

University of Liverpool



**Influence and Diversity
in the Early Tales of Henry James:
1864-1870**

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accordance with the requirements of the University of
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*This thesis is dedicated to my uncle
Antonios Karakostas.*

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Introduction

'Meanwhile, I repeat, we do not judge the artist with fairness unless we say to him, 'Oh, I grant you your starting-point [...] it isn't until I have accepted your data that I can begin to measure you.'¹

James's literary career begun in 1864, with a short story published in *The Continental Monthly* and with a critical essay in the *North American Review*.² This almost simultaneous appearance of his first attempts at fiction and literary criticism proves that he began his career as an author at the same time as he professed to assess the art of literary writing. It therefore suggests that James, at twenty-one, took his new calling as an author seriously – as seriously as he undertook the task of judging the literary efforts of others. It also intimates that his own fictional work that he simultaneously proffers to the world will serve as a paradigm of his ideas on fiction.

Although James's critical essays have been extensively studied, as is the case also with his major fiction, and the two have been exhaustively compared and contrasted, the early tales have been, by comparison, ignored, undervalued and for the most part read retrospectively – that is, as models for the later, more famous works James had not yet written. Those that have undertaken to discuss the early tales do so briefly, with the intent of moving on to the later novels and tales. The

¹ Henry James, "The Art of Fiction," Henry James: Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature: American Writers: English Writers. Leon Edel and Mark Wilson, eds. (NY: The Library of America, 1984), p.57. Hereafter cited as "AF." Subsequent references from the book will be cited as LC1.

² That was the article on Senior's book: "*Essays on Fiction*. By Nassau W. Senior. London, 1864" (1864). LC1, pp.1196-1204.

most famous and most extensive study of James's early works was written as far back as 1930 by Cornelia Pulcifer Kelly,³ and remains the most important study to date, proving the neglect that these tales have sustained. Even Kelly's study, however, aims at reaching and discussing the later works, allowing the early tales little space for examination. Her remarks, moreover, tend to be generalisations, often derogatory, and it is clear that her aim is to connect the tales to the critical essays or James's later works of fiction, rather than examine each tale for its own sake.

This thesis undertakes to examine the early tales of Henry James, from 1864 to 1870, stopping before James's first novel Watch and Ward (1871). I believe that the stories with which James begun his literary career have an intrinsic interest and by studying them we can come to a fuller understanding of James's development as a writer. Although there are interesting similarities with the later works, my concern has been to start from the beginning and consider these stories in themselves first of all. By doing so, I aim to avoid the reductive reading of them (as preliminary versions of later works) which have dominated the criticism so far. In the course of the thesis, I discuss previous critical accounts of all the tales concerned, both separately and collectively. My disagreements with particular judgements lead to my questioning the retrospective point of view critics take of these tales.

The effort to view these early works separately from James's later career has led me to look closely at the sources of and influences on the tales. That is, to study James's reading alongside his critical writing, using both to follow James's conscious working out of an artistic method and his less self-aware growth in confidence as a writer. This narrow focus has meant the exclusion of some wider contexts in which these early tales might be viewed, though James's sense of himself

³ "The Early development of Henry James," University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, vol. XV. (Urbana, Illinois: The University of Illinois P., 1930).

as American and his feelings about the civil war are evident in the tales and discussed by my work.

This thesis aims to see how James uses the figures that influenced him to create something new, that will help him develop into the master we know. My aim is therefore to contextualise these stories, analysing their possible influences and their relation to James's concurrent critical writing. This is a study of sources and influence; it also sees the stories as part of James's conscious working out of an artistic method. I am approaching them in this way, not analysing them in broader, possibly vaguer contexts such as the American cultural situation in the mid-nineteenth century.

The stories will be organised chronologically. Considering each separately, first of all I will discuss its sources, its influences and methods. Examining the tales, I have found three phases in James's early development and I have divided the stories accordingly into three chapters. The first phase includes the first four tales (1864-1866), which I believe have been influenced by the theatre. The second phase (1867-1868), and the most productive, is an expansion from the first. Theatrical methods remain prominent, but James seems to have attained a darker strain in his work. The tales of that period have a sensational hue, influenced as they are by Romantic writers. Finally, in the third phase (1869-1870) the sensational element gives way gradually to the new emphasis on the development of the psychology of the character. In the conclusion of each chapter I discuss the general lines of James's development in the period covered by the chapter, drawing together my analysis of the separate tales. This leads cumulatively to an overall account of James's development as a writer in the first seven years of his career.

Chapter One

The Dramatic tales

i) “A Tragedy of Error”: Tragi-Comic Errors.

James’s first story, “A Tragedy of Error” (1864), can claim a significant amount of critical attention, mainly due to its later discovery – by Leon Edel in 1953 - as a product of James.⁴ Rejected as representative of James’s fiction, attributed to his youth and lack of experience⁵, most critics seem to look at this tale in an effort to find “some of the characteristics of his later works” (Garant, p.225). Edel, for example, speaks of “foreshadowings” in the tale, suggesting that its interest lies in so far as it resembles or recalls later Jamesian fiction.⁶ At the same time, the tale is proclaimed to be influenced by French writers, especially Balzac;⁷ and to be highly

⁴ See Leon Edel, Henry James: The Untried Years, 1843-1870. (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1953), pp.217-218. Hereafter cited as UY. Also, Leon Edel, “‘A Tragedy of Error’: James’s First Story” *The New England Quarterly* 29, (Sep. 1956), pp.291-295. Hereafter cited as “TEJFS.”

⁵ Jeanne Delbaere-Garant claims that the tale “has little literary value,” but that it is “an interesting document on the psychology of the young James,” in Henry James: The Vision of France, (Paris: Societe d’Editions « Les Belles Lettres », 1979), p.225.

⁶ Leon Edel, Henry James: A Life. (London: Flamingo, 1996), p.72. Hereafter cited as Life. Fred Kaplan also names the tale “interestingly revealing, even anticipatory” in Henry James. The Imagination of Genius: a Biography. (Great Britain: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd, 1992), p.64. See also Robert L. Gale, “A Note on Henry James’s First Story” for evidence of foreshadowings the language that James uses in the first tale suggests. *Modern Language Notes*, 72 (February 1957), pp.103-107. Hereafter cited as “NHJFS.”

⁷ Kaplan believes the story to be influenced by Balzac and George Sand (Kaplan, p.64). James Kraft also thinks that the tale was written “under the influence of Balzac” in The Early Tales of Henry James. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969),p.1. Leo B.Levy’s book mentions Balzac. Versions of Melodrama: A Study of the Fiction and Drama of Henry James, 1865-1897. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1957), p.12. Edward Wagenknecht sees Balzac’s and Mérimée’s “inspiration” in James’s tale and suggestions of Maupassant and O.Henry in the tale’s ending, in The Tales of Henry James. (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1984), p.206. Mérimée is also mentioned by Sheldon M. Novick, who sees his influence in James’s lack of description. Henry James: The Young Master. (New York: Random House, 1996), p.93. On Mérimée as a possible influence, see also Peter Buitenhuis, The Grasping Imagination: The American Writings of Henry James. (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1970) p.13. On the other hand Edwin Sill Fussell perceives in the tale some American influence, “the undoubted influence of Edgar Allan Poe,” in The French Side of Henry James. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p.216. Nevertheless, he includes the tale in a group of what he calls “the French tales” of James (Fussel, p.166). Another suggestion on literary precursors is offered by Adeline Tintner, who in The Book World of Henry James: Appropriating the Classics mentions Shakespeare’s Comedy of Errors as a possible influence suggested by the title of the tale (Ann Arbor, Mich, London: UMI research

melodramatic in style. Shaw, for example, refers to the story as “this highly melodramatic story.”⁸ Reading this story indeed one cannot help envisioning it as a play with James as the director:

He stood beside the carriage a moment before getting in. She gave him her parasol to hold, and then lifted her veil, showing a very pretty face. This couple seemed to be full of interest for the passers-by, most of whom stared hard and exchanged significant glances. Such persons as were looking on at the moment saw a lady turn very pale as her eyes fell on the direction of the letter. Her companion saw it too, and instantly stepping into the place beside her, took up the reins, and drew rapidly along the main street of the town, past the harbour, to an open road skirting the sea. Here he slackened pace. The lady was leaning back, with her veil down again, and the letter lying open in her lap. Her attitude was almost that of unconsciousness, and he could see that her eyes were closed. Having satisfied himself of this, he hastily possessed himself of the letter, and read [...] ⁹

The movements of the characters are very carefully described. It is from such details that the reader will be able to *envision* the situation. We are to gather the illegitimacy of the affair by the man's delay in entering the carriage, obviously self-conscious. The veil also plays an important role here, a symbol we encounter often in melodrama and Gothic fiction. George Eliot's "The Lifted Veil" (1859) comes

Press, 1987), p.9. Hereafter cited as BW. See also John E. Savarese, "Henry James's First Story: A Study of Error." *Studies in Short Fiction* 17, (1980): 434. Finally, W.R.Martin and Warren U. Ober make a strong case for Chaucer's "The Franklin's Tale" in The Canterbury Tales, in their article "The Provenience of Henry James's First Tale," *Studies in Short Fiction* 24, (Winter 1987), pp.57-58, basing their evidence on the name of the ship, the Armorique, a name mentioned in Chaucer's tale. They examine similarities and differences between the two tales. Hereafter cited as "PHJFT." They too, however, admit that the tale is Balzacian, with elements from Hawthorne, in their book Henry James's Apprenticeship. The Tales: 1864-1882. (Toronto: P.D.Meany Publishers, 1994), p.14. Any future reference to this book will be cited by the name of the authors.

⁸ Valerie Shaw, The Short Story: A Critical Introduction, (London and New York: Longman, 1995) p.226. K.B. Vaid also talks of how "the tale opens in a melodramatic manner" in Technique in the Tales of Henry James. (Cambridge,MS: Harvard UP, 1964), p.127. Bruce Mc Elderry, Jr calls the tale a "conventional melodrama" in Henry James (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1965), p.25. In Kraft's opinion the tale is "a lurid and fanciful melodrama of adultery and murder" (Kraft, p.1). Kaplan finds a "melodramatic plot" that "combin[es] the realistic and romantic traditions" (Kaplan, p.64). Alan W. Bellringer, similarly, finds "melodramatic elements" in the story, in Henry James. (London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1988), p.7. See also Ellen Douglas Leyburn, Strange Alloy: The Relation of Comedy to Tragedy in the Fiction of Henry James. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968), p.3. Savarese finds theatricality in the opening paragraph of the story: "It opened theatrically, as if on a stage setting where the company was engaged in a dance of gestures." (Savarese, p.92).

immediately to one's mind, a story that James had probably read at the time and - some twenty years after it was first published - mentions it in one of his reviews as "a fine piece of writing," albeit "so woefully sombre."¹⁰ In his own tale here, the veil's movements remind one of the stage-curtain. It is lifted after the gentleman enters the carriage, indicating the intimacy of the couple.¹¹ What hides behind the veil is a very expressive face. The narrative depends for a moment on the heroine's expressions. The pale face indicates to the reader that something goes wrong, while at the same time we are invited to follow her glance to find the cause of the matter, i.e. the letter. Moreover, the veil indicates the wearer's privacy, which at the end of the paragraph is violated. The man will read the letter *after* he makes sure that the woman does not watch him read it, thus indicating that all is not well between them.

A lot depends here on vision, as if we are not merely reading a story, but are supposed to be watching it too: notice how many words and phrases associated with vision are used in just one paragraph: "showing", "seemed", "stared hard", "exchanged significant glances", "as were looking on", "saw" (used twice in the paragraph), "her eyes fell", "he could see", "her eyes were closed". From the start we feel another presence in the tale, someone other than the characters and yet as if among them, someone who observes them. As Edel pointed out, "it is not James who sees what goes on, but someone else [...] The third person, the observer, the

⁹ Henry James, "The Tragedy of Error," The Tales of Henry James, vol 1, ed. Maqbool Aziz. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p.1. Hereafter cited as "TE." All subsequent references to the tales of James are from the Aziz edition, hereafter cited as Tales.

¹⁰ Henry James, " 'The Lifted Veil' and 'Brother Jacob.'" (1878), LC1, p.994. James's inclination for what is real distances him from overt depictions of the metaphysical; wherever we find such references to metaphysical phenomena – a residue of Hawthorne's influence for the main part – we can distinguish at the same time an effort to blend them with reality that they may pass for real. This is usually achieved through an elaborate effort to justify their cause, so that they are not so metaphysical after all, as we shall see later on.

¹¹ Evelyne Ender points out that "James's practice as a writer often relies on a [...] desire to erect screens. But screens not only hide; they also designate and put on display what is to be hidden, creating in a very process a transgressive desire. Moreover, such veilings and gestures of modesty inevitably refer to a perception of sexuality." Sexing the Mind: Nineteenth-Century Fictions of

wayfarer, the onlooker, the passer-by – and their testimony is presented *objectively* to the reader (my italics)” (Life, p.72). Vaid suggests that “James’s use of the hypothetical spectator is a significant compositional device whereby he is able to maintain the indirection or objectivity of his presentation” (Vaid, p.128).¹² James’s own words at the same period prove how useful he thought this method: “In every human imbroglio, be it of a comic or a tragic nature, it is good to think of an observer standing aloof, the critic, the idle commentator of it all, taking notes, as we may say, in the interest of truth.”¹³ Taking it a step further, James seems to suggest that the observers the narrator refers to throughout the tale are projections of the readers themselves. The narrator tells us what to be and what to think indirectly: we are to believe the evidence of the observer, as if we had been there to observe for ourselves. Thus, both Edel and Vaid seem to forget that the compositional device is not the observer, but the narrator who invokes the observer with whom the reader must associate. Indeed, when Edel notices that “there was conscious method in the narrative” (Vaid, p.128) he has only understood half of the story. Francis Ferguson speaks of James’s need for “a fine intelligence,” as a “compositional centre” in the story:

James almost invariably used a fine intelligence to give us the clue to the other characters and to the issues and values of his dramas. It had to be a fine intelligence if it was to perceive what James wanted his audience to perceive through it, yet it could not be James himself, for then James would have been telling us *about* his subject instead of presenting it to us directly. The problem and the

Hysteria. (Ithaca and London: Cornell U.P., 1995), p.67. The veil here both attracts the observer’s attention and suggests at the wearer’s promiscuity. Thus, ironically, it achieves the opposite of its aim.

¹² Darilyn W.Bock, similarly, finds the use of “reflector characters” in James “as a means of deepening our sympathy or intensifying our appreciation of the central character.” “From Reflective Narrators to James: The Coloring Medium of the Mind” *Modern Philology* 76, (February 1979): p.264. She calls this “the value of indirection,” which also permits the readers “to see things about the nature and intentions of those around the main character, for instance, that he or she fails to see” (ibid.).

¹³ So writes James in his second review of Eliot’s “The Spanish Gypsy,” in the *North Atlantic*. Henry James, “*The Spanish Gypsy: A Poem*. By George Eliot. Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1868” (October, 1868). LC1, p.956. Hereafter cited as “SG2.”

solution both belong to drama, and good drama is full of Jamesian 'reflectors.'¹⁴

Perhaps then James's narrator in the first tale proves that James had already in mind the need for this dynamic. James understood that good fiction required a relationship between himself and the reader, and had in mind that a mediator was necessary to seal it successfully. In the course of this thesis one issue to be examined will be James's effort to create a relationship between the narrator, the observers and the reader that will serve towards the reader's understanding of the writer's work. Moreover, we will examine how drama helps James achieve that understanding in his first tale and the ones that follow.

For James both writer and reader must be good observers. When he read other people's works he seemed to be making an effort to read them carefully as if he were *observing* them well.¹⁵ He was attracted by writers who wrote in the same way. In his criticism of eminent literary figures that seem to have influenced his own writing (especially as regards the early tales) – such as Balzac, Trollope, George Eliot and Hawthorne - he says of them all that they were good observers.¹⁶ In so describing them, he seems to be attributing to them different types of observation. Balzac, for example, is accused of "disinterested observation" ("HB," p.33),

¹⁴ Francis Ferguson, "James's Idea of Dramatic Form," Henry James, ed. Harold Bloom. (New York, New Haven, Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p.19.

¹⁵ Writing in the *Nation* on Eliot's "The Spanish Gypsy," for example, James admires Juan, whose "exquisite intentions...confess themselves only on a second reading" "*The Spanish Gypsy: A Poem*. By George Eliot. Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1868" (July 1868). LC1, p.938. Hereafter cited as "SG1." He suggests that certain pages "must be read, re-read, and pondered" ("SG1," p.940). And again in his review of the same work in the *North Atlantic*: "To be appreciated at their worth, these pages should be attentively read" ("SG2," p.954).

¹⁶ "Whatever he encountered," says James of Balzac, "he observed," in "Honore De Balzac" (1875), Henry James: Literary Criticism: French Writers; Other European Writers: The Prefaces to the New York Edition. Ed. Leon Edel and Mark Wilson. (NY: The Library of America, 1984), p.36. Hereafter cited as "HB." Subsequent references to the book will be cited as LC2. Of Trollope James wrote: "He is an excellent, an admirable observer," in Henry James, "Miss Mackensie. A Novel" (1865), LC1, p.1314. Of Eliot he says: "She has the microscopic observation..." in Henry James, "Felix Holt, the Radical" (1866), LC1, p.911. Hereafter cited as "FH." And of Hawthorne he says that "there has rarely been an observer more serene," in Henry James, Hawthorne (1879). (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), p.47.

scientific, with “a passion for exactitude [...] for *all* the kinds of fact.”¹⁷ In the French author’s works James finds his “overmastering sense of the present world” (“HB,” p.49). This knowledge of the world, the consequence of his observation, results in “a very much greater amount of description in Balzac than in any other writer” (“HB,” p.50). James notes how Balzac creates “pictures,” “portraits” of places and people (“HB,” pp.50, 52). According to James, we find “Balzac’s strongest gift” (“HB,” p.52) in his ability to bring things to life: “the whole person,” James remarks of Balzac’s characters, “springs into being at once” (“HB,” p.53). Balzac’s observation, therefore, enables him to represent life and this is, according to the later James what the object of the novel should be.¹⁸ It is this realism in Balzac, primarily, that the young James admired and wished to emulate as early as the very beginning. “Both writers stress the apparent priority of the phenomenal world, and the novelist’s responsibility to represent it faithfully,” says Stowe, “yet neither abdicates for a moment his own privileged position as a mediator between the world and the reader.”¹⁹ The means through which James mediates and controls his reader is by giving us this relationship between the narrator, the observer, the characters, and the reader/spectator. The author himself seems to be standing somewhere above them, separating himself from them, but controlling them at the same time. He does

¹⁷ James writes that Balzac possesses “an unequalled intensity of vision” with which he “saw his subject in the light of science as well, in the light of the bearing of all its parts on each other, and under pressure of a passion for exactitude, an appetite, the appetite of an ogre, for *all* the kinds of facts. We find I think in the union suggested something like the truth about his genius, the nearest approach to a final account of him,” in Henry James, “Honore de Balzac, 1902” (1902), LC2, p.93. Hereafter cited as “HB1092.”

¹⁸ “I should say that the main object of the novel is to represent life,” writes James later in 1883 in “Alphonse Daudet” LC2, p.242. Hereafter cited as “AD.”

¹⁹ William W. Stowe, Balzac, James, and the Realistic Novel. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983), p.8. Taking it a step further, Stowe suggests that despite their wish to represent reality, their wish to interpret it questions the realism of the work: “Both are conscious, deliberate ‘realists,’ who are at the same time conscious, and deliberate artists and interpreters of experience” (ibid.). Thus, Stowe believes that both artists create, in a sense, the world that they presume to represent (Stowe, p.3). Leon Edel believes the same thing of James and Proust: “Thus Proust discovered, as Henry James had done before him, that the writer of fiction can not only

that in such a way that remind one of a playwright. The theatre, a living force in James's mind from the first,²⁰ serves James in his composition of these early stories, whereby the construction of all elements involve us (author, narrator, and readers) all.

Not surprisingly, critics have commented on James's lack of characterisation in "The Tragedy of Error." As Delbaere-Garant observes, "the characters are not described when they appear; their true nature is revealed through their acts and words" (Delbaere-Garant, p.226).²¹ Reading James's article on a novel by Elisabeth Stoddard helps us understand why James avoids extensive physical description. He finds that Stoddard's characters, despite their detailed physical description lack of "facts which may help us to read the story."²² Stoddard's physical descriptions of her heroine, for example don't allow the reader to "deduce" her character, and thus James finds that she remains for him "the American Sphinx" ("ES" p.616). "James generally explains the failure to give a character life partly as an abuse of the author's voice," Seed explains. "The latter should not become a substitute for characters but should play about them *after* they have been created."²³ Concurrently,

represent life but can actually create it for a reader – a reader sufficiently attentive and responsive to what he is reading." The Psychological Novel, 1900-1950. (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1961), p.65.

²⁰ Edel writes of James: "He had always been fascinated by painting [...] But the fascination of the drama was something deeper. Play-writing was a craft allied to fiction [...] The dramatist was there behind the novelist" The Complete Plays of Henry James, ed. Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1949), p.33. Hereafter cited as Plays. We must not forget, after all, that the first play James wrote was as early as 1869. Hartley Grattam also observes that drama was "a life-long devotion" for James, in The Three Jameses: A Family of Minds. (NY: New York University Press, 1962), p.229. James himself stated how important the dramatic form was to him in an article on Tennyson: "The dramatic form seems to me of all literary forms the very noblest. I have so extreme a relish for it that I am half afraid to trust myself to praise it, lest I should seem to be merely rhapsodising" Henry James, "Mr.Tennyson's Drama" (1875), Henry James: Essays on Art and Drama. Peter Rawlings ed., (Aldershot, Hants: Scholar Press, 1996),p.102. Hereafter cited as "Tennyson."

²¹ Vaid also observes how "neither the lady nor her lover is described directly" (Vaid, p.127).

²² "Two Men. A Novel. By Elisabeth Stoddard. New-York: Bruce and Huntington, 1865" (1867) LC1, p.616. Hereafter cited as "ES."

²³ David Seed "The Narrator in Henry James's Criticism" Philological Quarterly 60:4 (Fall 1981), p.505. James had the same problem with the works of Harriet (Prescott) Spofford. In an article on her Azarian he castigates her for her inappropriately detailed descriptions: "[The novel's] real interest lies in the history of two persons' moral intercourse. Instead of this, we are treated to an elaborate description of four persons' physical aspect and costume, and of certain aspects of inanimate attire. Of

James disapproved of Stoddard's long but "incoherent" dialogues that did not allow her to depict the inner being of her characters, who remained a riddle for the reader ("ES," p.616). Daugherty notes that Stoddard's novel became for James an example to avoid: "James was more strongly opposed to the overuse of dialogue as a means of characterization, primarily because of his interest in the protagonist's inner being."²⁴ At the same time, though, she sees that the opposite method was not right for James either: "James believed that an excessive analytical technique might rob characters of their human interest, reducing them to mere illustrations" (Daugherty, p.27). James did not like the absolute lack of the details that he considers necessary for characterisation. This absence is evident, according to James, in Goethe²⁵ and minor writers such as Anne Moncure (Crane) Seemuler.²⁶ The manner in which we see into James's characters, on the other hand, is very characteristic of the play where characters are either introduced indirectly by the other characters, or become known to us through their actions. James *seemingly* leaves the characterisation to the reader, who is left to envision the characters via what the narrator or the observers mention about them.

human nature there is not an unadulterated page in the book." "Azarian: an Episode. By Harriet Elisabeth Prescott, Author of *The Amber Gods*, etc. Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1864" (1865), LC1, p.604. Hereafter cited as "Azarian." Balzac's descriptions, by comparison, are also elaborate, James says, but they are there because they are relevant: "these things are all described *only in so far as they bear upon the action, and not in the least for themselves*" ("Azarian," p.608).

²⁴ Sarah B. Daugherty, The Literary Criticism of Henry James. (Athens (Ohio): Ohio University Press), p.27.

²⁵ James's impressions of Wilhelm Meister prove how inconsistent to the form of the novel Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship (1795-96) was for him: "As a whole, it has, in fact, no very definite character; and, were we not vaguely convinced that its greatness as a work of art resides in this very absence of form, we should say that, as a work of art, it is lamentably defective." In Henry James, "*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship and Travels. From German of Goethe*. By Thomas Carlyle. In Two Volumes. Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1865" (1865), LC2, p.945. It is interesting, moreover, to observe again how for James many of the artist's faults are also their greatness, which reminds us of Harold Bloom's theory of influence. See The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry. 2nd ed. (New York, Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1997).

²⁶ He writes of her heroine: "Emily Chester is not a character; she is a mere shadow; the mind's eye strives in vain to body her forth from the fluent mass of talk in which she is embodied [...] We attribute it to the want of clearness in the author's conception, to the want of science in her execution." Henry James, "Emily Chester. A Novel. Boston: Ticknor and fields, 1864" (1865), LC1, pp.589-590.

Hence, we notice that in "A Tragedy of Error" he has already given the reader enough relevant information with which to build up an image of the character. We have, consequently, in front of our eyes a woman with eyes that "turn very pale" ("TE," p.1), whose features can "stiffen with horror" ("TE", p.2), whose melodramatic actions may signify to us that she might have been "struck by a sudden thought" ("TE", p.5), or whose manner that she may be "seeking to recognise a long-lost friend" ("TE", p.6); a man, her lover, whose face can turn "as pale as hers," who can look "fixedly and vacantly before him," who "pretends" to read, who is discovered "plunged in so deep a reverie" ("TE", p.2); servants who wink significantly or whistle involuntarily ("TE", p.5). It is all visual and melodramatic. The opening scene with the incidents in the carriage was intended, in the same manner, as insight into the characters of M. de Meyrau and Hortense, as Vaid points out (Vaid, p.128). This is achieved, as mentioned before, by their reactions to the letter, and, also, by the reactions of the bystanders.

Another significant scene, that of the maid looking at her mistress through the keyhole and then reporting her to the cook, gives us more insight into Hortense. The maid observes the heroine who is locked in her room trying to decide what to do about her husband's return. What the maid sees through the keyhole is Hortense, holding a bottle of wine, looking out to sea; and an open letter lying on the table:

She kept this position until Josephine began to grow tired of waiting. But just as she was about to arise in despair of gratifying her curiosity, madame raised the bottle and glass, and filled the latter full. Josephine looked more eagerly. Hortense held it a moment against the light, and then drained it down.

Josephine could not restrain an involuntary whistle. But her surprise became amazement when she saw her mistress prepare to take a second glass. Hortense put it down, however, before its contents were half gone, as if struck by a sudden thought, and hurried across the room. She stooped down before a cabinet, and took out a small opera glass. With this she returned to the window, put it to her eyes, and again spent some moments in looking

seaward. The purpose of this proceeding Josephine could not make out. The only result visible to her was that her mistress suddenly dropped the lorgnette on the table, and sank down on an armchair, covering her face with her hand (“TE”, p.5).

We have no dialogue here, merely description by the narrator. Yet, the scene is powerful. Again, vision becomes very important. Through the narrator, who is our keyhole to the events, we are observing Josephine, who is observing her mistress through the door’s keyhole, who is herself observing something else over at the sea through another keyhole – the opera glass. Through all this, the reader not only knows what Josephine knows, namely that her mistress is in trouble, and quite desperate – as her improper, unhabitual drinking depicts – and in search of something; but standing above and beyond Josephine, the reader has an extra vision into the situation that helps him understand what Josephine does not. That this is a woman at the end of her tether, who, by covering her face, has given herself up to the evil darkness into which she has fallen ever since she began her affair with another man. We do not need the author to explain further what is going on in her mind. Her actions are enough.

“The text of muteness,” says Brooks, “suggests expression of needs, desires, states, occulted imperatives below the level of consciousness.”²⁷ Hortense’s desperation is expressed in her need for drink. Her sudden alert and her search for the opera glass reveal that she has had an idea. Her sinking into the chair discloses that the idea is desperate. Nevertheless, already her actions have proven her a determined woman. Thus, Hortense’s actions, as described here, do not only give us insight into her character, but also prepare us for her expedition in the night at the harbour to find and hire a murderer. Vaid indicates that this is a good example of how James uses

²⁷ Brooks, Peter, The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976), p.80.

dramatisation.²⁸ She also believes that the power of the story lies in this method rather than in James's playing a more omniscient role: "It may be remarked that in the author's fidelity to what his heroine does and says, and in his not directing his omniscience to her thoughts, lies whatever strength this tale has" (Vaid, p.131). This method intensifies the idea of the reader's role as an observer as it forces him or her to take part in understanding the character. By not entering Hortense's thoughts and by externalising them through her action and her speech the reader is forced to make all the interpretation. Similarly, the boatman's character is revealed in the confrontation he has with the boy, when Hortense (and, through her, the reader) is, secretly observing him. Hortense here becomes one with the audience, just like Josephine the maid had become earlier by looking at her mistress through the keyhole. She is serving, therefore, as a chorus in a Greek play, acquiring the dual role of an audience and a character, whose vision and action are important for the correct interpretation and evaluation of the play by the audience. Vaid seems to have sensed this presence of a chorus too when she mentions that "the brief colloquy between the maid and the cook" serves as "an effective and economical choral comment" (Vaid, p.129). Surprisingly, however, Vaid dismisses the tale as weak for its reliance on action rather than on authorial interpretation, because after all "it fails to present the situation of the woman in all its psychological complexity" (Vaid, p.131). She tends in the end to dismiss the tale as juvenilia.

There is, however, more complexity in the tale than she allows. In his study of melodrama in relation to James and Balzac, Brooks reminds us that "there is no 'psychology' in melodrama in this sense; the characters have no interior depth, there is no psychological conflict" (Brooks, p.35). He explains why: "It is delusive to seek

²⁸ "The author dramatises the agitation of his heroine by posting the maid Josephine at the keyhole of her lady's boudoir" (Vaid, p.128).

an interior conflict, the ‘psychology of melodrama,’ because melodrama exteriorizes conflict and psychic structure, producing instead what we might call the ‘melodrama of psychology’” (ibid.). Therefore, James’s authorial interpretation is not needed since action expresses its own psychology. Consequently, the reader of this tale unconsciously gives birth in his/her mind to the character’s psychology by observing her deeds and words. Unlike what Kelly believes, James *did* understand the “interdependence of character and action” and how “action may illustrate character,” and turn into “a means rather than an end” (Kelly, p.31).

According to James, Balzac combines “his inordinate passion for detail”²⁹ with “an imagination of the highest power” (“HB1902”, p.93); and this latter faculty helps generate romance in Balzac. James will designate him “a realistic romancer” (“HB”, p.49), at another instance “a picturesque romancer” (“HB”, p.43), who, unlike authors like Dumas, Mme Sand and Trollope, “weaves a dense [web]” (“HB,” p.37). Reality and romance, every-day life and melodrama, seem to work together in Balzac, whose vision becomes one with a painter’s. Following after his predecessor, in “A Tragedy of Error” James creates detailed settings, such as the post-office scene, the boat scene with the graveyard as the distant background, and so on, where he can recreate life’s little dramas. In “A Small Boy and Others” (1913) James reveals to us how he was awakened to the significance of “scenes.”³⁰ He understood that they expressed life and that he could use them to recreate, represent, and practically breathe life into his works. Brooks remarks in his book that “the scenic

²⁹ Henry James, “The Lesson of Balzac” (1905), LC2, p.127. Hereafter cited as “LB.”

³⁰ James recalls an early childhood incident where his cousin Minny Temple was admonished by her aunt with the phrase “Come now, my dear; don’t make a scene – I *insist* on you not making a scene!” “Who should say now what a world one mightn’t at once read into it?” asks James. The expression “told me so much about life. Life at these intensities clearly became ‘scenes’; but the great thing, the immense illumination, was that we could make them or not as we chose.” Henry James, “A Small Boy and Others” (1913), Autobiography. Ed. Frederick W. Dupee. (New York: Criterion Books, 1956), p.107. Hereafter cited as “SBO.” Further reference to the book will be cited as Autobiography.

method is part of James's technique from the beginning" (Brooks, p.159); and Edel will find this technique "skilful" ("TEJFS," p.294).

Despite James's admiration for Balzac's descriptions/scenes which he tries to emulate, there are some technical points in which he finds Balzac deficient: "of all the great novelists," he notices, "[Balzac] is the weakest in talk; his conversations, if they are at all prolonged, become unnatural, impossible" ("HB," p.58). Accordingly, in "The Tragedy of Error" James alternates descriptions with dialogue. He gives us a long dialogue between Hortance and the boatman – permeated with melodramatic expressions - where he expands the threads of the tale. It is from dialogues like this, and from the characters' actions as they are described by the observer that we are to make out the truth about the characters. "But what did James mean by action?" asks Kelly, and answers her own question thus: "not a profusion of events, but development, growth, often slow and moderate, of whatever it is with which the story is concerned" (Kelly, p.30). She continues her thoughts on what James's action is all about in the following manner:

A story must have action – if one had not the imaginative ability of a Scott to *make* things happen, one must have the perceiving life of Balzac to *see* them happen in life and then report them – it must have characters; it must have truth; it must be moral – not obviously so, as in the case of the 18th century writers, but inherently so (Kelly, p.33).

Therefore, what is important to James is not - as in Scott – "a profusion of events," but what little event the story has must be carefully developed; and this is done – as in Balzac – by "*perceiving* life," by "*see[ing]*" things "happen in life" and finally by "report[ing] them" to his reader. Kelly's words recall again the importance of observation in James, observation, moreover, of what is real, what exists. Hence James's commitment to truth, and consequently – as will be discussed later – morality.

What is it that the story is concerned with, nevertheless, the critics have failed to perceive, as most of them either ignore it or try to examine it from the point of view of James's later works. Savarese, however, does not rest at that. He examines the tale from a close textual approach, which would probably have pleased James had he lived to read it. Savarese notices, for example, that the tale is concerned with the *errors* that everyone is making about everyone else: "Almost everyone misjudges and mistakes the actions and character of everyone else in this story just when it is most important" (Savarese, p.435).³¹ Hortense misconceives the character of the boatman despite evidence that he lies to her.³² She also misjudges her lover in believing that he will not do anything to solve their problem. Similarly, her lover misjudges her in believing of her the same. This is ironic when one considers the importance of observation in this tale:

"For all the gazing that is done in the story (including a servant observing through a keyhole her mistress peering out to sea through a lorgnette), for all the faces that are presented to scrutiny (and there are faces especially pale ones, on almost every page) remarkably little gets perceived" (Savarese, p.434).

This deduction is what makes the errors so tragic. They are right there in front of everyone, yet no one sees them, neither the observers, nor the narrator who report them to the reader! Savarese speaks of their "severely limited" "penetrating power" and concludes that "the hypotheses which these observers construct from the surface evidence fall pitifully short" (*ibid.*). Savarese, then, disagrees with Vaid that there is an omniscient narrator who merely refuses to direct his omniscience to the heroine's

³¹ Martin and Ober's article on the tale suspiciously presents the exact same arguments, without recognising Savarese. They similarly point out that "in every corner and fold of 'A Tragedy of Error' there is nothing but secrecy, distrust, deceit, error and disaster," the complete opposite, that is, from what they perceive as the tale's precursor, Chaucer's "The Franklin's tale," that is "all openness, trust, honesty, honor and satisfaction" ("PHJFT," p.58).

³² As both Savarese (Savarese, p.432) and Martin/Ober ("PHJFT," p.58) point out, the boatman exaggerates his sufferings when he says to Hortense that he has eaten nothing since morning. She had previously witnessed his drinking the milk intended for the baby. As Savarese points out, "perhaps his [the boatman's] account of his propensity for violence is also tall talking" (Savarese, p.432).

thoughts: “*Omniscience*,” he emphasizes, “is precisely what is negated by the story” (ibid.). However, one cannot help but feel that perhaps this “limited penetrating power” was intentional (the key) on the part of James. After all, many observers also represent different points of view that need not agree with each other, as is usually the case in life. By giving us various and often mistaken views and conclusions, we the readers are intrigued about finding out what is really going on.³³ The author, therefore, is present in his absence. He stands somewhere where he can observe the observers; where he can observe life and present it objectively through the subjective polyphony of his creations.

In this way, therefore, James has control of what his readers are to make of the story. He manages that by manipulating the consciousness of his heroine as well as that of the reader who is made to be the witness, while he is indirectly told at the same time of how to react to what he witnesses. Brooks speaks of “the melodrama of consciousness” concerning The Portrait of a Lady (1882), but this applies too in James’s very first tale. It is the consciousness of evil that Hortense has to come to terms with. From the very beginning of the tale she is confronted (and the reader is confronted also) with her evil predicament: she has committed adultery while her husband was away, with a care-free abandonment as if certain that her husband would never come back. She admits that “every tongue that greets him, if only to say *bon jour*, will wag to the tune of a certain person’s misconduct” (“TE,” p.2). Her adultery, therefore, has not been a very private and carefully planned affair. It has been done in a way that suggests to Hortense that an ethical change has taken place in her, and she “stiffen[s] with horror” at the realisation of it. We are told that she is sure that her husband will immediately notice the change in her: “He will not be with

³³ Bock for example believes that “reflector characters” that are “deficient” serve to “increase our sympathy, anxiety, or interest in the main character” (Bock, p.265).

me ten minutes without guessing it” (“TE”, p.4). It is a change that she has just noticed herself upon her husband’s impending arrival. It suggests, moreover, a realisation in her that she has no depth, that all her character is in the surface of her, hence her fear that her sins will be visible.

With realisation comes action, and action is primarily mental in James. Hortense is faced with a choice, just as all heroes and heroines do at the moment of crisis: She must either face up to her evil deed or submit to the only honourable way-out: suicide. “I have half a mind to drown myself literally,” she declares (“TE”, p.3). Literally, as it follows at the end of the sentence, suggest to the reader that it is an afterthought. She seems to be trying to persuade her lover and herself that she will do it. It is more likely that she does not mean it as she is allowing herself “indifferently” to be persuaded against it by her lover (“TE”, p.3). Is Hortense trying to inspire pity or rekindle interest in her indifferent lover by suggesting to him death - a measure she obviously does not intend to carry out? Or, could it be as Vaid suggests, that “her mind [was] probably occupied with another plan”? (Vaid, p.128) Perhaps both. What is certain is, that by the time she locks herself into that room, she has given herself up to her instincts of survival. She has made up her mind, she has chosen her fate, and this we can feel as we watch her swallow that drink. Barzun sees the characters’ actions as ethical choices: “In acting out their feelings, people turn out either good or evil – a moral attitude which, taken with James’s addiction to violent plots, leads me to say that he is a writer of melodrama.”³⁴ We sense Hortense making her own moral

³⁴ Jacques Barzun, “Henry James Melodramatist.” The Question of Henry James: A Collection of Critical Essays. F.W. Dupee, ed. (London: Allan Wingate Publishers Ltd., MCMXLVII), p.262. Levy also points out that James “examines moral situations under the artificial conditions of melodrama” (Levy, 3). Melodrama, nevertheless, may also seem life-like, because of its affinities with theatre. “We generally think of melodrama as a form of stage play which flourished ‘in the nineties’” (Barzun, p.262). Speaking of Barzun’s reference to James’s “addiction to violent plots,” it is important to mention that violence is *suggested* in “The Tragedy of Error,” and, as with Greek tragedy, not depicted. James had a dislike for violence in fiction which was a reason why he disapproved of Stoddard’s novel: “Violence is not strength: on the contrary it needs strength. In any but the strongest

choice: she feels that she cannot count on her lover, (his own secrecy and deceit may excuse her misjudging him after all), so she abandons herself to her own evil contrivances and thus falls deeper and deeper into an evil pit. When we first meet her she has just got the news of her husband's return and faces herself as she has now become. Her face, then, was "very pale" ("TE", p.1). As she abandons herself to evil, this aspect of hers takes over, a typical Gothic movement. She appears to Josephine as "very pale" twice ("TE," pp.5,6) and when the boatman can finally see her face, he sees that it is "deathly pale" ("TE," p.14). With this aspect she reveals to him her plans and makes him an accomplice, proselytising him to her evil devices. The boatman will close the scene with the ominous statement: "We *have* been among the dead, after a fashion" ("TE", p.17).³⁵ Hence, upon her next meeting with her maid she looks "ten years older since this morning" ("TE", p.18). Then, the next day, the same maid reports her to have gained another ten years in her countenance ("TE", p.19). It is as if the evil in her makes her waste away. We cannot help of being reminded of other novels, like Balzac's The Wild Ass's Skin (1831), or Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray (1890), where the heroes waste away under their evil deeds and desires. Significantly, James will use this idea in later stories too, such as "The Story of a Masterpiece" (1868) for example.

All these repetitions ominously predict the tragic end of the story. "We can often detect in James's prose," mentions Brooks, "the effort to give adequate representations to what he feels to be the latent sinister implications of an event, to shadow forth the inner horror" (Brooks, p.169). One way to do that is by invoking surprise, or astonishment: "The melodramatic moment of astonishment is a moment

hands a violent style is fatal to truth. It is fatal to truth because of necessity it perverts everything it touches" ("ES," p.615).

of ethical evidence and recognition” (Brooks p.26). In this story, the return of the husband creates that astonishment, the horror, that leads to that moment of recognition. The horror in this story is not only the tragic mistake that ruins Hortense’s plans, but what Hortense has become. Certainly, James does not absolve her of her downfall. He rather transforms it into a moral journey for the readers, who must follow Hortense’s ordeal step by step - as she tries to reconcile herself to her evil deeds and find justification for her wrong in asking the boatman what he would consider as justifiable reason for murder, receiving his answer in near hysterics³⁶. At the same time, James’s narrator informs the readers that this is an “infamous topic” (“TE”, p.12). We watch her, as she becomes icy calm again, as if with new purpose. The boatman is surprised and asks her if she is “Spanish” (the people whom he accused of devilry, hatred and murder) to which she replies, “perhaps, I am” (“TE”, p.13). In this intense moment, the readers find themselves forced to part their ways from the character. The tale provides the author with the opportunity to diverge from Balzac, whose lack of morality in his works upset him.³⁷ Moreover, if Martin and Ober are correct in proposing Chaucer’s influence, then we can perhaps surmise that with his tale James achieves a more forceful depiction of the moral issues (matrimonial vows, truth) that concerned Chaucer. Chaucer’s character, the Franklin, embraces the virtuous woman by relating her honest behaviour toward her husband. James, by contrast, seems to strengthen the value of virtue by presenting us with the exact opposite - an amoral woman - with the help of theatricality and melodrama. As Brooks points out,

³⁵ Savarese appears to suggest moral consequences in her implicating the boatman: “She is surely unaware of the impact she has had on her accomplice, whom she has brought to compare himself sardonically in his new role with Charon on the Styx” (Savarese, p.433).

³⁶ “How odd! said Madame Bernier, with a shrill kind of laugh” (“TE”, p.12).

³⁷ “He had no natural sense of morality, and this we cannot help thinking a serious fault in a novelist” (“HB,” p.47).

Melodrama starts from and expresses the anxiety brought by a frightening new world in which the traditional patterns of moral order no longer provide the necessary social glue. It plays out the force of that anxiety with the apparent triumph of villainy, and it dissipates it with the eventual victory of virtue (Brooks, p.20).

The matrimonial world already appears in James's fiction as such a "frightening" world behind whose gates there is anxiety hidden, an anxiety James will subsequently explore in many of his works. In "A Tragedy of Error" James uses melodrama to make us believe that Hortense's plot against her husband will end in chilling victory by making her appear the victim of a loveless marriage, and a loveless affair. Somehow, we almost sympathise with the pale, unhappy and desperate woman (as we do with the tragic Oedipus in Greek tragedy) more than we do with the husband who only appears to us at the end, when all is shipwrecked, by that unexpected vision of irony and "chiastic inversion;"³⁸ the form of the limping figure appearing unexpectedly "with outstretched arms," ("TE," p.19) the *victorious* and virtuous husband, who brings along catharsis.

Brooks attributes "such overtly Gothic and melodramatic elements" in James's fiction to Balzac's influence, to which can be attributed such characteristics as "the continuing dark strain in the Jamesian imagination, its unremitting concern with the menacing, the abysmal, the violent, and the unknown" (Brooks, p.153). James's very first tale is indeed Balzacian in all that. It is dark; it is concerned with evil, with the unethical in the world. It uses Balzacian frames of structure (melodrama and the theatre) and themes, from the opening paragraph -

³⁸ Ralph Norman refers thus to the "interchangeability of the roles of two characters," which is an element he examines in James's works; and he finds its first appearance in "A Tragedy of Error" "in which a hired assassin kills the wrong man." He also sees that element as a theatrical device: "A change of roles is usually an element in the plot of such plays as we traditionally call the comedies." The Insecure World of Henry James's Fiction: Intensity and Ambiguity. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), p.142.

unmistakingly a Balzacian reference³⁹ - to the melodramatic ending. What James has taken from the original, namely Balzac, is the combination of a realistic and melodramatic way of looking at things. This, as we have said, involves description, which James adopts up to a point, and then moves further to substitute it with action and dialogue that give us characterisation. Hence, he takes the Balzacian hints, and together with the new elements, he creates something new, a picture of Hortense's tragic error.

This recalls Bloom's theory on poetic anxiety, that if we apply it to fiction – to Jamesian fiction - then the appropriate choice of revisionary ratio (out of the six that Bloom offers us) would be what he calls “clinamen,” namely, “poetic misreading or misprision proper” (Bloom, p.14). James, like the “ephebe-poet” in Bloom, sees his precursor's fiction going “accurately up to a certain point” (ibid.). Hence, in his own fiction he makes sure he “swerves” where he believes his precursor should have swerved. In speaking about misprision, moreover, Bloom suggests that “the poet confronting his Great Original must find the fault that is not there and at the heart of all but the highest imaginative virtue” (Bloom, p.31). He finds the reason for that in Lichtenberg's theory that “to do the opposite is also a form of imitation, and a definition of imitation ought by rights to include both” (ibid.). So James ultimately finds fault, for example, with what he sees in Balzac's as the greatest faculty, “his inordinate passion for detail” (“LB”, p.127): “this

³⁹ See the opening of Balzac's La Femme de Trente Ans (1844) for example, for a similar opening paragraph, as well as the opening page of Cousin Bette (1847). Other French writers have used carriage scenes which enclosed adulterous couples, like Flaubert in his novel Madame Bovary (1857), that “famous scandalous episode of the cab” (Ender, p.69). Ender also mentions Mérimée's tale “La Double Méprise” (1853), where “the scene of seduction takes place in a cab” (Ender, 70). James seeks to bring to our attention the adultery of the couple, without revealing any erotic acts in the carriage though.

extravagance is also his great fault” (ibid.). This fault, however, constitutes at the same time – as James realised⁴⁰ – Balzac’s genius.

James begins his career with a story about errors and the search for truth; and a literary theory that corrects errors made by other eminent literary figures, like Balzac. As we shall see, the three tales that follow are similarly concerned with errors: James deals with characters that make errors of judgement,⁴¹ while at the same time he enlists himself in “correcting” literary precursors that he disagrees with. As James solves his literary concerns, a fascinating group of literature begins.

ii) “The Story of a Year”: An Anti-Trollopean Tale

Talking about errors, here is another one: until 1953, when Edel discovered the existence of “A Tragedy of Error,” most critics dealt with “A Story of a Year” (1865) as if it were James’s first story. As with “A Tragedy of Error,” the story examined here has received significant – and rather negative⁴² - literary criticism, mainly due to its status as the first tale of James. Moreover, probably because of that status, it has been established as a primarily autobiographical story,⁴³ exciting even

⁴⁰ See note 17.

⁴¹ Savarese reminds us that James’s fiction is full of characters that “make tragic errors,” especially as regards their judgement of other characters. Also, that James’s plots are preoccupied with the search for “the true identity of others, to see behind masks and veils,” and names “The Aspern Papers,” “The Liar,” The Sacred Fount and The Golden Bowl as examples of Jamesian fiction that succeeds “The Tragedy of Error” (Savarese, p.434). In fact, examining the tales up to 1870 we find the continuous presence of this phenomenon, as it will be shown.

⁴² Robert C. LeClair’s harsh and unfair pronouncements are representative: “very little, if any, of such technical ability is evidenced in *The Story of a Year*, the thread of which is so thin and poorly spun that it barely holds together,” in Young Henry James: 1843-1870. (New York: Bookman Associates, 1955), p.377.

⁴³ A lot has been made of James’s experience (or lack of) of the civil war and the way that it is portrayed in the story. According to Adeline Tintner, the tale “is based on the reality of the Civil War, which James never experienced directly, although he did visit his brother Wilky in the hospital,” in The Pop World of Henry James : From Fairy Tales to Science Fiction. (London: Ann Arbor, 1989), p.214. Hereafter cited as Pop. See also R.W.B.Lewis, The Jameses: A Family Narrative. (London: André Deutsch Ltd., 1991), p.158. Lyndall Gordon also mentions that “in this tale he explores the unwritten history of the war whose unhealed wounds compel a new form of manhood,” in A Private life of Henry James: Two Women and his Art (London: Chatto & Windus, 1998), p.68. See also Emmet-Long, The Great Succession: Henry James and the Legacy of Hawthorne. (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1979), p.14; Vaid, p.133; Kaplan, p.70; UY, p.234; Others, like Hugh

the interest of psychiatrist Saul Rosenzweig, who examined it from a psychoanalytic point of view and concluded that the tale is “the story of his [James’s] own life – written prophetically.”⁴⁴ What Rosenzweig suggests is that the hero’s death in the tale stands for “James’s own passional death” (Rosenzweig, p.88) that resulted from his *obscure* accident when he was young and the subsequent “complex of guilt” he supposedly felt for not going to war (Rosenzweig, p.84). With this character’s death, Rosenzweig would have us believe, emerges the supernatural in Jamesian fiction, the ghosts, which “consistently represent an apotheosis of unlived life” (Rosenzweig, p.99). Rosenzweig’s theory, although clever, nevertheless is not flawless, for it sees the story from the point of view of Ford and interprets the character as the embodiment of the author; which is presumptuous, since there is really no objective evidence to make one presume such a thing. It might have been safer, perhaps, for Rosenzweig to assume that *the narrator*, rather, is identified with the author, because, as Seed notes, although now we tend to differentiate between author and narrator, “James does not make such a sharp distinction” (Seed, p.503). Seed points out that James rarely mentions the narrator “as such” and when he does, it is “only as a projection of the author” (*ibid.*). James, however, in his critical essays resented such authors whose autobiographic narrators failed to distance themselves from their

Fox, seem disappointed with James’s avoidance of exploring the consequences of the Civil War in his tale: “in the ‘Story of a Year’ he is not interested in exploring the real reactions of a girl whose fiancé has gone off to fight in the Civil War” in Henry James, A Critical Introduction. (Davenport, Iowa: Bawden Brothers, Inc., 1968), p.11. See also McElderry Jr. p.26; and Edna Kenton, ed. in Eight Uncollected Tales of Henry James. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1950), p.10. The character of Ford, moreover, is seen as the direct result of Wilky’s wounding in the war. See LeClair, p.379 ; UY, p.223 and Life, p.73; Novick, pp.93-94;. Moreover, Edna Kenton believes that the names James uses in his tale are family names, (Kenton, p.11); see also Edel, p.222. Gordon believes that Lizzie’s character has aspects of Minny Temple (Gordon, p.69), but then again Gordon will have us believe that almost all heroines of James are personifications of Minny – except for those that take after Woolson.

⁴⁴ In “The Ghost of Henry James: A Study in Thematic Apperception.” *Character and Personality*, 12 (December 1943), p.80.

characters and created, thus, novels that were too personal.⁴⁵ Examining James's criticism and the role of the narrator in James, Seed properly concludes that as far as James was concerned "there is no suggestion at all that the narrator might supply a means whereby the author can reveal his personality." (Seed, p.517). His function should lie elsewhere:

According to James, the narrator becomes as it were the tangible evidence of the author's control over his fiction. The narrator exists in order to relate materials (including dialogue) to each other (Seed, p.515).

In "A Tragedy of Error" we saw how the narrator allowed James to control the tale. By "relating" what the "observers," "passers-by," even the narrator himself, offered as evidence, the reader could spot the errors made by the characters. A similar thing is taking place in this story. The narrator helps the reader discover what the story is all about. He does that, as will be illustrated, not by being a doppelgänger of the author, but by becoming another character, bringing the other characters together in order for the reader to make his/her own deductions.

What we discern soon enough in the story is that it is not about Ford. It would be an error to examine the tale from the "point of view" of Ford.⁴⁶ Rather, the tale is about Lizzie. The narrator is interested in *her* year: "James bores into Lizzie's mind and inner states and proves her rudimentary soul. Her soul is searched by two

⁴⁵ See for example James's critical essay on Bayard Taylor, the manuscript pages of which were posthumously published, where James discusses the difficulty of handling the first person narrator, "the autobiographical form of composition," because the author "projects himself into the consciousness of a person essentially your opposite" and thus cannot avoid giving us "a tolerably fair reflection of the writer's character." He believed that only a genius could do it right, and mentions that even Browning, "the great master of the art" only attempts it "a few pages at a time" in *John Godfrey's Fortunes; Related by Himself; A Story of American Life*. By Bayard Taylor. New York: G.P.Putnam; Hurd and Houghton, 1965." (1957). LC1, pp.624-625. (James attempts the first person narrator in "a few pages at a time" in such early tales as "A Landscape Painter" (1866), "My Friend Bingham" (1867), "A Light Man" (1869) and "Gabrielle de Bergerac" (1869), as will be later discussed).

⁴⁶ Like Rosenzweig, Gordon thinks the story's interest lies with Ford: "Outwardly, there is the common tug between two women. Behind that lies the impact of the mind on physical illness, and behind that- and more indefinable - is a rare approach to death" (Gordon, p.68). Some are not so

conscious characters in the story, Ford and his mother” (Emmet-Long, p.15). Ford only appears at the beginning and the end of the story, serving rather as one of the “reflective characters” that Bock talked about (and that Emmet-Long seems here to concur with), as do the other characters: Ford’s mother, and Robert Bruce. It is indeed the mind and soul of Lizzie that interests the author. “The story is remarkable for its honesty and its penetrating understanding of what is really going on in the young woman’s mind,” says Bayley.⁴⁷ Beach also finds that the tale is “devoted to the soul” of Lizzie.⁴⁸ Most critics seem to agree that Lizzie’s soul is “rudimentary” and they base that on the repetition of the epithet “shallow” which accompanies Lizzie.⁴⁹ Some even read her as capable of causing the death of Ford.⁵⁰ This seems to me as a misreading of James’s intentions. Carefully reading about Lizzie’s actions and words, nowhere can I see any proof of shallowness or weakness in her. The text does not state that Lizzie was the cause of Ford’s death, as I shall attempt to prove. Although the word “shallow” is ascribed to Lizzie repeatedly in the text, it is important to see who calls her that and why: the word comes out of the mouths of Ford, his mother, Mrs Littlefield (a friend of Mrs Ford), and the narrator. Moreover, the recurrence of the word serves its own purpose in the tale: here, as in the tales that follow, repetitions serve to alert the reader to their credibility, or lack of it; they

certain about what the focus of the tale is: Kelly, p.36; Kraft, p.23. Others do however realise that Lizzie is the core of the tale: Martin/Ober, p.16.

⁴⁷ John Bayley, The Short Story: Henry James to Elisabeth Bowen. (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1988), p.57.

⁴⁸ Joseph Warren Beach, The Method of Henry James. (Philadelphia: Albert Saifer Publisher, 1954) p.173.

⁴⁹ “Elisabeth Crowe, a shallow girl, as we are several times told [...] not intelligent enough [...] not strong enough” (LeClair, p.377). Emmet Long believes that “she is not emotionally or intellectually deep” (Emmet-Long, p.14). Kelly calls her “a weak, shallow girl” (Kelly, p.34). See also Martin/Ober, p.17. Wagenknecht, p.204; Mc Elderry Jr., p.26.

⁵⁰ Daugherty sees Lizzie as one of James’s “dangerous temptresses and puzzling objects of passion” and believes that her behaviour kills Ford (Daugherty, p.228). Kaplan sees the story as James’s exploration of “the tensions of betrayal, adultery, woundedness and the feminine consciousness,” implying thus what Daugherty suggests openly. Edel believes that in the end she is “converted into Artemis or Diana, goddess of the chase, the masculine active yet all-mothering woman” (UY, p.223).

invite the reader to think in context. Usually we find that neither the words nor the one who utters them are reliable.

The narrator first sets the example here in ascribing Lizzie with epithets that seem rather to express his subjective opinion. He first calls her “the silly creature” in a moment when she jokes playfully with Ford, her lover.⁵¹ He then rather clumsily calls her “the poor misinformed creature” when she makes another playful remark about becoming a Mormon if Ford becomes a bachelor (“SY,” p.26). Again the narrator calls her “little fool” when she betrays her state of mind – being in love – by visiting her lover’s chamber in his absence (“SY,” p.30). Therefore, the narrator’s epithets rather reflect his discomfort in being present in a love scene. He often calls her ignorant, and indeed Lizzie does not seem well educated, but that was to be expected in her time and society. Mrs Littlefield (her name may be suggestive of James’s disapproval of the kind of the society she represents, one so limited – “little” - in the expectations - “fields” - of what a woman can do; and the fact that she is “limited” makes her unreliable) approves of her: “she found Lizzie very ignorant and very pretty” and is joyous at the prospect of showing her off to “so many lions” (“SY,” p.35). The narrator becomes gradually more condescending toward Lizzie, the more he sees her carefree and enjoying her bliss.

These characterisations of Lizzie, so inconsistent with his descriptions of her words or deeds, colour the narrators own character. Here is an example of how his observations sometimes betray the opposite of what he intends, especially when he discusses her relations to Ford’s mother:

From the first, as we have seen, Lizzie guessed at her guardian’s probable view of engagement: an abasement incurred by John. Lizzie lacked what is called a sense of duty; and unlike the majority

While Kraft thinks that both Lizzie and Ford’s mother share the responsibility for Ford’s death (Kraft, p.23).

⁵¹ Henry James, “The Story of a Year,” *Tales*, p.22. Hereafter cited as “SY.”

of such temperaments, which contrive to be buoyant on the glistening bubble of Dignity, she had likewise a modest estimate of her dues. Alack, my poor heroine had no pride! Mrs Ford's silent censure awakened no resentment. It sounded in her ears like a dull, soporific hum. Lizzie was deeply enamoured of what a French book terms her *aises intellectuelles*. Her mental comfort lay in her ignoring of problems. She possessed a certain native insight which revealed many of the horrent inequalities of her pathway; but she found it so cruel and disenchanting a faculty, that blindness was infinitely preferable. She preferred repose to order, and mercy to justice. She was speculative, without being critical. She was continually wondering, but she never enquired. This world was the riddle; the next alone would be the answer ("SY," p.32).

The picture of Lizzie that gradually emerges from this paragraph is one of a young woman who possesses good elements (generosity, optimism, good will), which the society where the narrator and especially Mrs Ford belong, misunderstands and has no appreciation for. The "sense of duty" and "the glistening bubble of Dignity," "the horrid inequalities of her pathway" describe a superficial society that the heroine comprehends – the text indicates – but means to escape in her own way: by ignoring it; by passing it by and hoping it will not bite if she will not bother it, if she will not "enquire," if she will not be critical of it. (In this, as we shall see, she is a step behind Gabrielle in "Gabrielle de Bergerac" (1869) who turns against society.) Lizzie, not surprisingly, has been compared to Daisy Miller.⁵² The narrator prefers to translate her attitude by implying that she is not deep, and apparently aims at our *pitying* his heroine ("my poor heroine" ("SY," p.32)), but one may find that difficult to do, because the text reveals her to be more genuine than the society which finds her inadequate.

The more the narrator observes Lizzie, the more he seems to wish to participate in what is going on around her. Further to giving us his observations of the characters and events, he offers us his own judgements of them: "A very Hector"

⁵² "'The Story of a Year' (1865) presents the earliest version of the Daisy Miller type." (Kraft, p.22).

("SY," p.20), "I think" ("SY," pp.25, 29, 32, 44), "silly creature" ("SY," p.23), "I verily believe" ("SY," p.26), "it might have seemed" ("SY", p.28), "I have no intention" ("SY," p.30), "my own taste" (ibid.), "I hope" ("SY," p.31), etc. His gossipy, exclamatory and melodramatic manner gives the reader the impression that, if we were watching a play, the narrator would be among the actors: "Happy Lizzie, I envy you" ("SY," p.31), "heaven forbid that I [...]" ("SY," p.35), "Glory of glories!" (ibid.), "what bliss [...]!", "what horror [...]!", "go, sinner [...]!", "and you, scoffing friend, there is the way out!", "I'm an honest man forever more," "Pray, where is the prompter?" ("SY," p.42), "for my own part, I [...]" ("SY," p.43), "O imposing spectacle of death!" ("SY," p.53), and so on. James seems to have created another character in creating his narrator. The latter's imposing presence arouses the reader's attention, inviting him to work out which are the narrator's ideas and which ideas belong to other characters.

James, subsequently, alternates his narrator's perception of the characters with that of the characters' perception of each other. The narrator's impressions of Lizzie, for example, alternate with Ford's:

'Hang it! She is shallow,' said Jack. 'But when a thing is shallow, you can see to the bottom. Lizzie doesn't pretend to be deep. I want a wife, mother, that I can understand. That's the only wife I can love. Lizzie is the only girl I ever understood, and the first I ever loved. I love her very much, - more than I can explain to you' ("SY", p.28).

Ford's convictions sound very much like those coming from an insecure man; a man who in his bookishness and his philosophical explorations forgets to be truly in love. Ford believes Lizzie to be shallow, but the reader is led to wonder whether Ford simply projects his own lack of depth. Lizzie appears from the start to be the one capable of feelings, when Ford is full of melodramatic but apparently empty words to her. He often contradicts himself: he demands that Lizzie not be true to his memory

should he die, and yet he informs Lizzie, more melodramatically than he perhaps realises, that “I never loved anyone before, and I never will again. If you had refused me half an hour ago, I should have died a bachelor” (“SY”, p.26). His language is full of over-subtle distinctions which border on contradictions: “I may not be entirely frank, but I think I am sincere” (ibid.). He claims to be afraid for her sake for being unable to advise her now that he is her lover⁵³, but the reader feels afraid for him and of his insecurities. His behaviour may be understandable considering that he is off to war, perhaps to die. Death is certainly very much in his mind. He makes morbid predictions that Lizzie finds inappropriate: ““Oh Jack, didn’t you promise me not to talk about that?”” (“SY,” p.22). He appears to be too preoccupied with himself.⁵⁴ His algebraic overview of the relationship is pessimistic from the start.⁵⁵ Lizzie gives the impression of being the only one to have begun this relationship in good will.⁵⁶ Ford disappoints her when he asks her to keep their engagement a secret even from his mother: “Lizzie’s heart sank with a sudden disappointment. Imagine the feelings of the damsel in the fairy-tale,”⁵⁷ demands James, “whom the distinguished enchantress had just empowered to utter diamonds and pearls, should the old beldame have straightway added that for the present mademoiselle had better hold her tongue” (“SY,” pp.24-25). Edel notices the unfairness of Ford’s actions in demanding Lizzie’s secrecy when he acts contrary to his own demands of her: “she [the mother]

⁵³ Ford tells Lizzie: “I have no fear for myself. But I have for you” (“SY”, p.26). It is significant that the narrator is ironic towards Ford. He refers to Ford’s plans as “the sublime egotism of protection” (“SY”, p.23). Such ironic remarks about the characters whose opinion about Lizzie he is supposed to share, create the (false) impression that the narrator is serene and able to see many points of view.

⁵⁴ As Lizzie becomes able to judge him – after spending time away from him – she is able to see the truth about him, as if disillusioned. Reading his letters she concludes: “Jack can make no allowances [...] He can understand no feelings but his own [...] ‘The night before he went off he told me that reason, as he calls it, was the rule of life. I suppose he thinks it the rule of love, too’” (“SY,” p.34).

⁵⁵ ““I confess I like to take account of possibilities. Don’t you know mathematics are my hobby? Did you ever study algebra? I always have an eye on the unknown quantity”” (“SY”, p.25).

⁵⁶ “Elisabeth went upstairs buoyant with her young love. It had dawned upon her like a new life, - a life positively worth the living” (“SY,” p.27).

thereby has an advantage over the heroine, who believes her betrothal to be unknown" (UY, p.223). From the start, Lizzie is put into a difficult situation by the very man who is supposed to be more experienced than her, and who thought of her as shallow and weak. From the beginning, then, there is a feeling that Ford pushes Lizzie away. His pragmatism about her simplicity – and his inability to see her as the “damsel in the fairy tale,” or in any romantic manner at all, proves how incompatible they really are. Lizzie’s words confirm that she is perplexed by his reasoning: “I don’t entirely understand you, but I quite trust you” (“SY,” p.25). For her, things are simple. Ford is the one who makes them complicated.

One person in the story who sees their incompatibility is, of course, Ford’s mother. She too sees Lizzie as shallow, and if we were most tempted to believe that Lizzie is shallow, it would be on account of Mrs Ford, who is, after all, her guardian. But the narrator’s comments about Mrs Ford are dubious and full of insinuations: “I think Mrs Ford, who had been an excellent mother, would have liked to give her son a wife fashioned on her own model” (“SY,” p.29); or, “Mrs Ford may not inaptly be compared to the chilly spectator on the dark side of the pane” (“SY”, p.32). The narrator seems to give with one hand and take back with the other. Yes, he seems to say, Mrs Ford is a good mother, but... Parents who disapprove of their children’s choices and wish to enforce their own will, especially in matters of marriage are a common theme in literature.⁵⁷ James will deal with the theme again in his early tales. The mother here is compared, moreover, to the British Constitution (“SY,” p.27). She has other ambitions for her son. Therefore, when she learns of the engagement,

⁵⁷ Tintner sees the influence of fairy-tales in James, but she believes it is as yet lacking in any significant elucidation about the character’s traits. Later in the tales, references to fairy-tales will serve as more than metaphors (Pop, p.6).

⁵⁸ One brings to mind Osborne’s quarrel with his father in Wives and Daughters, a novel that James admired very much: “Besides being the best of the author’s own tales [...] it is also one of the very

we are promised she won't remain idle: "from the grimness with which she bit off the end of her thread it might have seemed that she fancied herself to be executing a human vengeance" ("SY," p.28). She is also described as jealous ("SY," p.32). Lizzie too senses her resentment toward her, without knowing the reason for it. One feels that Lizzie has a lot to fear from Mrs Ford.

What follows next, of course, is Ford's departure for the front. Lizzie remains home with his mother and a war of nerves is enacted between them. Lizzie's time away from Ford seemed to have served as a time of disillusionment. The romance has worn away: "her love and hope grew to be an old story. She gave way, as the strongest must, as the wisest will, to time" ("SY," p.33). The narrator capriciously presents her disillusionment as plausible, at the same time that he denigrates her as "shallow" ("ibid.). Her jilting of Ford – to her defence, she accepts Bruce's offer of engagement after she believes Ford's condition to be incurable – is presented as a natural outcome. Mrs Ford helps her by conspiring against her and causes Lizzie's meeting Bruce. By comparison, Bruce outshines Ford in the interest he takes in Lizzie. Like a gallant warrior – he is jokingly named "Scottish Chief" ("SY," p.37) and has the name of the historic hero in Jane Porter's novel The Scottish Chiefs (1810) that Lizzie was reading⁵⁹ – he sweeps her off her feet. He is more specific in his affections for Lizzie: "I love you for what you are, - for your deep, kind heart, - for being so perfectly a woman" ("SY", p.50). He does not ask her to follow algebraic conclusions, but takes her for a sleigh-ride. This minute explanation of the hows and whys of the affair that gradually begins to take shape in the life of Lizzie is given with a purpose: James means all along to bring his character to a climax. This comes the moment she finds out that Ford is seriously wounded. The scene in the

best of its kind." Henry James, "*Wives and Daughters. A Novel.* By Mrs. Gaskell. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1866" (1866) LC1, p.1018.

train, as Bruce reads her the news from a newspaper, reminds one of the opening of "A Tragedy of Error." Like Hortense who faints on discovering her husband's imminent return, Lizzie seems paralysed: "she sat motionless, with her head against the window-frame, her veil down,⁶⁰ and her hands idle" ("SY," p.39).

The narrator takes over, describing first Lizzie's movements. Action and speech again contribute to revealing the character in this story.⁶¹ But taking it a step further than the preceding tale, James allows the narrator to enter the heroine's mind. Critics have noticed this development in James. Martin and Ober find "a good deal of sympathetic insight into her conscience" (Martin/Ober, p.16).⁶² It is precisely the conscience of Lizzie, at such a nightmarish moment for her, that interests James.

She sat in half-stupor. She had been aroused from a dream into a waking nightmare. It was like hearing a murder-shriek while you turn the page of your novel. But I cannot describe these things. In time the crushing sense of calamity loosened its grasp. Feeling lashed her pinions. Thought struggled to rise. Passion was still, stunned, floored. She had recoiled like a receding wave for a stronger onset. A hundred ghastly fears and fancies strutted a moment, pecking at the young girl's naked heart, like sandpipers on the weltering beach. Then, as with a great murmurous rush, came the meaning of her grief. The flood-gates of emotion were opened ("SY," p.39).

The shock that Lizzie must have felt is here paralleled to a nightmare and a murder-shriek. Nevertheless, time, the element of corrosion in her emotions for Ford, now corrodes the feeling of shock. What comes in its place is guilt and "ghastly" fear. This makes her externalise her emotions in tears. James's narrator claims he cannot

⁵⁹ Kraft, p.11; UY, p.222.

⁶⁰ Just as Hortense's veil was down.

⁶¹ "The attention to detail revealed in the later notebooks of Henry James existed in this tale as in its predecessor: the way in which the character is suggested by action and speech, the manner in which relationships between people are dramatically established, the search at all times for precision in the narrative" (UY, p.222).

⁶² Emmet-Long also suggests that the interest of the story lies "with the inner mind rather than the outward life," which he believes is a characteristic of Hawthorne (Emmet-Long, p.16). Beach sees James's intention to enter into the consciousness of Lizzie as having "no alternative:" "He must interest us in the soul of the girl; he must display with convincing truth her processes of thought." He sees in that method the influence of Eliot (Beach, p.174).

describe Lizzie's emotions, but he does a good job of it.⁶³ Whereas in the previous story the face of Hortense gave us a clue to her interior struggle and her downfall into a dark pit of fear and guilt, here we are treated to an actual insight into the tortured mind. The comparison of Lizzie's feelings to the shriek at the turn of the novel's page is clever. The reader is turning his/her pages as he/she reads Lizzie's mind. The idea that literature (books) incorporates human feeling is ingeniously interwoven with the narrator's present aims to portray a human consciousness.⁶⁴

What Lizzie has to come to terms with here – what her sense of guilt seems to be telling her – is that she has made a mistake. Her mistake was her thinking that she loved Ford. She can see now that she loves Bruce. Every time she persuades herself to think of Ford, Bruce comes to her mind:

He of the dark eyes and he of the wounds were the two constantly recurring figures of Lizzie's reveries. She could never think of John without thinking of the courteous Leatherborough gentleman, too. These were the *data* of her problem. These two figures stood like opposing knights, (the black and the white), foremost on the great chess-board of fate ("SY," p.42).

Bruce is perceived as the dark figure of the two ("dark eyes"/dark knight), while Ford is the innocent ("white knight"), wounded (victim) figure in her eyes. Her associations prove and are the result of her feelings of guilt. At the same time, her perception of the whole problem as the result of "fate" tells the reader that in her mind Lizzie admits that she did not mean this to happen; she did not expect it. More spectators are used to give us an objective view of Lizzie, which implies that even the narrator (like the rest of the characters in the story) may be subjective: "Still they [the people] could not fail to remark how poorly Miss Crowe was looking" ("SY", p.44). The emaciation theme appears again in this story, as in the previous one, to

⁶³ In many of Turgenev's novels the narrator also claims the same "inability" that contrasts with his having already given us all we need to know. See, for example, the ending of A Nobleman's Nest (1858).

indicate the effects that a heavy conscience may have on people's appearance. Guilt is externalised in this way, for the reader to see it. The spectators, moreover, have to share their importance as a source of knowledge with the narrator, who, in the usual manner of Trollope, gives his view of the matter freely: "I think she even took a certain comfort in her pallor and in her failing interest in her dress," says the narrator, indicating to us how Lizzie's guilt made her even conscious of proprieties.⁶⁵ The "comfort," it is implied here, arrives from the knowledge that she is sacrificing her looks for Ford as a means of expiation.

The reader, consequently, feels as if called upon to judge her. The narrator certainly invites us: "Perhaps she deserves your scorn" ("SY," p.42). The tale, thus, brings strongly to mind Anthony Trollope's novel Can you Forgive Her? (1864-65). James had read the tale and wrote an article on it the same year. In it James accuses Trollope of preoccupation with the insignificant: "To Mr Trollope all the possible incidents of Society seem to be of equal importance and of equal interest."⁶⁶ He considers the novel's issues insignificant and he does not see any point in the author's question: "The question is, Can we forgive Miss Vavator? Of course we can, and forget her too, for that matter" ("CYFH?", p.1318). He goes on to explain what is wrong with the novel:

For ourselves, we were very much disappointed that when Alice returns to her cousin George she should not do so more frankly, that on eventually restoring herself to Grey she should have so little to expiate or to forget, that she should leave herself, in short, so easy an issue by her refusal to admit Vavator to a lover's privilege. Our desire for a different course of action is simply founded on the fact that it would have been so much more interesting ("CYFH?", p.1319).

⁶⁴ Just as references to Jane Porter's novel suggest the affair is like a novelistic experience.

⁶⁵ In the beginning of the tale she did not mind when her skirt got dirty from her intimate walk with Ford in the woods ("SY," p.26).

⁶⁶ Henry James, "Can You Forgive Her? By Anthony Trollope. New York: Harper & Bros., 1865" (1865), LC1, p.1320. Hereafter cited as "CYFH?".

“The Story of a Year” is James’s “different course of action.” James’s heroine, Lizzie, jilts her fiancé for the man who pays attention to her at a time when her fiancé was considered to be as good as dead. Lizzie has perhaps better reasons to fall in love with Bruce than Trollope’s Alice had in returning to George. Bruce, after all, seems to hold honest feelings for Lizzie, who is abandoned by her lover for a year. James, thus, wanted to create some legitimate excuses for his heroine’s behaviour, as well as give his heroine enough reasons for her guilt. Then he can explore psychologically the guilty conscience.

Here is another instance when we have insight into Lizzie’s torture between the two men, reminding us of Alice’s similar inner torment:

“She cried aloud and said that she was very unhappy; she groaned and called herself wicked. Then, sometimes, appalled at her moral perplexities, she declared that she was neither wicked nor unhappy; she was contented, patient, and wise. Other girls had lost their lovers: it was the present way of life. Was she weaker than most women? Nay, but Jack was the best of men. If he would only come back directly, without delay, as he was, senseless, dying even, that she might look at him, touch him, speak to him! Then she would say that she could no longer answer for herself, and wonder (or pretend to wonder) whether she were not going mad. Suppose Mrs Ford should come back and find her in an unswept room, pallid and insane? Or suppose she should die of her troubles? What if she should kill herself? – dismiss the servants, and close the house, and lock herself up with a knife? [...] and then, alone, in darkness, with none to help her, she would vainly scream, and thrust her knife into her temple, and swoon to death. And Jack would come back, and burst into the house, and wander through the empty rooms, calling her name, and for all answer get a death-scent!” (“SY,” pp.43-44)

We can *see* her struggling with herself as she is trying to come to grips with her guilt for her loss of affection for Jack and her subsequent jilting. The description is extremely vivid and passionate. The passage reveals James’s power as the observer of human nature, a true psychologist. The struggle is of course a moral one. It is evident that her torture comes from her feeling that she does not suffer enough. She tries to persuade herself to feel in certain ways: “she cried,” “said,” “groaned,”

“called herself,” which turns stronger in her determination and becomes “she declared.” What she cannot really feel she tries to imagine: “if he would [...] then she would [...].” However, even in her imagination she cannot bring herself to return to him, so she imagines him coming back dying. Yet, even then all she could say to him is that “she could no longer answer for herself.” The parenthetical “or pretend to wonder” shows us her awareness that all this is how she would want to feel, but that she does not feel that way no matter how hard she tries.

That James is following Trollope’s technique is evident when we compare the above passage with the following of Trollope’s from Can You Forgive Her?:

She had *declared* to her aunt that John Grey would be incapable of such suspicion as would be shown by any objection on his part to the arrangements made for the tour. *She had said so*, and had *so believed: and yet* she continued to brood over the position which her affairs would take, if he did make the objection which Lady Macleod anticipated. *She told herself over and over* again, that under such circumstances *she would not* give way an inch (my italics).⁶⁷

In this passage there are characteristic Trollopeian structures of repetition (‘she had declared,’ ‘she had said so,’ ‘and yet she continued,’ ‘she had told herself again and again,’ and so on), which indicate the heroine’s efforts to re-enforce the initial view (“that John Grey would be incapable of such suspicion”), but unable truly to proceed from it. Her apparent effort to persuade herself (“she told herself over and over again,” which becomes stronger with “she would not”) betrays the guilt she feels that is caused by her perhaps unconscious understanding that her lover’s objections may be legitimate – although she does not want to admit it. Both heroines, we see, unconsciously acknowledge their guilt in their effort to justify themselves. The emotional turmoil that is created by this guilt, moreover, prevents them from actually

⁶⁷ Anthony Trollope, Can you Forgive Her?, 1864-5, ed. Stephen Wall (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), pp.56-57. Hereafter cited as CYFH?.

doing something about it. Thus, no action seems to be taking place. Lizzie expects the situation to sort itself out, and Alice remains in indecision for a long time.

Going back to the Jamesian passage, we see that Lizzie even brings Mrs Ford into her thoughts, the woman who represents both the cause for and a reminder of her guilt, but all it results in is her telling us that she would prefer death (albeit a romantically heroic one) to returning to Jack. Lizzie, moreover, addresses her situation via novelistic and poetic clichés.⁶⁸ However, that she would not attempt suicide is equally evident in her use of verbs. “What if she should kill herself?” betrays distance. It is no truer than that she might be insane.⁶⁹

As mentioned before, Lizzie feels afraid of her new feelings and tries to persuade herself that she is not wicked, by persuading herself that she has not fallen out of love for Ford (“SY,” p.43). James makes the point that his heroine’s feelings are frank: “She never deceived anyone but herself” (“SY,” p.33). She too feels guilty in expressing the thought that her fiancé is too good for her, reminding one of Alice’s insistence that “[Grey] was noble, generous, clever, good, - so good as to be *almost* perfect” (CYFH?, p.60) (my emphasis). James however, is not patient with Alice’s indecision, because he cannot see the cause for it. For once, his reading of a novel and his understanding of a writer are unjust. James fails to see Trollope’s concern with the machinations of conscience, so artfully portrayed by the author. This in itself is ironic, as James’s tale is also about conscience.⁷⁰ However, the melodramatic element in the early James has no patience with Trollope’s elaborate exploration of character and choice that procrastination over time affords. Thus in Lizzie we see

⁶⁸ “Swoon to death,” for example, has a Keatsian ring – from ‘Ode to Nightingale’ and elsewhere – but this does little more than confirm the romantic, heroic, poetic cliché element in her imagining.

⁶⁹ In her contemplation of suicide, Lizzie again reminds one of Hortense. The latter too did not mean it when she said it.

⁷⁰ Although he does not elaborate on his claim, nevertheless LeClair mentions how “the critical essays from the same pen which wrote the *Story of a Year*, [...] pronounced strong, even harsh judgment

neither the unfocused and spasmodic reactions of an undecided Alice who finds action impossible, nor the morally resolute Lily of The Small House at Allington (1864)⁷¹ for whom inaction becomes a choice. In other words, James is certainly less complex in his tale, whereas Trollope's concerns⁷² border on philosophical explorations about either vacillation between choices, or constancy in one choice, with time's effects on devotion and resolution. For James, on the other hand, time is more simply a corroding element. James seems to say that in time people forget, issues become less important, even love is forgotten. All is like the passing of the seasons in Nature:

“The summer waned to its close, and through myriad silent stages began to darken into autumn. Who can tell the story of those red months? I have to chronicle another silent transition” (“SY,” p.33).

He chronicles thus the happenings of a year (hence the title) in the life of a woman and how her acts and feelings affect those around her. James brings Nature into human issues (after the manner of Hawthorne), as if to make a point of how natural such occurrences are, contrasting, thus, his description of the situation with Trollope's detailed examination of it.

Ingeniously, James creates a very real character in Lizzie. In her struggle to revive some spark of her old emotions for Ford, she reads the letters she wrote to him. In doing so, she can only have noted the progress of her disengaging herself emotionally from him. After all, James had made it quite clear how her letters started to deteriorate in quantity as well as quality. Her own reactions at reading those letters

upon the very type of fiction he was then producing.” (LeClair, p.377). In his later criticism on Trollope James is less harsh.

⁷¹ James mentions this book in his last three essays on Trollope. He also mentions that he had been faithfully following Trollope's publications up the 1868-9 novel He Knew he Was Right in “Anthony Trollope”(1883), LC1, p.1344. Hereafter cited as “AT.”

⁷² In his introduction to Can You Forgive Her? Stephen Wall notices what James does not: “Like an interestingly large number of characters, Alice is a vacillator. The question why Trollope was so fascinated by people who change their minds is a large one, but it is obvious that to follow the process

show her reminiscing about the good old times, with a sense that all this is past: “Between reading and thinking and sighing and (in spite of herself) smiling, this process took the whole morning” (“SY,” p.54). She must be reminded, at the same time, all over again the reasons why she had fallen in love with Ford, and her sighs and smiles bring to our mind someone who is enjoying pleasant distant reminiscences. She is now ready to face Mrs Ford with civility, except that she realises that Mrs Ford already knows of her other engagement. Once again we have insight into her thoughts by the omniscient narrator:

“The plot of her little tragedy thickened. Be it so: she would act her part with the rest. For the second time in her experience, her mind was lightened by the intervention of Mrs. Ford. Before the scorn of her own conscience, (which never came,) before Jack’s deepest reproach, she was ready to bow down, - but not before that long-faced Nemesis in black silk. The leaven of resentment began to work. She leaned back in her chair, and folded her arms, brave to await results” (“SY,” pp.54-55).

That Lizzie is determined to act a *role* is evident from the way she sees the situation as a tragedy – again a theatrical reference. She will not admit of anything wrong in her own behaviour so long as Mrs Ford represents her guilt, but Ford’s reproach she cannot oppose. She has determined to abide by Ford’s wishes and try to make him happy, even if she has to pretend. She thus tells him that she had wanted to go to see him in the army, when she knows that she never really did. The insistence of “I wish, I wish I had!” (“SY,” p.55) implies her feelings of guilt. Her next words prove her intention to offer herself as a compensation: “Can I do anything for you, dear? [...] I would work my life out.” (“SY,” p.55). Not “I would give my life for you” – so much for her romantic ideas about swooning to death. It is as if by working for him, as inferior, she can make up for her lack of love for him. No statement of love comes from her lips. She will repay her debt by giving him her life since she cannot give

by which a person first comes to, and then reverses, a decision must be to discover a good deal about

him her heart, being able thus, to live with her guilt - a melodramatic ending indeed by Brooks' standards. "Melodrama may be born of the very anxiety created by the guilt experienced when the allegiance and ordering that pertained to a sacred system of things no longer obtain" (Brooks, p.200). This is what is taking place here. The "sacred system of things" has been broken for Lizzie. Her guilt gives rise to melodrama.

As for Ford, it is perhaps on account of Trollope that he dies. James was very much displeased at the time that Trollope's hero George did not die.⁷³ Critics see Ford's death as the most "magnanimous"⁷⁴ deed he could do for Lizzie. After all, he and Lizzie have nothing more to connect them. As Gordon suggests, "what Ford feels for Lizzie Crowe in his last hours is not less love, but love expanded beyond its object" (Gordon, p.68). Gordon does not make clear what she means by that "love expanded beyond its object," but we may concur that Ford, then, loves an idealised Lizzie, the girl he would want her to be, "simple" and "shallow," so that he can love her the way he wants.⁷⁵ He comes to realise though in the end - as does the reader - that Lizzie is not the person he thought her to be and that she needs to be loved in another way, Bruce's way, which may be more simple and bold than Ford's way.

Nevertheless, it is not clearly stated that Ford dies because of Lizzie's jilting or because of the pressures between his mother and his fiancée. Rather, one has the

their personality." CYFH?, p.13.

⁷³ James's view runs as follows: "As the reader follows George Vavasor deeper into his troubles [...] his excited imagination hankers for - what shall we say? Nothing less positive than Vavasor's death. Here is a chance for Mr. Trollope to redeem a thousand pages of small talk; the wretched man should have killed himself; for although bloodshed is not quite so common an element of modern life as the sensation writers would have us believe, yet people do occasionally, when hard pushed, commit suicide" ("CYFH?", pp.1321-2). Daugherty comments on the contrast that James's passage here shows, in comparison to his criticism of sensation novels, and sees this exasperation as an example of "the extent to which he could rebel against excessive dullness in fiction" (Daugherty, p.18).

⁷⁴ Charles Thomas Samuels points out that Ford "does the magnanimous thing: he dies." The Ambiguity of Henry James. (Urbana, Chicago, London: University of Illinois Press, 1971), p.72. Also, Kelly p.35; Wagenknecht, p.204.

⁷⁵ Such "selfish" lovers are common in later Jamesian works also. See for example Newman in The American and Mr Bock in The Europeans.

feeling that Ford's death is caused by a combination of his physical wounds and his psychological wounds at the front. From the start, we see how the war seems to affect him in a pessimistic way, making him even predict his death, expressing his wish that Lizzie find someone else. His calm acceptance of the fulfilment of the prediction shows that he rather expected it and his bearing no hard feelings to Lizzie rather contradicts the theory that his death was caused by her.⁷⁶ Perhaps James here is only aiming to comment on the waste of human life, emotional and physical, the price to pay for wars. Ford may represent what James's father had meant when he expressed his opinion that a man should not go to war until he had lived life, until he had experienced love.⁷⁷ His hero's tragedy is doubly felt as the war does not really allow him to enjoy his relationship with Lizzie, but instead wrecks it the moment it begins.

It is not surprising that James resents Trollope's interference in his novels. He wrote of Trollope that:

He took a suicidal satisfaction in reminding the reader that the story he was telling was only, after all, a make-believe. He habitually referred to the work in hand (in the course of that work) as a novel, and to himself as a novelist, and was fond of letting the reader know that this novelist could direct the course of events according to his pleasure ("AT," p.1343).

Trollope's manner of reminding the reader that what he was reading was only fantasy, clashes with James's notion that fiction should represent reality.⁷⁸ Although the story is fictitious, James insists that its success lies in its giving the illusion of

⁷⁶ I disagree, therefore, with Savarese, who sees "the wounds of love rather than of war" (Savarese, p.88).

⁷⁷ Kaplan, p.54; UY, p.175.

⁷⁸ We remember his statement on the importance of reality in fiction: "I should say that the main object of the novel is to represent life. I cannot conceive any other motive for interweaving imaginary incidents, and I do not perceive any other measure of the value of such combinations" ("AD," p.242). In his essay "The Art of Fiction" (1884) James makes this very explicit: "the air of reality (solidity of specification) seems to me to be the supreme virtue of a novel – the merit on which all its other merits [...] helplessly and submissively depend" ("AF," p.53).

reality.⁷⁹ Clearly, James is annoyed with what he sees as Trollope's assertion of power, a power that restrains him as an observant reader, just as it restrains his characters. James's opinion of Trollope's vision speaks for itself: "Mr Trollope is a good observer; but he is literally nothing else. He is apparently as incapable of disengaging an idea as of drawing an inference."⁸⁰ He sees Trollope's faculty of observation as limited. He attributes to Trollope "the virtues of the photograph," and the photograph for James "lacks the supreme virtue of possessing a character."⁸¹ In his critical essays "James used Trollope as the type of the unthinking mimetic novelist," says Jones.⁸² Trollope, therefore, is dull, as he lacks the imagination that Balzac's fiction abounds in. In his own tales, thus, we see an effort in James to diverge from Trollope. James tries to make his characters interesting by allowing them to develop in the eyes of the readers, without doing all the explanation for them. James allows the text to gradually reveal information. What each character says of the other is important. Examining Lizzie, moreover, we saw how the story moves from external general impressions of the characters' opinions of her, to the inner world of her thoughts. James uses his narrator to help him unite all the elements of the plot, just as he did in the previous tale. At the same time, James achieves the distance from the reader that he aimed for, by endowing his narrator with features typical of characters, especially of actors in plays. James's own presence, then, claims to be subtler – hence his reference to his interest in "the reverse of the picture," is an indication that he intends to diverge from Trollope.

⁷⁹ "The success of a work of art, to my mind, may be measured by the degree to which it produces a certain illusion. That illusion makes it appear to us for the time that we have lived another life – that we have had a miraculous enlargement of experience" ("AD," p.242).

⁸⁰ Henry James, "*The Belton Estate*. By Anthony Trollope. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1866" (1866). LC1, p.1326. This sounds similar to James's view of Miss Stoddard's and Miss Prescott's dullness.

⁸¹ Henry James, "*Miss Mackenzie*. A Novel. By Anthony Trollope. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1865" (1865). LC1, p.1316.

James, therefore, abstains from happy-endings, because on the one hand “they in fact undermine the novel’s engagement with life” (“J&T”, 289) and on the other, they are boring. Consequently, despite his aversion to violence, deaths are prevalent in his fiction from the beginning of his career.

The second tale of Henry James has also been recognised by the critics as containing an air of reality but at the same time to be influenced by Hawthorne.⁸² Emmet-Long claims that the tale “begins in a Hawthornesque manner, as James refers to his tale as a ‘romance’ and proceeds to speak of ‘a certain young couple I wot of’” (Emmet-Long, p.14). There are other instances, too, reminiscent of Hawthorne such as the dream of Lizzie (“SY”, p.42), which prophesies the death of Ford, and the continuous reference to dreams as a state of consciousness, or unconsciousness: “Lizzie moved about like one in a dream” (ibid. p.51). Emmet-Long points out how “Ford’s pallor and Lizzie Crowe’s dark hair and name” call for “dream psychology, symbolism and light versus dark imagery” (Emmet-Long, p.15), all found in Hawthorne. There are also reminiscences of The House of The Seven Gables (1851): “She roamed about the house with her footsteps tracked by an unlaidd ghost” (“SY,” p.43). There are moreover the foreshadowings of future events: “These imaginings [...] served to dissipate time, - heavy, weary time, - the more heavy and weary as it bore dark foreshadowings of some momentous event” (“SY”, p.44). Gordon even suggests that Lizzie’s name is “an augury of death in Macbeth when ‘the crow/Makes wing to th’rooky wood’” (Gordon, p.68), which she attributes to Hawthorne’s influence: “Like Hawthorne, James wished to bring out the ‘interest

⁸² Vivien Jones, “James and Trollope,” *Review of English Studies* 33 (1982), p.278. Hereafter cited as “J&T.”

⁸³ Long notes that “The Story of a Year” “is narrated realistically but has an elusive kinship with Hawthorne” (Emmet-Long, p.14). Douglass Leyburn also mentions how a “prevailing somberness” surrounds the tale, and also that the tale “gives much more impression of reality than its predecessor” (Douglas-Leyburn, p.4).

behind the interest' of a situation" (ibid.). Other such instances can be brought forward. Ford is described to be "a very Hector," a name that implies defeat by siege (the successful siege of Lizzie by Bruce), and death. The comparison of Ford to a wounded Greek at the end of the tale is noted by Emmet-Long to imply that Ford belongs to the world of "chastity" and "imagination," thus, to another realm (here represented by death) than Lizzie's "who belongs to the world" (Emmet-Long, p.15); foreshadowing thus not only his death but also his own illusions about their relationship and the errors they make about each other. Emmet-Long also suggests that the "sunset walk" of Ford and Lizzie "foreshadows Ford's later death, ostensibly as the result of wounds received in the war" (Emmet-Long, p.14).

As in his first tale, here too there is evidence that the theatre was prominent in James's mind. Twice the author mentions the word tragedy – used ironically - in conjunction with Lizzie: "A tragedy had stepped into her [Lizzie's] life: was she spectator or actor?" ("SY," p.39). Also, "since the tragedy dragged, might she not divert herself with that well-bred man beside her?" There are many more references to the theatre: Lizzie feels as if "she was like an actor who finds himself on the stage with a half-learned part and without sufficient wit to extemporise" ("SY," p.42). Robert Gale rightly points out how "amusingly, James's theatre images cover every act of the play."⁸⁴ We notice this in the following sentences: "Pray, where is the prompter?" ("SY," p.42), or, "the curtain had not yet fallen, yet our young lady had begun to yawn [...] and long for the afterpiece" ("SY," p.43). All these references to the theatre, however, as stated before, serve to emphasise the role of the narrator as a character in the story. Finally, in this tale we have one of the "frequent" – according to Gale – uses of the mask (Gale, p.134). The narrator refers to Lizzie when he asks:

⁸⁴ Robert L. Gale, The Caught Image: Figurative Language in the Fiction of Henry James. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1964), p.134.

“was it not her own soul masquerading in a shroud?” (“SY,” p.39). According to Gale, mask images “show ... James’s perception of the complexity of life and human motives, and also his awareness of the distinction between appearance and reality” (Gale, p.134). As in the “Tragedy of Error,” here too there is a distinction between the surface of things and reality. Lizzie’s soul is “masquerading into a shroud,” a shroud made by the narrator that the reader must attempt to pierce to get to her real character.

In this tale James was concerned with correcting Trollope’s (and consequently Stoddard’s and Prescott’s) errors of interfering too much with the characters’ lives, giving so much information in a way that made them look petty; and making his presence as an author felt in a way that annoyed the reader. In his own tale, James seems to be making an effort to distance himself from the view of the reader, so that the reader can feel free to work on the tale. At the same time the author is controlling the tale and the reader’s response to a degree, by turning his narrator into one of the characters, like another actor in the play of Lizzie’s year, among whom he can contribute in characterisation. By making all the characters (narrator and all) give subjective opinions that often appear erroneous, it is up to the reader to find out what is really going on. At the same time, James allows the narrator to enter the mind of his heroine, albeit with his subjective eyes, and describe her consciousness as he sees it. The reader, thus, feels interested enough to get involved in discovering the individual errors everyone makes and arrive at his own, perhaps equally subjective, version of truth.

iii) “The Landscape Painter” and the Unreliable Consciousness.

Having examined James’s intentions in the first two tales, we find ourselves prepared for the 1866 essay on George Eliot, in which James expresses what he already practices in his tales: his idea that a particular relationship should exist between the author and the reader. In his essay James explains what, in his opinion, that relationship consisted in:

“In every novel the work is divided between the writer and the reader; but the writer makes the reader very much as he makes his characters. When he makes him ill, that is, makes him indifferent, he does no work; the writer does all. When he makes him well, that is, makes him interested, then the reader does quite half the labor. In making such a deduction as I have just indicated, the reader would be doing but his share of the task; the grand point is to get him to make it. I hold that there is a way. It is perhaps a secret; but until it is found out, I think that the art of story-telling cannot be said to have approached perfection.”⁸⁵

It is with mathematical precision, that James explains this idea about the complex relationship between the novelist and the reader. A novelist, he says, makes his own readership. James, moreover, suggests that the novelist controls this progress of readership-making, because this progress is related to the creation of his characters. A reader is “indifferent” if the characters are badly made. When the reader is indifferent, James explains, the writer therefore “does all.” Thus, the opposite must be the goal of every novelist: he/she must aim at creating characters that are so well done as to interest the reader in participating in the novel. At the same time, the writer must avoid “doing all” by allowing for the participation of the reader. It is this oxymoron – doing everything (creating characters and readers) by not “doing all” and thus demanding and achieving the reader’s participation - that, according to James, makes storytelling “approach perfection.” Thus, if the clue to perfect story-making lies in reader-participation, James insists that every novelist’s goal lies in

finding a way to achieve it.⁸⁶ He claims, however, that he does not know how to do that. His early fiction, though, proves that already he had an idea: the use of a narrator that would serve as the intermediary between author and reader and would help at both creating good characters and at inviting reader participation.

What then, are we to make of two narrators as in the case of “A Landscape Painter” (1866) that follows? Apart from Bayley who sees the tale as a masterpiece,⁸⁷ critics in general find the tale interesting albeit experimental in its use of the diary form. Martin and Ober, for example, prefer it to the previous tales, because “it is a more distinctly Jamesian fiction,” and call it a “forerunner” (Martin/Ober, p.18). Nevertheless, they find the diary form problematic: “But if the diarist is to be a man of talent and promise, how can his diary betray his weakness of projecting his fancy on, and thus falsifying, external nature?” (Martin/Ober, p.21).⁸⁸ Despite that, they believe that James’s use of the diary form came as an answer to what he refers to as the error of George Eliot, who in her “Spanish Gypsy” (1868) did not allow her characters any freedom. (Martin/Ober, p.21). Certainly, Eliot’s presence as the creator of the work must have been too obvious for James’s liking. We remember how he was bothered by Trollope’s and other writers’ continuous presence also; whereas the diary - “a complex and subtle form” – seems to have permitted James to develop “a centre of consciousness” (Martin/Ober, p.21). Nevertheless, Eliot’s poem

⁸⁵ Henry James, “The Novels of George Eliot,” (1866), (LC1.p.922). Hereafter cited as “NGE.”

⁸⁶ “By suggesting that a novelist can create the reader in the same way as he can construct a character,” says Seed, “James is drawing attention to the element of craftsmanship which must go into establishing the reader writer relationship. By his self-restraint as well as by his shaping skills he should put the reader in a position where he can see enough to be interested, but not so much that he has nothing left to discover” (Seed, p.506).

⁸⁷ “It is a remarkable performance, so remarkable that one may wonder whether James, even in his years of sophistication, ever produced a better, or a more characteristic one” (Bayley, p.40).

⁸⁸ James’s intention is misunderstood by Martin and Ober, though, since the first narrator’s statements about Locksley specifically negate the possibility that the painter is a man of talent and promise. Kraft, nevertheless, is bothered by the diary form also: “The denouement is contrived and James awkwardly uses the device of a diary to tell the story” (Kraft, p.17).

could not have been the reason for James's adoption of the diary form because "The Spanish Gypsy" was written after the publication of "A Landscape Painter."

Although Eliot is not the precursor to the tale, James *was* influenced by other famous literary names of the time when he wrote "A Landscape Painter": he seems to have borrowed the plot's idea from two literary figures whose works he appears to be combining. One is Tennyson's poem "The Lord of Burleigh" (1842), as Miriam Allott has discovered.⁸⁹ Allott's most important evidence lies in the hero's profession, as well as the central situation of the poem that seems to be the same as in James's tale.⁹⁰ In Tennyson's poem, a rich man hides his identity, pretending to be a "landscape painter"⁹¹ and marries a poor girl who is afterwards surprised to find that her husband is the Lord of Burleigh. Her discomfort with the situation (being a lady of low birth) leads her to a premature death, after first fulfilling her duty as a wife by bearing him children. Allott finds that the poem expresses "a characteristic Tennysonian handling of men and women and an equally Victorian class consciousness" (Allott, p.220). The plot's "naïveté [...] was too much for James," so he changed it with what Allott describes as "a youthfully dry sophistication" (ibid.). In James's tale it is the hero who is "cheated of his 'dream'" and "emulating the Lord of Burleigh's wife [...] sinks five years later into an early grave" (ibid., p.221).

Allott's proofs are too plausible to be false. Moreover, what James must have liked about this poem is the dramatic possibility of the situation, that differed from Tennyson's usual works, as it was not permeated by descriptions the like of which

⁸⁹ See "'The Lord of Burleigh' and Henry James's 'A Landscape Painter,'" *Notes and Queries*, N.S.2 (May 1955), pp.220-221.

⁹⁰ She finds, though, evidence of two other poems in the tale too: the name of the hero, Locksley, recalls "Locksley Hall" (Allott, p.220), and the picnic (where incidentally Locksley mentions Tennyson) with the heroine and her father recalls "Audley Court" (Allott, p.221).

⁹¹ Tennyson, Alfred. "The Lord of Burleigh" (1842). *The Poems of Tennyson*. Ed. Christopher Ricks. (London & Harlow: Longman, 1969), p.603. Further reference to this collection will be cited as Poems.

James disliked in Tennyson at the time.⁹² Nevertheless, it is very likely that James's reversal of roles (making the man naïve and the woman calculating) was the result of Hawthorne's influence. In "Mrs. Bullfrog" (1837) Hawthorne humorously allows his hero, Mr. Bullfrog, to relate his matrimonial error: "It makes me melancholy to see how like fools some very sensible people act, in the matter of choosing wives," he tells us.⁹³ "For my own part," he continues, "I freely confess, that, in my bachelorship, I was precisely such an over-curious simpleton, as I now advise the reader not to be" ("Bullfrog," p.406). Mr. Bullfrog's desire was for

"the fresh bloom of youth, pearly teeth, glossy ringlets, and the whole list of lovely items, with the utmost delicacy of habits and sentiments, a silken texture of mind, and above all, a virgin heart. In a word, if a young angel, just from Paradise, yet dressed in earthly fashion, had come and offered me her hand, it is by no means certain that I should have taken it" ("Bullfrog," pp.406-407).

Despite the extremity of his desires, he does, nevertheless, find his dream-woman and marries her; when on their subsequent trip to his work, the carriage subsides and the true form of Mrs. Bullfrog is revealed. His wife is ugly and old, and, at first not recognising her, the narrator humorously deluges her with words such as "phantom," "ogre," "hobgoblin" (ibid., p.409), "gorgon" (ibid., p.410) and so forth, before he realises that she is actually his wife. What is of interest for us here is that the narrator refuses at the beginning to believe that "the ogre" is his wife, despite the evidence:

As the driver closed the door upon us, I heard him whisper to the three countrymen-

'How do you suppose a fellow feels, shut up in a cage with a she-tiger?'

⁹² "What manner of writing is it that lends itself so frankly to aberrations of taste? It is that literary fashion, which, to speak historically, was brought into our literature by Tennyson's poetry. The best name for it, as a literary style, is the ideal descriptive style. Like all founders of schools, Tennyson has been far exceeded by his disciples. The style in question reposes not so much upon the observation of the objects of external nature as the projection of one's fancy upon them" ("Azarian," p.603). Tennyson, however, was much admired by James as a poet. Later in his critical career, James will write of him that he was "the most charming of the *entertaining* poets." ("Tennyson," p.101).

⁹³ Hawthorne, Nathaniel. "Mr. Bullfrog" (1837), *Tales and Sketches*. (NY: Library of America, 1984) p.406. Hereafter cited as "Bullfrog." Further references to the collection of Hawthorne's tales will be cited as TS.

Of course, this query could have no reference to my situation
(ibid.)

Similarly, James's hero, as we will see, did not perceive the evidence that was given to him all along about Esther's real character. On the other hand, in Hawthorne's tale, it is the woman who has the money, and she offers it to her husband in the end, who is only too happy to have married her and, consequently, all ends well for them both. Ironically, money here appears as a unifying force, making up for the lack of love or beauty, but also bringing forth the superficiality in the natures of both husband and wife, a superficiality that was expressed anyway in their preoccupation with physical appearance. Furthermore, as in Tennyson's poem, in Hawthorne's tale we have a "naïve" situation, humorously depicted. Both Tennyson and Hawthorne do not explore, however, the effect of this situation on the psychology of the character. Tennyson tells us of the wife's discomfort, and subsequent death that results from it, but does not explore it. Even Hawthorne, who allows his narrator, Mr Bullfrog, to tell us of his surprise and express his dismay at the discovery of an ugly woman as his wife, does not dwell on the effects that the error Mr Bullfrog made have had on him as a character, nor does he care to explore the superficiality of his hero. Hawthorne's humour in dealing with the characters and situation, accomplishes, nevertheless, the impact that Hawthorne aims at with this story: it awakens us to that superficiality. We realise that Mr. Bullfrog's superficial character was to blame for his error. Hawthorne is, thus, suggestive rather than explicit. James called him "contemplator and dreamer" (Hawthorne, p.46) and believed that he had no "philosophy of human nature" (ibid., p.47); and that he was not a realist (ibid., pp.52, 98). Thus he creates allegories, parables, tales of morality: "Any figure therefore

easily became with him an emblem, any story a parable, any appearance a cover.”⁹⁴

There is a sense, then, in James’s tale, that he wants to explore what Hawthorne leaves unsaid.

In his own tale, James’s interest lies in the plot only in so far as it allows him to explore the psychological implication of the error that the character makes, an error that is seemingly not of his own fault. He wishes to examine first what makes the character blind to the error. Levy points out that “the protagonist [...] remains blind to the errors in which his motives – conscious or unconscious – have involved him, as if James were intent upon demonstrating the inescapable subjectivity of all awareness.”⁹⁵ After James explores this subjectivity, as Levy calls it, he explores the change in his character that the force of objective awareness (the realisation of the error) brings. In this tale, James employs humour to depict a tragic situation, a tragic error that will cost his hero’s life. Although Hawthorne’s character seems aware of his comicality, and uses it to attract our attention to his error, James’s hero does not realise he is comical and this makes him tragi-comic in the eyes of the reader.

For that purpose, in “The Landscape Painter” James provides the reader with two narrators. One is a diarist, Locksley, and the other is a friend of the diarist, who offers us the diary to read and thus introduces us to Locksley’s story. From the very first sentence of the tale the reader is treated as one of the narrator’s acquaintances: “Do you remember how, a dozen years ago, a number of our friends were startled by the report of the rapture of young Locksley’s engagement with Miss Leary?”⁹⁶ The narrator is merely reminding us of what we are supposed to know already, but may possibly have forgotten, adding bits and pieces that he assumes would be of interest

⁹⁴ Henry James, “Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) Written for the *Library of the World’s Best Literature Ancient and Modern*, Vol.XII” (1896) (LCI, p.460).

⁹⁵ Leo B. Levy, “Consciousness in Three Early Tales of Henry James,” *Studies in Short Fiction* 18 (1981), p.407. Hereafter cited as “CTETHJ.”

to us and that *he* - as an intimate friend of Locksley - alone knows. Of course, the reader remembers nothing – he is told everything little by little. However, this device takes the reader in, because it is very much like meeting someone in the street whom you cannot really remember meeting before, but who gives you, very gradually, all the details you need to make out an idea, even if, in the end, you never actually remember the person. In other words, it is natural, realistic and psychologically plausible. In this manner we get all the background on Locksley: how rich he was, his engagement with a woman whose beauty “was in truth very great” (“LP,” p.57),⁹⁷ how he was afraid of women wanting him for his money and how he escaped to the country after he broke off his engagement. Locksley is now dead and the narrator claims to be in possession of his diary, which he offers us finally to read. In what seems like a gossipy manner, he invites us thus:

If you will come to my house, I will show you such of his pictures and sketches as I possess, and I trust, convert you to my opinion that he had in him the stuff of a great painter. Meanwhile I will place before you the last hundred pages of his diary, as an answer to your inquiry regarding the ultimate view taken by the great Nemesis of his treatment of Miss Leary, - his scorn of the magnificent Venus Virix. The recent decease of the one person who had a voice paramount to mine in the disposal of Locksley's effects enables me to act without reserve (“LP,” p.58).

We cannot but be intrigued by the story of Locksley before we actually begin to read it. We had not yet made any inquiries, but this is taken for granted already and we are practically forced into not only reading the story, but making up our minds about it too. The first narrator practically threatens to “convert” us, as if we already had an opinion different from his own. Then we realise that we don't really know what his opinion is, except that we may assume that he must not be a very nice or reliable

⁹⁶ Henry James, “A Landscape Painter,” *Tales*, p.57. Hereafter cited as “LP.”

⁹⁷ Locksley's preference for very beautiful women may emulate Mr. Bullfrog's. The narrator stresses it, as if to make a point of Locksley's superficiality: “What it was besides her beauty that attracted

person to treat his friend with so little respect, gossiping about him, after the obstacle of another now deceased person (perhaps he means Esther herself) is removed. The narrator even invites the reader to his house, as if he were an intimate friend. He, therefore, tells us the story up to a point, as an introduction; but the events that are of main importance the reader is invited to "read" for himself. Nevertheless, what becomes obvious here is that James's intention is to create a relationship between his readers and the narrator, who is presented as a character, with his own vision and opinion about the events to be enacted. In making him so vivid and so obviously participating, James is disassociating from him. We gain at once the impression that the narrator is not the voice of the author, but the voice of just another character participating in the story.

The second narrator is the hero of the tale, the diarist Locksley, who upon retiring to the country, meets and moves into the house of an old merchant captain and his daughter with whom he soon falls in love and marries, in the belief that she has no idea about his fortune. Immediately after the marriage, however, his wife reveals to him that she did indeed know about his riches, and the tale ends with a disappointed Locksley, who feels betrayed into getting what he was avoiding all along.⁹⁸ Of course, things are not so simple for the reader. We soon realise that there is something wrong with Locksley's narrative which implicates him in the story of his error.

Locksley I never discovered: perhaps, since his attachment was so short-lived, it was her beauty alone" ("LP," p.56).

⁹⁸ "His attempt to avoid this doom meets with the same success that Oedipus found when he tried to avoid fulfilling the oracle which said that he would marry his mother," Elaine Zablonty points out in "Henry James and the Demonic Vampire and Madonna." *Psychocultural Review* 3:3-4 (Summer-Fall 1979), p.203. Her reading proves the presence of theatricality in James's story. Tintner mentions Moreau's painting "Oedipus and the Sphinx" (1864) that might have influenced James's early stories. Adeline Tintner, The Museum World of Henry James. (Michigan: Ann Arbor, 1986), p.22. Hereafter cited as Museum.

As the narrator, Locksley, is a painter by “profession” (I emphasise that because, like Tennyson’s Lord, he did not really have any profession – he was rich and idle, fond of painting but not famous for it), we the readers find ourselves turned into observers/critics of his works, not his paintings (which we never see), but his diary entries, the landscapes of life that he composes. The more carefully we look at his text the more we realise that Locksley is not reliable.⁹⁹ As he describes what is happening with the people around him it gradually becomes clear to the reader that it is not the captain and his daughter that trap him. What *he* fails to see, and what the reader does appreciate, through a series of humorous and highly ironic events, is that by escaping the superficialities of society he did not escape the superficialities in himself.

The fact is that I have broken with the past. I have decided, coolly and calmly, as I believe, that it is necessary to my success, or, at any rate, to my happiness, to abjure for a while my conventional self, and to assume a simple, natural character. How can a man be simple and natural who is known to have a hundred thousand a year? That is the supreme curse. It’s bad enough to have it: to be known to have it, to be known only because you have it, is most damnable. I suppose I am too proud to be successfully rich. Let me see how poverty will serve my turn. I have taken a first start. I have determined to stand upon my own merits. If they fail me, I shall fall back upon my millions; but with God’s help I will test them, and see what kind of stuff I am made of. To be young, to be strong, to be poor, - such, in this blessed nineteenth century, is the great basis of solid success (“LP,” p.61).

Locksley’s soliloquy makes the reader laugh at his naivety. This entry reveals several things about Locksley that he himself seems to be unconscious of: first, that this idea of wanting to live as a poor man is a mere fancy of his. That it is not something he has embraced is evident in his choice of language: “the fact is,” “I have decided, coolly and calmly,” “I believe,” “it is necessary [...] to abjure,” “I have determined,”

⁹⁹ Levy believes that with Locksley and his diary begins “the technique of the unreliable narrator of later fiction (“CTETHJ,” p.409”). However, James had already used this technique before in “A Story

“ I have resolved,” all show an effort made to persuade himself to do something which he obviously considers heroic. Another thing is that we view in him a romantic idea of what it must be to be poor (“To be young, to be strong, to be poor, - such, in this blessed nineteenth century, is the great basis of solid success”, or “the pure founts of inspiration of my time”, or “what a luxury to pass in a poor man’s mind for his brother!”). To the reader Locksley’s wish to embrace poverty has, thus, the boisterous sound of play-acting (“to abjure for a while my conventional self”, “to assume a simple, natural character”). Seeing his position as “conventional” and as “the supreme curse” - as opposed to the “simple” and “natural” character of poverty - also proves he has romantic notions. Unconsciously, he admits that this state he wants to belong to is not a part of him. As D.L.Mull points out, “if that character has to be assumed, it is not his own, nor are the merits on which he is then to be judged. In short, his ‘conventional self’ may be a function of his money, but it is still his ‘self.’”¹⁰⁰ We also realise that he does not ever mean to be poor, in that he has already made the necessary arrangements in case of failure, as if he already anticipates it: “if they fail me [...].” Thus, we see he never considers poverty as something permanent, otherwise he would have found some way of getting rid of his money. The hero, we observe, is deluded, and his delusion is a result of his egoism. Nowhere in this long entry do we notice any interest in his fellow man. It is all about him. It is about “my success” and “my happiness”, and happiness comes significantly second. The word “I” is repeated at least a dozen times in this excerpt alone.

of a Year.” The only difference here is that the unreliable narrator is also the main character. Ironically, Locksley’s ability as a painter is also questionable, which adds to his unreliability.

¹⁰⁰ Donald L. Mull, Henry James’s ‘Sublime Economy’: Money as Symbolic Centre in the Fiction. (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan U.P., 1973), pp. 23-24. Many of James’s early tales, as we shall see, are preoccupied with money and its effect on character. It is not surprising that James deals with money in his tales as most of his influences deal with it too: all of Balzac’s books are similarly dealing with money. Trollope’s novels also depict the importance of money in the relationships of his characters. Hawthorne’s most famous novel, The House of the Seven Gables, is about money. The list of Victorian authors dealing with the importance of money on character is long.

Ironically, Locksley begins to respect himself the moment we the readers lose that respect for him.

We see, then, that James uses humour to guide the reader's perception of his hero. Hawthorne, we remember, also uses humour in his own story, but although Mr Bullfrog seems aware of his light-heartedness and comicality, which seems intentional on his part, Locksley appears to take himself seriously. To some extent, as far as the reader is concerned the result is the same: we cannot help but feel that the characters deserved what they got, namely the wives they wanted to avoid in the first place. But in James's story things tend to take a more serious turn; for the author means to explore the consciousness of his character in the act of making the error (just as he had done with Lizzie in the previous story). Here it is Locksley's ego and his conceit that do not allow him to evaluate the situation properly.¹⁰¹ His conceit makes him appear to the reader utterly naïve – with the sort of naivety of a man who has been too preoccupied with his wealth and too protected from the ways of the world to be in touch with reality.¹⁰² In short, Locksley lives in a world of his own, because he has no knowledge of any other. When the captain offers him lodgings at his house, Locksley romanticises about how he has persuaded the man that he is utterly poor ("LP," p.61), merely by telling him that he is "an educated man, with a taste for painting; that [he has] come here for the purpose of cultivating this taste by the study of coast scenery, and for [his] health" ("LP," p.61). We must take him at his word when he once admits that "[he] never was a practical character" ("LP,"

¹⁰¹ Fox notices James's concern with selfishness: "The Primary concern of these tales, as in the later James, is with selfishness. Even this early in James's career, we can see that selfishness is the real cause of most of man's ills. In 'A Landscape Painter,' for example, although Miss Blunt is false and deceptive, the real cause of Locksley's plight is his own selfish pride, a selfish pride that takes pleasure in the thought of marrying someone who is poor and needy so that he can play the great man with her." (Fox, p.12). This recalls Trollope's Cousin Henry (1879), who chose to feel he would be doing his cousin a favour by marrying her, while he was all the time hiding from her the truth about the will's rightful inheritor.

p.60), because a practical man would have realised that a man of small income, a merchant at that, with an unmarried daughter – such as the captain is - would hardly ever accept a lodger in his house, if he did not think that the rent would be forthcoming.

His conduct towards his hosts, moreover shows a constant preoccupation with social manners and appearances that cannot have failed to reveal to them a person from a different class: “I have prided myself not a little on my good manners towards my hostess,” he says (“LP,” p.67). He feels reassured when the captain calls him a gentleman, which the captain resolves to, only to quickly cover his near slip of the tongue that would have probably revealed that he and his daughter suspected him of being rich. Referring to a rival for his daughter’s hand the captain exclaims: ““And I know one [way] in which you are more worthy of her than he, - *that is*, in being what we used to call a gentleman” (my emphasis) (“LP,” p.74). He calls himself “a poor,¹⁰³ friendless wanderer” (again a prominent romantic figure in books) and asks Esther if she has found him “repulsive” or if she does think him “sociable” (“LP,” p.71); which brings forth Esther’s correct interpretation: ““You want a compliment, Mr Locksley; that’s the long and the short of it. I have not paid you a compliment since you have been here. How you must have suffered!” (ibid.). He needs constant reassurance that he plays his part well, and having no other alternative, he keeps reminding himself of his ingenious (to him) state: “I am sailing under false colours of the deepest dye”(“LP,” p.68), or “ I play my part pretty well. I am delighted to find it come so easy” (ibid.). Again, the theatre seems to play an important part in the flow of the story, as in the previous tales. Money is, moreover, always on his mind, however hard he tries to persuade himself to the contrary: “I am inexpressibly happy

¹⁰² Levy finds that “it is Locksley and not Miriam who is naïve, and it is she who sees through his pretences but nevertheless agrees to marry him” (“CTETHJ,” p.408).

in the conviction that I am not wholly unfit for a life of (moderate) labour and (comparative) privation. I am quite in love with my poverty, if I may call it so. As why should I not? At this rate I don't spend eight hundred a year" ("LP," p.65). Again, the reader cannot help but detect the romantic notion with which Locksley perceives his new – self-inflicted – situation. This state of “poverty” amuses him and saves it him money too!

Moreover, he consistently refuses to see Esther in her true colours (reminding us of Hawthorne's character, Mr Bullfrog), but, like a painter, he makes his own painting of her; hence the title of the tale. He paints her only as a landscape, something to look at as from a distance, so that he never comes near enough to her true character. Hence, he calls his initial description of her “ a tolerable catalogue, but no picture” (“LP,” p.63), arriving at his goal a few lines later with: “She is, in short, a woman of character. There you are, Miss Blunt, at full length, - emphatically the portrait of a lady” (“LP,” p.63). Considering the title's importance in this tale Zaboltny remarks that “James seems to pass judgement on Locksley as a mere landscape painter; he has no gift for perceiving character and therefore could never be a portrait painter” (Zaboltny, p.207). She believes, moreover, that had Locksley understood the character of the heroine he would not have married her (ibid.). Although the reader may not be convinced that Locksley can see a portrait of Esther, but, rather, a mere landscape of her that he has created, for the reader he has presented – unbeknown to him – exactly what he claims, a portrait. Thus, Esther's presence continues to “puzzle” Locksley, who ironically wonders if she is not “indeed, a very commonplace person, and the fault [is] in me...” (“LP,” p.64). The reader can see the fault really *is* in him. He lets himself imagine Esther as “one of

¹⁰³ Notice the use of “poor,” again ascribed to people we should not really pity.

Miss Bronte's heroines," ascribing a romantic essence to her poverty ("This wholly working-dress of loveliness and dignity sits upon her with the simplicity of an antique drapery" ("LP," pp.65-66)); at the same time, wondering at her accomplishment of being poor and yet so lovely: "I should like some of those fretful New-York heiresses to see how this woman lives" ("LP," p.64); nevertheless, immediately bringing the issue back to him: "I wish, too, that half a dozen of *ces messieurs* of the clubs might take a peep at the present way of life of their humble servant" (ibid.). Notice how he chooses to see the situation, when she cuts his advances short:

'I am going to sit down here and talk to you, and wish our tête-à-tête not to be interrupted.'

'Have you anything particular to say?'

'Nothing so particular as Mr. Johnson, perhaps.'

Miss Blunt has a very pretty affectation of being more matter-of-fact than she really is.

'His rights, then,' said she, 'are paramount to yours.'

'Ah, you admit that he has rights?'

'Not at all. I simply assert that you have none.' ("LP," p.69)

Locksley *chooses* to believe that she does not mean what she says. He warns the reader of how to take Esther's statement, that he has no "rights," before he writes it down. A few lines further down she will send him on his way to read his bible – and leave her alone to, probably, compose her nerves. "Poor Miss Blunt," writes Locksley, "owes it to her conscience to read a certain number of chapters. What a pure and upright soul she is! And what an edifying spectacle is much of our feminine piety!" ("LP," p.70) This is another indication of his wilful blindness. Esther has explained to him already, at the beginning of their discussion, how going to church is to her like going to a festival: "I confess I am never deeply interested in the sermon, and I very much dislike teaching children; but I like wearing my best bonnet, and

singing in the choir, and walking on the way home" ("LP", p.69). Thus, the reader realises that she only sends him away to get rid of him for a while.

Finally, Locksley falls ill – an occasion for Esther to view the diary and discover the truth. Having now found out for sure about his circumstances – which before she only suspected, – a phrase escapes her that should tell him she knows: "‘Sentiment and loveliness are all very well, when you have time for them,’ said Miss Blunt. ‘I haven’t. *I’m not rich enough*. Good Morning’" (my emphasis) ("LP," p.76). Off goes a frustrated Esther, and there follows Locksley’s comment: "Speaking of another woman, I would say that she flounced out of the room" ("LP", p.76). This suggests again that in Esther he only perceives his own creation of her, his ideal painting of a woman, his own vision of art that is unfortunately blurry. Hence, he sees her exit as something other than what it was: "But such was the gait of Juno, when she moved stiffly over the grass from where Paris stood with Venus holding the apple, gathering up her divine vestment, and leaving the others to guess at her face" ("LP", p.76). Esther is hardly a Juno, but he chooses to attribute queenly stature to her and view her as something more sublime than she is. Lastly, after a picnic the diarist gives us a romantic description of their walk, as one taken by two lovers. But when he comes to their talk, he chooses for once to keep it to himself, assuring us, nevertheless, that:

It was all very sober and sensible, - such talk as it is both easy and pleasant to remember; it was even prosaic, - or, at least, if there was a vein of poetry in it, I should have defied a listener to put his finger on it. There was no exaltation of feeling or utterance on either side; on one side, indeed, there was very little utterance. Am I wrong in conjecturing, however, that there was considerable feeling of a certain quiet kind? Miss Blunt maintained a rich, golden silence. I, on the other hand, was very voluble. What a sweet, womanly listener she is! ("LP," p.81)

We are to gather that the talk was all one-sided. As for Esther, if she had no chance to talk, at least she had the opportunity to gather more information and further impressions of their guest. In the end, Locksley marries her, and on their honeymoon he brings along the diary to show her his "secret", anticipating her surprise, only to be surprised himself by her admission to him that she had read it before. Upon which he realises that the only compensation for his false pretences was a "false" union.

The question then arises as to how to take this character. What did James intend by presenting us Locksley? Locksley could easily be compared to the ruins of the tower (another Gothic reminder), twice present in his vision, with its majestic front and its "hollow old shell" ("LP," p.60). The tower reflects the hero who does not belong to the real world either. Locksley is himself nothing more but a hollow shell. All the references that imply the idea of a Byronic hero are ironic too. He would not be even so much of a knight as to bring Lizzie water from a spring when they went for a picnic. Locksley, moreover, represents what Hawthorne would fear in man, namely "intolerance, [...] the greed that refuses to share joy [...] withdrawal from mankind, the cynical suspicion, the arrogant perfectionism."¹⁰⁴ Gordon calls him "an arch observer" (Gordon, p.74), but Locksley's observations, as we have seen, do not extend beyond his prefixed ideals. Winner recognises that in some early tales the painter "is of crucial symbolic importance, standing for the possibilities of corruption or fulfilment in a way of life more hedonistic than the other characters have known or approve of."¹⁰⁵ Here there is definitely hedonism in Locksley's character. From the beginning we notice a use of hedonistic language in his descriptions:

¹⁰⁴G. Perkins, S. Bradley, R.C.Beatty, et al., eds. "Nathaniel Hawthorne," The American Tradition in Literature, vol. I, seventh edition, (N.Y.: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1990), p.1565.

¹⁰⁵ Viola Hopkins Winner, Henry James and the Visual Arts. (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 1970), p.94.

Never before have I relished the beauties of wave, rock, and cloud. I am filled with a sensuous ecstasy at the unparalleled life, light, and transparency of the air. I am stricken with reverent admiration at the stupendous resources possessed by the ocean in the way of colour and sound ("LP", p.59).

His language reminds one of poetry, just as his name recalls Tennyson and his poem "Locksley Hall"¹⁰⁶, where another young man is frustrated by the materialistic society and searches for other ways out, turning to the past. James, therefore, insinuates Locksley's delusions in assuming a Romantic, Byronic, Gothic identity. In the end, Locksley will have to discover, just like the hero of Tennyson's poem, that only reality is left for him, and he must make the best of it. Furthermore, the love that Locksley apparently bears towards nature is, according to Levy,

an integral part of his self-deceptions: the way he sees –and paints – landscapes cannot be separated from his limitations. What he loves is an ideal nature, mirroring his pleasant fantasies about himself and about a young woman. The distinction between his idea of himself and her awareness that he is a man unknown to himself slowly establishes itself ("CTETHJ," p.407).

In other stories following this one, the artist is often disillusioned. In most of them, however, the artist possesses the ability to see through the hidden layers of his subject's soul, as we shall see in "The Story of a Masterpiece." In "A Landscape Painter," the artist has absolutely no clue. He reminds one of a small child, who sees things, has impressions imprinted in his mind, but does not yet understand them as experiences. As the hero watches the view from the tower he tells us: "The only particular sensation I remember was that of being ten years old again" ("LP," p.60). He seems to be handling the whole episode of his visit there in this way, as if lacking the experience to deal with it.

¹⁰⁶ There are similarities in Locksley's entry given above and Locksley Hall's following lines: "Summer isles of Eden lying in the dark-purple spheres of sea./There methinks would be enjoyment more than in this march of mind, [...]" Alfred Lord Tennyson, "Locksley Hall" (1842), *Poems*, p.698.

Locksley's money, moreover, seems to have corrupted him in the way it makes him blind to the feelings of others as well as his own. He cannot see Esther's true feelings because he becomes obsessed with her the way he is obsessed with money.¹⁰⁷ Gordon, rightly points out that the hero becomes "obsessed with the character [Esther] secretes" (Gordon, p.74). Gordon also believes there is a hidden desire on the hero's part for Esther: "Her physical presence seems all the closer for the absence of touch, a voluptuous awareness expanding to the fullest attention" (Gordon, p.74). This passion in James is usually hedonistic, as Mull sees it, and usually connotes a secret desire in the artist that he cannot externalise openly. Here, as we have seen, the artist is not quite aware of it. Even in the narrator's introductory piece about the hero's past relationship with Miss Leary and the subsequent breaking up, we detect that it was Locksley rather who let his money get in the way, alienating himself because of it. "You see, our friend was held capable of doing battle for an 'idea,'" comments the narrator, and continues with what reads as an ironic comment: "It must be owned that this was a novel charge" implying that with Locksley the opposite is usually the case ("LP," p.57). Even in his efforts to find an excuse for Locksley, the narrator seems to believe that his friend was acting somewhat improbably. He calls Locksley's fate "compensation" ("LP," p.58), implying that he had to pay for his mistake.

We may get a better understanding of what James achieved here by examining a critical essay James wrote on Eliot's novel, Felix Holt (1866), that was published some months after "A Landscape Painter." James claims that Eliot's novel strikes him as the result of "so much drawing and so little composition."¹⁰⁸ (Always in his mind fiction acquires a visual foundation.) He finds in Eliot's novel "so rusty a

¹⁰⁷ Obsession, we will see, is a theme that James will deal in greater depth in many of the stories that follow.

plot, and such *longueurs* of exposition, such a disparity of outline and detail," that he could not possibly forgive them if it was not Eliot he was dealing with ("FH", p.907). He is very disappointed with the hero's delineation, which he finds inadequate to what the title of the novel promises: "As a story 'Felix Holt' is singularly inartistic. The promise of the title is only half kept" ("FH", p.908). He believes Felix to be only "a fragment" of the novel. Felix is seen so little in the novel and thus he and his principles are given (for James's tastes) less weight: "It is not that Felix acts at variance with his principles, but that, considering their importance, he and his principles play so brief a part and are so often absent from the scene" ("FH", p.909). James mentions in a subsequent essay on Eliot that "Felix Holt's radicalism, the pretended motive of the story, is utterly choked amidst a mass of subordinate interests" ("NGE," p.927). Thus, "no representation is attempted of the growth of his opinions, or of their action upon his character" ("NGE", p.927). "We find him a radical," exclaims James, "and we leave him what? – only "utterly married; which is all very well in it's place, but which by itself makes no conclusion" ("FH", p.908). He finds the ending of the story "hasty, inconsiderate and unsatisfactory [...] an anti-climax" ("FH," p.907); and the character without "triumphant vitality" ("NGE," p.927).

In "A Landscape Painter" Locksley's principles, his "idea" that his friend held him capable of fighting for, namely his desire to be married to a woman that will not take him for his money, are thoroughly explored. Unlike Felix, Locksley is ever present in the novel. James has dealt enough with his hero so as to justify his title – as opposed to Eliot, who, in James's opinion, did not – at the same time making an effort to keep a certain distance from the scene; a distance required for the

¹⁰⁸ Henry James, "Felix Holt, the Radical," (1866) LC1, p.907. Hereafter cited as "FH".

tale to leave a certain aura of mystery. To achieve that, he does not enter the tale himself, but uses the first narrator as an intermediary. Kelley believes that James borrowed the device from Merimée's because "it gave [the stories] [...] an authenticity, a reality to have someone connected with the character vouch for them" (Kelley, p.70). James does more than that, however. He invites, through the narrator, the reader to participate and do his part of the work, according to his idea of what the writer's duty is.

Kelley estimates that James uses the diary-technique "in an effort [...] to secure greater truth to life or make the story *seem* more true by having it's hero tell it, and with the purpose, too, of allowing him to bring in comment and analysis, which, in its turn, would also make the story appear true" (Kelley, pp.55-56). Kelly goes on to explain James's ingenious way of interfering without actually being there: "Though the author of the diary thinks and reflects upon life and the fisherman's daughter," she says, "James thought and reflected more. He analysed her character to himself and then gave the results of the analysis in his story" (Kelley, pp.56-57). James's premeditated method, therefore, of presenting to us Esther's character has succeeded here in making him more subtly present than Trollope was in his novels. Moreover, we are given exactly the information we need to know about her, without having any actual insight into her mind. Nevertheless, the traces of her that Locksley is reporting to us reveal a woman who knows what she wants, is honest about it, and does not scruple to get it. Critics have called her a "patient Griselda figure" turned "devious,"¹⁰⁹ one of James's early "dangerous temptresses" (Dalbaere-Garant, p.228), and "selfish 'types'" (Fox, p.12), reminding others of Thackeray's

¹⁰⁹ S. Gorley Putt, A Reader's Guide to Henry James, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1996), p.38.

heroines,¹¹⁰ a female fortune-hunter,¹¹¹ and so on. To the hero “she is rather a puzzle,” but not so to the reader, because the reader is neither blind, nor lacks the knowledge of the world. We take for granted that what she is reported to have said is true. She is James’s way of keeping a balance in the story. She represents reality in Locksley’s little fantasy, even if that reality is not so pleasant. As Mull observes, “though brutal, Esther’s speech [to Locksley] accurately indicates that Locksley’s romantic notion of an independent self is unrealisable” (Mull, p.24) Like the reader, Esther also understands that “Locksley’s self is not independent of its external condition; it exists only in relation to them. In denying them, he denies his own identity” (ibid.). If Locksley has been the child, she never followed him into his never-never land: “‘a false woman? No, - simply of a woman. I am a woman, Sir’ [...] ‘Come, *you* be a man!’” (“LP,” p.87).

The story ends, with the hero marrying the heroine, just as, in Felix Holt, Eliot has Felix marrying *his* Esther. The difference is that here James offers the marriage as a natural outcome of Locksley’s persistent romantic delusions that lead him to what he was trying to avoid in the first place. It is his punishment for his lack of natural feelings, his lack of love for his fellow human beings, and for his love of his money that does not permit him to build any natural relationships. James’s finale clashes with Eliot’s ending which he saw as “an anti-climax” (“FH”, p.907). It seemed to him a “sagacious tendency,” in Eliot’s part, “to compromise” (ibid.). To him Felix’s marriage “is all very well in its place, but [...] by itself makes no conclusion” (“FH”, p.908). It is not persuasive to James, it does not entail “a group

¹¹⁰ LeClair refers to Esther as a “heroine [that] has a slightly foreign tone, a watering down, perhaps, of Thackeray’s scheming women or the unscrupulous heroines of French literature” (LeClair, p.382). Kelley also refers to the last words of Esther in the story by saying: “This savors more of literature than of life, a certain scheming, treacherous, unscrupulous, heroines of Thackeray and French literature” (Kelley, p.56).

of consequents equally dramatic" ("FH", pp.908-909). Felix appears to James a hero whose author "wished and yet feared to make heroic" ("FH", p.909). Locksley, on the other hand, is treated in a mock-heroic way, but seems to achieve in the end some elements of the tragic hero, who after inner blindness finally sees the light, if only when it is too late for him; the self-inflicting punishment has crushed him. After that, Locksley will write no more in his diary. His "experiment" is over and he has got his results ("LP", p.58). At the same time, James precipitates both Tennyson's and Hawthorne's romantic conclusions, as if intending to say that no happiness is possible (natural) when it is based on lies - falseness begets falseness, and unhappiness ends in an early grave for both hero and heroine.

It would therefore be safe to say that the reason why James understood so well the errors of Eliot was because he had himself previously applied what he thought of as the correct method to his tale. Here, the first narrator has achieved the author's goal of making us interested by putting us on our guard and making us want to participate in finding out what has *really* happened to Locksley. Whereas the second narrator, Locksley himself, unconsciously reveals more truth by trying to hide things from the other characters around him. Keeping in mind James's ideas about the relationship between reader and writer, we can claim here that this tale is one of his most successful endeavours at perfection. James uses the two narrators as intermediaries between the reader and himself, both of whom are unreliable in their stories. By making his narrators also characters and by attempting to create a relationship between them and his readers, he manages to bring the reader into the story. In the end, his readers have to decide for themselves what to make of it. They

¹¹¹ See T.J. Lustig, *Henry James and the Ghostly*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.94. Zabolotny also calls her "a mercenary woman" (Zabolotny, p.203).

have to draw their own portrait (not landscape) of Locksley out of their observations and impressions of what they read.

iv) Action in character in “A Day of Days”

“A Day of Days” (1866) has won the admiration of some of the critics: “we think of ‘A Day of Days,’ Martin and Ober declare, as James’s first little masterpiece” (Martin/Ober, p.22).¹¹² Kelly notices how the tale reveals an interest in James to “study man” (Kelly, p.58). To do that, James “reduced action to almost nothing, in order to concentrate on the feelings of the characters” (ibid., p.57). (By action here Kelly of course refers to incidents, as opposed to what, we remember, she had distinguished as Jamesian action: the “development, growth, often slow and moderate, of whatever it is with which the story is concerned.”) He replaces incident then with “analysis” (ibid.).¹¹³ This emphasis on analysis focuses on the characters; taking us a step further than “A Landscape Painter” (where Esther’s character was described indirectly by Locksley), the author now attempts to explore *directly* the psychology of two characters rather than one.

Hence, we are now not so sure who our main character is, Adela or Ludlow, as they are both present to us almost in equal proportion. Although the tale begins with Adela and her past, and James suggests to us that this is Adela’s story,¹¹⁴ this seems to be only because we are in need of a setting, and her story provides us with

¹¹² Wagenknecht finds it “charming” although “slight” (Wagenknecht, p.181). Kaplan considered it “one of the best of these early stories” (Kaplan, p.70). And David Southward finds “the stuff of poetry” in it. “Flirtations in Early James.” *Nineteenth Century Literature* 52:4 (March 1998), p.514. There are others, though, who did not like it: Peter Buitenhuis calls the tale “a rather slight anecdote” albeit with “some pleasant description” in *The Grasping Imagination: The American Writings of Henry James*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p.25. See also Vaid, p.134; and McElderry Jr., p.26.

¹¹³ Also in LeClair, p.382.

¹¹⁴ We are told that it is Adela’s story in a rather roundabout way, by eliminating another candidate: “if, instead of being Miss Moore’s story, this were Mr. Perkins’s [...]” Henry James, “A Day of Days” (1866). *Tales*, p.91. Hereafter cited as “DD.”

one in which Ludlow may enter. Then we are given equal information about his past; and the story seems balanced between these two people. The title of the story does not help either in offering us a point of view, other than to suggest that we must read it from both Adela's and Ludlow's perspective, because the day was shared by both.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, most critics have read the tale from the point of view of either one or the other of the characters, arriving thus at different conclusions: Kelly for example, has read the tale from the point of view of Adela, believing that the situation in this tale is the "reverse" of "A Landscape Painter," and that the story is about "the rapid development of the feeling of love in a rich young girl for a poor young man" (Kelly, p.57). Subsequently, she questions the plausibility of Adela's sudden feeling for Ludlow, suggesting that it is not "true to nature" (ibid.).¹¹⁶ Other critics focus on Adela's preoccupation with social manners, that restrict her from building natural relationships.¹¹⁷ In the other camp, there are those who read the tale from Ludlow's perspective and read the tale's ending as Ludlow's escape from a woman who would be an obstacle to his career and life.¹¹⁸ There is, thus, a tendency

¹¹⁵ Interestingly, we know that James originally wanted to name the tale "Tom Ludlow's Letters," (see letter to William Conant Church, 21 May 1866, in Henry James: A Life in Letters, ed. Philip Horne (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 1999), p.11. Hereafter cited as HJLL.), which may suggest that Ludlow's perspective was in his mind, so that he intended the tale to be about *his* story more than Adela's. However, the letters that the title refers to play rather too unimportant a part in the tale – taking into account how titles usually serve a purpose in James's tales – and probably the editors decided that the focus the letters implied on Ludlow would be unjustified. In their article "'5 M.S. Pages': Henry James's Addition to 'A Day of Days'" Martin and Ober speculate that additional material James sent to the editors was about Adela, "so that the reader could enter into her situation sympathetically." *Studies in Short Fiction* 25 (1988), p.154. As Aziz points out, when James reprinted the tale in 1885 he did not revise the title, although he had the chance to do so (Tales, p.88).

¹¹⁶ See also LeClair, p.382.

¹¹⁷ "She does ignore certain of the restrictions of her background and nature, but she is not free enough to act as she really wants. The whole question of the forms proper to a lady, and to a gentleman, establishes the framework of the tale" (Kraft, p.14).

¹¹⁸ "The frequent conflict between the woman in a man's life and the career of his choice forms the basis of another Jamesian indictment of love. Woman as the object of love rivals creative work in the arts and sciences in the quantity of time and degree of concentrated attentiveness each requires" says Osborn Andreas, who sees Locksley's exist as his "wresting his career, as though only by a dint of a quick turn of his wrist, from the very jaws of peril," in Henry James and the Expanding Horizon: A Study of the Meaning and Basic Themes of James's Fiction. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1948), pp.85-86. Martin and Ober see it as an escape from what "is by implication a proposal of marriage from Adela" in favour of "follow[ing] his scientific calling" (Martin/Ober, p.22). On the idea

in the critics of this tale to examine the tale from a point of view of one character rather from a more central point.

Perhaps James's intention was that the story be examined from both the characters' view, as resembling a play. There are elements of theatricality in this tale also: We have two characters interacting within a reduced amount of scene and time,¹¹⁹ providing us with information about their person (as when Adela asks Ludlow to "tell me something about yourself" ("DD," p.102),) that we would normally expect the narrator to give us.¹²⁰ The latter some times appears as the stage-director ("In front of the house three roads diverged from a great spreading elm" ("DD," p.91), "Adela stood at the table" ("DD," p.95), "the hall table was bare" ("DD," p.105), etc.); at other times as a character ("we say it with all respect" ("DD," p.95), "for our own part, we can imagine [...]" ("DD," p.102), etc.), and at others as the omniscient observer who has access into the mind of the characters ("it occurred to Adela [...]" ("DD," p.90), "he felt an emotion of manly tenderness" ("DD," p.101)), and who wishes to offer that access to the reader ("for a moment, he retreated within himself and thought" ("DD," p.100)). He often tells us what to think of the characters ("the reader will observe [...]" ("DD," p.97)), recognizing at the same time that the reader is independent to think whatever he/she wants ("the reader may give this feeling such a name as he pleases" ("DD," p.102)). He acknowledges,

of Ludlow's "escaping" the heroine, see also Delbaere-Garant, p.228. Tintner, moreover, likens Adela to the wife of Bluebeard and Ludlow to Bluebeard's closet, "the room of the young man's consciousness and will which Adela wishes to control" (Pop, pp.24-25). She also likens her to the Sphinx, rejected by Oedipus (Museum, p.22).

¹¹⁹ In his study of craft in the early tales of James, Charles E. Fish notices the importance of time: "The most important aspects of this tale for our purpose are the amount of material covered and the compression of time. The title itself tells us that James is after a new compactness, that he is trying to achieve unity through restriction of time" "Henry James and the Craft of Fiction: The Years of Exploration 1864-1871" Diss. Princeton University, 1963, p.39. Although Fish does not seem to realise it, this sound suggestive of the theatrical form.

¹²⁰ "James draws upon one other device in his analysis of Tom Ludlow; he has Adela ask him for a self-portrait. Although the readers recognise the request and reply as a conventional expository method, it fits fairly naturally into a conversation between two people just beginning to know one

thus, the reader's presence as an audience/spectator of the events, and as such he invites the reader to participate.

Critics in this tale are at a loss as to pointing to a distinct influence. Martin and Ober believe that the tale does not have a precursor: "A Day of Days" seems to be the first tale by James that is not the product of an obvious borrowing" (Martin/Ober, p.22). Several literary figures are referred to in the text, but they seem to have an associating role rather than betraying a direct influence: Longfellow is mentioned for example by Ludlow when he is about to reveal to Adela his plans of going abroad.¹²¹ Although no specific work is mentioned, Ludlow's words bring to mind Hyperion (1839), in which a young man travels to Europe, and particularly to Germany (as Ludlow is about to) in order to forget his sorrow. Although there is no suggestion that Ludlow goes to Europe for a similar reason, associations can be found in his regret at the failure of building a relationship with Adela, which recalls Flemming's failure to secure Mary Ashburton's favours, and his departure from the hotel where she was also staying, avoiding seeing her again and taking another chance with his feelings. "He did not dare to stay. But, throwing himself into the carriage, he cast one look toward the window of the Dark Ladie, and a moment afterwards had left her forever!"¹²² That forever sounds as melodramatic as the final words in James's tale: "the day was ended," which – going back to our discussion on theatricality – sounds like "The End" of a theatrical play, or, in our times, a film.

another and thus makes easier the author's task of conveying necessary information" (Fish, p.43). Again Fish does not seem to notice that the "expository method" is characteristically theatrical.

¹²¹ Martin and Ober notice this, but they don't consider it significant, since, as we have already mentioned, they saw no precursor to the tale (Martin/Ober, p.22).

¹²² Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Hyperion,. (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1966), p.284. James admired Longfellow's works as much as Hawthorne's: "Among Hawthorne's fellow-students was Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who divides with our author the honour of being the most distinguished of American men of letters (Hawthorne, p.15). James habitually mentions Longfellow along with Hawthorne in many of his critical essays. Moreover, one of the reasons why he liked Longfellow's poetry in particular was for "its barkish flavor, its vague literary echoes," which

Another association is brought about with the mention of Adela as a Vere of Vere: "She had pretty well unlearned the repose of the Veres of Vere," says the narrator ("DD," p.105). This refers us to Tennyson's poem "Lady Clara Vere de Vere"¹²³ (1833, pub.1842) and possibly means to contrast Adela to Lady Clara who was a proud woman.¹²⁴ Lady Clara was also bored and made a habit of ensnaring young men,¹²⁵ so maybe the narrator wishes to point out that his heroine does not want to follow Lady Clara's example with regard to Ludlow, although the allusion does hint at the possibility.

In his study of Hawthorne and James, Emmet-Long notes that "in setting a tale in New England or in treating New Englanders abroad, James gravitates to Hawthorne" (Emmet-Long, pp.5-6). Examining James's fourth tale, one notices that Hawthorne's influence is very much present in this tale, a tale which Emmet-Long himself surprisingly ignores. The setting of the story reminds one of Hawthorne's setting in The Blithedale Romance (1852). The heroine, Adela, comes to live in the countryside, away from the town, having previously been residing "in the very best company of three great cities" ("DD," p.88). In Hawthorne's novel, Coverdale and Zenobia come to live in the countryside, having previously lived in the best society.

explains perhaps James's partiality for "literary echoes" in his own work. Henry James "*Poems*. By William D. Howells. Boston: James R. Osgood & Co., 1873" (1874), LC1, p.481.

¹²³ "Her manners had not that repose/Which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere." Alfred Tennyson, "Lady Clara Vere de Vere" (1842), Poems, p.636. I am grateful to a note by Jean Strouse for this suggestion, found in Henry James: Complete Stories 1864-1874. (NY: The Library of America, 1999), p.968.

¹²⁴ "Lady Clara Vere de Vere,/ I know you proud to bear your name" (Poems, p.636).

¹²⁵ I know you, Clara Vere de Vere, you pine among your halls and towers:/The languid light of your proud eyes/Is wearied of the rolling hours./In glowing health, with boundless wealth,/But sickening of a vague disease,/You know so ill to deal with time,/You needs must play such pranks as these" (Poems, p.638). At the beginning of the tale Adela is said to be "mistress of a very pretty little fortune" ("DD," p.88), and to have "lapsed into an almost irreclaimable rusticity" (ibid., p.89), living away from the city with her brother. She is thus reported to be feeling "a delicious longing to do something illicit" (ibid., p.90), and to be playing with the feelings of a minister who is in love with her: "It is but fair to add, however, that although a captive, Mr. Perkins was as yet no captor. He was simply an honourable man, who happened at this moment to be the most sympathetic companions within reach" (ibid., p.91). Thus, by mentioning that Adela has "unlearned the repose" toward the end of the tale, perhaps James wishes to indicate the change in her.

In James's tale, as in Hawthorne's novel, living close to nature constitutes a total abandonment of previous modes of life. Adela feels "a singular sense of freedom" away from society, even the society of her brother, "a sort of return to those days of early childhood" ("DD," p.90). In The Blithedale Romance the environment is seen as an "Arcadia,"¹²⁶ an "Oasis" (BR, p.35), constituting of "air that had not been breathed again" (BR, p.11). The return to nature seems to have the same paralysing influence - the city-rhythms cannot be kept up: "The society of nature, of the great expansive skies and the primeval woods, would prove severely unpropitious to her excessive intellectual growth. She would spend her time in the fields and live in her feelings, her simple sense" ("DD," p.89). It recalls thus Coverdale's deductions: "Our thoughts [...] were fast becoming cloddish [...]. Intellectual activity is incompatible with a large amount of bodily exercise" (BR, p.61). James, moreover, seems to be agreeing that living close to nature allows one to let go of his or her inhibitions ("She felt a delicious longing to do something illicit, to play with fire, to discover some Bluebeard's closet" ("DD", p.90)); to bring out a romantic and more beautiful aspect of things ("The morning light covered his face, and, mingled with that of his broad laugh, showed Adela that it was a very pleasant face" ("DD", p.94)); but by no means to show any evil, dark aspect that pertains to metaphysical powers such as are present in Hawthorne's novels. Here James distances himself under the more favourable auspices of every-day reality. There is no "unwonted aspect on the face of Nature" that can "put off her mask, and assume the mask with which she mysteriously hides herself from mortals" (BR, p.61). Instead, in James's story the heroine feels "a precipitate conviction that there could be no evil in an adventure so essentially wholesome as that to which she had lent herself, and that

¹²⁶ Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Blithedale Romance. (1852) eds. Seymour Gross and Rosalie Murphy (New York and London: W.W.Norton & Co. Inc, 1978), p.21. Hereafter cited as BR.

there could be no guile in a spirit so deeply sensitive to the sacred influences of Nature, and to the melancholy aspect of incipient Autumn as that of her companion” (“DD”, p.99). Thus, in James’s work the implication seems to be that whatever Adela does is the result of boredom rather than the result of any metaphysical power. James appears perhaps to be avoiding any romantic notion of the supernatural powers of nature and its evil power over man. Hence, no part of the surrounding nature has any power to predict, instigate, or affect the future events as in Hawthorne (the lake in Blithedale comes to mind) or Thomas Hardy. James has noted “the absence in Hawthorne of that quality of realism which is now so much in fashion” (Hawthorne, p.3), as well as the abundant presence of “fantasy and allegory” (Hawthorne, p.44) that he so much objected to.¹²⁷ He is, nevertheless, impressed by Blithedale: “the book [...] is a mixture of elements, and it leaves in the memory an impression analogous to that of an April day – an alternation of brightness and shadow, of broken sun-patches and sprinkling clouds” (Hawthorne, p.105). This impression “of an April day” can be spied in his story, when he changes the moods of the weather as the story evolves, from a moody September morning (James changes the season), to sunny afternoon, to a breezy day.

Despite his admiration, James had his grievances. He is keen on identifying what is not right with Hawthorne’s novel as follows:

As the action advances, in *The Blithedale Romance*, we get too much out of reality, and cease to feel beneath our feet the firm ground of an appeal to our own vision of the world – our observation. I should have liked to see the story concern itself more with the little community in which its earlier scenes are laid, and avail itself of so excellent an opportunity for describing unhackneyed specimens of human nature (Hawthorne, p.108).

¹²⁷ “I frankly confess that I have, as a general thing, but little enjoyment of [allegory], and that it has never seemed to me to be, as it were, a first-rate literary form” (Hawthorne, pp.49-50).

Remembering what James's view on the duties of the author is, as expressed in his essay on Eliot, we can understand why James was displeased. Hawthorne does not allow the reader to participate. James implies that Hawthorne floods the novel with his own vision, that does not leave any room for the readers' observations. Again, vision and observation become the issue. The world around us must be viewed and observed closely, not only the environment, but also humanity, and here, in the lives of the people, the communities they create, lies the interest for James: in the examination of character (not merely appearance) – clearly Balzac's, and especially Eliot's influence. In his 1866 essay on Eliot, he proves how, despite what faults he finds with her latest novel, "George Eliot's humanity" impressed him ("FH," p.908).¹²⁸ In "A Day of Days" James will thus combine Hawthorne's methods with the other techniques he has gathered, uniting the elements that impressed him in the other authors. If Hawthorne's world was that of the communal and rustic Blithedale or the crowded city, a world permeated by metaphysical phenomena, people with special powers (like the Veiled Lady, or the magician), and unsolved mysteries (like the relationship between Zenobia and Westervelt), James's world becomes that of the psychology of the hero and heroine. The situation, thus, is not the action, as in Hawthorne. James's action becomes his adventure of observing the character. There are no secrets about Adela. James gives a very close view of his heroine, with even a touch of irony suggesting her faults: "The truth is – we say it with all respect – Adela was an old hand. She was modest, honest and wise; but as we have said, she had a past – a past of which importunate swains in the guise of morning callers had been no inconsiderable part; and a great dexterity in what may be called outflanking these

¹²⁸ James notes "that extensive human sympathy" that Eliot's previous novels, Romola and Adam Bede, emit, "that easy understanding of character at large, that familiarity with man, from which a novelist draws his real inspiration, from which he borrows all his ideal lines and hues, to which he

gentlemen, was one of her registered accomplishments.” (“DD,” p.95). We are told from the beginning that Adela had experienced “most of the adventures which await a young girl on the threshold of life,” including the making and breaking up of an “imprudent” engagement (ibid., p.88). How different from all the intimations Hawthorne makes of his heroines’ past in all his novels, as if he depends on the mystery to keep the reader’s interest up. Thus, in the beginning of The Blithedale Romance we don’t know any specific details about either Zenobia or Pricilla; only hints are being thrown suggestively to the reader. Similarly, in The Scarlet Letter (1850) secrets are revealed very gradually. The Marble Faun (1860) is equally dependent on its plot’s mysteries, while The House of the Seven Gables (1851) depends upon the supernatural mysteries that govern many generations of a family.

James, on the other hand, seems to be denying the need for such artificial forces to enliven the readers’ attention. He appears to advocate the importance of a moment in time: a day of all days can be as interesting as time immemorial. Thus, he gives us the details of her past - as he would advise Hawthorne to do – for a better insight into Adela’s nature, only insofar as they attribute to the affair at hand. We need to understand first the kind of person she is:

“A great observer of life and manners, so far as her opportunities went, she conceived that it behooved her to organise the results of her observation into principles of conduct and of belief. She was becoming – so she argued – too impersonal, too critical, too intelligent, too contemplative, too just. A woman had no business to be so just” (“DD,” p.89).

The issue of observation keeps recurring. The description of Adela as “a great observer of life and manners” is counterbalanced by her lack of opportunity to observe, as she is isolated in the country where there is not so much for her to observe. Instead, she seems to turn in on herself and make an effort to observe her

appeals for a blessing on his fictitious process, and to which he owes it that, firmly locked in the

own character. Her conclusion is apparently disbelieved by the narrator, whose “so she argued” suggests that he does not perceive her the way she perceives herself. Recalling James’s views about the writer’s relationship with his reader, we can see them repeated here again, as James seems to suggest that the good writer needs to imagine and give credit to an observant reader – a reader similar in that respect to both author and (as we see here) the heroine! It is, therefore, observation that unites all of us. This reliance on, this relationship of (one might call it “a belief in”) observation may be the point of distinction between Henry James and Hawthorne. Here is the “transformation” that Emmet-Long talks about, here we find the distinctive departure from the aims of the “prototype model” (Emmet-Long, p.12).¹²⁹

In “A Day of Days,” therefore, we have a woman who has learned to think of and for herself, who – despite all she admonishes herself for – will continue to do so. We know that when we witness the “sense of freedom” that comes to her when her brother leaves for his trip. It is a reaction that conflicts with her reassurances about her present contentment. James, moreover, gives us the reason why Adela comes to live with her brother, reminding us of Zenobia’s abandonment of her life in the city, where she was known as a lady of some importance, for the life in the country: having lost any meaning in the way she led her previous life, she searches for a new and better one in the new life: her fortune and her character “might have ensured her the very best prospects; but [...] she had found herself willing to forfeit her prospects and bury herself in the country. It seemed to her that she had enough of the world and of human nature” (“DD”, pp.88-9). James choice of language (“a *new* and *better* world,” “might,” “ensure”) makes the decision that “she had enough of the world and

tissue of the most rigid prose, he is still more or less of a poet” (“FH,” pp.907-908).

¹²⁹ Emmet-Long sees James’s fictional works of the 60s and 70s gradually transforming into “social and psychological reality,” a process that is due to “James’s imperative mind” that transforms Hawthorne’s archetypes, or prototype models” (Emmet-Long, p.12).

of human nature” sound less positive. Her dissatisfaction with her previous life seems, possibly, to enclose in it a belief that in her new one she will change for the better, a belief that reminds one of the belief that encompasses the Blithedale project. However, here too this is proved an illusion, a discovery that Adela comes to realise gradually. Moreover, James seems to be treating this Hawthornean belief more subtly than Hawthorne does. What constitutes the better world? What does change involve exactly and how does it come about? James is vague, because this is not where his interest lies.

The interest of the tale, instead, lies in an internal, psychological observation rather than in the external, as the reader realises. When her friend first comes to visit her, “Adela had begun to fear that she had lapsed into an almost irreclaimable rusticity” (“DD,” p.89), only to have to come to terms in the end with the fact that she had not really changed. “She had lost another illusion” (ibid.), says James, - the word “another” referring evidently to her past mistakes. Her belief that her “years of seclusion” would be “profitable” has certainly not lasted, as the presence of a certain Mr. Perkins proves, who – as James ironically puts it – helps her “talk over her ‘difficulties’” (ibid., 91). Adela, obviously, deep down resents her seclusion.

The appearance of Ludlow, is the final challenge to her beliefs, and the final proof of her illusions. At first struck by his ease, which she continuously translates as honesty, and helped on by the sense of freedom which her closeness to nature makes her feel, she is determined to abandon her recent resolves for “a romantic adventure on so classical a basis [that] would assuredly hurt no one” (ibid., p.98). Here lies the Hawthornean view against the romantic idea of human abandonment to the natural instincts that result from living close to nature. Zenobia too had been ready to abandon all social rules and even submit her fortune as well as, finally, commit crime

in her romantic illusion for Hollingsworth's love. Here too Adela's natural instincts, which tend toward companionship, come out in the open. What she seeks, it seems, is a soul mate, which her talk with Ludlow convinces her she has finally found. James is again characteristically sarcastic towards them both, calling their coming together "bandying florid personalities" (ibid., p.95), suggesting that they both behave as if they are advertising themselves to each other, but none is interested really in the product each has to offer. Adela tries to persuade herself to be natural too: "why should not I be honest for once?" (ibid., p.95), or, "might she [Adela] not for once be a generous one?" (ibid., p.97). Obviously, she cannot escape from her true nature, which is one permeated by social restrictions and moral conditions and from her predisposition, her "romantic mood"(ibid.). The all-present, all-knowing narrator suggests that as he explains: "The reader will observe in Adela's meditation the recurrence of this saving clause 'for once'. It rests upon the simple fact that she had begun the day in a romantic mood" (ibid.). Her behaviour from then on, instead of becoming honest and open, becomes stylised into the behaviour of a "coquette" (ibid., p.102). She ends up treating the affair as a game to be won, a game that "thrilled" her by its "acute temptation" (ibid., p.104). Her escape to nature did not change her in the least. Finally, her illusions must end as the day concludes.

In the portrayal of Ludlow James builds a very interesting character by combining the features of Hawthorne's two heroes in The Blithedale Romance, Coverdale and Hollingsworth. A man of dubious character and experience, he reminds us thus of Coverdale and his dubious past. His ease of manner seems to derive from his past experiences. He also brings to mind Hollingsworth and his passionate plans and dreams about building a society governed by his rules. Ludlow too has his own plans and interests, but his pursuit of palaeontology - an interest in

the old and dead - exudes to the reader an aura of mistrust. That and his own words, show a man who does not indulge in romantic pursuits,¹³⁰ but rather, a man who has carefully calculated his life, in other words, one who has made some forward planning. This contrasts with his own words about his future: "it shows what fools we are to attempt to forecast the future" ("DD," p.97), or, "Imagination? I don't believe I have any. No madam, [...] I live in the present" (ibid., pp.97-98). His continuous repetition of "I", "I am," "I have," "I know" and so on (ibid., pp.102-3), lasting a whole paragraph that takes the space of a whole page, and the suspicious avoidance of any details about his divorce (he is not so honest after all), prove moreover that what Adela saw in him was not there; she saw only what she wanted to see. In her presence was a man who, like her, would not commit without any guarantees, just as Coverdale refused to commit in Hawthorne's novel.¹³¹ (The only difference being that Coverdale would not commit despite the guarantees.) Ironically, he comes in the end to see the whole episode as Adela had seen it at the beginning: "less than a fact – an idea; less than an idea – a fancy. 'It's a very pretty little romance as it is'" (DD", p.107).¹³² In a romantic gesture that commits him to nothing, he kisses her hand and leaves.

James, here, unites for a short period of time two people seemingly dissimilar that prove to be otherwise. Both show romantic illusions in their perception about each other (Adela's tenacity about Ludlow's "honesty," Ludlow's admiration of her "charm" ("DD," p.106)) that do not last. By the end of the three hours together, they

¹³⁰ "He was a man of strong faculties and a strong will, but it is doubtful whether his feelings were stronger than he" ("DD," p.92). These words recall Coverdale's words about Hollingsworth's "tremendous concentrativeness and indomitable will" (BR, p.125). While speaking about men like Hollingsworth, men with an "over-ruling purpose" in their lives, he finds them having "no heart, no sympathy, no reason, no conscience" (BR, p.65).

¹³¹ Levy suggests that "in 'A Day of Days' (1866), the idea of the missed opportunity is completely realised" and compares the story with James's later one "The Beast in the Jungle" (Levy, p.32).

perceive how erroneous their estimation of each other was. Ironically, what they see “looking frankly into each other’s eyes” (ibid.) was a reflection of each other. Adela perceives his inability to be her “heroic, very poetic, very chivalric” knight and give up his planned life for her sake, for the mere “fancy” of something going on between them (ibid.). She expects him, then, to be a gentleman, but - by his own admission and her own perception - he is not (ibid., pp.94, 101). Moreover, she is not prepared to give what she asks of him. At the same time, Ludlow grasps Adela’s thinking: he “had caught a glimpse of the truth – that truth of which the reader has had a glimpse – and he stood there at once thrilled and annoyed” (ibid., p.107). He understands that she is selfish, but he does not realise that he too cannot commit: “It’s not my fault,” he says (ibid.). The narrator wishes to indicate that it is: “but he was unable to add, in all conscience, that it was his misfortune” (ibid.), because he will not have to commit and change his plans. Interestingly, three years later James will write a play¹³³ of two people who don’t like each other, but in the end come together, able to compromise their plans and make the commitment that Adela and Ludlow seem here incapable of making.

Bock considers James’s use of the omniscient narrator in his fiction valuable in his “making characters interesting for us and guiding our response to them at each point of the work, a potentiality unique to the narrative, which forms an important link between the Victorian fiction and James’s own innovations in point of view, particularly his device of viewing one character through the eyes of another” (Bock, p.271). The narrator here appears like a unifying force between the two characters, permitting the reader to gather the evidence he needs to construct the truth about

¹³² It is interesting here to note that in his preface to The Blithedale Romance Hawthorne characterises his novel as a “fancy-sketch,” noting moreover that “his whole treatment of the affair is altogether incidental to the main purpose of the Romance” (BR, p.1).

¹³³ “Pyramus and Thisbe” (1869).

Adela and Ludlow. He allows us access to their minds, and contrasts their feelings to their words, their opinions of each other with their actual behaviour. "The reader has been put into possession of the key of our friend's conversation," says the narrator ("DD," p.104), and indeed, by the end of the tale, the reader may claim that he has been given a key into the world of the characters. He is offered a key into a room containing the psychology of the characters he has to enter and try to understand. That key is presented by the narrator. Before, we remember in "Tragedy of Error", the reader was offered the keyhole through which he could observe their actions and words, and from that make out the character. James's confidence grows, as gradually he allows his reader to enter the minds of the characters where he/she is presented with the "dramatisation of the human consciousness" (Bock, p.271). Bock sees "James's experiments in point of view, his interest in the drama of the troubled consciousness" taking him closer to the twentieth century literary concerns (ibid.). The examination of the character the moment he/she is committing an error, moreover, provides James with this opportunity to present the inner drama of consciousness. In this consciousness James's action lies, and this is something that James made evident in his fiction from the beginning. In dramatising it, he allows the reader to take part in the construction and understanding of the character, and draw his/her own conclusions.

iv) Conclusion: The Jamesian Types of Influence.

By 1866 James had a clear idea of what constitutes art in fiction. His tales during the previous two years indicate that he admired Balzac's passionate, realistic romances, Hawthorne's moral vision and imagination, and George Eliot's "moral sympathy." He had, moreover, a notion of the elements that ruin a work of fiction:

too much detail that creates photographs instead of paintings is seen as denying the reader the privilege of participating in the understanding of the story. James's theory, as a result, aims at embroiling both author and reader, a theory he evidently espouses as the best way to good fiction writing. What it means for him as a writer is that he has to find a way to involve the reader in his stories. To do that he espouses several methods that he incorporates in his fiction.

James had no qualms about borrowing ideas from others. There was no "anxiety," to borrow again Bloom's term, as far as James was concerned. In fact, he considered it a compliment to the author, signifying that he/she were worth borrowing: "Whenever a story really interests one, he is very fond of paying it the compliment of imagining it otherwise constructed, and of capping it with a different termination" ("SG2," pp.950-951). In his first four tales he evidently borrows themes, adopting other writers' methods, and builds with them something new. Even where we see James following the precursor's work closely - as with "A Landscape Painter" for example - we end up with "a different termination" and a different perspective. Yet, the precursor's presence is evident, even if we cannot always point to a specific work James is borrowing from.

Examining the four tales closely in search for the precursor, we may conclude, moreover, that there are several kinds of influence to be found in James. First, there are those authors whom James carries with him always. Those he is brought up to love (despite seeing their weaknesses, and, perhaps, as Bloom would say, because of them) and that permeate his works. These include Balzac and Hawthorne. We sense them already in his first four tales, although we cannot be positive about a specific work of theirs that James is basing his tales on. "A Tragedy of Error," as we have seen, is sensed as Balzacian. Yet, in it we have no specific

reference to Balzac, or to any work of his, as is the case with other tales where we have the specific reference to some work. "A Day of Days," similarly, breathes a Hawthornesque atmosphere, reminding one of The Blithedale Romance, without its mentioning the novel,¹³⁴ nor following its plot in the way "A Landscape Painter" follows Tennyson or Hawthorne. Even when we find the tale's precursor - Trollope in the case of "A Story of a Year" - we are still aware of the presence of Hawthorne and Balzac, if not in plot, then in method. The dream of Lizzie, we remember, recalls Hawthorne. These authors are associated with James from the beginning not only of his literary career, but also his literary understanding.¹³⁵ He will use them repeatedly in his fiction until the end of his career. A lot has been written on James's relationship with the works of Hawthorne and Balzac as a result, especially as regards James's novels.¹³⁶ All of the critics argue that James was influenced either by the one or the other. In fact, both writers co-exist in James's works from the start.

¹³⁴ Marius Bewley talks about the influence of Hawthorne in James's early fiction: "There are passages in the earlier prose of James in which the 'tone' of Hawthorne is so clearly struck that, if we were not told, we should take it without question as the earlier writer's work." The Complex Fate: Hawthorne, Henry James and some other American Writers. F.R. Leavis, intr. (NY: Gordian Press, 1967), p.8. Bewley believes, nevertheless, that the influence of Hawthorne was not present only in the early tales: "it was an influence that persisted to the end, and in certain ways it grew more insistent toward the end (ibid., p.5). He believes that Hawthorne's influence is often difficult to point to, since "Hawthorne's influence on James is not merely a matter of surface similarity, but exists in the very reality with which the novelists deal" (ibid., p.9). Bewley though, does not recognise the influences of other writers, believing that Hawthorne's influence "underline[s] the essential Americanism of Henry James" and "reveal[s] the fatuity of insisting to any considerable extent on the influence of Flaubert, Turgenev, Maupassant and Zola" (ibid., pp. 9-10). I find this view very naive.

¹³⁵ Hawthorne's novels James remembers reading as a child ("SBO", p.46). See also Hawthorne, pp. 87-88, where James recalls how the cover picture of the book affected him when he was a small child. He was reading Balzac as a teenager. ("SBO", p.192). He learned to appreciate the author further when John La Farge in 1858 discussed the author with him: "Most of all he [La Farge] revealed to us Balzac; having so much to tell me of what was within that formidably-plated door, in which he all expertly and insidiously played the key, that to re-read even after long years the introductory pages of Eugénie Grandet, breathlessly seized and earnestly absorbed under his instruction, is to see my initiator's youthful face." Henry James, "Notes of a Son and Brother," Autobiography, p.292. We also notice in this passage the role of La Farge as a "key" to James's understanding of Balzac, which reminds us of the role of keys in James's fiction.

¹³⁶ On James's relationship to Hawthorne, apart from the studies of Emmet-Long and Bewley see also; Richard H. Broadhead, The School of Hawthorne. (NY, Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1986), pp.104-200; John Carlos Rowe, "What the Thunder said: James's Hawthorne and the American Anxiety of Influence," Henry James Review, 4 (Winter 1983): 81-119; Dan McCall, Citizens of Somewhere Else: Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henry James. (Ithaca & London: Cornell U.P., 1999); R.W.B.Lewis, "Hawthorne and James: The Matter of the Heart." Trials of the World. (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1965),

Another type of influence we find in James derives from those contemporary authors that he read and criticised. For the main part, his criticism castigates the works of such authors, as Trollope, Stoddard, and other popular writers of the times, from whom he wishes to diverge. We see, therefore, James taking issue with dullness in fiction. Thus in his subsequent work, James embarks on a mission to prove that fiction can and must be interesting, and follows Trollope's story up to the point of disagreement. Then, James diverges in emphasis and method. Nevertheless, diversion is a form of influence, as Lichtenberg had pointed out. This sounds like Bloom's theory of "clinamen."¹³⁷ Perhaps, then, if it were not for those authors that James disagreed with, James might not have arrived at his own theories on what constitutes good fiction. James, therefore, learned from what he understood as the errors and truths revealed to him by other literary figures.

A third way James uses the authors or works he is influenced by is by association. We find already instances where references to other's works have some meaning or suggestiveness. Such was the case with Longfellow and Tennyson in "A Day of Days." By associating his characters with those of another author or book, James, of course, expects the readers to have some prior knowledge of these writers and works. Only then can the reader make the appropriate associations in order to arrive at a better understanding of the characters. So far, this is not very prominent in James. However, as we will see later, gradually this type of evidence of influence

pp. 77-96; Peter Buitenhuis, "Henry James on Hawthorne," *New England Quarterly*, 32 (1959): 207-225. For studies on James and Balzac, other than Fussell, Stowe, Delbaere-Garrant, and Brooks, see also Philip Grover, *Henry James and the French Novel: a Study in Inspiration*. (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1973) pp. 15-65; Percy, G. Adams, "Young Henry James and the Lesson of his Master Balzac," *Revue de Littérature Comparée*, 35 (July-September 1961), pp.458-467; Pierre A. Walker, *Reading Henry James in French Cultural Contexts*. (DeKalb: Northern Illinois U.P., 1995).

¹³⁷ "A poet swerves away from his precursor, by so reading his precursor's poem as to execute movement in his own poem, which implies that the precursor poem went accurately up to a certain point, but then should have swerved, precisely in the direction that the new poem moves" (Bloom, 14). If we substitute poetry here for fiction we arrive at the same understanding of what James did with Trollope's work.

becomes more predominant, sometimes replacing all the other types as James becomes a more confident writer.

Finally, a fourth type of influence may derive from figures whose methods James anticipates. We saw how “A Landscape Painter” anticipated Eliot. James saw her positive and negative elements because he was ready to see them. Already he had an idea of what he wanted fiction not to be about, as well as what he wanted it to consist of, which he proves by his apophthegm on the relationship that must exist between writer and reader. Thus, in his critical essay on Eliot we may surmise that James virtually compares her work to his and finds hers void of that relationship between reader and author that James considers so important, and that he put such an effort into building in his antecedent tales. Eliot choked her novel with her presence (just as Trollope and other writers had done), while she failed to entice the reader by giving him enough relevant information to work with. At the same time, Eliot does influence James, because in studying her in what seems essentially a comparison to himself, he simultaneously assimilates her assets, while he keeps away from what he sees as her errors. (In a similar way, James will be ready for Stendhal in the late sixties and Turgenev in the early seventies. His admiration for Stendhal and Turgenev will spring from his own previous fermentation of the elements that he subsequently finds and admires in them. While his objections will concern ideas that James had already established in his own fiction, and that Turgenev and Standhal, in James’s opinion, we shall see, lack¹³⁸).

¹³⁸ We have proof, as it shall be shown, that James had been reading Stendhal earlier than Edel suggests. Moreover, although I am not of the opinion that James “found” Turgenev in 1873 as Gettmann and Peterson suggest (Royal A. Gettmann, “Turgenev in England and America” *Illinois Studies in Language and Literature* 27 (1941), p.67 and Dale E. Peterson, The Clement Vision: Poetic Realism in Turgenev and James. (NY: Kennikat Press, 1975), p.41); neither am I of Barbara Wilkie Tedford’s opinion that James had been reading Turgenev since the 50s just because he “had many opportunities” to do so. “Of Libraries and Salmon-Colored Volumes: James’s Reading of Turgenev through 1873” *Resources for American Literary Study* 9 (1979), p.49. Nor do I believe that, had James read a tale or two of Turgenev in the *Revue* in the fifties, as Tedford argues, that would have made

James's belief that the reader should participate in the tale's creation is correlated to the author's duty to make it interesting. Therefore, it seems logical that James should have chosen the theatre as a way to involve his reader. He thus turns his story into a setting and creates scenes where both characters and readers are required to act. To control both characters and readers and, at the same time, to avoid the mistakes made by Trollope, Eliot, Stoddard and other writers who drowned their works by their presence, we saw that James imported the observer narrator, who is constructed to appear as another character in the tale, as another actor. The observer narrator becomes the projection of the reader, as James demands that the latter be also an observer; but the narrator does not become the embodiment of the author, as critics believe, since it becomes clear that James strives to distance himself from him: we are aware of the author's observant presence from that distance, sometimes allowing the narrator to speak for him (as in "a Day of Days"), at other times showing a demarcation from him by making his narrator appear unreliable (as in the other tales I examined). We realise, nevertheless, that the author is required to be an observer also, in order to create the narrator as such. He, too, must be of that "fine intelligence" that Ferguson talked about. This explains why James admired authors whom he saw as observers of life. He, also, was a great observer of life, the illusion of which he tries to recreate in his fiction. Observation, and thus the faculty of vision, that "intense vision" that James admired in Balzac, becomes, therefore, in his fiction an important connecting factor between author, narrator and reader.

Turgenev a significant figure for James as yet. If Turgenev, a significant influence for James in the seventies to be sure, had been with James since his boyhood, James would not have missed the opportunity to acknowledge it in his autobiography, as he does with Hawthorne and Balzac. It is far more likely that James read Turgenev in the late sixties-early seventies, after his brother and father had done so. Daniel Lerner, who essentially agrees with Tedford, understands however that the evidence is circumstantial as "the date of James's first reading of Turgenev cannot be fixed certainly" in "The Influence of Turgenev on Henry James," *Slavonic & East European Review* 20 (1941), p.29.

Ultimately, the observer becomes also the projection of the character, who appears to be observing the appearance, actions and emotions of other characters. We saw how characters, like actors in the theatre, reveal important information about each other. Their melodramatic speeches and gestures, moreover, make them vivid in the reader's mind, and the reader feels as if he/she is watching them rather than reading about them. The stories, consequently, have the feel of a play.¹³⁹ Moreover, by encompassing the narrator amidst the characters, making him appear as a character too (either directly as in the case of "A Landscape Painter," or indirectly as in the other tales we examined) and by having him invite the reader – as the invisible audience – to participate in forming judgements, James turns the reader into an actor too; achieving, thus, his goal as expressed in his essay on Eliot.

At the same time, by using melodrama – associated with the theatre – James extracts from the reader a reaction. We, the readers, find that we must know how and why the characters came to their melodramatic climaxes. The reader is left with the task of searching for the truth, following the clues of what he witnessed. Simultaneously, melodrama provides the careful reader with the clues. We find that the actions of Hortense speak for themselves, just as Brooks indicated that action has its own language which reveals the psychology of the actor. The melodramatic thoughts of the characters are equally revealing about their psychology. Jamesian action, then, gradually moves towards the esoteric of the character. Melodrama is thus internalised in James (as in the case of Lizzie and Adela), who uses it to externalise the truth about their character. Levy sees melodrama as "James's capacity for confronting the realities that lie beneath the surfaces he rendered with such skill,

¹³⁹ Barzun suggests that a reason why James felt drawn to write his plays was "because he sought the intensified effect of the play form – the short sharp conflict which must be made plain as it progresses and which must nonetheless be kept half-hidden to hold the feelings of wonder or horror in suspense"

the sign of a vigorous and unflinching vision” (Levy, p.9). Hence, the reader discovers that behind Hortense’s melodramatic actions lies the reality of a woman in desperation; just as behind Lizzie’s melodramatic thoughts lies the reality of a woman who feels guilt. In using melodrama, then, James plays with the effects of the flux between appearance and reality on the reader’s perception.¹⁴⁰

James, moreover, uses melodrama as a means through which he “examines moral situations” (Levy, p.3), or, as Brooks would put it, expresses “the moral imagination” (Brooks, p.14). Both Levy and Barzun agree that melodrama expresses the battle between good and evil,¹⁴¹ and Brooks sees in James’s “dramatized moral dilemmas” the influence of Balzac, who “nourished himself with Gothic novel, melodrama, and frenetic adventure story, and invented cops-and-robbers fiction,” in order to prove that “reality can be exciting, can be equal to the demands of the imagination, which in Balzac’s case means primarily the moral imagination, at play with large and basic ethical issues” (Brooks, p.6). James takes that further “into the drama of moral consciousness,” explains Brooks, “so the excitement derives from the characters’ own dramatised apprehension of clashing moral forces” (ibid.). And for James, therefore, Brooks argues, “moral consciousness must be an adventure, its recognition must be the stuff of heightened drama” (ibid.). Yet, although James uses melodramatic conventions, Levy argues, “he often departs radically from the archetypal scheme, counselling chastened stoicism rather than optimism and

(Barzun, p.269). One sees that James uses these effects in his tales too, and one cannot help thinking that some of the tales, especially his first one, could easily be turned into plays.

¹⁴⁰ Bewley claims that this is the result of Hawthorne’s influence: “This concern with the relation between appearance and reality is at the basis of Hawthorne’s art, but for Hawthorne the strain between the two terms is not as great as it was to become for James” (Bewley, p.80).

¹⁴¹ “Melodrama,” says Barzun, “even at its crudest, depicts the endless battle of God and Satan” (Barzun, p.262). Which is what Levy intimates when he says that “ideologically, melodrama insists upon the ultimate goodness of man; its single dramatic aim is to demonstrate the triumph of good over evil [...] Melodrama is, in effect, mock tragedy: its strategy is to threaten the good in order to lend a greater surprise to its perennial denials of the power of evil, and its final appeal to the relief that we experience when virtue escapes intact” (Levy, p.2).

acknowledging the efficacy of evil rather than denying it” (Levy, pp.2-3). In the tales examined here, we have seen the acknowledgement of this efficacy in James’s preoccupation with his characters’ moral states. The moral consciousness of Hortense, which we indirectly recognise, and especially the one of Lizzie, is turned into an adventure for the reader. Furthermore, “chastened stoicism” was implied at the end of “A Landscape Painter,” when Locksley finds himself married to a mercenary woman. This stoicism, the acceptance of responsibility for his error, it is perhaps implied, brings about his death. In that sense, James is indeed poles apart from the melodramatic idea of “demonstrating the triumph of good over evil” that Levy mentions. The interest in James lies in demonstrating the adventure, the machination of consciousness as his character deals with moral/ethical issues, in such a way so as to make the readers go through the adventure also.

James finds the act of committing errors - a common enough experience in life - the background for examining moral reflection. James builds up the situation to reach a peak, whereby the character finds him/herself making choices and realising that these choices were erroneous. Hortense’s situation leads her and the reader to the realisation, or moment of recognition, that she has fallen into an ethically void pit, as dark as her face is pale; and her choices from then on remain desperate and blind, because she chooses to abandon herself to her immoral life. Lizzie, on the other hand, reaches a moment of moral choice as she is faced with her error of having promised herself to the wrong man, but decides to follow her conscience and stick to her promise. She seems to be rewarded with the death of her fiancé and the freedom to marry the man she loves. Locksley’s pretentious (and thus erroneous) belief that he can escape what he really is – a man of fortune – leads him to commit a further error in marrying the type of woman he wished to avoid. Similarly, Adela’s and

Ludlow's erroneous perceptions and romantic illusions about themselves and each other lead them to the final moment of realisation that the day they had together would lead to nothing more than a "friend[ship] of three hours" ("DD," p.107). Their errors, moreover, attract the reader, who is enticed into noticing them, explaining them and having his/her own opinion about them.

We see, therefore, that in his own works James abides by the requirements he sets up for other writers (Daugherty, p.21). In the first four tales, the theatrical methods James uses in his fiction help him establish his theory on what constitutes good fiction, and depart from the errors that he saw other literary figures make – at the same time as he is influenced by them in more than one way. Theatre is used, though, as a means through which the author achieves the illusion of reality in the tales. Interestingly, at the same time, James uses the theme of error-making in his plots to create stories that diverge from the erroneous precursors and help the reader reach the truth. This preoccupation with errors committed by characters, as well as the presence of drama, are two features that continue in the following group of tales examined. However, as James continues his search for the means through which to attract his readers' participation, his stories seem to become darker, infused with romantic and Gothic elements. The next chapter will examine how James's darker strain helps him achieve his original goals.

Chapter Two

Sensational Tales of Complex Consciousness

i) “Poor Richard” and the Complexity of Character

“Poor Richard” (1867) was the sixth tale to see the light of publication, but will be examined before “My Friend Bingham” (1867) because we know that James wrote “Poor Richard” first.¹⁴² Critics are again divided in their opinion regarding this tale. There are those like Dorothea Krook, who dislike it despite its foreshadowings of later works: “‘Poor Richard’ is typical of James’s weakest apprentice stories: a rambling, sprawling, ill-shaped tale, much too long for what it says, and punctuated by fits of violence in speech and act that are not uncommon in these earliest stories, showing how Dostoyevskian the young James could be before he became consistently Jamesian.”¹⁴³ On the other camp are critics like Gordon, who sees “Poor Richard” as “one of [James’s] finest tales” (Gordon, p.82).¹⁴⁴ Although of simple plot with few characters – three very different men want to win the hand of the same woman – James handled it in such a way so as to create psychological drama, probing deep into his characters. “What are particularly remarkable,” Martin and Ober explain, “are the detailed yet clear analyses of complex states of mind and feeling of moral dilemmas, which were to become a feature of James’s future work” (Martin/Ober, p.26).

¹⁴² See Michael Anesco, ed., Letters, Fictions, Lives: Henry James and William Dean Howells. (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.12. Hereafter cited as LFL. Also in Kaplan, p.73; and in UY, p.237. Novick gives the size of the tale as the reason for its being published after “My Friend Bingham” (Novick, p.153).

¹⁴³ Dorothea Krook, “Isabel Archer Figures in Some Early Stories of Henry James,” *The Henry James Review* 7: n.2-3 (Winter-Spring 1986), p.131. It is rather strange that Krook talks about foreshadowings since she examines the heavily revised (1885) edition of the tale in her article, which is as close as it could get to James’s later fiction. It seems that she is treating it as if it was the original early text, proving how prejudiced critics are about James’s early tales. See also Beach, p.175; Kelly, pp.71-72; Wagenknecht, p.199. Encyclopedia, p.520.

¹⁴⁴ Kaplan calls it his “most sustained story so far” (Kaplan, p.70). See also LeClair, p.397; Kraft, p.5; Martin/Ober, pp.26, 29, for similar views.

Like the previous tale that seems to have stemmed from more than one literary precursor, this tale presents us with a good indication of how James, as he got more confident, used his influences. Critics' efforts to find the precursor of this tale, have resulted in a plethora of ideas, which indicate, ultimately, how important for the understanding of James's tales and their author's intention influence-hunting has become. It may even be an indication that James purposefully uses these precursors in his texts, in order to attract the attention of the reader. Martin and Ober, in their search for the precursor, turn to the title that suggests to them Benjamin Franklin, but also see in the tale Eliot's influence (Martin/Ober, p.27); however, the latter influence is refuted by Buitenhuis (p.32). Tintner finds in the heroine's name the influence of Cumming's The Lamplighter (Pop, p.206). Novick sees suggestions of Eliot and Hawthorne (Novick, p.141). Adams proposes Balzac's tale "La Vieille Fille" for a similar triangle of suitors despite differences in character and intentions (Adams, p.461). But closest to a match, in my opinion, come Buitenhuis (p.31), Wagenknecht (p.199), LeClair and Kelly, who notice the influence of Sand.¹⁴⁵ This plethora of suggestions may complicate matters for the critic, but not for James, as we shall see, who seems to have had a clear idea of what he wanted to do.

Edel, moreover, is of the opinion that James's story is autobiographical: "The eloquence as well as minuteness with which Henry describes poor Richard's feelings have the vividness of personal experience" (Life, p.77). By "personal experience," Edel refers to the summer of 1865 holiday which James, Oliver Wendel Holmes and John Chipman Grey spent with Minny Temple. However, if Captain Severn in the

¹⁴⁵ "The rich, independent heiress, living in the country attracting many admirers, among them a farmer lad, is reminiscent of George Sand, though, no doubt, unintentionally so," says Kelly and finds similarities in "the analysis of love by the author [James], the long discussions about it, often in the nature of soliloquies or asides, by the characters," with "such tales as *Lucrezia Floriani* or *Le Dernier Amour*" (Kelly, p. 71). LeClair, who quotes Kelly, also agrees that "the situation of Gertrude and her

story resembles James – according to Edel¹⁴⁶ – and Minnie was the prototype for Gertrude, Edel’s theory does not account for the other two characters, the protagonist, Richard, and the Major. Certainly there is no evidence that either of James’s two young friends were in anyway the prototypes, other than that they were officers in the war. Moreover, the portrayal of Gertrude is unlike the character of the Minnie Temple (Kraft, p.7). If, however, this incident in James’s life put him in the mood to write a tale in which the psychology of four people would be explored, then we can say that it came at the correct moment.

Certainly, James had in mind similar (literary) examples on which he could build his own story, as his critical essays at the time betray. In his essay on Mary Elisabeth Braddon for example, James mentions Mrs Radcliffe and her novel The Mysteries of Udolfo (1794) (“AF,” p.742). There are similarities to be found between James’s tale and Radcliffe’s novel, such as the courtship of a young woman by more than one man.¹⁴⁷ (Emily is sought after by more than three men throughout her lengthy adventures, but we can say that only three of them play an important role: Valancourt, the chevalier that she loves, who is almost lost to her through his immature behaviour, but who grows by the end to be noble and deserving in everyone’s eyes; Count Morano, the friend and fellow conspirator of her step-uncle, whose motives prove to be rather mercenary; and the chevalier DuPond, who loves her secretly at the beginning and afterwards helps her out of many difficulties, but has to submit in the end to losing her to another man). Nor is this novel the only one of the kind Radcliffe wrote. Her earlier novel, The Romance of the Forest (1791),

suitors, among them a farmer lad, is more in the vein of George Sand than out of Harry’s life,” thus disputing the idea that the story is autobiographical. (LeClair, p.397).

¹⁴⁶ Edel refers to Severn as “the Captain who has loved Gertrude in silence – in Henry’s fashion” (Life, p.78).

¹⁴⁷ Certainly, the plot with three suitors to a single woman seems quite common. For instance, it recurs repeatedly in Hardy.

that James had probably read, again deals with the choice of one woman between three men who pursue her. Moreover, one cannot help but wonder whether the original for Major Luttrell, the first fully developed evil character in James's works, is not one of the evil characters of Radcliffe, especially Montoni. Novick says of Major Luttrell that "he was evil in the only way that James recognised Evil: he abused his power" (Novick, p.141). The same can apply to Montoni, whose declarations of power over his niece are unforgettable:

She afterwards enquired by what right he exerted this unlimited authority over her? [...]

'By what right!' cried Montoni, with malicious smile, 'by the right of my will [...] You may know *I* am not to be trifled with.'¹⁴⁸

Another novelist may have contributed as well to the development of the plot of "Poor Richard." George Sand must have been on James's mind at this time, as one year after the publication of "Poor Richard" saw the publication of his first critical essay on Sand, in which James recalls that he has read all of her tales¹⁴⁹, and especially mentions Mauprat ("MM," pp.700-1). In Mauprat (1837) the heiress of fortune and name, Edmee Mauprat, is sought after by two men, one of whom, her cousin, Bernard Mauprat, is described as a man of nature. Bernard Mauprat bears many similarities to Richard's character, who is just as much of a brute at the beginning of the tale as Bernard, and who ultimately becomes seemingly more civilised in his manners and appreciated by Gertrude, just as Bernard's efforts towards attaining education and civilised behaviour are for the sake of Edmee. Kelly's view that James may have used Sand "unintentionally" (Kelly, p.71) seems unlikely. "Unintentional," is a strange word to be applied to a writer like Henry

¹⁴⁸ Ann Radcliffe, The Mysteries of Udolpho, (1794), ed. Bonamy Dobree, (Oxford: World's Classics, 1980), pp.216-217. Hereafter cited as MU.

¹⁴⁹ "With all her precipitation, not one of her tales (we believe we have read them all) [...]" in Henry James, "Mademoiselle Marquem: A Novel. By Madame George Sand. New York: G.W. Carleton & Co., 1868" (1868). LC2, p. 697. Hereafter cited as "MM."

James. James would not have felt guilty of having “translated” other author’s ideas.

He himself wrote that:

There is no strictness in the representation by novelists of persons who have struck them in life, and there can in the nature of things be none. From the moment the imagination takes a hand in the game, the inevitable tendency is to divergence, to following what may be called new scents. The original gives hints, but the writer does what he likes with them, and imports new elements into the picture (Hawthorne, pp.106-107).

If Kelly implies guilt with her “unintentionally,” she need not have been afraid. James has “imported” enough new elements to “Poor Richard” to create a new picture. In fact, his story seems a polemic against the very romantic writers James borrows from.

James, moreover, may have found the title of his tale in Sand’s novel. In chapter XIII Bernard mocks himself for his dress and manners in the city where he had come for the first time. “You may shrug your shoulder when I confess to you that I took the greatest pleasure in the world in not powdering my hair, in wearing clumsy shoes, and in going everywhere in an excessively plain, strictly neat, dark-coloured suit, in a word, in aping, as far as it was then permissible without being taken for a *real plebeian*, the dress and the ways of *Poor Richard!*”¹⁵⁰ In James’s tale Richard is intentionally careless of his dress although he resents and is jealous of the looks and manners of the other two men that court Gertrude. He performs his own little childish revolution by not participating to the discussions, and instead sulks. This may be the evidence, therefore, that Bernard was the original of Richard.

When the story begins, the reader is brought into “Miss Whittaker’s garden.”¹⁵¹ The description that follows of the premises should prepare us for the author’s aversion to the romantic. Hence, the meadow is “narrow”, the “towing-path”

¹⁵⁰ George Sand, Mauprat (1837). Sylvia Raphael trans. (Oxford : World Classics, 1997), p.146.

¹⁵¹ Henry James, “Poor Richard,” (1867), Tales, p.128. Hereafter cited as “PR.”

is “disused”, and the river is of “slow and shallow stream”, with “low flat banks” that “were unadorned with rocks or trees (“PR,” p.128).” How unlike the endless descriptions of the gardens in Radcliffe’s novels; for example the grounds around St Aubert’s house, “that opened upon a grove, which stood on the brow of a gentle declivity, that fell towards the river, and the tall trees gave it a melancholy and pleasant shade (MU, p.3);” or “the green pastures along which he [St.Aubert] had so often bounded in the exaltation of health, and youthful freedom – the woods, under whose refreshing shade he had first indulged that pensive melancholy [...] - the wild walks of the mountains, the river, on whose waves he had floated, and the distant plains” and so on (MU, p.2). The river in Radcliffe is with “swelling bank,” near “orange, lemon and palm trees, whose fruit in the coolness of the evening breathed delicious fragrance (MU, p.4).” Emily, moreover, has several meetings with Valancourt in romantic gardens where the love scenes take place. In George Sand’s novel, gardens are equally prominent. Bernard is always walking up and down the gardens in search of Edmee. In the garden the most interesting and romantic scenes take place. James however makes his story attention-grabbing by infusing scents of a romantic past that exist only as an afterglow, at a time when the romantic tradition was waning¹⁵² and realism (and, ultimately, naturalism) was becoming dominant in contemporary literature. Romance and Realism are interwoven throughout, but we should be warned about the outcome: the description ends with the path being “not in itself a romantic promenade” (“PR”, p.128).

¹⁵² Discussing James’s critical essay on Arnold, Daugherty points out James’s conflict between romance and reality: “As a ‘higher critic’ living in a post-Romantic age, James distrusted pure feeling, which he associated with nostalgia and hence with an impulse toward escapism. Therefore, like Arnold he decided to play the rationalist – or so it would seem.” Nevertheless, she points to James’s subsequent praise of Arnold “‘for boldly saluting [Oxford University] as the Queen of Romance: romance being the deadly enemy of the commonplace’” (Daugherty, p.7). James, then sees Romance as an escape from dullness, a thing he most disliked, as we have said, in fiction.

by the summer sun, a large and healthy mouth, and on that mouth the adorable and dangerous light of the smile. Such was Deruchette”¹⁵⁴), Gertrude is plain. But she has another kind of beauty; Captain Severn, explains it:

‘You mean she isn’t pretty. She *is* beautiful, I think, in spite of the irregularity of her face. It’s a face not to be forgotten. She has no features, no colour, no lilies, no roses, no attitudes; but she has *looks*, expressions. Her face has *character*; and so has her figure. It has no “style”, as they call it; but that only belongs properly to a work of art, which Miss Whittaker’s figure isn’t, thank Heaven! She is as unconscious of it as Nature herself’ (“PR” p.143).

We see thus again in this story what seems to evolve into a constant motif: James differentiates between outward appearance and inward traits and gives preference and priority to the latter. It is in the character itself, in the personality of the hero/heroine that the interest lies. Here we may find the esoteric beauty that will find ways to project itself onto the face and figure. “What do we care about the beauty of man or woman in comparison with their humanity?” he had asked the previous year in his critical essay on Prescott (“Azarian,” p.606):

In a novel we crave the spectacle of that of which we may feel that we *know* it. The only lasting fictions are those which have spoken to the reader’s heart, and not to his eye; those who have introduced him to an atmosphere in which it was credible that human beings might exist, and to human beings with whom he might feel tempted to claim kinship (“Azarian”, pp.606-607).

This is what James tries to achieve in his own tale. He introduces us to “an atmosphere in which it was credible that human beings might exist” by making us the witnesses of the “sentimental converse” between Gertrude and Richard and by bringing us face to face with their “humanity” as soon as the story begins. Le Clair understood this when he wrote that: “ The author here shows, perhaps for the first time with any sustained powers, his growing ability to appreciate and present the

¹⁵³ Henry James, “*Les Travailleurs de la Mer*. Par Victor Hugo. Bruxelles: A. Lacrois, Verboeckhoven et Cie.; New York: F.W.Chistern, 1866,” LC2, p.448. Hereafter cited as “LTM.”

The tale, it must be noted, begins in *media res*. The reader witnesses a quarrel between Gertrude and the hero of the tale, her aspirant lover, Richard. Ironically, the narrator calls it “sentimental converse” and it is not long before we realise otherwise. But not before the narrator has his chance to describe for us the two main characters: we learn that the heiress is “positively plain, but for the frequent recurrence of a magnificent broad smile, - which imparted loveliness to her somewhat plebeian features (“PR”, p.128). This element is very important, because, as everyone who loves Gertrude has discovered, (and the reader discovers it through Captain Severn’s lips and Richard will second the observation) this smile represents all that Gertrude is. It gives her face “character” (“PR”, p.143). When this smile burns out, as it does in the end, it will not be Gertrude anymore that we see, “but her ghost” (“PR”, p.172). Therefore, Gertrude is her smile. When that is gone, she is no more.

Victor Hugo emerges as another (associative) influence for this tale; it is, possibly, from him that James got the idea about the smile which he subsequently explores in his own heroine. In his essay on Hugo’s novel, La Travailleurs de la Mer (1866), James makes a point about mentioning the importance of the smile on the face of Hugo’s heroine:

About this young lady M. Hugo says an enormous number of extravagant and pretty things. We all know what to expect, however, when M. Hugo enters upon the subject *jeune fille*. “To have a smile,” he says at the close of a rhapsody on this subject, “which, one knows not how, lightens the weight of the enormous chain dragged in common by all the living, is – what else can I call it but divine? Deruchette had this smile. We will say more. Deruchette was this smile.”¹⁵³

Unlike Deruchette who is beautiful (“in the place of science she possessed beauty; in the place of intelligence, innocence; in the place of love, ignorance [...]. [She had] an innocent brow, a supple and graceful neck, chestnut hair, a fair skin, slightly freckled

more delicate shades of human reactions between people bound together in a situation calling for sensitive understanding and treatment” (LeClair, p.396). This priority, to interest the heart rather than the eye,¹⁵⁵ is not a complete break with his beliefs on the real, the observed (“the spectacle”). Neither is it new, as Levy seems to believe. We saw it developing in the previous tales also, especially in “A Story of a Year” that opens in a similar way, and “A Day of Days,” where two people were brought together, and whose reactions to each other James handles with special interest.

Here, also, we are only told about the characters exactly what we need to know, allowing the characters to reveal themselves and each other. In the quarrel at the beginning, for example, Richard’s movements are carefully given in such a way as to betray the movements and behaviour of a boy who is upset because he cannot get what he wants: “His manner, as he walked and talked, was that of a nervous, passionate man, wrought almost to desperation;” or “the young man gazed on the ground, swinging his stick. Finally, with a heavy blow, he brought it to earth” (“PR”, p.128). Whereas Gertrude remains “self-composed.” She finally “[strolls] quietly along, looking at the slow-mounting moon” (ibid.). That the couple think in different wavelengths becomes evident from the object of their vision: she looks at the moon, and he looks at the ground at his feet. Our romantic expectations about this couple are dashed by the distance that seems to exist between them.

Richard’s exclamations of love are melodramatic and Gertrude is condescending with him with the result that he continues to strike “vehemently at the

¹⁵⁴ Victor Hugo, The Toilers of the Sea, (1866), vol. I, Mary W. Artois trans., (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1903), p. 75.

¹⁵⁵ It is characteristic that in his critical essay on Hugo he finishes by saying: “[The work] is in our opinion, the work of a decline. We have not hesitated to speak of it with levity, because we believe it to have been written exclusively *from the head*. This fact we deeply regret, for we have an enormous respect for M. Victor Hugo’s *heart*” (my emphases) (“LTM”, pp.453-454).

weeds by the water's edge, like one who may easily burst into tears of rage" ("PR," p.129). The plot at this instant is very similar to Mauprat. Gertrude behaves toward Richard as Edmee had done toward Bernard. She tells him: " 'if I don't love you Richard, in your way, I don't; and if I can't, I can't. We can't love by will'" ("PR," p.132). How similar to Edmee's speech, when she tells Bernard that "'affection cannot be made to order; it must be requested or inspired.'"¹⁵⁶ When Gertrude gives her opinion of Richard ("you are so indolent, so irresolute, so undisciplined, so uneducated'" ("PR", p.130)) it is like listening to Edmee haranguing Bernard for the same reasons. The hero is trying to possess the heroine with childish and animalistic instincts, while the heroine tries to chastise the "child" and teach him some lessons by enumerating his flaws. When Richard hugs Gertrude "a selfish sense of victory invaded the young man's breast" ("PR," p.131), reminding us of the same animal instincts Bernard felt when he came into physical contact with Edmee.

Richard, like Bernard, is initially presented as being close to nature, innocent in his ignorance.¹⁵⁷ He can only express himself by showing his raw feelings: he is brutal, passionate, instinctive and violent. In fact, "brutal" and "violent" are two words that repeat themselves throughout the tale. He has a force inside him that boils his blood hot (he is called the "hot-blooded one" in p.159). Unlike both Bernard and Valancourt, who seem to be expected to develop from innocent to mature men, Richard already appears to encompass many qualities simultaneously. Throughout the tale we perceive several perspectives on Richard: at first, we see the spoilt child in him, the "rebellious and troublesome boy" that he grew to be ("PR," p.134). Then, when compared to the two other men in the tale he appears rustic, "a Pagan hero" (ibid., p.137), "an ignorant boor" (ibid., p.141), a "native barbarian" (ibid., p.151).

¹⁵⁶ George Sand, Mauprat (1837), trans. Sylvia Raphael, (Oxford: World's Classics, 1997), p.102.

But the most prominent image of Richard that gradually emerges is romantic: that of a knight on a quest. He is described as “this woefully wounded knight” (“PR,” p.144), with “a brave resolve” (ibid., p.145), “soaring most heroically” (ibid.), riding his horse “like one pursued,” and “having successfully performed this feat” (ibid., p.147), thinking, moreover, of being “worthy of striving to obtain” Gertrude and “liv[ing] forevermore upon the glory of having been formally refused by [her]” (ibid., p.137). He perceives the other men surrounding Gertrude as opponents whom he carefully observes, and envisages winning Gertrude as an “adventure” (ibid, p.145) and a “game” (ibid., p.153), bringing thus to one’s mind jousts. When Gertrude visits his home she speaks of his “*entourage*” (ibid., p.155). Finally, he is described by Gertrude herself as being “abundantly a man” (ibid., p.178), at the end of the tale, as opposed to her original view of him as a child at the beginning. Ironically, concurrently with Gertrude’s perception of him, he seems to the reader and the narrator lost, without a quest; almost the way he is reported to have been before he met Gertrude.

Richard, we understand, is not a simple character, but rather a multi-dimensional one. There are many sides to him: he can be passionate, uncouth and childish, but he can also be wise and self-possessed (ibid., p.154). He can be “magnanimous” (ibid., p.142) and “selfish” (ibid., p.131). He can be weak in behaviour and strong in feeling. Nor is he the only many-faceted character in the tale. James’s fiction, thus, proves his dissatisfaction with the “types” of characters – the good, the bad and the ugly – of the romantic novels. He especially resented, moreover, Dickens’s types, calling them “a mere bundle of eccentricities, animated

¹⁵⁷ This may be another indication that the tale has Mauprat as its precursor, as Sand was much preoccupied in her novel with Rousseau’s ideas.

by no principle of nature whatever.”¹⁵⁸ In his own work, we see James’s efforts to make his characters complicated; characters that evolve in front of the readers’ eyes. He wants them to be real characters, human, as opposed to the static characters he found in other authors. Their ability to evolve, moreover, contributes also to James’s persistent intention to keep the text free of his identity. Hence, the reader remains intrigued by the characters rather than the author.

Richard is not the only character who is not static. Gertrude, “his first extended portrait of a lady” (Gordon, p.82), similarly unravels in the eyes of the reader. She, too, is comprised of different, often conflicting traits, displaying James’s grasp of the complexity of human nature:

Her feelings were indeed, throughout, strong rather than delicate; and yet there was in her whole nature, as the world had learned to look at it, a moderation, a temperance, a benevolence, an orderly freedom, which bespoke universal respect. She was impulsive, and yet discreet; economical, and yet generous; humorous and yet serious; keenly discerning of human distinctions, and yet almost indiscriminately hospitable; with a prodigious fund of common sense beneath all; and yet beyond this, - like the priest behind the king, - and despite her broadly prosaic, and as it were secular tone, a certain latent suggestion of heroic possibilities (“PR,” p.133).

Gertrude, then, as is evident in all human beings, is an amalgam of good and bad qualities. She appears strong most of the times to society, except when we see her weak in front of Richard (“here she found herself weaker than he” (ibid., p.131)), or opposite Severn to whom she cannot admit that he loves, and finally opposite Luttrell to whom she clings for security (“she would anticipate security by agreeing to marry him” (ibid., p.165)). She enjoys her dominion over other people, a rule her financial status permits her to exercise: “She was in virtue, both of her wealth and of her tact one of the chief figures of the neighbourhood. These facts had forced her into a prominence which she made no attempt to elude, and in which she now felt

¹⁵⁸ Henry James, “*Our Mutual Friend*. By Charles Dickens. New York: Harper Brothers, 1865”

thoroughly at home” (ibid., p.133).¹⁵⁹ Consequently, her money affects her character and actions (which brings to mind Locksley in “A Landscape Painter” and what Mull had said about the inability to escape what is already part of your character). She partly realises that. It is this love of money and position which prevents her from telling Severn of her love for him:

‘I am no fool. I can’t be a fool if I try. I am too thoroughly my father’s daughter for that. I love that man, but I love myself better. Of course, then, I don’t deserve to have him. If I loved him in a way to merit his love, I would sit down this moment and write him a note telling him that if he does not come back to me, I shall die. But I shall neither write the note nor die. I shall live and grow stout...well! I’m as he made me. Whether I can deceive others, I know not; but I certainly can’t deceive myself.’ (“PR”, p.149)

Her words prove that she bears the responsibility for her actions. It is not fate or destiny that set the couple apart, as she at other times claims,¹⁶⁰ but her own fault. Her feelings for Severn constantly contrast with her vision of her duty as dictated by her money: “her duty was to fold her arms resignedly, to sit quietly on the sofa, and watch a great happiness sink below the horizon” (ibid., p.140). What she does not realise, what she comes to realise much later with Severn’s death, is that she had a choice, and that she made the wrong one in choosing to allow her money to get in the way of her happiness. When her chances of happiness are gone, she realises (and so does the reader) her error. Hence, she admits to fearing and despising the very element that enabled her to enjoy other things, because money, after all, became a

(1865). *LC1*, p.854. Hereafter cited as “OMF.”

¹⁵⁹ Krook believes her to be “a blend of James’s Isabel Archer and an American variant of George Eliot’s Dorothea Brooke. Her wealth, her universal benevolence, her social conscience, her maternal-protective instinct (mainly towards Poor Richard) are the Dorothea side. The Isabel side comes out principally in her yearning desire to put her fortune at the service of the man she loves” (Krook, p.132). I do not agree that Gertrude has the desire that Krook describes, because she appears to be clinging to the fortune rather than the man she loves. Krook is more successful in pointing out the similarity between Luttrell and Osmond (ibid.).

¹⁶⁰ ““Heaven has chosen for us,”” she once tells Richard (“PR,” p.132). Her rather superstitious belief in destiny, fate, fortune, may be an indication of the relief she probably feels at ascribing the responsibility for her wrong choices to some stronger power, beyond her control: “It seemed to Gertrude [...] that she had a strong case against Fortune (“PR,” p.148).

hindrance to love (a common theme in Jamesian novels): “A vague suspicion that her money had done her an incurable wrong inspired her with a profound distaste for the care of it” (ibid., p.165). As a result of the conflict in her - as this realisation is gradually taking place - she withers in front of everyone’s eyes; and from the “florid and vigorous dalia” (“ibid., p.133) that everyone wanted, she becomes “somewhat paler than before.” As she agrees to marry Major Luttrell, the man that wants her for her money, she continues to err and withers even further: “She had lost her single beauty, her smile; and she would make but a ghastly figure in the altar” (ibid., p.170). When Richard sees her again after he recovers from his illness,¹⁶¹ “it was not Gertrude he saw, but a ghost” (“ibid., p.172). ““She is dying, - she’s consuming herself!”” he exclaims. We notice here the similarities with Hortense in “A Tragedy of Error” and Lizzie in “The Story of a Year,” in the deterioration that their errors bring. Locksley’s death in “A Landscape Painter” might have had a similar cause. Like a psychiatrist, James grasps the effect that psychological changes may have on the body.¹⁶² Gertrude, fortunately, escapes, on the last minute, through Richard’s intervention. Nevertheless, she remains dependant on her money, remaining at the end of the tale trapped in the life she has created for herself.¹⁶³ She rather resembles the heroine in “A Days of Days,” who could not bring herself to open up and take chances without guarantees. And this is sad, but on the other hand, as she had

¹⁶¹ His illness, similarly, could be said to have resulted from his guilt for his evil choice of telling Severn that Gertrude was not home.

¹⁶² I strongly disagree, therefore, in this tale at least, with Edel’s notion of what he calls the “vampire theme” (UY, p.239; Life, p.78), the deterioration of one character the moment another becomes strong, as if in some supernatural way one character’s strength is gained by the other character’s failing. The “vampire theme” that, in Edel’s view, begins with this tale, has become so popular with the critics (see Zablony’s analysis of the tale for example, (Zablony, pp.211-212)), that it proves, as if with a twist of irony, considering James’s dislike for supernatural phenomena, the popularity, even now-a-days, of Gothic themes. As has been shown, physical deterioration is logically explainable in James’s early tales, usually resulting in psychosomatic effects that are inter-related and that have no effect on anyone but the character who is going through them. Nowhere do we have any substantial evidence that Gertrude causes Richard’s illness or *vice versa*.

¹⁶³ “Gertrude, having gone to Europe, is finally viewed taking refuge, ironically, behind what she has deplored as destructive to her relationships” (Mull, p.23).

admitted to herself on another occasion: “this is not romance...it’s reality” (“PR,”p.153), a reality she cannot escape.

The other two characters, Captain Severn and Major Luttrell, are similarly complex. Severn’s romantic military aspect is combined with that of a “mathematical tutor” (ibid., p.138), with the result that “valour” and “heroism”(ibid.) and sentiment, unite with sensible, accurate conceptions of personal goals. He was “a serious man; he was conscientious, discreet, deliberate, unused to act without a definite purpose” (ibid., p.139). On the other hand, the emotional man in him battles with his logical side. His feelings for Gertrude, thus, are trapped in his sense of honour and duty, and a logic that dictates to him that he has no right to the affections of a rich woman – affections that existed above and beyond all logic - when he is so poor himself. He too commits the error of allowing his reason to dictate his emotions and misses the opportunity of finding love. This inability to free himself from his social prejudices even when he is supposed to be in love, makes Severn appear weak, especially in the eyes of Richard, who thinks of him as “a poor lover” (ibid., p.143).

The most fascinating character, however, has got to be Major Luttrell. “A man of delightful manners and wonderful talents” (ibid., p.141), is all we know of him and his past; except that he is a recruiter for the army. He is a “poor” and “ambitious” man who “had become too sensible [...] of the advantages of a luxurious home.” Thus, *his* contribution to the war exists only in recruiting others (like Severn) to die for their country, while his only faith and goal is to marry a rich woman and live in luxury and comfort (ibid., p.163). Gertrude finds him “at once very agreeable and the least bit in the world disagreeable” (ibid, p.141), Severn distrusts him (ibid, p.144), and Richard soon finds out that he is “a cold-blooded rascal” (ibid., p.159). As such, he is the complete opposite of Richard, who is called “hot-blooded” (ibid.).

If Richard is passionate, Luttrell is cold. Charming and civil in appearance, of “good breeding,” “a masculine, aristocratic, intelligent stamp” (ibid., p.163), he is scheming and calculating in reality (“calculate,” “count,” “his policy” are some of the words used about him to denote his nature (ibid., p.163)). Luttrell seems indeed as if he comes out of a Gothic novel; perhaps, as previously suggested, out of Radcliffe’s Montoni. He is the neo-Gothic character, only instead of occupying the dark castles he lives in the best salons of society. James seems fascinated by this character. Like Montoni, he remains an unfathomable secret as regards his reasons for being who he is. We know all the characters’ past except for his. The narrator, representing a member of society (and in this we sense how James differentiates and distances himself from his narrator), nevertheless, calls him “a man of sense,” who “duly weighed his obstacles against his advantages” (ibid.). He is moreover described as an observer capable of “silent deductions,” (ibid.) and “mischievous cogitations” (ibid., p.162), a man of “good” and “accurate” “knowledge” and of “solid personal qualities” (ibid., p.163). The narrator calls him “a pleasing combination of the gravity of a man of affairs and the versatility of the man of society” (ibid., p.164). Hence, we see again in Luttrell a character encompassing different and opposing elements (sense, knowledge, good breeding and intelligence are combined with rascality, love of luxury and a suggestion of cruelty although, despite his interference¹⁶⁴ we don’t see him ever being violent). Despite his “good qualities,” therefore, it becomes clear that Luttrell “is not pre-eminently a man of conscience” (ibid., p.162). Instead, what we come to realise is that Luttrell is morally dead. This

¹⁶⁴ It is characteristic of James’s talent for creating little ironies in his tales, and leaving in this manner only the reader “in the know,” that none of the characters suspects Luttrell of actively causing harm. Richard calls him a “passive spectator” (“PR,” p.173), and Gertrude does not suspect him of any interference because she believes him ignorant of her love for Severn: “I had a secret, and [Richard] surprised it. You were less fortunate” (ibid., p.176). “It might have seemed to a thoroughly

becomes most evident in his scene with Richard, after they have both lied to Severn and sent him away without him seeing Gertrude. Richard feels guilt and demands to know the motives for Luttrell's collaboration. At which Luttrell replies, in a characteristically Montonian manner: "I have no wish to talk metaphysics over the matter" (ibid., p.158). By contrast, Richard's anxiety to differentiate himself from Luttrell by offering an excuse for his crime, indicates his moral sentience. Unlike Richard, Luttrell is a dark, brooding, elusive, evil presence, disguised in charm and respectability; all the more interesting to James for its suggestions of the presence of evil and its fermentation and protection within the social patterns of behaviour. James, then, seems to suggest what Hawthorne understands: that evil exists in the supposedly calm and ordered society that people have created for themselves.

As creations James's characters help us understand why James castigated Dickens in his critical essay. To create a character as one trait only, as a type, the way Dickens has done, fails in James's eyes to give the reader the illusion of reality. This is what James meant by calling these characters "a bundle of eccentricities, animated by no principle of nature." The character created in that way, James seems to feel, may be *perfect* in one way only – positive or negative, good or bad, beautiful or ugly – and in this world as James and all of us know it, no-one is perfect. Dickens's characters are "creatures of pure fancy" then, not of common humanity ("OMF," p.854). "The word humanity," says James, "strikes us as strangely discordant, in the midst of these pages; for let us boldly declare it, there is no humanity here" (ibid., p.855). Thus Dickens, although "a great observer and a great humorist" (ibid., p.857), and "a master" of "the commonplace" and "the odd" (ibid., pp.856-7), cannot possibly be categorised among the great novelists, according to

dispassionate observer that in these last four words there was an infinitesimal touch of tragic irony," the narrator warns us (ibid.).

James, because “he has created nothing but figure. He has added nothing to the understanding of human character” (ibid., p.856).

James explains what he believes humanity stands for: “It is in what men have in common with each other and not in what they have in distinction” (“OMF,” p.855). James creates characters that have things in common: Richard and Gertrude are more alike than they are aware. Both are described as rustic. Both have romantic and conservative notions that are expressed in melodramatic speeches. What Richard *likes* in Gertrude are the characteristics they share (strength) and the ones he would like to share (generosity, volition, and control). He sees in her “a certain latent suggestion of heroic possibilities” (“PR,” p.133). The narrator describes her as “the priest behind the king”, and Richard could surely see himself as her king, in need of her wisdom and guidance. He tells Gertrude that she is no fool and knows that this is the reason he loves her: “if you were a fool, you might love me; but I shouldn’t love you, and if I must choose, I prefer that” (ibid., p.132). Severn and Gertrude also share their sentimentalism, their sense of duty and their reasonableness. They are emotional behind their heroic façade. Nevertheless, they are also emotional cowards. At the same time, Gertrude also shares her love for power and security with Luttrell. Moreover, what all characters together share is their complexity as human beings.

I mentioned earlier that there are two narrative methods in this tale. The first is the use of the narrator who tells us the story, a narrator that again appears distinct from the author. The other method of having the characters reveal each other we have also seen before in previous tales. Hence Gertrude reveals a lot about Richard and vice versa, Severn reveals a lot about Gertrude and Richard, Gertrude reveals a lot about Severn, Richard brings about revelations regarding Luttrell, and so on.

There is a powerful scene giving us the relationship dynamics between the characters, when they all take a walk in the garden:

[Richard] stopped [...] and looked toward Gertrude, whose eyes he had been afraid to meet until he had seen his adventure to a close. But she was looking at Captain Severn, under the impression that Richard had secured his auditor. Severn was looking at Luttrell, and Luttrell at Miss Whittaker; and all were apparently so deep in observation that they had marked neither his speech nor his silence. 'Truly,' thought the young man, 'I'm well out of the circle!' ("PR," p.145)

As Richard imagines himself outside the triangle Gertrude-Severn-Luttrell, and observes them from that distance, he helps the readers grasp the feelings and interests of all the characters for each other. Observation is again important, as everyone observes somebody else; yet, despite its importance we sense also its limitations. Despite its "depth," their observation is at the same time shallow and subjective, as all characters fail to see everything. Even Richard, who experiences a broader view of the others is at the same time restricted outside their circle and cannot be part of the dynamics within it. Hence when he wishes to enter the circle he is rejected, because he has no experience of those dynamics as the others do. Unlike Richard, the reader has the key to understand the dynamics, since his observation depends on the narrator whose omniscient observation is that key.

Novick believes that in this tale James failed to comply to his own rules: "Despite his strictures on George Eliot, James told the story as if he saw it with the eye of God, and left nothing for the reader to imagine" (Novick, p.142). I believe that Novick is wrong because he takes for granted that the narrator is also the author. This, however is not true, since the narrator's opinions are given in such a way as to cause our desire to distance ourselves from him (as in the instance of the narrator's opinions of Luttrell for example). Moreover, perhaps had Novick taken into consideration the title of the tale, he might have discovered another instance where

the author leaves the reader free to “imagine.” The tale is called “Poor Richard” and from the beginning requires of the reader to make up his mind: Is Richard to be pitied? In the first chapter, Gertrude is mentioned as pitying him three times. She pities him for his consistency in loving her (“I only pity you the more for your consistency” (“PR,” p.130)). She pities him because she can neither hate him nor love him (“To hate you, I should have to have loved you. I pity you still” (ibid., p.131)). Finally, she pities him for his situation in life (“She had espoused his interests...because she loved his sister, and because she pitied himself” (ibid.,p.136)). Once more she thinks of him as “so pitiable a creature” (ibid., p.138) when she thinks of him in comparison to Severn. “All the world seemed above him, and he was consequently at odds with the world” (ibid.). The narrator seems to pity him for his insistent love for Gertrude, despite his ability to see that she loves someone else (ibid., p.160). Captain Severn also pities him at the walks in the gardens, when he realises that Richard, too, loves Gertrude: “And forthwith this faint-hearted gentleman felt a twinge of pity for Richard’s obvious infelicity” (“PR”, p.144). However, the word ascribed to Severn (“faint-hearted,”) indicates that it is Severn, rather, who is to be pitied for the lack of the bravery that Richard possesses. In chapter two, things dramatically change. Richard pities Gertrude as he can now feel empathy for her predicament: “Did he refuse you, as you refused me? Poor Gertrude!” (“PR,” p.148) “You fool!” says Gertrude and for a moment we think that Richard is falling into the claws of self-pity (ibid.). At the next moment, however, we are told that Gertrude does not pity him anymore; she seems rather to admire him: “She felt that it was out of place any longer to pity him. He was the slave of his passion; but his passion was strong” (“PR”, p.149), unlike hers that is not strong

enough to reveal itself to Severn. Luttrell pities Richard too,¹⁶⁵ but his pity is similar to the contempt that we would expect from such a calculating man for one who has true emotions. We, the readers, therefore, find it difficult to pity Richard.

The last chapter seems, then, to oppose the title. Richard now pities Gertrude. However, the ending is consistent. What Richard saw in Gertrude at the end of the tale, “a sad plain girl in a white dress, nervously handling her fan” (ibid, p.177), is not the Gertrude he thought he knew and loved. We are reminded here of Gertrude’s promise that if he knew her, if he gave himself time, he would realise that he did not love her. The only love he has for her in the end of the tale, when he sees the ghost of what she used to be, is one that emanates from pity for another human being suffering: “It was through pity that his love returned” (ibid., .173). Ironically, when he has finally risen in the esteem of Gertrude, of his own eyes, and of the readers, he is not the same man as when he loved her. He had told her before that had she been a fool to love him, he would not love her back.

In this tale, James has shown more confidence than in all the previous ones. He manages to mix up various literary ideas and come up with a story that is as fascinating as it is emotional. The main part of its fascination lies in the characters that James has created. They are his polemic against characters by others authors, like Dickens, whose characters are not true to human nature, but exceptions. In James’s characters we find the presence of romance. Romance infuses the characters’ psychology, and expresses itself in their speech and gesture and often in their actions, as if it is the most natural thing in the world. James seems to be suggesting that there is romance in all of us, a part of our human nature. Nevertheless, when confronted with every day reality that romance seems to cause strife and unhappiness. Only

¹⁶⁵ “My poor young man,’ said he, ‘you’re out of your head. I’m sorry for you” (“PR,” p.160).

characters like Luttrell seem to survive unscathed because they have somehow got rid of the romantic feeling in them. Such characters, though, lack also any moral depth.

Although this story seems to be following the critical ideas set in the previous set we examined, it begins a period when James dwells more on how evil presence affects the life of humanity and co-exists with good. It seems that by examining that presence James finds ways to invite the interest of the reader. Luttrell, the first dubious character, may share characteristics with his romantic precursors, but lacks their supernatural essence and power. This, rather than making him dull, seems to enhance his power in our imagination (just as it seems to do in the minds of the other characters) as it raises our curiosity about him; all the more because he could be living among us, rather than in a distant, dark, Gothic castle.

ii) “My Friend Bingham” and Genuine Prose.

Examining the first five stories, I have claimed that, although James infused his tales with romantic elements, nevertheless, he seems to be aiming at reality. Despite the melodrama (deceit, murder, betrayal, death, etc.) that the tales are immersed in, the reader is never in the presence of the ugly deed or the horrific event. James uses the *suggestion* of an unpleasant or horrific event to examine character, create emotion, provoke moral thought and attract the participation of the reader; but he does not seem to believe in the use of violence *per se* to further his aims. If we examine his essays, written at this time, we find that James dislikes the permeation of supernatural phenomena, which characterise Romantic and Gothic/sensational novels. More specifically, in his review on Dumas he asserts that,

To be completely great, a work of art must lift up the reader's heart; and it is the artist's secret to reconcile this condition with images of the barest and sternest reality. Life is dispiriting, art is inspiring; and a story teller who aims at anything more than a

fleeting success has no right to tell an ugly story unless he knows its beautiful counterpart. The impression that he should aim to produce on the reader's mind with his work must have much in common with the impression originally produced on his own mind by his subject. If the effect of an efficient knowledge of his subject had been to fill his spirit with melancholy, and to paralyse his better feelings, it would be impossible that his work should be written. Its existence depends on the artist's reaction against the subject; and if the subject is morally hideous, of course this reaction will be in favor of moral beauty.¹⁶⁶

As life is "dispiriting," it is the artist's duty to make it inspiring through art. This sounds like a polemic against the sensational fiction that is dispiriting because of its representations of human wickedness and weakness. Morality, as opposed to horrors, then, will be the medium through which the artist will achieve his goal. A true artist, therefore, should not rely on horror in order to make his story exciting. Excitement can come through less technical means. James claims that the writer inevitably reacts against his/her subject matter. Without such a reaction, paralysis follows instead of composition. Therefore, the aim of telling the truth about one's experience can be squared with making it uplifting or morally beautiful. The truth of the experience consists in one's reaction to it and when the source of the experience is hideous, the reaction will be toward, and in favour of the morally beautiful. This leaves uncertain what would happen if the source of the experience were beautiful: would the reaction be in favour of the hideous? James's tone is less earnest; however, his "of course" implies that moral beauty should follow as a natural outcome. The writer seems required to respond to the experience in a way analogous to how James describes the reader responding to a text. Moreover, the response is always counter, checking one emphasis with its opposite. Much of James's later novels – his balancing of forces, his interest in social "concussions," the poise of his narratives – is foreshadowed

¹⁶⁶ Henry James, "Alexandre Dumas, *Affaire Clemenceau: Memoire de l'Accuse*. Paris: Michel Levy, 1866" (1866), LC2, p.279. Hereafter cited as "AD."

here, when his immediate concern is the relation between the sensational and the real.

These views bring to mind also James's review on Mrs Braddon. After comparing the sensational fictions of Radcliffe, Collins and Braddon (finding the latter two tending toward the real as opposed to the romantic), he declares that even "a good ghost story, to be half as terrible as a good murder story, must be connected at a hundred points with the common objects of life."¹⁶⁷ Radcliffe's fiction, albeit full of improbable supernatural incidents that make the novels too technical, nevertheless acknowledges the need for reality in her own need to explain the improbable away: "The supernatural, which Mrs. Radcliffe constantly implies, though she generally saves her conscience, at the eleventh hour by explaining it away, requires a powerful imagination in order to be as exciting as the natural" ("AF," p.742). James repeats here his point from the Dumas essay about reality's superiority over the supernatural in the art of fiction. Among the sensation novelists, he finds Collins' fiction the best of the three because his mysteries are comprised of "stern reality" (ibid.), while Braddon, who turns "to society, accordingly, and not to life [...] produces, not stories of passion, but stories of action" (ibid., p.745). A very striking remark this, implying that passion is to be found in life itself, not in the superficialities of society. James gives, finally, praise to Braddon for her having "done her work better than her predecessors" by applying "a woman's finesse and a strict regard to morality" (ibid., p.746). James, however, true to his opinion that popular sensation stories do not make a work of art, recognises her popularity, but at the same time condemns her by declaring that her readers are not to be found among the more sophisticated followers

¹⁶⁷ Henry James, "Aurora Floyd. By Mary Elisabeth Braddon. New York: American News Company, 1865" (1865), LCJ, p.742. Hereafter cited as "AF."

of such writers as Eliot, Sand, Thackeray and Hawthorne.¹⁶⁸ The implication seems to be that James wishes to address the latter group of readers with his own fiction.

James's critical engagement with sensation fiction appears also in his creative role, in particular his first 1867 story to be published, "My Friend Bingham." With this tale begins a different group of stories that, on first acquaintance, seem to defeat James's beliefs about sensationalism in fiction; and for this reason, it seems, critics have not taken to the tale, finding it too melodramatic (Kraft, p.21),¹⁶⁹ unbelievable,¹⁷⁰ and lacking in technique (Beach, p.177; Wagenknecht, p.196).¹⁷¹ "My Friend Bingham' is most engagingly bad," says Bayley (Bayley, p.59). This story relates the adventure of two friends, one of whom, Bingham, is a rich man on a recreational hunting trip,¹⁷² who commits a grave error in killing a little boy, mistaking him for a seagull. The story goes on to relate that the killer marries the child's mother. The narrator's opening paragraph, nevertheless, cannot but strike us as an illustration of James's theory as stated in his critical reviews on Dumas and the other sensational writers:

¹⁶⁸ "The great public, in the first place, is made up of a vast number of little publics, very much as our Union is made up of States, and it is necessary to consider which of these publics is Miss Braddon's. We can best define it with the half of a negative. It is that public which reads nothing but novels, and yet which reads neither George Eliot, George Sand, Thackeray, nor Hawthorne. People who read nothing but novels are very poor critics of human nature" ("AF," p.744).

¹⁶⁹ See also Encyclopedia, p. 454.

¹⁷⁰ Some critics have trouble swallowing the probability of a woman marrying the murderer of her son. Buitenhuis calls it "this apparent misalliance" (Buitenhuis, p.26). Martin and Ober find fault with Mrs Hicks, who "fails to induce the reader to accept a grieving mother who too readily accommodates herself to the death of her only child and then unblinkingly marries the man who killed her child." "James's 'My Friend Bingham' and Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner'" *English Language Notes* 25 (December 1987), p.48. Hereafter cited as "J&C."

¹⁷¹ James himself called it "a slight romance." (See his letter to Alice, 3 February 1867 in Henry James: Letters, vol. I, Leon Edel ed., (London: Macmillan, 1974), p.69. Hereafter cited as Letters.) Gale says that he "rightly" called it so (Encyclopedia, p.454). Nevertheless, we would be wrong to take James's comment as an indication that he really believed that, because James would not write anything he did not take seriously. His remark, rather, betrays his modesty. Howells is reported to have greatly liked the story (LFL, p.12). Another critic who finds James's story slight is Fish who in his dissertation proves how superficially he has read the tale (See Fish, pp.52-64).

¹⁷² "The man who marries Mrs Hicks is named George Bingham, and he shares his name with George Bingham (1811-1879), a popular painter who specialized in scenes of hunting and shooting..." (Museum, p.180). Tintner also associates the name of Mrs Hicks, who is the widow of a minister, with a painter of religious themes, Edward Hicks (Museum, p.179).

Conscious as I am of a deep aversion to stories of a painful nature, I have often asked myself whether, in the events here set forth, the element of pain is stronger than that of joy. An affirmative answer to this question would have stood as a veto upon the publication of my story, for it is my opinion that the literature of horrors needs no extension. Such an answer, however, I am unwilling to pronounce; while, on the other hand, I hesitate to assume the responsibility of a decided negative. I have therefore determined to leave the solution to the reader. I may add, that I am very sensible of the superficial manner in which I have handled my facts. I bore no other part in the accomplishment of these facts than that of a cordial observer; and it was impossible that, even with the best will in the world, I should fathom the emotions of the actors. Yet, as the very faintest reflection of human passions, under the pressure of fate, possesses an immortal interest, I am content to appeal to the reader's sympathy, and to assure him of my own fidelity.¹⁷³

The very first sentence about Charles' "deep aversion to stories of painful nature" brings to mind James's declaration that "to be completely great, a work of art must *lift up the reader's heart.*" (my emphasis) Moreover, Charles' reflection on the subject of pain and joy recalls the author's belief that "if the subject is morally hideous, of course [the author's] reaction will be in favour of moral beauty." This is why it follows that "an affirmative answer" to Charles' question whether "the element of pain is stronger than that of joy," therefore, "would have stood as a veto upon the publication of my story." We find here James's conviction that a writer "who aims at anything more than a fleeting success," a writer like him, "has no right to tell an ugly story, unless he knows its beautiful counterpart." His narrator would consider it unthinkable to relate events if his own impressions of them were ugly. It is only after he has made this clear that the narrator continues with his story. James seems to be claiming that his story will be interesting despite the absence of horrific elements, which is suggesting that the story is part of his critical polemic. The interest of the story will instead be focused, the narrator points out, on the "human

¹⁷³ Henry James, "My Friend Bingham" (1867), *Tales*, p.108. Hereafter cited as "MFB."

passions.” This is obviously what impressed the author, here is where the “immortal interest” lies; therefore this is what must be conveyed to the reader.

There is, however, more to the opening paragraph. Three further issues will be considered: the first is the relation of the narrator to the events. The second is the relationship between the narrator and the assumed reader. The third is the relationship between the author and the narrator.

This is the first story with a “first person narrator” that the critics recognise, because the narrator is *officially* a main character in the tale (Martin/Ober, p.24). In “A Landscape Painter” we had two first person narrators; but one was not named as a character (despite his involvement in the interpretation of the tale and his relation to the other narrator), and the other was a diarist. What is puzzling for me, then, is that the critics seem to ignore that “My Friend Bingham” is consequently told from the narrator’s (Charles’) point of view: “It seems to us that the centre of interest in the story lies in its protagonist, Bingham,” say Martin and Ober (“J&C,” p.47, n.7).¹⁷⁴ These critics seem to wish to ignore the existence of the narrator as a character. In fact, Charles is just as much the protagonist as – if not more so than – Bingham. In the first paragraph, Charles, calls himself “a cordial observer,” signifying from the start whose observations we will receive. “It was impossible,” he continues, “that, even with the best will in the world, I should fathom the emotions of the actors.” These utterances betray an anxiety on the narrator’s part to extricate himself from any participation and, as a result, from any responsibility. The others are the actors.

¹⁷⁴ Beach, similarly, fails to grasp the point of view in this tale: “The all-important matter in this story is naturally the attitude of Bingham towards Mrs. Hicks and her attitude towards him” (Beach, p.177). This is why he has trouble with the interpretation of the tales: “In the first ten of these tales (with one exception [“A Light Man”]), the author had no better inspiration than to offer us his own omniscient survey of the action. This means there is no point of view at all steadily maintained.” As far as this tale is concerned, the author “fails to choose the person best fitted to follow the action, or he fails to select and develop those scenes in which his observation might serve best to illuminate it” (Beach, p.179). Such inattentive readings and generalisations prove how unfair critics have been towards James’s early tales.

He is supposed to be merely the observer. Nevertheless, as the story unfolds, one is struck by the many instances when the narrator does participate!¹⁷⁵ These moments are decidedly elusive, but this is only because Charles is making a constant effort to cover them up. Moreover, his language frequently betrays his attempts to assert himself over his friend. In certain instances, his sentences betray even jealousy (Levy, p.409). When for instance he begins his narrative, he relates in detail Bingham's financial circumstances. Bingham comes from a rich family, we are to understand, and has no vocation, unlike Charles, who, we are told, is working in an office. Bingham is said to be critical of rich people, expressing "his profound resentment" of his own earlier wasted youth ("MFB", p.109). The narrator is often very critical of him however: "I have no doubt that much may be said, within limits, for the graces of that society against which my friend embodied so violent a reaction, and especially of his good humour, - that home-keeping benevolence which accompanies a sense of material repletion" (ibid.). Contradicting his friend's noble feelings, the narrator uses terms which belittle the thoughtfulness of Bingham's resentment, turning it into a reaction only. Bingham's "profound resentment" is thus described by his friend as "violent reaction". Indeed, the narrator is sarcastic. His friend's "material repletion" is constantly in his mind. At the same time he continues to put him down: "It is my belief that he had but a limited capacity for study, and I am certain that to the end of his days there subsisted in his mind a very friendly relation between fancies and facts" (ibid.). On the other hand, he is indirectly asserting his own superiority. He possesses the "critical mind" ("MFB", p.110),

¹⁷⁵ "It is fathoming, interpreting and interfering with the actors that make up the substance of his [Charles's] narrative" ("TETHJ," p.411). I agree with most of the position that Levy takes, as he is the only critic who follows the tale closely. Nevertheless, I do not arrive at the same conclusion as he does that Charles was "spiteful" (ibid.).

always ready to give an opinion: “I made haste to assure him, that I considered him [...]” (ibid.).

Charles’ active part begins the moment Bingham suggests shooting the bird. “Try” is his answer; and he goes on to recite repeatedly (“I remember idly repeating...” (“MFB”, p.113)) the lines from Coleridge’s poem “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” (1798) the work which seems to be James’s “precursor” (to use Harold Bloom’s term).¹⁷⁶ The poem is there, of course, to unite Bingham’s unreasonable deed (Bingham’s remark “ ‘I wonder if I could put a shot into him,’” (“MFB,” p.113), is the only reason we are given for his killing of the sea-gull) with the Mariner’s unfathomable deed (we do not know what drove the Mariner to kill the sea-gull in the poem either). However, Charles’ words do not absolve him from the responsibility he tries to avoid. He may not have done the deed himself but he condoned it with his “try;” and the “idle” recitation of the poem’s lines must have unconsciously betrayed that to him. (“MFB”, p.113).

From this point Charles becomes gradually more active. He is the one who sees the mother after the death of her child. It is through his observant eyes that we learn that the woman is “of decided beauty,” a comment accompanied by a full description of her appearance. From that moment his opinion of her is decidedly improved. Charles is the one to suggest to Bingham that he, Bingham, is in love with the woman, and assures him that it is all right to be so. What makes the story doubly ironic is Bingham’s determination never to marry, due to having previously been jilted. The following discussion between Bingham and Charles takes place as they go hunting:

¹⁷⁶ See “J&C,” pp.44-48; BW, p.69; Museum, pp.179-180; “TETHJ,” p.409; Buitenhuis, 26. All critics see the association as regards Bingham and his deed, but not Charles. Nevertheless, I claim that Charles too bears responsibility for the deed.

Bingham had forsworn marriage. I made haste to assure him that I considered him quite too young for so austere a resolve.

'I can't help it,' said he; 'I feel a foreboding that I shall live and die alone.'

'A foreboding?' said I. 'What's a foreboding worth?'

'Well, then, rationally considered, my marriage is impossible.'

'But it is not to be rationally considered,' I objected. 'It belongs to the province of sentiment.'

'But you deny me sentiment. I fall back upon my foreboding.'

'That's not sentiment, – it's superstition,' I answered. 'Your marrying will depend upon your falling in love; and your falling in love will certainly not depend upon yourself.'

'Upon whom, then?'

'Upon some unknown fair one, - Miss A, B, or C.'

'Well,' said Bingham, submissively, 'I wish she would make haste and reveal herself.' ("MFB," p.111)

Of course she immediately does reveal herself! What makes the dialogue comic, moreover, is the friends' manner of sensationalising ("foreboding, "superstition") everyday matters, such as love and marriage, or bachelorhood, at the same time as they try to rationalise them. Bingham's avowals in favour of celibacy are comically overturned by his eagerness to find a lover. His departure from his original unrealistic resolution in such a childish way establishes his character as a man incapable of the evil deed he ends up committing. Thus, the subsequent tragic events do not mar him as a character in our eyes, but rather make us empathise. Moreover, the fact that he falls in love with the mother of the dead child – although tragic-comic – again proves the generous character of Bingham.

There are even suggestions that Charles might be smitten with her himself.

He tells Bingham that he would like to go and see her and his friend looks at him "an instant keenly" ("MFB", p.124):

'I shall go, not out of curiosity,' I resumed, 'but out of-'

'Out of what?'

'Well, in fine, I should like to see her again' ("MFB", p.124).

Could Bingham be suspecting his friend's motives? Perhaps not, but he seems a bit uneasy. Charles describes his visit to Mrs Hicks with much enthusiasm: "O the

satisfaction which, in the course of that quiet dialogue, I took in this sweet infallibility! How it effaced her loneliness and poverty, and added to her youth and beauty!" ("MFB", p.124). It seems that Charles is the one with the romantic notions now. It becomes equally evident that he is a snob, who aspires to be on the same footing with Bingham; thus, only by elevating Mrs Hicks to that footing also can he abandon himself to his feelings for her. Consequently, he sees her poverty as elevating her to "a woman of the world," and he "should have found it impossible to address her as any other than an equal" ("MFB," pp.124-125). Mrs Hicks is not so comfortable with him as he is with her. He seems to sense that: "I will not deny that in a certain sense I regretted Mrs Hicks's reserve. It is true that I had a very informal claim upon her confidence; but I had gone to her with a half-defined hope that this claim would be liberally interpreted. It was not even recognised" ("MFB", p.125). Levy, not surprisingly, believes that Charles "is disappointed that she does not prefer him to Bingham – that is the crux of his situation" ("TETHJ," p.410).

Under the surface of Charles' narrative of the subsequent events, we can make out that Bingham has finally understood his friend's transformation into a rival and is not at all happy about it: "I fancied that my admiration gave him even more pleasure than he allowed himself to express" ("MFB, p.125). The reader sees that, from Bingham's point of view, Charles is a possible rival and that Bingham's silence, therefore, might not be the result of pleasure but of annoyance. It is odd and telling that Charles does not think of this, or, at least, that he does not admit it. That it gave no pleasure to Bingham is evident by the fact that Bingham does not inform him of his intentions to visit Mrs Hicks and propose to her. Thus, in another comic turn of events, Charles also visits Mrs Hicks on that same day (behind Bingham's back) only to catch them "in a somewhat passionate interview" (ibid.). Bingham has

proposed and awaits his answer. Upon Charles's arrival, he ironically enlists him in his cause! "Bingham laid his hand on my arm. 'He represents the world,' he said, addressing our hostess. 'You're afraid of the world. There, make your appeal'" (ibid.). Finally Charles has made it to be a "man of the world", only not in the sense that he would have wanted. Mrs Hicks's subsequent answer rings with James's black humour: " 'I don't believe you represent the world,' she said; 'you are too good'" (ibid.). We know – as they all probably suspect by now - that Charles was there for his own interests, in disrespect of his friend's. " ' She flatters you,' said Bingham. 'You wish to corrupt him, Mrs Hicks.' Mrs Hicks glanced for an instant from my friend to myself. There burned in her eyes a far searching light, which consecrated the faint irony of the smile which played about her lips. 'O you men!' she said, - 'you are so wise, so deep!'" ("MFB," p.126). It is evident that Mrs Hicks is the superior of them both in intelligence and that she has seen through the situation which she manipulates to her advantage. She accepts Bingham's proposal with ease: " 'You are the world to me,' she cried with beautiful inconsequence," knowing very well, as Esther does in "A Landscape Painter," where her interests lie.

From these examples it seems that the narrator of the story is more than an observer, and certainly, that his cordiality can be questioned. "Charles is a better talker than a listener," Bingham once says of him ("MFB", p.125). Although Charles is interested in Mrs Hicks, either his unwillingness to get involved with a poor woman, his lack of motivation such as real affection, his friendship to Bingham, or even simply his bad timing, result in his remaining what he calls "a cordial observer," or rather as we have seen a secondary actor – secondary in relation to the final outcome of the tale. He, after all, is not the one who gets the girl, but only remains to tell us about the events.

Equally interesting is the narrator's implied relation to the reader, and, at one further move, his relation to the author. Charles assumes the role of the author of the story, addressing the reader directly. It is evident that James often uses him as his spokesperson, in such instances as the opening paragraph and the ending of the story, in order to pass through him his ideas on what constitutes "genuine prose." Therefore, as in the beginning he gives us his views on what a story should contain and what should be excluded from it, so at its close he explains what the results have been:

The proper conclusion of my story lies in the highly dramatic fact that out of the depths of her bereavement – out of her loneliness and her pity – this richly gifted woman had emerged, responsive to the passion of him who had wronged her all but as deeply as he loved her. The reader will decide, I think, that this catastrophe offers as little occasion for smiles as for tears. My narrative is a piece of genuine prose ("MFB", p.126).

James's narrator had informed us that he expected us to decide about the success of the story at the beginning. Now he explains to us what he has tried to achieve, namely to dramatise the passion, the feelings of a woman for the man who killed her child. It seems impossible that any woman should consider marrying her child's murderer, in which case the story appears to be ridiculing the false conventions of sensation fiction and melodrama. Yet, Bingham *does* offer her the financial security which she is not ever likely to get from anyone else, including Charles. Behind the narrator's emotive language, a more prosaic reality is visible. The reader has to come to terms with a complex clash between realism and romance so that, as the narrator says, neither smiles nor tears are an appropriate response. Through Charles' mouth, James seems to say that life's little ironies can serve better as a subject than any that needs the invocation of supernatural events and horrors. And comedy – arising out of

the feeling that human beings are foolish – takes the story away from the sensational and toward - in James's mind - the genuine.

Kelly sees in this tale James's effort to reconcile the opposing elements of Romance and Realism. She believes that by now James has embraced the different elements he found in writers like Eliot and Balzac: "Men and women are thus dual creatures – creatures of passion and creatures of conscience – and it is the working of these two oppositely directed instincts that complicates life into an interesting situation, far more interesting than when but one is active" (Kelly, p.68). According to this reading, James's drama comes from the action of such romantic and realistic elements that exist *within* his characters – unlike Braddon's that focuses on the outside, society. He seems to be saying in the end what he had suggested at the beginning: that here lies enough action which does not need the addition of horrific and sensational techniques. He invites the reader to decide whether he is right or not to say that this does constitute "a piece of genuine prose" as opposed to the "fake" one that writers of sensational fiction use.

Kelly finds James's tale unsuccessful:

Though the story is about passion, James did not deal with it directly and lost much intensity which he might otherwise have gained. He cast it into the narrative framework whereby a minor character, in this case a friend of the man, an observer, tells what the main characters do. This device, possibly borrowed from Merimé, James was to use frequently in his stories. It gave them, he probably felt, as in the case of the diary framework of a *Landscape Painter*, an authenticity, a reality to have someone connected with the characters vouch for them. However, it often caused him, as in this story, to shirk his own responsibility (Kelly, p.70).

Kelly fails to notice James's belief in the importance of the participation of the reader. The frameworks he uses do not aim at reality only, but also at making the reader work for a better understanding of the tale. She does however make the very

important connection with “The Landscape Painter”, although the similarities here do not stop with the issue of authenticity. We have here again the double vision given to the reader, who is able to go beyond what the narrator offers him, and thus achieve the understanding that the author wishes him to arrive at. We also have the silent presence of women in both stories – women who are central, yet kept back in the background. Kelly also fails to see that in this tale too James intentionally distances himself from his narrator, after he has used him for his purposes. In his fear of telling too much, and so spoiling his tale by denying the reader’s participation, he makes his narrative betray a separation. For the same reason, the story does not have extensive characterisation, and for what little of it there is, the “cordial observer” is again used. James has purposefully made the narrator say that “it was impossible that [...] I should fathom the emotions of the actors.” If Charles wishes to be a “*cordial* observer” James is not. He is giving us gradually everything we need to know, but in a way that we have to look for it. The reader, as a result, arrives at an adequate understanding of Charles’s character (as well as the characters of the other protagonists) by observing his thoughts, his report and interpretation of his and the other’s actions. Thus, as Veeder points out, “by not merely presenting us with statements of a character’s thoughts, by making us instead experience a mind thinking, James’ style sets our minds in motion too.”¹⁷⁷ This, therefore, is how James involves the reader in these stories.

Considering again James’s idea on what comprises a great work of art, and in particular what the artist’s duty is, namely to produce a “beautiful counterpart,” we see that James’s idea is successfully applied in the tale. He tells us of a story of ugliness (the irresponsible act of killing an innocent child), using thus a sensational

¹⁷⁷ William Veeder, Henry James – the Lesson of the Master: Popular Fiction and Personal Style in the Nineteenth Century. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), p.3.

event, which he presents to us only after he has been able to give a beautiful counterpart (the coming together of the mother and her child's killer). Bingham's marriage to the mother is presented as his moral atonement. By marrying her, a woman who, although beautiful, is poor, possibly mercenary, and lacks the refinements of a woman of Bingham's social circle, he expiates for his crime. His deed shows a noble humility. At the same time, Charles does his own penance for his contribution to the deed by telling us the story, just as the Mariner does his penance by relating his deed to the guest. Finally, if Bingham is rewarded for his good deed by finding love, Charles seems to have achieved a sort of reward in his being finally able to see his friend as something superior to his former idea of him: "He is a truly incorruptible soul; he is a confirmed philosopher; he has grown quite stout" ("MFB", p.127). There lies in his words a proof of his finally feeling inferior to his noble friend, which suggests perhaps that he did after all want Mrs Hicks for himself, but that he could not rise to the occasion. In this indirect admission of his inferiority, he too seems to have achieved nobility. His generosity, moreover, seems to be coupled with amusement in his calling his friend "stout," as he rejoices in his friend's good life. Buitenhuis senses the influence of Hawthorne in the tale when he points out that "as in Hawthorne's fiction, suffering brings about refinement of feeling and access of knowledge" (Buitenhuis, p.26).¹⁷⁸ Hence, here is another indication of how deep Hawthorne is imbedded in James.

The whole narrative, (from sin to expiation, from death to marriage), moreover, can be seen as a cliché and as part of a sensational tradition. Wilkie Collins' novels, in particular, end in expiation. They also have first-person narrators

¹⁷⁸ Again, it seems to me amazing how the critic can have said that only about Mrs Hicks. He sees a development in her, but I believe that she is a static character, in the background of the tale, serving as an objective background with which to judge the behaviour of the protagonists. The focus of the development is in the two protagonists and especially in Charles.

whose views and motives cannot be trusted. The story reads like an experiment in Collins and a parody of him – the last word “stout”, for example, indicates the ordinary and prosaic, deflating the pretentious structure of the whole. Similarly, the story is funny, and comedy also takes the story away from the sensational and toward the genuine in James’s mind. James’s ironies work in the gap between appearances and reality revealing the discrepancy between self-understanding and the world’s impartial view of them. In “A Landscape Painter” this technique creates black humour at the expense of Locksley. “My Friend Bingham” uses similar ironies to a gentler effect reaching a more optimistic conclusion about both human relations and the writing of genuine prose. But both of these arise out of James’s blackly comic parody of sensation fiction, most evident when Bingham accidentally shoots a small boy. Finally, if the reader is not convinced of the narrator’s or even James’s arguments as to what constitutes “genuine prose,” he is certainly invited to think for himself what genuine prose should consist of by examining James’s arguments in conjunction with how the latter brings them into play in his story.

iii) “The Story of a Masterpiece”: Subjective vs. Objective Art

The beginning of 1868 saw the publication of James’s seventh tale, “The Story of a Masterpiece.” The tale was popular when it was published,¹⁷⁹ and has

¹⁷⁹ A critic in the Nation wrote that “‘A Landscape Painter’ is a very charming love-story indeed, written with grace and spirit.” Quoted in *Tales*, p.512. James’s brother William writes on March 1868 that he found “a certain neatness and airy grace of touch [...] a greater suppleness and freedom of movement in the composition.” But he disapproved of the story for being “one of those male vs. female subjects you have so often treated.” “It seems to me,” William continues, “that the story must have rare picturesque elements of some sort, or much action, to compensate for the absence of heartiness, and the elements of yours were those of everyday life.” William also notes that “the moral action was very lightly touched, and rather indicated than exhibited.” He realises though that his brother’s shortcomings rose from his “wholesome dread of being sloppy and gushing and overabounding in power of expression, like the most of your rivals in the Atlantic [...] and that is excellent, in fact it is the instinct of truth against humbug and twaddle, and when it governs the treatment of a rich material it produces first class works.” *Henry James: The Critical Heritage*. Roger Gard ed., (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1968), p.24. William, although not always fair in his

remained so for its theme of art and the role of the artist and its association with later works by James and other writers like Oscar Wilde.¹⁸⁰ Many critics, thus, point out how “the very paintings” in James’s fiction “are an aid to clarity of vision and insight” into the characters.¹⁸¹ Others, however, like Vaid, dislike the tale for its bad technique: “the author interrupts the tale to give an unnecessary detailed account of an earlier episode in the heroine’s past (Vaid, p.134).¹⁸² Hawthorne’s presence has been noted by many critics, especially as regards the “Prophetic Pictures” (1837), which seems to be one of the tale’s precursors.¹⁸³ Browning’s “My Last Duchess,” is seen as another one, mentioned by the painter Baxter, and serving – as it shall be explored – to render the appropriate associations to the tale’s concerns.¹⁸⁴

In “The Prophetic Pictures” Hawthorne explores the idea that the painter has the almost supernatural ability, the “gift,” to “see the inmost soul, and, by a power indefinable even to himself, to make it glow or darken upon the canvas, in glances that express the thought and sentiment of years.”¹⁸⁵ “It is an awful gift,” surmises Walter Ludlow,¹⁸⁶ who suggests to his fiancée that they have their portraits done by a famous painter who remains unnamed, as if to represent his Art (“PP,” p.456). The power to predict the future is ascribed to the painter with a certain superstitious note that Hawthorne was famous for: “the old women of Boston affirm [...] that after he

judgement of his brother, proves to us that his brother already had a distinct idea about the art of fiction.

¹⁸⁰ See for example Putt, p.39; Sicker, p.30.

¹⁸¹ Edwin T. Bowden, The Themes of Henry James: A System of Observation through the Visual Arts. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), p.70. See also Putt, p.39; Sicker, pp.28-29. Buitenhuis, moreover suggests that this is a Hawthornesque idea: “[Hawthorne’s] major emphasis is on the painter’s ability to discover and portray characteristics invisible to unskilled eyes and on the almost magical aspects of this kind of gift” (Buitenhuis, p.39). See also Ora Segal, The Lucid Reflector: The Observer in Henry James’ Fiction. (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1969), p.101, note 6.

¹⁸² See also Kelly, p.81; Wagenknecht, p.204; LeClair, pp.398-399; Martin/Ober, p.32.

¹⁸³ This view is shared by Wagenknecht, p.203; Encyclopedia, p.632; Buitenhuis, p.39; and Brodhead, p.125.

¹⁸⁴ Both Kenton (p.12) and Martin/Ober notice the presence of the poem, but Martin/Ober do not think there is any significant connection between the poem and the tale (Martin/Ober, p.32).

¹⁸⁵ Nathaniel Hawthorne, “The Prophetic Pictures” (1838). TS, p.463. Hereafter cited as “PP.”

has once got possession of a person's face and figure, he may paint him in any act or situation whatever – and the picture will be prophetic" ("PP," p.460). By painting the couple's portraits he seems to reveal something hidden to them: "Amid the rich light and deep shade, they beheld their phantom selves" (ibid., p.461). Walter sees in the portrait of his fiancée a frightened Elinor and Elinor sees an expression of her fiancé that causes her face to take the same expression the painter had captured in her portrait. They go ahead with the wedding despite the warning that the painter gave Elinor. The end of the tale sees the painter visiting the now married couple to view again the now covered pictures, and becomes the witness to an attempt by the husband to murder his wife with a knife, as if instigated by the picture. We are left to ponder the narrator's "moral" about the responsibility Elinor bears for her choice to marry Walter despite what she sees in his portrait: "Could the result of one, or all our deeds, be shadowed forth and set before us – some would call it fate, and hurry onward - others be swept along by their passionate desires – and none be turned aside by the PROPHEMIC PICTURES" (ibid., p.469). We also ponder, however, whether the pictures were indeed prophetic – as the narrator seems to believe and as the painter wants us to presume by his final words to Elinor ("Did I not warn you?" (ibid.)) – or, whether the couple was predisposed to act in fulfilment of the "prediction" because they believed in the "powers" of the painter. In the latter case, of course, the responsibility falls on the painter. Is there evil in the painter that causes the destruction of others? "Hawthorne," says Buitenhuis, "with his usual sense of ambiguities, suggests at one point that the artist was 'a chief agent of the coming evil which was foreshadowed'" (Buitenhuis, p.39).¹⁸⁷ Certainly the narrator warns of the unnaturalness of the painter's calling: "It is not good for man to cherish a solitary

¹⁸⁶ In "A Day of Days," James's hero is called Ludlow (Buitenhuis, p.39).

ambition” like the painter did, because his isolation, the lack of emulation with other people will turn him into “the semblance, perhaps the reality, of a madman” (“PP,” p.467). “Reading other bosoms, with an acuteness almost preternatural” the narrator concludes, “the painter failed to see the disorder of his own” (ibid.). This, of course, gives us a sense of irony: that this isolation which causes the painter to enter into a different sphere of perception and a power to understand and, thus, reveal causes and effects in his art that to the uninitiated eye seem “preternatural” and “prophetic,” also leads to the painter’s “disorder,” his blindness about his own life. Hawthorne seems to point out the necessity of this isolation at the same time as he warns of its unnaturalness.

Whereas Hawthorne focuses on the “magic” of the artist-painter that empowers him to portray the soul of man onto canvas, and the capacity of Art (“Oh, potent Art!”) to cause “the dead [to] live again” (ibid., p.467), James directs the attention to the characters, and emphasizes how art, represented here by a picture, may express experience and affect the lives of both creator and viewer.¹⁸⁸ The portrait of Marian, therefore, becomes in James the key with which he will open up the characters to the eyes of the reader. The plot unravels from around the picture. John Lennox sees a painting made by an up-coming young painter, Baxter, and sees in the subject a resemblance to his fiancée, Marian. He subsequently invites the painter to work on a portrait of her, without knowing that the painter and Marian were formerly engaged. Baxter paints a masterpiece, the scrutiny of which leads Lennox to a disturbing truth about his fiancée’s character. “Marian’s person was

¹⁸⁷ “The artist’s power to create replicas and ‘striking counterfeits,’” adds Lustig “enables him to exercise a malign influence over the lives of his originals” (Lustig, p.40).

¹⁸⁸ Buitenhuis considers Hawthorne’s emphasis to be “on the painter’s ability to discover and portray characteristics invisible to unskilled eyes and on the almost magical aspects of this gift.” By contrast, “James’s treatment [...] centres on the psychological rather than the magical” (Buitenhuis, p. 39).

lightness.”¹⁸⁹ The story ends with the wedding of Marian and Lennox taking place all the same after the destruction of the painting with a knife by Lennox, an act that strongly recalls Hawthorne’s tale.

The narrator introduces us first to the couple, Lennox and Marian, just as Hawthorne had done in his story. Unlike Hawthorne who gives us little information about the characters (we only know that they are affianced and want to have their portraits made) - a factor that permits the development of the metaphysical, the supernatural element in the story – James creates a useful nucleus of information around his characters, à la Balzac. What is evident from the start is that Lennox is “of large estate”, and Marian “penniless” but beautiful (“SM,” p.180). Social and financial differences in couples interest James, as they had interested Balzac, and we see them become a dominant theme in his fiction. We gradually comprehend the role of money in the relationship of the couple. “Lennox” says the narrator, “saw her [Marian], then loved her and offered her his hand. In accepting it Miss Everett acquired [...] a complete stability and regularity of position” (“SM,” p.182). From the start, it is evident, then, that his reasons for falling in love were aesthetic¹⁹⁰ and her reasons for marrying him were financial. What becomes equally clear is that Lennox is not aware of it. He believes himself in love with her, and, although appearing to suspect that she might not be in love with him (“ ‘I’m afraid sometimes [...] she doesn’t really love me,’” he admits to a friend (“SM,” p.183)), he does not really want to believe it. He believes instead that “their engagement had as yet been an affair of pure sentiment” (ibid., p.187); yet the narrator had told us that there was

¹⁸⁹ Henry James, “The Story of a Masterpiece” (1868). *Tales*, p.201. Hereafter cited as “SM.” Kraft calls Marian “the embodiment of the beautiful vacuity of that society” (Kraft, p.34). Moreover, as Marian is called “a light woman,” it brings to mind the homonymous poem by Browning, that James will use as a precursor to “A Light Man” (1869).

¹⁹⁰ “We realise that Lennox is more enamoured of something in Marian’s outward appearance than of the girl herself” (Sicker, p.27).

“nothing sentimental in her [Marian’s] amiability” (ibid., p.182). Lennox also naively believes that Miriam does not want him for his money, as we are made to understand when the narrator discusses Lennox’s gifts to Marian for the engagement, which brings him to the idea of the portrait.

He had taken almost fastidious care not to give himself the vulgar appearance of a mere purveyor of luxuries and pleasures. Practically, he had been as yet for his future wife a poor man – or rather a man, pure and simple, and not a millionaire. He had [...] neither sent her sugar-plums, nor made bets with her, nor made her presents of jewellery [...] Marian, however, was quite content. She was, by nature, a great artist in the *mise en scene* of emotions, and she felt instinctively that this classical moderation was but the converse presentiment of an immense matrimonial abundance. In his attempt to make it impossible that his relations with Miss Everett should be tinged in any degree with the accident condition of the fortunes of either party, Lennox had thoroughly understood his own instinct. He knew that he should some day feel a strong and irresistible impulse to offer his mistress some visible and artistic token of his affection, and that his gift would convey a greater satisfaction from being sole of its kind. It seemed to him now that his chance had come. What gift would be more delicate than the gift of an opportunity to contribute by her patience and her goodwill to her husband’s possession of a perfect likeness of her face?” (ibid., p.187)

Lennox’s “fastidious care” to hide his wealth reminds one of Locksley in “A Landscape Painter.” His attempts have a comic ring to them, because Marian is perfectly aware that he is rich. She sees, moreover, his actions as part of some formal procedure, and being herself “a great artist in the *mise en scene* of emotions,” she is aware of his acting out a part. As the text makes clear that Marian acts out the emotions that she does not truly feel,¹⁹¹ and as she awaits the rewards of her union with Lennox, the latter’s illusions about her character surface. The narrator’s language becomes elaborate when he discusses Lennox’s “attempt” to exclude his wealth from his relationship. The readers are made to feel the selfishness of Lennox, who, although demanding complete altruism in Marian’s reasons for marrying him,

is not himself prepared to be generous toward the woman he loves. In reality, the portrait is not a gift for her, but for him; an extension of his desire to possess her, as he would another work of art. Everything he does, is not “delicate” as the narrator describes it, but a sad proof of (what Mull would see as) his inability to accept his wealth as a part of himself and to see how it has coloured his perception of the world and not, as he evidently believes, vice versa. James, thus, yet again, seems to wish to impart to us that his character’s unnaturalness is what causes his erroneous choice. He falls for a mercenary woman because he is blind to his own (to use Hawthorne’s word) “disorder.”

Although the title evokes only one painting, the tale itself deals with two paintings of the same woman (Kraft, p.29), whose comparison aims at enhancing our understanding not of the woman depicted, as is usually presumed, but of Lennox and Baxter. Marian remains the same for us from the start. We know her motives and we are not surprised by her prehistory of lovers. She reminds one of Esther in “A Landscape Painter.” Therefore, the paintings reveal to us more about the other two characters than about Miriam. The first painting, we are told, was made when Baxter was in love with her. By the time Lennox views the painting Baxter’s feelings for Marian are a thing of the past. He is now engaged with another woman. He has, nevertheless, named the picture “My Last Duchess,” after Browning’s poem, which indicates the bitterness he feels towards Marian. He says that the picture was “a sort of receptacle of waste ideas,” which to the reader reads as a confirmation that Baxter’s romantic depiction of Marian expressed his own feelings and hopes and that, therefore, Marian is described not as what she really was, but in the subjective way that the painter – affected by his love for her – envisioned her. “In truth,” says

¹⁹¹ We see how James saw thus the theatre as a part of everyday life.

Sicker, "the portrait is largely fanciful – a virtual representation, not of the real Marian, but of a perfect image of her with which both Baxter and Lennox have fallen in love" (Sicker, p.28). By giving the title of Browning's poem to the first portrait of Marian, moreover, Marian's character is immediately associated with that of the duchess. James, here, uses Browning's poem to associate Baxter's now evidently disillusioned opinion of Miriam with that held by the Duke for his dead wife. The dead duchess is accused by her jealous husband of having been fickle.¹⁹² Ingeniously, however, at the same time the allusion to Browning's poem serves to create another similar relationship: that of the Duke to both Baxter, and, to a greater extent, Lennox. How guilty of fickleness Miriam is, the reader is not left to conjecture. We learn from the narrative that Marian had attracted the admiration of more than one man in the absence of Baxter. It is suggested that she flirted. The narrator, however, says of her at the beginning of the tale that "in her emulation of the social graces of these, her more fully licensed [married] sisters, Miss Everett was quite guiltless of any aberration from the strict line of maidenly dignity" ("SM," p.180), suggesting, therefore, that her behaviour was not blameworthy in the eyes of society. Towards the end of the tale, when Marian is said to be pondering her situation, she herself concludes "she had done nothing really amiss. There was no visible blot in her history. It was faintly discoloured, indeed by a certain vague moral dinginess; but it compared well enough with that of other girls" ("SM," p.206). Like Luttrell in "Poor Richard," Marian is morally and emotionally dead. She does not feel

¹⁹² "She had/ A heart – how shall I say? – too soon made glad,/ Too easily impressed; she liked whatever/ She looked on and her looks went everywhere./ Sir, 'twas all one! [...] all and each/ Would draw from her alike the approving speech,/ [...] as if she ranked my gift of nine-hundred year old name/ With anybody's gift." Robert Browning, "My Last Duchess" (1842), Poetical Works 1833-1864. Ed. Ian Jack (London: Oxford U.P., 1975), p.368. Hereafter cited as "MLD." Further references to this collection will be cited as Works. In James's tale, accordingly, Marian says that her "heart is everywhere," when Lennox once asks her where her heart is ("SM," p.200), and Baxter discovers her changing lovers at the same time as she was engaged to him. The duke's protest about his gift to his wife, moreover, recalls Lennox's wish to give Marian a gift "sole of its kind."

her wrong. She knows about it through social interactions. There is, moreover, here a suggestion, that both Baxter and Lennox saw too much in Marian's behaviour that was not there, reminding us of the Duke's exaggerated jealousy of his wife.

Furthermore, in both cases Marian's affections seem to have been somewhat wished for rather than given. The narrator has informed us after all that there was "nothing sentimental in her amiability." Indeed she appears incapable of any real passions. The men who accuse her of superficiality and heartlessness ("SM," p.196), only do so because they expect stronger emotions than she is capable of. "It is never she who expects more of herself," says Kraft, "but those who fall victim to her beauty and then are disappointed that she does not have the rich soul she never claimed to have" (Kraft, p.30). This is something that Baxter has realised by the time he paints his second portrait of her, and this is what Lennox will realise to his own detriment when he observes that painting.

Besides, when Lennox recognises Marian in the first painting, he is in the same state as Baxter was when he painted her: "very much off his balance" ("SM," p.183) – a state, moreover, that suggests affiliations with the Duke in "My Last Duchess" who shows signs of being demented and cruel in his wish to possess his wife as he would possess a work of art.¹⁹³ That both Lennox and Baxter were in the same emotional state, moreover, explains their shared ability to recognise Marian as the subject of the painting.¹⁹⁴ Whereas Lennox's other artist friend, Gilbert, to whom he applies for confirmation, does not see the resemblance: "They are both handsome

¹⁹³ This is suggested in the line where the Duke shows his statue of Neptune to his listener: "Notice Neptune, though,/ Taming a sea horse, thought a rarity,/ Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!" ("MLD," p.369). Like Neptune, the duke had been trying to tame his wife. Moreover, as the duke prepares to marry again, to a rich count's daughter, we are given the impression that the new bride is seen as a rarity because of her worth in dowry, and will end up exactly like her predecessor, a possession, a piece of art in a Bluebeard's castle.

¹⁹⁴ Bayley notices that in the second, "masterly work" the painter "represents these qualities in the sitter, in such a way that they can only impress themselves on someone intimately involved with her" (Bayley, p.61). However, this applies also (and especially) to the first work.

and both have auburn hair. That's all I can see'" ("SM," p.187). Therefore, we may claim that what is suggested is that strong emotions,¹⁹⁵ like falling madly in love, negate the faculty of observation.¹⁹⁶ The artist, Baxter, has portrayed his ideal, and Lennox recognises in that his own ideal impression of his fiancée.¹⁹⁷ Thus, art, James tells us, when influenced by love is subjective and "ambiguous" ("SM," p.184).

On the other hand, art that is based on experience and maturity produces masterpieces. Baxter's second work on Marian is a masterpiece, because "his only concern was to do his work well" (ibid., p.202). The narrator explains to us why Baxter did his work well:

The artistic half of Baxter's nature exerted a lusty dominion over the human half – fed upon its disappointments and grew fat upon its joys and tribulations. This, indeed, is simply saying that the young man was a true artist. Deep, then, in the unfathomed recesses of his strong and sensitive nature, his genius had held communion with his heart and had transferred to the canvas the burden of its disenchantment and its resignation (ibid., p.202).

James, then, suggests here that the isolation¹⁹⁸ that Hawthorne's painter required for his composition was unnatural, because the artistic part of the man will have nothing to "feed upon." An artist needs experience in order to create. Baxter's second painting of Marian was built upon his "disenchantment" and his "resignation" and

¹⁹⁵ Bayley notices "the unfathomable world of emotion which these stories explore, and which in one case succeed in making into an admirable work of art..." (Bayley, p.62).

¹⁹⁶ Lennox is "somewhat relieved" by the fact that his friend does not recognise Marian as the subject of the picture: "It was not without a feeling of discomfort – a feeling by no means inconsistent with his first moment of pride and satisfaction – that he thought of Marian's peculiar and individual charms having been subjected to the keen appreciation of another than himself" ("SM," p.187). Gilbert's inability to recognise Marian, rather confirms the connection between the painter and Lennox as lovers of Marian, but Lennox, blinded by his jealousy, gives a more convenient (to him) explanation of the phenomenon. This creates ironies only the readers are aware of – it puts them "in the know."

¹⁹⁷ As Sicker puts it, "'The Story of a Masterpiece' is one of James's earliest attempts to analyse the process of self-deception through which one falls in love with an imaginary ideal" (Sicker, p.27). We saw the same attempt in earlier tales of James.

¹⁹⁸ James speaks of Hawthorne's preference for solitude in Hawthorne. "He was silent, diffident, more inclined to hesitate – to watch, and wait, and meditate – than to produce himself, and fonder, on almost any occasion, of being absent than of being present. This quality betrays itself in all his writings. There is in all of them something cold, and light, and thin – something belonging to the imagination alone – which indicates a man but little disposed to multiply his relations, his points of contact, with society" (Hawthorne, p.21). Again, discussing Hawthorne's impressions abroad James

was a masterpiece because his talent fed on the disappointment of his heart. James, then, allows his artist to be part of society and to experience life, because from these experiences he can arrive at the accomplishment of true art. Baxter falls in love and experiences troubles, but emerges a better painter, because he has learned to infuse into his work the truth of what he sees. He can now see Marian for what she is, and his knowledge and feelings about her and the ability (talent) to translate those onto a canvas result in his creating a masterpiece. Nor does James deny him the right to love again, but there is a feeling that this time his choice is more prudent, and his love more balanced.

The second painting, consequently, becomes for Lennox a kind of mirror of her soul, or, to put it otherwise, a translation of her soul, a translation of the truth as Baxter sees it. To Lennox the ability of the artist to reveal Marian implies the presence of some metaphysical power, that recalls Hawthorne's tale: "It seemed to Lennox," explains the narrator, "that some strangely potent agency had won from his mistress the confession of her inmost soul, and had written it there upon the canvas in firm yet passionate lines" ("SM," p.200). As he ponders further on Baxter's powers, the idea of the supernatural power of the artist is disproved:

Had Baxter been a man of marvellous insight – an unparalleled observer; or had he been a mere patient and unflinching painter, building infinitely better than he knew? [...] For it was evident that Baxter had done more. He had painted something more than knowledge – with imagination, with feeling. He had almost *composed*; and his composition had embraced the truth (ibid., p.201).

Truth then is "an alchemic blend" (Sicker, p.27) of knowledge, imagination, feeling, genius and heart. It requires also the faculty of observation, a faculty that was overshadowed by the painter's state of imbalance when he was in love. Baxter can

talks about "the weak side of Hawthorne's work – his constant mistrust and suspicion of the society that surrounded him, his exaggerated, painful, morbid national consciousness" (ibid., p.121).

now be more objective with his subject. He does not paint Marian as a Renaissance Countess in medieval dress anymore, but in a black dress in which “the ‘picturesque’ element had been religiously suppressed” (“SM,” p.190).¹⁹⁹ Lennox becomes, thus, now able to read the true character of Marian rather than the ideal Marian that he saw in the first picture.

The second portrait, the masterpiece, brings about a crisis in Lennox’s life, because it causes him to appreciate and confront his error (his illusions) about his ideal bride. James admirably shows the gradual changes that take place in Lennox due to this confrontation, what Sicker sees as “Lennox’s frantic retreat in a realm of complete self-deception” (Sicker, p.29). At first, Lennox is puzzled by the portrait’s “brutality” (“SM,” p.199), and frightened by it. He is filled with “pain and suspicion” (ibid., p.203), and tries to deny its meaning:

‘That’s it,’ he said. ‘Now I know what I didn’t like in your picture – the point of view. [...] You evidently care nothing for the poor girl. You have got over your love rather too well. You loved her, she was indifferent to you, and now you take your revenge.’
Distracted with grief, Lennox was taking refuge in irrational anger (ibid.).

The narrator confirms Lennox’s desperate efforts to disengage his own understanding of the painting from that of the creator.²⁰⁰ Lennox prefers to believe that the unpleasant character he reads in Marian’s portrait is false, caused by Baxter’s ill will towards her. Baxter sees his struggle and pities him.²⁰¹ In the end, however, Lennox fails to sustain his illusion, because the painter’s experience that he derives from the picture causes him pain and suspicion, which at the same time “acutely sharpened” his “faculties” (“SM,” p.201). As a result,

¹⁹⁹ Sicker, pp.28-29.

²⁰⁰ “For Lennox, who loves pictures but cannot paint, art is the source of agony rather than solace. Unable to reaffirm his original vision of Marian by visibly reproducing it, he desperately seeks to deny the truth about Baxter’s portrait (Sicker, pp.29-30). See also Kraft, p.28.

²⁰¹ “He begun to pity him. He had felt tempted, indeed, to pity him from the first” (“SM,” p.201).

In spite of his earnest efforts to believe in Miriam as before, to accept her without scruple and without second thought, he was quite unable to repress an impulse of constant mistrust and aversion. The charm was broken, and there is no mending a charm (ibid., p.205).

“Like Stendhal before him,” says Sicker, “James realized that once a love-image is shattered, there is no sane way of mending it” (Sicker, p.29). The “charm” is broken, and Lennox is able to see clearly. This is proved when he chances upon the first painting again, and, like Gilbert, cannot perceive anymore the resemblance between Marian and the Countess. He sees Marian after that through “grim logic” (“SM,” p.208).

Only Lennox is not an artist, like Baxter, to be able to externalise his emotions. Nor did he have time to come to terms with his emotions. The events make him realise that the error was his: “If he had mistaken her and overrated her, the fault was his own” (ibid.). We are to understand, therefore, that the marriage will take place: “As for marriage, that should stand, for that was not of necessity a matter of love” (ibid.). To have backed out would be to punish Marian for something that was not her fault. “It was a hard thing that she should pay the penalty” (ibid.). Nevertheless, despite his reasoning, emotions are too strong to handle, and Lennox proves that he has not yet found the balance he lost. His feelings take over when he faces again the “masterpiece,” the representation of his error, of his romantic illusions. The face portrayed is “detestable” to him (ibid.) and, in “angry despair” and “with barbarous glee,” he hacks it - a melodramatic act that was anticipated in the tale’s association with both “The Prophetic Pictures” and “My Last Duchess.” “Lennox strives to kill the image of his own romantic blindness,” says Sicker.²⁰² In

²⁰² Sicker also believes that this results in “destroy[ing] his rational intelligence” and by marrying Marian entering into “a self-induced hallucination” (Sicker, p.30). I believe it is the opposite. The marriage is proof of the “destruction” of his aesthetic emotions for Marian. He now enters the marriage rationally.

destroying the picture –ironically, his precious gift – he punishes himself for his illusions, and gains “an immense relief” from all those pent-up emotions (“SM,” p.209).²⁰³ The ending of the tale – considered minus the last paragraph added later upon the editor’s request and against James’s will²⁰⁴ – is the natural conclusion, and the appropriate one in James’s tale. As Daugherty points out, James “advocated an open-ended plot,” because, as a method, it “stimulated the reader’s imagination, making him sense the complexities of human nature” (Daugherty, p.28). It brings the readers to an emotional peak and allows them the freedom to interpret the tale.²⁰⁵ The additional paragraph is redundant, and may contribute to our missing the point about why Lennox had to destroy the picture (as Sicker and Bayley miss it), because of its emphasis on the wedding.

Again in this tale, James reverts to the omniscient narrator, who seems to be given more prominence than the characters. We have very little dialogue. Everything is reported as observed by the narrator, who takes us back and forth in time as he likes. Nevertheless, again we have evidence of James’s efforts to keep a distance from him. A man of the world, who has all the knowledge to undertake the task of

²⁰³ Bayley sees the destruction of the portrait as Lennox’s conviction that “he could exorcise those traits of which he seems to accuse the original.” “Lennox behaves as if art were so much outside life.” Bayley further claims, “that the removal of what was uncomfortable in it could make life comfortable again” (Bayley, p.62). This is a misreading of James’s tale, because Lennox’s destruction of the painting does not suggest any conviction on his part that Marian will change. “Marian may be what God has made her,” he says. Nor is there any indication that he believes that life will be comfortable after the destruction of the portrait. This is an act caused by intense emotions of anger against himself. It affords him momentary relief, but not the guarantee of a better life.

²⁰⁴ See *Letters*, pp.73-74; *HJLL*, pp.18-19.

²⁰⁵ Buitenhuis is not convinced: “The conclusion is melodramatic and unconvincing, belonging far more to the Gothic literary convention than to the relatively realistic manner in which the story is written” (Buitenhuis, p.39). Charles Fish, on the other hand, understands the importance that such a dramatic ending has for James: “James thought that to end the story with stabbing was ‘more dramatic.’ There was less interference between the reader and the action [...] The dramatic way in this sense, is the indirect way, for it suggests interpretations and conclusions to the reader but does not openly force them upon him” “Indirection, Irony, and the two endings of James’s ‘The Story of a Masterpiece’” *Modern Philology* 62 (February 1965), p.242. Fish, moreover, points out that a reason why James did not like the addition can be explained by his dislike of Eliot’s ending with a marriage in *Adam Bede*, that should have been foreshadowed instead of given, as he says in his article on the novels of Eliot, in order to allow for the participation of the reader (ibid.). Another good point Fish

acquainting us with the truth of the events, the narrator's often elaborate language ("I may as well take advantage of the moment, rapidly to make plain to the reader the events to which the above conversation refers" ("SM," p.191)), his gossipy manner in forming opinions, ((he often undertakes to "conjecture" (ibid., p. 180), to "point out" (ibid., p.182), to choose between things that "need not here be declared" (ibid., p.189), and things he "may add, moreover" (ibid., p.190)), and his attempts to engage the reader's participation ("stand off, gentlemen, and let *her* make the addition" (ibid., p.182)), contribute to the narrator's affinity with the characters, at the same time creating a relationship with the reader who is invited to participate with the characters.

Moreover, James does more with this story that transcends his precursor. He discusses not only his views on painting but also the criticism of it. These were issues that had been on his mind that period, as is proved by his critical essay published the same year on P.G. Hamerton's own essay on contemporary French painters. In that essay James writes that:

It is no more than just, that, before sitting down to discourse upon works of art, a writer should be required to prove his familiarity with the essential conditions of the production of such works, and that, before criticising the way in which objects are painted, he should give evidence of his knowledge of the difference between the manner in which they strike the senses of the persons of whom it is impossible to conceive as being tempted to reproduce them and the manner in which they strike the senses of persons in whom to see them and to wish to reproduce them are almost one and the same act.²⁰⁶

makes is in uniting all endings of James so far and proving that there is a consistent irony present (ibid., pp.242-243).

²⁰⁶ Henry James, "*Contemporary French Painters. An Essay.* By Philip Gilbert Hamerton. With Sixteen Photographic Illustrations. London: Seeley, Jackson, and Halliday, 1868" (1868), LC1, p.1032. Hereafter cited as "CFP."

In his story James will construct “the essential conditions of the production” of Baxter’s work by taking us back to the past.²⁰⁷ By doing this, he proves his own “familiarity” as one who “discourse[s] upon works of art.” Then he proceeds through his characters to criticise the art he has described. It is as if we are getting lessons in art criticism in the most amusing manner, that of reading a story about art. The second part of the above text refers to the different manner of understanding art. This James exploits in his tale also. We see that there are different understandings of the first painting between Lennox, Gilbert and Baxter, as well as of the second one between Lennox, Baxter and Marian herself who notices nothing strange in it. This idea may have originated in Hawthorne’s tale, since everyone there interprets the painter’s portraits differently. Interpretation, moreover, is the role of the critic, a necessary task according to James: “It is certain that the painters need to be interpreted and expounded, and that as a general thing they are themselves incompetent to the task” (“CFP”, p.1033). Hence, we have no distinct explanation by Baxter of his works, except the vague allusion to the Browning poem as “an attempt to embody my own private impression of the poem, which has always had a strong hold on my fancy” (“SM,” p.185), because, as James says, “to see [...] and to wish to reproduce [...] are almost one and the same act.”²⁰⁸ It is Lennox (and the narrator) who make the associations later and discover the true meaning of Baxter’s art. Moreover, it is evident that James’s criticism on painting agrees with his theories on fiction. As with the painter, who uses a precursor to “embody his own [...]

²⁰⁷ Kelly finds that only “a few hints [about the past] would have been sufficient to enable an interested reader to reconstruct it for himself” (Kelly, p.81) but this would have interfered with James’s intentions to give a full understanding of the process of the conception of the work and how this relates to our understanding of it.

²⁰⁸ The painter expresses in this tale the same lack of “anxiety of influence” that James expresses in Hawthorne, pp.106-7. Baxter tells Lennox: “You know how a painter works – how artists of all kind work: they claim their property whenever they find it” (“SM,” p.186). Kenton, moreover, sees in Baxter’s works what is “really criticism of poetised fiction within fiction [...] an invitation to read the poem again” (Kenton, p.12). In such ways, James unites his ideas on painting with those on fiction.

impression,” so the author can do the same. The interpretation of a work of fiction, moreover, requires, according to James, the cooperation of the reader. We must make the appropriate associations to arrive at the author’s true meaning.

In this tale James’s interaction with realism and romance has been detected by the critics, but most critics have failed to grasp James’s intentions and for that reason see it as a failure. “Realism and Romance fight an unresolved battle,” says Buitenhuis, “as a Balzacian insistence on fact and the contemporaneity of the narrative disperse the mystery essential to such a story” (Buitenhuis, p.40). Buitenhuis expects a Hawthornesque tale and as such James’s tale has failed: “If James had used the painting as a source of ambiguity, as Hawthorne had done,” Buitenhuis claims, “he could have examined the mind of the painter as well as that of the subject” (ibid.). James, though, is not interested in the painting, except in so far as it helps him examine the characters and through them his idea on Art. And that, despite what Buitenhuis thinks, James successfully accomplishes. He does not seek to create allegories as Hawthorne does. In examining what the masterpiece represents, what made it a masterpiece and why it was finally destroyed by Lennox, James has created three vivid characters, as opposed to Hawthorne’s characters who remain distant to the reader. Romance and the Gothic are necessary to James because he sees them as part of life. Lennox’s melodramatic action at the end of the tale is nothing more than the result of his frustrated emotions. What James seems to object to is consigning the story’s interest to the use of supernatural devices.

iv) “The Romance of Certain Old Clothes”: the Horror of Obsession

Examining “The Story of a Masterpiece,” we saw that James objected to two elements found in Hawthorne: the supernatural aspect and the allegory. Yet, these

two elements are present in his next tale, "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes" (1868). Emmet-Long sees this tale (together with the later "De Grey: A Romance" (1868)) as "attempts to reach a large audience" at a time when James "was in doubt" about his tales (Emmet-Long, p.18).²⁰⁹ James's contemporaries had not been particularly impressed by his previous tales, and his brother had criticized him on his lack of action and too much analysis in the "The Story of a Masterpiece."²¹⁰ Hence, maybe "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes" was a respond to the demands of his readers for more action. William, still dissatisfied, saw this story as being "in a different tone from any of yours, [it] seems to have been written with the mind more unbent and careless, is very pleasantly done, but is, as the *Nation* said, trifling for you" (Gard, p.25).²¹¹ H.D. Howells, on the other hand, greatly admired it.²¹²

Modern critics have been divided in their opinion of James's eighth published tale, which was at the same time the second tale to appear in 1868, as well as James's "first ghost story" (Wagenknecht, p.200). Some see it as a successful tale,²¹³ imitating Hawthorne's tales of the supernatural.²¹⁴ Others see it as an unsuccessful one.²¹⁵ Some consider it romantic;²¹⁶ others too realistic to achieve the desired

²⁰⁹ Novick terms it "a potboiler" (Novick, p.154), and Lustig mentions that James modestly, "repeatedly deprecated his ghost-stories as pot-boilers" (Lustig, p.3).

²¹⁰ See Gard, p.24.

²¹¹ In the *Nation* an appreciative critic of James described the tale, nevertheless, as "a tantalizing story which, when the end turns out to be trivial, is seen to be trivial altogether." Quoted in *Tales*, p.513.

²¹² In his review of James's collection, *A Passionate Pilgrim and other Tales*, in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1875 he wrote: "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes in this volume is unsurpassed." *LFL*, p.107

²¹³ See Vaid, p.134.

²¹⁴ Kaplan says that James "both adapted and transformed Hawthorne into a family romance" (Kaplan, p.71). Quentin Anderson sees the tale as "an addition to Hawthorne's 'Legends of the Province House.'" *The American Henry James*. (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers U.P., 1957), p.37. See also Buitenhuis, p.40; Putt, p.37; Fox, p.6; Lewis, p.44; Martin/Ober, p.35; *Encyclopedia*, p.559; LeClair, p.401; Kraft, p.20; Brodhead, p.125; Beach, p.184.

²¹⁵ "It has too little drama, too much summarizing, a beginning too slow and too remote from the main action, a patronizing, satirical attitude towards the characters that develops a mood at odds with the final horror, and, in the second wife, a character too crudely and obviously selfish." Raymond D. Havens, "Henry James on One of His Early Stories" *American Literature* 23 (1851), p.133. Kraft calls it "contrived and slight" (Kraft, p. 20).

²¹⁶ Kelly finds that "the story is not realistic but romantic. If the talks of James and Howells are recalled, the reason is at once apparent. Howells had acclaimed romanticism; he had praised

supernatural effect it aims at in the end.²¹⁷ The tale shows a continuance in James's concern with the supernatural and its role in fiction, and foreshadows some of James's later works, notably the "Turn of the Screw".²¹⁸

The opening paragraph ("Toward the middle of the eighteenth century there lived in the province of Massachusetts [...]"²¹⁹) reminds Emmet-Long of "Hawthorne's colonial fables" (Emmet-Long, p.17). The time of the events, as well as the name of the family (Willoughby) and their circumstances (a widowed lady with three children), moreover, bring to the reader's mind Austen's novel Sense and Sensibility (1811). Indeed, Austen's indirect presence becomes apparent to the careful reader throughout the novel. With the introduction of Lloyd for example, and his "intentions" concerning the two sisters, towards which (intentions) their mother

showed a dignified indifference [...] remote from that hideous alacrity to make him commit himself, which in his quality of a young man of property, he had but too often encountered in the venerable dames of his native islands ("RCOC," p.213).

The lines read as a reversal of the famous opening of Austen's novel Pride and Prejudice (1813). Even the mention of Goldsmith's novel The Vicar of Wakefield (1766), that was one precursor to Austen's novel, helps maintain a connection with Austen and her novels.

Hallab believes that associations can be found for the "motif of the 'fatal chest' in "a popular melodrama of the time *The Mistletoe Bough: or The Fatal Chest*,

Hawthorne. James then turned to supply his editor-friend with a story as much as possible like Hawthorne's without being a direct imitation" (Kelly, p.82). See also Emmet-Long, p.17.

²¹⁷ James "simply transferred his evolving notions of psychological realism to the eighteenth century [...] Imbued with ideas about the necessity of realism in fiction, he was not able, even when writing in the romance form, to profit at this time by Hawthorne's example" (Buitenhuis, p.42).

²¹⁸ Kaplan sees "The Turn of the Screw" (1898) as "a variation" of this story (Kaplan, p.413). Wagenknecht suggests similarities with The Other House (1896) (Wagenknecht, p.200). The American (1877) has also been suggested (Levy, p.31).

²¹⁹ Henry James, "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes," Tales, p.210. Hereafter cited as "RCOC." One may note that it is very unusual for James to use this historical novel opening.

and, oddly enough, the story of Cinderella.”²²⁰ She mentions Tintner who had first written about the idea that James derived themes from fairy tales such as Cinderella and Bluebeard.²²¹ Hallab agrees with Edel when she says that “the opening of the fatal chest “ reveals guilt and calls up a ghost, who carries out the revenge that destroys the villain and closes the action” (Hallab, p.317). Although the suggestions on precursors have been many, Allott was the one who discovered where the plot’s idea came from: “the real source of the story, [is] a legend related by James Russell Lowell.”²²² The story was told to and influenced both James and Tennyson who based their work upon it. Tennyson’s “The Ring” (1889), consequently, follows closely James’s tale, with minor differences. For example, in “The Ring” the rivalry is between cousins, not sisters, and the apple of discord is not the clothes, but a haunted ring.

James’s tale deals with the rivalry of two sisters, Viola and Perdita, first for the same man and then for the trousseaux of Perdita who did marry him. The clothes are described as a great treasure, a sort of prize money for the winner bride: “Mrs Willoughby had determined that her daughter should carry home the most elegant outfit that her money could buy, or that the country could furnish” (“RCOC,” p.217). Viola’s situation,” the narrator comments, “was not to be envied” (ibid.). Yet it is Perdita who dies. On her deathbed, however, she makes her husband promise that the clothes will be locked up in a chest for her daughter’s coming of age. Subsequently, her husband marries Viola as Perdita had expected. Viola, obsessed with the clothes

²²⁰ Mary Y. Hallab, “The Romance of Old Clothes in a Fatal Chest,” *The Henry James Review*.16:3, (1995), p.315.

²²¹ See *Pop*, pp.24-30. Tintner, however, surprisingly ignores this tale, despite the fact that it involves a chest, a key and clothes. She does notice, though, the role that clothes play in Jamesian fiction, and considers the tale as “the first ‘apparel’ story” (*Museum*, p.238).

²²² Miriam Allott, “James Russell Lowell: A Link Between Tennyson and Henry James.” *The Review of English Studies* N 6 (1955), p.400. Hereafter cited as “T&J.”

finally extracts the key to the chest from her husband, but some time later her husband discovers her dead, killed, it is suggested, by her sister's vengeful ghost.

As the title suggests, the key to the understanding of this story are the clothes. Edel believes that James's choice of clothes as the theme to his tale is not coincidental. The story, he says, "was written, singularly enough, not long after Henry ordered from his tailor the suit of clothes made from the same cloth as William's suit of the previous summer" (UY, p.254). Therefore, in his opinion the story "contains ghostly punishment for sisterly identification and imitation, as well as usurpation" (Life, p.82). According to Edel, "Henry had abundant guilt about his relation with his brother (Life, p.82).²²³ Certainly, the sibling relationship in this tale is not a happy one.

This tale offers limited insight into the character's minds. Instead, we are given Shakespearean names that apparently relate to their personality and fate. Clothes in this tale help especially with characterisation. Take the following scene for example with the blue silk:

'Blue's your colour, sister, more than mine,' she said with appealing eyes. It's a pity it's not for you. You'd know what to do with it.'

Viola got up from her place, and looked at the great shining fabric as it lay spread over a chair. Then she took it up in her hands and felt it, - lovingly, as Perdita could see, - and turned about toward the mirror with it. She let it roll down to her feet, and flung the other end over her shoulder, gathering it about her waist with her white arm bare to the elbow. She threw back her head, and looked at her image, and a hanging tress of her auburn hair fell upon the gorgeous surface of the silk. It made a dazzling picture ("RCOC", p.217).

The reader is invited to observe that "dazzling picture." Viola's treatment of the fabric, sensual ("she took it up in her hands and felt it, - lovingly") as well as almost

violent in her wish to possess it (“[she] flung the other end over her shoulder, gathering it about her waist”), betray her feelings toward her sister’s possessions, and, together with her sister’s words above, prepare us for what is to come. The image tells a lot about Viola’s character. She is a woman who knows what she wants. She has also the character of the predator. She has in her what makes Shakespearean heroines like Viola disguise themselves into men to achieve what they want. Is James’s Viola evil? After all, she pursues her sister’s husband. The narrator says otherwise: “Mrs. Lloyd’s conjectures had fallen very far short of the truth, touching Viola’s feeling for her husband. It had been a passion at first and a passion it remained” (“RCOC,” p.222). Viola is a passionate creature. She is driven by that passion when she possesses the blue fabric in the way described above. She is driven by the same passion in the scene following her sister’s wedding when she wears her wedding dress: “Bedizened in this unnatural garb, Viola stood in the mirror, plunging a long look into its depths, and reading heaven knows what audacious visions.” (ibid., p.218). Again we are presented with the image of Viola looking at her self in the mirror; another invitation for us to observe her and try to configure her “audacious visions”. She seems bewitched by the clothes,²²⁴ obsessed, unbalanced (she does after all wear her sister’s veil behind her back, signifying her wish to usurp her sister’s life). What does she see? The reader thinks of Arthur’s phrase when he describes her as “in the language of that day, a devilish fine woman” (ibid., p.223). It is what *he* must have also seen at the wedding of their brother, a fine woman with whom he spent the evening riding while his wife was giving birth. The reader is further given the impression that maybe Lloyd made a mistake in his choice of a wife

²²³ There have been other biographical interpretations: Kaplan too sees sibling rivalry, and sees incest symbolically represented in the rivalry between the two sisters (Kaplan, p.91). Lewis sees in the plot the “drama lying behind Henry Senior’s choice of a bride” (Lewis, p.43).

²²⁴ George Eliot often has similar scenes involving the bewitching power of finery.

after all. Had he married Viola, he would have had his “devilish fine woman” and she would have had all the possessions that represented for her the happiness that her sister stole from her: the clothes. These impressions are not things James’s narrator explains to us, but they are impressions one derives from the scenes he allows us to observe. Those scenes are like cinematic pictures. As Kelly points out, “these pictures [...] are not photographs in neutral tones such as one expects after the previous stories of James, but are highly colored, impressionistic paintings, and the story,” she therefore concludes, “is not realistic but romantic” (Kelly, p.82). I disagree. The scenes may be presented in a romantic manner, like “impressionistic paintings,” with the distinct purpose, however, of involving the reader who has to find their clear meaning. In describing scenes without explaining them lies James’s strength.²²⁵ The underlying issues concerning the relationships between his characters, though, are realistic. Whatever the derivation of the idea, the clothes do represent for Viola her sister’s happiness. Every time she wears one her imagination takes flight, and we can envision her as happy. Ironically, the clothes become such a fixation that, even after she has possessed her sister’s life, the fact that she cannot possess *them* comes as a heavy blow. It is as if her sister is still holding back, from the grave even, the “key” to her happiness. “‘And pray what right’, she cried, ‘had Perdita to dispose of my future?’” (“RCOC”, p.225). The clothes are associated by now in her mind with her future. They have been the future she always imagined when, trying them on, she looks at herself in the mirror. Her husband’s financial losses accentuate to her the importance of the clothes, as to everyone’s eyes she “was perforce less of a great lady than her sister had been” (ibid., p.224) The

²²⁵ Le Clair seems to think so also when he says that the events are “carrying more weight because James does not attempt to explain” (Le Clair, p.401).

clothes help, then, dramatise Viola's feelings.²²⁶ "There was a sullen defiance in [the chest's] three great padlocks and its iron bands, which only quickened her desires" ("RCOC," p.224). They dramatise her desperation, that forces her to steal the key to the chest from the very hands of the child-owner. They help dramatise her violent death at the hands of the ghost of her sister, her hand on her heart, facing the very clothes she loved and desired.

The violent death of Viola has aroused the interest of James's critics for being so blatantly sensational, supernatural, reminding one of Gothic fiction. Most critics see it as a break with his theories about connecting the ghost story "at a hundred points with the common objects in life." The violent death, nevertheless, has a purpose: for one, it arouses our interest in Perdita as a character and Perdita as a ghost. Ghosts, Lustig explains, serve a purpose, appear for a reason: "to reveal the truth" (Lustig, p.33). James's ghost here dramatises for us the truth about Perdita, just as the clothes dramatised the truth about Viola. Hallab, not surprisingly, finds it remarkable that a woman who was so "docile" in life, would come back to become so violent, but associates it with "another common folklore motif – the return of the dead mother to defend her child" (Hallab, p.317). However, one should perhaps ask, how "docile" was Perdita?

When the narrator introduces us to the sisters, we are told that Perdita's eyes were "full of fire and animation," that "she had been from her childhood a creature of smiles and gaiety" and that she was never embarrassed to talk to you ("RCOC," p.211). She appears to be the complete reverse of her sister's personality (although, as we realise later, the sisters are similar in their embodiment of both good and bad elements). This is a subtly different image from the "docile" one Hallab ascribes to

²²⁶ Buitenhuis calls the tale "costume drama" (Buitenhuis, p.42). Also in Brodhead, p.125.

Perdita. Moreover, Perdita's behaviour before the secret comes out suggests that she is not as innocent as she might appear on the surface. After all, the fact that she had secret meetings with Arthur, behind her sister's back, (although not her mother's), suggests that she was purposely keeping her sister in the dark about her dealings so that she could avoid antagonism. Why else would she not tell her from the first about Arthur's preference? She was obviously afraid that he might prefer her sister if the game was fair. The fact that Viola believed, after four months had passed by since they first met Arthur, that there was nothing between her sister and Arthur ("if Perdita had nothing more to boast of than she, there was not much to be feared from her rivalry"), suggests that her sister must have been very crafty indeed to manage it, and that it is Viola who is the "docile" and naïve one ("RCOC," p.214). Evidently, Viola's error lay in her underestimating her sister. Perdita's secrecy also suggests that she was obsessed with the idea that Arthur might have chosen Viola had he had half a chance, that is, had Viola been as crafty as her sister to catch him for herself.

Viola's behaviour is one of a jealous sister, natural enough under the circumstances. Perdita's behaviour is the behaviour of a woman obsessed with the fear of rivalry. Obviously, hiding her relationship with Arthur from her sister implies insecurity. However, even after she marries she does not feel secure. Her obsession is evident when she allows this fear to destroy her. Her health deteriorates – the narrator gives only some vague reason, "some excess of diet or exposure," - after she was doing so well recovering physically (ibid., p.219). This suggests, rather, that the reason might have been mental – the result of emotional turmoil after her husband's excursion with her sister.²²⁷ My suggestion that Perdita was obsessed with the idea

²²⁷ Banta sees Edel's "vampire factor" here, suggesting that it was Viola's "possessive will" that caused Perdita's death, but it is Perdita's own fears and obsessions that lead her to her death. Martha Banta, Henry James and the Occult: the Great Extension. (Bloomington, London: Indiana U.P., 1972), pp.82-83, 89.

that her sister was a rival, still to be feared, and that her fear might have probably led her to her death, I base on two more grounds: firstly on the ground that her husband is completely honest with her. His account of his ride with Viola the moment it was made (when he reached her bedside after the birth of their child) suggests that the thought of his wife's jealousy had never crossed his mind. It also suggests that he himself had not harboured any feelings for his sister-in-law; otherwise, he would avoid mentioning his outing out of guilt and fear of exposure. The fact that he tells her of his ride should reassure her; and yet it does not. After all, what more natural than that he would have a ride with his sister-in-law, a member now of his own family? Obviously, Perdita does not see it that way.

The second ground that proves Perdita's obsession was the clause she extracts from her husband when she realises that she is going to die. "The last feeling which lingered in her heart," says the narrator, "was one of mistrust" ("RCOC," p.220). Not surprising, since the first feeling she had was mistrust also, a feeling that led her to hide her affair with Arthur. In her last moments, Perdita appears selfish. She assumes that her sister and her husband will get together after her death and she is not at all happy about it. She does not think for a moment altruistically about the union: that it might be a good thing for her husband and the child. Instead she thinks of her possessions, her clothes that her sister was so jealous of, and how she might have the power, even after she is dead, to deny her sister possession of them. One is under the impression that Perdita gives as much importance to her possessions as Viola, and in recognising that "she covets my rings and my laces more than she covets my husband," she confirms her own priorities also (*ibid.*, p.220). It seems that for Perdita also the clothes represent all the good fortune she had, the status she has acquired in the eyes of society, and which her sister lacks. Therefore, to her it is not so important

that her husband might marry her sister: she does not ask of him not to marry her because she resents the loss of love. All she asks, interestingly enough, is that the clothes be locked up, denying, hence, her sister the identity the clothes endowed herself with. "Dress can be a sign of what we are," says Hughes, "what we would like to be and even what we are not" – a matter "of enormous importance," she says, to many characters of Balzac too.²²⁸ It is as if Arthur, a rich man, has been only the means to what represents – for both sisters – happiness.²²⁹ It is interesting how the reader senses this in Perdita's request. The narrator gives us Arthur's immediate reaction: he was "puzzled at the intensity with which his wife appeared to cling to this idea" ("RCOC," p.221). The reader feels, perhaps, just as puzzled, and must decide what to make of this request for him/herself. To me, as explained above, the request depicts the relationship between Perdita and her possessions, an obsession for the clothes that, apparently, does not really differ much from Viola's obsession. The sisters, only apparently different, are essentially the same, sharing the same opposite characteristics of light and dark, hot and cold, evil and innocence. This leads to the final scene where the pent-up emotions of the rivalry culminate in violence.

The perpetrator of this violent act is not named. The reference to the "two vengeful ghostly hands" is suggestive, of course, of Perdita. The violent,

²²⁸ Clair Hughes, Henry James and the Art of Dress. (London: Palgrave, 2001), p.14. In her examination of the significance of the clothes in James's works, Hughes points out that "on the whole, the function of dress in James's fiction is weighted towards symbolism rather than realism" (Hughes, p.4), helping to "uncover the meaning under appearances" (Hughes, p.5). James, she says, "has an acute sensitivity to surface appearances, but the recordings of those appearances [...] were not, for James, to be ends in themselves, they were to be seen as instruments towards the revelation of moral meaning" (Hughes, p.9). In addition to their symbolic function, though, Hughes concedes that clothes "place characters in a precise social and historical framework to an extent that would have been obvious to early readers, but is now easily underestimated" (Hughes, p.4).

²²⁹ At the beginning of the tale, when the girls meet Arthur, they listen to him talk about his experiences of "fine people" and "fine things," which contrasts with the girls' manner of living: "They would all gather around the fire after tea, in a little wainscoted parlour, - quite innocent then of any intention of being picturesque or of anything else, indeed than economical, and saving the expense of stamped papers and tapestries" ("RCOC," p.212). From the beginning then we have the sense that both sisters see Arthur the same way: representing all the "fine things" that they lack and crave for in

melodramatic ending of this tale is an extension of the ending in the previous tale. Lennox was violent in his destruction of the portrait, and we discussed there how the violent ending allows the reader to reach an emotional peak. Kelly finds the story “artistic,” because “the scenes move panoramically to the final one, each picture increasing the tone in much the same ominous manner as a heavy storm that gathers and develops” (ibid.). The death here comes as a relief, both to the victim and the perpetrator, from “the storm,” the obsession that possessed them. It also comes as a relief to the reader, who was caught up in “the storm” by observing the characters. The now dead heroines become vivid ghosts in the minds of the reader who is left pondering about them. The final act is left to him/her that has to make sense of it all, “stimulated” as the reader’s imagination now is to be able to “sense of the complexities of human nature” (Daugherty, p.28).

The role of the narrator is again important to the interpretation of the tale. The way he associates the characters he presents to us with the theme of the story, i.e., the clothes, is ingenious: it is as if he *dresses* the characters up for the occasion. He dons them with names and plays with the associations produced by the characteristics those names ascribe. Hence, Viola is said to be “a faint likeness to the Viola of Shakespeare’s comedy” and yet she is very much like her (“RCOC,” p.211). It *is* an intentional baptism. She might not be “of the softest and finest emotions” that the narrator says he imagines the Viola of Shakespeare to be, but how true a characterisation is that of Shakespeare’s Viola? After all, she did have enough of artfulness in her to disguise her true self. James’s Viola has the same artfulness after her sister’s death to transform herself from a “very plump beauty” (ibid.) and “cold grey eyes” (ibid., p.212), into “a devilish fine woman” (ibid., p.223). Moreover, the

order to belong to the “fine people” that Arthur knows, and the need for a fine trousseaux expresses and represents that craving.

reference to the Viola of Shakespeare does associate the tale with plays, clothes, and disguises, (indicating to us how theatre remains present in the second phase of James's first works). As with Viola, so the choice of Perdita's name was intentional. After all, she does die. That clothes, moreover, have been associated with characters becomes obvious in the sentence that begins to describe the sisters. Notice the use of the verb "wear": "The two sisters were at this time in all the freshness of their youthful bloom; each wearing, of course, this natural brilliancy in the manner that became her best" (ibid., p.211). Again we sense that characters are "worn."

The narrator, moreover, lacks often a sense of seriousness, and that in itself gives us a tinge of his personality. Such instances as the "of course" in the above sentence, or the inverted Austenite comment as regards Arthur, mentioned at the beginning of this essay, betray a certain humoresque attitude that adds to the mystery of who this narrator is, and what his relation to the events is. He is often being condescending when he talks about the brother of the girls, Bernard: "Clever, however he was not" (ibid., p.210). Or, when he talks about Arthur not being a "paragon" husband (ibid., p.212). On occasion, he is ironic, expressing his opinions: "Poor fellow! He had coveted a 'devilish fine woman', and he had got one" (ibid., p.225). "At other times he presumes to explain the appearances of things so as to add more mystery to the story, as when he is describing the chest:

There was a sullen defiance in its three great padlocks and its iron bands, which only quickened her desire. There was something exasperating in its incorruptible immobility. It was like a grim and grizzled old household servant, who locks his jaws over a family secret. And then there was a look of capacity in its vast extent, and a sound as of a dense fullness ("RCOC," p.224).

He uses big, elaborate, bombastic words that make Viola's obsession with the clothes seem ridiculous, creating thus a contrast to her own words "it's absurd" that mean the opposite: that it is ridiculous not to have the clothes. One may well ask, where does

the narrator stand in all this? The answer would seem to be that he stands up high, looking down at the characters he has created, like Perdita's ghost must have watched over the closet, occasionally participating by describing how they seem to him, offering us his point of view on what is happening, allowing us, at the same time to form our own. This is why, as I mentioned at the beginning the descriptions of scenes resemble pictures. They are pictures he infuses with his own views and emotions. Even the final scene of the dead Viola seems like a panoramic picture, much like the one Hawthorne gave of Colonel Pincheon's death²³⁰ in The House of the Seven Gables, another possible influence according to Buitenhuis, who finds however that the ending is not as successful as Hawthorne's scenes of mystery, because,

“[...] such a conclusion is completely out of keeping with the rest of the tale, in spite of James's conscientious attempts at period atmosphere. He had apparently not realised that it required something more than historical detail to create the proper mood for supernatural events. Hawthorne's method was to create a warm haze of ambiguity so that there are always at least two possible explanations of mysterious events, one of them natural. James, on the other hand, in *A Romance of Certain Old Clothes*, simply transferred his evolving notions of psychological realism to the eighteenth century. He did not yet have much idea of what could be done with image and symbol to enrich and mystify a romantic tale. Imbued with ideas about the necessity of realism in fiction, he was not able, even when writing in the romance form, to profit at this time by Hawthorne's example. *The Romance of Certain Old Clothes*, as the title suggests, is, for all its high colour, a costume drama, unredeemed by historical insight or credibility” (Buitenhuis, p.42).

²³⁰ “There were many rumors, some of which have vaguely drifted down to the present time, how that appearances indicated violence; that there were the marks of fingers on his throat, and the print of a bloody hand on his plaited ruff [...],” in Hawthorne's The House of the Seven Gables, (1851), George Seymour Lee, ed. (NY: W.W.Norton & Co. Inc.,1967), p.16. Here too, emphasis is given to the violence of the event which James seems to be emphasising too in his tale. Hughes, though, believes that the marks on the dead body are indicative of Merimée's story that James had translated, “The Venus of L'Ille” (1837) (Hughes, p.200, n.11).

However, in his criticism Buitenhuis takes as an absolute fact that James's intention was to mimic the fashion of Hawthorne with the mere difference that he tries to infuse the story with realism. Buitenhuis is far off from what is really happening here in taking the story to be a story of romance. The romance referred to in the title relates not to the story itself but to the clothes and how the heroines perceive them. For them the clothes are their own romantic idea of happiness. The ending, therefore, intentionally lacking the ambiguity in its explanation, remains open-ended to allow the reader to do his part of the job. Whereas Buitenhuis sees it as an amateur production of James's, this tale is in fact the opposite. James's achievement lies in the narrator's picturesque and emotional portrayal of the story, the use of the clothes and the final sensational event, all of which generate not a costume drama, but psychological insight.

v) "A Most Extraordinary Case" for the Detective Reader

"A Most Extraordinary Case," James's ninth tale, the third to come out in the productive year of 1868, ought to be considered one of James's best early tales, for its psychological probing into the characters,²³¹ as well as for the exciting means through which he manages to make this phenomenally simple tale fascinating. It deals once more with disease and death, and sustains the application of the sensational and romantic motifs with the purpose of gaining the interest and involvement of the reader.

"A Most Extraordinary Case" deals with an invalid's last months of life: an ex-soldier, Colonel Mason, is found by his aunt ill in a hotel at the end of the American civil war, and taken under her care to her house to live with her and her

²³¹ Anderson includes this tale among what he considers James's "essays in the deeper psychology" (Anderson, p.47).

niece until he recovers. There Mason seems at first to be making some progress, under the constant care of his aunt, Mrs Mason, and the young physician Dr Knight, and the company of his aunt's niece, Miss Hofmann, with whom Mason soon falls in love. Miss Hofmann, however, is soon unexpectedly engaged to Dr Knight and Mason's health gives in just as unexpectedly and he dies. "Unexpectedly" is perhaps a relative word: although the death was unexpected to Dr Knight and the family, - "but it's the most extraordinary case I ever heard of. The man was steadily getting well,"²³² Dr Knight exclaims at the end of the tale - it does not seem so extraordinary, though, to the reader, especially if he/she has read the tales that have preceded this one. Mason's "case" does, after all, bring to mind the cases of Ford in "The Story of a Year" and Richard in "Poor Richard" and even that of Perdita in "The Romance of Certain old Clothes," cases where the characters have fallen ill out of some psychoneurotic disorder - one could say, - rather than some physical causes, a disorder that has often resulted in death (as in the cases of Ford and Perdita), or living a state of moral, psychological dead-end, another type of esoteric death (as in the case of Richard).²³³ This seems to be the case here also, when the tale is closely examined, and many critics have seen this death as unnatural, most of them attributing it to either Miss Hofmann's lack of response to his love²³⁴, or even to Dr

²³² Henry James, "A Most Extraordinary Case" (1868), *Tales*, vol.I, p.227. Hereafter cited as "MEC."

²³³ Examining this tale Southward stresses that "the heyday of American neurasthenia was still to come, but already James hints at the possibility of a thoroughly psychosomatic illness, as plausible in men as in women (Southward, p.497).

²³⁴ Alfred Habegger, for example blames her when she "descends to the Hudson River and sings German lieder, simultaneously imitating the Lorelei, who lured mariners to their death, and wearying Ferdinand to the point of exhaustion." He continues with another example: "At the party, where she and some other American girls further wear out the hero, it appears that Caroline actively contributes to his death. A bystander points at the moral: "'Was there ever anything like the avidity of these dreadful girls?'" In *Henry James and the "Woman Business"*. (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1989), p.173. However, as will be shown, Caroline is no Lorelei, nor has she any wish to suck the life out of Mason. Mason is the one who would have liked to lure her. Moreover, the "bystander" Habegger refers too is Mrs Mason, (a very important detail Habegger seems to ignore.) whose motives are dubious, for she is clearly jealous of her niece and in love with her nephew.

Knight's antagonism and final victory over Mason.²³⁵ Blaming Mason's death on his unrequited love,²³⁶ critics have given a convenient answer to the mystery, pointing toward the famous vampire theme theory,²³⁷ but they have failed to grasp James's intention and have not solved the "case," because their theories are based on the result, and James is interested in the process. Therefore, we should not examine the tale from the end toward the beginning,²³⁸ but rather, we should follow the process with which James builds his character. If we do that we will realise that Mason's death is not the result of a heartbreak, - that is merely the excuse. Instead, Mason's is the case of a psychoneurotic - a psychotic if you will - whose disease (a disease of the mind) was brought about after a nervous breakdown. Everything that occurs from then on, is the result of his nerves not being able to deal with the pressures of everyday life. The extraordinariness of the case, and the mystery of it all, lies in the people's inability to realise this, their inability to understand the obscure condition of Mason - possibly an idea that did derive from James's own experience at the time of what his biographers call his "obscure hurt."²³⁹ As none of the characters understands why Mason died, it is a clear invitation (set by the title) for the reader to step in and do his/her part in solving the case.

The first scene begins with Mason as an invalid visited by his aunt. Knowing he was a soldier, we, of course, immediately assume he is suffering from some wound. From the dialogue between nephew and aunt, however, we soon realise the

²³⁵ Novick claims that Knight was "quite oblivious of having killed his friend" (Novick, p.159).

²³⁶ "Mason falls in love with Caroline, and when he learns that she has engaged herself to Dr. Knight, he loses his will to live and dies" (Wagenknecht, p.195). Also, LeClair, p.403.

²³⁷ See Buitenhuis, p.43, where he compares the tale to "De Grey: A Romance," pointing to both heroes dying as the heroines blossom.

²³⁸ As do those who have compared the tale to later works of Henry James: "The relationship on which the central drama turns is that between the Isabel figure, Caroline Hoffman, and the Ralph figure, Ferdinand Mason" (Krook, p.134). Krook also sees "in primitive outline [...] elements of the last act of Milly Theales's drama" (Krook, p.136). See also: Southward, p.503; Kraft, p.18; Samuels, pp.72-72; Putt, p.34

²³⁹ See UY, p.184; Lewis, p.159; Gordon, p.88; Encyclopedia, p.447; LeClair, p.404; Buitenhuis, p.36.

case is not so. What is Mason suffering from? We are never actually told. “Now, tell me, are you very ill?” asks Mrs Mason. “You must ask the doctor [...] I actually don’t know,” is Mason’s answer (“MEC,” p.228). Mrs Mason’s question strikes one as “extraordinarily” strange when she follows Mason’s answer with the statement that she has actually seen his doctor already! We are, then, to derive that Mason’s doctor, Dr Zandt, has no idea what the matter is; that whatever the matter is, it is certainly not of a physical nature. This fact is later confirmed – one should say established – by Dr Knight himself, after James has built up his credentials so carefully, juxtaposing Knight to his older colleague in the area, Dr Gregory, “a gentleman of the old-school” (ibid., p.231), who “had not kept up with the progress of the ‘new diseases’” (ibid., p.232). We see how carefully James builds up the clues to the case. Every detail is relevant, bearing upon the case in hand. Dr Knight will call the disease a “disorder” rather than an illness or hurt, a disorder that was “deeply seated and virulent, but there was no apparent reason why unflinching care and prudence should not subdue it” (ibid., p.233). Upon another visit, Knight will discuss Mason’s case with Mason in more detail, giving us the patient’s history just as a psychiatrist would:

‘It will be your fault if you don’t [get better]. It will prove that you’re fonder of sickness than health, and that you’re not fit company for sensible mortals. Shall I tell you?’ continued the Doctor, after a moment’s hesitation. ‘When I knew you in the army, I always found you a step beyond my comprehension. You took things too hard. You had scruples and doubts about everything. And on top of it all you were devoured with the mania of appearing to take things easily and to be perfectly indifferent. You played your part very well, but you must do me the justice to confess that it was a part’ (ibid., p.241).

Knight’s information is a solution to the mystery: he suggests that the “disorder” is psychological. There is even a suggestion of madness as he juxtaposes Mason to “sensible mortals” for whom he is “not fit company” unless he recovers. His

reference to Mason's "mania" and to his "playing a part" might suggest madness also. Knight's medical history of Mason's military past reveals a man who was much affected by the war, perhaps even suffering from what we now know as post-traumatic stress disorder, shell shock or battle fatigue. It suggests also that James was not so indifferent to the war as his critics often accuse him of being, but that he had noted the impact of it on the American people, especially the young men, in more than a material way. His description of Mason's case also suggests interest in or knowledge of mental disorders and psychiatry.

The narrator's description of Mason, moreover, reminds one of characteristics of a workaholic who has suffered a breakdown:

"Although constantly exposed to hard service, it had been his fortune never to receive a serious wound; and until his health broke down, he had taken fewer holidays than any officer I ever heard of. [...] he was yet in his innermost soul a singularly nervous, overscrupulous person. On the few occasions when he had been absent from the scene of his military duties, although duly authorized and warranted in the act, he had suffered acutely from the apprehension that something was happening, or was about to happen, which not to have witnessed or to have had a hand in would be a matter of eternal mortification, that he can be barely said to have enjoyed his recreation. The sense of lost time was, moreover, his perpetual bugbear, - the feeling that precious hours were now fleeting uncounted, which in more congenial labours would suffice almost for the building of a monument more lasting than brass. The feeling he strove to propitiate as much as possible by assiduous reading and study in the intervals of his actual occupations. I cite the fact merely as an evidence of the uninterrupted austerity of his life for a long time before he fell sick. I might triple this period, indeed, by a glance at his college years, and at certain busy months which intervened between this close of his youth and the opening of the war. Mason had always worked. He was fond of work to begin with" (ibid., p.234).

Therefore, what we have here is the case of a man who has suffered a breakdown because of too much work, psychological pressure that had to do with the war and that resulted in depression; a man whose health collapsed for no other reason than that. Mason himself describes his condition thus:

'Until Mrs Mason discovered me, I hadn't a friend in the world. I had become demoralised by solitude. I had almost forgot the difference between sickness and health. I had nothing before my eyes to remind me in tangible form of that great mass of common human interests for the sake of which – under whatever name he may disguise the impulse – a man continues in health and recovers from disease. I had forgotten that I ever cared for books or ideas or anything but the preservation of my miserable carcass. My carcass had become quite too miserable to be an object worth living for. [...] I was getting worse rather than better; and I therefore gave up resistance. It seemed better to die easy than to die hard' (ibid., p.233).

Feeling better already, Mason can describe his feelings to his doctor. James clearly portrays a case of depression, and it is curious to read it, since one cannot help but wonder if James describes depression from personal experience.

Having explained away Mason's disorder in this fashion, James proceeds to enter deeper into the character of his hero. Mason is similar to Richard from "Poor Richard" in many ways: The narrator calls Mason "poor Ferdinand," bringing to mind "Poor Richard" – an invitation to the readers to decide what they are to make of the hero (ibid., p.230). His family circumstances are similar – they are both orphans that crave love as well as a repository for their pent-up emotions. They find that in the young women they fall in love with, but do not know how to deal with these emotions because they have no prior experience: "[Mason] reached his twenty-seventh year a very accomplished scholar, as scholars go, but a great dunce in certain matters. He was quite ignorant of all those lighter and more evanescent forms of conviviality attached to being someone's son, brother, or cousin" (ibid., p.235). Unlike Richard who was a "brute," Mason was at least educated and manages therefore to maintain a subtler manner in his love for Miss Hofmann, although inwardly his love was just as violent as Richard's was for Gertrude.²⁴⁰ Mason's craving for some attention and love can be seen in his reaction to his aunt's visit and

her subsequent attentions to him: “the young man lay watching her comely face in delicious submission to whatever form of utterance this feeling might take. ‘You’re the first woman – to call a woman – I’ve seen in I don’t know how many months,’ he said” (“MEC,” p.228). Or, in another instance, when his aunt declares to him that ““from this moment you’re in my hands””(ibid., p.230): “The young man lay speechless from the very fullness of his heart; but he strove by the pressure of his fingers to give her some assurance of his gratitude” (ibid.,p.230). His pent-up emotions momentarily escape and, “giving way to his weakness, he put his hands to his face, and cried like a homesick school-boy”(ibid.). The narrator explains: “Finally, after the lapse of years, he too was being cared for” (ibid.). His aunt’s arrival and proposition to him had reminded him “of the exquisite side of life” (ibid.). Tintner translates Mason’s reaction as responsive to the eroticism of his aunt²⁴¹, associating their relationship with that of Stendhal’s Gina and her nephew Fabrice in the La Chartreuse de Parme (1839), which she thinks that James might have read at the time, although Edel mentions James reading this novel for the first time in 1869 (Life, p.99) and James states in a letter that he had been reading it in 1870.²⁴² Even if he did read the novel, (as Tintner claims in her essay), and used it as

²⁴⁰ Gordon calls it an “obsession” (Gordon, p.88). Although it resembles Richard’s love in its intensity, it recalls Lennox’s in its quality.

²⁴¹ “In such unmistakably sensual terms James has established the attraction that this desirable woman feels for her young nephew and that he is responsive to.” Adeline Tintner, “In the Footsteps of Stendhal: James’s ‘A Most Extraordinary Case’ and La Chartreuse De Parme.” Revue De Literature Comparee 55, (April-June 1981), p.235. Hereafter cited as “IFS.” Tintner writes on the relationship between Stendhal’s novel and James’s tale also in Book, pp.246-247, and in “The Books in the Books: What Henry James’s Characters Read and Why.” The Library of Henry James. Edel, Leon and Adeline R. Tintner, eds. (London: Ann Arbor, 1987), p.74.

²⁴² Edel is probably basing his information on the letter James wrote to his sister, on 8th November 1869, where he says that “I have been reading Stendhal – a capital observer and a good deal of a thinker. He really knows Italy” (Letters, p.169). In Philip Horne’s edition of James’s letters there is a previously unpublished letter of 25th March 1870 to Charles Norton – that is, four months after he wrote to his sister – where he claims that he has just been reading The Charterhouse: “A propos of the C. de P. I have just been reading it – with real admiration. It seems to me stronger and more truthful than the author’s books of profound observation, theory, &c.” (HJLL, p.33). This letter indicates that probably James was reading The Charterhouse in 1870, but also, that he had been reading Stendhal’s

a precursor to his tale; and even if Mrs Mason was in love with her nephew, as Tintner further believes; it is equally obvious from the passages mentioned above that Mason was not in love with his aunt - he did not see her in that way at all. This is a very important detail for the careful reader. We must be interested – we are asked by the narrator to be interested – in Mason’s story; not the aunt’s. James wants to take the hero’s point of view. Tintner herself realises this when she notes how James does not tell the tale “from her point of view” (“IFS,” p.236):²⁴³ “The book which had told the story from the aunt’s point of view,” she explains, “was of course *La Chartreuse* and we must not forget that James is not slavishly imitating or plagiarizing; he is converting Stendhal’s novel to his own uses” (ibid., p.236). For the sake of argument, considering for a moment the possibility that Stendhal was the precursor, as Tintner suggests, we cannot fail to see that James’s hero is no Fabrice. Neither is he in love with his aunt as Fabrice was for a while. Unlike Fabrice, he has not experienced the love of women, being an orphan. The role of the aunt’s presence, as a love option that he will not consider, is there, of course, and it cannot be ignored as the narrator urges us – nor is the intention of the author such. Mrs Mason serves, not only to show what Mason missed in his pursuit of Miss Hofmann, but also to demonstrate the difference between her love for him and *his* love for Miss Hofmann. In comparison to the former, Mason’s love is obsessive and damaging to himself. The aunt’s love is giving. His love is demanding – demanding both of Caroline, but more so of himself.

We realise that his love is demanding gradually, in every scene of the tale, after Mason has settled in his aunt’s house and has met with Miss Hofmann, whom

other works possibly even before 1869. Therefore, it might be safer to assume that rather than being influenced by Stendhal’s novel, James’s tale anticipates it.

he has found “uncommonly pretty” (“MEC,” p.236). After Miss Hofmann’s situation in the world is explained to him by Mrs Mason – Caroline is reported to be not merely “young”, “gracious,” “beautiful” and “accomplished,” but also “*au mieux* with her bankers” (“MEC,” p.326), thereby rich and independent – the latter takes it upon herself to discourage him from falling in love with her niece²⁴⁴ and he assures her that in his case there is no danger: “It takes more than half a man to fall in love” (“MEC,” p.237). And yet, upon his first meeting with Dr Knight, Mason’s resolutions seem to have failed him: Dr Knight congratulates him on having such an aunt and continues,

‘But I should say that your especial blessing was your servant. He looks as if he had come out of an English novel.’²⁴⁵

‘My especial blessing! You haven’t seen Miss Hofmann, then?’
 (“MEC,” p.234)

Curiously enough, this little incident passes by quietly, but the reader appreciates that already Caroline has captured Mason’s heart. He is enamoured by her beauty.

“He would sit for half an hour at once, with his book on his knees and the pages unturned, scrutinising with ingenious indirectness the simple mass of colours and contours which made up the physical personality of Miss Hofmann. There was no question as to her beauty, as to its being a warm, sympathetic beauty, and not the cold perfection of poetry. [...] These [...] were charms enough to occupy Mason’s attention, and it was but seldom that he allowed it to be diverted” (ibid., p.238).

Clearly, Mason is in love. He reminds one of Lennox who was also infatuated with the heroine because she was beautiful rather than for her personality. His worry, moreover, that she thinks him “stupid” and “a well-meaning bore” further

²⁴³ I do agree with Tintner’s view that if Mrs Mason was in love with Mason, then the hero possibly denies himself a better future with her. But of course his obsession with Miss Hofmann by now has made him blind to this possibility.

²⁴⁴ Krook points out the similarities between the Caroline’s aunt and Isabel’s aunt, Mrs Touchett in The Portrait, as well as between Mason and Ralph (Krook, p134).

²⁴⁵ This phrase recurs in The Portrait.

precipitates his former convictions about falling in love (ibid., p.239). Already this love brings worries to him.

No wonder the first relapse comes so soon after he has woken up to Caroline and the doctor chatting by the piano, and the subsequent preparations for the ball, to which he had hoped she would not go. Once, Mason comes into physical contact with Caroline as he buttons her glove “with great deliberation and neatness,” and covers her with her drapery “solemnly” (Ibid., p.243) – as if the task is the most important, the most serious in the world. It is as if he is performing a ritual completely mesmerised by Caroline’s presence, in her beautiful dress, who verbally contemplates dancing with Knight whom she compliments to Mason’s face (“He does so many other things well” (Ibid., p.243)). We are left to imagine how he must have felt after they left him all alone in the house. Probably like “a pair of the rejected gloves” that he saw in the hands of the maid-servant (Ibid., p.244). With what “great deliberation and neatness” James built up his scene! It is so melodramatic:

‘I hope you’re feeling better, sir,’ she said, politely.
‘Thank you, I think I am.’
‘It’s a pity you couldn’t have gone with the ladies.’
‘I’m not well enough yet to think of such things,’ said Mason, trying to smile. But as he walked across the floor he felt himself attacked by a sudden sensation, which cannot be better described than as a general collapse” (ibid., p.244).

When his servant comes to help him and asks him what he has done to bring about his exertion,

‘I had been putting up Miss Hofmann’s shawl,’ he said.
‘Is that all, sir?’
‘And I had been buttoning her glove.’
‘Well, sir, you must be very prudent.’
‘So it appears,’ said Ferdinand (ibid., p.244).

Of course, the servant means one thing and Ferdinand understands another. He understands that he is in love and that his love is straining him. It is overpowering him; it makes him collapse under its weight. It is not Caroline who is the vulture that eats him alive, as critics have described her. It is *he* who wants to engulf her as he covers her with her cape. After all, we are not to examine the case from her point of view either. She is there to help us see Mason in a clearer light. Nor is the relapse the result of unrequited love – although his love *is* unrequited – but it appears to be the result of his being unable mentally and physically to deal with the exertions of such new and powerful emotions.

The reader senses that Mason has lost control for the first time in his life at a time when he feels he most needs it. The mere effort to appear outwardly in control always exercises him, as can be seen in every subsequent scene of the tale. He does not know how to deal with the situation. It becomes clear by her reaction to Mason's behaviour during their outing together that she had no idea that he was in love with her. He is aggravated by his inability to control the situation:

'Confound her German!' thought the young man. Suddenly Miss Hofmann rose from her seat, and, after a short interval, reappeared on the platform. 'What did you find down there?' asked Ferdinand, almost savagely.

'Nothing, - a little strip of beach and a pile of stones.'

'You *have* torn your dress,' said Mason.

Miss Hofmann surveyed her drapery. 'Where, if you please?'

'There, in front.' And Mason extended his walking stick, and inserted it into the injured fold of muslin. There was a certain graceless *brusquerie* in the movement which attracted Miss Hofmann's attention. She looked at her companion, and, seeing that his face was discomposed, fancied that he was annoyed at having been compelled to wait (*ibid.*, p.248).

The "almost savagely" shows how he cannot control his emotions – for the first time in front of Miss Hofmann. The accented "have" in "you *have* torn your dress" shows his effort to excuse his anger, to guide it to a reasonable subject, namely the fact that

she has torn her dress in leaving him. The episode is a brilliant example of his inability to deal with real-life situations. The awkward dress scene – that exudes eroticism in its violence²⁴⁶ – contrasts Mason's gracelessness and violence of temper with Caroline's serene one, who in her innocence does not comprehend the reason for his anger. She will understand, finally, what is going on, not because he will explain it in any distinct terms²⁴⁷, but because she is "a woman of great instincts" ("MEC," p.250). Her instincts tell her that he is in love with her when he asks that they may remain together on the spot a bit longer, like a child who sees his toy taken away from him. She humours him and gets herself out of the difficult situation. She lets him assume that she is under his control. They can stay together in the cold if he wants, but she was thinking only of his safety. "There is no good reason, that I see, for our behaving like children" (ibid., p.250). He translates this as "what [he] wanted" (ibid., p.250).

What he wants remains quite vague in comparison to what Dr Knight – his rival – wants. Through the two men's discussions of Caroline, we notice that they agree in their perception of her. She is compared to a goddess – an obvious influence here is Morris's epic The Earthly Paradise, which James had written about twice that same year. In fact, "A Most Extraordinary Case" can be said to have "The Lady of the Land" and "Atalanta's Race" as its precursors.²⁴⁸ Both poems deal with the stories of men in love with women of extraordinary powers. In "Atalanta's Race,"

²⁴⁶ Southward calls it "such frankly sexual malice" (Southward, p.499).

²⁴⁷ "It is a delicate question whether Miss Hofmann now ceased to be perplexed; whether she discerned in the young man's accents – it was his tone, his attitude, his eyes that were fully significant, rather than his words – an intimation of that sublime and simple truth in the presence of which a wise woman puts off coquetry and prudery and stands invested with perfect charity" ("MEC," p.249).

²⁴⁸ "Atalanta's Race," the first of Mr. Morris's Greek legends, is to our mind almost the best. [...] But the most beautiful passage in the poem is the description of the vigil of the love-sick Milanion in the lovely sea-side temple of Venus." Henry James, "The Earthly Paradise: A Poem. By William Morris, author of 'The Life and Death of Jason.'" Boston: Roberts Bros., 1868" (1868). LQ1, p.1188. Hereafter cited as "EP."

Atalanta, a princess, has taken an oath to marry only the man who will run faster than her. She is compared to Diana²⁴⁹, the goddess that has given her the power to run faster than all. In "The Lady of the Land," the heroine has broken her vow of chastity to Diana and has been punished by being turned into an ugly dragon during the day. In the first poem the hero, Milanion, will bravely undertake to win the race and his love will persuade Venus to help him run faster than Atalanta. Dr Knight seems to resemble Milanion, as he undertakes to dance with Caroline thereby passing *her* test²⁵⁰. In the second poem the hero cannot find it in him to undertake the test and kiss the scary dragon, thereby losing the girl and eventually dying. He brings to mind Mason, who cannot undertake the physical commitment of love that in his eyes becomes a frightening experience. In reading Morris, James must have been fascinated by the concept of the heroic failure, and, in his tale, it is this idea that he is examining. In "Atalanta's Race" the poet describes men who could not compete with his heroine and end up losing their life for it until Melanion comes to lift the curse. In "The Lady of the Land" the hero shows weakness and loses what he most covets. James combines the two ideas and creates Mason and Knight. Mason is physically weak, and fails to catch up with the heroine. Moreover, his exertions finally kill him.

The precursor specifically for the character of Mason, the invalid cousin, might have been a character from George Sand's novel, Indiana (1831). Sir Ralph

²⁴⁹ "A maid stood by him like Diana clad/ When in the woods she lists her bow to bend,/ Too fair for one to look on and be glad." Also: "She seemed all earthly matters to forget;/ Of all tormenting lines her face was clear,/ Her wide grey eyes upon the goal were set/Calm and unmoved as though no soul were near,/ But her foe trembled as a man in fear,/ Nor from her loveliness one moment turned/ His anxious face with fierce desire that burned. In William Morris's "Atalanta's Race," The Earthly Paradise, (London: Strangeways and Walden, Printers, 1868), p.110. Hereafter cited as EP.

²⁵⁰ This dance issue serves to show indirectly that Knight and Miss Hofmann are compatible: "'I like a man to dance,' said Caroline, 'and yet not to dance' ("MEC," p.243) This corresponds to Knight's comment: "'Yes, I danced. It's a great piece of frivolity for a man in my position; but I thought there would be no harm in doing it just once, to show them I know how'" ("MEC," p.244). Clearly he has passed *her* test. Moreover, Knight and Caroline, remind one of Bruce and Lizzie in "The Story of a Year." They too had found a common hobby in sleigh riding.

Brown, is an invalid,²⁵¹ who is also in love with his cousin Indiana. Mason, moreover, is similar to previous Jamesian creations. If he had been well, he would probably have been likened to Ford in "The Story of a Year." But Ford was not a complete study because the story focused more on the heroine. What we were told of him helped us become better acquainted with Lizzie. Richard, as mentioned before, was another precursor to Mason, but his failure was not due to weakness or lack of trying. Mason does not try; as an invalid, he can only watch and wait. Lennox, too, is mirrored here. James seems to be combining previous characters to create this one. In the study of Mason, James has created a disturbing character. It takes a close reading to understand what Mason's problem is. As the title indicates, his is a most extraordinary case, because he is a very extraordinary character. The title brings to mind romantic tales of mystery. James intentionally plays with our expectations. Although the tale lacks any metaphysical phenomena, it does leave us with an aura of mystery.

The ending particularly disturbs the reader: Mason is left alone with Caroline who witnesses his last moments on earth. We are not informed about what went on in the room – if indeed there were any last words. We are only told that Caroline comes out of the room "with her face pale and discomposed" and that for some time afterward she seemed to Knight "very silent and thoughtful" ("MEC," p.261). Caroline does not react as if astonished, but rather as saddened by the outcome. Although it is not necessary that she has understood Mason's medical condition, she must have been struck and disturbed by the waste of his life. Quite possibly, Mason told her that he loved her, and that would excuse her expression. Mason's death is

²⁵¹ "From the age of fifteen he was attacked by spleen, a completely physical ailment under the foggy skies of England, a completely moral one under the life-giving skies of Bourbon island." George Sand, *Indiana*. Sylvia Raphael., trans. (Oxford : Oxford U.P., 1994), p.109. Sir Ralph may have been the precursor to The Portrait of a Lady, also, with which he bears further resemblances.

“extraordinary,” ironically, only to his doctor:²⁵² having almost got to the gist of the matter in his analysis of Mason’s history, his subsequent emotional involvement with Caroline does not allow him to further understand his patient’s condition and failure to recover. He makes, thus, an erroneous statement, because of his inability to examine him objectively.

Critics, we have said, have given thought to what brought about this death, blaming either of the characters. Sicker comes closer to the truth of the matter, but mistakes Mason’s illness for one that is self-imposed:

Actually, Mason has sought death from the very beginning of his love. Although he tells himself that he will declare his passion as a mature man when he recovers, he wills his relapses during moments of intimacy because they impose the barriers to sexual union upon which his self-flagellant imagination thrives. Agony becomes love’s perverse delectation, and death becomes its final fulfilment when the love image is irrevocably beyond reach (Sicker, p.37).²⁵³

Although it seems this way, Sicker does not take into consideration Mason’s mental state. He seems to be blaming Mason for something that was beyond his power. Mason certainly does not seek death from the very beginning, as Sicker thinks. In fact, he does seem to get better. Nor is love’s agony perversely sought for – it is an unfortunate result. He does not will his relapses! They just come to him. He cannot handle the situation. Nor is it some “revenge-feeling for shortcoming [that] is directed not against others but “‘extraordinarily,’ and perhaps self-sacrificingly against the self,” as Mackenzie claims.²⁵⁴ Mason, like Charles in “My Friend

²⁵² “James’s invocation of the title,” Southward notes, “by one who is even more excluded than the reader from Hofmann and Mason’s parting has the singular effect of putting the reader, by contrast, relatively ‘in the know.’ Mason’s death becomes an event with degrees of intelligibility: a medical anomaly to Dr Knight and Mrs Mason, its *vie intime* is penetrated somewhat by the reader, but ultimately is known only to the victim and his witness” (Southward, p.503).

²⁵³ Levy similarly thinks that Mason “chooses to die” (Levy, p.32). See also Martin/Ober, p.38.

²⁵⁴ Manfred Mackenzie, Communities of Horror and Love in Henry James. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard U.P., 1976), p.36.

Bingham,” simply realises that he has not been a lover, whereas Knight has; that he has had illusions:

He had been a besotted daydreamer, while his friend had simply been a genuine lover. He deserved his injury, and he would bear in silence. He had been unable to get well on an illusion; he would now try getting well on a truth (“MEC,” p.255).

He has realised that Caroline has never encouraged him, and that the whole matter was an illusion, a daydream. It proves, at the same time that he was apathetic in his behaviour in comparison to Knight. Moreover, we can see that he never intended to die. His death, then, as the text suggests, comes uninvited, as the result of his psychosomatic disorder.

Again in this story we are given the impressions of the ubiquitous narrator. However, the narrator this time has not the power to enter into the minds of all characters. He appears to be giving us his impressions of the characters as they act and speak, often accompanied by opinions²⁵⁵ and gossip about them,²⁵⁶ but he only enters the mind of Mason. He indicates, this way, where the focus of the story lies, creating at the same time an aura of mystery around Mason. It is up to us, then, to consider what the others really think. “James provokes the reader now to read through his characters’ manners, to make meaning of the surfaces not quite transparent” (Southward, p.503). The narrator, thus, is selective of what he gives us: “‘Reserve’ and ‘self-possession’ are traits belonging to James’s narrator [...] who has carefully monitored the leak of information about the doctor’s interest to [the] reader” (Southward, p.504). He maintains a channel of communication, as if in an imaginary dialogue with the reader, inviting him to participate.²⁵⁷ James has thought out very well how he is going to build this tale. His brother realised that also:

²⁵⁵ As when he calls Caroline “a woman of great instincts” (“MEC,” p.250).

²⁵⁶ “Serious passions are a good preparation for the highest kinds of speculation” (“MEC,” p.252).

²⁵⁷ “This was a stern treatment, the reader will admit” (“MEC,” p.255).

Am I right in guessing that you had a conscious intention of this sort here? [...] You shrink from the attempt to drag them [the characters] all dripping and raw upon the stage, which most writers make and fail in. You expressly restrict yourself, accordingly, to showing a few external acts and speeches, and by the magic of your art making the reader feel back of these the existence of a body of being of which these are casual features. You wish to suggest a mysterious fulness [*sic*] which you do not lead your reader through. It seems to me this is a very legitimate method, and has a great effect when it succeeds."²⁵⁸

We conclude, then, that James has built this character up very carefully from the beginning. This is his best psychological study so far. It is, in my opinion, how he translated Morris's poem about the man who failed to get the woman of his dreams.

As for the man, who knows what things he bore?
What mournful faces peopled the sad night,
What wailings vexed him with reproaches sore,
What images of that nigh-gained delight!
What dreamed caresses from soft hands and white,
Turning to horrors ere they reached the best,
What struggles vain, what shame, what huge unrest?
(EP, p.526)

In Mason's case we can answer every question of the above. Nevertheless, what we cannot answer with certainty is what happened between Caroline and Mason in the last private scene, behind the locked door. This open end invites individual impressions and serves to encourage the reader's fancy.

vi) "A Problem"

James continues in the same suggestive manner in the fourth tale he publishes in 1868, "A Problem." The tale has been a real problem for the critics, as very few find it worthwhile to examine. Those who have, call it "slight" (Martin/Ober, p.39), "odd" and "banal" (Kraft, p.20).²⁵⁹ It is the shortest tale of James (Vaid, p.193),²⁶⁰

²⁵⁸ Letter to Henry James, April 1868 (Garth, p.26).

²⁵⁹ Kraft also states that it is "flatly written" (Kraft, p.20). Gale did not like it either: "The story ranks low among James's least effective writings" (Encyclopedia, p.529). Brodhead calls it "feeble" (Brodhead, p.125). Also: Kenton, p.14; Kelly, pp.83-84.

who, according to Kelly, concerns himself with form rather than imagination (Kelly, p.87),²⁶¹ it is found to be similar to Hawthorne's "The Threefold Destiny" (1838, 1842) (Brodhead, p.125). Most of the critics who noticed this tale sensed James's preoccupation with the psychology of his characters: LeClair believes James to be "intrigued [...] by the psychological complication" that the situation allows him to develop (LeClair, p.406).²⁶²

James uses an omniscient narrator, who, like a salesperson, tries to interest us in his goods: "September was drawing to an end, and with it the honeymoon of two young persons in whom *I shall be glad to interest the reader*"²⁶³ (my italics). The title again prepares us for careful reading: what is the "problem" in this story James refers to? The ending seems to suggest that the problem refers to the two-marriages-each prediction of the various mediums: "I don't see but that the terrible problem is at last solved, and that you have each been married twice" ("AP," p.276). However, as is characteristic in James's stories, this story raises more than one question as to what the problem is that should interest the reader. The prophecies themselves and the characters' reactions to them are a problem to be considered: are we to believe in them as they did, that is, take them for granted; or are we to examine whether the characters' having done so may be the cause of all the troubles (after all, the narrator warns us that it is the "two young persons" that must "interest the reader")? In other words, was it destiny, or some metaphysical power of that kind which we are asked to observe and discover, or the characters' own deeds or inaction that brought about the realisation of the prophecies. Is the story, then, a polemic against superstition, as

²⁶⁰ Wagenknecht also notices the length of the story but in a positive way: "A Problem" is a very short tale for James, and considering the limited space at his disposal, he handled both narrative technique and characterization satisfactorily though without distinction" (Wagenknecht, p.199).

²⁶¹ LeClair sees it also as "an artistic attempt for form based upon the rather flimsy device of fortunes told at the beginning and fulfilled in the end (LeClair, pp.405-406);

we see it in the times of the Puritans that are so well described by writers like Hawthorne or Catherine Maria Sedgwick²⁶⁴, or even a polemic against the romantic and Gothic writers' infusions of the superstitious in the form of predictions and prophecies? Or, merely a polemic against his contemporaries' predictions of future events?²⁶⁵

James begins his tale as if he is building up a "case," a play that must be "played out." The narrator says of his two main characters: "they were on the whole not sorry to have the overture play itself out, and to see the curtain rise on the drama to which they had undertaken the leading parts" ("AP," p.262). He begins this family drama, or as Brodhead has it, "a homely drama of domestic relations" (Broadhead, p.125), in detail, starting with a description of the characters themselves. There is nothing special about Emma and David, the newly married couple, the narrator insists, except that they are made to be conveniently simple enough to be gullible. Emma, for example, "was a simple, unsophisticated person" whose married life "was likely to be made up of small joys and vexations" ("AP," p.262). David also "was a simple, natural fellow" who was "unable to forget that life is full of bitter inhuman necessities and perils which muster in force about you when you stand idle" ("AP," p.262).²⁶⁶ These characterisations prepare us for trouble, but convince us also that

²⁶² Wagenknecht claims that "A Problem is not a story of the supernatural but a psychological study," and he likens it to Howell's *The Shadow of a Dream* (1890) (Wagenknecht, p.199).

²⁶³ Henry James, "A Problem," *Tales*, p.262. Hereafter cited as "AP."

²⁶⁴ The character of Magawisca certainly brings C.M.Sedgwick to mind and her novel *Hope Leslie* (1827), which James must have read long before 1868, although he mentions Sedgwick in an essay in 1875. Magawisca, Sedgwick's Indian heroine, does not appear to have any supernatural powers, although she does become something very near to a pow-wow, the spiritual man of the Indian tribe, and is ascribed magical powers by the superstitious and the Puritans. Nevertheless, the hero Everel does wish that her words were prophetic once: "'And may not the last words of a friend, be, like the sayings of a death-bed, prophetic?'" in *Hope Leslie*, (1827), ed. Mary Kelly, (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers U.P., 1987), 331. Hereafter cited as *HL*.

²⁶⁵ The biographers of James have, for once, no suggestions about what event may have inspired James's to write such a story.

²⁶⁶ David's beliefs bring to mind *Hope Leslie* again, and Philip Gardiner's letter to his friend Morton, where he writes that "'I will abandon all to my destiny. Even Jupiter, you know, was ruled by fate. It is a folly to attempt to shape the events of life; as easily might we direct the course of the stars – those

trouble could be self-caused. Both characters sound as if they are preparing for troubles in life before there is any reason to worry. What is it, one may wonder, that has made David so pessimistic, so negative about life at the beginning of his marriage? There is nothing in the tale that indicates a bitter past! Why does he anticipate “bitter inhuman necessities and perils”? James’s choice of sentences gradually disturb the reader. At the sunset of their honeymoon – interestingly enough the couple is watching a sunset as they are preparing to depart – Emma contemplates the future with what sounds like an effort to persuade herself that she will be happy: “she ought to be happy” and “her house should be a sanctuary of modest elegance and good taste” (“AP,” p.263). These are contrasted to her more sincere wish “that she might be a mother” (ibid.). When she thought of motherhood, “she ceased to meditate and to whisper virtuous nothings to her conscience. She rejoiced” (ibid.). It is as if she has to condition herself to be happy with married life. Only the thought of having a child seems to appeal to her. This realisation, however, has not come to her. It seems subconsciously to lurk there, only to surface when real trouble strikes.

Clearly, both characters are superstitious. This seems to be preconditioned. Emma immediately becomes frightened when she sees Magawisca – bringing also to mind the fears of the Puritans in Hope Leslie, and especially the scene where Magawisca has gone to Hope and Everel’s abode to warn Leslie about her sister. Pretending to sell Indian moccasins, she frightens the servant Jennet: “Jennet could not say what it was in the woman, but she had the strangest feeling all the time she was there; a mysterious beating of her heart that she could not account for” (HL, p.185). Jennet’s fears can be attributed to her ideas about Indians. Similarly, Emma looks at the Indian women with a foreign eye and is disturbed by their ways. She

very stars, perhaps, govern the accidents of our being. The stars – destiny – Providence, what are they all but various terms of the same invisible, irresistible agency!” (HL, p.201).

loses her confidence the moment her transaction with the Indian women becomes more intimate and feels “relieved” when her husband appears (“AP,” p.264). However, it did not look as if the Indian women were of any danger to her. Emma seems to be making up her mind based on appearances and prejudices: “Emma looked at her, hesitating. She was a repulsive old squaw, with sullen, black eyes, and her swarthy face hatched across with a myriad wrinkles” (ibid.). Unlike Sedgwick, James tries to make his characters’ prejudices more tangible by giving his readers a visual experience, which is definitely Emma’s (James’s syntax stresses *her*).

The Indian predicts to them that their first-born will be a daughter that will die. The couple, although disturbed, take it lightly at first, until Emma does give birth to a daughter. As the sex of the baby meets the first part of the prediction, the parents begin to worry about their daughter’s fate. Gradually their worry becomes an obsession, which takes a toll on the characters and ultimately the marriage:

For some time after the child was born Emma was confined to her room. She used to sit with the infant on her lap, nursing her, counting her breathings, wondering whether she would be pretty. David was at his place of business, with his head full of figures. A dozen times Emma recurred to the old woman’s prophecy, sometimes with tremor, sometimes with indifference, sometimes almost with defiance. Then, she declared that it was silly to remember it. A tipsy old squaw – a likely providence for her precious child. She was, perhaps, dead herself by this time. Nevertheless, her prophecy was odd: she seemed so positive. And the other woman laughed so disagreeably. Emma had not forgotten the laugh. She might well laugh with her own lusty little savages beside her (“AP,” p.265).

James’s interest in psychological analysis can be perceived here. Gradually the thoughts of the prophecy begin to haunt Emma. She thinks of it “a dozen times.” She “declares” to herself as if trying to persuade herself that all is all right; therefore, all is not all right in her mind. Her efforts to rationalise her fears are useless: “nevertheless” proves that. The woman’s laughter is haunting her, together with her

own impressions of the Indian's "lusty little savages" that indicate the part her own prejudices play in turning the incident into an obsession with her. Thus children of Indians are called "savages" by a woman who takes such tender care of her own baby ("nursing her, counting her breathings, wondering whether she would be pretty") as to surprise one that *she* would never think of a child as a "savage." Yet, her fear of the unknown and different turns Emma into being herself "savage" toward that unknown and different. It is as if fear brings out the worst in her.

After the experience has become so intensely fearsome, she recalls a similar prediction by an old Italian woman "our teachers used to dislike" ("AP," p.267), who used to predict the future by reading the cards. Some of Emma's fellow-school girls "were afraid" and would not go to her. We see in James a concern with Orientalism and the Americans' reaction to the exotic as something to be feared and kept at a distance. The prophecy of the Italian woman that Emma will marry twice, becomes fearsome to her husband now: "'my dear girl, [...] you make a man's flesh crawl,'" says David, and accuses her of having "no imagination" ("AP," p.267). To the reader, though, this sounds ironic, because imagination is vivid in both characters' perception of the prophecies, who after originally rationalising them, allow them eventually to reach horrific proportions.

Emma's discussions of the prophecies with David suggest that she might have been the cause for his conversion into fearing the prophecies. It is as if she instils in him evil suspicions which he did not originally have. She transmits to him her own fears, thus bringing her own perception of evil into his previously innocent (due to ignorance) mind. (This is also what seems to have happened to her, as Magawisca brings her own perception of evil into her previously innocent and simple mind). Soon David falls victim to the same obsession, as the fears caused by his wife

bring to mind another prophecy that takes on a new light in his eyes now: ““ I never mentioned it before because I had forgotten it – utterly forgotten it” (“AP,” 268), he says, just as she had utterly forgotten hers: ““it seems absurd to keep it on my mind; not that I really ever felt it there” (“AP,” p.267). Incidents that were logically absurd to them before, become “preternaturally odd!” (“AP,” 269) From here onwards the characters seem to fall into a dark pit of fixation:

It besieged him, and harassed him and distracted him; it thrust itself into his mind at the most inopportune moments; it buzzed his ears and danced among the columns of figures in his great folio account books [...] David read himself a million times a husband (“AP,” p.269).

The obsession turns the prophecy into a visible and potent thing that makes noises and dances away David’s sanity. It takes even a numerical importance. It rises in time, from “a dozen” – in Emma’s thoughts – to a million in David’s.

Ironically, what David had made a point of checking in Emma (her superstitious imagination) utterly consumes him:

It was a conflict of oracles. [...] Could either of the soothsayers have made her statement in a figurative sense? It seemed to David that this was to fancy them a grain too wise. The simplest solution - except not to think of the matter at all, which he could not bring himself to accomplish – was to fancy that each of the prophecies nullified the other, and that when he became Emma’s husband, their counterfeit destinies had been put to confusion (“AP, “ 269-270).

In his imagination, his “fancy” as he twice calls it, the prophecies become “oracles”- bringing to one’s mind the ancient Greek oracles and their non “figurative sense.” (James may have been recalling his readings of Morris’s Earthly Paradise here, where oracles often determined the heroes’ destiny). It is ironic that David tries to be “practical” when such a thing would – under the circumstances - be absurd. His efforts to apply logic to the matter show how deeply confused he has become by his belief in the prophecies:

Gradually the perpetual oscillation from one phase of his destiny to the other, and the constant change from passionate exaltation to equally morbid depression, induced a state of chronic excitement not far removed from insanity ("AP," pp.271-272).

We can again see suggestions of Morris's myths and the Greeks' reactions to the oracles' predictions, often defying them, only to bring about the outcome they were trying to avoid in the first place. What is interesting is how James associates the preoccupation with fate and the supernatural, with obsession and, ultimately, insanity. This association is something we have seen in all his supernatural tales so far. Even his more realistic tales, moreover, often contain similar elements.

Furthermore, David's fear of the prophecy and the subsequent uncertainty of his life that results from his belief in it, brings out a different side of him that we had not seen before: "He was gradually transformed from a quiet, home-keeping, affectionate fellow, into a nervous, restless, querulous man of pleasure, a dinner-out and a haunter of clubs and theatres" ("AP," p.271). Similarly, Emma changes: from a "simple, sensitive person" ("AP," p.272) she becomes jealous and vindictive ("AP," p.271) and a "bitter, scornful woman, infuriated by a sense of insult and injury," who "los[es] all self-control" ("AP," p.272). Again the idea emerges that the complexity of one's character becomes evident by one's response to some challenging (usually evil) experience. The change from simple to complex characters affects their simple marriage too: "there was some dark cloud hanging over their marriage" ("AP," p.270).

The narrator's comments, nevertheless, often suggest that their problems are self-caused. ("That she was a very silly girl I don't pretend to deny. I have expressly said that she was a person of a very simple make" ("AP," p.271), the narrator says of Emma). The two other characters that appear for a short space in the tale, Julia (David's friend) and the priest, serve the same purpose. Sanity is preserved in the

character of Julia: “Julia’s you see, in all this business was the only wise head” (“AP,” p.273). She is the only one who does not trust to fate and destiny, but to “the inspiration of the moment” (“AP,” p.272). She is not described as “simple,” but as a “charming, superior person” (ibid.). She is also the only one who acts in this tale, while the others expect fate to take its course. She laughs at the “superstitious, fantastic and puerile” in David (ibid.), recalling the laughter of the Indian women who were probably laughing at Emma’s fears in the first place. She manages to bring light into the couple’s darkness: “She made it a matter of conscience to keep David by her influence in as sane and unperverted a state of mind as circumstances would allow” (“AP,” p.273). Julia seems to suggest James’s idea of how one’s mind can be perverted by experiences of evil and lose its innocence. Like Lennox, who finds out his fiancée’s real character through the experience of the portrait and loses his innocence of mind about her, so David is void of his innocence and liable to further degradation because of the prophecy.

Finally, the story ends with the reconciliation of the couple, under the favourable auspices of the clergyman, Mr Clark, whose words brings to mind Hope Leslie and the speech by Eliot, the Indian’s preacher, to the Puritans gathered for the trial of Magawisca. Like Eliot, Clark represents the light in the darkness of superstitious, misled, whose “noisome weeds of folly” do not allow the light to pass through (“AP,” p.274). Moreover, he affirms the capacity of evil experience on man’s consciousness: “ ‘I suppose [...] [the trial] is sent, like all trials, to remind us of our feeble and dependent condition [...] to make us search our hearts and see whether we have not by chance allowed the noisome weeds of folly to overwhelm and suffocate the modest flower of wisdom” (ibid.).

The couple happily reunite after the trials of separation and the death of their daughter and complete, as is suggested by the least superstitious person, Julia, all three prophecies. However, the prophecies ultimately leave us with the sense that they were nothing more than coincidences, eventually humorously waved aside. James uses the evil prophecies and the child's death the way he had treated the sensational event in "My Friend Bingham:" as prompts for his depiction of the operation of the human conscience which here ultimately triumphs over evil, corresponding, therefore, with his own theories on the author's moral responsibility towards his readers. It becomes, consequently, clear that James was writing by his set of rules.

vii) "De Grey: A Romance" and Character Imposition

"Every man, we fancy, has a latent tenderness for the past, a vague unwillingness to let it become extinct, an unavowed desire to preserve it as a pleasure-ground for the fancy" ("EP," p.1183). So wrote James in 1868 when he was working on the poems of Morris. James was not foreign to this tenderness; he began his fictional career writing about events already some years old. Two of his stories, moreover, he places at the beginning of the century, and these are his most sensational and romantic tales, "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes" and "De Grey: A Romance." In these two stories critics have argued over the influence (or otherwise) of the American²⁶⁷ and French²⁶⁸ classics on James, who, in their (the

²⁶⁷ As far as "De Grey" is concerned, in Henry James: The Writer and His Work Tony Tanner points out that "James uses a Hawthornesque family curse for its psychological possibilities." (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1985), p.12. Gale draws attention to "the eldrich [*sic*] atmosphere, which is old worldly despite the nominal American setting, [and which] has the ring of psychological romantic truth à la Nathaniel Hawthorne" (Encyclopedia, p.168). Ora Segal also refers to the tale as a "Hawthornesque romance" in The Lucid Reflector: The Observer in Henry James' Fiction, (New Haven and London: Yale U.P., 1969), p.147. See also Brodhead, pp.126-127; Buitenhuis, (who finds the influence of both Hawthorne and Poe) pp.42-43; and Zablony, who notices the influence of Poe's "Ligeia" (Zablony, p.209).

critics') opinion, begins his career by imitating them without achieving any of their greatness. Most critics have taken for granted that these tales being juvenilia are therefore not of any great value.²⁶⁹ They seem to agree, in fact, that James did not really have any particular intention other than using them as exercises. I have already examined James's former story, "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes" and showed how James had made use of conventional romantic elements to create a tale that seems to be deeper and more sophisticated than critics generally believe. This was recognised fifty years after the tale's publication when the tale was chosen to represent James in Hammerton's Collection of a thousand Short Stories, even if by then James preferred to have something newer to represent him.²⁷⁰ De Grey, similarly uses conventional romantic techniques. However, again the tale does not contradict James's opinion about sensational fiction.

The title of the story declares it a romance, and the reader, not surprisingly, expects to read a Hawthornesque story. Indeed the tale bears many similarities to Hawthorne's "The Lily's Quest" (1839, 1842), in which a couple of lovers, Lily and Adam, (about whom we know nothing else) search for the appropriate part of land in Lily's family mansion to build their "Temple of Happiness."²⁷¹ The couple is

²⁶⁸ "De Grey [...] is based on a story by Balzac" (Kraft, p.20). Kraft, however does not mention which story he means. Adams comes nearer to a hit by claiming that "this plot is - at least in its essentials - much like the last half of *La Peau de Chagrin*, one of Balzac's novels that James did not like" (Adams, p.462). Kelly finds the influence of George Sand in this story: "George Sand was to influence not only the treatment of passion, but the entire story, conception, material, atmosphere, and execution" (Kelly, p.87). She does not refer to any particular work of George Sand, however, but simply mentions that "George Sand's father had been thrown from a horse" (ibid.) and could therefore have influenced Paul De Grey's ending. See also LeClair, p.405.

²⁶⁹ Edgar Pelham for example considers the tale to be "the weakest and most wildly romantic of this early group," although strangely he considers "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes" James's "most readable" tale. *Henry James: Man and Author*. (London: Grant Richards Ltd., 1927), p.15.

²⁷⁰ Raymond D. Havens mentions this incident in his article "Henry James on One of his Early Stories", giving us James's letter to J.A.Hammerton, Esq. On 23rd July 1914. "With a hundred of his stories to choose from" notes Havens, "and nearly a score dealing with the supernatural, why, James asked himself, had the editor selected this one?" *American Literature* (March 1951), p.133. Perhaps James wanted something more recent, but the incident proves that that story was successful enough to be considered as representative of the American literature even fifty years after it was written.

²⁷¹ Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Lily's Quest" (1839, 1842). *TS*, p.685. Hereafter cited as "LQ."

followed by a relative, “the dreary Gascoigne,” who “had a gift to know whatever evil and lamentable thing had stained the bosom of Mother Earth; and when his funereal voice had told the tale it appeared like a prophecy of future woe, as well as a tradition of the past” (“LQ,” p.686). The relative is described as an “old lunatic” (ibid., pp.687-688), who stands for “a type of all the woeful influences which life could fling upon them” (ibid., p.686). Gascoigne warns them off many a plot of land, telling them of the sorrowful events that took place on it, until upon their choosing yet another plot he suddenly leaves them with “an inscrutable smile” (ibid., p.689), and reappears after the Temple is finished and Lily is dead. She had been “growing every day more fragile” as the temple was being built and died when it was ready. Gascoigne returns on her funeral to plague Adam with sorrow, telling him that the plot of land was a former cemetery, but Adam, with a melodramatic gesture cries “Joy! Joy!” because in her death their happiness is eternal (“LQ,” p. 691).

James apparently borrows the idea of the old family curse, the lunatic relative and the couple of lovers, but his tale is following the method of its predecessor, “The Romance of Certain Old Clothes,” where the idea of the metaphysical was only a disguise – the clothes – for the drama that was gradually unfolding and emerging from under layers of silk. The “Romance” there was referring rather to the way the characters perceived the clothes and cherished romantic ideas about them. Similarly, the “romance” in this title refers to the name that precedes it: De Grey. I aim to show in this section, likewise, that James’s design here was to exhibit the melodramatic, fictitious, supernatural idea the characters have about the De Grey family.

As we said before, the story begins with the time: “It was the year 1820, and Mrs. De Grey [...] had reached her sixty- seventh spring.”²⁷² 1820 is in the past, in

²⁷² Henry James, “De Grey: A Romance,” *Tales*, p.277. Hereafter cited as “DG.”

the near past, as was the story of "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes." By taking us there, James awakens in us expectations of romance, of mystery such as we find in writers who deal with the past; including Morris, with whom James was dealing at the time in his critical essay, and Hawthorne. The rest of the paragraph introduces the reader to Mrs De Grey and ends with a strange way of introducing Mr. Herbert:

Frequently, in the spring, she wore a little flower or a sprig of green leaves in the bosom of her gown. She had been accused of receiving these little floral ornaments from the hands of Mr Herbert (of whom I shall have more to say); but the charge is unfounded, inasmuch as they were carefully selected from a handful cut in the garden by her maid ("DG," p.277).

We have here a first person narrator, who seems to be omniscient, although not related in any way to the characters he is telling us about. We do not deal with a friend, or a friend of a friend here. However, the narrator seems to know intimate things, such as whether the flowers were given to Mrs De Grey by Herbert or not. The manner in which he talks of this circumstance, moreover, strikes one as strange: he raises suspicions only to drown them. This makes us suspicious about Herbert, but also about the narrator who speaks as if he gossips. In the next paragraph, the narrator's omniscience becomes more strikingly apparent: not only does he know all about the characters he presents us with, but also what the world thinks of them: "That Mrs De Grey should have been just the placid and elegant old lady that she was, remained, in the eyes of the world at large, in spite of an abundance of a certain sort of evidence in favour of such a result, more or less of a puzzle and a problem" ("DG", p.277). The language he uses is infused with hints that there is something going on behind the surface of the circumstances he presents. Words like "evidence," "result," "puzzle" and "problem" arrest the reader's attention, and bring to mind James's story "A Problem," the story that preceded "De Grey," indicating to us that we have to look carefully for the clues to solve them.

The paragraph continues in a gossipy manner: "It is true, that everyone who knew anything about her knew that she has enjoyed great material prosperity, and had suffered no misfortunes" ("DG," p.277). There is an effort on the part of the narrator to persuade us that there is something going on. The comma after "it is true" gives emphasis. It leads us to expect a "but" clause. Sure enough, it comes with the news about the rumour concerning her husband's mental health. The word "insanity" ("DG," p.277) brings to mind past stories of James – "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes," "A Most Extraordinary Case," "A Problem" – where circumstances suggested that one of the characters may have suffered from some sort of obsession or other that made him look or act as if he/she were insane. Certainly, the story of her husband, as it unfolds later on, suggests that this might have been true of him also. He was in love with a French girl who died – possibly obsessed since he could not get over her even though he married another woman; and maybe this obsession with the woman he could not have, led him to his deterioration and death (a familiar pattern in James as we have seen it in "A Most Extraordinary Case" and in "A Story of a Year").

The paragraph continues with the narrator's interfering comments that are full of suggestions: "she might, therefore very well have been happy and have looked so" ("DG," pp.277-278). There is a contrast here between the narrator saying she has every reason to be happy and the fact that his saying so draws attention to the possibility that she did not really have every reason to be happy. Similarly:

On the other hand, a dozen sensible women had been known to declare with emphasis, that not for all her treasures and her felicity would they have consented to be Mrs De Grey. These ladies were, of course, unable to give a logical reason for so strong an aversion. But it is certain that there hung over Mrs. De Grey's history and circumstances a film, as it were, a shadow of mystery, which struck a chill upon the imaginations which might easily have been kindled into envy of her good fortune. 'She lives in the dark,' some one had

said of her. Close observers did her the honour to believe that there was a secret in her life, but of a wholly undefined character [...] It was certainly hard to conceive, in talking with her, to what part of her person one might pin a mystery [...] Let us say, then, in defiance of the voice of society, that she was no tragedy queen. She was a fine woman, a perfect gentle woman. She had taken life, as she liked a cup of tea, - weak, with an exquisite aroma and plenty of cream and sugar" ("DG," p.278).

The narrator seems unable to differentiate between the "logical reason" and the society he presumes to defy. That same society he calls "sensible" and tries quite hard to excuse its views, so that he too appears to be influenced by this "shadow of mystery, which struck a chill upon imaginations." It seems that his imagination works alongside theirs, in fantasising about this "perfect gentlewoman," that "morally [...] had had no history," but that lived "in the dark" with "a secret [...] of a wholly undefined character." He tries to include himself among "us" ("us" equals the readers plus the narrator), but we are on our guard by now – after all the insinuations about a woman who seems perfectly normal – and suspicious about a narrator who draws such an elaborate comparison between a woman's quiet life and the way she takes her tea! We rather believe the narrator to be among those who see Mrs De Grey as a "tragedy queen," despite his assurances to the contrary.

It is ironic that the paragraph ends with the sentence "she had had no history" (ibid.), as the next one starts with a flash back into her history and the history of her family. But then again, the tale is full of such carefully situated ironic phases, such as the one that follows regarding Paul: "Not that it was to be wished that he should take his father's life as an example" ("DG," p.278). The phrase is doubly ironic, not because he does end up like his father (dead due to the curse, as Father Herbert claims) but because he appears to have ended like him – or because in either case we cannot ever know for sure. Let me explain: We do not know much about Paul because he is the character least present in the tale. We hear about him and we have

an impression derived from the description of some pictures of him for the greater part of the story, until he finally returns from his trip. By the time this happens we have already an idea of what the “mystery” is, at least as far as Mr and Mrs De Grey are concerned. We also know a lot about Herbert and Margaret. Through their dealings, we find out about the curse. After James has built up his case, Paul starts to deteriorate. Of course one way of looking at it - and the most popular as it appears - is by blaming his health’s decline on the curse and Margaret’s reversion of it.²⁷³ On the other hand, Paul’s sickness, assumed to be of supernatural causes, might have been caused instead by other, natural factors, and his death to be the natural outcome of a bad fall from his horse.²⁷⁴ I believe that James’s intention was to show how the curse - that may have been a rumour only - became an obsession with Herbert who transmitted that obsession to Margaret (significantly, Mrs De Grey never believed in it), showing, thus the power that certain personalities have over the minds of others. James, thus, uses the curse only as far as it helps the personalities of his characters to emerge.

The same year of the publication of this tale we have the publication of James’s critical essay on a biography of the Catholic priest/monk Père Lacordaire. “He was a combination of the most dissimilar qualities and tendencies,” writes James of Père Lacordaire.²⁷⁵ “His character was made up of elements partially hostile to each other. [...] His sympathies, one may say, dwelt in the future and his ideas in the past” (“PL,” p.197). Similarly, Father Herbert’s sympathies lie with the De Greys’

²⁷³ Leyburn, p.4; Putt, p.34; UY, pp.56, 254; Buitenhuis, p43; Kelly, p.88.

²⁷⁴ Emmet Long has noted that possibility which he attributes in James’s attempt “to conclude on a note of ambiguity, somewhat like Hawthorne.” (Emmet-Long, p.18). He finds the attempt “weak since his Gothicism has already passed beyond qualification” (Emmet Long, p.18) - although it is not clear what he means by that. Wagenknecht also allows for the possibility that the death is not supernatural and that it is left to the reader to decide what to believe, in Seven Masters of Supernatural Fiction. (NY: Greenwood Press, 1991), p.31.

future, but his ideas dwell in the past of the De Greys. "We are quite unable," continues James in his essay on the priest, "to satisfy ourselves as to how his assumption of the monastic character was a spiritual necessity, and how far a spiritual luxury – how far a matter of humility and how far a matter of pride" ("PL," p.203). In "De Grey," likewise, the reason why Mr Herbert chose the monastery rather than Law is not given. Nevertheless, we find him comfortably established in the house of the De Grey, where he abandoned priesthood, at the same time as he enjoys the respect accorded to his former function. Furthermore, Père Lacordaire's "nature" was, according to James, "passionate, and he went in all things to extremities" ("PL," p.198). He was a man who commands everyone's respect: "There can be no doubt that there was a magic virtue in his utterance, manner, and aspect, and that it was in these things strictly that his eloquence lay" ("PL," p.202). Moreover, "we can readily believe," says James, "that he possessed the authority which accompanies great intensity of will" ("PL," p.201). Nevertheless, James finds that as a monk, cut off from society, Père Lacordaire "failed to understand" that society he was writing for ("PL," p.204). James is not sure, whether he sees in the monk someone who is "very proud or very humble" (ibid.). Yet, the figure of the priest/monk seems to have captured his fancy. In "A Problem" the figure of the priest represents the positive, unifying aspect of religion. In "De Grey," James approaches rather the dark, ritualistic aspect of Catholicism, drawing, probably, from the life of Père Lacordaire.

We do not have definite facts about the relationship of Father Herbert and Mr De Grey and here is where James begins his "mystery". All we know about their quarrel is a rumour, but whether it was about a woman (the dead French woman

²⁷⁵ "The Inner Life of the Very Reverent Père Lacordaire, of the Order of Preachers. Translated from the French of the Rev. Père Chocarne, O.P. Dublin, 1867" (1868). LC2, p.197. Hereafter cited as

perhaps) or cards, it probably was not serious enough. The reconciliation could be a result of De Grey's wish to have someone in the house who would take care of his family, and by then Herbert was a priest. In any case, it cannot have been such a bad quarrel or else he would not have entrusted him with his family and his money. Mr Herbert, however, may have acquired a superstitious streak – even priests are liable to superstitions and heresy²⁷⁶ – and the whole curse idea might be in his imagination. He can see – or so he imagines – the doom ahead (or rather, the doom he imagines lurking from the past). Even when Mrs De Grey suggests that the death of her son's former fiancée was natural (of love disappointment, like her husband's), Herbert refuses to see it in this logical manner but rather reacts in a melodramatic way:

'My child! My child!' he cried, in a broken voice. 'I have always loved you! I have been harsh and cold and crabbed. I was fearful. The thunder has fallen! Forgive me, child. I'm myself again,' Margaret, frightened, disengaged herself, but he kept her hand. 'Poor boy!' he cried, with a tremulous sigh.

Mrs De Grey sat smelling her vinaigrette, but not visibly discomposed. 'Poor boy!' she repeated, but without a sigh, – which gave the words an ironical sound. – 'He had ceased to care for her,' she said.

'Ah, madam!' cried the priest, 'don't blaspheme. Go down on your knees, and thank God that *we* have been spared that hideous sight!'

Mystified and horrified, Margaret drew her hand from his grasp, and looked with wondering eyes at Mrs. De Grey. She smiled faintly, touched her forefinger to her forehead, tapped it, raised her eyebrows, and shook her head ("DG," p.288).

Melodrama characterises Herbert's reactions which contrast forcibly with Mrs De Grey, who clearly sees him as a crazy old man (as is understood by her signs to Margaret). Whereas *he* is frightfully fascinated by the event of the foreign woman's death, determined to believe it was caused by the curse, Mrs De Grey is ironic and evidently of the belief that there is nothing supernatural in this situation either. The

"PL."

²⁷⁶ Père Lacordaire's extremities led him to "[challenge] the disapproval of the Papacy," but he retracted when summoned to Rome. James accuses him of "profound inconsistency." ("PL," p.199).

narrator's manner of presenting Mrs De Grey in this instance is very careful. This is the first incident that we get of something being wrong with the whole curse-idea. And yet, this fact is easily missed in the way the passage is narrated. This is mainly because Mrs De Grey's actions are soon blotted out by Margaret's reaction that should have been Mrs De Grey's too. Margaret is clearly influenced by Herbert because she is frightened. She is young and gullible. "[T]here seemed to burn, nevertheless, in her deep blue eyes the light of an almost passionate vitality; and there sat on her firm, pale lips the utterance of a determined, devoted will" ("DG," p.284). Mrs De Grey, by contrast, is dull and conventional enough to be disbelieved. We are keen to think that the person with vitality is also the person who sees things clearly. Moreover, "it seemed at times as if she [Margaret] gave herself up with a sensuous, reckless, half-thankless freedom to the mere consciousness of security" (ibid.). Herbert represents part of that security. She has understood the importance of that man in the family. Herbert in her eyes is everything holy and powerful personified. She admires, respects, fears, and trusts him. This is why she is always taken in by his reactions. Neither Paul, nor his mother react this way to him. Moreover, Margaret is in love (with someone she has not met, except in letters), and therefore more vulnerable. In addition, she is young and impressionable (she did, after all, fall in love with a picture),²⁷⁷ strong-headed, "passionate" and "wilful." She says to Paul she never had any adventures, and what is more natural than that Paul has become her adventure: an adventure in which she confronts Mr Herbert and the curse.

²⁷⁷ "The former of these designs Margaret thought a very pretty child; but to the other the poor girl straightway lost her heart" ("DG," p.258). When she actually meets him, "he moved, to Margaret's fancy, in a circle of almost supernatural glory" ("DG," p.291). Therefore, she did have a vivid imagination. Describing her as being in love, the narrator talks about "her enchanted senses" as Paul talks to her ("DG", p.291).

The scene in the priest's rooms where he reveals the curse to Margaret is one of James's finest. It is as if a game is being played out between two affected people. The language changes to suit their personalities and the narrator's descriptions take a morbid tone. "She saw in the old man's face the *portent* of some *dreadful* avowal. His whole figure *betrayed* the weight of an *inexorable* necessity" ("DG," p.296") (my italics). Between them, they act out their melodrama. In this scene, James justifies all those who have claimed that he has been influenced by romantic and Gothic literature. To me those descriptions of the natural environment (the changes in the weather, that gradually becomes stormier as the revelation of the curse approaches) to suit the events recall both Radcliffe and Sand. But he uses these influences purposefully, aiming at emphasising the scenes he wants his readers to focus their attention on, or influence and enhance the emotions of his characters – not instinctively as Kelly seems to think.²⁷⁸ The story does move at the command of the author, and it has to do both with romance and reality. The scene here is a perfect example of how romance takes over reality:

'Listen my child,' said the old man, his bosom wrung by the stunned, bewildered look of Margaret's face: 'it's useless to protest, to weep, to resist. It's the voice of fate!'

'And pray, sir,' said Margaret, 'of what do you accuse me?'

'I accuse no one. I don't even accuse Heaven.'

'But there's a reason, - there's a motive -'

Herbert laid his hand on his lips, pointed to a seat, and, turning to an ancient chest on the table, unlocked it, and drew from it a small volume, bound in vellum, apparently an old illuminated missal. 'There's nothing for it,' he said, 'but to tell you the whole story.'

He sat down before the young girl, who held herself rigid and expectant. The room grew dark with the gathering storm-clouds, and the distant thunder muttered ("DG," p.297).

²⁷⁸ "The story gushes along; it moves by itself and not at the command of the author; it is not hampered by any prejudice either for or against his characters on the part of the author; it deals with love and makes of it an overwhelming passion, and though its result is tragic, it does not overcome the reader for it is not reality, but romance" (Kelly, p.87).

Margaret, in her last effort to cling to reality, asks for a logical explanation, a “motive”. However, Herbert has by now asserted himself over any last particles of reason that she might have. Even before she can do anything, he has invoked “fate,” the ultimate romantic idea. If Margaret was in a more realistic frame of mind she would have answered that there is no such a thing as fate, that man makes his own. In fact, the belief in fate is not even Christian, because it presupposes that everything has been predetermined and that therefore man has no free choice. Granted, some Christian writers often invoke it, sometimes just for fun. Herbert, however, uses the idea of fate in a superstitious way, to suit his dark purposes. Herbert seems to have completely abandoned his Catholic robes and has acquired a darker, paganistic visage.²⁷⁹ The “ancient chest” also refers us to pagan times. In what seems like a ritual, he draws Margaret to his web of prejudices by a mere wave of the hand. She cannot react because she is already “expectant.” Immediately the room darkens, symbolising (or frightening her to) her downfall. She *will* believe him.

Let us examine what Herbert reads to her: the first of three pages of what he claims to be the registers of the family. “George de Grey,” he read, “met and loved, September, 1786, Antonietta Gambini” (“DG,” p.279). Did they use to keep records of whom they fell in love with in those days, as well as whom they married? There are, moreover, some entries that do not quite fit in the whole curse-idea: One De Grey, for example, married a woman twelve years older than him. She could have died from natural causes. People did not live for many years in those days. Another one is said to have died “by her lover’s hand” (“DG,” p.297), which could mean that she too may have died from causes other than the curse. She was probably murdered.

²⁷⁹ He is said to have “gradually dropped his priestly character” and to “crave neither parish, nor pulpit” (RCOC,” p.280). Herbert seems more keen on the power invested in him by his profession than the profession itself. He even abandons his project to write “a History of the Catholic Church in America,” reminding us of Casaubon in Middlemarch.

Another one dies in childbirth a year after she exchanges pledges with her De Grey. Why did *she* survive so long – exactly 13 months after the pledges? Are they not all supposed to die within the month? After this incident, he stops reading out any others but states that there were two more pages. As with the whole curse idea, we have to take his word for it. However, is he a reliable source? Herbert himself has no proof of the curse other than the rumour: “One of the race, the say, came home from the East”²⁸⁰ (“DG,” p.298). Who are “they?” Why is that incident – of such importance - not recorded in the register?

When Margaret tries to react, the priest gives her the final melodramatic blow: a threat on her life.²⁸¹ He manages to frighten her out of her wits:

Poor Margaret looked about her for help, inspiration, comfort of some kind. The room contained nothing but serried-lines of old parchment-covered books, each seeming a grim repetition of the volume at her feet. A vast peal of thunder resounded through the noonday stillness. Suddenly her strength deserted her; she felt her weakness and loneliness, the grasp of the hand of fate. Father Herbert put out his arms, she flung herself on his neck, and burst into tears (“DG,” p.298).

This passage is characteristically Jamesian in its structure, atmosphere and concerns. “Poor Margaret,” like “Poor Richard” and all the other “poor” characters of James’s earlier tales, has reached the peak of her agony. This is the indication that for James’s hero the end of the tether has been reached. She is confronted with something she cannot handle – it is beyond her powers. It is characteristic that her physical powers are giving in as her mental ones abandon her – most of James’s characters so far have lost their health in such psychological struggles. How ironic and significant that the “hand of fate” turns out to be the arms of Father Herbert! One wonders what would have happened had he not interfered in the couple’s lives.

²⁸⁰ Evidence of orientalism in James.

This, however, does not necessarily mean that Father Herbert acted against the couple out of meanness, or some gain – at least, not financial. It is more likely that he truly believes in the curse and sees it his duty to act (“he had done his duty; the rest was with God” (“DG,” p.299)). He subconsciously needs to feel he has some authority – probably this is why he became a priest – or just likes to interfere because it makes him – a lonely man – feel important and needed.

Margaret’s reaction to the news, her act of cursing the curse, - “a prodigious act of volition” (“DG,” p.299) – does not mean that it was an act of courage. It would require more courage to have gone to Paul and confront him with the news. Like Richard in “Poor Richard,” who reacted by lying when confronted with losing Gertrude to Severn, she took the easy way out: to defy the curse, to persuade herself that she could take things in her hands, that she did not really believe in it, that it would not catch up with her. This is make-believe though, because from then on we see her living in a state of psychological frenzy. She is, indeed, “transfigured” (“DG,” p.300) into something only the careful reader realises: she starts to lose her mind! The ending of the tale that finds her a lunatic, is not as sudden as most critics believe. It comes in a slow process of psychological deterioration. She becomes a neurotic through mental and physical strain. She tries to keep herself occupied with the bridal preparations. Nevertheless, already she is falling apart:

One day she was crossing the hall, with a piece of stuff just sent from the shop. It was a long morsel of vivid pink satin, and as she held it, a portion of it fell over her arm to her feet. Father Herbert’s door stood ajar; she stopped, and went in.

‘Excuse me, reverent sir,’ said Margaret; ‘but I thought it a pity not to show you this beautiful bit of satin. Isn’t it a lovely pink? – it’s almost red, - it’s carnation. It’s the colour of our love, - of my death. Father Herbert,’ she cried, with a shrill, resounding

²⁸¹ “The old man seized her arm with a firm grasp. ‘Paul De Grey’ he said, in an awful voice, ‘exchanged pledges with Margaret Aldis, August, 1821. She died – with the falling leaves’” (“DG,” p.298).

laugh, 'it's *my shroud!* Don't you think it would be a pretty shroud? – pink satin, and blonde-lace, and pearls?' ("DG," p.301)

It is interesting how James uses the satin scene for a second time, the first being in "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes" when Viola was making exactly the same movements with the white silk for her sister.²⁸² The cloth represented Perdita's life that Viola craved so much that it made her obsessed with her sister's clothes. Here, Margaret has become obsessed with the curse. She involves herself in the preparation of the bridal clothes that represent the life she wants, but that - taking the curse's existence for granted for the moment – could be the means of her death; hence, as she comes to realise this she loses her composure. Father Herbert notices there is something wrong: " 'You frighten me,'" he says ("DG," p.302). " 'Dear father Herbert, didn't you frighten me?'" she answers ("DG," p.302), a proof of the significance of Herbert's influence on her (further emphasised by her Catholic form of addressing him - "reverent sir"). Margaret's words to the priest, enhanced by her handling of the clothes, suggest, furthermore, an unselfconscious means of taking revenge²⁸³ (an indication that although impressionable, she is also "passionate" and "wilful," a characteristically Jamesian complex character).

James becomes even more explicit and *entertainingly* ironic for the reader (who unlike Paul, knows about the curse), in the scene that follows between Margaret and Paul: " 'Have no fears, my dear,'" he reassures her. " ' I don't mean to bury you alive; I'm not digging your grave. If I expected you to be content to live as my poor mother lives, we might as well be married by the funeral service'" ("DG," p.302). This and Herbert's reactions are gradually triggering her mind subconsciously, so that

²⁸² "Then she took it up in her hands and she felt it [...] She let it roll down to her feet, and flung the other end over her shoulder ("RCOC," p.217).

she never, for a moment, ceased to keep a cunning watch upon her physical sensations, and to lie in wait for morbid symptoms. She wondered that, with this ghastly burden on her consciousness, she had not long since been goaded to insanity, or crushed into utter idiocy. She fancied that, sad as it would have been to rest in ignorance of the mystery in which her life had been involved, it was yet more terrible to know it. During the week after her interview with Father Herbert, she had not slept half an hour of the daily twenty-four; and yet, far from missing her sleep, she felt, as I have attempted to show, intoxicated, electrified, by the unbroken vigilance and tension of her will ("DG", p.302).

She has begun, then, to wonder about her senses. Emphasis is given to her "will" that has led her to all this, her "volition" that took a mistaken path, and wonders, "fancies" (again imagination) what would have happened if things had been different. It is no wonder that in such a state of mind (feeling "this ghastly burden on her conscience") and body ("she had not slept half an hour of the daily twenty-four") she faints. Ironically, she does not realise that by her exaggerated vigilance and suspicion of the curse, she is leading herself into that "insanity" and "idiocy" that she fears.

Preoccupied with herself, she fails to notice that her fiancé is ill. Moreover, there is a suggestion that she had been ignoring her lover for some time. She is afraid "that he had begun to dislike her [...] He was cold and distant" (ibid.). When, finally, she notices his illness she partly realises where her mistake lay: "Deluded fool that she was, for a day, for an hour, to have concealed her sorrow from her lover!" ("DG", p.306) Had she told him about the curse, however, she might have at least saved her senses and maybe his life. Although she still believes in the curse, she realises she cannot handle it all alone. "Now that the enchantment of her fancied triumph had been taken from her," says the narrator, "she felt utterly exhausted and overwhelmed. Her whole organism ached with the desire for sleep and forgetfulness"

²⁸³ "In dress," says Hughes, "the subterranean, the complex and even the violence of human relations is revealed" (Hughes, p.185).

(ibid.). The frenzy that father Herbert had awakened in her, and that resulted in what appeared as a physical blossoming to the others, finally takes its toll on her and she collapses. Again we see James's suggestion that mental exhaustion causes physical exhaustion. Moreover, the fact that her behaviour had changed toward Paul²⁸⁴ after she found out about the curse might have been his cause for depression and loss of health and the reason why he blames her for his death at the end, despite his fall from the horse:

'Ah, senseless clod that I am, I have killed you!'
'I believe it's true. But it's strange. What is it, Margaret? – you're enchanted, baleful, fatal!' ("DG," p.307)

His melodramatic language has prompted many critics to interpret them in the light of Edel's vampire theory, "the idea [...] that in any relationship one partner battens on to and drains the life energy of the other" (Tanner, p.12).²⁸⁵ James, however, hides, behind his Hawthornean plot, clues contrary to appearances, and uses his characters' erroneous judgements about each other to achieve psychological insight. Writing on the tale, Beach thus, not surprisingly, suspects that beside the "creation of effects of mystery and terror," James's concern is "the psychological processes of the characters" (Beach, p.184). Buitenhuis, moreover, sees in the tale a purposeful "ambiguity of causation" which he attributes in James's priority "to create romance and interest from character" (Buitenhuis, p.43). "The mystery and the horror," he says, "is found not so much in the plot as in the development and

²⁸⁴ "This growing potency of loveliness filled him with a tremor which was almost a foreboding. He longed to possess her; he watched her with covetous eyes; he wished to call her utterly his own" ("DG," p.300). Amid his physical desire for her, one can detect fear caused by her change (she had become frantic by now – very different to the docile girl she was before), and the "foreboding" suggests worry.

²⁸⁵ Fish calls it "the first of the 'vampire' tales and associates it with "Longstaff's Marriage" and The Sacred Fount. (Fish, p.143), as does Edel in Life, pp.85, 548. See also Wagenknecht, p.181; Adams, p.462; Kenton, p.5; Fox, p.7; Lustig, p.66; Encyclopedia, p.168. Zablony takes it even further by suggesting that "the fantasy which underlies this Gothic romance is the fantasy of the vampire mother," Mrs De Grey (Zablony, p.210). She claims, moreover, that "Margaret [...] is the creature of

interaction of character" (ibid.). Therefore, he suggests that James here takes the "Hawthornesque idea of the hereditary curse" (Buitenhuis, p.42), but examines it in Poe's manner of "us[ing] the Gothic romance as a means of exploring certain obsessive psychological traits" (ibid., p.43).²⁸⁶ What we are left with is several complex characters, that prove once more James's fascination with the complexity of human nature. Buitenhuis notices that: "Paul, dashing and handsome, is also moody and introspective, whereas Margaret develops from an innocent girl into a woman of deep passion and an almost terrible strength of will" (ibid.). Similarly, the "placid" and "elegant" Mrs De Grey is also a woman with her own opinion. Despite allowing Herbert's dominion over the house, she steadfastly refuses to believe in the curse. At the same time, the priest unites serenity and good intentions with obsessions and superstitious misconceptions.

Overall, the last pages of the tale up to the lunacy of Margaret are infused with melodramatic language. This contrasts forcibly with the last few lines of the tale that describe the situation after Paul's death and Margaret's lunacy. Here the tone becomes normal, everyday. The tale ends with what appears as an argument between Mrs De Grey and Herbert on whether there was any supernatural "pressure" or not. The two of them do not seem to have solved the "problem" yet. Mrs De Grey tries to finish the issue by resolving that "it's always the survivors of a calamity who are to be pitied" ("DG," p.308), meaning that she sees it as a natural "calamity," and not a supernatural one. While the priest insists on the curse idea by referring to the time and hence the past events: "Yes, madam, it's the survivors, - even after fifty years" (ibid.). This open ending leaves the readers with the sense that they too are the survivors. The priest's ominous words sound like an invitation to the readers to

the mysterious mother, Mrs De Grey; she is an extension of her baleful influence" (ibid.). Zahlotny is a good example of how critics have misread the early stories.

decide if they are going to give a romantic hue to the history of the De Greys or not, not only fifty years after the event but hundreds more.

viii) “Osborne’s Revenge”

The last of James’s 1868 tales was “Osborne’s Revenge.” This tale seems to incorporate James’s ideas found in the previous ones. It is preoccupied again with errors, obsession, insanity, reality vs. fantasy, love and friendship, problems and solutions, responsibility and victimisation. Not a favourite with the critics who see it as a structurally incomplete²⁸⁷ story, as another example of the hero’s “withdrawal” from the complications of life and love,²⁸⁸ and even as an example of necrophilia,²⁸⁹ the tale is rejected as one of James’s worst efforts at romance.²⁹⁰ Yet to examine this story from a romantic point of view is a mistake. Romance was not James’s focus in this story. His focus, yet again, was the “case,”²⁹¹ the “puzzle” (“OR”, p.313), the “problem” (“OR,” p.319) that arises from the moment Osborne decides to take revenge for his friend’s death. This is a story where a lawyer will be asked to judge a

²⁸⁶ Poe is a possible model for James as will be made evident in the next tale.

²⁸⁷ Tintner is impatient with this story: “The end is divorced from the beginning. No revenge has been secured, if, indeed, any should have been, but the reader has been led to expect it and feels almost as tricked as the hero when nothing comes of his intention. In addition to this defect which is contrary to James’s usual straightforward manner, analysis has clogged but has not made probable the story” (Pop, p.84). Le Clair is similarly irritated that “there has never been any cause for Osborne’s revenge; and the ending is so divorced from the beginning, the impelling force so deceiving, that the reader feels that he has been definitely tricked. In the other stories James has been straightforward, if laborious at times; here the annoying twist of the *donné*, added to which is much clogged analysis, resulting in the bad ending, leaves the reader little short of exasperated” (LeClair, p.407).

²⁸⁸ Segal wrote that “the early stories abound in examples of such withdrawals. [...] That the young men’s suspicions are groundless and are the expression of their fear of ‘life’ is clearly intimated in all these stories, and most emphatically in Osborne’s revenge” (Segal, p.222). Sicker includes “Osborne’s revenge” in James’s tales where “agony becomes love’s perverse delectation, and death becomes its final fulfilment when the love image is irrevocably beyond reach” (Sicker, p.37). He notes that James’s characters, “unlike Tristram, Shakespeare’s Antony, Goethe’s Eduard, or Bronte’s Heathcliff, seek death, not as a means to numinous union with their beloved, but as oblivion, as an escape from consciousness altogether” (ibid. p.38).

²⁸⁹ “The love that his earliest invalid heroes bear for a pale, icy virgin in stories like “Osborne’s Revenge,” “A Most Extraordinary Case” and “Longstaff’s Marriage” suggests a fatal attraction to the image of a corpse” (Sicker, p.99).

²⁹⁰ “The story is not made probable enough to be realistic, yet it is not imaginative enough to be romantic” (LeClair, p.407).

case, to examine the witnesses, only to become, ultimately, the accused, and we, the readers, his jury.

In the first part of the tale we are introduced to Osborne and Graham. "As constantly happens with friends," says the narrator, "the two were perfectly diverse in character, tastes and appearance" ("OR", p.313), which brings to our mind "My friend Bingham" with another couple of intimate friends: George Bingham and Charles. There are obvious similarities between the two sets of friends: in both cases both friends fall in love with the same woman. Moreover, Bingham and Graham share similarities in character, as do Osborne and Charles. The first set of characters is seen by their friends to be "of a far finer clay" than the latter ("OR", p.313): both men are artistic, sensitive, and indolent as men of good fortune in those times used to be. They seem to be prone to sentimentalism, as opposed to the other set of characters who are partisans of a more realistic approach to life, which seems associated with their working status. The diversity between the friends' characters is emphasised. The description of Osborne by the narrator is indicative: you would think that the narrator, and not Osborne, is the lawyer presenting us with evidence. We are told the views of "disinterested parties" that cannot explain how such different people as Osborne and Graham hit it off together ("OR," p.313); of "Graham's partisans" who saw Osborne as "a commonplace, hard-working lawyer, who addressed a charming woman as if he were exhorting a jury of grocers and undertakers, and viewed the universe as one vast case" ("OR," p.313). Even a report of the dead Graham's opinion of his friend is given: "Graham had once told his friend somewhat brutally [...] that he [Osborne] worked like a horse and loved like a dog" ("OR," p.313). Osborne is therefore described as someone with not much

²⁹¹ Henry James, "Osborne's Revenge," (Tales, p.313). Hereafter cited as "OR."

experience in relationships with people, since he does not have any time for them. He seems able to relate to people and situations only so far as they correspond to his work, which he can obviously do well. Moreover, if the narrator is not giving us someone else's evidence, he nevertheless describes events in a legal manner: "Osborne was, perhaps, in error"²⁹² ("OR," p.314), or "pity came uppermost, and bade fair to drive him to a merciless disallowance of all claims to extenuation on the part of the accused" ("OR," p.314), and so on. Thus, the narrative is imitating the mind of the protagonist, enjoying at the same time ironic distance from it.

The tale, as has been pointed out already, begins by introducing the two main characters to us: "Philip Osborne and Robert Graham were intimate friends" ("OR", p.309). In retrospect, the phrase reads like a clue to the mystery, as if the fact that they had been intimate friends was a good reason why all these events happened in the first place. The letter from Graham that immediately follows the introductory paragraph reinforces this sense that there is an undercurrent of mystery, and gives us more information about the characters:

'Dear Philip: I am, as you conjectured, not well. These infernal waters have done me no good. On the contrary – they have poisoned me. They have poisoned my life, and I wish to God I had never come to them. Do you remember the *White Lady* in *The Monastery*, who used to appear to the hero at the spring? There is such a one here, at this spring – which you know tastes of sulphur. Judge of the quality of the young woman. She has charmed me, and I can't get away. But I mean to try again. Don't think I am cracked, but expect me next week.' ("OR," p.309)

Graham's inference to "poison", "infernal waters" and "sulphur" as well as the reference to Scott's novel *The Monastery* (1820) and its supernatural "*White Lady*", seek to associate the present situation that Graham has found himself in with the adventures of heroes in Gothic literature. He associates Henrietta with the White

²⁹² Again, a character's error allows James the opportunity for examining his consciousness, as in

Lady and ascribes to her, therefore, supernatural powers that he cannot escape from. Thus, she has “charmed me and I can’t get away.” Moreover, he writes to Osborne with the fact that he is addressing a lawyer in mind: “conjectured” and “judge of the quality” testify to that. Evidently, he means to communicate to him, subconsciously perhaps, more than he is actually writing. “Judge of the quality of the young woman,” he tells him, a thing that Osborne can only do by associating her with what information Graham has given him about the White Lady. Graham correctly remembers that The White Lady “used to appear to the hero at the spring.” What he fails to mention is that the White Lady appeared to the hero after he had called her, after he had used the special chant to her. Readers who have read Scott’s novel can thus bear in mind this clue which reinforces the conclusion that Graham was obsessed with Henrieta. Finally, the choice of the verb “cracked” further implies that Graham has gone literally crazy over this woman.

Graham’s mental condition gradually unravels itself throughout the story. Osborne, who only gets a glimpse of it, as if it is covered in shade, at the beginning, himself eventually brings it out in broad day light. The reader of course is meant to be more knowledgeable than Osborne, whose thoughts are observed as if he were the accused in a court and we the jury: Mrs Dodd has already made references to Graham’s finding “a source of fascination in the sense of his injury” and she has mentioned to Osborne her concern about Graham’s “sanity” (“OR,” p.310). Osborne himself has found him “morally, at least, a sad invalid” (“OR,” p.310). Presently he sees by himself Graham “looking at him with a solemn stare which (in the light of subsequent events) cast a lugubrious shade over the whole transaction” (“OR,” p.311). The reader is aware that Osborne sees the universe as a “vast case,” and

previous stories.

he/she knows, therefore, that he cannot even begin to understand his friend, let alone help him:

“Osborne observed with regret that he made no response to his attempts at interrogation and to his proffered sympathy. Osborne had by nature no great respect for sentimental woes. He was not a man to lighten his tread because his neighbour below stairs was laid up with a broken heart. But he saw that it would never do to poke fun at poor Graham, and that he was quite proof against the contagion of gaiety” (“OR,” p.311).

Osborne expresses his concern by interrogating his friend who obviously feels it and cannot go through it. What Graham must also sense is this inability in his friend to feel for him. All Osborne could do at this point was to laugh the problem away, and he instinctively sees that this would be unbearable to his friend. He is so far from comprehending the nature of his friend's problem that all he can think about is: “Has it made him stupid?” (“OR,” p.311) Thus, they never discuss Graham's love for Henrietta as friends of ten years normally do. Osborne's idea of a solution is to send him away, not only from Henrietta, but also from his own good influence. No wonder Graham commits suicide! There was no one around to help him; not, even, his most intimate friend. Graham's farewell letter to his friend proves that Graham felt that he could not be helped by Osborne: “ Don't call me insane, or impious, or anything that merely expresses your own impatience and intolerance, without throwing a ray of light on the state of my own mind. He only can understand it who has felt it, and he who has felt it can do but as I do” (“OR,” p.312). Impatience and intolerance are what Graham felt he got from Osborne. He wants to make clear to him that he has been going through something that Osborne cannot understand. He does not hope that Osborne will understand, not unless he too goes through the same disappointment which is not very likely for someone who “loves like a dog.”

What the first part of the story suggests, therefore, is that Osborne has been leading a kind of existence that has kept him protected from the sort of experiences that Graham went through.²⁹³ Osborne is in a sense immature. The experience of his friend's death will gradually change all that. Work, his "remedy for mental trouble," cannot help him erase the pain and guilt he feels ("OR," p.313):

"But he found his grief far stronger than his will, and felt that it obstinately refused to be pacified without some act of pity and charity for the deserving objects; but at the bottom of his soul there lay a well of bitterness and resentment which, when his nature was strongly shaken by a sense of wrong, was sure to ferment and raise its level, and at last to swamp his conscience. These bitter waters had been stirred, and he felt that they were rising fast. His thoughts travelled back with stubborn iteration from Graham's death to the young girl who figured to the prologue of the tragedy. He felt in his breast a savage need of hating her" ("OR," pp.313-314).

Osborne cannot find peace. His conscience is now bothering him. He needs to pity Graham²⁹⁴ as this makes him feel better. Previously he did not help Graham. This is what is causing his "bitterness" and the "resentment" to rise. But he cannot point those feelings toward himself. This would not make him feel better, but worse. So he needs to find another outlet, another target to blame and vent his anger on. This need is reflected in the "stubborn iteration" with which he thinks about the situation and in the solution he finds to his problem: by blaming Henrietta, he thus projects all the guilt onto her. Now he can go back to being a lawyer again and act: "It seemed to him that justice cried aloud that Henrietta Congreve should be confronted with the results of her folly, and made to carry forever in her thoughts, in all the hideousness of suicide, the image of her miserable victim" ("OR," p.314). The sentence bristles with legal jargon. Moreover, by undertaking to be the agency of justice he has found the way to redeem himself. She is now the "accused":

²⁹³ He reminds one of Margaret in "De Grey," who was also innocent, and was tainted by the evil experience of Father Herbert.

²⁹⁴ "Poor Graham" is mentioned eleven times during the tale.

“It is true that he had always pitied him as much as he loved him, although Graham’s incontestable gifts and virtues had kept this feeling in the background. Now that he was gone, pity came uppermost, and bade fair to drive him to a merciless disallowance of all claims to extenuation on the part of the accused” (“OR,” p.314).

Osborne pities what he does not understand. He has a vague awareness that Graham is superior to him for those “incontestable gifts and virtues” that he possesses; but he does not have any real understanding of those gifts and virtues either, as is proven in part two of the story when Osborne hears the piano music²⁹⁵ coming from Henrietta’s house: “Osborne had no soul for music, but he stopped and listened, and as he did so, he remembered Graham’s passion for the charming art and fancied that these were the very best accents that had lured him to his sorrow. Poor Graham! Here too, as in all things, he had showed his taste” (“OR,” p.315). How ironic that Osborne admires his friend for something he himself does not appreciate. Osborne describes music as the product of a siren-Henrietta, implying that his friend was no Odysseus.

In the second part of the story, Osborne comes into confrontation with Miss Congreve, and the reader confronts his false notions, and desires. The meeting scene, - very similar to the one described in “My Friend Bingham” between Bingham and Mrs Hicks and yet very different too²⁹⁶ – is highly dramatic, for Osborne has to come to terms with the fact that Henrietta is not at all what he expected and that he actually likes her: “Now that he had met Miss Congreve under these circumstances, he felt his mission sitting more lightly on his conscience. Ideally she had been repulsive; actually, she was a person whom, if he had not been committed to detest her, he would find it very pleasant to like” (“OR,” p.319). Again, we realise that it is because of “his conscience” that he has become so obsessed with avenging Graham. He is the

²⁹⁵ Another association with “A Most Extraordinary Case,” for Mason, too, had appreciation for piano music as the scene where he listens to Caroline playing certifies.

one who has “committed” himself, just as he has set up the rules of the game. She ought to be “repulsive” so that his self-appointed task is made easy. The more he persuades himself that she is evil, the more he wishes to take his friend’s place in her life:

“Oddly enough, Graham had never seemed so living as now that he was dead. In the flesh, he had possessed but a half-vitality. His spirit had been exquisitely willing, but his flesh had been fatally weak. He was at best a baffled, disappointed man” (“OR,” p.319).

The passage follows Osborne’s beliefs about Graham, as if reflecting Osborne’s fantasy that Graham is completed by Osborne’s actions, that his ineffectual sensitivity is improved by the addition of Osborne’s forcefulness and vitality.

Three more incidents/scenes follow that allow Osborne to discover Henrietta’s true character: a theatrical play, the rejection of a suitor, and a confrontation between Osborne and Henrietta. After each scene, Osborne becomes more convinced about the justification of his revenge, only to be again confronted with his injustice toward Henrietta. Hence after the play, when he discovers how talented Henrietta is²⁹⁷, he begins to ascribe wickedness to her: it is as if the fact that she was clever put him on the defence. However, all the witnesses speak of her in the best terms:

‘Clever, clever, said Philip, ‘I hear nothing else. I shall begin to think she’s a demon.’

‘No, Henrietta Congreve is very good,’ said his companion. ‘She’s very religious. She visits the poor and reads sermons. You know the other night she acted for the poor. She’s anything but a demon. I think she is so nice’ (“OR,” p.325).

Philip’s wish to associate Henrietta with the demon again reinforces the idea that he feels threatened by her cleverness. This reminds one of Edgar Allan Poe’s heroes to whom the cleverness of a woman often seemed threatening: As in “Morella” (1835)

²⁹⁶ In “My Friend Bingham,” Bingham kills the child and marries the mother, whereas in this story Osborne saves the child but does not marry the grateful aunt.

for example, a very sinister story about a husband who began to gradually see his wife's knowledge of philosophy as a threat to him and ended up killing both her and his daughter who resembled her mother.²⁹⁸ As soon as Osborne realises, however, how good Henrietta is, he feels threatened of being rejected along with the others (his friend and the priest), just as Paul de Grey had felt threatened by Margaret's growth of vitality.

"She was not a mere twaddling ball-room flirt. There was in her coquetry something serious and exalted. It was an *intellectual* joy. She drained honest hearts to the last drop, and bloomed white upon the monstrous diet" (my emphasis) ("OR," p.326).

His depiction of Henrietta in such terms suggests also his obsession with her. The more people she "drains" the more she "blooms" in his eyes and the more he desires her. She causes him "a fierce disgust" (ibid.), at the same time as she charms him and he wants to be "the hero of his vision" that she will fall in love with and break her heart over (ibid.). If this happens, then he proves himself the cleverest of them all. Finally he will confront her himself with Graham's letter only to be surprised by her spirited and brave revenge at his insolence in disobeying her wish never to speak again about Graham. At that point, he must have realised that truly he was no match for Henrietta.

Having gone through this trip of experience Osborne is reborn with a new understanding of his friend:

Then it was that he conceived the integrity of Graham's despair, and then it was that he began to be sadly, woefully puzzled by the idea that a woman could unite so much loveliness with so much treachery, so much light with so much darkness. He was as certain of the bright surface of her nature as of its cold and dark reverse,

²⁹⁷ "It was plain that Miss Congreve was a true artist" ("OR," p.320).

²⁹⁸ D. W. Jefferson has noticed the similarity between Henrietta and Morella: "She [Henrietta] has a range of accomplishments that includes competence in theological discussion, a fact that recalls an earlier figure in American literature: Poe's Morella, whose erudition is 'profound,' and her powers of mind 'gigantic,' and who introduces the narrator of the story to early German mystical writers." Henry James and the Modern Reader, (Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1964), p.73.

and was utterly unable to discover a link of connection between the two ("OR," p.334).

Being in love with her, he is now able to appreciate his friend's despair. His loyalty to his friend and his own obsession with her, moreover, permits him only a partially clear perception of Henrietta, as a woman of conflicted traits. His obsession with her becomes more evident still when he resorts to making her jealous by fabricating a rival woman. In the end, he becomes Graham. The madder he becomes the more he hates her:

He would have given a great deal to be able to banish her from his thoughts; but she remained, and while she remained he hated her. After all, he had not been wholly cheated of his revenge. He had begun by hating her and he hated her still ("OR," pp.339-340).

He thus reaches the stage his friend reached just before he committed suicide, hating the object of his affections. As he realises he is in love with Henrietta it is now *he* who becomes "Poor Philip" ("OR," p.340). And in his despair, he too contemplates suicide: "He was a disappointed, saddened man. There in the surging, furious darkness, yawned instant death. Did it tempt him too? He drew back with a shudder" ("OR," p.343). Having felt Graham's despair after making a fool of himself and being rejected by Henrietta, what is it that draws him back from following his example? It is because he senses at the same time that this situation he got himself into is supposed to be Graham's experience, not his: "At moments he wondered how in the world he had become saddled with this metaphysical burden: *que diable venait-il dans cette galère?*"²⁹⁹ This is Graham's *galère*. Like father Herbert had done to Margaret before, so Graham imposed his experience on Philip, who from a quiet, logical, "hard-working lawyer" ("OR," p.313) turns into the "drivelling fool" that his friend was ("OR," p.314). Levy rightly sees the tale as "a study of the converging

mental states of two men who differ radically from each other" ("TETHJ," p.411). We now understand why so much emphasis was given to the diversity of their characters at the beginning of the tale.

Osborne's error has been gradually revealed to him (and to the reader) by the various witnesses to Henrietta's character, which he, like a good lawyer of Graham, made a consistent effort to discredit. Hence, he ignored the implications as to the true character of Graham. His blindfold falls with the unequivocal testimony of Major Dodd: 'Good heavens! My dear sir, how could the woman love a madman?' ("OR," p.344) While Osborne was in darkness, the narrator who presented us with his case like a lawyer kept the reader in the light. He gave us the events, the evidence of witnesses for both sides, and he gave us a concluding summary of what we need to know before we make up our minds about Osborne. Thus the narrator too, is present as another character, in communication with the reader, who is brought into the story as the jury.

Nor are we to remain in any doubt as to Henrietta's innocence. We are allowed to be witnesses of the scene between Henrietta and her fiancé, where they talk about Graham's death, and from her reaction we gather that she did not know of Graham's suicide. At that point, her innocence is besmirched by that experience, knowing that she played a role in that man's suicide. "'Miss Congreve was the cause,'" says Major Dodd. "'I insist she was the innocent cause'" ("OR," p.344); and he prays that she never learns of the suicide. Henrietta hears of it, however, and the knowledge is brought about by Philip's presence and actions. "'Horrible-horrible,'" she murmurs, and "[shakes] with irrepressible tears" ("OR," p.341). She is innocent no more. James, thus, ingeniously portrays how one personality affects/imposes on

²⁹⁹ The phrase helps the reader associate Philip with *Géronte*, and Graham with the ingenious and unscrupulous *Scapin* who persuades him to hide in a sack and be beaten in Molière's play, "Le

another, making relationships between people, and, ultimately, life, all the more complicated.

The tale's ending is uplifting: "*Aux grands maux les grands remedes*" ("OR," p.45). After discovering the truth, Osborne is able to move on and lead a normal life. To marry a woman that resembles the photograph is his award for losing his illusions, like he left those "six dozen" photographs of himself with the photographer. Leaving his former self behind, he is able to start all over, albeit carrying the experience that Graham has forced upon him. The ending reminds us of James's credo as expressed in his essay of Dumas, that "to be completely great, a work of art must lift up the reader's heart," so that "if the subject is morally hideous," the writer's duty lay toward "moral beauty." In this story, therefore, James evaluates Graham's suicide (a sensational event) on the morally innocent, favouring the latter, and revenge turns into a remedy in marriage – not without a sense of sour humour (after all none of the friends marries the woman they were obsessed with).

ix) Conclusion: James and Sensational Fiction

"Deep in the timorous recesses of my being is a vague desire to do for our dear old English letters and writers *something* of what Ste. Beuve & the best French critics have done for theirs. For one of my calibre it is an arrogant hope."³⁰⁰ So wrote James to his friend Perry in 1867. In the following year James continued to write critical essays, castigating or exonerating other writers, and expressing his views on the art of fiction. Literary criticism, nevertheless, was not the only field where he was productive; eight short stories also saw the light of day, which means that, arrogant

Fourberies de Scapin" (1671). Osborne, it is implied, is the victim of Graham's madness.

³⁰⁰ HJLL, (September 1867), p.16.

or not, James was very prolific. Like the ones before them, the tales of 1867-8 express James's own ideas on fiction, only with more bravado and ease than before. If his efforts on literary criticism were timorous – and it hardly showed – his attempts at fiction gradually gained in confidence.

As Daugherty emphasizes in her book, as early as the 1860s, fiction according to James was associated with criticism: “during the 1860s James's ideal of a novelist was closely related to his concept of the critic” (Daugherty, p.10). If we look back to his previous efforts it becomes evident that by 1866 James had begun to form a distinct ideology about his art. Fiction requires detailed description of the heroes, the situations and the settings they find themselves in (Balzac-Trollope), avoiding, however, triviality that leads to boredom (Trollope). The writer must possess to the utmost the faculty of vision, which will give him the power carefully to observe the reality of things. The writer's faculty of observation needs to be helped by the faculty of sympathy and imagination (Balzac, Hawthorne), both of which involve the techniques of romance, Gothic and melodrama. These must be enlisted, on condition that they do not endanger the ethical side of the story. These will help on the action, that must, however, also be internal and psychological (Balzac, Eliot), without completely excluding the metaphysical that brings man closer to nature and its powers (Hawthorne). James uses other people's works as his most important guiding point. Works of art offer him the material on which his faculties can exercise themselves in creating something new. All these must be kept in a balance, and this is something that can be achieved through the co-operation of reader and writer. It is interesting to see how James developed these issues in the second phase of the early tales.

The second phase of James's early career begins with "Poor Richard." Unlike the tales before it, "Poor Richard" has been seen as an amalgam of reality and romance that has confused many critics. One could claim, and as my reading of the various stories has shown, critics have indeed argued that James's use of romantic elements in his tales is contradicting and paradoxical, especially given that at the same time he castigated romanticism and advocated realism in his critical essays. Yet in my opinion, there is no contradiction: James's incorporation of romance seems intent on reinforcing realism, and to do so he uses romantic methods (plot, characters, setting, etc.) borrowed from other writers. Hence, for example, what appears as a romantic promenade by the woods for the hero and the heroine turns out to be anything but romantic, as in reality the protagonists happen to be arguing. Gothic conventions are employed, like evil characters (Major Luttrell); and themes: disease (Richard falls ill) and madness (Richard's obsession with Gertrude as well as his behaviour when ill, make him appear as if mad). This method of employing romantic tones is found in all the stories: in "My Friend Bingham" a sensational occurrence takes place (Bingham's accidental shot kills a child) that is followed by the killer's marriage with the child's mother. The death allows James to describe how a man saw his friend overcome the horrible evil he did to a child and its mother, and indemnify the mother for the loss of one love (the love of her son) with another, his love for her. The result of a redemption founded in love makes even the narrator/friend betray a hint of jealousy. James's use of the sensational event is allowed only so far as it permits the author to examine something beautiful, regenerating, which emanates from an accidental evil. James's intention was to explore the beautiful counterpart of an otherwise grim situation, since it is his view that no ugliness is worth relating unless there is a beautiful result at the end of it. It is

not the death of the child, the ugly sensational event that is of interest to him, but man's ability to find meaning in life after evil befalls. What James says in this story, as in the others that follow, is that although extraordinary events occur in life, it is not the events themselves that are worth our attention so much as the truth, the reality that encircles them, the context into which these events take place and the way they affect character.

In "The Story of a Masterpiece," a painting becomes the key to a new experience for Lennox who is awakening to the truth about his fiancée – a truth he can come to terms with after he destroys the painting that would remind him of his illusions. "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes" ends with what appears to be a supernatural death. Rather, the story is about the romantic notion that two sisters have of the marital clothes that both covet, and how their obsessions affect their lives. "A Most Extraordinary Case" again has to do with a seemingly extraordinary death: a death that proves to be the outcome of a highly probable and very explainable depression syndrome. The predictions of various oracles about the death of a child and the two marriages of the parents are troubling the heroes (and the readers) of "A Problem." The story, however, examines rather the problem of superstition and how responsible the characters are for what is happening to them. James seems especially interested in how one character imposes his irrational fears on another, causing loss of innocence in this tale, as well as in the next one, "De Grey: A Romance," which deals with a curse that might after all exist only in the imagination of a priest. "Osborne's Revenge" invokes in the mind of the hero the impression that the heroine is a witch of a woman who causes the death of his friend. Instead, we find out that it is his friend who had psychological problems and that he is infusing the others' lives with evil by imposing his own madness to them. In

including Romantic/Gothic conventions, then, James appears at the same time to attack them.

These sensational events, therefore, are merely the appearance for James; the reality lies underneath and this is where the interest lies also. The sensational, the unexplainable, James hence seems to be saying, is not half as interesting as what really goes on beneath the surface, the explainable, the truth, life. In 1884, in his essay "The Art of Fiction" he asserts that "the only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life" ("AF," p.46). Yet even as early as the 1860s we have evidence that James's concern lay with the depiction of life in his art. In "The Art of Fiction" he also claimed that,

the good health of an art which undertakes so immediately to reproduce life must demand that it be perfectly free. It lives upon exercise, and the very meaning of exercise is freedom. The only obligation to which in advance we may hold the novel is that it be interesting [...] The ways in which it is at liberty to accomplish this result (of interesting us) strike me as innumerable, and such as can only suffer from being marked out or fenced in by prescription. They are as various as the temperament of man ("AF," pp.49-50).

His demand that the novel must be interesting was also expressed as early as the 1860s in his essays on Trollope. We remember that James was almost exasperated at Trollope's "thousand pages of small talk" in Can You Forgive Her? ("CYFH?," p.1321). Believing in freedom, James does not feel guilty in utilising sensation in order to make his stories and, later, his novels interesting. For James, thus, the sensational elements found in his tales can be one of the "innumerable ways" the author is free to use in order to "accomplish this result (of interesting us)."

This argument does not diverge from his preference for the real, because as he writes in the same essay, "the measure of reality is difficult to fix ("AF," p.51). Nevertheless, James suggests that truth be used as a safe measure: "the only conditions that I can think of attaching to the composition of the novel is [...] that it

be sincere” (ibid., p.64). He disliked Trollope because of his perseverance in reminding the reader that what he writes is nothing but fiction. “It implies that the novelist is less occupied in looking for the truth” (ibid., p.46). What is most true and most real for James is human experience, and in his tales here he deals with characters in the process of gaining that experience. James seems intrigued by that process through which man works out experience and what it reveals about the character. For example, in “A Story of a Masterpiece,” while looking at the painting Lennox realises how inexperienced he was in judging human character, and this inexperience is contrasted to his expertise in judging a work of art. He finally gains experience through reading in Baxter’s painting the painter’s own journey of experience. The way Lennox absorbs that new understanding of Baxter reveals the complexity of his own character. Similarly in “A Problem,” David and Emma’s experience of a prophecy begins a process of revelation about the complexity of their characters as they try to handle the “knowledge” that was offered them by Magawisca.

Hawthorne is most prevalent in these tales of 1868, although other authors and poets’ influence is often detected. Hawthorne’s presence emphasizes James’s preoccupation with the sensational and the romantic. One feels that James invokes Hawthorne’s works in an endeavour to complete them. What James wrote of Hawthorne’s “The Scarlet Letter” is characteristic of the way he seems to be reworking his tales:

The faults of the book are, to my sense, a want of reality and an abuse of the fanciful element – of a certain superficial symbolism. The people strike me as not characters, but as representatives, very picturesquely arranged, of a single state of mind; and the interest of the story lies, not in them, but in the situation, which is insistently kept before us, with little progression, though with a great deal, as I have said, of a certain stable variation; and to which they, out of

their reality, contribute little that helps it to live and move
(Hawthorne, p.90).

This “single state of mind” is something that James had previously taken issue with in Dickens also, disapproving of his “types” that he perceived as not specimens of real life, but exceptions. Similarly he disapproves of The House of The Seven Gables because the men and women “are all figures rather than characters, they are all pictures rather than persons [...] they are all types, to the author’s mind, of something general” (Hawthorne, p.99). If the characters do not evolve, then the story depends on the row of events for its development, a characteristic of sensational and romantic fiction.

Instead, James wants to bring action in the character, where he believes the possibility for the representation of reality lies. He, thus, takes sensational stories or elements, like the ones he finds in Hawthorne, and explores their possibilities as regards character. He reverses, therefore, Hawthorne’s method, by using the same ingredients. Action now serves for the progress and development of character and not the other way around. Events help the reader in focusing on the character and observing the realities that lie there. Graham’s death in “Osborne’s Revenge” begins Osborne’s journey through experience and gradually uncoils his real character that lay behind appearances. Their friends were wondering, we are told, why these apparently different characters were such good friends, but the reader soon realises that the reason is that Osborne is capable of turning into the character of Graham, and of becoming thus a mirror image of his friend.

At the same time Gothic concepts make the tales exciting. They represent James’s idea of the sensational, a dose of which, we have said, serves to enliven the, often, boring realism. James was an avid reader of the romantics, European and American. Although he was influenced by the European Gothic (allusions to

Radcliffe, Sand and Browning are found in most of his early tales) it is the American Gothic that he espoused most for its domesticity. "American Gothic had an antithetical development," says Richard Davenport-Hines: "it became family-centred."³⁰¹ And he is right in attributing to this element James's admiration for American Gothic:

It was this novelty which made James in 1865 praise contemporary horror literature for being 'connected at a hundred points with the common objects of life.' He rejoiced that the discovery of mysterious terror in domestic mundanities had proved 'fatal to the authority of Mrs Radcliffe, and her everlasting castle in the Apennines. What are the Apennines to us, or we to the Apennines?' (Hines, p.267)

James believed that the evil we imagine existing is not so far from home as we think and this is evident in the early tales that are permeated by deaths, madness, sickness, and jealousy.

Having examined the ten tales between 1867 and 1868, one realises that they are indicative of good craftsmanship: the observer-writer continues to develop into an intricate relationship between author, narrator and reader. Detailed narrative description becomes selective. Melodrama, Gothic and romance are paradoxically more prominent as a means to reach the hidden reality. The issue of ethics/morality becomes an issue of truth that must concern his readers as much as it concerns the writer, and that must be looked for and found in the character's act of committing errors. The psychology of the character becomes as important to James as method, especially in its analysis of how one consciousness affects another. In the next three tales we will see how he starts to focus on the consciousness of his characters, taking them away from committing errors that reveal to us their personality into searching and discovering truths about themselves.

³⁰¹ Richard Davenport-Hines, Gothic: Four Hundred Years of Excess, Horror, Evil and Ruin. (London: Fourth Estate, 1998), p.267.

Chapter Three

Portraits of Consciousness

i) "A Light Man": Three portraits in One Consciousness

"A Light Man" was the first tale published in 1869. Some critics³⁰² claim that the tale was written after "Gabrielle De Bergerac" which was published the same year, one critic³⁰³ even suggesting that "A Light Man" was probably written while James was travelling in England. Theme-wise, "A Light Man" can be said to follow closely "Osborne's Revenge" rather than "Gabrielle De Bergerac," the latter, as Edel suggests, expressing James's anticipation for his European journey (UY, p.304).

The date Max begins his journal entries is interesting: in the spring of 1857 the James family, living in France at the time, moved to a new apartment in Boulogne, "a large and costly establishment which required many servants" (UY, p.135); then back to Paris, where they faced serious financial difficulties that resulted in Henry James Senior's decision to move back to Boulogne. They did not stay more than a few months there before they returned once again to America, in the summer of 1858. Edel suggests that James's tale "The Pupil" (1891) was a remembrance of "the parental anxieties of this time [...] remembered by Henry – remembered over the decades" (UY, p.138).³⁰⁴ However, the date in "A Light Man" signifies that James was reminiscing much earlier than that: Maximus returns from France to America in financial difficulties. Throughout, the story is suffused with financial concerns.

³⁰² Kelly believes that "Gabrielle De Bergerac" was written in 1868 after "De Grey," but was published a year later (Kelly, p.87) and that therefore "A Light Man" came last.

³⁰³ Novick claims that the tale was written the Spring of '69, when James was already in England (Novick, p.181).

³⁰⁴ Edel points out that in "The Pupil" "it is a second son who suffers from the spectacle of the mendacity of his parents and their happy-go-lucky habits" (UY, p.138). There is a sense of this feeling of irresponsibility in Maximus who, at the opening paragraph of "A Light Man," reflects on his prospects.

In the year 1857, moreover, James fell seriously ill with typhoid. During his convalescence he was given a French tutor. Edel makes some interesting remarks about this relationship that influenced James:

For a while, still convalescent from his typhus, Henry was assigned a tutor at home, a Monsieur Ansiot, whom he described later as “a form of bland porpoise, violently blowing in an age not his own.” For all his dreariness, his greasy texts (extracts of classical writers), his “drowsy lapses and honest aridities,” M. Ansiot left something with his young pupil: a “working” sense of *le vieux temps*, a glimpse of a past world which Henry felt later to have had a wealth of value for him (UY, p.138).

The description of the tutor, a man from another age, living through the texts of a classical library, reminds one of Mr Sloane, but also has a tint of Maximus in it as he once reflected “how short and fat and dark and debauched” he felt.³⁰⁵ Moreover, in Mr Sloane’s ill health James may be reminiscing over his own serious illness in the year 1857.

From all the stories of the period 1864-69 this was James’s favourite, and was revised and reprinted twice. James wrote to his mother four years later that of his early stories (i.e., those written before the seventies) “there is only one – *A Light Man* [...] I should not rather object to reissue. That showed most distinct ability” (Letters, p.357). Howells himself, in a letter written in 1869 to James, admits to being impressed by the main character in the story: “I confess the idea of him fascinated me. He is one of your best worst ones; and I am sorry we hadn’t him for the Atlantic” (LFL, p.64). Nevertheless, this has not been a popular tale with the critics. LeClair calls it “a meagre little tale” whose “improbable characters [do not] seem real or plausible” (LeClair, p.423).³⁰⁶

³⁰⁵ Henry James, “A Light Man” (1869), Tales, p.348. Hereafter cited as “LM.”

³⁰⁶ The tale has also been called “a desperate venture” (Beach, p.180); “weak” (Encyclopedia, p.385). See also Kraft, p.46. There were those who liked the tale though: “It is his cleverest, subtlest, and most accomplished tale to this point” (Martin/Ober, p.50). Ironically, these critics have misread the tale, reading Max as a good, honest man.

An obvious influence in this story was Browning's poem "A Light Woman", part of which James uses as his preface (Vaid, p.92; BW, pp.9, 53; Martin/Ober, pp.54-55). Others have mentioned other possible influences, like Anne Moncure (Crane) Seemüller's Opportunity (Habegger, p.111) and Beckford's personal life, or work.³⁰⁷ James did write a critical essay on Seemüller's novel, but apart from the two male protagonist's opposing characters, nothing else much resembles James's tale. As for Beckford, we cannot say for sure if his character and what was known of his life style influenced James, although the opening page of his novel Vathek (1782), where the character of the protagonist is described, does bring to mind James's character Sloane.³⁰⁸

The narrator of the tale is the main hero whose diary entries we are reading. He is the centre of consciousness through whom we find out about the other characters. It is the third time James uses the first person narrator and the second time James uses the diary form. In the first, another narrator prefaced the diary entries of the main hero. James seems confident as he supplants multiple narrators for a single narrator that, once again, does not represent the author's voice: James's intention, says Edel, "was to tell an autobiographical tale, in the form of a diary, in which the diarist would provide one picture of himself while the reader would form another."³⁰⁹ Edel, moreover rightly points out that the reader has to figure out for

³⁰⁷ Wagenknecht wonders "whether Sloane was intended to suggest William Beckford and whether James had Swinburne in mind in portraying him as a 'curious blend of sensuality and impotence'" (Wagenknecht, p.191). Other critics, moreover, suggest St. Augustine's *Confessions* (Martin/Ober, pp.52-54). Tintner more convincingly suggests Voltaire as the origin of Sloane and his two secretaries, about whose life James would have read from Carlyle's essay on Voltaire, or Sainte-Beuve's *Causeries du Lundi* (BW, pp.208-211).

³⁰⁸ William Beckford, Vathek (1816), ed. Roger Lonsdale, (London: Oxford U.P., 1970). Vathek was first printed in 1782, but I will be using the 1816 text that had been used for the first American edition. Tintner mentions that "we now know James probably read *Vathek* early in life" (Pop, p.80) from a letter James wrote to Herbert Gilchrist in 1913 that she has in her collection (Pop, pp.86-87, 289, n.4).

³⁰⁹ Leon Edel, ed. The Complete Tales of Henry James, vol. I, (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1962), p.7.

himself what is going on, and what to make of the main hero. He calls this method used by James “self revelation:” The tale “represented the first instance in which he used a technical device later to be developed to perfection: the device of self-revelation by the principal character, with the author never intervening to describe or elucidate; the reader must figure out all the implications of the narrative himself” (UY, p.254). This agrees with James’s statement in his critical essay on Eliot about what constitutes the relationship between author and reader.

James associates his tale with Browning’s poem “A Light Woman.” The choice of lines immediately endows the tale with the atmosphere through which the reader must examine it. Thus, James literary association tells you that the centre of consciousness is the equivalent of Browning’s centre of consciousness, the man who stole from his friend his woman. To ignore the poem, then, or to misinterpret it as Martin and Ober have arbitrarily done, is to miss the point. Hence, instead of seeing Max as “no hero,”³¹⁰ these critics see him as the “disinterested” friend who had no real intention to supplant Theodore from his position as heir to Sloane. “But the key point that serves to confirm [Max] Austin’s disinterestedness is that, having won the woman, having the plucked pear in his hand, Browning’s speaker has ‘no mind to eat it’” (Martin/Ober, pp.54-55). However, had James intended to give that connotation to his character, he would have quoted other lines from the poem and he would not have any reason to name the tale “A Light Man.”

Titles, as we have seen, play a striking part in James’s early tales as a means by which our attention is attracted. In this tale of three men, the first thing James seems to suggest is that the reader has to decide which of the three is referred to by the title. This is not an easy task, and by the end of the tale, as it will be shown, the

³¹⁰ “What I seem to myself, do you ask of me?/ No hero, I confess.” Robert Browning, “A Light Woman,” Works, p.623.

decision cannot be final. Although originally it seems to refer to the narrator, Max, gradually as we read through the story we realise that the title could relate to each of the three characters. Yet there is *one* (“a”) light man; at least, one for every reader.

The first diary entry signals the beginning of our acquaintance with Max, the diarist. It is a long single paragraph with bombastic phrases and suggestive sentences and maxims from a man that we as yet know nothing about. “I have changed my sky without changing my mind,” begins Max, immediately taking us by surprise by his suggestion that he remains the same man despite travelling! How strange, for a man in Victorian times, the time when travelling is regarded as an important source of knowledge and cultivation of one’s mind and character!³¹¹ What a strange hero, created by the author who was about to travel to Europe for the second time in his life, the son of a man who believed that Europe would educate his children and thus took them there, only to return with them soon after, thinking that after all America is better. Was this what James pondered about - America over Europe or vice versa?

The date 1857 is the date the Jameses were in Europe. James certainly appears to be using his reminiscences of the time. Max too has just returned from France to America:

I have been at home now for a week – at home, forsooth! And yet after all, it is home. I’m dejected, I’m bored, I’m blue. How can a man be more at home than that? Nevertheless, I’m a citizen of a great country, and for that matter, a great city. I walked to-day some ten miles or so along Broadway, and on the whole I don’t blush for my native land. We’re a capable race and a good-looking withal; and I don’t see why we shouldn’t prosper as well as another. This, by the way, ought to be a very encouraging reflection (“LM,” p.346).

The irony of the feelings that his native land arouses in him (“I’m dejected, I’m bored, I’m blue”) is further accentuated by the effort he makes to be optimistic about

³¹¹ See among many Clough’s “Amours de Voyage.”

his return and his future there, as proved especially by his use of such enthusiastic language as “I’m the citizen of a great country,” followed by the anticlimactic “this, by the way, ought to be a very encouraging reflection.” What causes his feelings of dejection, boredom and gives him the blues is precisely his situation in this his world. He continues:

A capable fellow and a good looking withal; I don’t see why he shouldn’t die a millionaire. At all events he must set bravely to work. When a man has, at thirty-two, a net income of considerably less than nothing, he can scarcely hope to overtake a fortune before he himself is overtaken by age and philosophy – two deplorable obstructions. I’m afraid that one of them has already planted itself in my path. What am I? What do I wish? Whither do I tend? What do I believe? I am constantly beset by these impertinent whisperings (“LM,” p.346).

Max initially appears preoccupied with his financial situation. However, it is not the worries of a man who wishes to have a financially worry-free life. These are the obsessions of a man who wants to be a millionaire in the most effortless way. Working is seen as something that needs bravery! Max does not merely wish to be able to get by. Instead, he is thinking of comfortable security, of being a millionaire: he says, “when a man has, at thirty two [...] less than nothing, he can scarcely hope to overtake a fortune.” The word “overtake” supports the reader’s impression that Max expects to be presented with the fortune, or somehow snatch one himself rather than work for it. The mention of his age, moreover, is there to suggest to the reader the idleness of this man, who at the age of thirty-two has not managed to make something of his life. His only interest left seems to be his quest for identity. His “philosophical,” as he suggests, curiosity about his identity expresses at the same time our own curiosity about this character who so suddenly enters our hearing.

Max’s subsequent revelations about his life in France reveal a man of pleasures: “Pleasure pure and simple, pleasure crude, brutal and vulgar – this poor

flimsy delusion” was what he must have been living then but was doing without at present (“LM,” p.346). There is a hint about a love affair which he has left behind and now melodramatically recalls:

More would be forgiven me if I had loved a little more, if into all my folly and egotism I had put a little more naiveté and sincerity. I did the best I could, I was at once too bad and too good for it all. At present, it's far enough off: I've put the sea between us (“LM, p.347).³¹²

Later in the story he recalls again the beloved: “I never knew but one creature who was [worth hating], and her I went and loved” (“LM,” p.355). Was he jilted? Did he jilt the woman? It is not clear what happened to him in France, except that we are left with the impression that his “good digestion” (“LM,” p.346) and his youth helped him possibly to lead a life of dissipation. Probably he wasted all his fortune in France:

Formally it was enough that I was Maximus Austin; that I was endowed with a cheerful mind and a good digestion; that one day or another, when I had come to the end, I should return to America and begin at the beginning; that meanwhile existence was sweet in – in the Rue Tranchet. But now! Has the sweetness passed out of life? Have I eaten the plums and left nothing but the bread and milk and corn-starch (“LM,” p.346).

His lack of money which made the sweet experiences possible – the “plums” - seems to be his source of problems. He has had his experience of the life of pleasures and now he is back to America, as originally planned (“when I come to the end...” one assumes he means the end of his financial comfort). “The wave of pleasure has planted me here in the sand,” he continues, thus we may gather that his life of pleasures has resulted in his having to return to America due to lack of funds. “ Shall I owe my rescue to the wave of pain?” (“LM,” p.347). “Pain”, then, represents the work he must do to “rescue” himself from poverty. “At moments my heart throbs

³¹² He brings to mind Lockwood in Wuthering Heights, who confesses near the beginning of the novel that he has travelled north after an unsuccessful love-affair in the south.

with ecstatic longing to expiate my stupid peccadilloes," he admits. What the stupid peccadilloes exactly are we may only assume. What is certain is, that he is in financial difficulty and in need of finding some source of funds. He tries to beautify his resolution to work, the "pain": "I see, as through a glass, darkly, the beauty of labour and love. Decidedly, I'm willing to work. It's written" ("LM," 347).³¹³ How strange that he sees "the beauty of love" "through a glass, darkly!" Glass can distort things; make them appear better or worse. Quoting St. Paul, Max manages to envision work as something beautiful through the distorted vision of the glass in the dark. "It's written," he exclaims, invoking the fates. Ironically, his destiny arrives in a letter (which remind us of "A Tragedy of Error").

What a relief, then, for him to receive the letter of Theodore informing him of Sloane's invitation: "My sail is in sight; it's at hand; I've all but boarded the vessel," he declares ("LM," p.347). His boredom vanishes instantly:

Who is he, what is he, and what is the nature of his relations with Theodore? I shall learn betimes. I have written to Theodore that I gladly accept (I believe I suppressed the 'gladly' though) his friend's invitation, and that I shall immediately present myself. What better can I do? I shall, at the narrowest calculation, obtain food and lodging while I invoke the fates. I shall have a basis of operations. D., it appears, is a long day's journey, but delicious when you reach it. I'm curious to see a delicious American town. And a month's stay! Mr Frederick Sloane, whoever you are, *vous faites bien les choses*, and the little that I know of you is very much to your credit ("LM," p.348).

Previously, Max was curious about himself and his life. Now his curiosity (and his financial need) turns towards another life, Sloane's. Retrospectively, this is ironic, as in a later scene of the tale Sloane informs Max that he lives "out of mere curiosity" ("LM," p.351). If Sloane lived out of mere curiosity, so it seems does Max. It is his curiosity that made him move on from a stagnant life to the house of Sloane. Taking

³¹³ Max's resolution to work reminds Locksley's resolution to work, that is, to paint in "The Landscape Painter." It is conventional in Victorian Literature to make the move from idle privilege to

it a step further, the author ingeniously implicates his reader, by involving him in the lives of these two very similar people. We too are curious about them, and our curiosity unites us with the characters. By making us curious, the author involves us in the tale. Moreover, the suppression of the “gladly” betrays again, in a moment of happy confidence, Max’s relief at having found an outlet for his boredom and a solution to his immediate worries (“and a month’s stay!”) and his need to avoid looking dependent and needy. The phrases “I shall have a basis of operations,” “narrowest calculation,” as well as his curiosity as to Theodore’s relations with Sloane suggest to the reader in retrospection that already in Max’s mind plans towards his own advancement had begun to be formed.

The next entry finds Max in the company of Theodore. This is the first instance in the story when the reader gets the impression that the diarist is not reliable. Max’s description of his friend provides us with a point of contrast:

His is one of those smooth unwrinkled souls that infuse a perennial fairness and freshness into the body. As tall as ever, moreover, and as lean and clean. How short and fat and dark and debauched he makes one feel. By nothing he says or means, of course, but merely by his old unconscious purity and simplicity – that slender aspiring rectitude which makes him remind you of the tower of an English abbey. He greeted me with smiles, and stares, and formidable blushes. He assures me that he never would have known me, and that five years have quite transformed my physiognomy. I asked him if it was for the better? He looked at me hard for a moment, with his eyes of blue, and then, for all answer, he blushed again (“LM,” p.348).

The physical contrast between the two seems to suggest also a moral one. Theodore’s fairness (“light” has double sense: weight and colour), and cleanliness, suggests moral superiority; whereas Max’s continuous association with darkness causes restlessness to the reader. Theodore’s suggestive silence at the end of the paragraph as the answer to Max’s question further unsettles the reader. Are we to espouse

practical labour (from Carlyle onwards).

Theodore's apprehensions about Max? Are they truly the apprehensions of a "smooth, unwrinkled soul?" Or could Theodore's presence be a façade? "Aspiring" rectitude does not mean *achieving* it. Is Max, consciously or unconsciously, suggesting or suspecting his friend of less rectitude than his friend's outside appearances seem to promise? Or is it the author's intervention to suggest other implications using Max's subconscious? The reference to the abbey, for example, mentally transports the reader into medieval times, when religious figures, seemingly righteous, hid dark motives under their enlightened façade, most often of financial nature, a theme often dealt with in Gothic novels. 1869 was the year James read Stendhal, possibly The Red and the Black (1830). However, Stendhal was not the only one who could possibly have influenced James on the dealings of the priests. There was Radcliffe's and Lewis's work.³¹⁴ Moreover, Theodore's intensity ("he looked me hard for a moment") his lack of response and suspicions may bespeak his own fear lest he has a rival in front of him. His blush may indicate guilt for suspecting Max. On the other hand, if Max suspects Theodore of ulterior motives, he certainly does not fear him yet. Indeed, he seems condescending towards him, (referring to him as "poor Theodore" or "the poor boy,") and often ironic: "Theodore, characteristically, doesn't know its [the fortune's] numerical formula" ("LM," p.349). The "characteristically" between commas may suggest a small pause in Max's thoughts about Theodore, as if he doesn't really believe that Theodore

³¹⁴ Elisabeth Stevenson comments on James's lack of religious understanding in his novels: "He was helpless with the loose and varied ecclesiastical forms of his own country. He had known no parsons in his youth. He had to invent them when they were necessary for his stories. They might be human, but they were not of the cloth" The Crooked Corridor: A Study of Henry James. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961), p.36. It would perhaps be safe to say then, that James's experience of priests was restricted to what he had read about them. The priest in "A Problem" most likely derived from Hope Leslie; Father Herbert in "De Grey" probably originated from the biography of Père Lecordaire; while Theodore may have derived from some Gothic novel that dealt with dubious priests. "The theological student in the story *A Light Man*" says Stevenson, "has only a certain handdog modesty as the badge of his profession; his activities are as cynical as those of the 'light man' of the title" (ibid.).

would really not have a clue about the amount. Alternatively, this may be Max's habitual picture of Theodore and, therefore, an unwary one. The reader may read the pause and find in it reasons to doubt Max's judgement.

If Theodore's character is as yet obscure, Max's becomes gradually clearer by the time he begins writing about Sloane. The first thing he mentions about him is his monetary value: "it's probably a round million" ("LM," p.349). The more he tells us about Sloane the more we feel as if we are reading about Max himself: "He has lived much abroad [...] he has had adventures and passions [...] he takes it into his head to write memoirs," all these are things they have in common (ibid.). Moreover, the enthusiastic way with which Max describes Sloane's house, admiring everything in such detail, proves that he shares Sloane's tastes and love for luxury. Even the way he describes Sloane's physical aspect ironically recalls Max:

As I looked upon him, in the lamp-light, it seemed to me, for the first five minutes, that I had seldom seen a worse-favoured human creature. It took me then five minutes to get to the point of view: then I began to admire. He is undersized, or at best of my own moderate stature, bent and contracted with years; thick, however, where I am stout, and light where I am heavy. In colour we're about equally dark ("LM," p.350).

Apart from the weight, they are both small in stature and dark in colour, the latter suggesting a similar association in the hue of their characters. The fact that Sloane appears "a worse favoured human creature," therefore, reflects on Max too by association. Also, James seems to say here that the reason why Max "admires" Sloane so much is because he instinctively senses their similarities. Sloane appears to the reader to be an older version of Max. If we were to imagine Max in Sloane's present age, we would probably get the same type of old man. Moreover, in describing himself, Max endows himself with characteristics that will make him feel more confident and imposing ("stout" and "heavy"), allowing himself to feel

stronger opposite the “quaint old image of ebony and ivory” (“LM,” p.350). This can be explained by examining the lines that follow:

His skin is of just the hue and apparent texture of some old crumbled Oriental scroll. I know a dozen painters who would give more than they have to arrive at the exact ‘tone’ of his knuckles. His eyes are circled with red, but within their unhealthy orbits they scintillate like black diamonds. His nose, owing to the falling away of other portions of his face, has assumed a grotesque, unnatural prominence; it describes an immense arch, gleaming like parchment stretched on ivory [...] At first, as I say, I fancied him monstrously ugly; but on further acquaintance I perceived that what I had taken for ugliness is nothing but the incomplete remains of remarkable good looks (“LM,” p.350).

One of James’s best similes is found here. Sloane is likened to valuable items: an old Oriental scroll, diamonds, ivory. In Max’s eyes, Sloane has become the beautiful things that surround his life. He has come to represent the beautiful house with everything it contains that Max has been admiring ever since he entered it. More than that, the references to “old crumbled scroll” and the “parchment” are a metaphor for the “Last Will and Testament. March.F.S.” (“LM,” p.369). The author has made the reader realise that when Max envisions Sloane as a scroll, a parchment, a paper, he actually envisions that will worth “around a million.” Sloane represents the way Max wants to think of himself in old age, namely rich and comfortable, surrounded by the beauty of his riches. Under Sloane’s ugliness he sees the beauty he wanted to work on, “the beauty of labour and love,” the beauty of the comforts that Sloane possesses. This is the reason why he needs to feel strong next to the weak Sloane, because, as he had expressed in his diary earlier, work needs bravery, and it doesn’t take long before he decides to set to work “seducing” this rich man and winning him over to his side:

Coming events do what we all know with their shadows. My glorious destiny is, perhaps, not far off. I already feel throughout my person a magnificent languor – as from the possession of the past opulence. Or is it simply the absolutely comfortable life I lead

in this delicious old house? At all events, the house *is* delicious and my only complaint of Mr Sloane is, that instead of an old widower, he's not an old widow (or a young maid), so that I might marry him, survive him, and dwell forever in his rich and mellow home ("LM," p.356).

Again Sloane's fortune is seen by Max as his "glorious destiny," the destiny he was talking about at the beginning when we first met him. He has now the chance to "overtake a fortune." The language he uses has become elaborate and indulgently sensuous again. His love of comfort, a crucial part of who he is and a characteristic he shares with Sloane, surfaces here as he writes. His "magnificent languor" has given him a sense of security and freedom to express himself more openly now than before.

James allows his heroes to evolve in our eyes gradually. All three of them appear to have an idea of themselves that is different from what they actually are. "I know very well the appearance I make in the world," says Max. "I pass for intelligent, well-informed, accomplished, amiable, strong. I'm supposed to have a keen relish for letters, for music, for science, for art" ("LM," p.355). His description of himself, although presented as the opinion of others, seems to us to be what he actually thinks of himself. He liked and espoused the world's opinion. For those that are familiar with James's past stories, Max should remind them of James's first evil character, Luttrell, in "Poor Richard," and his similar soliloquy about himself and his accomplishments. Only Luttrell was always sincere with himself if not with others.

Here there is a sense that Max has only just begun to discover himself:

I blush for my slothful inaction. It isn't that I'm willing to stay here a month, but that I'm willing to stay six. Such is the charming, disgusting truth. Have I actually outlived the age of energy? Have I survived my ambition, my integrity, my self-respect? Verily I ought to have survived the habit of asking myself silly questions. I made up my mind long ago that I care deeply for nothing save my own personal comfort, and I don't care for that sufficiently to

secure it at the cost of acute temporary suffering. I have a passion for nothing – not even for life (“LM,” p.355).

Luttrell would not have blushed at his laziness and his love of comforts. When we met Luttrell he was fully aware of what he was. Max still believes that he was once good, but none of his actions, present or past, that we know of amounted to anything that did not originate from selfish feelings. Even when he first met the religious Theodore in their youth, all he passed into him was “something of my vulgar indifference” (“LM,” p.353). He realises gradually that he should not blush or ask himself silly questions. But he is still not yet sure of what he is, just like we found him at the beginning. He says he has no “energy, but he realises that he has been very energetic in commending himself to Sloane’s sentiments. He has a “passion for nothing – not even for life,” he says, but that depends on what life he refers to. If it is the life of the people he used to “find a certain entertainment” in “contemplating, ” people who led normal lives and who did not care merely for their “own personal comfort,” then of course it appears that he has no passion for that (“LM,” p.355). But ironically he does have a passion for nothing, for the nothingness of Sloane’s life, for the “slothful inaction” of days passed in idle comfort and the enjoyment of pleasures. How like the king Vathek with his five palaces for “the gratification of each of the senses” (Vathek, p.1). He prides himself to be a “man of fact,” but he appears to us to have all his facts wrong (“LM,” p.350).

How ironic, then, that he is only perceptive of the others’ self-deceptions. He writes of Sloane that “he is the victim, however, of more illusions with regard to himself than I ever knew a human heart to find lodging for” (“LM,” p.357). He calls him a “man of fancy, ” but all along Max is the one who fantasizes about who he is and what he deserves (“LM,” p.350). The narrative of Sloane’s story and of his character reads, as has been mentioned before, as the one of Max: the “dread of

poverty" ("LM," p.358) and old age, the egotism and selfishness, the belief that he is "the most rational of men" ("LM," p.359), and so on, a description that goes on for three pages, culminates in Max's sarcastic deduction: "He fancies himself one of the weightiest of men; he is essentially one of the lightest" ("LM," p.359). Max here reveals the title's reference. Sloane is the one to be characterised as "a light man." However, as the "lightest" of men, the "poor pretentious old simpleton" ("LM," p.359), the "poor, battered, bamboozled old organ" ("LM," p.355), the "lemon-coloured host" has at the same time been turned into a "*bonhomme*," a "delicious old brute" ("LM," p.363), a "precious old fool" ("LM," p.365) as soon as Max's designs begin to form themselves, and the reader is, ultimately, doubtful as to who the title refers to (Sloane or Max).

To complicate matters more, Theodore's guilty behaviour at the end of the tale presents us with yet another possibility: that Theodore, the "man of taste" as Max describes him, might be our "Light Man" ("LM," p.354). I say at the end, because prior to Theodore's own admission to ulterior motives, his presence in the tale was so constructed as to wave off any suspicions expressed by Max, attributing them to Max's jealousy and crookedness. Most critics see Theodore as innocent or naïve, the complete opposite of Max. Kraft's view of the two men as opposites is characteristic of James's critics. For him Max represents Europe and Theodore America; Max is "a seeker of pleasure, a professed pagan who measures everything according to his own desires;" whereas Theodore, accordingly, "lacks all modulation, color, and tone; he is so naïve as not even to be aware of his own behaviour or of Max's obvious deceptions" (Kraft, p.45). Like most of the critics Kraft flatters the image of Theodore and does not pay close attention to the text: "It's a part; he plays it," was Max's verdict of the people's and originally his own good opinion of

Theodore's morals: "He plays his part then, artistically, with taste, with relish - with all the finesse of his delicate fancy. How can Mr.Sloane fail to believe that he possesses a paragon?" ("LM," p.354). Max's vanity that is expressed in his ironic dismissal of his opponent as the weaker of the two again throws dust in our eyes:

What has got into Theodore I know not; his illness seems to have left him strangely affected. He has fits of sombre reserve, alternating with spasms of extravagant gaiety. He avoids me at times for hours together, and then he comes and looks at me with an inscrutable smile, as if he were on the verge of a burst of confidence - which again is swallowed up in the darkness of his silence. Is he hatching some astounding benefit to his species? Is he working to bring about my removal to a higher sphere of action? ("LM," p.364)

Theodore's signs of worry should have made us suspicious. However, because of our distrust of Max, whose sarcasm about Theodore "hatching some astounding benefit to his species" is so amusing to the reader, that we ignore the implications of that "darkness of his silence" or that "inscrutable smile," and any suggestions that he could be capable of murder ("to bring about my removal"). Max's admission that his diary entries are "the record of my follies as well as of my *haut faits*" ("LM," p.365), is his realisation that he made a mistake in underestimating Theodore. The diary entries also express the record of our error, since we too may have been duped by Theodore's seeming morality. At the end, the latter admits that he wanted the money for himself as he had financial obligations with his sisters. But he also blames Max for seducing him into this pursuit of Sloane's fortune. This proves that he too was unaware of his true character. Theodore liked to believe that he was a moral man, but when the time came to prove it, he fell short of his convictions; they were too "light". This is what Max means when he says that Theodore should be "just" ("LM," p.372). "You accuse me of having 'played with you, deceived you, betrayed you'. It seems to me that you're quite off the track." Theodore was the one who did not show his

true colours to Max, when Max's antagonism for Sloane's fortune was obvious. Max, in the end has realised what he is and what he wants from life. Now it is time for Theodore to do so.

What, then does James mean? "Who is the light man?" as Kraft has asked (Kraft, pp.45-46). Kraft arrives at the right conclusion as he considers all three of them:

It appears at first that it is the pagan Maximus since James uses Max's diary to reveal his crassness, but Theodore is really no better. He is just as eager for the inheritance, only not as aware of his means of obtaining it. And the old man is so inconsequential that he can do nothing but parody what each of them is thinking and doing. All three, because of their restrictive and shallow vision, are light, weak men (Kraft, p.46).

The role of the old man is certainly not as inconsequential as his character might appear to be. In my opinion, if Sloane is called the light man, then both the others are the same by association. All three are described to be different aspects of the same coin. After all, even in their different terms, the man of fancy, the man of fact and the man of taste, all betray a tendency toward materialism. Therefore, the title as is, is correct, just as Kraft's impression that they are all "light" is correct. In the end all are one, "A Light Man."

In this tale, we see a change in the role of the narrator. Unlike in the previous tales where understanding the tale depended on finding the character whose point of view we must take, or finding the "key" to the elucidation of the story in some object, or title, here the "key," the point of view is the narrator, who becomes the centre of consciousness in the tale. Nor is it so much about the revelations that come by committing errors – although erroneous actions and observations are still a part of the story – as it is about discovering truth and self-awareness. When we first read about Max he is asking himself existential questions. By the end of the tale, after

confronting Theodore we have a sense that he knows who he is, what he wants and where he is going, and all the answers are represented in his subsequent decision to wait for the heiress of the fortune. We the readers find ourselves travelling through his consciousness and experiencing his experiences, understanding his amoral nature by going through his perception of himself and the others. The story is left vague as to his fate, but one may safely assume that, like Luttrell before him, Max will attempt to win over and marry the heiress.

ii) “Gabrielle de Bergerac” : a portrait of a lady

James’s best tale of the period is, in my opinion, “Gabrielle de Bergerac.” The story was popular with the public³¹⁵, and James received for it “the astonishing sum of eight hundred dollars” (Novick, p.163). Most critics see it as a historical romance³¹⁶ and both Kelly and Novick connect it chronologically to “De Grey,” believing that it was written after it, and before “A Light Man.”³¹⁷ The effort to categorise it as a romance betrays once again the critics’ misunderstanding of

³¹⁵ Novick quotes a letter from Minnie Temple to James of August 15th-22nd 1869, where she praises him for “Gabrielle de Bergerac”: “My dearest Henry what a charming tale is Gabrielle de Bergerac! Just as pretty as ever it can be. I am proud of you, my dear, as well as fond” (Novick, p.203). In a letter to James, Howells informs him of his tale’s success: “Gabrielle de Bergerac is thought well of by those whose good opinion ought not to be of any consequence, but is.” He goes on encouragingly: “It really promises to make a greater impression than anything else you’ve done in the Atlantic” (LFL, p.64). In the same letter he gives him also the praises of his wife: “I’ve read the last proof of your Gabrielle, and it’s really magnificent – as Mrs. Howells, a very difficult critic, declares” (ibid, p.68). Kelly mentions that Howells also liked this tale: “Howells [...] praised his romantic tales and this one especially as ‘the best thing’ he had done” (Kelly, p.91). She also confirms the tale’s success in mentioning that James was unsatisfied with it: “*Gabrielle de Bergerac* sickened him by its very success: it mocked him” (Kelly, p.91).

³¹⁶ Novick calls it “a historical novelette” (Novick, p.163). Mc Elderry Jr calls it “one experiment in historical fiction” (Mc Elderry Jr, p.31), as does Delbaere-Garant (p.230). Emmet Long finds the story “a lush historical romance reminiscent of George Sand” (Emmet-Long, p.18). Similarly Beach calls it “a special essay” and “a deliberate study in historical romance” (Beach, p.186); Levy concurs: “James’s enthusiasm for the stereotypes of romantic melodrama is unrestrained” in this story as it was in “De Grey: A Romance” (Levy, p.17).

³¹⁷ After discussing James’s dissatisfaction with “Gabrielle de Bergerac” Kelly mentions that he continues his literary efforts with “A Light Man”: “Rather despairingly he tried once more a realistic story, *A Light Man*” (Kelly, p.91). Novick also mentions “A Light Man” as coming last, after “Gabrielle de Bergerac” and “De Grey”: “Finally, at the end of the summer James wrote a realistic story, quite different from the others” (Novick, p.163).

James's intentions in using romantic elements in his fiction; as does their pointing out the possible significance of the chronological (in terms of composition rather than printing) association of "De Grey" and "Gabrielle;" which also suggests their belief in the existence of a distinct romantic phase expressed in some of the tales; the romantic phase is opposed to what they see as realistic tales, such as, for example, "A Light Man." And yet, "Gabrielle de Bergerac" seems to puzzle them in its incorporation of realism. Kelly tries to make some sense of this amalgam of romance and realism she finds in the tale: "The impossible gives way to the possible though not perhaps the probable, and the story, though a romance, is not unreal. In fact, it seems quite real," she says, "laid as it is in France with its characters of the lower nobility of the time of the Revolution, and cast in the narrative framework where a descendent of Gabrielle's tells her story to a man who has become interested in her picture" (Kelly, p.88). We have seen before in James's tales how a similar narrative framework breathes realism to the events narrated. Nevertheless, Kelly surrenders to the general view that this must be a romance because the setting involves past times: "The story might well have been made a realistic one, but the atmosphere with which James clothed it, the setting in the past [...] the flow of imagination and improvisation, make it a romance" (Kelly, p.90).³¹⁸

Another reason why critics may have been confused as to the tale's intentions is the possible biographical elements they find in it. Gordon, for example, sees Minnie Temple in James's portrayal of Gabrielle.³¹⁹ Novick believes the story

³¹⁸ Another dissatisfied critic is Hartley Grattan, who finds that "in the light of James's subsequent development it is a curiously unrewarding performance [...] To the litmus paper it shows traces of George Sand, Balzac and Merimee, but in the harsher light of judgement it is exceedingly unimportant." *The Three Jameses: A Family of Minds*. (NY: New York U.P., 1962), p.234.

³¹⁹ "At this time, he was writing an unusually heated and fulfilling romance between a footloose scribbler and a woman forbidden him (for reasons of birth). Gabrielle's situation reflects that of Minny: an intelligent young woman who laughs 'with extraordinary freedom' is stagnating under the roof of a mindless brother" (Gordon, p.90). No wonder that the heroine's marriage to Coqueline "charms" Minny. For a discussion on Minny's outgoing, unconventional, spirited personality and the

emanates from James's personal experiences as a boy.³²⁰ Another critic finds James in his depiction of his characters: "In *Gabrielle de Bergerac* the contradictions arise from the fact that, in his effort to characterize, James put – unconsciously – much of himself in the picture" (Dalbaere-Garant, p.233). She sees James in his creation of Gabrielle and Coquelin, "whose inner life and moral richness far more appeal to him" – unlike the Baron and the Vicomte de Treuil "in whom he is not interested and whom he merely copies from some literary stereotype of the French nobleman"³²¹ (ibid.). However, this critic believes that James made a mistake in creating French characters because he "sets limits to his freedom" as he enters into a territory he is unfamiliar with: "That is why his Gabrielle strikes us as a kind of patchwork of literary reminiscences, a mixture of Eugenie de Guerin, of George Sand's heroines and of Sainte-Beuve's Celebrated Women" (ibid.).

It is true that many critics of *Gabrielle de Bergerac* have come up with various precursors to the tale: Beach believes that the tale is "a kind of pastiche of Scarron, Watteau, Rousseau, Walter Scott, with a spice of Hawthorne and other American writers" (Beach, p.186). Adams on the other hand makes a good case that what he calls Balzac's Walter Scottian tale "L'Enfant Maudit" may be the precursor of "*Gabrielle de Bergerac*" because of its similarities in plot (lovers of different social strata, confrontations with the family member, love for literature, etc.) and the

Jameses' opinion of her, as well as Minny's brother and his imprisonment, see Gordon's biography of James.

³²⁰ "A story of a young boy and his tutor, fleshed out with realistic details drawn from his own memory" (Novick, p.163). Levy suggests the same thing: "The many tutors which James had had, especially while living in Europe, afforded him a sensitive understanding of the connections between a tutor and his charge, and the reader feels that the author has complete control of the delicate intercourse between them" (Levy, pp.425-426).

³²¹ In fact she suspects that the Vicomte's precursor was a character in *Valentine*: "James may also have found him in George Sand's *Valentine*, in the person of the Comte de Lansac" (Dalbaere-Garant, p.231).

use of the same name for James's heroine (Adams, pp.462-463).³²² Gale, moreover, notices the narrator's allusion to characters from Cervantes' novel Don Quixote (1605) in his depiction of Gabrielle and her friend Marie de Chalais.³²³

That Cervantes's story was in James's mind at this time is not surprising. After all, like Don Quixote, James embarks on his own adventures in Europe. Cervantes's heroines seem to have stayed with James. Indeed, reading Cervantes' novel one is reminded of Gabrielle in the description one finds of the duchess in volume two: "The lady too was dressed in green, so richly and magnificently that she herself seemed almost to glow. A falcon was perched on her left arm, indicating to Don Quijote that this was a very great lady indeed."³²⁴ The similarity in the first appearance of Gabrielle with that of the duchess suggests that James must have been impressed by Cervantes' image of this character and the imprint it had made on the hero of the novel. Her appearance holding the falcon certainly ascribes to her graceful and heroic possibilities and gives the beholder the sense of nobility that must, presumably, extend from the outer appearance to the inner being of the character. Thus, Don Quixote's immediate reaction to meeting her is to offer her his services: "Sancho, my son, run over to the lady of the palfrey, holding the hawk, and let her know that I [...] will be pleased to serve her in any way I can and in any way her noble self may direct" (DQ, p.506). Like Don Quixote, the reader is guided by this image of nobility into assuming that the Duchess is as good and noble as she looks. Ironically, the Duchess proves to be the opposite of noble, as she proceeds to

³²² Surprisingly, Adams forgets to mention that the two stories share another element: the curse. Both Gabrielle's brother and the Duc d'Hérouville curse the couples. Gale also sees the influence of Walter Scott and Sand (Encyclopedia, p.245).

³²³ "The complete record, Gabrielle and her friend Marie de Chalais remind the narrator of Gabrielle de Bergerac of 'the beautiful duchess in Don Quixote, followed by a little dark-visaged Spanish waiting-maid'" (Gale, p.109).

³²⁴ Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, The History of That Ingenious Gentleman Don Quijote de la Mancha, Trans. Burton Raffel, (N.Y., London: W.W.Norton & Company, 1996), p.506. Hereafter cited as DQ.

utilise Don Quixote's madness for the purpose of amusing herself and her husband, at the, often, cruel and painful expense of Don Quixote and Sancho. Similarly, the Duchess' maid is as bad as her lady. So the question naturally arises, why would James have his narrator associating his characters with those of Cervantes? Obviously, James liked the idea of the Duchess' presence with the hawk in her hand. Here, then, is how he describes Gabrielle:

My aunt [...] walked slowly over to where we stood, still holding her crow on her hand. You have her there before you; judge how she looked. I remember that she frequently dressed in blue, my poor aunt, and I know that she must have dressed simply. Fancy her in a light stuff gown, covered with big blue flowers, with a blue ribbon in her dark hair, and the points of her high-heeled blue slippers peeping out under her stiff white petticoat. Imaging her strolling along the terrace of the chateau with a villainous black crow perched on her wrist. You'll admit it's a picture.³²⁵

Like the Duchess, Gabrielle is dressed in a gown. The duchess' dress was green, the colour of greed, and a colour probably chosen to reflect her character. Greedy for amusement, for power over people, indifferent to other's physical or emotional pain, the duchess' beautiful dress, so "rich" and "magnificent" to view, expresses nevertheless an exterior beauty that hides a rotten soul. On the other hand, James's choice of a "simple" blue gown that is decorated by blue flowers might not be magnificent in itself, - he specifically negates the thought, - but it helps instead accentuate the aura of integrity, truth, and intellect, that is the inner beauty that emanates from Gabrielle. It is the colour of the sky as M. Bergerac recalls it in the time of his youth, a time before the black sky of the revolution came along: "to me, I confess, [the sky] looked divinely blue" ("GB," p.375). Blue, then, is associated with God; Jesus' mother, Mary, was wearing blue. Thus, James creates a different version of the picture that remained in his mind of the Duchess.

³²⁵ Henry James, "Gabrielle de Bergerac" (1869), *Tales*, p.377. Hereafter cited as "GB."

Assuming then that he had Don Quixote in his mind when he created Gabrielle, the colour of the dress is one way for James to distance himself from Cervantes. Another instance that proves this effort takes place right after he mentions Cervantes' characters. The paragraph that follows his pointing them out, immediately distances Gabrielle from the Duchess: Gabrielle is found by a poor man's deathbed, offering help to the needy. Unlike the duchess, James's heroine is truly compassionate and caring, despite the narrator's somewhat arch, ironic tone: "All this, doubtless, implied no extraordinary merit on Mlle. de Bergerac's part; but it placed her in a gracious, pleasing light" ("GB," p.402). James's heroine, then, morally speaking, comes closer to such a character as Blanche/Henriette in Balzac's 1836 novel Lily of the Valley. Here we have another pair of lovers who are prevented from being together by the fact that the heroine is already married. Despite their love for each other, their mutual understanding, their "sensing that we were twins from the same breast,"³²⁶ the heroine's moral consciousness and sense of duty prevents a physical union.³²⁷ Interestingly, the heroine's white dress – the dress she wears the first time Felix sees her and every time they meet from then on - is also a constant reminder in the novel of her moral condition, and associates her in the hero's mind with the sky (the stars that the hero was obsessed with) and the flowers (lilies). At the same time, Balzac's hero associates *his* devotion to the heroine with Don Quixote: "During that night, bathed in light, where that starry flower lit up my life, I pledged my soul to her with the faith of the poor Castilian Knight whom we

³²⁶ Honore de Balzac, Lily of the Valley (1835). Lucien Hill, trans., (New York: Carroll and Graf, 1997), p.59. Hereafter cited as LV.

³²⁷ James didn't like the novel ("Le Lys dans la Vallée"[...] is bad enough to be coupled with "Béatrix") ("Balzac," p.38); and thought that Balzac had failed to persuade the reader that his heroine was truly moral: "Purity in Balzac's hands is apt to play us the strangest tricks," he says ("HB," p.62). "Madame de Mortsauf" he continues about Henriette, "is a saint familiar with the most cynical views of life [...] who drives about with her lover late at night, kissing his head and otherwise fondling him" (ibid., p.63). In his own tale there is no "fondling" whatsoever, and the only physical expression of their feelings towards each other is done through hugging or kissing the child.

laughed at in Cervantes, and with which our love begins" (LV, p.43). Cervantes' influence is evident in Balzac's novel, and perhaps James was reminded of him through reading Balzac.

Despite James's departure from Cervantes' evil character, the use of the duchess's image is not the only element that impressed James. Early in the novel, another character in Don Quixote, the beautiful Marcela, appears briefly but very intensely. Her story, narrated in two chapters, probably attracted James's imagination in depicting Gabrielle. Marcela was, like Gabrielle, an orphan, living with relatives. Although she had a very understanding uncle who – unlike Gabrielle's relatives – would not force her to marry someone she did not want, society was not as indulgent to her. Her incredible beauty accompanied by a fortune made her the most sought after woman in the village, and it was expected of her that she should marry. Marcela, however, refused to marry anyone, became a shepherdess undertaking the management of her own sheep, and chose to preserve her virtue despite every man's promises and threats.³²⁸ At the funeral of one of her suitors who dies of a broken heart we see her asserting her right to free choice as to what she will do with her life,³²⁹ and resenting bearing responsibility for anyone's death.³³⁰ It was Marcela's

³²⁸ "She was so careful about her honour that, of all those who wooed her and courted her, not one ever boasted, and in truth not one of them could have boasted, that she'd given him even the tiniest, smallest prospect of getting what he wanted" (DQ, p.59).

³²⁹ "I was born free and I chose the solitude of the fields so I could live free" (DQ, p.71). And again: "I live freely, and have no desire to let anyone rule me" (DQ, p.72).

³³⁰ Marcela exclaims:

'Can it be right that sorrow is laid at my door? If you've been deceived, complain; if you haven't had what was promised you, plunge yourself into despair; if you've been enticed, tell your confessor; if I've accepted you go boast about it. But let no one call me cruel or a murderess to whom I've promised nothing, nor ever deceived, nor enticed, nor said yes to' (DQ, p.71).

Listening to Marcella one is reminded of Gabrielle's refusal of the Count:

'[M. le Vicomte] comes to exact the fulfilment of your promise.'

'I made no promise,' said Mlle. de Bergerac.

'Excuse me, mademoiselle; you gave your word that you'd wait for me.'

'Gracious heaven!' cried the young girl; 'haven't I waited for you!' ("GB," p.420)

character, a feminist prototype, her dynamism, and her ethos, her sticking up for her beliefs about virtue, about love and marriage, against the social expectations that might have inspired James in creating Gabrielle.

Like Marcela, Gabrielle objects to the social expectation to marry the Count, a man she does not want, but who would be a “proper” choice for her, according to her brother and sister-in-law. Like the society of Marcela’s village in Don Quixote, her brother and sister, also, do not understand Gabrielle’s assertions for freedom of choice: the choice to live her life by her beliefs, by her ethos, by the dictates of the heart. When the idea of the Count as a husband is forced upon her, Gabrielle wishes to show her relatives that the Count does not really love her by asking the child to give his opinion – children are innocent bearers of truth:

‘The truth comes out of the mouths of children,’ she said.
‘Chevalier, does he love me?’
‘Stuff!’ cried the Baronne; ‘one doesn’t speak to children of such things. A young girl should believe what she’s told. I believed my mother when she told me that your brother loved me. He didn’t but I believed it, and as far as I know I’m not the worse for it.’ (“GB,” p.388).

What James achieves here is to awaken the reader to the reality of Gabrielle’s world. How cruel, how pathetic do the Baronne’s words sound! How frustrated Gabrielle must have felt in a life so unhappily predicted. How cruel could life be for the child. She lives in a world where she feels afraid of herself, and unnatural:

‘We don’t live in a natural world, Coquelin. If we did, there would be no need of concealing this divine affection. Great heaven! Who’s natural? Is it my sister-in-law? Is it M. de Treuil? Is it my brother? My brother is sometimes so natural that he’s brutal. Is it I

Here Gabrielle reminds the Count that she has not married anyone else and has waited as promised for his return. However, she never made him any promise to marry him, although he liked to believe that her words implied it. When Gabrielle gives her ultimatum here, the reaction of the Count recalls Marcella’s situation every time she refuses someone: “Her gallant lover had sunk into a chair, burying his face in his hands, and stamping his feet on the floor in a frenzy of disappointment. She stood regarding him in a sort of helpless, distant pity (“GB,” p.420). Of course the Count has no justification for his behaviour and James is being ironic in his depiction of his reaction (“her gallant lover”), that may have been inspired by Marcella’s words.

myself? There are moments when I am afraid of my nature' ("GB," p.414).

Those moments are when she chooses to revolt against the command of her brother to marry Gaston,³³¹ because by finding herself in love with Coquelin, she is no longer satisfied with her previous submissive and languorous existence;³³² or, when – ironically enough – she chooses to follow her conscience and break up with Coquelin.³³³

Gabrielle, like Marcela, is a woman who knows what she believes and what she wants. Unlike Marcela, however, who has managed to find a balance in her beliefs, Gabrielle's have brought her no peace of mind, because her conscience is bothering her. Unlike Marcela, who in her "wisdom" has reasoned her world into a beautiful arcadia in which she has every right to live as she pleases - free from any societal obligations (DQ, p.72), - Gabrielle's reason guides her to the opposite direction: she realises that her love for Coquelin, although natural, goes against her belief in her duty toward her family.

'Reason has come to me. She tells me that if I marry in my brother's despite, and in opposition to all the traditions that have been kept sacred in my family, I shall neither find happiness nor give it. I must choose the simplest course. The other is a gulf; I can't leap it, - something in the very look of these old walls, within which I was born and I've lived. I shall never marry; I shall go into

³³¹ His own words prove how unnatural he sees her rebellious behaviour and her decision to follow her heart and marry Coquelin: "'Gabrielle, you are mad!'" ("GB," p.421) Similarly, Coquelin is described as "half mad" by the narrator at the picnic: "Coquelin was half mad with the joy of spending a whole unbroken summer's day with the woman whom he secretly loved" ("GB," p.407). As in previous stories ("The Most Extraordinary Case," "De Grey: A Romance," "Osborne's Revenge") love is closely associated with madness.

³³² "'*Mon Dieu!* Think how I have lived! What a senseless, thoughtless life! What solitude, ignorance, and languor! What trivial duties and petty joys! I have fancied myself happy at times, for it was God's mercy that I didn't know what I lacked. But now that my soul begins to stir and throb and live, it shakes me with almighty pulsations'" ("GB," pp. 414-415).

³³³ Gabrielle's words to Coquelin show how guilty she feels about her feelings and any thoughts of marrying him: "Well, then, think of all you ask! Think of the inexpiable criminality of my love. Think of me standing here, - here before my mother's portrait, - murmuring out my shame, scorched by my sister's scorn, buffeted by my brother's curses! Gracious heaven, Coquelin, suppose after all I were a bad, hard girl!" ("GB," pp.417-418). Although somewhat ironic in his reply, Coquelin has nevertheless understood her problem: "As much as anything I have ever known in you I admire your beautiful delicacy of conscience'" ("GB," p.419).

religion. I tried to fling away my name; it was sowing dragons' teeth. I don't ask you to forgive me. It's small enough comfort that you should have the right to think of me as a poor, weak heart' ("GB," pp.418-419).

Significantly, her escape from the gulf is very similar to Marcela's solution. Gabrielle sees her freedom and peace in a celibate existence.³³⁴ The manner in which she envisions her situation certainly reflects the way many heroines were described in literature. One is reminded of Radcliffe's heroines, for example, whose escape from similar "gulfs" were conceived in their minds to be possible only under the protection of the church, a society with different rules, more "simple" and straight forward, and in which you can enter by your own choice. Other authors have described the good and the evil outcomes of entering the society of the church (Radcliffe, Stendhal and Lewis among others); James's concern in this story, however, rests with secular society and the individual's struggles in it.

Another possible influence might have been Mme de Staël's novel Corinne, or Italy (1807). His reference to de Staël in his 1868 article³³⁵ on Sainte-Beuve certainly indicates that he was familiar with her works. Given "the fact that a generation used the novel as a guide book" for its beautiful descriptions of Italy and its attractions³³⁶, the book may easily have been in James's mind – if not in his hands – at the time he wrote "Gabrielle," preparing as he was for his own trip to Europe. Mme de Staël's heroine, Corinne, was also an orphan, who lived with her unsympathetic stepmother. Wishing to avoid an arranged marriage to her

³³⁴ In fact her wish to belong in a community of other women of similar circumstances (i.e., nuns) recalls Marcela's wish to lead a celibate existence as a shepherdess, associating with fellow shepherdesses: "'Chaste conversation with the shepherdesses I meet, and taking care of my goats, are all the diversions I need'" (DQ, p.72). Convents were reviving in the mid-19th century and were a retreat for pious single women in life and fiction. (See Hardy's A Laodicean and Charlotte Yonge who even financed convents).

³³⁵ Henry James, "Portraits of Celebrated Women. By C.A. Sainte-Beuve. Translated from the French by H.W. Preston: Roberts Bros., 1868." LC2, p. 644-688. Mme De Staël is mentioned on pages 644 and 655.

stepmother's brother, and tired of society's suppression of women who, as a result, have nothing to do all day but live an unnatural life of ennui and mental stagnation,³³⁷ she escapes to her native country Italy where she is free to live the life of a poetess - "flinging away" her real name and assuming an identity of her own. Like Cervantes' heroine Marcela, Corinne opposes society's expectations, and, in a way, isolates herself in a new identity as a poetess (as Marcela had isolated herself from society by becoming a shepherdess), and entering into a simpler microcosm of artists, where different rules apply and where she can feel free to explore her talent. Unlike Marcela, however, Corinne falls in love, and thereby finds she needs to rejoin society. De Staël, thus, goes a step further than Cervantes in exploring the heroine's reinstatement into society. As soon as Corinne falls in love she finds herself right back where she started from: facing society's prejudices and restrictions. Without her realising, her refusal to marry him when he asks her to³³⁸ makes her just as conservative as the rest of society and she ends up, alone, bitter and manipulative, until she finally dies of a broken heart.

James goes beyond his two precursors by giving us a heroine who will turn and fight. Gabrielle, like Corinne before her, is faced with society's prejudices in

³³⁶ John Isbell, "Introduction," *Madame de Staël, Corinne, or Italy* (1807). Trans. Sylvia Raphael. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) p. xvii. Hereafter cited as *Corinne*.

³³⁷ "'Men, in whatever seclusion they live, always have the opportunity to fill their leisure with a worthwhile occupation. But women's lives, in the isolated corner of the earth where I was living, were very dull.'" (*Corinne*, p.249). Corinne describes to Oswald how boring her life in England was, and how society did not sympathise: "'You ought to be content. You do not lack anything. What a stupid opinion, based on the externals of life, while the whole centre of happiness and suffering is in the innermost and most hidden sanctuary of ourselves'" (*Corinne*, p.255). Corinne's words bring to mind Gabrielle's impressions of her life prior to falling in love, and her realisation that there was more to life as soon as she was awakened from her emotional and mental lethargy. In Balzac's novel "Lily of the Valley" the idea that women are not masters of their fate is similarly emphasized; but Balzac takes it a step further to show how trapped women are even in their marriages: "A man shapes his own circumstances," says Henriette to Felix. "Mine are forever fixed. No power can ever break the heavy chain to which the woman is held by a gold ring, that symbol of wifely purity" (*LV*, p.59).

³³⁸ She wants to let Oswald free to choose her as his wife and rejects his marriage proposal, evidently expecting him to insist. He, of course, feels rejected, and in the end she loses him altogether, because she forgets to be honest and natural and complicates her relationship through her own prejudices that surface without her realising.

falling in love with a commoner. Like Corinne, she has a strong sense of duty and sacrifice and her conscience prevents her from feeling free to act as she feels would be natural. She is depicted à-la Corinne to believe in fate's cruelty and to imagine that she can remain in a sort of limbo existence where she need not as yet make a choice:

The poor girl, you see, was completely possessed by her passion, and yet she was in a very strait place. For her life she wouldn't recede; and yet how was she to advance? There must have been an odd sort of simplicity in her way of bestowing her love; or perhaps an odd sort of subtlety [...] [T]here was, at this moment, a large element of romance in the composition of her feelings. She seemed to feel no desire to realize her passion. Her hand was bestowed; fate was inexorable. She wished simply to compress a world of bliss into her few remaining hours of freedom ("GB," p.417).

Reading this paragraph one can envision James in the act of Harold Bloom's Tessaera. Applying again his theory on poetry to fiction, we can examine here how James "completes" de Staël, and then goes on to create his "antithesis" of de Staël (Bloom, p.14). Even his choice of language suggests inclination toward de Staël's novel and departure from it: "she was in a very strait place," the narrator says, reminding the reader that the situation Gabrielle finds herself in is similar to Corinne's. James has brought his heroine to the exact place de Staël had brought hers. "For her life she wouldn't recede:" Gabrielle, like Corinne will not deny her feelings nor does she regret them. Gabrielle's wish to prolong the state of "bliss" she was in, keeping her freedom at the same time, reminds us of Corinne's similar anxiety to extend her happy days with Oswald, while keeping him in the dark about her true identity, fearing that by revealing it, all will be at an end. The reference to her momentary "romantic state" emphasises rather the reality of her situation, as she is caught between her blissful times with her lover and her realisation that all can be at an end at any moment. The impression she gives of not wishing to "realise her passion"

again brings to mind Corinne's apparently peculiar rejection of Oswald's proposal of marriage, as she savours the bliss of being in love.³³⁹ Similarly, Gabrielle's implicit belief in the "inexorable" hand of fate again associates her with Corinne. How she will "advance", is James's way of differing from de Staël by "advancing" further from where she had stopped, taking it a step beyond his precursor. Gabrielle will not retreat to a convent or any form of simple society, but will instead marry her lover, and live a life that, if short, is one that – the reader feels – she will never feel guilt or regret about, since in not submitting to the arbitrary will of others she has achieved self-respect.³⁴⁰ Corinne's pride, fear and prejudice by contrast kept her from fighting for what she wanted and made her full of bitterness and regrets.

In his essay on Paton's biography of Stendhal James discusses Stendhal's notion thus:

His [Stendhal's] notion was that passion, the power to surrender one's self sincerely and consistently to the feeling of the hour, was the finest thing in the world [...] It is easy to perceive that his doctrine held itself quite irresponsible to our old moralistic canons, for naïveté of sentiment in any direction, combined with great energy, was considered absolutely its own justification.³⁴¹

Coquelin's character, bares obvious similarities to Stendhal's characters Fabrice and Julien.³⁴² Like Julien, Coquelin was of humble origin. His education, associated with the church, again recalls Julien. In fact, his whole relationship with Church and Army recalls both Julien and Fabrice. Even his wound in the leg that Coquelin got in the fight for the American independence recalls Fabrice's wound at Waterloo. The plot of "Gabrielle de Bergerac" itself has many similarities with The Red and the

³³⁹ Foreshadowing later James here.

³⁴⁰ "For what you've done to me," she will say to her persecutors, the Vicomte and her brother. "I thank you" ("GB," 425).

³⁴¹ Henry James, "Henry Beyle (otherwise De Stendhal). A Critical and Biographical Study. By Andrew Archibald Paton. London: Trubner and Co., 1874" (1874). LC2, p.813.

³⁴² Fabrice del Dongo, the hero of Stendhal's The Charterhouse of Parma (1839). Julien Sorel in Stendhal's The Red and the Black (1830).

Black: the love of a poor man for a woman that belongs to the high society and whose family does not approve of the match. A plot we find recurring also in Stendhal's Chroniques Italiennes (1829-1836)³⁴³. As mentioned before, it is now known that James had been reading Stendhal before 1869. Although he does not mention which works, it could be the case that he had read The Red and the Black, and the Chroniques Italiennes before 1869. James mentions The Red and the Black in his critical essay later in 1874, where he expresses his dislike for it. However, bearing in mind previous cases of James's dislike for works by other people (Trollope's Can You Forgive Her?, Eliot's Felix Holt), it is most probable that James would have been influenced by something he disliked. What he mainly disliked about Stendhal's works was the gross immorality that permeated them. Coquelin is, not surprisingly, the model of virtue as a lover and a tutor. His student describes him as a temperate man, with the ability to feel deeply. His passions (for freedom, for love), make him rise occasionally above his otherwise quiet existence. For "the beauty of humanity, justice, and tolerance" ("GB," p.398) - things he was teaching his student - he fights in a war. For love, he climbs a tower. Under no circumstances though would he behave like a Stendhalian hero, pursuing love by sacrificing his morality. James clearly did not agree with Stendhal's idea of passion for passion's sake. James's "old moralistic canons" do not permit Coquelin's Stendhalian energy and love to become their own justifications. James's hero, like Stendhalian characters, feels this energy associated as it is with his feelings for Gabrielle: "to see her across the table, to hear her voice, her tread, to pass her, to meet her eye, [had been] a deep consoling, healing joy. It revealed to him the force with which she had

³⁴³ One of the chronicles, "The Abbess of Castro," for example, deals with this theme. This is quite a frequent plotline in literature, which Henry James would have come across again in reading Stendhal, Corinne, and Balzac. Others too had been writing on the same theme, as for example Blackmore, who on the same year as "Gabrielle de Bergerac" published Lorna Doone.

grasped his heart, and I think he was half frightened at the energy of his passion (“GB,” p.402). For James, though, the interest seems to lie not in the achievement of the goal itself (winning the loved one) – after all, Coquelin and Gabrielle end up, anticlimactically, dead, soon after their union – but in the struggles (moral, emotional, psychological, physical) that the character experiences in his encounter with life’s big dramas: love, marriage, disease, death, poverty, clash with social norms, etc. It is a struggle that brings the character into a situation where he has to fight against himself, the person he has always been against the person the new circumstances force him to become. Coquelin’s new emotions seem to him as both criminal (“Hope in itself he could never have felt; for it must have seemed to him that his passion was so audacious as almost to be criminal” (“GB,” p.402)) and natural:

‘We are two honest mortals, who have a perfect right to repudiate the blessings of God. If ever a passion deserved its reward, mademoiselle, it’s the absolute love I bear for you. It’s not a spasm, a miracle, or a delusion; it’s the most natural emotion of my nature’ (“GB,” p.414).

This oxymoron demands from him a choice: had he been like Stendhal’s heroes, he would follow his heart for the sake of experiencing his emotions, despite the moral dilemma. James, however, evidently prefers the characters who manage to rise above their strife and follow their convictions – their “moralistic cannons”. Gabrielle will choose reason over emotion.³⁴⁴ Coquelin will respect it and decide to leave. The change of fortune that brings them together, finally, only accentuates James’s intentions to emphasize his characters’ moral drive. Gabrielle will break out:

³⁴⁴ Boudreau has seen this as an influence of Hawthorne: “Hawthorne and James imagined a world in which the individual is free to walk away from her community, but they rejected that possibility in favour of a different conception of identity, ethics, and justice.” Kristin Boudreau, “Is the World then so Narrow? Feminist Cinematic Adaptations of Hawthorne and James.” *The Henry James Review*, 21:1 (Winter 2000), p.50.

‘Things have taken place – and chiefly within the last moment – which change the face of the future. You’ve done the business brother,’ and she fixed her glittering eyes on the Baron: ‘you’ve driven me back on myself. I spared you, but you never spared me. I cared for my name; you loaded it with dishonour. I chose between happiness and duty, - duty as you would have laid it down: I preferred duty. But now that happiness has become one with simple safety from violence and insult, I go back to happiness [...] for what you have done to me I thank you’ (“GB,” p.425).

We observe the emphases given to the turn of events (“things have taken place”). Gabrielle’s struggle with her self (we remember her previously feeling unnatural because of her new feelings) finally ends (“you’ve driven me back to myself”). In sacrificing herself to morality, to duty, she is rewarded with happiness. Nevertheless, her marriage to Coquelin, her *happiness*, is here associated more with “safety from violence and insult” than love. Rather true happiness, the text here infers, arrives from the satisfaction Gabrielle feels for having done her moral “duty, ” and the balance she reaches in her life by doing that. Moreover, this moral duty, was not the duty laid down by her brother (to marry a man of his choice for the good of the family), but the moral duty she felt, that she had to fulfil what her family thought of as her duty. Thus, she reaches a new grasp of what the moral action is.³⁴⁵ Similarly with Coquelin, his final words reinforce Gabrielle’s: “In our relations there was nothing that the world had a right to lay a finger upon” (“GB,” p.426), and “the relations I speak of had ceased to exist” (ibid.).

By the end of the tale, it is not their love that wins the day, but an ideal. As in Balzac’s “A Father’s Curse”, the two lovers die in the end, leaving us with a bitter taste about love and its power over society. Although the two Jamesian lovers exit the world of Bergerac, and finally die, the family continue to receive the Viscount³⁴⁶

³⁴⁵ This awareness is something that recurs in James’s later fiction, for example in Isabel.

³⁴⁶ The Chevalier mentions that the Vicomte is with him even at the time of his mother’s death: “I remember his telling me several years later, at the time of her death, when I was old enough to understand him [...]” (“GB,” p.383).

who remains a friend; just like, in Balzac's tale, we are left with the father's proclamation that *he* will perpetuate the line with his son's rejected fiancée. Unlike Balzac, James's seemingly pessimistic ending accentuates instead a single moment in time, a moment recalled by the nephew, when Gabrielle fell in love with Coquelin and "rebelled" against her family's injustice to her. Gabrielle's moment of glory, a moment captured by and inundated from her portrait, is more important than her love for Coquelin, or her death in the guillotine. So Stendhal's belief in the value of momentary passion is replaced by emphasis on the moment of self-aware, self-sacrificial moral choice.

Apart from drawing from other authors in this story, James also draws from himself. The story seems to connect to at least two previous stories: "De Grey" and "A Light Man." In "De Grey," we remember, there was also a portrait (that of Paul), which strongly affected Margaret, who subsequently fell in love with it and the man it portrayed. In "Gabrielle de Bergerac," similarly, the first narrator who begins the tale is reported by the second narrator, M. de Bergerac, to have fallen in love with the portrait: "You tell me that you fell in love at first sight with my aunt's portrait" ("GB," p.386). James takes the notion further by having the hero, Coquelin, "smitten with the original" (*ibid.*) and from that feeling produce the portrait, which is reported to have been his only really significant work. The idea of passion, of some kind of strong feeling (positive or negative) on the part of the artist being the instigator of new artistic creation of art, was suggested also in "The Story of a Masterpiece" and will resurface as a subject later on in James's tales and novels in his many discussions of the artistic impulse.

Coming back to "De Grey," however, we find more similarities with our work at hand: when M. de Bergerac, the narrator, explains how his education began

to be an issue with his parents, he mentions the possibility of having a priest for a tutor as favoured by his mother:

There was a very pretty abbé among her friends, M. Timblaud by name, whom she wished to install at the château as my intellectual, and her spiritual adviser; but my father, who without being anything of an esprit fort, had an incurable aversion to a priest out of church, very soon routed this pious scheme ("GB," p.375).

This reference to his mother's plans about M. Tiblaud bring to one's mind the situation of Mme De Grey and the priest Herbert, her spiritual advisor and Paul's tutor in "De Grey: A Romance." This similarity of situations may indicate to the examiner of James's tales that James believed he had a reading public which was following his tales from the beginning; and he may be indicating to his public that he has already dealt with this subject and will not explore it here again. We have seen before how his family and friends (William James, Howells, Minny, etc.) wrote to him to comment on the tales. Maybe James believed in a circle, and the circle that extended from that circle (his friends' friends) that faithfully read all his tales. Moreover, from the father's (M. de Bergerac's) negative reaction to the idea of a priest in the house, we may infer that Herbert's position in relation to the household of De Grey in the previous tale was indeed a baleful force against the De Greys.

A further reference to the "De Grey" tale can be found in the narrator's justification of Gabrielle's infatuation with Coquelin:

Coquelin's importance, moreover, was increased rather than diminished by the fact that, as I may say, he was a son of the soil. Marked as he was, in aspect and utterance, with the genuine plebeian stamp, he opened a way for the girl's fancy into a vague, unknown world. He stirred her imagination. I conceive, in a very much the same way as such a man as Gaston de Treuil would have stirred – actually had stirred, of course – the grosser sensibilities of many a little *bourgeoise*" ("GB," 386).

The narrator makes here an inference about the impact of such a difference in social status on the couple's feelings for each other. This difference, he suggests (and what

a romantic notion on his part it is), was what excited Gabrielle's imagination. Such a similar difference in social status existed, we remember, between Paul and Margaret in "De Grey" and there too, Margaret's imagination is reported to have been affected.³⁴⁷ Although Paul and Gabrielle are of the same status (as if James has now reversed the situations), the reference to Gaston's probable effects on "many a little bourgeoisie" suggests again that James may be referring to his previous tale, communicating again to his reading public the fact that he is not going to deal with exactly the same situation (namely a high born man in love with a low born woman).

Moreover, the reference to "*many a little bourgeoisie*" suggests that Gaston is not sincere about his feelings for Gabrielle (my italics). In fact, the descriptions we have of Gaston de Treuil's character rather bring to the reader's mind Max in "A Light Man." His financial dependence on his old relative, recalls Max's (and Theodore's) dependence on Sloane. He admits to Gabrielle that "I have been laying siege to his favour with such constancy that his surrender, like his extinction, is only a question of time" ("GB," 3p.92), reminding us of similar descriptions by Max of his "dominating" Sloane ("LM," p.354). By the same standards, we can judge of Gaston's personal worth. Although the narrator/boy claims he wishes to keep his good memories of him, in the course of the narration the reader infers that Gaston was a parasite feeding on others and capable of succumbing to temptations.³⁴⁸ His exciting personality, his clever conversation and its effect on his audience, all recall the effect Max had on Sloane. Even his physical description and the suggestion about

³⁴⁷ "Paul was like a ray of splendid sunshine in the dull, colourless lives of the two women; he filled the house with light and heat and joy. He moved, to Margaret's fancy, in a circle of almost supernatural glory. His words, as they fell from his lips, seemed diamonds and pearls" ("DG," p.291). Gabrielle's life had been uneventful and somnolent in the days before she fell in love with Coquelin, whose conversation at the dinner table must have made an impression on her. This languorousness is very frequent in the stories – there is a Tennysonian quality in it – and it helps make the Stendhalian idea of passion more powerful.

a dubious past (“he had a tired, jaded exhausted look, which told of his having played high at the game of life, and very possibly, lost” (“GB,” p.381)), recalls Sloane (another hypostasis of Max as suggested before) and Max himself. He is often portrayed as “cold” (“GB,” pp.382, 393), with a “luminous shade” (ibid, p.382) (the oxymoron accentuates the luminous that recalls the epithet “light” again), “pale” (ibid, p.383), “lighter and slighter” (ibid), “a man of taste” (ibid, 388), “light and foolish” (ibid, p.390), of “pale face” (ibid., p.391), “inconstant” (ibid., p.393), “insensate” (ibid., p.424), again reminding the reader of “A Light Man.” Gaston’s vain description of himself and his praising of his social qualities to Gabrielle in their night-walk just before he proposes to her, recall also Luttrell and a similar proposal to Gertrude in “Poor Richard.” Another element that connects him to Luttrell is his theatrical behaviour: “There was that about Gaston de Treuil that reminded you of an actor by daylight.” His behaviour, as described through the memories of the little boy, who back then used to admire him, emerges as insincere and often cruel towards both Coquelin and Gabrielle, but also toward the boy, whose presence was cumbersome.³⁴⁹ Yet the preoccupation with Gaston suggests to us that this type of character was fascinating for James. He is both ironic and sympathetic towards him.

Nevertheless, by far the most interesting character of all in “Gabrielle de Bergerac” is the main narrator, M. de Bergerac Jr., whose reminiscences about his aunt are a mixture of boyish impressions and adult opinions, the distinction of which

³⁴⁸ Even his friend, de M.Bergerac Sr., fears his weakness; his reason for marrying him off to his sister was “the best way to insure the preservation of [his property] and to attach him to his duties and responsibilities”(“GB,” p.383).

³⁴⁹ The Vicomte once exclaims to Gabrielle in the presence of the boy: “Hang the child! Why did you bring him along? *You* are no child. You can understand me” (“GB,” p.391). Apart from his cruel disregard of the child who is present, his subsequent words to Gabrielle prove how amazed he would be had he realised how much the child actually understood and felt. The novel, among other things, has much to say about child-obedience and consciousness too. Everyone’s behaviour toward the child, in fact bring to mind What Maisie Knew (1897) and James’s portrayal of the child’s abuse here may be proof that the issue of the adults’ dismissal of children’s mental abilities was an issue with him as early as 1869.

is a nice exercise for the reader, and an indication of great talent on the part of James. James brings again the centre of consciousness in the narrator. It is through him that we grasp the truth about his aunt and her lover, as well as about his role in the story.

There is a distinctly conscious effort on the part of M. de Bergerac, as a narrator, to disengage himself from his self as a boy. This is an obvious attempt on his part to gain authenticity. He is not always successful: although his "I"s often mingle with such third person instances as "M.Coquelin's pupil, the heir of the house" ("GB," p.374), or "le chevalier," and attract our attention to M.de Bergerac's efforts at distancing himself, all along the narrator proves fascinated to be back in time again as a boy, given the chance to speak of his boyish feelings, opinions and grievances. Of the latter, he seemed to have many:

Poor mother did her best to make me good for nothing. She had her maid to curl my hair with the tongs, and she used, with her own fingers, to stick little black patches on my face. And yet I was a good deal neglected too, and would go for days with little black patches of another sort ("GB," p.375).

Although he clearly resents the fact that he was neglected and left to cry for days without anyone caring, he also indicates that his mother, although much to blame, was also much to be pitied ("poor mother") – though pity is a very doubtful feeling in these stories. Elsewhere he presents her as an unhappy woman imprisoned in an unhappy marriage. Her case is the case of unexplored possibilities:

He [The Vicomte] admired the turn of her mind. I remember his telling me several years later, at the time her death, when I was old enough to understand him, that she was a very brave, keen little woman, and that in her musty solitude of Bergerac she said a great many more good things than the world ever heard of ("GB," p.383).

She represents what life would be like for Gabrielle, had the latter done her duty and married the Vicomte, which makes everyone's resentment of Gabrielle's rebellion doubly ironic. One wanders what "many good things" could have come out of Mme

de Bergerac's "musty" mouth, and whether anyone other than the Vicompte would appreciate them.

The narrator is most bitter towards his father, whom he indirectly blames for his mother's unhappiness, his aunt's predicament and his own. "My poor³⁵⁰ father was an odd figure of a man," he says at the beginning of his narration.

He belonged to a type as completely obsolete as the biggest of those big-boned, pre-historic monsters discovered by M. Cuvier. He was not overburdened with opinions or principles. The only truth that was absolute to his perception was that the house of Bergerac was *de bonne noblesse*: His tastes were not delicate. He was fond of the open air, of long rides, of the smell of the game-stocked woods in the autumn, of playing at bowls, of a drinking-cup, of a dirty pack of cards, and a free-spoken tavern Hebe. I have nothing of him but his name ("GB," p.375).

The comparison of his father to a "monster" must not have been far from his actual perception of him when the narrator was a boy. We read of the narrator's fear of his father when the latter "seemed finally to remember that he had a little son and heir running wild," and called him over to physically inspect him, like "a young colt"! "What did he want? Was he going to send me for sale?" asks the boy ("GB," p.376). Moreover, apart from the behaviour, the narrator resents the lack of "opinions and principles" on his father's side, which turn him into a monstrous character. We recall the narrator's criticism of his father's and the Vicomte's plans for his aunt: "it seems to me that [the plan] made small account of the girl's own happiness" ("GB," p.383). How confused the child must have been, James seems to want to indicate, when he could compare his father of the house "*de bonne noblesse*," with his teacher, Coquelin, a mere "man of the soil," whose sensibilities, bravery, good manners, gentleness, morals and opinions, "his perfect good sense" ("GB," p.417), made the student love and admire him. "He is my hero: *tirez-vous de là*" ("GB," p.378). If

³⁵⁰ Again the "poor" seems dubious.

nobility was what his father's behaviour expressed, then what description would he find for Coquelin's behaviour which he clearly preferred to that of his father? Thinking back on his father, he wishes to make clear that he and the father have nothing in common but the name.

Yet the name does not come alone, the author clearly indicates. The importance ascribed to his nobility by everyone around him, accompanied by the abuse of his innocence as he is made the witness to events and conversations unsuitable for his young eyes and ears, leave their mark in the narrator. He might not be an exact copy of his father, but he certainly has not become one of Coquelin either, whose influence was by necessity of short duration. In the narration of the events, M.de Bergerac fluctuates between his innocent appreciation of such events and adventures as the outing to the ruins, and the opinionated descriptions of other events and conversations between his aunt and Coquelin, towards whom he cannot help but, unconsciously, grow condescending: "the word 'acquaintance' perhaps exaggerates Mlle. de Bergerac's relation to this excellent young man" ("GB," p.385). The issues of social inequality and the importance of Gabrielle's name come up in the conversation the lovers have; and it is interesting to note the reaction of the narrator in the present, who had been the innocent listener as a child in the past:

In her hand she carried an ornamented fan, an antiquated and sadly dilapidated instrument. She suddenly raised it above her head, swung it a moment, and threw it far across the parapet. 'There goes the name of Bergerac!' she said; and sweeping round, made the young man a very low courtesy.

There was in the whole action a certain passionate freedom which set poor Coquelin's heart a-throbbing. 'To have a good name, mademoiselle, ' he said, 'and to be indifferent to it, is the sign of a noble mind.' (In parenthesis, I may say that I think he was quite wrong) ("GB," pp.409-410).

In his description of the fan, James and his heroine signify the name de Bergerac itself, by the epithets "ornamental," "antiquated and sadly dilapidated." The narrator,

however, seems to be excluded from perceiving the underlying meaning of the words he unconsciously utters, for he evidently does not seem to realise that what applies to the fan, applies also to his name. Significantly, in his parenthetical remark he differs from the opinion of his hero, Coquelin: he is resenting the “nobleness” of his aunt’s action, because he cannot bring himself to do the same. In fact, whenever he speaks of his aunt’s feelings for Coquelin he refers to them as the result of her romantic constitution.

Once, for example, Coquelin accuses Gabrielle of not taking his love as seriously as he did: “for you it’s romance; for me it’s reality.” Coquelin’s words are meant to cause Gabrielle to take decisive action. As we have said, she was procrastinating her blissful existence, fearing the results of having to act and do her duty. M. de Bergerac, however, sees her inaction, and Coquelin’s accusation as indicating her reluctance to give up her social status. Indeed his ambiguous feelings towards this match are evident in his effort to justify his aunt’s preference of Coquelin to Gaston:

I think that she felt a vague, un-avowed curiosity to see what sort of figure you might make when you were under no obligations to nobleness. I think, finally that unconsciously and in her interest simply of her unsubstantial dreams [...] she contrasted Piere Coquelin with the Vicount de Treuil. I protest I don’t know how Coquelin bore the contrast. I frankly admit that, in her place, I would have given all my admiration to the Vicomte (“GB,” p.386).

The language M. de Bergerac uses suggests that he is carried away by his prejudice, and the importance he attaches to the nobility. It seems important to him that his audience (the first narrator) does not believe *him* capable of such “unsubstantial dreams.” He “protests” and distances himself from his aunt. The fact that he prefers Gaston, despite the latter’s dubious character, proves how he is his father’s son after all.

M. de Bergerac often infuses his narrative with comments that clearly did not belong to a child. His associating Cervantes' characters, for example, to Gabrielle and her friend is an indication that it is the old man's impressions that we are getting.³⁵¹ In reliving the episodes, M. de Bergerac must be generating new interpretations of what happened, not only to his aunt and tutor, but also to himself. One wonders how he can remember in such detail conversations that he did not understand at the time. It is difficult for the reader to remember that the observer and reporter was a child. His tears, whenever something upsets him, really take the reader by surprise; like most of the characters in the tale we tend to forget the child's existence. Unlike what James did with his much later novel, What Maisie Knew (where the narrator aims at recreating the mental process/evolution of Maisie that the reader has to follow and from that gather what is really happening), here the narrator was the child, and the reader has to differentiate between his experiences and feelings as a child and his later interpretations of them as an adult.³⁵² The reader here can visualise two personalities, that of the child and that of the adult, that merge and divert according to the chevalier's moods, and this merging and separation, each time

³⁵¹ Similarly, Tintner notes that the reference to Doré's illustrations prove that it is both the old man's and James's impressions that we are getting: "The old chevalier telling the story, whose childhood antedated the French revolution, could not have seen the illustrations by Doré first published in France except when he was already an old man. James himself could not have seen them as a child, for in 1862 he was already nineteen years old, so apparently the narrator and James himself were grown-ups interested in fairy tales, or at least in Doré's version of them" (Pop, p.11).

³⁵² Perhaps one reason why James does not choose a boy for his hero in his novel is his use of a boy previously in this tale. In his Preface (1908) to What Maisie Knew he justifies his choice of a girl so: "All this would be to say, I at once recognised, that my light vessel of consciousness, swaying in such a draught, couldn't be with verisimilitude a rude little boy; since, beyond the fact that little boys are never so 'present', the sensibility of the female young is indubitably, for early youth, the greater, and my plan would call, on the part of my protagonist, for 'no end' of sensibility." In Henry James, "Preface," What Maisie Knew (1897), ed. Adrian Poole. (Oxford: World's Classics, 1996) p.6. It seems that his boy-hero in "Gabrielle de Bergerac" proved troublesome to James. He has to think of many ways to keep him "present" at all times: promenades, a trip, an illness, etc. His use of the narrator (the boy, only much older) who explicates his earlier feelings maybe a way to ascribe to the boy the sensibilities he otherwise wouldn't be able to express in any other way than by crying. Another reason why he probably did not want to use a boy in his novel may be that Balzac had already done so twice, in "A Father's Curse" and in The Lily of the Valley, where both heroes are abused as children by their parents. In fact, James's theme of abused children probably originates in Balzac.

they occur, reveal more about the character and his perception of the other characters. The narrator himself apparently does not realise this distinction.

Nevertheless, the chevalier is not the only narrator. As in previous tales, another narrator introduces the second narrator's story. Vaid finds that the prologue in "Gabrielle de Bergerac" is "an altogether avoidable narrative blandishment" (Vaid, p.14). "At its best," she says, discussing James's prologues in general, "the prologue succeeds in arousing the reader's curiosity to an adequate pitch and in drawing him into the promised narrative" (ibid.). However, there is more going on here than she realises: James's use of two narrators in this tale takes us back to his earlier story, "A Landscape Painter." There, the gossipy friend of Locksley serves as the source of some valuable information on Locksley's past; pretending at the same time to be one of us – the readers – and offering to "convert us" to his opinions, the narrator succeeds in alerting us to the text's hidden treasures, supplying some himself with his interesting suggestions. Similarly, the first narrator of "Gabrielle de Bergerac" serves as an introduction to the second narrator, but also alerts us to the portrait itself and its role in the story: "It hangs above my table as I write, and I have only to glance up at the face of my heroine to feel how vain it is to attempt to describe it" ("GB," p.373). Yet, he proceeds to do so – in fact the whole story seems to emanate, as if effortlessly, from the portrait. This narrator was obviously fascinated by Gabrielle as much as her nephew and Coquelin had been. Already, she becomes "my heroine" – recalling M. de Bergerac's words about his "hero." Coquelin. His fascination is also evident in his consciousness of the painter's "appreciation" of Gabrielle: "one may easily see that the painter deeply appreciated the character of the face" ("GB," p.373); as well as in his emotional reception of M.de Bergerac's excitement at the prospect of speaking about Gabrielle: "Somehow,

- I hardly know why, - I felt touched almost to tears" ("GB," p.374). M.de Bergerac, as mentioned before, states that the first narrator is in love with Gabrielle's portrait. This love, it seems, inspired the narrator to write the story, as M.de Bergerac's love for his aunt inspired him to tell it, just as Coquelin's love inspired him to paint the best portrait he ever painted. Hence the portrait, is the unifying force in the story, binding together the two narrators, at the same time as it binds them with the other characters, exciting the interest not only for them, but also for the reader, whose attention to the portrait also invokes his interest in the tale.

The first narrator's presence is evident also in the narration of M. de Bergerac: "But I see you protest; you glance at the picture; you frown. *C'est bon; give me your hand*" ("GB," p.387). Such interruptions in the narrative give the reader the impression that he/she is eavesdropping in a conversation rather than reading the story. We too feel as if we are present, sitting between the two narrators and looking at the picture, that we picture what they fancy, listen to what they say, "protest" and "frown," in other words, participate. Moreover, the use of the two narrators discussing the story of the painting, demands and brings about a discussion of its subject's conclusion. Unlike "A Landscape Painter" whose ending was rather melodramatic in leaving us with the stupefied diarist and his realisation of his predicament, in this tale the two narrators verbally interact in the epilogue that awakens the reader to the reality of the situation.

The ending dialogue makes the tale appear realistic rather than romantic as most of the critics prefer to think. The narrator's questions to M. de Bergerac are brief and to the point - the very questions the reader would want to ask. M. de Bergerac's epigrammatic answers about his aunt's later life and misfortunes (like small pictures of her life), moreover, highlight James's idea that what is of

importance is rather the moment in time when the individual finds him/herself in conflict and how they react to that conflict, rather than the result of their actions. He does not reward or punish his heroine for her morality or her bravery. Rather, he seems to say, her life and death was the natural outcome of her choices in her present time: in marrying a man of “superior temperance,” who was “no *sans-culotte*,” her life could only be happy; but she also ended up dying with him at the scaffold. That was the fate of so many, after all, James seem to imply. Even the Vicomte’s life had the same ending. What remains, is the portrait, and the two narrators who sit and ruminate about it, creating for the reader another picture, a more complete picture of everyone connected with the portrait.

The picture itself is present all the time throughout the text, reminding the reader that the whole story emanates from it.³⁵³ We are told that the portrait was “the sole memento of her life” (“GB,” p.374), but it turns out that it is also the memento of others’ lives: we are told that it represents Coquelin’s creative moment in his life; M. de Bergerac’s early life is also connected to the portrait: “I never look at the picture,” says M. de Bergerac, “without thinking of those summer afternoons in the woods and of Coquelin’s long stories” (“GB,” p.399). The characters are associated with the picture too: Gabrielle’s appearance before Coquelin, the first time he saw her with the crow in her hand, occasions this remark from one narrator to the other: “You’ll admit it’s a picture” (“GB,” p.377). As M. de Bergerac describes his father’s eyebrows he concludes that “they were very much the eyebrows of the portrait” (“GB,” p.376). M. de Bergerac’s reminiscences are described as individual pictures too: “I remember the whole picture, as one remembers isolated scenes of childhood,” he says (“GB,” p.382). Indeed, the various incidents are smaller pictures of the

bigger canvas that is Gabrielle's life: Coquelin's pavilion, for example was "a scene of pleasure" ("GB," p.394), reminding the reader of a similar pavilion in Sand's Valentine. Coquelin's warning to the boy about love and its sufferings creates a picture in his head: "I understood hardly a word he said; but whether it was that I was terrified by his picture of the possible insignificance of a Baron de Bergerac, or that I was vaguely overawed by his deep, solemn tones, I know not ("GB," p.404). The excursion to Fossy is also a picture "imprinted" in the child's memory: "I shall never forget that day at Fossy; it was one of those long raptures of childhood which seem to *imprint* upon the mind an ineffaceable *stain* of light" (my italics) ("GB," p.407). One of the most powerful pictures given in this tale is the description of the two towers at Fossy: "Two great towers were standing, - one of them diminished by half its upper elevation, and the other sadly scathed and shattered, but still exposing its hoary head to the weather, and offering the sullen hospitality of its empty skull to a colony of swallows" ("GB," p.406). The reader can envision in these two towers Coquelin and Gabrielle themselves. Gabrielle "diminishes" herself in the eyes of society by marrying Coquelin, and the latter "sadly scathed and shattered" by war and social troubles will still "expose" himself to society's attack by taking Gabrielle under his wing.

Similarly, the references to various authors (no other tale so far mentions so many) represent little pictures themselves, closely associated with James's tale. References to the fairy tales (Perrault, Madame d'Aulney, and La Fontaine are mentioned in the text as well as Doré's illustrations of "Sleeping Beauty") and their contribution to the boy's learning alert the reader to the narrative, which, sometimes, tends to emulate them: "One of these days you will be a man grown, and I shall have

³⁵³ In her discussion on the influence of Doré's illustrations of the *Sleeping Beauty*, Tintner, however, arrives at the conclusion that Doré's picture (and not Gabrielle's) was the "hub around which the tale

left you long before that,” says Coquelin to the boy, in a manner that recalls the reading of a story:

‘You’ll learn a great many things that you don’t know now. You’ll learn what a strange vast world it is, and what strange creatures men are [...] You’ll be Baron de Bergerac the master of the château and of this little house. You’ll sometimes feel very proud of your title, and you’ll sometimes feel very sad that it’s so little more than a bare title. But neither your pride nor your grief will come to anything besides this, that one day, in the prime of your youth and strength and good looks, you’ll see a woman whom you will love more than all these things, - more than your name, your lands, your youth, and your beauty [...] But the woman you love will be out of your reach. She’ll be a princess, perhaps she’ll be the Queen” (“GB,” p.403).

Coquelin’s similes, aimed at the boy’s imagination, recall fairy-tales such as Perrault’s “Sleeping Beauty.” Tintner makes an interesting case about Perrault’s tale as the precursor for “Gabrielle de Bergerac.”³⁵⁴ She suggests that James purposely mentions the fairy tale because he aims at leading the reader to make the association: “Section 2 brings in the fairy tale itself in the specific version that James wants the reader to recognise as an analogue of his *nouvelle*” (Pop, p.11). Similarly then, we can say that the reference to classic writers like Ovid³⁵⁵, Plutarch,³⁵⁶ and Virgil³⁵⁷ are

resolves” (Pop, p.11).

³⁵⁴ Tintner makes associations between the Sleeping Beauty being awakened by the prince “to life, love and sex” (Pop, p.10), and Gabrielle’s awakening to her own love for Coquelin. She believes that the story was not reprinted because James did not like it and because probably “he could not accept as a parallel for his story a Sleeping Beauty who is awakened, lives in sexual harmony, and engages in a reciprocal relationship with a man” (Pop, pp.11-12). She also mentions that many painters followed in Doré’s footsteps, choosing “Sleeping Beauty” as their subject – a subject, according to Tintner, all too popular between the 1860s and the 1890s – “trying to stop a world that was moving too fast and changing too rapidly, bringing a change in women’s self awareness” (Pop, p.15). And she explains: “The creation of their particular subject matter fulfilled the need to reduce the speed with which the confrontation between men and women and a redistribution of their rights and responsibilities to each other was taking place toward the end of the century” (ibid.) Therefore, she believes that the fairy tale helped James to “accept the waiting period necessary for adulthood to take place, which for him meant waiting to go to Europe on his own” (ibid.) As previously shown, though, the text seems rather to suggest the opposite: that James rather celebrates this moment of confrontation.

³⁵⁵ In Ovid’s poem “Metamorphosis,” in his “Pyramus and Thisbe,” the two lovers who were forbidden by their parents to marry, and who meet secretly only to die tragically in one of their meetings. That this poem was in James’s mind can be evident from his homonymous 1869 play that deals with a man and a woman who fall in love.

³⁵⁶ Plutarch’s reference here may be to his “Moralia,” treatises on various subjects, one of which was “On the Education of Children” (*de liberis educandis*), then attributed to Plutarch, but now proven not to be his, and widely read in the medieval and Renaissance times. Plutarch’s “Moralia,” however, also

there for the reader to associate with their works, proving James's attention to detail. Scarron and Rousseau are also motioned and can create for us interesting associations.³⁵⁸ Cervantes and Balzac's contributions have already been explored. James's own tales, previously published, can be detected in the text. James, thus, appears to us more confident; and not so much corrective in his use of precursors, as associative. In other words, he does not wish to correct what he thought they had done wrong, but rather, by mentioning other works or writers he aims to create small pictures in the minds of the readers. Contrary to Dalbare-Garant's opinion that James enters an "unfamiliar territory," James's vast knowledge of the literary figures of all times proves not only how familiar he was with his subject, but how free he felt to manipulate and engineer all this knowledge into something complex and clever that is "Gabrielle de Bergerac."³⁵⁹

iii) "Travelling Companions" and Compromise

Upon James's return from Europe, "Travelling Companions" (1870) was published. The tale's preoccupation with the sites of Italy and the experiences of two American tourists who breathe Italy's art, have led critics to term it a biographical

include such treatises as "On the Restraint of Anger," "Advice on Married Couples" and "Table Talk," that James may wish to bring to the reader's memory and thus create ironic analogies.

³⁵⁷ The boy obviously studies The Aeneid, where we may find two troubled love stories: Dido and Aeneas' was the first, whereby we have a woman bound by oath to her dead husband, also pursued by the rejected king Iarbas, but in love with Aeneas whom she cannot have. And the second was the love story of Aeneas and Lavinia, the latter already engaged to another man, Turnus, who is upset when Aeneas appears on the scene. In the end, Turnus is killed by Aeneas in a duel, which brings to our minds the final confrontation between Gaston and Coquelin (although James's hero is wounded by the enemy).

³⁵⁸ M.Scarron's Roman Comique (1651-7) again deals with amorous adventures, thus its impropriety as reading material for the boy, who ironically becomes the observer of even inappropriate scenes enacted by his family. P. Adams mentions Rousseau's La Nouvelle Héloïse (1761) as a possible reference: "the account of the love of the idealistic young tutor and the woman of the aristocracy, with all the accompanying theses of democracy, the simple life, and nature, is like something out of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*" (Adams, p.463).

³⁵⁹ From all the early tales Elisabeth Luther Cary found this one to be containing "a hint of the free and gracious manner so soon to be acquired," in The Novels of Henry James: A study. (New York: Haskell House, 1964), p.35. Douglas-Leyburn also finds this tale "most successful" because here

tale, with little significance other than as a piece of travel writing. Kelly claims that James invokes his own experiences in the story, thus “the result is a mixture of travel report and art criticism with the story incidental and not at all necessary to the interest” (Kelly, p.114). While Beach suggests that the tale “might have served for a complete travellers guide to Milan, Venice and Rome. The readers were given full direction as to what they should see and feel” (Beach, p.187)³⁶⁰ Most critics consider the tale a failure,³⁶¹ but tend to recognise it as the first tale with an international theme, for which reason the tale is thought of as the beginning of a new period in James’s work, the period after his trip to Europe. Maves calls it “James’s first exercise on the international theme” (Maves, p.xi), and “James’s first truly international story” (Maves, p.9). Similarly, Wegelin sees it as “his earliest ‘international’ story” and believes that James’s American heroine anticipates Daisy

James “demonstrates his power to deal convincingly with tenderness and passion and to write with more mature control” (Douglas-Layburn, p.6).

³⁶⁰ Like James, “the narrator of *Travelling Companions* is seeing Italy for the first time. He has gone down into it from the north, as James had [...] with a volume of Stendhal in his pocket – James likewise, of course – visits Venice and is enraptured by the pictures” (Kelly p.114). James’s incorporation of his “American woman”, Kelly suggests, helps James express his views about Italian art, and wonders: “had he likewise met one [American woman] and enjoyed the galleries with her, or merely longed to?” (Kelly, p.114) “We are not justified,” she answers herself, “in carrying any biographical hypotheses beyond this point” (Kelly, p.114). Novick thinks otherwise: As James sat down to write the story “he imagined himself back over the course of his trip, and the lessons of the voyage crystallized as he wrote” (Novick, p.226). Novick believes that James’s hero in “*Travelling Companions*” is James himself: “The protagonist of the story followed the itinerary and had the impressions that HJ had had on his recently completed journey, and struck up a friendship with a father and daughter who resembled the Bootts” (Novick, p.485, n.1). He goes on to suggest that Elisabeth Boot was the prototype for James’s heroine, because she had also been to Europe with her father and James had long discussions with her on their travels (Novick, pp.224, 226). Gordon, of course, believes that the story emanates from James’s love for his dead friend Minny Temple. “The experience of Charlotte Evans is remarkably close to Minny’s dream [of visiting Europe]” (Gordon, p.125). Another critic calls the tale “more [of] a travelogue than a work of fiction,” arguing that “if the plot is obviously fictional, detail after detail is pure autobiographical.” Carle Maves, *Sensuous Pessimism: Italy in the Works of Henry James*. (Bloomington/London: Indiana University Press, 1973), p.10. “What is after all most vivid in ‘*Travelling Companions*,’ insists Maves, “is tourism” (Maves, p.16), and concludes that James and his hero “are one” (Maves, p.27). John Carlos Rowe also mentions tourism in relation to “*Travelling Companions*” in *The Theoretical Dimensions of Henry James*, (London: Methuen., 1985), p.199. Other critics have seen the tale as a result of the trip: Emmet-Long, p.20; LeClair, p.435 ; Kaplan, p.127; Buitenhuis, p.46; McElderry, Jr., p.31; Lewis, p.219; Hovanec, pp.44-45.

³⁶¹ Dorothea Krook calls it “an unambitious little tale compared with ‘Poor Richard’ or ‘A Most Extraordinary Case’” (Krook, p.136). McElderry, Jr. finds the tale “the least Jamesian of his fiction”

Miller.³⁶² My essay will tempt to prove that, although the tale begins James's life-long preoccupation with Americans abroad, it truly belongs – thematically and methodically – with the previous tales, and with it ends the first period of James's career.

Most critics have read "Travelling Companions" as a love story with a happy ending: while travelling through Italy, our narrator, Mr Brooke, meets two fellow-American tourists, father and daughter. He falls in love with Miss Evans, compromises her unintentionally in the eyes of society, proposes to her and is refused because she believes him to propose solely out of chivalry. Upon her father's death though, a year after they separated, they marry.³⁶³ All critics suggest that Miss Evans, therefore, was in love with him, and it was merely her pride which prevented her from giving in to Mr Brooke in the first place; after a year, they meet again and the death of her father frees her, somehow, to marry Brooke. Reading and re-reading the tale, I still fail to see how they come to these conclusions. To borrow Dan McCall's phrase, "such verdicts made me wonder if we are reading the same text" (McCall, p.38). As many critics associate the tale with later works of James, we can perhaps attribute their wrong assumptions to their reading James backwards (last

for its "thin plot" of "trivial action" (McElderry, Jr., pp.31-32). See also: Buitenhuis, p.46; Maves, p.10; Habbeger, p.145; Jefferson, p.58; Winner, p.78.

³⁶² Christof Wegelin, The Image of Europe in Henry James. (Dallas: South Methodist University Press, 1958), p.56. He also believes that Mr Evans "points forward to Newman" of The American (1876-7) (Wegelin, p.79). Winner also associates the tale to Newman and The American (Winner, pp.71-72). As does Edel: "Here is a foreshadowing of Christopher Newman and of Adam Verver" (UY, p.310). Kelly discusses the story in a new chapter, where she includes the first three stories after James's return from his European trip, and under the subtitle "By-products of the European Trip" (Kelly, p.112). Although she finds "Travelling Companions" unsuccessful as a tale, she recognises it as the beginning of the "international theme:" "Though not necessary, the story has its importance, however, in the light of James's later works, for here [...] we have the germ of all the stories that have to make up the large body treating the International Situation" (Kelly, p.114). See also Emmet-Long, p.20; Jefferson, p.58; Le Clair, p.435.

³⁶³ See McElderry, Jr. p.31; Osborne, pp.23-24; Kelly, p.114; Wagenknecht, p.207; Encyclopedia, p.667; and Pelham, p.16. Moreover, Beach mentions that the "young American couple were drawn together by the sentiments they shared for Italy" (Beach, p.187).

works first) with the result that they bring into their criticism of the story elements that are found in the later works.

Another reason for the critics misreading the tale as a love story may be the role of the narrator. We have again first person narration, a sort of dramatic monologue, by the protagonist. This time, though, the narration is not framed (no diary or introduction by another narrator here). Brooke recounts to us his experiences in Italy that result in his marrying Charlotte Evans. Since it is his point of view (he is the centre of consciousness), the critics have been beguiled into believing everything he says, without actually examining it. Had they paid closer attention to what Brooke says they would have noticed inconsistencies that should lead on to the conclusion that our centre of consciousness is unreliable. Apart from the inconsistencies in his narration, James's opportune and relevant, direct or indirect use of literary sources points us to the correct reading of the tale, if only we read close enough.

Indeed close reading suggests that Miss Evans was not in love with Mr Brooke. Rather, she made every effort to make him realise that she was not interested in him as a lover, nor did she believe that he was really in love with her. This is evident in the scene between them when he admits to her that he bought a painting because the picture reminded him of her:

'I admire you more than any woman in the world.'
She looked at me for a moment, blushing again. 'You don't know me.'
'I have a suspicion of you. It's enough for admiration.'
'Oh, don't talk about admiration. I'm tired of it all beforehand.'
'Well, then,' said I, 'I'm in love.'
'Not with me, I hope.'
'With you, of course. With whom else?'
'Has it only just now occurred to you?'
'It has just now occurred to me to say it.'
Her blush had deepened a little; but a genuine smile came to its relief. 'Poor Mr. Brooke!' she said.³⁶⁴

³⁶⁴ Henry James, "Travelling Companions" (1870), *Tales*, p.24. Hereafter cited as "TC."

Mr Brooke's romantic notions of his feelings ("I admire you more than any other woman in the world") leave Miss Evans unmoved, and rather annoyed and embarrassed, as her physical description (blushes) implies. She is evidently treating the matter too matter-of-factly by comparison ("you don't know me") and her annoyance may be evinced in her abrupt "not with me, I hope" answer to his love-confession. Her question 'has it only just occurred to you?' sounds ironic in her mouth and the final exclamation of "Poor Mr Brooke!" suggests to the reader that she pities the man. She further explains why she doubts him:

'Love, I fancy, doesn't come in just this way.'

'It comes as it can. This is surely a good way.'

'I know it's a very pretty way, Mr. Brooke; Venice behind us, the Adriatic before us, these old Hebrew tombs! Its very prettiness makes me distrust it.'

'Do you believe only in the love that is born in the darkness and pain? Poor love! it has trouble enough, first and last. Allow it a little ease.'

'Listen,' said Miss Evans, after a pause. 'It's not with me you're in love, but with that painted picture. All this Italian beauty and delight has thrown you into a romantic state of mind. You wish to make it perfect. I happen to be at hand, so you say, "Go to, I'll fall in love." And you fancy me, for the purpose, a dozen fine things that I'm not' ("TC," p.24).

The passage shows how different they are as characters and accentuates Miss Evans' claim that Mr. Brooke does not know her at the same time as it proves how well she has figured *him* out, further justifying her distrust in him. Whereas Miss Evans makes an effort politely to make a point, before she can even begin to explain what her "fancy" of love is, the narrator, feeling rejected responds like a child: "It comes as it can. This is surely a good way." So Miss Evans' talks to him accordingly: "I know it's a very pretty way Mr. Brooke" When she indicates to him his romantic notions, he resents it. But his reply to her indicates that he has an over-sentimental idea of what love is ("Poor love!"); that his only notion of it is romantic: "the love

that is born in the darkness and pain.” The passage reflects his previous meditations on love:

I lay at my companion’s feet and wondered whether I was in love. It seemed to me that I had never been so happy in my life. They say, I know, that to be in love is not pure happiness; that in the mood of the unconfessed, unaccepted lover there is an element of poignant doubts and pain. Should I at once confess myself and taste of the perfection of bliss? It seemed to me that I care very little for the meaning of her reply. I only wanted to talk of love; I wanted in some manner to enjoy in that atmosphere of romance the woman who was so blessedly fair and wise. It seemed to me that all the agitation of fancy, the excited sense of beauty, the fervour and joy and sadness begotten by my Italian wanderings, had suddenly resolved themselves into a potent demand for expression (“TC,” p.23).

Brooke thoughts on his feelings have a Stendhalian ring to them. (This is not surprising, as Brooke is said to be travelling with a book by Stendhal in his pocket – just as the author had at the time of his trip.) “What characterises grand passions: the vastness of the difficulty to be overcome and the black uncertainty of the outcome,” says Stendhal in The Red and the Black.³⁶⁵ Ironically, in the chapter that the quotation comes from, Stendhal’s heroine decides to give in to her “grand passion,” unlike Mr Brooke – or Miss Evans who does not feel any grand passion for him in the first place. Everything Brooke confesses to himself (and to the reader) that he feels, is exactly what she warned him that it was: the feeling of the hour, caused by the beauty of the place. They both know it is not genuine, but whereas Charlotte does not want to give in to the feeling of the hour, he is abandoning himself to it.

Charlotte becomes to him another picture he views in the places he visits, another tourist attraction. The tale opens with his assertion that “the most strictly impressive picture in Italy is incontestably the Last Supper of Leonardo at Milan”

³⁶⁵ Stendhal, The Red and the Black: A Chronicle of the Nineteenth Century (1830). Catherine Slater, trans., (Oxford, NY: World Classics, 1991), p.325. Other critics who mention the influence of Stendhal in this tale are: Maves, who compares Brooke to Fabrice when the former wonders whether he is in love (Maves, p.16); Kenton, p.12; Sicker, p.21.

("TC," p.1). And as he is viewing this "incontestably" "impressive picture" he is also viewing another: that of Miss Evans looking at the picture of Leonardo and her father who was watching the copyist who was working on the picture. Later on he sees a picture that reminds him of her and he buys it: "Yes, incontestably, Miss Evans resembles my little picture," he will say ("TC," p.17). From the start, then, Brooke's relationship to the Evanses is associated with Italian art. He becomes Miss Evans' travel escort, and as he visits with her the tourist attractions, he experiences for them feelings that sound almost sexual. Maves notices it: "At times, significantly, the purely romantic and sensuous responses to Italy heighten into the sensual and even the downright sexual" (Maves, p.11).³⁶⁶ Soon he comes to associate the land with the woman and vice-versa:

If my fancy had been called upon to paint her portrait, my fancy would have sketched her with a background of sunset-flushed palace wall, with a faint reflected light from the green lagoon playing up into her face. And if I had wished to sketch a Venetian scene, I should have painted it from an open window, with a woman leaning against the casement, - as I had often seen her lean from the window in her hotel ("TC," p.21).

Brooke's fancy has taken flight while he is on holiday, and here lies the problem. His imagination that he allows to roam free, leads him to misconceptions.

The reader, though, has no excuse for entertaining them. Every time Brooke so much as hints at romance, Miss Evans thwarts him. He says: "the reality of Venice seems to me to exceed all romance. It's romance enough simply to be here.'" Her answer is a reminder to him of his folly: "Yes; but how brief and transient a

³⁶⁶ Maves quotes the following passage of Brooke's description of the Milan Cathedral that proves his argument: "This prospect offers a great emotion to the Northern traveller. A vague, delicious impulse of conquest stirs in his heart. From his dizzy vantage-point, as he looks down at her, beautiful, historic, exposed, he embraces the whole land in the far-reaching range of his desire" ("TC," p.7). "The implication here," Maves suggests, is not merely of invasion, but of intercourse" (Mason, p.12). He also notices that Brooke feels guilt for them, and blames it on his being a foreigner (Mason, p.13).

romance!” (“TC,” p.18). His way of thinking and expressing himself often repel her, as when he refers to the couple they see kneeling at the church:

‘They are better off than we,’ I said. ‘Be they husband or wife, or lovers, or simply friends, we, I think, are rather vulgar beside them’
‘My dear Mr. Brooke,’ said Miss Evans, ‘go by all means and say your prayers.’ And she walked to the other side of the church (“TC,” p.28).

When he imagines that “we melted in unanimous homage” (“TC,” p.30) she brings him back to reality:

‘Mr. Brooke,’ said my companion. ‘We ought to learn from all this to be real; real even as Giotto is real; to discriminate between the genuine and the fictitious sentiment; between the substantial and the trivial; between the essential and the superfluous; sentiment and sentimentality.’
‘You speak,’ said I, ‘with appalling wisdom and truth. You strike a chill to my heart of hearts.’
She spoke unsmiling, with a slightly contracted brow and an apparent sense of effort. She blushed as I gazed at her (“TC,” p.30).

His melodramatic and sentimental language contrasts with the physical description we have of her. She appears again annoyed and made uncomfortable by his behaviour. They even disagree in the paintings they like and in the way they view them. The disagreement is symptomatic of others – shorthand for the contrasts Charlotte makes above between realism and fancifulness. It is obvious that these two people have nothing in common, nothing on which to base a mutual affection. His self-absorption in his feeling and impressions make him appear egotistical to the reader at the moment Brooke accuses Miss Evans of being “egotistical,” because she talks to him about her home and her life there (“TC,” p.30). Miss Evans, previously reluctant to speak about her hometown, Araminta, now reveals the reasons: “She spoke of having been engaged, and of having lost her betrothed in the Civil War” (“TC,” p.30). From this, we can infer that Miss Evans has known love and sorrow and that her admonitions to Brooke were sincere, and not flirtatious.

After all that, it is difficult to see Miss Evan's rejection of Brooke's marriage proposal as caused by pride, as the critics think. The text is rather specific about what is going on:

'You are an excessively proud woman. I can tell you that.'

'Possibly. But I'm not as proud as you think. I believe in my common sense.'

'I wish for five minutes you had a grain of imagination!'

'If only for the same five minutes you were without it. You have too much, Mr. Brooke. You imagine you love me' ("TC," p.35).

It is Mr Brooke who calls her proud for refusing the "benefits" he has offered her ("TC," p.35). But she stresses that it is all about "common sense," something Brooke is lacking. Again she blames his imagination for his romantic notions. "We have been living, Mr. Brooke, in poetry," she explains. "Marriage is stern prose" ("TC," p.35). Not surprisingly, Brooke feels relief: "I think, on the whole, that my uppermost feeling was a sense of freedom and relief" ("TC," p.36). He admits that she is right: "In my deepest heart I admitted the truth, the partial truth at least, of her assertion of the unreality of my love" (ibid.) He is confident of "regarding things" from now on with "sober insight" (ibid.). He believes that reality will come and that "the way to hasten its approach was, meanwhile, to study, to watch, to observe" (ibid.). But that was what he was supposed to be doing all along when his imagination took over. More time in Italy guaranteed rather a continuation of the "drunkenness" of his mind.

The ending may appear, then, conflicting to Miss Evans' words, but it isn't when we take in all that has happened to her since the last time we saw her, a year before. The Miss Evans we meet now is a broken Miss Evans. Her father has died, and she has nothing to look forward to back home (her fiancé we remember is also dead) and no protector: "I shall feel my loss more when I get home again," she admits ("TC," p.39). "The air seemed so heavy with the exhalation of unburied

death, so bright with sheeted ghosts” our narrator had thought in his walks (“TC,” p.38), and Miss Evans certainly appears like the walking dead: “it suited her mood to linger on” (“TC,” p.39). She looks to Brooke “pale:” “her pale face, her wilful smile, her spiritless gestures, spoke most forcibly of loneliness and weakness” (ibid.). This brings out the romantic in him again, and again he takes it upon himself to be chivalrous:

Over this gentle weakness and dependence I secretly rejoiced; I felt in my heart an immense uprising of pity, - of the pity that goes hand in hand with love. At its bidding I hastily, vaguely sketched a magnificent scheme of devotion and protection” (ibid.).

Here is the proof that he has not changed: his notions are still romantic (“gentle weakness,” “immense uprising of pity,” “magnificent scheme”). Having no previous experience of what love is, he again associates it with pity. Miss Evans, who is in need of someone to support her, gives in to him, not out of any hope that he has changed, but as an answer to her immediate needs. As she watched the painting of Sacred and Profane Love, we sense that she chooses to become the Sacred, the divine. She has chosen to become his picture, the picture of the Madonna he bought, a possession of art. In her acceptance of his love, and their subsequent marriage, though, the reader is left with a sour taste. This is not going to be like the love she had experienced before. This is a compromise, a choice to do her duty by life, by society, by herself; to live even if her life is not what she had planned or dreamed of. It is an acknowledgement of her weakness and her need for support. Emmet-Long seems to have sensed this: “Her safe marriage at the end to Mr. Brooke is a kind of rescue” (Emmet-Long, p.21). In the end, we are left with the sense that the marriage is no more than a form of companionship through the journey of life, hence the title of the story “travelling companions.”

Once again it is difficult to pinpoint one specific precursor. The critics have pointed out several influences: Tintner, for example, initially mentioned Goethe's *Italianische Reise* and Baroness Tautphoeus's novel The Initials (1850) as the works from which James possibly derived his title (Pop, p.158). She also finds the influence of George Sands' La Dernière Aldini which Miss Evans mentions she has read. "Sand's novel is filled with the customs of eighteenth-century Venetian life relevant to James's tale, and undoubtedly he mentioned it for that reason"³⁶⁷ The allusions to other works here seem to be of associative nature.³⁶⁸ Hawthorne's tale, "Rapaccini's Daughter" (1844, 1846), for example, is mentioned by Miss Evans, and the reader remembers that in that story a man's fancies, dreams, and uncontrolled imagination lead him near to death. Giovanni, we remember, did not really love Beatrice, but was fascinated by her beauty and the external influences of Rapaccini's creation. When Beatrice tells him of her innocence, he does not pay attention, until she sacrifices herself by choosing in death a moral ending to an evil life on earth, subject to her father's manipulation. Like Miss Evans who rejects Brooke, Hawthorne's heroine is consciously making a choice to reject the plans of her father, led by a moral logic that the hero lacked. Charlotte, like Gabrielle before her, has a sense of moral duty to herself and others that she refuses to compromise. She only marries Brooke when it is not a moral compromise, but genuine choice. Mr Brooke, like Giovanni, overwhelmed by his fancies, cannot see the truth. Emmet-Long again points out that "James transforms Hawthorne's notions into realism." He sees Charlotte Evans as "a realistically redrawn version of Hilda" in The Marble Faun. (Emmet-Long, p.37).

³⁶⁷ Adeline Tintner, Henry James and the Lust of the Eyes: Thirteen Artists in his Work. (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), p.136.

³⁶⁸ "When books are mentioned, as in "Travelling Companions" [...] no one single classic is focused on." (BW, p.202). Edna Kenton also comments on this: "In 'Travelling Companions' Stendhal, Ruskin, Hawthorne and Murray figure more actively than lazy reading may suggest" (Kenton, p.12).

Like Hilda, Miss Evans appreciates Italy and yet is able to morally resist it (Emmet-Long, pp.20-21).

As far as method is concerned, here again James has infused throughout the text clear indications that the reader must find, fulfilling thus his obligation as a writer by creating interest for the reader. Like Leonardo's decayed picture that is being completed by the spectator, so the story must be completed by the reader: "The mind," says the narrator about the decayed picture of Leonardo's, "finds rare delight in filling each of its vacant spaces, effacing its rank defilement, and repairing as far as possible, its sad disorder" ("TC," p.1). As in the story that preceded it, here too the concept of the picture is important to James. The entire story is infused with small pictures that, put together, make up the whole picture, and after the reader has put everything together, he/she can clearly see what is going on. This is something that the critics of James's earlier tales have for the most part failed to do.

iv) Conclusion: Character and Art

The beginning of 1869 sees a relative decline in James's invocation of the supernatural, the Gothic, and the romantic element that can be found in the tales of the period 1867-1868. Although romantic elements still exist in the tales that follow (especially in story-line and character building), the tales tend not to depend any longer on some supernatural event or some mystery. Rather, they seem to follow a more realistic approach in the uncoiling of events. Realism ceases to be merely the end result, and becomes again the means through which the end result is achieved. As James becomes more confident about his art, and as he anticipates his trip to Europe, his tales – his critics claim – become more autobiographical, culminating after his return from Europe with the realistic tale "Travelling Companions".

What the tales that follow “Osborne’s Revenge” have in common is the use of dramatic monologue. James uses interior monologue to give us the subjective view of the characters who tell us in their own words what is going on. This is not a new method; he had attempted it previously in “A Landscape Painter” and “My Friend Bingham” also. James’s use of a narrator who was himself a protagonist was an idea he borrowed most probably from Browning’s “My Last Duchess,” and “A Light Woman,” poems that have been precursors in two tales (“The Story of a Masterpiece” and “A Light Man”). There is a particular link to Browning, although James would have had other examples among prose writers. Much later in life, James described Browning as “difficult.”³⁶⁹ He admits that the younger he was the more he clung to the novel and thought of Browning’s works with “the sense, almost the pang of the novel they might have constituted” (“R&B,” 792). Hence, “The Story of a Masterpiece” uses Browning’s “My Last Duchess” to create associations between Browning’s speaker and Lennox that the reader must discover; and “A Light Man,” is based on Browning’s poem “A Light Woman” for the same reason. These associations help the reader arrive at the conclusion that there is more to a character than meets the eye, that character is more complicated than what he seems. James, hence, uses Browning’s method to internalise action, which was the thing he aimed at from the beginning of his career. James’s tales represent then the way he was impressed by Browning’s works.

Browning’s storylines do not constitute the sole fascination for James. Rather it is his selective use of language in the way he constructs his poems to hide and then let the reader discover what is really going on. It is how individual words or sentences betray a different meaning from the one the narrator/speaker wishes to

³⁶⁹ Henry James, “The Novel in *The Ring and the Book*. Address delivered before the Academic committee of the Royal Society of Literature in Commemoration of the Centenary of Robert

convey, or how different perspectives of the same thing constitute a greater understanding of what the thing is all about. It is Browning's complicating art³⁷⁰ that fascinated James. "The process of discovering a meaning and discovering what it is like to discover are as important as the meaning itself," says Isobel Armstrong³⁷¹ in her essay on Browning, and this is what suited James well because it presupposed the participation of the reader and, therefore, agrees with James's view on the relationship between reader and writer. Writing about Browning's The Ring and the Book (1868-9) in his 1912 essay, James admires this difficulty in Browning for the work it gives the reader to do: "Browning works the whole thing over – the whole thing as originally given him – and we work him" ("R&B"). In "The Ring and the Book" we have ten dramatic monologues from which the reader must work out where the truth of the crime lies if possible (or discover the impossibility of knowing the whole truth). According to Langbaum, Browning's "aim" in using the dramatic monologue was

to replace the objective view of events of traditional drama and narrative with points of view. Such a method can be justified only on the relativist assumption that truth cannot be apprehended in itself but must be "induced" from particular points of view, and that there can be sufficient difference among the points of view to make each repetition interesting and important as a psychological fact.³⁷²

Browning, May 7, 1912." LC1, p.792. Hereafter cited as "R&B."

³⁷⁰ As opposed to Browning himself. How disappointed he is when he finally meets the man he expressed in a letter to his sister in 1877: "The chattering and self-complaisant Robert B. [...] I am sorry to say, does not make on me a purely agreeable impression. His transparent eagerness to hold the *dé de la conversation* & a sort of a shrill interruptingness which distinguishes him have in them a kind of vulgarity. Besides which, strange to say, his talk doesn't strike me as very good. It is altogether gossip & personality & and is not very beautifully worded. But evidently there are 2 Brownings - an esoteric & an exoteric. The former never peeps out in society, & the latter hasn't a ray of suggestion of *Men & Women*." HJLL, April 1877: p.87. James's ability to recognise the complexity of character is transferred, as we have seen, in his art, where characters are portrayed as encompassing different and usually conflicting traits.

³⁷¹ Isobel Armstrong, "Browning and the 'Grotesque' Style," The Major Victorian Poets: Reconsiderations. Isobel Armstrong, ed., (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p.103.

³⁷² Robert Langbaum, The Poetry of Experience: The Dramatic Monologue in Modern Literary Tradition. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1972), p.109.

James, moreover, takes this method further by giving us one centre of consciousness through which emerge several other points of view, from which the reader is able to decide for himself what is real and what is unreliable. "A Light Man" is the best example where psychological insight into the heroes' characters is achieved through Max's subconscious, internal monologue about himself, his friend Theodore and their rich benefactor Mr Sloane, whose money they both covet. Both Max in "A Light Man" and Brooke in "Travelling Companions" give us an interpretation of events that evidently contradicts with their presentation of them. M. de Bergerac's interpretations of his aunt's story also clash with his boyish reminiscences of her words and actions. Through these contradictions the reader is awakened to the subterranean currents of the story.

Furthermore, James uses suggestiveness to indicate that there is more going on in his tales than his narrator claims. We have seen already, throughout the tales, how a poem, a title, a literary reference, names, Gothic allusions, irony, ambiguous endings, all serve to turn the story around in the eyes of the careful reader. In "A Light Man" the reader is led to make associations not only between Browning's poem and the tale's plot, but also between the title's word/noun "man," referring, one would assume, to one of the three characters, and the adjective "light" that could be referring to either shade (thus a man can be good as opposed to dark which would connote badness), or weight (thus the man would be shallow, of dubious character). The reader must choose who the man referred to as light is and what does the author mean by "light". This search, as we saw, leads the reader to discover that all three characters in the story could be referred to by the title, as they are all "light" - and light here means dubious rather than good - and represent different aspects of the same coin, or rather "man." Similarly, in "Gabrielle de Bergerac" James

painstakingly creates associations between his tale and Cervantes' novel which help the reader understand the moral consciousness of the heroine. Additional literary references interspersed through the pages further contribute as clues to the correct synthesis of meanings. As do descriptions of the surrounding environment (ruins, pavilions, etc). Likewise, the references to Stendhal and Hawthorne in "Travelling Companions" help the reader make the appropriate interpretation of Brooke's character; as do the references to the various paintings that the characters are observing.

Although still dependent on clues and hidden meanings to make the reader do his part of the job, nevertheless, the tales are less cryptic as they become more interested in the representation of art, which in turn aims at portraying character. Art, consequently, becomes a subject that begins to interest James greatly. References to art are made from the beginning of his literary career, but at this period they begin to appear more prevalent. All three tales concern themselves with painting and colour and the importance of darkness and light. Indeed, reading through these last three tales one is under the impression that James was not writing but painting them. Perspective, subject, themes, colours, all blend to create portraits of his characters. In "A Light Man" all three characters are painted, carefully measuring their dimensions and depth, their shades and hues. What is great about this tale is that James has managed to merge all three characters into one portrait which mirrors them all. In the next tale, "Gabrielle de Bergerac" James continues the picture theme by giving us the tale of a character who emerges from her portrait. Portrait and character remain connected throughout the tale and create relationships to the other characters that become part of the creation: the portrait's painter (Coquelin) and its observer (M. Bergerac, the narrator). At the same time the reader feels that he/she becomes an

observer-critic of more than one portrait and more than one scene in the life of the subjects; yet all are beautifully tied together into one piece of art that is the portrait of Gabrielle. Likewise, in "Travelling Companions" the character of Miss Evans is associated with the picture of a Madonna, and the author-painter goes a step further by associating different paintings with different ideas as represented by his characters. Hence, Tintoretto's Crucifixion can be said to express the sacrifice that the heroine makes in giving up her life to a man of superficial feelings, a man she herself does not love. Whereas the painting of the Rape of Europa in the Ducal Palace suggests to the reader a connection between the hero and the subject of the painting: Mr Brooke, too, compromises Miss Evans by missing that last train.

Thus, James's use of art here helps him convey his ideas about his characters and the issues that concern them. We see in Max, Gabrielle, Brooke and Charlotte, for example, a search for identity and meaning in their life. Gabrielle and Charlotte manage to find meaning in leaning toward moral consciousness and in sticking up for what they believe. Max and Brooke on the other hand, surrender to their egotism, and theirs are the portraits of a darker hue, of lighter weight. Ironically, they are the ones who get what they want in the end, but their victory, James seems to indicate, is sour. If Max does marry the rich heiress of Sloane, how long before he is dissatisfied, bored, or poor again? Similarly, how satisfying can his marriage to a woman who sees life from a different perspective from him be for Mr Brooke? How little satisfying for his ego such a marital victory seems. On the other hand, Gabrielle and Charlotte are portrayed as the better of the four. Gabrielle's insistence on doing her duty, her action against pressure, her sacrifice of her name and her family in the end for her beliefs may appear sour and of short-lived satisfaction as she is soon to die. Nevertheless, James seems to immortalise her self-sacrifice for the sake of morality

rather than passion – as Stendhal would have it – and he does that through art (the portrait). Similarly, Charlotte’s compromise, her choice to do her duty by life, by society, her acknowledgement of her weakness and her need for support, which forces her to live and love as a husband a man she was not in love with, seems more heroic than Mr Brooke’s victory over her. Hence, she is praised as a Madonna through art. Adversity and man’s effort to survive in it, sometimes successfully, sometimes not so, seem to be for James more real than the happy endings of Sand or the satisfied love of the morally damned characters of Stendhal. James sees this as a good subject for art. Like Hawthorne who believed that art should “spiritualise reality” (McCall, p.24), James seems to be doing the same thing here: he uses art to spiritualise his characters.

Examining the last three tales it is difficult to point to one specific influence in James. Rather, the period is characterised by frequent references to other authors’ works that, as we have seen, have an associative rather than a corrective role, although some references to other writers still betray his literary opinions. Stendhal, for example, becomes more prominent during this period, and any reference to this author’s novels is an argument on James’s part against Stendhal’s views on love for love’s sake. Therefore, when both Coquelin and Brooke are associated with Stendhal’s heroes, the implication is that their emotions and passions (rather than their rational mind) guide them, and this, ultimately, proves detrimental.

The tales are also characterised by plots and characters that recur in literature, and this is perhaps one reason for the misinterpretation of James’s tales by modern critics. The tale of “Gabrielle de Bergerac” itself evokes, for example, works ranging from the classic Roman writers to Cervantes, Balzac, Stendhal, Sand, de Staël, Rousseau. “A Light Man” recalls many an evil and greedy character in literature:

Vathek, the duke in "A Light Woman" and so forth. Similarly, "Travelling Companions" again bring to mind authors such as Stendhal, Sand and Hawthorne. Therefore, not surprisingly perhaps, critical views as to what influenced James differ accordingly. Although critics do not agree as to a specific literary precursor, they do concur, however, as we have seen, in observing the influence of both Balzac and Hawthorne which saturate the tales with both realism and romance. Yet, James's intentions were always to depict the illusions of life, which are often suffused in man's mind with a romantic atmosphere. Madness, death, murder, disease, errors, evil are all part of life, and man has the tendency to romanticise about them, which in itself is part of reality, as James seems to imply. We tend to say that hardships bring out the real self in man. The way one deals with unpredicted afflictions proves the kind of person one is. James seems to employ this truth, using it as a method of portraying character. Human errors and man's contact with evil fascinate him for the possibilities of analysing character.

Unlike what critics may believe,³⁷³ another characteristic shared by the three tales is that they all relate to James's previous works. "A Light Man" certainly recalls more than one of its predecessors: "Poor Richard," in its similarities between Max and Luttrell, and "A Landscape Painter" in the use of the narrator spring to mind. Likewise, "Gabrielle de Bergerac" invokes such of its predecessors as "De Grey" in a clever association/disassociation from its plot; "A Landscape Painter" in the use of the narrator; and "A Light Man" in its similarities between Max and de Treuil. Finally, "Travelling Companions" recalls "The Story of a Masterpiece" in the heroine's realisation of the man's shortcomings and her going through with the wedding despite them, and the role that painting plays in both tales. James's use of

³⁷³ Brodhead finds that James's early tales "have curiously little to do with one another, let alone with James's later work." (Brodhead, p.123).

his own tales in association with his new ones may again point to a belief, on his part, in the existence of a specific audience that has been reading him from the beginning of his career, such as his friends and family, as well as the regular subscribers to the periodicals that printed him. In any case, the previous tales seem to serve as background shades for James to fall back to and use whenever he needs. They constitute his experience as an artist and, although evident only to the few who have read them, they too serve as clues to the intentions of the writer.

In the previous stories the characters revealed their consciousness to the readers by committing errors. In the last three stories James reveals their consciousness not so much through depicting their moment of error but by leading them on a trip of self-discovery. By the end of "A Light Man," Max has no illusions about what he is and what he wants about his life, and his unethical consciousness is revealed to us through what he says about the others. Similarly, Gabrielle's character is revealed by her journey through moral choice. Likewise, Miss Evan's moral consciousness is rendered through her bravery in recognising her weaknesses and compromising with the adversities of life in order to find some normalcy and stability. James's heroines are moving towards Turgenev's women "who represent strength of will – the power to resist, to wait, to attain."³⁷⁴ It is not surprising that James admired Turgenev so much, since in the latter's works he finds the characters he aimed to create.

³⁷⁴ Henry James, "Frühlingsfluthen. Ein König Lear des Dorfes. Zwei Novellen. Von Ivan Turgéniew. Mitau, 1873" (1874). LC2, p.982. Hereafter cited as "IT."

Towards Turgenev

In 1870 James returns from his trip to Europe, bringing with him a new set of influences. Stendhal, evidently, was both in his pocket and in his mind. As much as he admired him otherwise, for his “simple and instinctive method”³⁷⁵ and his “love of the beautiful *per se*” (Stendhal, p.817), James took issue with Stendhal on his idea of passion which defeats ethics, an issue also reflected in his tales. He might have been comparing Stendhal to Turgenev, whom he must have been reading round about this time.³⁷⁶ According to James Turgenev had “a deep moral note” (“IT,” p.977), and in his novels liked to examine “characters as moral failures” (ibid.). “A pair of lovers accepting adversity,” James notes, “seem to him more eloquent than a pair of lovers grasping at happiness” (ibid., p.981). Unlike Stendhal, Turgenev “belongs to the limited class of very careful writers” (ibid., p.965). He is one of the careful observers: “His line is narrow observation” (ibid.). Reading his fiction James feels he believed what the author wrote.³⁷⁷ Turgenev’s fiction is realistic, for its being “touched with the fantastic without being perverted by it” (ibid., p.971). It achieves therefore, the representation/illusion of life in the same manner as James aimed to represent it.

Reading through James’s criticism of Turgenev one notices James’s clear perception of him. James exceedingly admired Turgenev for his characters,

³⁷⁵ So James writes a few years later in his article “Henry Beyle (otherwise De Stendhal). A Critical and Biographical Study. By Andrew Archibald Paton. London: Trubner & Co., 1874” (1874), LC2, p.813. Hereafter cited as “Stendhal.”

³⁷⁶ As mentioned before, there is a disagreement among the critics as to when James started reading Turgenev. Some believe he read him in his teens, others that he read him in 1873, a year before the appearance of his first article on Turgenev. A phrase by James himself indicates in my opinion that he had been reading Turgenev earlier than 1873: “If he were a romantic optimist we suspect that, as things go, we should long ago have ceased to miss him from our library” (“IT,” p.999). How much time could James mean by “long ago?” It certainly does not seem right that a year signifies as “long ago.” On the other hand, it is my belief that, had he been reading Turgenev since boyhood, he would have indicated it somewhere. Therefore, the period between 1869 and 1871 seems to me a more likely time, since his trip to Europe may have given him the excuse and opportunity to do so.

especially his women. "His figures," he says, "are all portraits" ("IT," p.969). James attributes Turgenev's ability to create portraits to his discernment of "the wonderful complexity of our souls" (ibid., p.973). James had already taken interest in the soul of his characters as we have seen, aiming to bring it forth by using melodrama and the theatre and then the art of painting. Turgenev's characters, moreover, are dramatically portrayed, and this makes them interesting for James, because, rather than describing everything himself, the writer allows "the situations to speak for themselves" ("IT," p.983). That, and his use of "a rich suggestiveness" ("IT," p.983) were understandably appreciated by James, who, as a reader of Turgenev's works now, is left alone to do his part of the work, interested in discovering the complexity of the characters without being bogged down by excessive characterisation.

The critics notice in James's descriptions of Turgenev a sense that James identifies with him. "James was glad to meet in Turgenev a talent similar to his own, or at least to what he himself ambioned to become" (Dalbaere-Garant, p.191).³⁷⁸ Dalbaere-Garant mentions that the two writers "resembled each other in more than one respect" (ibid.). They shared the same literary background (Balzac, Sand), they believed in the importance of the novel as a form and they led similar lives (ibid.). Peterson adds that they both "emphasize the play of perspectives and the 'point of view' [...] the technique of filtering raw experience through a mediating consciousness" (Peterson, p.3). We saw how important point of view was already for James. In his tales he experiments with it, until his use of point of view – unlike Turgenev's – finally rests with "the very consciousness which was to be portrayed" (Lerner, p.38). Lerner mentions that the two authors share "a deep psychological interest" (Lerner, p.41).

³⁷⁷ "When fiction is written in this fashion, we believe what we read" ("IT," 971).

³⁷⁸ See also Lerner, p.32.

There is a sense then that the critics view Turgenev as the next precursor of James, whose works after 1870 he influenced. Although Turgenev did influence James and was the precursor in many of his following works, nevertheless the influence took place after and because James had already anticipated him. What James understood about Turgenev's art were matters that he had already dealt with in his own fiction throughout the sixties. James's dramatic concerns started with his very first tale. "Suggestiveness" was a further means by which he kept the reader working. The "concern with the fantastic" that he saw in Turgenev he was able to recognise because he had dealt with it in the same way too, trying not to be "perverted by it," using it only to depict the evil in life, how man dealt with it and what it revealed about character. James similarly dealt with the psychology of the character, exploring his/her complexity. We have seen how his tales derive from character rather than plot. In "Gabrielle de Bergerac" action is restricted to the description of character. This is what he admired in Turgenev also: "The germ of a story, with him, was never an affair of plot [...]. The first form in which a tale appeared to him was as the figure of an individual or a combination of individuals, whom he wished to see in action, being sure that such people must do something very special and interesting."³⁷⁹ We have the same feeling when we read James's tales. In Turgenev, then, James admired what he recognised as the right perspective. And in deploring Turgenev's pessimism,³⁸⁰ he affirms at the same time his own credo about art being uplifting as expressed in "My Friend Bingham."

Turgenev, then, becomes James's literary companion in the years that follow, whose guidance leads him in the exploration of character. Turgenev's will-less men and wilful women, whose errors and moral choices he explores in his novels will

³⁷⁹ Henry James, "Ivan Turgénieff" (1884). LC2, p.1021.

³⁸⁰ ("IT," pp.987, 996)

become the map for James's exploration of his own characters as James progresses towards depicting the greatest errors of them all, the ones committed by Isabel and Milly.

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