

The Man Without Characteristics:
The Rhetorical Narrator in the Late Novels of Henry James

by

Brenda Austin-Smith

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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BRENDA AUSTIN-SMITH

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Abstract

The assumptions of contemporary narrative theory are that in any narrative it is possible to distinguish between story and discourse, and that the element of discourse is incidental to the transmission of a story to a reader. Much of this theory relies on the theory and practice of Henry James, who supposedly favoured "showing" over "telling" in his novels. What narrative theory overlooks, though, are the ways in which James's narrative practice diverges from the schemes and narrative typologies that have apparently sprung from it. In particular, narrative theory fails to account for the presence and rhetoric of the intrusive narrators of James's last two completed novels: The Wings of the Dove and The Golden Bowl. This dissertation argues that it is through the non-omniscience of these late narrators that James dramatizes the intractability of language to experience, and thus to full comprehension by both the characters within these fictions, and the readers of them.

The first chapter of this thesis reviews the contributions of structuralism and discourse analysis to the development of narratology. The attention paid to the principle of mediation in studies of literary utterances by recent discourse analysts provides the basis for a method by which the narrators of the late James can be made visible, and distinguished from the character-focalizers with which they are often confused. Identifying a narrator's voice in the discourse of a text becomes a way of characterizing that narrator, and of testing conventional notions of narratorial omniscience and central consciousness in James against the actual uncertainties of narrative discourse. Questions of attribution raised by discourse analysis are also relevant, as these late novels rely on indirect, free indirect, floating free indirect, and hypothetical discourse. All of these discourse forms undermine the apparent authority of the late Jamesian narrator, outlining instead the profile of a rhetorical

narrator who convinces the reader through the act of persuasion rather than through knowledge.

The second and third chapters of the thesis apply the methods of discourse analysis to The Wings of the Dove and The Golden Bowl. In the first of these novels, the narrator participates in the unrealized of Milly Theale--the substitution of a romantic icon of divine love for a literal young woman. The novel's elevation of Milly to the status of suffering dove is an effect of the narrator's own morbidly romantic excesses, and his willingness to surrender the ambiguities and imperfections of the living Kate Croy for the perfection of the finally unknowable Milly. That these tendencies are mirrored in Merton Densher has led many readers to see Densher as the novel's hero and exemplar of moral growth. Though the narrator's indulgence of romantic figures can be identified in the discourse of the novel, the degree to which the interpretive community accepts his version of Milly Theale testifies to his rhetorical success.

In The Golden Bowl, the narrator's role is complicated by his inability to locate the story in the perspective of any one character until Book Second. The narrator of this novel struggles against the limitations of his knowledge for some kind of lucidity, some way of representing the relations of the four main characters that can be reconciled with his own desire for narrative coherence. The ambiguity so often found in this book, and in *Maggie Verver*, is related to the disjunction between the narrator's desire to narrate a sacred myth whose heroine is Maggie, and her intractability to this desire. What this narrator finally faces is the refusal of the world to conform to the shape he imagines for it.

James makes these narrators suspend their stories at moments of crisis, denying the reader their final judgements of what these fictions mean. It is the contention of this thesis that James does this to confront the reader with the problem of narration: the impossibility of authoritative judgement in the face of partial knowledge. James's

point is that in the absence of perceptual and linguistic conditions which make perfect knowledge possible, the only available basis for understanding is the most detailed picture imaginable of the situation to be judged. The reader is left to evaluate and elaborate on the compositions of these narrators as approximations of a reality that cannot otherwise be known, for in a world in which perfect representation, knowledge, and judgement are unattainable, "composition alone is positive beauty."

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List of Discourse Abbreviations

DN	Narrator discourse
DC	Character discourse
DD	Direct discourse
ID	Indirect discourse
FID	Free indirect discourse
FFID	Floating free indirect discourse
HD	Hypothetical discourse

INTRODUCTION

Too frequently, criticism on Henry James returns to the subject of narrative technique without suggesting the narrator, and the problem of narration, as a locus for discussion of his texts. James remains the genius of narrative theory, the figure whose theory and practice of narrative fiction is cited as precedent for modern narrative theorists. But no study details the conditions of narrative rendering that govern his own texts. The approaches to narrative favoured by contemporary narratologists, in their allegiance to linguistic and structuralist models, and in their aspirations to scientific purity and universality, overlook the divergences of James's novels from their theoretical systems, and obscure the troubled relationships of his narrators, not only to events and characters, but also to the very stances, possibilities, and languages of narration itself.

As Henry James has become the focus of increasingly theoretical critical work, the absence of a narratological bias in book-length studies of his late novels is surprising. For example, sentence structure, metaphor, and their relationship to epistemology form the argument of Ruth Yeazell's Language and Knowledge in the Late Novels of Henry James, while narration and discourse in The Bostonians is the subject of a chapter of Janet Holmgren McKay's Narration and Discourse in American Realist Fiction. Susanne Kappeler, in Writing and Reading in Henry James, uses narratological studies of the folktale in an analysis of "The Aspern Papers" and The Sacred Fount, but does not explore narratology or the narrator in any of the later novels. Influenced as these books are by contemporary critical approaches to the novel, they still do not extend their examinations of James's work to the narrative assumptions that might underlie those works.

To date, the most ambitiously theoretical study of James is John Carlos Rowe's The Theoretical Dimensions of Henry James. There, Rowe describes his project as the use of Henry James "as a point of reference for exploring the particular claims

for authority made by recent theories of literary criticism based on the psychology of influence, feminism, psychoanalysis, Marxism, phenomenology, and reader-response or Rezeptionstheorie" (Preface xi). The point of reference James forms for Rowe is underwritten by a tradition of "the single author" in which James appears as the Master, and, at the same time, undermined by a Foucauldian sense of the author as "a particular formation of discursive practices" (xii). The tension between these two notions of the author, and of the consequent "authority" of the text as either an extension of personal mastery or as a textual effect, is the source of Rowe's argument against regarding these figures as mutually exclusive. Each conception of the author, and of his textual power, depends upon the invocation, and the degradation, of the other.

Despite this implicitly rhetorical approach to James, signalled most obviously by Rowe's references to Michel Foucault's "What is An Author?," no chapter of Rowe's book explores James from the point of view of rhetorical theory. Neither does Rowe devote a chapter of his work to narrative theory, even though James looms so prominently in the pages of past and present narratologies, and even though current narrative theory examines the complicity of narrative in the construction of fictional authority. What is missing from Rowe's study, and from other theoretically based studies of James's fiction, is a recognition of the ways in which narrative theory and rhetorical theory intersect to provide a theory of narrative rhetoric, a theory which cannot only be used to interpret James's work, but is also, in crucial ways, already embedded in that work.

The way I combine a rhetorical and a narratological approach to James is in a consideration of the narrator as a rhetor in the late James text. Rowe tangentially anticipates this undertaking by focussing on the Master as a powerfully persuasive figure outside the Jamesian text: as the traditional root of all authority. However, he does not consider the narrator as the fictional simulacrum of that authority in the

text, and, as Wayne Booth has suggested, as the most versatile rhetorical technique available to an author (The Rhetoric of Fiction 153). Booth goes on to single out the Jamesian third-person "centres of consciousness" as the "most important unacknowledged narrators in modern fiction" (153), pointing out that the considerable persuasive value of these narrators resides partly in the fact that they are not seen as narrators.

My contention is that the late Jamesian narrator is rhetorical in a duplex sense. As a figure within the text who employs discourse, the narrator uses the resources of language--among them its figurative powers--to compose and deliver a compelling narrative. The narrator thus manipulates the reader through the form of narrative statement, the selection of events to report, and the choice of words and figures with which to report them. It is also my view that the narrator in the late James text is non-omniscient, and can be shown to have a parti pris--a set of preconceived notions--which influences his perception of events. The traditional view of the rhetor as one who persuades an audience through his eloquence is thus a context for this study. The narrator is rhetorical in that his narration communicates a world to the reader--a world which is shaped by his partial and interested, rather than impartial and disinterested, discourse.

The late Jamesian narrator is also rhetorical in a formal sense. As a feature of the literary text often assumed to be merely structural or finally authoritative, an innocent conduit or reliable source of information from author to reader, the non-omniscient narrator is a trope in James's own compositional rhetoric. The persuasive value of such a narrator is considerable, for through the figure of a non-omniscient narrator James dramatizes the vulnerability of any humanly limited perceiver (the reader, for example) to the pressures exerted by other limited perspectives (the narrator's for example) and the supreme difficulty of moral judgement or action in the absence of full knowledge.

The rhetorical narratology I construct in this study focusses on the narrators of two late James novels, The Wings of the Dove and The Golden Bowl, and the way in which these non-omniscient narrators use discourse as a form of rhetoric. As narratology, this study derives much of its theoretical shape from extant theories of narrative and narration, but I am particularly interested in the inability of narratological theory to account for the presence and the tactics of these late Jamesian narrators. It is the tendency of narratologists to postulate from theory to text, rather than from text to theory, that has rendered these Jamesian narrators all but invisible to theorists, and resulted in criticism of James for straying too far from the categories of narrative typologies or discourse that later theorists have applied to his work.

What follows is a summary of three areas of narrative theory which have influenced the study of James's narrative practice: structural narratology, the typology of narrative modes, and discourse analysis. The ordering of these summaries reflects my sense of their progression from the general to the particular. Structural narratology concerns itself with the justification of narrative as a valid field for critical inquiry, and mimics the spare and systematic rigour of the scientific method in order to achieve this goal. Structural narratologists do not usually regard the narrator of a fiction as anything other than a linguistic "function." This approach to narration overlooks the possibility of characterized third-person narrators in James, for example, and the rhetorical role these narrators might play in the transmission of a story.

The study of narrative modes involves traditional discussions of "point of view" as well as contemporary accounts of the narrator and narrative situations. It is here that most accounts of James's narrative practice can be found, though the tendency of some of these theories to blur distinctions between a character's, a narrator's, and an author's point of view limits the utility of many of the typologies of narrative

modes offered as explanations of James's method. When James's own practices are subjected to analysis according to these typologies, it is often James, rather than the theoretical structure, who is found wanting. Non-omniscient third-person narrators, for example, do not have a place in these typologies of fictional narrators, and evidence of such narrators in late Jamesian works is usually regarded as an aberration, or as the sign of an incompletely conceived narrative situation.

Discourse analysis focusses on the texture of character and narrator discourses within the text, and attempts to make more precise the distinctions between those discourses, particularly as those distinctions bear on questions of narratorial interventions and the issue of narrative authority. Discourse analysis concentrates on what Lubomir Dolezel calls "the textual base" of a work, from which the reader constructs the "referential totalities" known as narrators or characters. Dolezel points out that the textual base determines these referential totalities, and that "the shortcomings and inconsistencies of the extant typologies of narrator are due primarily to neglect of the textual base" (6).

It is my view that this neglect explains the failure of narratology to identify rhetorical narration in the late novels of Henry James, and thus to generate from that narration the referential totality of a rhetorical narrator as a character in The Wings of the Dove and The Golden Bowl. Although I use discourse analysis to identify the voice of the narrator in each of these novels, I also indicate where the definitions of discourse types (i.e. direct discourse, indirect discourse, free indirect discourse) found in the work of most analysts prove inadequate in the face of the discourse actually encountered in these late James works.

Although these areas of narrative theory do not fit neatly into each other like a set of perfectly concentric circles, their arrangement here indicates the direction of this study away from the abstract schemes of story and discourse, the perfect distinctions between hetero- and homodiegetic narrators, and the pure categories of

direct and indirect discourse, as these theoretical frameworks obscure what I find most interesting about James's narrators and their methods of narrating.

James's novels repeatedly and consistently repudiate the assertion that any one theory can make known to a reader everything about a text. They do this in much the same way in which they dramatize the failure of any one character to know, fully, any other character, or even to know herself. The means by which these novels accomplish such a paradoxical and puzzling task--persuading both readers and critics to accept frustration instead of fulfillment of our literary expectations--is the rhetoric of narration in James.

CHAPTER ONE: THE LAWS OF NARRATIVE

Structural Narratology

In his article "An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative," Roland Barthes considers the need for "a common model" of narrative in order to facilitate the study of narrative modes and genres (237). Barthes stresses the appropriateness of structuralism as a method for discovering such a model in compelling terms:

For is it not one of structuralism's main preoccupations to control the infinite variety of speech acts by attempting to describe the language or langue from which they can be derived? Faced with an infinite number of narratives and the many standpoints from which they can be considered (historical, psychological, sociological, aesthetic, etc.), the analyst is roughly in the same situation as Saussure, who was faced with desultory fragments of language, seeking to extract, from the apparent anarchy of messages, a classifying principle and a central vantage point for his description. (238)

Structuralist narratology is dictated, then, by the analyst's need to exert some control over the number of narratives that demand study, and to justify the view of narrative as something other than a random assemblage of events resistant to systematic explication. For Barthes, these necessities authorize the adoption of a deductive rather than an inductive method of narrative analysis (after the example set by linguistics), and a movement from "a hypothetical model of description . . . down, towards the species, which at the same time partake in and deviate from the model" (239).

Barthes' enthusiasm for structural narratology had waned with the appearance of S/Z and its opening claim that the attempt to see all narratives as variants of a single structure was "undesirable, for the text thereby loses its difference" by being equalized "under the scrutiny of an in-different science" (3). Yet the appeal to

structuralism as the ultimate narratological method persists in the work of narrative theorists beguiled by the prospect of a theory degree zero.

The narratology defined and promoted by a theorist like Gerald Prince, for example, resembles a grammar of narrative texts. Narratology, writes Prince, "examines what all narratives have in common--narratively speaking--and what enables them to be narratively different" (182). The influence of structural and transformational linguistics is marked in Prince's insistence that narratology should consist of "a finite set of [transformational] rules operating on the interpreted structures and accounting for 'narrative discourse'," including point of view, narratorial interventions, and related textual phenomena (182). This bias towards linguistic and grammatical models of narrative informs the work of other critics such as Tzvetan Todorov and Gerard Genette, and finds one of its sources in Claude Levi-Strauss' Structural Anthropology. In its association with linguistics and structuralism, structural narratology pursues the invariant elements of all narratives, regardless of their medium of presentation. The resulting catalogue of shared elements, what Wlad Godzich calls a "taxonomy of narratives" (Foreword to Chambers xii), follows the example of narrative analysis performed by Vladimir Propp in The Morphology of the Folktale. In that work Propp sought the isolation of basic story elements and their "functions" from the surface narrative. The Russian formalist reduction of stories to essential narrative particles embedded in extraneous, narrated material generated the terms "fabula" and "sjuzhet" to distinguish the story as a series of non-narrated essential events, from the story as it is encountered in the form of narrative. The related terms "histoire" and "discours," or "story" and "discourse," are formally defined by Jonathan Culler as "a sequence of actions or events, conceived as independent of their manifestation," and "the discursive presentation or narration of events" (The Pursuit of Signs 169-170).

As Culler explains in an overview of narratological theory, different and often confusing terms are used by narrative analysts to describe and define the ingredients of a narrative. Thus "recit," or narrative, is for Claude Bremond equivalent to *sjuzhet*, while for Roland Barthes the same term refers to *fabula* (Culler 170). Gerard Genette distinguishes "histoire," the sequence of events, from both the *recit* (the narrative itself) and from "narration," which is the way in which the narrative is articulated (Culler 170). In Genette's narratology, "story" consists of events in temporal and causal order, before they are actually put into words. All changes to this pre-verbal material made by a narrator fall into the category labelled "discourse." For Seymour Chatman, "story" embraces events and their arrangement, leaving "discourse" as the means by which narrative content is communicated (Martin 108).

Chatman's Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film, follows the structuralist and formalist example. The object of Chatman's study is "Narrative form rather than the form of the surface of narratives--verbal nuance, graphic design, balletic movements" (10). Citing the work of Propp and the Russian formalists, Chatman stresses "the necessity of separating narrative structure from any of its mere manifestations, linguistic or otherwise" (16). Adopting the binary structure of narrative from structuralism--the "what" and "how" of story and discourse--Chatman defends his method, while acknowledging the dangers of reductionist theorizing, by quoting Todorov to the effect that poetics, or literary theory, "is . . . distinct, as is any science, from the description of literary works" (17). This appeal to science as a model for literary criticism colours structural narratology, influenced as it is by linguistics, and by the structural anthropology of Levi-Strauss. Scientific methods of observation are also suggested for the study of literary structure. Chatman, like Barthes, considers a "rationalist and deductive approach" appropriate for literary theory, as "the deduction of literary concepts is more testable and hence more persuasive than their induction" (18).

Although Chatman points to Aristotle's Poetics as a precedent for the construction of a "grid of possibilities [for narrative], through the establishment of the minimal narrative constitutive features" (19), the argument that narratives "are indeed structures independent of any medium" (20) becomes the basis for a Platonic theory of narrative texts. Barbara Herrnstein Smith observes that the narratological notion of a "versionless version," a basic story that is autonomous and independent of any of its versions or surface manifestations, and free also of "any teller or occasion of telling and therefore of any human purposes, perceptions, actions, or interactions . . . occupies a highly privileged ontological realm of pure Being within which it unfolds immutably and eternally" (On Narrative 212). Chatman admits in his introductory chapter that theorists "need not expect actual works to be pure examples of our categories" because "no individual work is a perfect specimen of a genre " (18), but this allowance merely underscores the bias of structural narratology toward the pure categories of scientific classification, and predicts the inevitable distortion of existing narratives to make them fit the demands of an abstract system of narrative structure.

In a foreword to Ross Chambers' Story and Situation: Narrative Seduction and the Power of Fiction, Wlad Godzich identifies the structuralist "tendency to bracket away the medium and the mode" of narrative presentation as a delaying tactic (xii), that puts off but cannot avoid the eventual confrontation between two halves of the paradox it generates. On one hand, there is the assumption that events exist prior to and independent of their narrative renderings even though these events can be studied only as they are presented in narrative form. On the other hand, as Godzich notes, "it is the empirically verifiable lot of narratological analysis to constantly come upon events in narratives that, far from being prior givens that the discourse of the narrative is merely relating, are the products of discursive forces or constructs fulfilling discursive elements" (xiii). As soon as the mutual dependence of story and discourse is acknowledged and the 'absent' one brought forth in practical analysis, "it

proves to be a perturbatory element rather than a resolving one, and the totalization one hoped for is irremediably gone" (xiii).

Godzich's observation is that applied structural narratology cannot separate story and discourse with any degree of authority, and that what is defined as story inevitably partakes of discourse. Not just interdependent, the two elements are radically inseparable. Wallace Martin notes the same problem. Although the terms of structural narratology are useful in describing the features of a narrative, the "conceptual clarity gained by distinguishing fabula from syuzhet, and story from discourse, is achieved at a certain price: it implies that what the narrator is really telling is a chronological story--one that the reader tries to reconstruct in the right temporal order--and that the elements of narration are deviations from a simple tale that existed beforehand" (109).

Obscured in the formation of a structural theory of narrative are the problems posed by narrative elements that remain officially eccentric to the model: for example, narrative rhetoric and the problem of ambiguity. Wallace Martin writes in Recent Theories of Narrative that theorists observing "natural" languages could identify the underlying structure of ambiguous sentences because they understood the structure of unambiguous sentences. However, "ambiguity is the norm, not the exception, in tales that attract the attention of literary critics" (103). Ideally, a structural analysis of literature would "be able to show how a single surface structure (sequence of events) could be related to as many deep structures as there are interpretations of the tale," but, as Martin notes, narrative analysts "have tended to overlook surface ambiguities and to assign one structural description to stories that have more than one meaning" (104). The point is well taken, particularly since the works most often subjected to structural analysis, and mustered as confirming examples of structural narratology's universal application, are folk-tales and legends from an oral tradition.

Fidelity to structural narratology's scheme of "story" and "discourse" is impossible to maintain in the face of written narratives characterized by ambiguity, such as the novels of Henry James. James appears with regularity in the pages of narratological theory, but discussion of his work usually surfaces in relation to discourse rather than to story (see Chatman and Rimmon-Kenan in particular), suggesting the difficulty facing the analyst who tries to separate the two elements in James's writing.

Moreover, the persistence with which theorists consider narrative in predominantly grammatical terms, parsing fictions into constitutive units, is reflected in the ordering of chapters in their studies. Chatman's Story and Discourse, Mieke Bal's Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative, and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics all defer discussion of narrators and narrative discourse to chapters in their books which follow sections on events and characters, and further distinguish the abstract class of discourse as "narrative statement" from its articulation by a narrator. Although individually these critics occasionally distance themselves from structuralism and formalism, the rhetoric of their own critical narratives follows that lead in privileging the essence of story over the vehicle of discourse. Structural narratology remains blind to the subtleties of James' novels, with their narrative intricacies and ambiguities, their refusal to present discourse as mere means in the delivery of a story to the reader, and their insistence that the reader confront the figure of the narrator, resisting the critical inclination to assume the rhetorical innocence of discourse.

Narrative Modes and Point of View

Distinguished from the European tradition of narratology, with its crucial division of story and discourse, the American strain of narrative analysis has tended to concentrate on point of view, and the discriminations of the narrator (Culler 170). Yet, as Culler indicates in The Pursuit of Signs, this preoccupation with point of view

depends upon the very same assumption of the more formal Continental approach; namely, that there is a difference between what a narrator presents to the reader in a narrative, and what may be said to have "really" happened. "For the study of point of view to make sense," claims Culler, "there must be various contrasting ways of viewing and telling a given story, and this makes 'story' an invariant core, a constant against which the variables of narrative presentation can be measured" (170). But this notion is itself an "heuristic fiction," for very rarely does the theorist actually encounter fictions in which the same series of events is presented from different perspectives, and so the analyst of point of view must postulate the non-discursive existence of the events of the story, independent of narrative presentation, in much the same way as does the structural narratologist (170-171). The pitfalls of such an approach for the narratologist who studies Jamesian texts remain the same, however one characterizes the theorist. Assuming the priority of story over discourse establishes a hierarchy of narrative elements that the narrative itself may question (Culler 172). Indeed, this subversion of assumptions may be the point of the narrative under scrutiny.

Whether structuralist in attitude or not, the categories of narrator or narrative modes advanced by theorists as disparate in method as Wayne Booth and Mieke Bal rely on the establishment of rational models to account for narrative phenomena. Common to all of these models of narrative situation or point of view is an encounter with a narrative effect or occasion which resists definition by the model. To the degree that point of view theorists acknowledge the limits of their systems, and indulge a view of their own enterprise as the construction of an engaging and persuasive set of metaphors to describe narrative relationships, their rhetoric inclines away from prescription, and is less likely to dismiss what it cannot explain. The contrary impulse often replaces a description of what a writer such as James actually does in a text with the theorist's own requirements of narrative fiction.

In "Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept," Norman Friedman names James's prefaces as the "source and fount of critical theory in this matter" (112), and reviews the organization, by Joseph Warren Beach, of James's scattered comments on point of view, as well as the application of the resulting distinction between direct and indirect presentation to James's fiction by Percy Lubbock. Crucial to Lubbock's understanding of James's method is the opposition of showing to telling, with the author devising his fiction in such a way as to have it seem to tell itself. Only when the author thinks of his story as something to be shown rather than as something he himself tells the reader can the "art of fiction" begin (Friedman 113). This same showing-telling distinction, treated in detail by Beach in The Twentieth-Century Novel: Studies in Technique, and adopted by Friedman as the axis on which he plots modes of narrative transmission, continues to haunt narrative criticism, appearing as a commonplace in discussions of narrative technique, and appealing to James, usually through Lubbock, for its authority. The showing-telling opposition surfaces in Chatman in equation with the Platonic terms mimesis and diegesis, revived by Genette in "Boundaries of Narrative" (146).

The end of omniscience in modern fiction is heralded in Friedman's article by his identification of neutral omniscience, "I" witness, "I" protagonist, selected omniscience, multiple selected omniscience, dramatic, and camera modes as narrative presentations, and the association of modern literature with non-omniscient narrative modes. A similar forecast attends Barthes' pronouncement of the "death of the author" in Image, Music, Text, which liberated the reader from the tyranny of the biographical author. Wayne Booth's The Rhetoric of Fiction introduced the "implied author" as a textual stand-in for the absent, dead, or otherwise inaccessible biographical author, while at the same time distinguishing between this figure and the narrator, whose reliability or unreliability could be measured against the values of this

implied author or "official scribe" (71). The official scribe is, for Booth, the most important tool available to the author for the construction of his text.

The exit of the author from the text brings an immense pressure to bear on the notion of the narrator, acknowledged, even implicitly, by the theorists who attempt definition of the fictional narrator and its relationship to textual authority. Seymour Chatman sets out a "spectrum of possibilities" for narration, which moves "from narrators who are least audible to those who are most so," and uses the term "nonnarrated" to designate this "negative pole of narratorhood" (146-47). Narratorial presence is for Chatman strictly defined by "demonstrable communication" in a text between a teller and an audience (147). Enumeration of the various "parties to the narrative transaction," the issue of point of view, and a version of speech-act theory form Chatman's conception of narration (147). The real author, the implied author, the narrator, the real reader, the implied reader, and the narratee all figure on Chatman's spectrum, but remarkably, he comments that "there may or may not be a narrator" in any given text; only the implied author and implied reader "are immanent to a narrative" (151).

Mieke Bal's reaction to this scheme is decidedly antipathetic. Unlike Chatman, who declares that the term "narrator" should be used to name only someone "actually telling the story to an audience, no matter how minimally evoked his voice or the audience's listening ear" (33-34), Bal uses the term to mean "the linguistic subject, a function and not a person, which expresses itself in the language that constitutes the text" (119). In this, Bal's approach to the narrator resembles that of Kate Hamburger in The Logic of Literature who calls the act of narration a "function" by which narrated persons and events are created, and through which "the narrative poet" manipulates us (136). Ann Banfield's position in Unspeakable Sentences is similar: for her there is in fiction no person who narrates. The opposition between Chatman and these latter theorists is based on particular definitions of the narrator

and the narrative act, both of which preclude recognition of a non-omniscient narrator who can be characterized only through his rhetoric--which involves, among other things, his use of the third-person form of address.

Chatman's tendency to define the narrator in exclusively oral terms is countered by Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, who sees spoken or written discourse as implying the existence of "someone who writes or speaks it" (3). Reviewing Chatman's diagram of narrative relationships, the consensus among critics concerning the implied author (Booth, 1961, 1982; Iser, 1974; Perry, 1979), and the separation of that entity from the "real" author, Rimmon-Kenan identifies two problems in Chatman's scheme. The first involves the "anthropomorphic entity" of the implied author (86). If, as Chatman claims, the implied author "has no voice, no direct means of communicating' (p.148), then it seems a contradiction in terms to cast it in the role of the addresser in a communication situation" (88). The result of such a claim is to insist either that no one is communicating to us in fictions where an oral narrator is not presented (as Hamburger and Banfield do), or to ascribe all identifiable commentary, description and related narrative phenomena to the author, resurrected in order to act as origin and source for the material encountered on the page. Either conclusion is a circumscription of narrative possibilities. Rimmon-Kenan's solution is to regard the implied author as "a set of implicit norms rather than as a speaker or a voice (i.e. a subject)" (88). Secondly, Rimmon-Kenan insists on the presence of a narrator in any and every narrative, "at least in the sense that any utterance or record of an utterance presupposes someone who has uttered it" (88). Rimmon-Kenan goes on to classify diarists and letter writers as narrators, whether conscious of this status or not, since these figures fulfill the requirements for a narrator: "the agent which at the very least narrates or engages in some activity serving the needs of narration" (88). For Bal too, though she adopts the structural division of narrative into story and discourse, the narrator is indispensable to a discussion of text and discourse, being "the most

central concept in the analysis of narrative texts. The identity of the narrator, the degree to which and the manner in which that identity is indicated in the text, and the choices that are implied lend the text its specific character" (120).

While offering different definitions of what exactly a fictional narrator is, virtually all recent theorists direct attention to the crucial distinction between narrative voice and point of view. The difference between who sees and who speaks is overlooked in traditional accounts of point of view in fiction (in Friedman, for example), but without some recognition that the "perspective and the expression need not be lodged in the same person" (Chatman 153, emphasis his), "point of view," particularly for the critic of Henry James, remains an indistinct term. Chatman names three ways in which the term may be understood: as referring to physical placement, to ideology, and to a character's interest (151-52). He elaborates:

Perception, conception, and interest points of view are quite independent of the manner in which they are expressed. When we speak of "expression," we pass from point of view, which is only a perspective or stance, to the province of narrative voice, the medium through which perception, conception, and everything else are communicated. Thus point of view is in the story (when it is the character's), but voice is always outside, in the discourse. (154)

Chatman's perception of the difference between perspective and expression is astute, but his confidence that the two can always be separated--one belonging to story, the other to discourse--seems optimistic, particularly in fictions in which it is possible that the point of view is not that of the character, but of the narrator. Since Chatman does not recognize any but overtly communicative narrators as deserving of the name "narrator," this causes difficulty for the critic following Chatman's scheme who faces narratives in which the lines between narrator and character are deliberately blurred, obscuring as well the boundaries between story and discourse. Perspective and

expression may often be independent, but they may also be ambiguously connected by writers, or by narrators, interested in exploiting the possibilities of confusion.

In Modes of Literary Discourse, Genette articulates this same distinction in terms of "focalization," identifying the focalizer as the perceiver, and the focalized as that which is perceived. Focalization is crucial not only to Genette's theory, but to the narratologies of Rimmon-Kenan and Bal, who derive their conception of this phenomenon from Genette's work. Rimmon-Kenan defines focalization as the "perspective" or "angle of vision" through which a story is presented verbally by a narrator, though that same perspective is not necessarily his. Identification of the two elements involved in focalization (Genette's "voix" and "mode") makes possible precise investigations of the interrelationships between them (71-2).

For Rimmon-Kenan, the implications of focalization are numerous. Specifically, focalization and narration are distinct activities; this distinction enables her to define the Jamesian third-person centre-of-consciousness narrative as one in which the "reflector" is the focalizer, while the user of the third-person is the narrator. She also concludes that in terms of focalization, there is no difference between third-person centre of consciousness and first-person retrospective narration, for in both, "the focalizer is a character within the represented world. The only difference between the two is the identity of the narrator" (73). Bal echoes this point, noting the lack of a "fundamental difference" between first and third-person narratives where focalization level is concerned (111).

Like Chatman and Rimmon-Kenan, Bal sees focalization as an antidote to the ambiguity of terms such as "point of view" and "narrative perspective," and advises that "each pole of that relationship, the subject and object of focalization, must be studied separately" (111). Further complexities of focalization are considered at length by both Rimmon-Kenan and Bal, embracing the position of the focalizer relative to the story (whether internal or external), the degree of persistence in the

focalization (whether it is fixed, variable, or shifting), and the perceptual and psychological facets of focalization.

Although Rimmon-Kenan mentions the "rhetorical considerations" that may motivate an external focalizer to withhold information about the represented world that "in principle" he knows all about, the rhetorical implications of focalization are addressed, albeit briefly, only by Bal. Early in her chapter on focalization she writes that perception itself "depends on so many factors that striving for objectivity is pointless" (100). She proceeds from this to develop an argument that identifies focalization as "the most important, most penetrating, and most subtle means of manipulation" (116). Bal reaches this conclusion through a scrutiny of "character-bound focalization" (CF) in which a character acts as focalizer, and "external focalization" (EF), in which an anonymous agent, situated outside the realm of the fabula or story, acts as a focalizer (105).

This resembles Chatman's description of the perspective-expression relationship, and is open to similar criticism. However, Bal makes an important point overlooked by both Chatman and Rimmon-Kenan. Rimmon-Kenan links the opposition external/internal (focalizer) to "neutral" versus "subjective" focalization, and states that "the ideology of the narrator-focalizer [the external focalizer] is usually taken as authoritative, and all other ideologies in the text are evaluated from this 'higher' position." Bal, though, notes that when the story is focalized entirely by an external agent, the narrative "can then appear objective, because events are not presented from the point of view of the characters. The focalizer's bias is, then, not absent, since there is no such thing as 'objectivity,' but it is unclear" (106, emphasis mine). The reader, maintains Bal, is often manipulated by external focalization into "forming an opinion about the various characters" (106), and into accepting the narrator-focalizer's dominance, and power to transform "other evaluating subjects into objects of evaluation" (Rimmon-Kenan 81). In terms more conventional to narrative theory,

at least since Booth's The Rhetoric of Fiction, what Bal indicates is the indeterminacy of the external focalizer's, or narrator-focalizer's, reliability or authority.

The variegations of focalization are impossible to systematize or enumerate exhaustively, as they are reflections of the possible relationships between the agent and the object of focalization, which are conceivably infinite. However, the importance of focalization is that it distinguishes, in a way not previously attempted by typologies of narrative presentation, the elements of perspective and voice used in particular by authors of so-called third-person center of consciousness narratives, of which James is the most noted. Bal's observation of the way in which external focalizers can appear omniscient without actually being so also opens a theoretical space for the consideration of rhetorical strategy in the creation and deployment of such narrators.

My claim is that the third-person narrators in The Wings of the Dove and The Golden Bowl exhibit the characteristics of the external focalizers that Bal describes above, but that the impression that they are somehow "outside" the realm of the fabula is as much an effect of their rhetoric as is the impression that they are omniscient. These narrators may not be named, or present as bodies in the scenes they describe, but they can be characterized if they are carefully separated from the characters through which they focalize events. What Bal's scheme of focalization does not fully account for is thus the possibility that these apparently external focalizers are actually, or also, internal focalizers, and that their narration constitutes another level of the fabula, or story, at the same time that it is also *sjuzhet*, or discourse.

In addition to the concept of focalization, Genette contributes an analysis of levels of narration to narratology in Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method. Genette's term "diegesis" approximates "story" in the structuralist scheme of narrative. This level of narrative is subordinate to the "extradiegetic" level, which is concerned with

the first level's narration. Narration, as Genette explains, is always at a higher level than the events that are narrated (228). Thus, what separates interpolated or embedded stories from the "first narrative" or main story is "less a distance than a sort of threshold represented by the narrating itself, a difference of level" (228). The stories told by fictional characters constitute a "hypodiegetic" level of narrative--a level below the diegetic level of the primary narrative.

Genette classifies narrators according to the level of narrative they inhabit. A narrator who is in some sense "above" the story he narrates is "extradiegetic," while a narrator who is a character at the level of the story, which is in turn narrated by an extradiegetic narrator, is called "intradiegetic" (255-6). This typology of narrators is affected too by a narrator's degree of participation in the story as well as by its position at different narrative levels. Whether intra- or extradiegetic, narrators can be present in or absent from the stories they narrate. If they are absent from the events they narrate, they are "heterodiegetic" narrators; if they are involved in the events of the story, they are "homodiegetic" (255-6).

Narrators who are both extradiegetic and heterodiegetic exhibit the characteristics associated with narratorial omniscience. Rimmon-Kenan defines fictional omniscience as "familiarity, in principle, with the characters' innermost thoughts and feelings; knowledge of past, present and future; presence in locations where characters are supposed to be unaccompanied . . . and knowledge of what happens in several places at the same time" (95). Homodiegetic narrators, who participate to some extent in the events they narrate, include those narrators who tell of their own past lives, like Pip in Great Expectations. In this case knowledge of how things eventually "work out" does not make Pip an omniscient heterodiegetic narrator (Rimmon-Kenan 96).

As well as mark the boundaries of narrative activity at various levels, Genette identifies their transgression by narrators. Any intrusion by an extradiegetic narrator

into the diegetic universe (or vice versa) produces an effect of strangeness that is either comical or fantastic (234-35). He continues:

All these games, by the intensity of their effects, demonstrate the importance of the boundary they tax their ingenuity to overstep, in defiance of verisimilitude--a boundary that is precisely the narrating (or the performance) itself: a shifting but sacred frontier between two worlds, the world in which one tells, the world of which one tells. (236)

Genette's comment prepares narratology for a confrontation with narrators who trespass these boundaries--not because they reverse or invert them (which is in effect a re-establishment, rather than a trespass, of borders)--but because they evade categories, and remain indefinite when compared to the typical examples of intra-, extra-, homo- and heterodiegetic narrators.

The narrators of the James novels studied here are examples of narrators whose relationship to the diegetic world is difficult to establish. For example, both narrators are to some degree intrusive, which extra- and hetero-diegetic narrators rarely are. Both seem to be influenced by the personalities, words, or actions of the characters they observe, which is in keeping with intra- and homo-diegetic narrators, but neither plays a direct part in the diegesis. The question of narratorial omniscience, the essential characteristic of the extra- and hetero-diegetic narrators, is also raised by the complex focalization techniques at work in these novels, as both narrators occasionally appropriate the language or stance of an omniscient narrator, but neither one can be proven to actually possess omniscience.

F.K. Stanzel's A Theory of Narrative and Susan S. Lanser's The Narrative Act provide examples of recent narrative theory that supply structurally based narratology with a concentration on mediacy in narrative. For Stanzel, mediacy is "The generic characteristic which distinguishes narration from other forms of literary art" (4), and the "rendering of mediacy" is "perhaps the most important starting point for the

shaping of the subject matter by an author of a narrative work." Stanzel's method entails the description of "narrative situations" in the novel: the first-person, the authorial, and the figural. The first-person narrative situation is analogous to that of Genette's homodiegetic narrator, the authorial situation resembles Genette's heterodiegetic narrator, and the figural narrative situation is close to Genette's conception of focalization, but with an important difference.

Stanzel's description of the figural narrative situation, which he sees as predominant in most of Henry James's third-person novels (94), does not maintain the separation between focalizer and focalized central to Genette's scheme. Rather, for Stanzel "the mediating narrator is replaced by a reflector: a character in the novel who thinks, feels and perceives, but does not speak to the reader like a narrator." Thus the "illusion of immediacy is superimposed over mediacy" (5). Although the figural novel is concentrated upon a character who acts as "figural medium and bearer of consciousness" (95), Stanzel acknowledges the deviations from the figural situation in a novel like The Ambassadors, and in short stories like "The Pupil," without surrendering his view of the figural novel. Stanzel interprets the presence of a remark made by the narrator in "The Pupil" as a leftover from the "original first-person composition" of the story (Wayne Booth makes a similar observation about "The Aspern Papers" in The Rhetoric of Fiction 346). Supporting this thesis, Stanzel notes the presence of this phenomenon--the appearance of a narrator in the midst of a supposedly figural work--in "several other third-person narratives by James" (97). Stanzel's explanation of James's technique in The Ambassadors is more strained; Stanzel typifies the novel as one in which an authorial situation is superimposed over a figural situation, but without causing the reader distress:

On the very first page of the novel the narrator steps forward with an unmistakably authorial "I." Overt designation of the narrator, however, is not

maintained. His presence is only perceptible in comments not unlike stage directions which are kept quite impersonal. An occasional epithet . . . now and then a quick interpretation of an event, but without drawing the personal presence of the narrator into conscious view of the reader . . . --none of these will succeed in suspending in the majority of readers the impression of figural presentation. (100)

This glossing over of narrator presence (and commentary) in the figural novel as a harmless aberration indicates Stanzel's refusal to compromise his scheme, and stands out against his recognition that mediacy permeates every narrative situation in fiction. Stanzel lists synopses, outlines, and chapter headings as the only places where mediacy has not yet, or has only partially, found expression (22). Why, then, the insistence on the non-presence of a narrator in The Ambassadors or other figural novels, and the arbitrary dismissal of the "epithets" and "quick interpretations" of this narrator as against the "guiding, directorlike" qualities of other authorial narrative intrusions? (27). The problem with Stanzel's system of classification--straddling as it does the distance between diagrammatical, structuralist approaches to narrative and discourse-oriented analysis--is that while it recognizes the rhetorical potential of the authorial narrator, the need to preserve the purity of its categories outlaws any extension of rhetorical power to the narrator aberrantly present in figural novels. Stanzel achieves this preservation either by effacing that narrator, or by downplaying the significance of the narrator's intrusions. Once again, such a strategy limits the adequacy of this approach to the curiously intrusive narrators of the late James.

Susan Lanser's The Narrative Act introduces rhetoric and ideology into narrative analysis in more direct ways. Lanser defines point of view as a "relationship" rather than a concrete entity," and considers narrative "a complex network of interactions between author, narrator(s), characters, and audiences both real and implied" (13). Lanser's use of speech-act theory and the resulting accent on narrative discourse as

an act (75) differentiates her conception of analysis from Stanzel's--based as his is on perspective, mode, and person. Much like Lanser though, Stanzel conceives of narrative situations as the product of relations: between the narrator and the reflector, between the narrator and other characters, and between the narrator and the story's centre of action (A Theory of Narrative 48-49). The notion of relationship as central to narrative analysis appears as far back as Propp's claim that the search of analysts should be for the primary "functions" of narrative--"relations between elements, rather than the elements themselves" (quoted by Wallace Martin, Recent Theories of Narrative 92). In Stanzel and Lanser's work though, the concept of "relation" has migrated from deep to surface structure, and is recognizable at the level of discourse.

Point of view for Lanser, as for Chatman, embraces an ideological or attitudinal stance as well as physical placement or angle of perception; however, Lanser awards this attitudinal stance to authors rather than just to narrators or characters. There is always a connection between a method of narration and the "basic attitude" of the author, writes Lanser, for "technique is never wholly independent of ideology" (18). On this view, point of view has considerable rhetorical power, as it "shapes, even controls, textual meaning and reader response" (18). Speech-act theory underlies Lanser's demonstration of the relationship between narrative method and the author's "basic attitude," for in its use of terms such as "perlocutionary acts" to designate speech-acts designed to persuade, this theory unites poetics, which "considers the forms of utterance," with rhetoric, which "is concerned with strategic implications of the utterance" (74).

Lanser scrutinizes the speech acts of narrators--the entities who narrate or arrange or deliver fictional texts (52). Examining the speech acts of narrators "in the context of their performance" as well as examining the "verbal forms and perspectives which these speech acts manifest," enables us to create "a profile of that speaker's

voice in relationship to the discourse act, its propositional content, and its audience" (80). The object of this enterprise is the eventual recovery of the author's ideology, an ideology Lanser seems to believe is always distinguishable from that of the narrator. Curiously, Lanser's project finally reads like a recuperation of authorial intention at the expense of textual ambiguity and subtlety. She seems uneasy at the prospect of un-authorized fictions, commenting early on in her book that the consequence of the "death of the author" is "[t]he assumption that no authoritative textual ideology can be recovered from the literary work" (48). Lanser feels that this attribution of fictional opinions to personae rather than to authors "deprives them [the opinions] of 'real-world' force or validity." She urges instead that "the text as a whole be considered an aesthetic expression of the circumstances in which it was produced, and that not only the 'content' of the work but its formal structures be understood to reflect an authorial view" (49).

The comment reveals Lanser's belief that this "authorial view" is almost always identical to or in complete agreement with the totality of those structures and that content. Her conception of the rhetoric of narration is extremely narrow and, in the most pejorative sense of the word, authoritarian. The dynamism of the model of narrative suggested by her title, and her intelligent discussion of the social context of literary production is apparent only. The continuum of relationship Lanser is willing to recognize between authors and the ideology of their texts is very limited. She allows that not all narrative structures are "homologous" to the rhetorical structures which produce the discourse--some, indeed are contradictory. But all textual structures, for her, "manifest a reaction--whether of similarity or contrast--to their geneses" (103). Lanser's claim that the ideology inscribed within the text is fully recoverable and intelligible as a reflection of the author's own attitudes leads to her re-statement of the conventions "linking the author's social identity with that of the heterodiegetic (third-person) narrative voice," and the conventions of "authorial

equivalence" by which this narrator "may also be assumed to share the personality and values--the imaginative and ideological consciousness--of the authorial voice" (250).

This elision of the heterodiegetic narrator with the author, or the authorial voice within the work, is echoed by Suzanne Ferguson in "The Face in the Mirror: Authorial Presence in the Multiple Vision of Third-Person Impressionist Narrative." Ferguson defines the essential strategy of impressionistic fiction as the "banishing of the author," with the result that all fictional experience seems to emanate from the consciousness of the characters (this is akin to Stanzel's view of the figural narrative situation). The purpose of this strategy for an author like Henry James is to efface or submerge the authorial presence in the surface of the work (230). Central to Ferguson's description of the "multiple vision" discernible in impressionistic fiction is the "indirect reporting of speech and thought in the free indirect style" (234), a phenomenon examined carefully by discourse theorists. Again like Lanser, who mentions the "dual perspective" of free indirect discourse as the narrator's text, and thus a reflection of an authorial perspective, Ferguson too sees free indirect speech as a sign of authorial presence (234). Ferguson's view of this "multiple vision" is that it is a way of importing the author's "direct communications with the reader" (233) into the novel by attributing them to a third-person narrator; and at the same time satisfying the requirements of impressionistic fiction that the reader apparently confront fictional experience with no absolute values to guide him. According to Ferguson, the rhetoric employed by impressionistic authors such as James is thus one of deceit. Ferguson refuses to distinguish "in any but the most abstractly theoretical way, the 'authors' of third-person impressionist fictions from their narrators" (232), and claims that if these "reliable" narrators were really distinct from their authors, the reader would encounter styles of narration very different in "syntax, lexis, and

morphology" from the styles of those authors' letters and works of non-fiction (233).

What critics of point of view like Stanzel, Lanser, and Ferguson implicitly deny to the writer of figural or impressionistic fiction is the construction of a more or less fully characterized third-person narrator, distinct from the dead or otherwise absent author, but similarly possessed of a high degree of intelligence, sensitivity, and articulation: plainly put, James's notion of a fine mind subjected to the bewilderment of experience. Lanser and Ferguson's refusal even to consider that an author such as James would construct a narrator similar to himself in many respects, but standing in some complexly ironic relationship to himself as the historical author, adds up to a demand that authors who wish to have their narrators distinguished from themselves by readers must always create first-person narrators, or narrators less intelligent, perceptive, or articulate than they are.

The problem with the theories of point of view briefly reviewed above is that they fail to account for textual phenomena their proponents encounter in reading--usually in the form of a voice other than a character's or a first-person narrator's, that is named "authorial," or the voice of the implied author, because there is no other way for the critic to explain its presence. Specifically, the voice of the heterodiegetic narrator, though not theoretically a part of Chatman's "histoire," Stanzel's "figural novel," Lanser's "method of narration," and Ferguson's "impressionistic fiction," continues to appear in these critics' descriptions of novels and short stories by Henry James. Short of altering their categories, and the interpretive systems based upon them, they can only fault James (as Ferguson does, 235) for failing to adhere to the purely figural, scenic, or oblique method of narration he supposedly championed.

One source of the difficulty is the inadequacy of the descriptions of James's narrative technique. One of the most over-simplified can be found in Wallace Martin's Recent Theories of Narrative:

An authorial narrator (one who plays no part in the action) tells the story but does not indulge in commentary or use of the pronoun "I"; the reader is never reminded that a writer has created what is in fact a fictitious tale. Further, the narrator presumes access to the mind of only one character, thus reproducing an aspect of authenticity found in the first-person novel, in which, as in life, we do not know what goes on in other minds. This "limited point of view" often involves a visual as well as a psychological constraint: the narrator represents only what the character sees, as if looking through the character's eyes or, as "invisible witness," standing next to him. (133)

This description of James's method seems unaffected by recent developments in narrative theory, and the increased attention directed to precisely the narrative situation found in James's work. All the confusion surrounding the relative status of the Jamesian narrator and the Jamesian character of central consciousness is represented here.

Of particular interest here is the way in which Martin's description of the Jamesian narrator capitulates so completely to what I call the rhetoric of narration in James. It is, for example, simply not true that James's narrators do not "indulge" in the use of the pronoun "I," a point noted by critics like Stanzel, and discoverable by careful readers of the late novels. Neither do James's narrators have access to the mind of characters--these narrators do not possess omniscience, "selected," "limited," or otherwise qualified. It is also misleading to state that these narrators represent "only what the character [of central consciousness] sees"; the reader has only to recall the private scenes between Bob and Fanny Assingham in The Golden Bowl to refute such a claim. Yet there is something in Martin's description of the effect of this narrative technique, its reproduction of "an aspect of authenticity found in the first-person novel," that is suggestive of the problem this method poses for critics who try

to explain it without referring to the texture of the narratives in which the problem appears.

Discourse Analysis

Critical interest in Genette's separation of voice and perspective in a narrative text becomes, in narratology, very closely connected to discourse analysis, which attempts to award responsibility for textual utterances to narrators and characters, and thus separate voix from mode. The relation between the two is made clear when Mieke Bal, for example, concentrates on the linguistic features of external and internal focalization. She notes that the often-made claim that Strether, in James's The Ambassadors, is "telling his own story,' whereas the novel is written 'in the third person,'" is as absurd as the claim that the sentence "Elizabeth saw him lie there, pale and lost in thought" is narrated, "from the comma onwards, by the character Elizabeth," when it is rather a presentation of what Elizabeth saw (101). Identifying the focalization of a narrative is, therefore, dependent upon a scrutiny of the discourse features of that text.

This is Janet Holmgren McKay's premise in Narration and Discourse in American Realist Fiction, in which she notes that accounting for narrative modes in fiction "has become a preoccupation of current critical theory" (3), and argues that determining responsibility for fictional utterances is the only reliable way to determine what fictional perspective (of the narrator or of a character) dominates that portion of a text (11-12). In her introductory chapter McKay reviews the contributions to discourse theory of Lubomir Dolezel, Dorrit Cohn, Roy Pascal, Brian McHale, and others, settling finally on Dolezel's work as a model for her own discourse analysis of American realist fiction.

The attraction of discourse analysis for critics like Dolezel and McKay is that it counters the vagueness of traditional categories of point of view by assuming a

separation of perspective and expression which those categories often conflate. In recognizing this difference, discourse analysis also achieves a liberation from what Dolezel calls the "anthropomorphic concepts and personifying terms (such as 'omniscient' narrator, narrator with 'limited omniscience')" (Dolezel 5) that characterize the discussions of perspective and point of view. McKay specifically praises Dolezel's scheme of analysis for its reliance on "discourse types that are determined by the presence or absence of certain linguistic features," reducing his dependence on "anthropomorphic" metaphors (7).

Briefly, discourse analysts identify forms of discourse in speech as "direct" or "indirect": direct discourse refers to the words of persons as they are spoken by those persons, whereas indirect discourse involves a report by a mediating presence of another's words. While in speech only these two forms of discourse are known, in literature a third type, known variously as "free indirect discourse," "free indirect style," "represented discourse" (Dolezel), "narrated monologue" (Cohn), and "represented speech and thought" (Banfield) in English, style indirect libre in French, and erlebte Rede in German, combines features of both direct and indirect discourse. Whatever it is called, the discourse so designated is free of the "tags" given to indirect discourse which label the speaker--i.e. "said John"--but is presented in the tense of third-person narration, unlike direct discourse. The following examples appear in Chatman (201), and are quoted by McKay (15):

Direct discourse: "I have to go."

Indirect discourse: "She said she had to go."

Free indirect discourse: "She had to go."

McKay refers to work on FID by George Dillon and Frederick Kirchoff which defines it as material that "is to be understood as a representation of a character's expressions or thoughts as he would express them . . . Thus, although the pronouns referring to the character are third-person, not first, and the tense (usually)

"backshifted" from the tense the character would use, in other respects the material is given as he would assign it rather than as the narrator would" (17).

Mieke Bal's description of levels of focalization admits a degree of complexity comparable to the schemes for discourse analysis advanced by Dolezel and Cohn. It is possible, shows Bal, for an external focalizer to "watch along with a person, without leaving focalization entirely to a CF [character focalizer--a participant in the story]" (113). This type of focalization Bal compares to free indirect speech, "in which the narrating party approximates as closely as possible the character's own words without letting it speak directly," and calls "free indirect' focalization" or "ambiguous focalization" (113). Her conclusion is that there are sentences in fictions in which the external focalizer seems to be looking over the shoulder of the character focalizer (as in Stanzel's figural situation) in a form of "double" or ambiguous focalization in which the reader cannot establish with certainty just whose perceptions are being recorded (114).

The ambiguity Bal locates in this form of focalization appears as well in the discourse typologies of Dolezel, Cohn, and Pascal. For Dolezel, modern fiction in particular embodies a change in the relationship between character discourse and narrator discourse, a process of neutralization that abolishes "the opposition of the two planes" (18). The result is the growth, in modern fiction, of "frequent ambiguous segments" of discourse. The most important literary manifestation of this ambiguity for Dolezel is represented discourse or RD (8). According to Dolezel, RD is a universal, international phenomenon, and he recounts arguments among German and French scholars over its composition: whether it is a "mixed" transitional device (character utterance experienced by the narrator), or a reproduction of another's speech (19-20). Dolezel's own preference is to regard RD as a transitional narrative device characterised by its third-person grammatical formulation. Despite the intricacy and precision of Dolezel's typology of narrative modes, he admits that there

are no well-defined boundaries in the dynamic relationship between these modes in any work, and that there are "portions of text where we cannot decide whether it is DC [character discourse] penetrated by signals of DN [narrator discourse], or DN tinged with signals of DC. These are simply mixed contexts where, as it were, both the narrator and a character 'speak' at the same time" (53).

This notion of a dual-voiced discourse informs most of the work on free indirect discourse (FID) and its function in the literary text. That FID is a specifically literary device was the claim of Charles Bally, the theorist credited in Roy Pascal's The Dual Voice with having popularized the study of FID. Bally's research led him to the conclusion that what he called "style indirect libre" did not occur in common linguistic usage, and was "purely a product of writing" (Pascal 13). This claim remains a controversial one, with contemporary linguistic and structuralist theorists insisting that FID is derived from direct discourse, and so does not function ambiguously, as some discourse analysts argue.

McKay discusses in detail the issue of FID's status as a form derived from direct discourse in the introductory chapter of Narration and Discourse in American Realist Fiction. Her conclusion is that although in speech there are many "extralinguistic contextual features" that influence conclusions about who is responsible for the features of indirectly reported discourse, such as "the relationship between the reporting and the reported speaker, the general reliability of the reporting speaker, the reporting and reported speaker's attitudes toward the situation being described," these contexts are not usually available to the consumer of literary texts (14). For McKay, indirect discourse presents the "most extreme case of nonrecoverability," because in literature "there is usually no direct antecedent for the fictitious indirect report" (14). In support of this view, McKay quotes Brian McHale's article "Free Indirect Discourse: A Survey of Recent Accounts": ". . . in fiction . . . there is no direct "original" prior to or behind an instance of ID [indirect discourse] or FID [free

indirect discourse]; the supposedly "derived" utterances are not versions of anything, but are themselves the "originals" in that they give as much as the reader will ever learn of "what was really said"" (qtd. in McKay 14).

Despite opposing arguments, the majority of narratologists using discourse analysis persist in assuming "that indirect reports closely resemble their hypothetical direct antecedents" (McKay 14). An example is provided by Donald Ross, who, in "Who's Talking? How Characters Become Narrators in Fiction," argues that third-person narration of the kind found in the novels and short stories of authors like Henry James can be "attributed" to characters in the story. The function of represented discourse, for Ross, is "to transmit or betray information about the narrator's attitude toward what he represents," and he claims that RD accomplishes this with none of the ambiguity identified by Dolezel as integral to it.

McKay quotes Ross's contention that indirect quotation "implies that the character's actual words could be found if quotation marks were put in and some changes made in pronouns and verb tenses" (Ross 1223). The same assumptions about the recoverability of direct forms of discourse from indirect forms affects Chatman's paradigm for reporting speech and thought in fiction (Chatman 201). Ross sees the verbal and mental activities of characters as being presented in "formally similar ways," and proceeds from this to conclude that "Most third-person narratives . . . may be attributed to a single character who appears in the story, and most give a view into the mind of the character to whom they are attributed." Ross illustrates his point by re-presenting third-person passages from James as if they were uttered by a character already present in the story. The changes required to transform such passages are, for Ross, "trivial," and the method ensures that such stories are read "accurately," without the irritating ambiguities, hesitations, and uncertainties of James's difficult style.

Quite apart from the questionable linguistic foundation upon which Ross argues for the simple attribution of third-person narration to a character, his own attitude towards the complexities of narrative technique is astonishingly intolerant of or blind to the rhetorical uses of third-person narration--as well as to the uses of uncertainty and ambiguity in narrative. McKay compares Ross's notion of attributed narration to Ann Banfield's argument for "narratorless" narratives, and finds in both "an oversimplification of the narrative function and an insufficient awareness of the distinction between mode and voix" (10). She continues:

To say, as Banfield does, that a narrator exists only when information is present in a story that no character can know is to require every narrator to fulfill the traditional omniscient storytelling role. In turn, attributing narration to the author or character imposes unnecessary limitations on the narrative voice Had James wanted Strether "to talk" throughout the novel, he could have written it in the first person without the narrative device of distancing that his limited third-person approach permits. (10)

What McKay stresses is the rhetorical effect of narration and discourse, an effect which cannot be perceived until the text's mode of narration, or perspective, is distinguished from discourse, or voice. The point can be extended into an indictment of those theorists, like Ross, who prefer to dispense with the features of a text which render it resistant to their interpretive schemes, rather than to fully engage the text in all of its rhetorical complexity.

Most of the controversy surrounding indirect discourse, and particularly free indirect discourse (FID), has been over the source of its authority--who is responsible for it. Responsibility for direct discourse in fiction, as in every day speech, is fairly easy to award. Characters' spoken words are presented within quotation marks, and are conventionally accepted as having been reported verbatim by a recording narrator. Problems arise, though, when one attempts to assign responsibility for FID.

Does it express the opinions of the narrator or the character? Is it in fact a "mixed" discourse, a "dual voice," as Pascal calls it? Can it be awarded with certainty to any fictional speaker?

The question gains more interest when the thoughts of fictional figures, as well as their speech, are considered. This is the subject of Dorrit Cohn's Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction. Cohn sees the representation of fictional consciousness as the "touchstone" that sets fiction apart from reality and builds a semblance to another, non-reality, and Cohn's study sets out a rhetoric of narrative methods that accomplish this. Cohn is critical of linguistic studies of the techniques for presenting consciousness because, while they provide precise terminology, they oversimplify "the literary problems by carrying too far the correspondence between spoken discourse and silent thought" (11). While speech is always verbal, some part of consciousness is not; one of the flaws of the exclusively linguistic approach is that "it tends to leave out of account the entire non-verbal realm of consciousness, as well as the entire problematic relationship between thought and speech" (11).

Cohn suggests three ways in which consciousness is given literary representation: through psycho-narration, the narrator's discourse about a character's consciousness; through quoted monologue, a character's mental discourse; and through narrated monologue, a character's mental discourse in the guise of the narrator's discourse. The most complex and the least familiar of these techniques in the context of the third person (at least in English) is narrated monologue. As its name implies, it occupies a curious position between narration and quotation. Like Cohn's category of psycho-narration, narrated monologue maintains a third-person reference and the tense of narration; but also like quoted monologue, it reproduces verbatim (according to Cohn) the character's own mental language (14).

Narrated monologue is a hybrid technique, a kind of "synthesis" for Cohn of indirect and deep psycho-narration, and direct but shallow quoted monologue (100). It is also a transformation of figural thought-language into the narrative language of third-person fiction (100). Not only is narrated monologue a difficult phenomenon to define, but its effects can sometimes also be found in areas of a narrative where other techniques dominate, demonstrating the difficulty of marking its boundaries. Cohn writes of a "stylistic contagion" which indicates places "where psycho-narration verges on the narrated monologue, marking a kind of mid-point between the two techniques where a reporting syntax is maintained, but where the idiom is strongly affected (or infected) with the mental idiom of the mind it renders" (33).

Of Cohn's three narrative modes for presenting consciousness in fiction, it is narrated monologue that approximates FID as it is defined by other theorists. Narrated monologue renders a character's thoughts in his own idiom, yet the words are not presented as words actually running through the character's mind. This narrative method suspends the figural consciousness "on the threshold of verbalization in a manner that cannot be achieved by direct quotation" (103). Cohn, like Pascal, uses the notion of a dual voice to describe narrated monologue, comparing it to the superimposition of "two voices that are kept distinct in the other two forms" (106). This "equivocation" creates in turn "the characteristic indeterminateness of the narrated monologue's relationship to the language of consciousness, suspending it between the immediacy of quotation and the mediacy of narration" (106). Its function within a fiction depends upon its context. When it approaches psycho-narration, it becomes "monologic" in quality, creating the impression that it is a record of the figural mind's explicit thoughts; when it borders on spoken or silent discourse, its features become more narratorial, more suggestive of a narrator formulating a character's non-verbal feelings (106).

Cohn is very careful to distinguish narrated monologue from the undifferentiated area of figural narration that has been labelled the realm of FID or style indirect libre by French and German theorists (110). The functions of narrated monologue are distinct from those of figural narration, but Cohn nevertheless stresses the special relationship that exists between narrated monologue and figural narration: "figural narration offers the narrated monologue its optimal habitat, and the narrated monologue caps the climax of figural narration In this sense one can regard the narrated monologue as the quintessence of figural narration, if not narration itself: as the moment when the thought-thread of a character is most tightly woven into the texture of third-person narration" (111).

Though Cohn acknowledges something inherently ambiguous in narrated monologue, this ambiguity pertains to the status of the mode in relation to conscious verbalization rather than to its fictional source. The material and style of narrated monologue is always the responsibility of the figural character (102-103). Cohn does, however, consider the blurring effect peculiar to narrated monologue in returning to the "two-in-one effect" engendered by the technique:

To speak only of a dual presence (perspective, voice, etc.) seems to me misleading: for the effect of the narrated monologue is precisely to reduce to the greatest possible degree the hiatus between the narrator and the figure existing in all figural narration. But to speak simply of a single presence (perspective, voice, etc.) is even more misleading: for one then risks losing sight of the difference between third- and first-person narration; and before long the protagonists of figural novels (Stephen, K., Strether) become the "narrators" of their own stories. In narrated monologues, as in figural narration generally, the continued employment of third-person references indicates, no matter how obtrusively, the continued presence of a narrator.

And it is his identification--but not his identity--with the character's mentality that is supremely enhanced by this technique. (112)

In this Cohn takes explicit issue with Wayne Booth's often-quoted claim that any sustained inside view, of whatever depth, temporarily turns the character whose mind is shown into a narrator (The Rhetoric of Fiction 164).

The lack of definition attending the status of FID as a record of either a character's or a narrator's thoughts is obscured by commentators like Donald Ross, Susan Lanser and Suzanne Ferguson, among others, who prefer to downplay its use as a figure or form of textual ambiguity. Even Cohn and McKay, who devote considerable space to FID and its effects, are unable to allow it to "float"--each places FID within the discourse range of either the character (Cohn) or the narrator (McKay). For other theorists, the presence of FID marks a text as a self-consciously "literary" artifact, and contributes to the sense of narrative as a "bivocal" or, in Mikhail Bakhtin's understanding of the novel as heteroglossia, a "polyvocal" form.

Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan sees the essential ambiguity of FID as a dramatization "of the problematic relationship between any utterance and its origin" (113). Ann Banfield makes a similar observation based on careful scrutiny of indirect discourse in general: that sentences in FID confound attempts to connect speakers with utterances, pronouns with their direct antecedents. Wallace Martin summarizes her argument regarding all fictional discourse: "Consciousness and the self are thus cut loose from 'I,' and we as readers are allowed to experience something we cannot otherwise experience in this world: subjectivity freed from its connection with our bodies and voices" (141).

These comments appear to me to be mystifications of a particular discourse's rhetorical effect. Though it may be, in certain circumstances, impossible to say for certain just who is responsible for the terms or sentiments expressed in a literary utterance, this uncertainty may fulfill a particular function within the narrative in

which it appears. In the late novels of Henry James, for example, this ambiguity is pervasive, but rather than dramatize "consciousness and the self cut loose from 'I,'" this ambiguity is the result of the narrator's struggle for linguistic and narrative coherence.

The issues of authority and ambiguity raised by explorations of FID in fiction engage more familiar questions of narratorial reliability. The same critical assumptions that derive FID from an "original," and unambiguous direct discourse (Chatman's for example), also tend to view reliability as progressively corrupted by the passage from direct discourse to indirect discourse to free indirect discourse. Letters and diaries preserve reliably what a character has thought or said; quoted or reported dialogue is less a pure likeness of the original articulation; and a narrator's or "implied author's" summary of a character's thoughts or speech may be inaccurate (Martin 141).

In opposition to this entropic association of discourse types with the decay of reliability, Kate Hamburger argues that "the fictional world created in third-person narration is simply posited, beyond any questions concerning reliability. Quotations are neither more nor less reliable than narratorial summary, since there is no reality about which these 'unspeakable sentences' could be right or wrong" (qtd. in Martin 141). This argument is persuasive, but Hamburger's subsequent contention that this is a "narratorless" or "speakerless" style, because it betrays the presence of a non-vocal consciousness, ignores the role of FID in communicating irony or sympathy to a reader (McKay 19). To account for these effects, one must posit sources for the irony or sympathy thus conveyed. In this regard McKay again quotes McHale: ". . . when FID functions as a vehicle of irony or empathy there are at least two sources, often difficult to distinguish: the character whose utterance is being reported and also an author/narrator who intervenes somehow, to some degree, in the report and is responsible for the irony and sympathy itself" (qtd. in McKay 19).

The intensity of the theoretical discussion of the features and functions of FID attests to its importance as a narrative device, a device not overly attended to nor even given a standard name in most recent Anglo-American criticism (Cohn 108). Yet it is more than possible that indirect discourse forms, such as FID, are the source of the disruptions of narrative theory explored in the previous sections of this chapter.

Discourse analysis inevitably rests upon the investigations of structuralist and non-structuralist theorists, and discourse analysts identify discourse types as they relate to the typologies of narrators and narrative modes those analysts endorse. The confrontation with FID's ambiguity, however, forces theorists to interrogate their own conceptions of how a narrative is articulated, and under what conditions. Faced with FID's paradoxical characteristics of precise linguistic features and an indeterminate status between the discourse of the character and the discourse of the narrator, analysts may diminish or deny the ambiguity of FID in order to place it more securely within the domain of one or the other. Or, like Banfield and Hamburger, they may acknowledge the disembodied quality of FID and name it "speakerless," because no existent typology of narrators or narrative modes imagines a textual figure--Dolezel's "referential totality"--who might be characterized by this kind of utterance.

I find the discourse typologies of Dolezel and Cohn which McKay applies to James's The Bostonians useful, but at times inadequate to the study of narration in The Wings of the Dove and The Golden Bowl. Specifically, there are two types of discourse in these narratives which are not identified by either Dolezel or Cohn, and which do not attach themselves to any of the narrators described by the point of view theorists reviewed above, but which are essential to any description of narration in these two late James novels.

Arlene Young, in a recent article on narration in The Golden Bowl, identifies one of these kinds of discourse as "hypothetical discourse," discourse which displays the

tense and person of direct discourse, and like direct discourse, is enclosed in quotation marks, but which is not in fact actually uttered aloud by either a character or a narrator (382). Hypothetical discourse raises many of the same questions of attributability as indirect and free indirect discourse, for though on the page it resembles direct discourse, "specific examples cannot readily be located in any single consciousness" (383). An example of hypothetical discourse from Book Second of The Golden Bowl illustrates its complexity:

‘Yes, look, look,’ she seemed to see him hear her say even while her sounded words were other--‘look, look, both at the truth that still survives in that smashed evidence and at the even more remarkable appearance that I’m not such a fool as you supposed me. Look at the possibility that, since I am different, there may still be something in it for you--if you’re capable of working with me to get that out.’ And her uttered words, meanwhile, were different enough from those he might have inserted between the lines of her already-spoken. (427)

Young examines the intricacies of narrative responsibility in the above passage, pointing out that though the words in quotation marks "seem to be a formulation within Maggie’s consciousness, . . . a close examination of the syntax of the tag [at the beginning of the passage] casts doubt on this assumption" (393). These words may actually be "the narrator’s formulation of Maggie’s assessment of Amerigo’s silent response to her" (393), but there is no way of knowing how accurate Maggie’s assessment of Amerigo’s reaction, or the narrator’s representation of this assessment, actually is. As Young also points out, "the accuracy of [Maggie’s] supposed assessment is further called into question by the narrator’s implicit comment on Amerigo’s reaction" in the form of the narrator’s concluding tag:

This statement suggests that the words that Amerigo might in fact conjecturally attribute to Maggie would be different from those that appear

in the passage of hypothetical discourse. . . . Moreover, Maggie's spoken words are not preceded by a tag, but by a reference to her uttered words being different from those Amerigo might have attributed to her, which creates some uncertainty as to whether the quoted speech that follows are her 'uttered words' or 'those he might have inserted between the lines of her already-spoken.' . . . And yet the ultimate effect of the entire passage is one of such perfect indeterminacy that the reader is left doubting the words he reads, unsure, finally, of what words were indeed uttered and whose words they were. (393-4)

What hypothetical discourse does is involve the characters, the narrator, and finally, the reader of such passages in a "mounting confusion of perceptions" (393) that is impossible to resolve.

For Young, hypothetical discourse functions as a "ficelle embedded in the narrative" (383) of The Golden Bowl by dramatizing narrative possibilities that no one in the novel actually voices aloud. Young uses hypothetical discourse to question the narrator's omniscience in this novel, and sees in the indeterminacy of its relation to the "reality" of what the characters or the narrator are actually thinking, proof that "reality is unknowable, both in fiction and in life" (398). Though Young's attention is focused on hypothetical discourse in The Golden Bowl, hypothetical discourse is also a potent rhetorical device for the narrator of The Wings of the Dove.

The other discourse type crucial to this study is more difficult to define, as it is more an effect of the narrative situations encountered in these two novels than a kind of discourse that can be identified independently of its appearance in them. I refer to this discourse as "floating free indirect discourse" (abbreviated as FFID), and see it as an integral part of the narration of The Golden Bowl in particular. What careful scrutiny of the narrative of this novel reveals is exactly the problem outlined by Dorrit

Cohn in a discussion of the grammatical differences between narrated monologue and "the narration of fictional reality generally" (104):

The problem of delimiting the narrated monologue from narration generally is far more complex, since purely linguistic criteria no longer provide reliable guidelines. Cloaked in the grammar of narration, a sentence rendering a character's opinion can look every bit like a sentence relating a fictional fact. In purely grammatical terms, "He was late" . . . could be a narrator's fact, rather than a character's thought. . . . Obviously, an author who wants his reader to recognize a narrated monologue for what it is will have to plant sufficient clues for its recognition. (106)

Cohn's use of the term "narrated monologue" refers specifically to the fictional representation of a character's thought. Since it is my view that the narrators of these two novels are not qualified to report the actual contents of a character's thoughts, and that James has indeed planted "sufficient clues" to enable the reader to recognize this, I will be using Cohn's terms only in order to indicate their inappropriateness to the narrative discourse of these novels. But Cohn's observation that the distinction between narrated monologue (what McKay and others call FID when the context is one of represented speech rather than represented thought) and general narration is often blurred is valuable to my depiction of rhetorical narrators in the late James, for it is my view that these narrators exploit the lack of definition between what is understood as the discourse of a narrator, and what is taken to be FID.

What I call floating free indirect discourse is precisely narrative material that can be read either as free indirect discourse or as the direct discourse of the narrator. As Cohn points out, general fictional narration shares certain linguistic features with free indirect discourse, namely, the use of third-person pronouns and a tense backshifted from the tense a character other than the narrator would normally use

in direct discourse. This is clear in the example of discourse taken from Chatman and McKay and offered as FID earlier in this chapter: "She had to go" (McKay 15). McKay herself notes that apart from its tense and pronominal forms, FID "is as close to direct discourse as an indirect form can be" (17), though of course the direct discourse she is thinking of here is that of the character rather than of the narrator. She goes on to claim that "given the specific features of FID, the number of sentences of this type is necessarily quite small. FID is rarely used exclusively or even consistently in long stretches. Rather it alternates with other more traditional forms of narration" (17).

What McKay does not account for here is the possibility of fictions in which FID, or what seems to be FID but is actually the direct discourse of a narrator, is used exclusively or consistently for long stretches of narration--for example, in the late novels of Henry James. The two novels studied here are examples of fictions in which narrative discourse often "floats" between FID and narrator discourse: that is, passages of discourse which are the responsibility of a non-omniscient first-person narrator can also be read as representations of a character's intimate thoughts or feelings. The attraction of this kind of discourse for a narrator is that it gives the impression of omniscience and authority to what is actually speculative and conjectural on his part. The danger of this discourse for readers is that a narrator who is imperfect in human ways can be mistaken for a superhuman authority. The following sentences from what is called the "pagoda section" of Book Second of The Golden Bowl provide an example:

This situation had been occupying, for months and months, the very centre of the garden of her life, but it had reared itself there like some strange, tall tower of ivory, or perhaps rather some wonderful, beautiful, but outlandish pagoda . . . She had walked round and round it--that was what she felt; she

had carried on her existence in the space left her for circulation, a space that sometimes seemed ample and sometimes narrow (301)

The past perfect tense and third-person form of these sentences allow them to be read as DN, as the narrator's report of what Maggie Verver apparently thinks to herself, though it is impossible to say for certain whether all of the terms in the passage are the narrator's own versions of what Maggie is or might be thinking, or whether some of them are words Maggie herself might actually use, reported indirectly by the narrator. Then again, though the examples of FID provided by analysts such as Chatman and McKay are most often backshifted from the simple present tense to the past tense ("I have to go" becomes "She had to go"), the tenses used by characters and narrators in actual fiction are much more varied and sophisticated. Thus, the same past perfect tense and third-person form can also mark these sentences as FID--that is, it is conceivable that Maggie might think to herself that "[t]his situation has been occupying, for months and months, the very centre of the garden of my life, but it has reared itself there like some strange, tall tower of ivory" Linguistic marks alone do not determine the source of these sentences, or provide unambiguous answers to questions of the narrator's or the character's relative involvement in the choice of words used to represent these complex inner landscapes. Discourse such as this floats between what analysts have defined as DN and DC, between the narrator's indirect account of a character's thoughts and the free indirect rendering of those thoughts.

The following chapters explore the role of floating free indirect, hypothetical, free indirect, indirect, and direct discourse in the rhetorical projects of these late Jamesian narrators. The aim of this investigation is the adumbration of a figure of indeterminate substance and character who can nevertheless be detected in the texture of discourse that makes up the fictional world, and for whom narration is life itself.¹

Notes

¹ Both Todorov and Foucault connect the act of narration with life by reference to The Arabian Nights, in which narration becomes "a desperate inversion of murder; it is the effort, throughout all those nights, to exclude death from the circle of existence" (Foucault 117).

CHAPTER TWO: THE NARRATOR, THE WINGS OF THE DOVE
AND REIFICATION

There is our general sense of the way things happen--it abides with us indefeasibly, as readers of fiction, from the moment we demand that our fiction shall be intelligible; and there is our peculiar sense of the way they don't happen, which is liable to wake up unless reflexion and criticism, in us, have been skilfully and successfully drugged. There are drugs enough, clearly--it is all a question of applying them with tact; in which case the way things don't happen may be artfully made to pass for the way things do.

Preface to The American

Despite the ambiguity associated with James's Major Phase, The Wings of the Dove is regarded with a wealth of critical certainty. There is a marked degree of unanimity in the descriptions of Milly Theale as "the centre of action and morality in the novel" (Harland 313), as "the central symbol of the book" (Greenwald 179), and as a character whose suffering and death are "expiatory," "sacrificial," and, finally, "redemptive" (Segal 52, 191). J. A. Ward finds Milly a "Christlike" figure, "doomed yet magnificent," a "victim consenting to be a victim" who performs at the novel's conclusion a "sublime gesture of forgiveness" (Search for Form 181). Frederick Crews acknowledges the soap-operatic quality of Milly's plight, but nevertheless calls her a "stricken and stoical princess" (60) who becomes "an indistinct, powerful symbol for life and loss, for beauty and the annihilation of beauty" (57-58). For Allon White, she is "the purest of Jamesian characters" (62), and for Daniel Mark Fogel, she is the

dove who, "by transcendent love and forgiveness, triumphs in death, changing forever the lives of her entrappers" (62). Even Dorothea Krook, who notes the careful balance of beauty and horror in the novel, comments on the "striking" religious parallels of the work, particularly in the contrast between "the power of the world, figured in Lancaster Gate, to undermine and destroy the noble and the good, and the power of the good, figured in the person of Milly Theale, to abase the proud by answering it with forgiveness, loving-kindness and sacrificial death" (221). Although Milly is not, for Krook, fully redemptive as a character, she does indeed have "a holy life and holy death" (220).¹

This view of Milly Theale as the moral centre of the book, and of the novel as "the very soul" of James's own canon (Matthiessen 43) is habitually attributed to James himself. James, according to Crews, found Milly "unspeakably touching," and intended the reader to see her this way as well. Thus, he "deliberately emphasizes the enormous scope of her tragedy, 'explaining' it in semimythical terms which make it all the more grandiose" (67). Crews remarks on the novel's style, which, as the story progresses and Milly's suffering becomes more "impressive," grows more and more figurative, "until at the end, we are reading what amounts to lyric poetry" (73). The rationale behind James's "increasingly allegorical" treatment of Milly is the justification of Densher's reaction to her: Milly's "symbolic value must be inflated to almost Christlike proportions in the reader's mind" in order to make Merton Densher's actions "plausible" (76). Densher must be made convincing to the reader because, claims Crews, it is Densher who assumes "the role of an oracle for James's own opinions," and provides, by his actions, "our best clue to the author's moral judgement of his principal characters" (66).

Fogel echoes this attitude in his study of water imagery in the novel, which he claims supports "the traditional interpretations" of Matthiessen and Krook, and which "accords with James's explicit statements about his intentions in the novel, particularly

about his intention that Milly should effect a genuine spiritual conversion of Densher" (74). Charles Samuels adopts a similar stance by arguing that "the fervor of [James's] admiration" for Milly leads him to equate her with Jesus Christ (64), even at the cost of minimizing or ignoring character traits that might lead to a different interpretation of her (64-65).

More recently, Paul Harland reads the romantic connotations of Milly's characterization as tokens of James's return, at this late point in his career, to romance as an antidote to the lack of "moral value" he apparently detected "among contemporary realist writers" (310). It is the "ambiguous value" of romance that entices James, writes Harland, for while romance "at once diminishes the sharp, detailed world of realism, it may . . . heighten moral value" (311). In fact, it is the relation between the narrative strategies of "circumspection and circumlocution" in the novel and the indistinct nature of the "moral authority" thus "summoned or conjured obliquely" that Harland identifies as the origin of the "air of romance" associated with Milly Theale (312-13).

While Harland may be correct in noting the "ambiguous value" of romance for James, it is by no means certain that James saw romance as an appropriate response to a moral lack among contemporary writers. Nor is it obvious to this reader that James intended Densher to be read as oracle for the author's opinions on the novel's other characters. Finally, it is also not certain that James saw Milly Theale as the unqualified heroine other critics see her as, or that the novel's movement toward what John Carlos Rowe has called "the symbolization of Milly Theale" reflects James's own attitudes towards Milly. What is very possible is that James identified romance as a temptation, as a fictional strategy that could indeed infuse a work with an immense "moral authority," but would, in the process, endorse a kind of deliberate imperceptiveness on the part of both characters and readers to the sharp details of reality, those things which we cannot help but know, sooner or later. Romance

understood in this way is one of the drugs alluded to in the Preface to The American quoted above--a way of dulling "reflexion and criticism" in the reader.²

In the Preface to The American, James devotes much space to "penetrating a little the obscurity" of the so-called "romantic" principle. His conclusion is that the only "general attribute of projected romance" that he can perceive is based in the kind of experience it treats:

experience liberated, so to speak; experience disengaged, disembroided, disencumbered, exempt from the conditions that we usually know to attach to it and, if we wish so to put the matter, drag upon it, and operating in a medium which relieves it, in a particular interest, of the inconvenience of a related, a measurable state, a state subject to all our vulgar communities The balloon of experience is in fact of course tied to the earth, and under that necessity we swing, thanks to a rope of remarkable length, in the more or less commodious car of the imagination; but it is by the rope we know where we are, and from the moment that cable is cut we are at large and unrelated: we only swing apart from the globe--though remaining as exhilarated, naturally, as we like, especially when all goes well. The art of the romancer is, 'for the fun of it,' insidiously to cut the cable, to cut it without our detecting him. (The Art of the Novel 33-4).

Romance, then, is the representation of "disconnected and uncontrolled experience--uncontrolled by our general sense of 'the way things happen'--which romance alone more or less successfully palms off on us" (The Art of the Novel 34). Readers such as Paul Harland and Elissa Greenwald--who maintains that James's accomplishment in Wings is the transcendence of romance, "not through greater realism, but by using symbolism to capture a reality beyond that of the material world" (177)--look away, as the narrator of this novel looks away, from the realities

that control and encumber the narrative: not only Milly's illness and approaching death, but the very palpable control exerted by Maud Lowder on every other character in the novel, the narrator included. The desire of these readers to find transcendental significance in this tale of multiple exploitation blurs the fine edges of James's criticism of the various alliances of wealth and social status, of money and journalism, and of the gold standard at the heart of romance in this novel.

Rather than read the novel as James's "rehabilitation" of romance (Harland 310), I read The Wings of the Dove as a demonstration of the rhetorical efforts of the narrator to convince the reader to accept a view of Milly Theale consistent with the narrator's conceptions of moral value and moral authority--conceptions very different from James's own.³ It is the narrator of Wings, and the characters ranged around Milly, not Henry James, who construct and maintain a romantic view of her, who orchestrate the responses of each other to her, and who are engaged in the composition, rather than in the mere observation, of Milly as the dove of the novel's title.

Reading The Wings of the Dove as critique rather than as endorsement of a romantic view of Milly Theale dictates a scrutiny of the technique by which James apparently communicates such a view: the use of a third-person narrator. Received accounts of James's narrative technique concentrate on the figure of central consciousness, or "reflector," a character in the text through which perception is filtered, rather than on the third-person narrator, the presence who in turn delivers the "reflector's" perceptions to the reader. The confusion resulting from the conflation of these two distinct figure-features of the Jamesian novel is clear in discussions such as that of Ora Segal in The Lucid Reflector: The Observer in Henry James's Fiction. In that study Segal claims for the Jamesian observer "most of the authorial functions of the traditional omniscient author" (Preface ix). Segal sees this observer as appearing in two "guises," that of the central intelligence, "as a first-

person narrator or a dramatized center of consciousness--whose personal vision wholly controls the story; or in the subsidiary role of choric commentator, raisonneur, or confidant, intermittently present in the action" (Preface xi). To both of these versions of "the author's deputies" Segal awards the activities of "moral commentary, psychological analysis, and philosophical generalization" valued, she writes, not only by the great Victorian novelists, but also by James, who objected only to "the intrusive, discursive, omniscient mode of their presentation in Victorian literature" (Preface xi).⁴ In this way, while recording James's objections to "the heavy-handed didacticism" of the omniscient narrator, Segal continues to read the Jamesian observer as a version of that all-knowing author, re-inscribed as confidant or character in the story, but authoritative nonetheless.

This conception of the Jamesian narrator leads some readers to assume that James's own attitudes towards the issues and characters in Wings can be extrapolated from the narrator's. Thus John Carlos Rowe sees not only Kate Croy, Susie Stringham, Maud Lowder, Merton Densher, and Lord Mark, but also "the writer himself" as "repeatedly pushing [Milly] toward the level of allegory" (Rowe 171-72). Others, like Fogel, Samuels, and David McWhirter, consistently refer to the unnamed narrator as "James," cementing the confusion between the two.

The other view of James's narrative method, that James was so committed to the principle of the centre of consciousness that he forswore all use of a narrator, and that therefore his fictions can in some way be called "non-narrated," also pervades criticism of Wings. This encourages some critics to conclude that the presence of a narrating voice is a violation of James's own compositional principles (as John E. Tilford does in his article "James the Old Intruder"). Samuels, for example, who calls the narrator of Wings "James," expresses amazement that James's "love" and sentimental devotion to Milly Theale leads him to "compromise his creed of authorial reticence" by making explicit statements about her that exceed "all reasonable limits

of ethical advocacy" (64). Laurence Holland too, though he sees the "narrative convention" of the novel as founded on "the intimate connection" between "the author's voice" and "the centre of consciousness," reads "James's emergence intermittently in the first person" as "the flaw in his form" (286).

In opposition to the equation of the narrating figure with James, or to the claim that narratorial intrusiveness betrays a fault in James's artistry, I believe The Wings of the Dove offers a partially-characterized narrator who is a textual simulacrum of the author in a complexly ironic sense. By appropriating the narrative strategies associated with the omniscient, authoritative narrator, this figure manipulates the responses of the reader to figures and events in the story. Far from simply embodying James's own reactions to or opinions of fictional characters, and functioning as an authoritative limit to or frame for interpretation, the narrator of Wings multiplies the levels on which the drama of the story takes place. In this way James explores the fictional narrator as a rhetor, one who persuades through eloquence. It is precisely the absence of the rhetorical narrator from critical accounts of narration in The Wings of the Dove that has resulted in the readings noted above, which surrender to the supposedly "authoritative" narrative voice on the one hand, or which criticize James for his "intrusiveness" on the other.⁵ Both approaches minimize the complexity of narration in this novel, and often ignore the ambiguous characterization of its major characters.

In the first chapter of Language and Knowledge in the Late Novels of Henry James, Ruth Bernard Yeazell warns particularly the "experienced critic of James" against assuming that the worlds of the late novels are "imaginatively contiguous" with those of the early and middle period novels (1). What is a persistent temptation, notes Yeazell, is the easy translation of "the elaborate indirections" of a work like The Wings of the Dove into something more palatable, more comprehensible, perhaps even more soothing, but less Jamesian, than what is really there:

Critics of any fiction, but especially of novels as elusive as these, necessarily begin with much that is unwritten plot summary and character sketch; the very act of intelligent reading demands that we implicitly summarize what is said and draw inferences from what, in late James at least, so often is not--that we postulate a consistent referential universe to which a novel's words finally point. But one thus translates James's late novels at the risk of doing violence to what is most idiosyncratic and exciting in them, of making their particularly fluid and unsettling reality something far more stable and conventional. The distance at which critics must inevitably talk about novels is particularly dangerous here; the disquiet which we feel on first reading these novels should not be so easily assuaged. (2)

Yeazell goes on to remark that our uneasiness about figures and situations in the late works extends "to the very nature of the fictional universe which James's late style creates. To allow that style fully to work on us is to find ourselves in a world where the boundaries between unconscious suspicion and certain knowledge, between pretense and reality, are continually shifting--a world in which the power of language to transform facts and even to create them seems matched only by the stubborn persistence of facts themselves" (3).⁶ What Yeazell identifies in these comments is the effect of the late style on the reader's perception and comprehension of the people and events these fictions embrace; what she leaves unnamed is the fictional source of this uncanny style, the narrator of the late novels.

It is not only our assumption that a novel's words direct us to "a consistent referential universe" that is overturned by the late style, but our assumption that that style itself has a consistent and referential source; that the narrator who delivers the tale to us assumes a familiar and stable shape as either omniscient and authoritative or demonstrably unreliable. The late novels confront us, by contrast, with narrating

figures who refuse to take up these comforting positions: to reduce these figures to less demanding dimensions is to lessen the effort we need to exert to read the stories they deliver.

In the scrutiny of The Wings of the Dove which follows, I will be positing the presence of a rhetorical narrator from the narrative effects of the text. These effects are the result, I argue, of the narrator's employment of indirect and hypothetical discourse forms which may contain elements of the narrator's own comments, judgements and speculations about characters and events; of focalization to encourage identification with a character; and of figurative language to approximate or suggest what cannot in actuality be known for certain.

The narrator of The Wings of the Dove is obliquely revealed by his rhetorical acts as a non-omniscient observer of people who has an active, personal interest in the outcome of the events he appears merely to relate. This interest has as one of its sources the narrator's own vulnerability to romance, animated by the appearance of the rich, lonely, and strangely ailing Milly Theale. The narrator's progressive emotional involvement with the major characters of Wings--with Milly Theale and Merton Densher in particular--manifests itself in a greater reliance on indirect discourse as a vehicle for narration, an increased use of Milly and Densher as character-focalizers, and the insertion of figures and images which may be the narrator's responsibility into what is offered as a record of what a character is thinking or feeling. The outcome of this narrative rhetoric, born of romantic fascination, is the projection of Milly Theale as the self-sacrificing divinity of the novel, and of Merton Densher as the narrator's stand-in: the pure and committed suitor the narrator himself longs to become. Ironically, what the narrator's indulgence of these narrative fantasies allows is for Maud Lowder's own decidedly unromantic and manipulative scheme to proceed to its triumphant end largely without narratorial comment.

What is most often noticed by critics of the novel is its "circuitous form of representation" (Greenwald 179) or "method of indirection" (Koch 95). J. A. Ward remarks on the number of important conversations in the novel that are "discussed or recollected rather than actually presented," and claims that Wings exceeds all James's other novels in the frequency of events reflected on rather than dramatized (Search for Form 172-173). What is noted here is the extent to which we as readers of Wings are reliant upon the narrator for information about these events and conversations, and the extent to which the narrator uses forms of indirect discourse to report--or appear to report--what was said, what was felt, or what happened, whether in private rooms, as in the interview between Milly and Sir Luke Strett, or in private minds, as on the many occasions when the narrator "goes behind" to give the reader a glimpse of what a character might be thinking, often in the form of hypothetical discourse.

It is in these ambiguous passages that the narrator's own rhetorical intentions begin to emerge, and the romantic portrait of Milly Theale as suffering dove begins to dominate the narrative. The result of this gradual apotheosis of Milly is the loss, to readers as well as to other characters and to Milly herself, of Milly's humanity, and the consequent demonizing of Kate Croy. The cost of the narrator's investment in romanticism (to exploit the economic language of the novel) is thus the effacement of a very sick young woman by a symbol of sacrifice, and the paradox, as Darsan Singh Maini has noticed, of "Milly dead being a more shattering and moving force than Milly alive" (140).

Narration in Volume One

The Preface to Wings refers to the narrative construction of the novel in terms of "successive centres" of interest, centres which "would constitute, so to speak, sufficiently solid blocks of wrought material, squared to the sharp edge, as to have

weight and mass and carrying power" (8). The persuasive effect of these "blocks" of material is accomplished largely through the technique of focalization, by which the narrator uses, or appears to use, a character as a narrative lens through which to view the world of the novel. The choice of focalizer has considerable "carrying power," as the narrator's decision to invest in what the reader takes to be a particular character's point of view (in the expanded situational and ideological sense identified by Chatman 151-52) suggests that the narrator endorses that point of view, and approves of the character to whom it belongs. Focalization in this novel is not as fixed in the perspectives of the characters as it is in The Golden Bowl, however; most chapters contain lengthy passages of narratorial exposition or commentary not focalized through a character in the story--an example is the introductory paragraph of Book Third. The effect is that of a slightly detached narrator-observer who "zeroes in" after a few paragraphs on a character to whom he can attach his gaze.

Using focalization as a measure of the narrator's attraction to the characters in Volume One of Wings, what becomes clear is that the fairly even distribution of chapters among Kate Croy, Merton Densher, Susie Stringham and Milly Theale breaks down after Book Third. The first of the two chapters of Book First is focalized largely through Kate Croy. That she is the first character-focalizer of the novel seems to suggest that she has a strong claim to the role of protagonist, as does the narrator's sympathetic rendering of her confrontation with her father. Kate remains prominent in the second chapter of Book First, and shares focalizing duties with Merton Densher in the two chapters which comprise Book Second. It is as if the narrator, though planning to concentrate solely on Densher's point of view for Book Second, cannot keep his interest from straying to the much more compelling personality of Kate Croy. Discourse forms in all of these chapters are mixed, with the first few pages of a new Book usually rendered in indirect discourse, giving way to direct discourse between characters.

Book Third also contains two chapters, both centred loosely in the perspective of Susie Stringham, and the first consisting entirely of indirect discourse. Book Fourth alters the narrative scheme by devoting three chapters to the subject of Milly in London, the first focalized through Milly herself, the second and third shared between Milly and Susie (with much narratorial exposition). Once again, an entire chapter (chapter two) of this book is narrated in indirect discourse.

The first three of Book Fifth's seven chapters are focalized loosely through Milly, and contain a mixture of direct and indirect discourse, though the passages of indirect discourse comprising these chapters become more lengthy. Chapter four is, but for a brief exchange between Kate and Milly, presented entirely in indirect discourse, again focalized through Milly. The remaining three chapters of Volume One, describing Milly's interview with Maud Lowder and her encounter with Kate and Densher at the National Gallery, are also narrated from Milly's perspective. In this last chapter especially, what direct discourse there is (Densher's exclamations of surprise, for example) are so embedded in long passages of indirect discourse that it is almost difficult to locate them on the page.

The combined effect of the narrator's concentration on Milly Theale as the primary character-focalizer of Volume One, and of the narrator's reliance on indirect methods of narration (from summaries of conversation through psycho-narration to what seems to be a record of the character's own thoughts) is a slow and steady immersion in the point of view of Milly Theale--at least as the narrator posits that point of view. By the end of Book Fifth, the narrator's earlier interest in and sympathetic identification with Kate Croy has tapered off; she has been replaced in the narrator's affections by this curious young American girl characterized by her travelling companion as the epitome of all that is romantic. So smitten, by the conclusion of Volume One, is the narrator by the image--partly of his own making--of Milly as the suffering and isolated young woman, that his ability to describe without

judgement the progression of Kate's vision for Milly and Densher is severely compromised.

The narrator of Wings is an intensely observant and imaginative figure, given to positing some inner motive or feeling from the outwardly-apparent manner or behaviour of a character. Thus the traditional commentary associated with third-person narration--on appearance, demeanour, and activity--turns very quickly into psychological investigation and conjecture. At times, the freedom with which the narrator comments on a character's thoughts and feelings, provides an apparently verbatim account of those thoughts, or even supplies the words which a character does not actually utter, suggests an observer not limited by physical reality. It is true that this narrator "goes behind," as some other of James's narrators do, and speaks confidently of what these characters appear to be thinking. However, this apparent omniscience is qualified many times in the novel, not only by the narrator's admission that what he reports is often what a character might be thinking, but also by the shifting boundaries of discourse in the novel, which make the assignment of certain opinions, terms, and bits of quoted material ambiguous.

Book First of Volume One serves as an appropriate lexicon of the narrator's discourse repertoire, as the various discourse types that appear in that Book--from third-person narrative commentary through direct discourse of characters to indirect forms (hypothetical discourse, free indirect discourse, and floating free indirect discourse)--appear with regularity throughout the novel. The first book is also crucial in that there we are introduced to Kate Croy and her personal situation, which determines, to a considerable extent, the motives for her actions towards Maud Lowder, Merton Densher, and Milly Theale.

Although Kate is often regarded as the novel's "dark heroine" (Bell 97), as the sinister, even "positively evil" foil for Milly (Crews 59), at the beginning of the story

she is imprisoned in a "social cage," possessed by everyone around her (Rowe 147). Kate is here rendered passive by her situation, dependent upon whatever remnants of family feeling she can arouse in her black sheep father. So marked is the felt difference between this Kate, willing to give up her aunt's sponsorship if her father will "have" her, and the Kate whom Crews judges as "harshly materialistic" (74), and whom Samuels describes as "the book's chief embodiment of evil" (61), that J. A. Ward writes of "the process of her transformation from a woman governed by ideas of loyalty to one who sends her fiance to make love to another woman" as "something of a mystery" (Search for Form 173-74). Millicent Bell writes that the novel begins with a "remarkable conversation" between Kate and her father (101), but no actual conversing occurs for a number of pages. Instead, the reader is presented with a description of Kate pacing to and fro in front of a mirror in her father's shabby digs. This opening scene, described by Elissa Greenwald as showing, through the consciousness of Kate Croy, the "alienation" that results from "the detailed observation of objects" (180), is crucial in characterizing Kate as a woman very conscious of her vulgar surroundings, aware of her family's decayed honour, and equally determined not to surrender to the squalid fate that seems reserved for her.

The narrator's typical method of moving from observable phenomena to unobservable motive is clear in the novel's famous opening scene, in which Kate Croy waits in her father's dingy apartment for him to appear. The description of the room in which Kate waits is permeated by terms apparently belonging to Kate's own consciousness, and representing her own thoughts on and reactions to her shoddy surroundings. Examining the narrative texture of the scene in detail reveals the narrator's rhetorical agility in moving rapidly from straightforward description, to a mixture of third-person exposition and what Dorrit Cohn calls psycho-narration, to sentences of what seems to be free indirect discourse: "She waited, Kate Croy, for her father to come in, but he kept her unconscionably, and there were moments at

which she showed herself, in the glass over the mantel, a face positively pale with the irritation that had brought her to the point of going away without sight of him" (21).

In this sentence the word "unconscionably" sounds as if it could be Kate's own, while the phrase describing her face as "positively pale" with irritation moves away from what is observable in the glass to what is apparently not--the possibility Kate has been entertaining of waiting no longer. Nicola Bradbury writes of this sentence that it "invites the reader to enter a bond of superior knowledge with the author," that "it is not certain whether the implied viewpoint is that of Kate herself or of a putative observer in the room," and notes the "manipulation of the reader's reactions" in the shifting modes of the sentences (Later Novels 75-6). The sentences that follow continue the description of Lionel Croy's apartment, offering judgements of the "shabby sofa," the "sallow prints," the "lonely magazine," and the "vulgar little street" to be seen from the balcony, that again seem to be Kate's own, though voiced by the narrator through psycho-narration--the narrator's articulation of a character's thought.

After this though, the expository tone of the narration fades away, and the next few sentences bring the narrator, and through him the reader, into proximity with the anguish Kate feels when confronted with the squalor of her father's quarters. The transition is through a curious sentence couched in the third-person: "One felt them in the room exactly as one felt the room--the hundred like it or worse--in the street." This Eliotesque sentiment is difficult to locate, as the use of "One" to refer self-consciously to the speaker could be the narrator's way of introducing Kate's feeling about the house sympathetically, or it could be Kate's actual way of phrasing this thought to herself, in which case the sentence is an example of free indirect discourse. So close does the narrator seem to be, by this time, to Kate's consciousness, that either possibility is credible. The suspension of the comment somewhere between Kate and the narrator is preparation for the sentences that

follow, many of which are also difficult to place with certainty in one mind or the other:

Each time she turned in again, each time, in her impatience, she gave him up, it was to sound to a deeper depth, while she tasted the flat emanation of things, the failure of fortune and of honour. If she continued to wait it was really in a manner that she mightn't add the shame of fear, of individual, of personal collapse, to all the other shames. To feel the street, to feel the room, to feel the table-cloth and the centre-piece and the lamp, gave her a small salutary sense at least of neither shirking nor lying. This whole vision was the worst thing yet--as including in particular the interview to which she had braced herself; and for what had she come but for the worst? She tried to be sad so as not to be angry, but it made her angry that she couldn't be sad. And yet where was misery, misery too beaten for blame and chalk-marked by fate like a "lot" at a common auction, if not in these merciless signs of mere mean stale feelings? (21)

Trying to separate the narrator's discourse from Kate's discourse in this passage is very difficult, so fused is the narrator's point of view with Kate's. The first three sentences combine the narrator's external view of Kate--"Each time she turned in again"-- with material that seems to contain the gist of Kate's own thoughts, though expressed in the narrator's words--"it was to sound to a deeper depth, while she tasted the faint flat emanation of things, the failure of fortune and of honour." These sentences move smoothly and seamlessly from expository narration to indirect discourse, and confirm our sense of the narrator as tracking Kate's mental as well as her physical movements. This passage also introduces, in the phrase "and for what had she come but for the worst?" questions, partial questions, and exclamatory

phrases typical of free indirect discourse (McKay 17), which suggest that these exclamations and questions are present, word for word, in Kate Croy's mind.

Janet Holmgren McKay's study of narration and discourse in The Bostonians noted that narrator's use of various forms of indirect discourse, from "summaries of speech that contain the character's sentiments but not necessarily his words to apparently verbatim accounts of speeches and thoughts with only the minimum changes necessary for indirection of the 'free' or compact type--changes in pronomial forms and verb tenses" (56). These indirect forms are often mixed together in the same account, the reader moving "from narrator's summary into a character's thoughts or words into a combination of the two, and back to summary, in the course of a few sentences" (56). A similar narrative texture is visible in the sentences quoted above, with the reader carried effortlessly from an "objective" view of Kate inward to a subjective rendering of the contents of her mind. The use of indirect discourse replicates, writes McKay, "the rhythms we associate with speech rather than writing," in particular through the use of "[p]auses, parenthetical asides, repetitions, idiosyncratic phrases associated with given characters' direct discourse" (56). While permitting the narrator to condense the speech and thought of characters, and so add to the "economy" (56) of the narration, the use of indirect discourse, most importantly, "manipulates the reader's perceptions of character and events within the novel" (57). The "distance and ambiguity" characteristic of indirect discourse constantly forces the reader to identify the source of the indirect report--to decide whose words or thoughts are represented, and to what extent (McKay 57).

The novel McKay examines in her study was not revised by James for the New York Edition, and McKay herself comments on the audibility of the narrator of The Bostonians in comparison to the controlled narrators of the later novels (40). Thus the problems she identifies in that novel in assigning responsibility for indirect discourse are compounded in Wings by the presence of a more muted narrator,

whose linguistic habits may be encountered and accepted by a reader accustomed to associating an unobtrusive narrator with an omniscient one.

So effaced is the narrator in the opening scene of the novel, for example, that it is difficult to read the sentence "And yet where was misery, misery too beaten for blame and chalk-marked by fate like a 'lot' at a common auction, if not in these merciless signs of mere mean stale feelings?" as anything but a direct rendering of Kate's despair at confronting the sordid future that awaits the remnants of her "family feeling," though the question could also be the narrator's own rhetorical summary of what he observes in Kate's actions.

This attentive rendering of Kate Croy's reactions to her father's surroundings creates sympathy for her, for by the narrator's extended forays into what seem to be her thoughts, we have a view of Kate's sensitivity, and her determination not to surrender herself to the vulgarity both her sister and her father are drowning in. Yet it is impossible to say for certain just where the narrator stops reporting Kate's thoughts and starts delivering his own comments on the scene, so often does this narrator employ the interrogative sentence, both as a rhetorical question of his own, and as a sign of the uncertainties facing Kate. Typical too are sentences that extend or build on a metaphor or image without indicating whether the generating image is Kate's or the narrator's. Such is the figure of the "fine florid voluminous phrase, say even a musical, that dropped first into words and notes without sense and then, hanging unfinished, into no words nor any notes at all" (21). The colloquial air of the word "say" suggests once more that these words are Kate's, and that she is the one developing this analogy. The figure returns a page later, but is this time prefaced by the narrator's curiously qualified sentence:

If she saw more things than her fine face in the dull glass of her father's lodgings she might have seen that after all she was not herself a fact in the collapse. She didn't hold herself cheap, she didn't make

for misery. Personally, no, she wasn't chalk-marked for auction. She hadn't given up yet, and the broken sentence, if she was the last word, would end with a sort of meaning. (22)

It is unclear here whether Kate herself actually picks up and completes the earlier figure of her family as sentence fragment, or whether the narrator's hedging--"If she saw . . . she might have seen"--places the rest of the passage in the realm of narratorial conjecture. The casting of the sentences themselves in the form of FID (with its characteristic shift in pronoun reference and tense) confuses matters. These words appear to be Kate's own, delivered untagged by verbs of thought that would betray the presence of a narrator. The emphasis on "would" adds to our sense of having caught Kate's personal commitment to making something of herself, and yet the introductory qualifiers suggest that this passage may be the narrator's construction of Kate's thoughts--his version of what she is probably thinking and feeling. Of interest too is the self-reflexive nature of the sentence, its comment not only on Kate's sense of herself as taking over the authorship of her family's history, but also on the narrator's sense of himself as editor, as responsible, perhaps, for ensuring that this particular text communicates meaningfully.

The narrator frequently inserts qualifying words and phrases into his accounts of characters' consciousness, sometimes to indicate their inner uncertainty or awareness of possibilities and limitations, as when Kate thinks of "the way she might still pull things round had she only been a man" (22). At other times, though, the qualifying "might have" signals the narrator's admission that what he is introducing could be, but is not necessarily, the truth, as when the narrator says that the answers to the questions that Kate (apparently) asks herself were not in Chirk Street, "and the girl's repeated pause before the mirror and the chimney-place might have represented her nearest approach to escape from them" (22); or when, in

conversation with her father, Kate falls silent "from what might have been a sense of sickness" (29).

This combination of qualified, elliptical conjecture and FID in the narrator's discourse raises the issue of just how much the narrator knows about the inner workings of other characters' minds. The frequent use of FID, particularly in the form of questions that supposedly lurk in a character's consciousness--"But what could a penniless girl do with it but let it go?"--suggests direct access to that mind. But FID retains the essential ambiguity of indirect discourse since it is "not uttered directly by the reported speaker" (McKay 18). On the other hand, McKay claims that "every example of indirectly reported speech, no matter how it is reported, seems to have the potential of including elements that are the responsibility of the embedded speaker, and this possibility is often exploited in literature" (16). The narrator's habitual use of FID may represent his attempt to create, as nearly as possible, the probable content of a character's thoughts, couched in terms, and in tones, that are likely to belong to the character. These passages or sentences of FID appear at first to counter the carefully qualified "might haves" of the narrator's discourse with a refreshing and convincing air of certainty and insight. But the ambiguous nature of FID does not resolve the question of just what words or sentiments in these passages are the narrator's responsibility, and what ones are the characters'.

Leo Bersani, in "The Narrator as Center in The Wings of the Dove" sees the centers of consciousness in the late novels as "assimilated into [the narrator's] point of view on the story" (131), and uses the fusion of the narrator's and the characters' discourse in the novel as proof that the characters "become for the Jamesian center possible moral choices internal to his own mind," that finally "serve mainly allegorical functions" (131). Bersani's argument is based on his analysis of the novel's fused discourse: "Any attempt to delimit with precision the boundaries between the centers' expressions of their own thoughts and the narrator's presentation of them,

or indeed even his comments, ends in much uncertainty and confusion. Not only are stylistic distinctions between narrator and centers difficult to perceive; the former's thoughts are assimilated to his characters' minds" (131).

Although Bersani identifies this fused discourse as a crucial element in the narration of Wings, he contradicts himself by claiming first that the characters are assimilated into the narrator's point of view, and then that the narrator is assimilated to the minds of the other characters. And though the narrator's interest in and sympathy for a character such as Kate Croy results in the frequent use of FID, it is not true that in other scenes the narrator's thoughts and attitudes cannot be distinguished from those of the characters. This is particularly true in passages concerning characters the narrator feels no sympathy with, such as Lionel Croy, or characters like Susie Stringham, from whose naivete the narrator wishes to disassociate himself. It is easy, for example, to read the narrator's irony in the tag inserted into Lionel Croy's disbelieving comment on Kate's generosity to her sister: "You've a view of three hundred a year for her in addition to what her husband left her with? Is that,' the remote progenitor of such wantonness audibly wondered, 'your morality?'" (30). The narrator removes himself even from Kate after the novel's opening chapter, which ends with an observation that is a brief example of what I call floating free indirect discourse (FFID), discourse that can be read either as a character's FID or as the direct discourse of the narrator: "What he couldn't forgive was her dividing with Marian her scant share of the provision their mother had been able to leave them. She should have divided it with him" (33).

In the second chapter of Book First, which describes Kate's dependence on her Aunt Maud, the narrator continues to introduce questions in FID, such as "What on earth was it supposed that she wanted to do with it?" (34), that give the impression, particularly through the use of emphasis, that such questions are lifted verbatim from Kate's mind. There is, though, more of a distance between the

narrator and Kate in this chapter, most obviously indicated by the narrator's first references to "our young woman's feelings" (34) and "our young lady" (35), and by references to the narrator's own situation as observer, almost in imitation of Kate looking out "from the high south window" of her aunt's house (35).⁷

The first such self-conscious comment occurs well after the reflection, apparently made by Kate, that as long as she stays upstairs, the "discoveries" she daily makes are "like the rumble of a far-off siege heard in the provisioned citadel" (36). This vision of Kate as damsel in distress, under pressure from outside, gives way to the comparison made by Kate of herself to "a trembling kid, kept apart a day or two till her turn should come, but sure sooner or later to be introduced into the cage of the lioness" (37). This metaphor is extended for half a paragraph before changing into a figure of Maud Lowder as "Britannia of the Market Place," with "a reticule for her prejudices as deep as that other pocket, the pocket full of coins stamped in her image, that the world best knew her by" (37). The narrator returns to the first of this metaphoric series by remarking that "It was in fact as a besieger, we have hinted, that our young lady, in the provisioned citadel, had for the present most to think of her, and what made her formidable in this character was that she was unscrupulous and immoral" (37).

Besides making plain the presence of a narrating personality in the use of the first-person plural, this comment also demonstrates how the ingredients of a metaphor which is apparently the responsibility of a character may become part of the narrator's own discourse--or perhaps how a metaphor attributed to a character may originate with the narrator. In "Myth and Dialectic in the Later Novels," Austin Warren notes both that James "proudly renounces his right of omniscience" in the late work (552), and that the "'expressionism' of the later novels makes it difficult to locate, psychologically," the metaphorical, emblematic perceptions so characteristic of this period, in the minds or perceptions of the characters (557). Having to choose

between either the characters or James as the psychological site of "emblematic perception," Warren concludes that all of James's characters have instinctive reactions "which in art must express themselves (even if by intermediation of the novelist) in metaphoric terms" (557).

In this instance it is difficult to know whether the phrase "we have hinted" suggests that the original likening of Kate to someone under attack is the narrator's own invention, or if the comparison is Kate's, picked up and developed by the narrator. Is it part of Kate's "conveniently" picturing her aunt this way that Mrs. Lowder is associated with "the roar of the seige and the thick of the fray"? (38). Or is this all part of "those dangers that, by our showing, made the young woman linger and lurk above, while the elder, both militant and diplomatic, covered as much of the ground as possible"? (38). The narrator begins the next paragraph with the words "These impressions," which add to the reader's sense of uncertainty over the status of these figures as accurate representations of Kate's conception of her situation, and suggests at the same time that the impressions referred to here are those gathered by the narrator himself as well as those registered by Kate Croy.

The frequency with which the narrator refers to "our young lady" and "our young woman," as well as to "our subject," and "our analysis," has led Laurence Holland, as well as Bersani, to see the "narrative convention" of the novel as "the intimate connection" between "the author's voice" and the center of consciousness (286). Holland sees this combinatory technique as exercising authority "by delegating authority and confessing responsibility" (286). At the same time, he also sees these interventions by "the author" as a "lapse or flaw in the 'guarded objectivity' of his drama," paralleling Kate and Densher's "questionable commitment" (286). Holland's association of the narrator with James persuades him to accept the narrator's comments and judgements as supremely authoritative as well as confessional: as indications that James could not stay out of his story. Holland sees the language of

the novel as fate, and connects the observation of characters, and in particular of Milly Theale, with the danger and tragedy that awaits them (289-290). The "watchful care" of Susan Stringham for Milly is, for Holland, dangerous, and finally "inseparable from the reader's and James's own" (289). This comment ignores what is clear about Susie's interest in Milly: that the young girl is a social treasure, a trophy that Susie can bear to London and place before Maud Lowder in triumph. Neither James nor the reader can be said to have the same motive in watching Milly, or to view Susie's use of her for this purpose with happiness. What Holland also does not acknowledge, in his insistence that the narrator is the vision and voice of James himself, is the persuasive power of narrative language that can at times be distinguished from the attitudes of both the reader and James.

One crucial difference between this narrator and the traditionally omniscient and remote narrators of nineteenth-century fiction is this figure's relation to the narrated world. Gerard Genette distinguishes between heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narrators based on the narrator's absence or presence in the story, and between extra- and intradiegetic narrators based on the narrator's placement outside or inside the first level of narration. Omniscient narrators are extradiegetic (they exist outside the world they talk about) as well as heterodiegetic (they do not tell their own stories). First-person narrators are intradiegetic (they participate in the narrated world) and often homodiegetic, although they may tell stories about others. Omniscient narrators are free to talk about the contents of characters' minds, but are not characters themselves, and although their judgements of characters may colour their discourse, and influence the reader, they are not themselves subject to influence by other characters. In this context, it is difficult to place the narrator of The Wings of the Dove. Although not corporeally present in the narrated world, the narrator does not speak with the unqualified authority of the omniscient narrator. More interestingly, there are places in the novel where this narrator's discourse becomes

contaminated by terms picked up from other characters' conversations or thoughts. These terms, and the attitudes they give rise to, make their way into the narrator's discourse, and exert considerable rhetorical influence. In this way the narrator may be said to resemble other characters rather than other fictional narrators. In a sense, the narrator of Wings is even in competition with other characters for the right to tell the story: he is certainly not the only figure in the novel possessed of the talent for observation, and other characters too examine the speech and gestures of their companions for meaning.

The introduction of Merton Densher in Book Second of Volume One provides an example of characterization in contrast to that of Kate in Book First. Whereas Kate presents herself as a forceful and determined personality, restless in her father's home not out of indecision, but because everything in the place literally repels her, Densher first appears in the park as a person whose "behaviour was noticeably wanting in point" (45). The cause of his apparent aimlessness is in fact that he awaits Kate Croy, but the narrator uses this first impression as an index to his character, which by implication lacks rigour and commitment. The narrator's description of Densher as "refined, as might have been said, for the City" and "sceptical, it might have been felt, for the Church," as "perhaps at the same time too much in his mere senses for poetry" suggests, along with his absent-mindedness and irregular cleverness, his tendency "to drop what was near and to take up what was far," the unfixed nature of youth (46). Though the narrator seems prepared to withhold final judgements of Densher's moral qualities, there are enough qualifications in this passage--including the narrator's complaint that the trouble with Densher is that he "looked vague without looking weak--idle without looking empty"--to leave us with doubts about Densher's personal reliability, and thoughts about his potential malleability.

As there is a shift in the narrator's sympathy away from Kate in Volume Two as her intentions towards Milly become clear, so Densher's dubious reliability becomes more sympathetic to the narrator as the story develops, and the young man who seems so formless here, so vague, becomes for many readers as well the very barometer of morality in the novel. For the nonce, though, Merton Densher is immediately embraced by the narrator's almost avuncular language as "our young man" (54), and completes "our young couple" (59), over which the narrator fondly watches.

Watching too, in a fashion both less tolerant and less locateable, is Kate's Aunt Maud. Maud Lowder, with her massively furnished house and a personality Kate refers to as "prodigious" dominates this novel from the beginning. Millicent Bell calls her "the mythic divinity of the book, the representative of the great hidden force underlying its events" (101). It is Aunt Maud, rather than Milly, against whom Kate Croy is pitted in a battle of wills, for it is only in response to Mrs. Lowder's plans for her that Kate takes up the deception of Milly, as Ernest Sandeen notes (513). He also points out that it is Mrs. Lowder "who first sets in motion the scheme to mislead Milly Theale," and that "Kate's primary objective is not to deceive her friend Milly but to outwit her Aunt Maud" (513). Even before she has actually appeared as an articulate character, Maud makes entrances through other characters' images of her, as Kate's Britannia of the Market Place in Book First, and as "the principal lady at the circus" (apparently) to Densher in Book Second (54). And as other earlier images of Aunt Maud have been difficult to award with certainty wholly to Kate or the narrator, so the following passage too seems to combine elements of Densher's thoughts and the narrator's without distinguishing clearly between Densher's discourse and the narrator's discourse:

It was impossible to keep Mrs. Lowder out of their scheme. She stood there too close to it and too solidly; it had to open a gate, at a given

point, do what they would, to take her in. And she came in, always, while they sat together rather helplessly watching her, as in a coach-and-four; she drove round their prospect as the principal lady at the circus drives round the ring, and she stopped the coach in the middle to alight with majesty. It was our young man's sense that she was magnificently vulgar, but yet quite that this wasn't all. (54)

The recognition that Aunt Maud is a considerable force to be faced is surely Densher's, and he might well take some journalist's pleasure in reducing the sense of her particular power over his life to a circus spectacle--though the fantasy ends with the acknowledgement that Aunt Maud's belief in herself creates a convincing sort of majesty. The image might also belong to the narrator, who has already shown a fondness for elaborate imagery, and has already postulated a "passer" in the park for whom our young couple would have signified "a long engagement," and then referred to "the presumed diagnosis of the stranger" as if he himself had not invented the observer (52). The possible responsibility of the narrator for this image of Aunt Maud might also hint at the narrator's own need to deflate her stature and power, for as the story proceeds, it is Maud Lowder, more than any other character, who challenges the narrator's rhetorical supremacy, who declares her right to define not only the nature of the relationships around her, but their significance, their meaning, as well.

Densher feels that power during the interview he has with Aunt Maud over the complete impossibility of his relationship with Kate, not only in what he terms the ominous cruelty of her over-furnished rooms, or in their "frank and large" (64) discussion of her plans for Kate, but also in what Aunt Maud does not say to him. After replying, rather flippantly he thinks, to Aunt Maud's statement that she wants to see Kate "high, high up--high up and in the light" (65), Densher imagines her reproach to him: "'Don't be too impossible!--he feared from his friend, for a

moment, some such answer as that; and then felt, as she spoke otherwise, as if she were letting him off easily" (65).

This kind of discourse is not fully accounted for in the typologies of most discourse analysts, which tend to gloss over its difference from other, more tractable kinds of direct or indirect discourse. Arlene Young has called this device "hypothetical discourse," and defined it as "dialogues or monologues which are presented as quoted speech on the page, though not in fact (or fiction) ever verbalized" (382). Young distinguishes hypothetical discourse from what Carren Kaston, in her study of The Golden Bowl, identifies as "imagined speech" by pointing out that hypothetical discourse cannot be as confidently located in the mind of a character as Kaston's term suggests, and that it proves to be a valuable guide to interpretation of that novel, "a ficelle embedded in the narrative" (383). Hypothetical discourse functions most fully as a ficelle by confronting the reader with a verbal construction which practically frustrates any and all attempts to award responsibility for it to either character or narrator.

In the example of hypothetical discourse quoted above, Densher apparently constructs a response from Mrs. Lowder that she never, in fact, makes. Nevertheless, the hypothetical construction accomplishes much for her case, as it makes her actual reply to Densher seem mild. The tag that follows the comment suggests, though, that the words in quotation marks are not even necessarily what Densher imagined Mrs. Lowder ready to say: "he feared from his friend, for a moment, some such answer as that" (65). It is impossible to pinpoint the location of the tag: the sentence may be an example of ID, in which case the narrator is reporting the content of Densher's thought, and the words "some such answer as that" are Densher's. The tag also resembles, in tense and voice, FID, in which case "some such answer as that" could be the narrator's admission that what has been given as the unspoken reprimand is conjectural, offered by the narrator as an approximation of what Densher actually

thought. How close these words are to what Densher dreaded hearing is unclear; certainly they do the job of conveying to us Densher's anxiety at having overstepped his bounds with someone he is trying to impress, but they do so while creating a whole new sense of uncertainty about the narrator's apparent omniscience.

A more extended and complex passage of hypothetical discourse appears a few paragraphs later, signalling the end of Densher's interview with Mrs. Lowder. Densher is taking in once more the sense of his own lack of importance in Mrs. Lowder's world:

Aunt Maud clearly conveyed it, though he couldn't later on have said how. "You don't really matter, I believe, so much as you think, and I'm not going to make you a martyr by banishing you. Your performances with Kate in the Park are ridiculous so far as they're meant as consideration for me; and I had much rather see you myself--since you're, in your way, my dear young man, delightful--and arrange with you, count with you, as I easily, as I perfectly should. Do you suppose me so stupid as to quarrel with you if it's not really necessary? It won't--it would be too absurd!--be necessary. I can bite your head off any day, any day I really open my mouth; and I'm dealing with you now see--and successfully judge--without opening it. I do things handsomely all round--I place you in the presence of the plan with which, from the moment it's a case of taking you seriously, you're incompatible. Come then as near it as you like, walk all round it--don't be afraid you'll hurt it!--and live on with it before you."

He afterwards felt that if she hadn't absolutely phrased all this it was because she so soon made him out as going with her far enough. (66)

Unravelling this passage for evidence of what Mrs. Lowder actually said to Densher is extremely difficult. It seems certain that she couldn't have said everything

recorded in the quotation marks, or else Densher would be able to say exactly how she had conveyed to him that he really didn't count for much, rather than puzzle over just how he managed to get that impression from her. That Mrs. Lowder may, though, have said some of these things to Densher is also possible, given the resemblance of this passage to an earlier example of her blunt manner of delivery, when she begins the interview with Densher with the sentence, "If I hadn't been ready to go very much further, you understand, I wouldn't have gone so far" (64). As in this instance of direct discourse, the section of hypothetical discourse quoted above begins without an introductory tag. We might well assume that the quoted words are then, as they were earlier, Mrs. Lowder's own. The comment that follows the quoted material, though, is so full of qualification as to make it impossible to declare with certainty just how much of this Mrs. Lowder did in fact say, just how closely what is given to the reader resembles whatever remarks Mrs. Lowder did make, and further, how much of the comment itself is Densher and how much the narrator.

Densher could have picked up the gist of Mrs. Lowder's feelings about him from her physical presence, from signs made during their conversation, from body language, or simply have extrapolated from what her furniture had to say about her taste, her wealth, and her power to keep guests waiting for her. As an aspiring journalist, he could within all probability invent for himself a summary of these impressions and carry it away with him, couched in Mrs. Lowder's own terms and sentence structures. Certainly the affection for Densher that colours this material--"since you're, in your way, my dear young man, delightful"--seems to reflect Densher's own conviction that Aunt Maud likes him, a conviction not shared by Kate, who suspects that Aunt Maud is "seeking to know [Densher] in order to see best where to 'have' him" (51). The possibility that this material shows the success of that endeavour, that Densher's vanity has been touched, is real.

What is also unclear in hypothetical discourse is the degree of narrator involvement in either its construction or its reporting. Two minds, Densher's and the narrator's, are responsible for the appearance of these sentences, but in what proportion? Has the narrator presented exactly what Densher might (or might not) have heard (or imagined) Maud Lowder say to him? Or is it likely that the narrator, as an observer of both Densher and Mrs. Lowder, has contributed words, phrases, or subjective tone, to what is given here? That the narrator behaves in an editorial fashion, deciding what to report and what to omit, is explicit in his admission that "Other things than those we have presented had come up before the close of his scene with Aunt Maud, but this matter of her not treating him as a peril of the first order easily predominated" (66). The use of quotation marks in hypothetical discourse also has considerable rhetorical significance. Are these words in quotation marks because Densher remembers them, or imagines them, as spoken; or are these quotation marks the responsibility of the narrator, performing another editorial duty in presenting material in a way that minimizes his role as narrator? For as Arlene Young points out, hypothetical discourse creates an "illusion of reality produced by the use of the form of direct quotation rather than that of free indirect discourse, thus giving a semblance of precision and authenticity to what is actually vague and indeterminate" (390).

The indeterminacy of hypothetical discourse echoes the indeterminacy of other forms of indirect discourse in the novel, such as FID and FFID. Like FID and FFID, hypothetical discourse is a puzzle of accountability, in which the contributions of a character and a narrator may be so finely mixed as to finally frustrate any declaration of just who is responsible for what term. What hypothetical discourse adds to the uncertainty created by FID and FFID is the persuasive force, as Young points out, of an apparently direct discourse form. The questions of responsibility raised by FID are thus complicated by the presence of quotation marks, which places the entire

hypothetical passage into the paradoxical state of being convincing and conjectural at the same time.

This type of discourse thus functions as a form of mise en abyme within the text: it is a discourse which demonstrates the infinite regression of accountability (whose words are the original and direct, whose the derived and indirect?) by dramatizing that uncertainty as direct discourse. It is as if, having reached the vanishing point of indeterminacy, the text, instead of collapsing into itself, invents another level of fiction. As a rhetorical strategy then, hypothetical discourse both reveals and embodies the fictional nature of all attempts to represent "what really happened."

The Preface to Wings recounts the particular pleasure of "beginning far back" and "going behind" in the construction of the novel, so that the entrance of the book's nominal heroine is delayed till Book Third (8). The interest of the story of Milly Theale and her struggle is not in "the record predominately of a collapse," but in her efforts to oppose her fate, to "found her struggle on particular human interests, which would inevitably determine, in respect to her, the attitude of other persons, persons affected in such a manner as to make them part of the action" (Preface 5). The books beginning the novel, which concentrate on the relatively powerless positions of Kate Croy, Merton Densher, and even Lord Mark, in relation to Maud Lowder, thus prepare a scene of peculiar tension for the introduction of Milly Theale. The narrator's presentation of these characters and their respective potentials--Maud Lowder's for coercive sponsorship, Kate's for material preoccupation, Densher's for laxity, and Lord Mark's for high-mannered parasitism--create lines of force radiating out from Lancaster Gate, and more specifically, from Maud Lowder's reticules of opinion and money, into which Milly Theale walks in the middle books of the novel. Milly exerts her own personal force certainly, but appearing as she does, when she

does, and accompanied not only by Susan Stringham but by an immense fortune, Milly unwittingly fills the fantasies of the characters ranged around her as everything from an "heiress of all the ages," or an aristocrat's meal ticket, to a doomed princess.

The Preface refers obliquely to Milly as a kind of siren, huge sinking ship, or great failing business (6), a figure whose need of others to help her "wrest from her shrinking hour still as much of the fruit of life as possible" (5) draws them to her--perhaps to be wrecked and drowned themselves. The participation of other characters in Milly's drama thereby becomes "their drama too--that of their promoting her illusion, under her importunity, for reasons, for interests and advantages, from motives and points of view, of their own" (5). Some of these motives "would be of the highest order--others doubtless mightn't," but this mixture would finally be "her sum of experience . . . what she should have known." The reader would see, ranged around her, other characters "terrified and tempted and charmed; bribed away, it may even be, from more prescribed and natural orbits, inheriting from their connexion with her strange difficulties and still stranger opportunities, confronted with rare questions and called upon for new discriminations" (5).

The reader and the narrator of The Wings of the Dove, no less than the other characters ranged around Milly Theale, are called upon as well to ask questions and to make "new discriminations," especially when regarding Milly through the various screens thrown up by others which mediate any view of her in the novel. Susie Stringham, Milly's romantically inclined companion, is the most easily-identified of these screens; her conceptions of Milly, informed by her reading of New England serials, influence every perception she has of her young friend. Sister M. Corona Sharp refers to Susie's "incurable romanticism" as that which "fairly transmutes the 'slim, constantly pale, delicately haggard, anomalously, agreeably angular young person' from New York" (184). Other critics have also noted the degree to which

Susie's "fairy tale method is responsible for the introduction of many of the romantic elements in the novel" (Harland 313). F. O. Matthiessen points out that Susie's is an imagination fed on Pater and Maeterlinck, "the Puritan imagination 'finally disencumbered' of its background and determined to make up for all its 'starved generations' by discovering in Milly the richest possibilities of romance" (492-93). John Carlos Rowe concurs, writing that "[f]rom the beginning, Milly stands for the 'real thing' for Susie--the embodiment of that 'romantic life' which has always been her private dream" ("Symbolization" 138). Rowe mentions the intentional irony in this--that Susie's "'reality' should be tied up with the 'romance' of her fairy princess" ("Symbolization" 138). The irony is also that such romance is precisely what Milly travels to London to escape. In its place she craves "people," and scenery that is "personal and human" (93).

Despite critical recognition of the effect of Susie Stringham's romanticism on the portrayal of Milly, the general regard for Milly as the symbolic centre of the novel seems still to be based on the characterization of Milly established in Book Third, a characterization coloured by Susie's thoughts and impressions, and very clearly named by the narrator as emanating from Susie's fanciful pre-occupations. The method of the narrator in this section of the novel is indirect, an indirection made much of by critics who claim that Milly is "more powerful, pure and true" in absence than in presence (Bradbury, "Celebration of Absence" 87), that she is too spiritual to be realistically portrayed, that Susie's worshipful attitude towards Milly is instructive for the reader, and that Susie is described in the Preface as "a reliable register, whose perceptions forerun the reader's" (Greenwald 182). The reliance on Susie as reflector for Milly in Book Third does not carry with it a guarantee of reliability, for James declares in the Preface his "main anxiety" that "the air of each shall be given," and that the reader should participate in each of these agents' points of view. In this regard, he writes, "We were to have revelled in Mrs. Stringham, my heroine's

attendent friend, her fairly choral Bostonian" (Preface 11). Such a gently comic description of Susie is an unlikely testimony to the veracity, in any finally authoritative sense, of her perceptions.

In contrast to the indeterminacy of the indirect discourse of earlier books, the use of indirect discourse in Book Third usually distinguishes, rather than merges, the point of view of the narrator and the point of view of Susie Stringham. As in earlier chapters of the novel, the narrator here stands very close to Susie, appearing to follow and record her thoughts. But at particularly crucial points the narrator distances his own discourse from that of Mrs. Stringham, marking for the reader a discernible distance between the attitudes he perceives, and the attitudes he himself may hold.

The narrator's and the reader's position as observer is signalled by the use of "we" and "our" throughout the chapter: "as we meet them" (75), "the young lady in whom we are interested" (76), "our good lady's sympathy" (77), "our friend's imagination" (79), "our young woman" (83), "our observer" (87), "our fanciful friend" (92). The locution is a constant reminder of the distance between the narrator and the scene described, and in the case of Mrs. Stringham, of a difference in perception as well. It is Mrs. Stringham, after all, who is called "fanciful." This distance is preserved for most of Book Third, with the narrator presenting Susie, in a gently ironic manner, as a woman completely overcome by what she construes as the romance of her position as attendant to the heiress of all the ages.

While the method of narration in these chapters is indirect, and thus affected by the ambiguity characteristic of all indirect discourse, there is nevertheless a strong melodramatic cast to the material presented as representative of Susie's thoughts and feelings. This is in keeping with the observations of a woman who contributes pieces to magazines, and whose dream has ever been to "be in truth literary" (77). The emphasis in this example suggests a faithful rendering of Susie's feelings, in Susie's

own idiom. Sentences like this in ID, which seem to include some elements of Susie's actual thought, are accompanied by sentences of straightforward commentary, in which the narrator makes some statement that points out the limitations of Susie's perceptions. The narrator says, for example, that Mrs. Stringham moved "in a fine cloud of observation and suspicion; she was in the position, as she believed, of knowing much more about Milly Theale than Milly herself knew" (76). Nowhere in the pages that follow is Susie's vision of Milly as "the real thing, the romantic life itself" (78), left unqualified by the narrator.⁸ Instead, the narrator's method of reporting the contents of a character's consciousness by coming as close as he can to that character is matched by a truly remarkable number of distancing comments and words. The effect is that of an observer trying to get as close as he can to a mind he wishes at the same time to be distinguished from, so unlike his own does it appear to be.

With an air of slightly superior distance, the narrator refers to Susie's "little life," a life much impressed by the "apparition" of Milly's much more substantial one:

She was alone, she was stricken, she was rich, and in particular was strange--a combination in itself of a nature to engage Mrs. Stringham's attention. But it was the strangeness that most determined our good lady's sympathy, convinced as she had to be that it was greater than any one else--any one but the sole Susan Stringham--supposed. (77)

The mixture of narrator comment and what seems to be Susie's own words is quite complex. The first part of the first sentence, up to the dash, presents itself as Susie's, while what follows the dash seems to be the narrator's, particularly in the change from pronoun to formal name. Similarly, "our good lady's sympathy" comes from the narrator, but the rest of the sentence is an odd portrayal of Susie's conviction that Milly is much stranger than anyone but she can really see, phrased by the narrator

in such a way as to suggest that this insistence is habitual, and perhaps even slightly vain and tiresome.

This kind of narration carries on through both chapters of Book Third, embedding words and phrases redolent of Susie's fictional aspirations and obsessions in the more controlled and calm medium of the narrator's discourse. The blend is skilful, but it is still possible to distinguish Mrs. Stringham's attitude, and occasionally even her "voice," in the heightened tone or language of these sentences, especially, of course, where the narrator marks that voice for the reader:

She knew, the clever lady, what the principle itself represented, and limits of her own store; and a certain alarm would have grown upon her if something else hadn't grown faster. This was, fortunately for her--and we give it in her own words--the sense of a harrowing pathos. That, primarily, was what appealed to her, what seemed to open the door of romance for her still wider than any, than a still more reckless, connexion with the 'picture-papers.' For such was essentially the point: it was rich, romantic, abysmal, to have, as was evident, thousands and thousands a year, to have youth and intelligence and, if not beauty, at least in equal measure a high dim charming ambiguous oddity, which was even better, and then on top of all to enjoy boundless freedom, the freedom of the wind in the desert--it was unspeakably touching to be so equipped and yet to have been reduced by fortune to little humble-minded mistakes.

It brought our friend's imagination back again to New York . .
 . . (79)

The almost breathless piling up of adjectives, the very tone of the interjection "which was even better," the ultra-romantic image of "the freedom of the wind in the desert," all of which is "unspeakably touching," give us the almost histrionic quality of

Susie's imagination in FID, the end of which is signalled by the beginning of the next paragraph. Susie is clearly, as the narrator puts it, "in convenient possession of her subject," the term "convenient" a dry comment on the ready-made categories of Susie's mind into which she places Milly. The sprinkling of the narrator's discourse with terms and phrases lifted, apparently, from Susie's own speculations about Milly's background, continues in the next few sentences, with references to "the luxuriant tribe of which the rare creature was the final flower," to her "handsome dead cousins, lurid uncles, beautiful varnished aunts, persons all busts and curls," and ending with "[t]his was poetry--it was also history--Mrs. Stringham thought, to a finer tune even than Maeterlinck and Pater, than Marbot and Gregorovius" (80).

With Mrs. Stringham's character so outlined, it is hard to see how she could be read as a reliable source for information about Milly. Sister M. Corona Sharp remarks of Milly's effect on Susie that it is "not that Milly Theale is so great in herself; but that for the little New England mind she is simply tremendous" (189). It is also clear from the narrator's careful presentation of Susie's thoughts that her experience of Milly is most often described in terms of "impressions" rather than in terms of knowledge. Susie has an "impression" of Milly's greatness (80), and might even have thought of the girl as "the biggest impression of her life" (81); at the end of a week's travel Susie has "the impression, indistinct as yet" that something is bothering Milly (83).

Here the narrator steps forward to make the clearest statement in the novel about the method of narration he employs with respect to Milly, and in so doing defines the peculiar dangers of coming so close not to Milly herself, but to the characters for whom she is a fascination, a cipher, a reality problem:

Such a matter as this may at all events speak of the style in which our young woman could affect those who were near her, may testify to the sort of interest she could inspire. She worked--and seemingly quite

without design--upon the sympathy, the curiosity, the fancy of her associates, and we shall really ourselves scarce otherwise come closer to her than by feeling their impression and sharing, if need be, their confusion. (83, emphasis added)

This declaration of the narrator's intention to concentrate on the effect Milly has on other characters immediately raises the issue of his reliability as witness and recorder of events. What the narrator denies here is his own omniscience, since he proposes to participate--along with the reader--in the confusion of other characters "if need be." The purpose behind this strategy is to approximate, as closely as possible, the experience of these figures as Milly works upon their sympathy, curiosity, and fancy. What this narrator seems to be after is something James himself regarded as a great value: intensity of impression. Intensity is greatest, maintained James, where a fine mind is subject to bewilderment, and an omniscient mind is, by definition, not bewildered. Like the other characters he observes, then, the narrator will proceed by impression, and experience confusion, the better to convey to the reader the sense of the scene before him.

John Carlos Rowe writes of this passage that the narrator's "we' involves his mask as writer and teller as well as the would-be reader in the ambiguity of Milly's 'style' and 'design'" ("Symbolization" 142). It is in the influence Milly has on others that she is great. Rowe quotes the following lines in which the narrator once more uses Mrs. Stringham as a model for his style--"She reduced them, Mrs. Stringham would have said, to a consenting bewilderment"--as evidence that

the narrator dramatizes his own critical dictum. Any approach to Milly, as we circle closer, throws us by a kind of centrifugal force out toward all that which surrounds her. Just as we see Milly perched on her alpine ledge only to voyage through the puzzles of Mrs. Stringham's consciousness, the narrator's own approach to the center

of his subject returns to the impressions of others. ("Symbolization" 143)

With this method, the narrator achieves a strange kind of verisimilitude, for confusion, and imperfect knowledge based on impression, is the "reality" he observes. At the same time, the narrator declares himself to be potentially vulnerable to those impressions and confusions, as he does not simply report them from some superior and omniscient vantage, but shares them as well. The risk this kind of narrator runs is that of being unable, at some point, to separate his own perceptions from those of the characters he is so closely watching, or even to articulate clearly the difference between his own uncertainty about what he sees, and the uncertainty he detects in others.

As a figure perhaps more than commonly observant, this narrator is well-qualified to extrapolate from appearance, attitudes, behaviour and speech to what may lie behind such surfaces, and the hypothetical constructions of motive he offers to the reader may be more probable than those put forward by a character such as Maud Lowder. But as a figure with self-confessed human limitations, he is no more likely than Maud Lowder to construct explanations of or motives for behaviour that can finally be accepted as authoritative, for there is no figure with superior knowledge who stands at one remove from the narrator, and against whom his reliability can be measured. What is there for the reader, however, is the discourse of both the narrator and the characters, and the ambiguities of the narrative in this novel put increased pressure on the reader, especially after the revelation of the narrator's non-omniscience, to examine the texture of that discourse for signs, not only of the narrator's limitations, but of his increasing surrender to the same impressions and confusions he witnesses in others. There is no reason to assume that without a demonstration of extreme resistance, on the narrator's part, to the pull created by what people make of Milly Theale, that he too will not be caught in "that whirlpool

movement of the waters produced by the sinking of a big vessel or the failure of a great business; when we figure to ourselves the strong narrowing eddies, the immense force of suction, the general engulfment that, for any neighbouring object, makes immersion inevitable" (Preface 6-7).

The passages quoted above, in which language reflecting Susie's romantic and rather hyperbolic inclinations is highlighted by the narrator's use of indirect and free indirect discourse, make it clear that total immersion in Susie Stringham's regard for Milly is not yet a danger for the narrator. This method persists in sentences of hypothetical conjecture, in which the narrator suggests that the interpretation he offers to the reader of Milly's influence on Susie is "quite the way Mrs. Stringham would have expressed it--as the princess in a conventional tragedy might have affected the confidant if a personal emotion had ever been permitted to the latter"; and that Susie's sense of Milly's "definite doom . . . might have represented possibly, with its involved loneliness and other mysteries, the weight under which she fancied her companion's admirable head occasionally, and ever so submissively, bowed" (85).

The narrator perhaps prides himself on his ability to "catch" the tone of Susie's impressions so skillfully--in much the same way that Susie "fondly believed she had her 'note'" in the stories she wrote for her beloved magazines (77). He does not want to be confused with Susie, though, and the distancing techniques he uses to distinguish himself from her culminate in the famous scene in which Susie finds Milly sitting on the edge of a slab of rock. Just after phrasing a question in FID to suggest Susie's anxiety at finding the discarded volume of Tauchnitz--"but as she hadn't yet picked it up what on earth had become of her?"--the narrator steps forward in the first person, as if to confirm for us his presence as a separate consciousness before immersing himself once more in Susie's perceptions of the scene: "Mrs. Stringham, I hasten to add, was within a few moments to see . . ." (87).

What Susie sees is what her sensibilities prepare her to see: a tableau of "harrowing pathos" suggestive first of all of suicide, and then of stoical resolution:

For Mrs. Stringham stifled a cry on taking in what she believed to be the danger of such a perch for a mere maiden; her liability to slip, to slide, to leap, to be precipitated by a single false movement, by a turn of the head--how could one tell?--into whatever was beneath. A thousand thoughts, for the minute, roared in the poor lady's ears It was a commotion that left our observer intensely still and holding her breath. What had first been offered her was the possibility of a latent intention--however wild the idea--in such a posture; of some betrayed accordance of Milly's caprice with a horrible hidden obsession. But since Mrs. Stringham stood as motionless as if a sound, a syllable, must have produced the start that would be fatal, so even the lapse of a few seconds had partly a reassuring effect. It gave her time to receive the impression which, when she some minutes later softly retraced her steps, was to be the sharpest she carried away. This was the impression that if the girl was deeply and recklessly meditating there she wasn't meditating a jump; she was on the contrary, as she sat, much more in a state of uplifted and unlimited possession that had nothing to gain from violence. She was looking down on the kingdoms of the earth, and though indeed that of itself might well go to the brain, it wouldn't be with a view of renouncing them. Was she choosing among them or did she want them all? This question, before Mrs. Stringham had decided what to do, made others vain; in accordance with which she saw, or believed she did, that if it might be dangerous to call out, to sound in any way a surprise, it would probably be safe enough to withdraw as she had come. (87-88, emphasis added)

The strong current of Mrs. Stringham's romanticism carries her thoughts from one melodramatic interpretation to another. The narrator is at first careful to qualify what he sees her see--"what she believed to be," "she saw, or believed she saw"--while at the same time weaving terms typical of Susie's attitudes into his own discourse. Exclamatory fragments characteristic of FID appear too, in the agitated question Susie seems to ask herself--"how could one tell?"--and in her own self-conscious realization that the thought of suicide is, perhaps, a wild idea. That the vision of Milly as contemplating the riches of the earth is Susie's projection is also stressed in the narrator's wording: it may be the sharpest of all those impressions Susie carries away with her, but it is an "impression" nonetheless.

The sentences directly following this one mediate almost imperceptibly away from obvious ID, that is, the narrator's report of what Susie might be thinking, to sentences often read as DN, as the comment of the narrator on the scene he witnesses over Mrs. Stringham's shoulder. The question that becomes the crystallization of Susie's view of Milly's situation--"Was she choosing among them or did she want them all?"--is given in FFID, creating the illusion of direct access to Susie's mind. The distance between DN and DC that forms the only basis for discriminating between the attitudes of these two figures is gone, or at least not obviously marked. The narrator's point of view collapses into Susie's. This move from ID to FFID has been so subtle though, and the narrator's discourse so seamlessly replaced by what may be read as Susie's, that the sentence has often been taken as an appropriate and authoritative interpretation of the scene. "Everyone," writes Millicent Bell, "has seen here a suggestion of Christ's temptation" (103). The sentence itself is, however, a complex question, a rhetorical form that assumes the analogy between Milly and the tempted Christ in the very act of posing the question. There is no statement by the narrator that Susie is in the least justified in reading Milly's posture in such an exalted way. And yet this scene has become, in John

Carlos Rowe's words, "a paradigm for the entire allegorical thrust of the novel's imagery" ("Symbolization" 141).

This entire passage has proven one of the most commented on in the novel, and the one most frequently cited as evidence of James's intention to imbue Milly with transcendental significance. Millicent Bell sees here the image of Milly "in her status of the 'dove' of the title," and suggests that James "may have consciously desired to oppose to modern pragmatism the powerful vocabulary of Christian ethics." Readers cannot, writes Bell, "read the meaning of much of Milly's behaviour without reference to the life of Christ; she is a comparable human example of the ethic of generous love" (103). Elissa Greenwald sees this moment of Milly brooding over the abyss as "pregnant with Miltonic as well as Hawthornian associations," and as "identified with James's own creative spirit" (178). F. O. Mathiessen is dissatisfied with the incomplete analogy of the scene, in which he detects no sense that James wished to present Milly as "tempted by the devil in her choice of this world" (494). He is answered by Bell, who believes the scene is charged with Christ's refusal "to renounce his humanity" rather than with the temptations of material possession (103). Rowe extends Bell's point, arguing that in this scene, as in others, "the allegorical referents" ("Symbolization" 141) for an interpretation of Milly as somehow divine fail to coalesce. The central myth of the novel, that of "the incarnation, Passion, crucifixion, and ascent of Christ--is manipulated to destroy any possibility of fulfilled meaning" ("Symbolization" 134). Rowe mentions "the stream of Susie's consciousness" in which the effort to "try to push Milly into an archetypal figure" takes place, but he does not see the narrator as undercutting these attempts.

Clearly, though, it is Mrs. Stringham, rather than the narrator, who attributes to Milly the "latent intention" of suicide, and who carries away an impression that solidifies into a conviction on the next page that "the future wasn't to exist for her princess in the form of any sharp or simple release from the human predicament"

(88). The narrator's commenting consciousness returns in the concluding sentences of the chapter when he observes that the image that remained with Susie "kept the character of a revelation," that all the aspects of Milly previously known to Susie had "been gathered in again to feed Mrs. Stringham's flame," and when he remarks that these "are things that will more distinctly appear for us, and they are meanwhile briefly represented by the enthusiasm that was stronger on our friend's part than any doubt" (88). The reader is cautioned here to regard Mrs. Stringham's perceptions as those of an over-enthusiastic reader, determined to find significance everywhere. That Susie tends to see things around her in terms of fiction is confirmed by the narrator's description of her reminded, as she listens to the sounds of activity outside the alpine inn, of

old stories, old pictures, historic flights, escapes, pursuits, things that had happened, things indeed that by a sort of strange congruity helped her to read the meanings of the greatest interest into the relation in which she was now so deeply involved. It was natural that this record of the magnificence of her companion's position should strike her as after all the best meaning she could extract; for she herself was seated in the magnificence as in a court-carriage--she came back to that, and such a method of progression, such a view from crimson cushions, would evidently have a great deal more to give. (92)

It is in this passage that the narrator, building on Susie's sense of Milly's greatness, and showing how this feeling is reified through the metaphor of the carriage to become for Susie something concrete, as tangible as rich cushions, suggests how closely Susie's belief in Milly's grandeur is tied to her awareness of Milly's wealth. Implicit too, in the last words of the sentence, in which Susie's own thoughts are given sharper form than perhaps they would take in her own mind, is the beginning of Susie's consciousness of how valuable Milly is as a social counter.

That consciousness has already surfaced in the narrator's report in ID of Susie's thought that "she had as beneath her feet a mine of something precious. She seemed to herself to stand near the mouth, not yet quite cleared. The mine but needed working and would certainly yield a treasure. She wasn't thinking, either, of Milly's gold" (88). It is once again difficult to say for sure if this last sentence is an indirect version of Susie's thought--"I'm not thinking, either, of Milly's gold"--or if it is a narrator's comment on the absence of any monetary preoccupations on Susie's part. It may be both at once, or perhaps even a denial, thought by Susie and voiced by the narrator, that thoughts of Milly's money enter into Susie's conviction that at last she should have something to show Maud Lowder, that Maud "would have nothing like Milly Theale, who constituted the trophy producible by poor Susan" (97).

Books Four and Five of Volume One, devoted to Milly's London triumph, display similar mixtures of DN and DC, with the narrator placed so as to share, or so as to appear to share, Milly's perspective. Here too, as in the rest of the novel, the narrator's discourse occasionally seems to fade away, presenting portions of text in FID and FFID, which can also be read as DN, as belonging to the narrator. Thus, discourse that seems to be a part of a character's consciousness may actually be the responsibility of the narrator. Often it is impossible to resolve the ambiguity created by such passages. We are left instead with a narrative that continually frustrates our attempts to award responsibility for many of these words to either a character securely placed within the story, or to a narrator we take to be outside the story, and therefore capable of providing guidance to us in our evaluation and judgement of events and characters.

As Kate Croy's consciousness was dominated by the material realities of her father's apartment in Book First, so Milly's in Book Fourth is dominated by an impression of things as they become objective correlatives of her sudden plunge into

the social world of Lancaster Gate: "the faces, the hands, the jewels of the women, the sound of words, especially of names, across the table, the shape of the forks, the arrangement of the flowers, the attitude of the servants, the walls of the room, were all touches in a picture and denotements in a play" (99). The play of these objects on Milly's sense of her "alertness of vision" (99), as well as her thoughts of how she and Lord Mark might or might not get along together, are provided in what appears to be FID. The occasional qualifying phrase or two--"She had never, she might well believe"; "She would have described this curiosity" (99)--may be there to remind the reader that this vision of Milly is not unmediated, but it is already hard to tell whether these words refer to the uncertainties and hesitations present in Milly's thoughts, or to the narrator's conjectures about those thoughts. When we read, for example, that Milly "couldn't at this moment for instance have said whether, with her quickened perceptions, she were more enlivened or oppressed" (97), we cannot know for sure whether Milly herself registers this inability, or whether the narrator, watching her facial expressions, her reactions to others, offers a version of what she might be thinking.

All of the characters ranged around Milly treat her as more, and consequently as less, than she is, and all do so for their own convenient purposes. As Rowe points out, the social world Milly enters "is in the throes of radical change and upheaval" ("Symbolization" 144). Relationships, between the old world and the new, between the poor upper class and the rich middle one, are not what they used to be. Lord Mark's conversation to Milly at table is full of these things. He explains, says the narrator,

or at least he hinted--that there was no such thing to-day in London as saying where anyone was. Every one was everywhere--nobody was anywhere . . . --was there anything but the groping and pawing, that of the vague billows of some great greasy sea in mid-Channel, of masses

of bewildered people trying to "get" they didn't know what or where?

(100)

The use of FID in this passage preserves Lord Mark's tone of exasperation at the way in which even the most dependable things--like "sets" of people at dinner parties--have changed. We have a glimpse too of his own confusion and his sense of having lowered himself, not only to participating in such a motley social crowd, but also to confessing these things to a mere American. Milly's very presence at the table is a sign, notes Rowe, "of the shifting order of this modern London," for she is a mere girl "with nothing but her fortune to recommend her" ("Symbolization" 151).

"Nobody here, you know" says Lord Mark to Milly later in the same scene, "does anything for nothing" (106). His remark suggests that those who befriend do so for what they can "make" of the acquaintance. Milly herself senses the beginnings of the process in her comment to Lord Mark that Aunt Maud, far from seeming calculating, is an idealist: "She idealises us, my friend and me, absolutely. She sees us in a light" (106). The narrator's report of Kate's later conversation with Milly echoes Lord Mark, observing that Lord Mark is, like everyone else, "working Lancaster Gate for all it was worth: just as it was, no doubt, working him, and just as the working and the worked were in London, as one might explain, the parties to every relation," and further, that Milly herself will be made to "pay" for her current success (116).

That Milly is in an ideal position to be made much of, and eventually, to be made to "pay" for something, is clear by her unwitting entrance into "the stalemate of relations at Lancaster Gate" (Rowe 151). She is the saving angel "with a thumping bank account" (214) who can be used by characters to free themselves from the manipulations of others: Milly is a prize for Kate to dangle in front of Lord Mark as a substitute for herself, while Aunt Maud sees her as a lure to lead Densher's interest away from Kate. Milly is Susie Stringham's passport into London society, and

Lord Mark's potential financial future. She becomes, eventually, a way for Kate and Densher to "square" Aunt Maud without her knowing it, and finally, a way for Densher to escape responsibility for his betrayal, not only of Milly, but also of Kate.

For Lord Mark, the picture of Milly's charming innocence, framed by her huge fortune, allows him to make his careful advances to her by way of gallantry, as when Milly feels, at Matcham, "as if there were something he wanted to say to her and were only--consciously yet not awkwardly, just delicately--hanging fire." This, at the moment she and Lord Mark come into view of the Bronzino, "appeared to amount to . . . 'Do let a fellow who isn't a fool take care of you a little'" (137). It is here that Milly is reminded of Mrs. Lowder's earlier words to her that she must let "us all think for you a little, take care of you and watch over you" (134). Milly's consciousness that taking care of her was, "wasn't it, a peu pres, what all the people with the kind eyes were wishing," coincides with her sight of the Bronzino:

Once more things melted together--the beauty and the history and the facility and the splendid midsummer glow: it was a sort of magnificent maximum, the pink dawn of an apotheosis coming so curiously soon. What in fact befell was that, as she afterwards made out, it was Lord Mark who said nothing in particular--it was she herself who said all. She couldn't help that--it came; and the reason it came was that she found herself, for the first moment, looking at the mysterious portrait through tears The lady in question, at all events, . . . was a very great personage--only unaccompanied by a joy. And she was dead, dead, dead. Milly recognized her exactly in words that had nothing to do with her. "I shall never be better than this." (137)

Ralf Norrman writes in The Insecure World of Henry James's Fiction of the referential ambiguity of James's use of pronouns in the late novels. Such ambiguity figures in the penultimate sentence of the quoted passage, a passage itself already

ambiguous in its combination of DN and DC. The identification of Milly and the Bronzino, suggested by Lord Mark, and apparently confirmed by Kate's subsequent appearance in the gallery with an entourage of expectant viewers, is enforced by the narrator's method of reporting Milly's impressions. The referents for "her" in the introductory tag, while not hopelessly ambiguous, are confused: does Milly recognize Lucrezia in words which have nothing to do with Lucrezia, but everything to do with herself? Or does Milly recognize herself in Lucrezia with words which have nothing to do with Milly, but which refer rather to Lucrezia's faded greatness, and Milly's awareness that she (Milly) will never be more than a picture? Even more ambiguous, because perfectly suspended between Milly's consciousness and the narrator's, is the sentence "And she was dead, dead, dead." The repetition is in keeping with FID, and the sense of Milly's profound recognition of her own approaching death. Yet, the words also convey a foreshadowing of that death on the part of the narrator, whose discourse seems almost fused with that of Milly in this scene, and whose use of pronouns seems to promote the general identification of Milly and the painting. Lady Aldershaw, in the narrator's terms, goes furthest in looking at Milly "quite as if Milly had been the Bronzino and the Bronzino only Milly" (139). It is also in the gallery, amid this substitution of art for life, that Kate, watching Milly sit down on the nearest seat, hopes Milly isn't feeling ill, and Milly arranges for Kate to accompany her to see Sir Luke Strett.

The sense of being idealized, of being seen "in a light" is at first attractive to Milly, who says to Lord Mark, "That's all I've got to hold by. So don't deprive me of it" (106). It soon becomes a burden, an obstacle to any other way of being with those around her, including Merton Densher, in whose conversation Milly detects an acquiescence to "the view":

It was at this point that she saw the smash of her great question complete, saw that all she had to do with was the sense of being there with him. And there was no chill for this in what she also presently saw--that, however he had begun, he was now acting from a particular desire, determined either by new facts or new fancies, to be like every one else simplifyingly "kind" to her. He had caught on already as to manner--fallen into line with every one else; . . . Whatever he did or he didn't Milly knew she should still like him--there was no alternative to that; but her heart could none the less sink a little on feeling how much his view of her was destined to have in common with--as she now sighed over it--the view. She could have dreamed of his not having the view, of his having something or other, if need be quite viewless, of his own; The defect of it in general--if she might so ungraciously criticise--was that, by its sweet universality, it made relations rather prosaically a matter of course. It anticipated and superseded the--likewise sweet--operation of real affinities. (181)

The passage is a mixture of elements of DN and DC--giving us the sense of Milly's wandering thoughts as she listens to Densher drone on about the States. The first dash seems to signal our entry into the current of Milly's thoughts as mediated for us by the narrator. The tense of these thoughts is consistent with that of the narrator's discourse, yet some of the interjections seem to reconstruct Milly's own inner narrative, "--the view," "--if she might ungraciously criticise--," "--there was no alternative to that," in FID. At least one of these fragments, though, "--as she now sighed over it--" appears to be a narratorial observation. Trying to distinguish the narrator's discourse from Milly's is difficult here, for it is also possible to read the sentence beginning "He had caught on already" as FID as well as DN, which qualifies it as an example of FFID. The last sentence quoted above has the impact of FID,

a reflection by Milly, interrupted by her consciousness of how ungracious it is to criticize people who are being "kind," on how a received view can interfere with "real affinities." That interruption, the presence of the word "rather," and the interjection "likewise sweet" seems to locate this analysis of the general view of her in Milly's mind rather than in the narrator's, though the possibility of the narrator's non-omniscience, demonstrated in Volume One, immediately renders this impression of access to Milly's consciousness non-verifiable.

The placement is significant, not only because it suggests that Milly might have the ability to recognize the liability of being romanticized by others, but because it also suggests that the narrator does too, even though he does not abide by this knowledge.⁹ For the narrator, like Aunt Maud, Densher, Kate, Susie and Lord Mark, is finally guilty of accepting and promoting "the view" of Milly, a view which Susie Stringham offers in return for access to Lancaster Gate, and which is taken up by others for their own uses. Each of these uses claims for itself a motive, means or end that can be reconciled with nobility or transcendence: Kate's desire to escape both the marriage her aunt plans for her and a penniless future; Susie's wish for entrance into a world of riches and romance; Maud Lowder's appreciation of, and aspirations for, the talents she sees in Kate; Densher's need to justify his sense of himself as superior to the vulgarities of the material world; Lord Mark's use of cultured gallantry as a means of securing a fortune to go with his name. All these justifications for replacing the real Milly with a convenient term effectively un-realize her, and allow her, as she notices, to be "placed" by those around her in various conceptual compartments.

Qualification of what are apparently Milly's inner thoughts and feelings--"It was doubtless" (166); "she perhaps but invented the image of his need as a short cut to accommodation" (178)--continues for the rest of Book Five, providing an odd veiling of what is the closest view we are to have of the nominal heroine of the novel.

The effect is once more of a confusion between what uncertainty Milly experiences as she studies Kate Croy, and what uncertainty the narrator encounters in his efforts to know what Milly is thinking, and to deliver her inner life to us.

It is after all the other characters' conceptions of Milly, rather than Milly herself, that the narrator has declared himself interested in, claiming that only by sharing the impressions and confusions of others can we come close to her. Yet in sharing these impressions, in coming so close to characters' minds that it is difficult to distinguish the narrator's discourse from what he presents as the characters', the narrator is affected too by these conceptions, especially the ones which appeal to inclinations already discernible in his character. The narrator has shown in earlier books a liking for imaginative figures, picking up elements of those he finds in other characters' discourse and developing them himself. In Volume Two of the novel the narrator continues to do this, appropriating tropological terms used by other characters to describe Milly Theale and incorporating them into his own discourse. His favoured sources for these terms are those characters with whom he comes to share a sentimental interest in Milly, namely, Merton Densher and Susie Stringham. Both characters have been presented in early books of the novel as less than perfectly developed as centres of moral judgement. Yet as Milly becomes less and less a material presence in the final books of the story, the narrator adopts both Susie's, and more persuasively, Densher's, attitude towards Milly, weaving terms taken from their discourse--or taken from what he represents as their discourse--into his own.

There is no reason to believe that the narrator has suddenly become omniscient in these last chapters of Volume One. The verbal hesitations prominent in Book Three still abound, and there are examples of hypothetical discourse which still function as islands of conjecture floating between a character and the narrator. However, there is none of the emotional distance between DN and DC typical of the

narration of Book Three, but instead an almost precipitate alliance of the narrator's perspective with Milly's. The narrator's discourse can sometimes be separated from Milly's, and occasional narratorial comments on her own romantic tendencies--as when the narrator remarks on Milly's "romantic version" of her life hanging in the scales as she waits in Sir Luke Strett's office (146)--appear in the text. Even these are gentle in tone, though, suggesting something about the narrator's attitude towards Milly--that it is an attitude of sentimental interest that shades into empathy to become, in Volume Two of the novel, an idealizing regard--a romantic infatuation. So tender and reticent an attitude does the narrator take toward Milly that, as Darsan Singh Maini notes, her "consciousness as a medium is not as fully used, as, for instance, Kate Croy's in the opening section" (71). It is as if the narrator's protective gallantry manifests itself in a preservation of distance from Milly, a distance that contributes to the diminishment of her real and human qualities.

Narration in Volume Two

Perhaps the most rhetorically significant "fusion" of the narrator's discourse with a character's discourse is that which develops in Volume Two between the narrator and Densher. As Kate Croy occupied the opening section of Volume One, so Densher becomes the focalizer of all five chapters of Book Sixth, much of which consist of indirect discourse. Densher is also the character-focalizer of most of the following books of the novel, with the exception of Book Seventh, which is focalized largely through Milly.

Densher dominates Book Eighth as well, the first chapter of which is presented entirely in indirect discourse, increasing the reader's reliance on the narrator's representation of Densher's thoughts and feelings. The second of Book Ninth's four chapters is also indirectly focalized through Densher, while the fourth chapter contains less than half a page of direct discourse. These two books in

particular demonstrate the "carrying power" mentioned in the Preface, the rhetorical pressure to identify with Densher as a result of being immersed so thoroughly in his perspective. The scene between Densher and Kate in the first chapter of Book Tenth relieves this sense of closeness with Densher's mind, but the long involved passages of indirect narration that punctuate the remaining chapters of the novel, and that begin chapter six of Book Tenth, leave the reader to weigh Kate's few words-- "We shall never be again as we were!" against the accumulated detail offered by the narrator as evidence of Densher's sensitivity not only to Milly Theale, but to the intrigue he has entered into with Kate against her.

The narrator's concentration on Densher, and on Densher's perceptions of Maud, Milly, and Kate, becomes for many readers a sign of Densher's superior moral vision--a proof of Densher's "authority" as spokesperson for James's own judgement of the events of the novel. The narrator does indeed seem more closely allied to Densher's point of view than to the view of any other character in the novel, but this alone is not proof that Densher possesses the "correct" interpretation of any of the people around him, or any of the things they do. Instead, what this attention indicates is the degree to which the narrator's earlier irony in the treatment of Densher has been replaced by an acceptance of his less than sterling qualities because he is the only person in the immediate landscape who fulfills the narrator's romantic notions of who Milly's suitor ought to be--Susie Stringham finds him attractive for similar reasons.

Leo Bersani says of Densher that the "sophistry in which [he] must strenuously indulge in order to justify his continuing to deceive Milly could strike us as exemplary proof of the Jamesian moral sense gone awry," and that "James . . . is strikingly tolerant of Densher's self-righteous conclusion that he's behaving decently toward Milly simply by remaining perfectly still and refusing to lie with his lips" (143). Densher not only commits sins of omission against both Milly and Kate in Volume

Two, but also consistently misjudges Maud Lowder's opinion of him, as well as underestimates the real power she can wield over him and Kate. Nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than in his failure to understand, at the novel's conclusion, how successfully Maud has "squared" them, how skillfully she has made use of Densher's own romantic notions and lofty, intellectual pretensions to secure her own very concrete material ends.

Writing in the Preface of his delight in the indirect presentation of "the main image," James notes this "merciful" treatment of Milly as a means of dealing with her "at second hand, as an unspotted princess is ever dealt with; . . . All of which proceeds, obviously, from her painter's tenderness of imagination about her, which reduces him to watching her, as it were, through the successive windows of other people's interest in her" (16). But the interest that other people have in Milly, left undefined in the Preface, is exploitative, and their desire to use her as a social or financial resource has a correlative in the language with which they cloak first their motives, and finally, Milly herself. In many ways the drama of this novel is not in Milly's struggle to stay alive, but rather in the crisis of signification that she precipitates. The struggle of those around Milly is to declare her final meaning, her significance, in a way that results in profit.

As Milly becomes less of an active character in Volume Two and more the subject of others' conversation, the narrator's chosen method of indirect presentation--lighting the central figure of Milly using Densher, Kate, Susie, and Aunt Maud as sources of illumination--involves him in the subtle process of idealization that all these characters participate in.¹⁰ Milly Theale, ostensibly the center of the novel, becomes in truth peripheral to it, a figure whose symbolic potential as "heiress of all the ages," as "dove," as "princess," is grounded on her absence from the text as a young woman with human needs, capacities, and terrible vulnerabilities. What Rowe

calls the "symbolization of Milly Theale" is the gradual erasure of Milly's humanity, and its replacement by a series of romantic tropes: a Christian maiden martyred by domestic animals (209), the aristocratic victim of the French Revolution (369), someone saved from a shipwreck (215). Stephen Koch identifies this apotheosis of Milly, "the object of a common interest," as "a process that robs her of her humanity, indeed, her life" by transforming her into "a symbol and a register of a common truth" (94). The poetic conversion of Milly Theale into a conveniently objective symbol, a sort of empty set into which other characters can place their idealizations of her, is for Koch, the ultimate betrayal of her.

Such betrayal is a danger for readers and critics as well, who may be tempted to replace the ambiguous, evasive character of Milly Theale with poetic tropes or idealizing figures. One powerfully attractive category of such figures for readers of Milly's "meaning" or "significance" is the religious. John Carlos Rowe writes of the constant pressure in the novel to give Milly an immediate, iconographic meaning as the 'fairy princess' (Susie), the 'dove' (Kate), 'the little American girl' (Densher), or the Bronzino portrait (Lord Mark). The entire Christian context in which Milly is so explicitly placed, from her first appearance on the Brunig to her final covering 'flight,' threatens to transform her into a transparent sign, a fixed and determinate value.

("Symbolization" 134)

While Rowe sees the elements of religious myth in the novel "manipulated to destroy any possibility of fulfilled meaning" (134), he still refers to the "final symbolism of Milly's absence" (134), to her less than salvatory "sacrifice" (136), and to her symbolic function as dove (162). While analyzing the ways in which the text undermines the attribution of transcendent values to Milly, Rowe nevertheless accepts much of the terminology of transcendence as appropriate.

The most suggestive characterization of Milly in the novel is as the dove of the title. It is this comparison that is most often cited when critics refer to Milly's spiritual significance in the story. Elissa Greenwald finds imagery suggestive of the dove of Genesis in the alpine scene of Book Third (178). F. O. Matthiessen sees James as introducing it to dramatically contrast Milly with Kate, who is described as appearing to Milly as pantherlike. Yet Kate uses the figure--"because you're a dove" (171)--not to elevate Milly but almost to patronize her, to suggest that there are things she wouldn't, or couldn't know about the world. The narrator says that Milly here "enjoyed one of her views of how people, wincing oddly, were often touched by her" (171), and we understand that Milly takes Kate's words as "an accolade; partly as if, though a dove who could perch on one finger, one were also a princess with whom forms were to be observed" (171). The inspiration Kate's term for her gives to Milly to study dovelike behaviour (172) suggests that Milly finds much that is attractive in the characterization. The way in which her response to Kate is given suggests that the narrator too is held by Kate's terms.

In his role as apparently non-omniscient mediator between Densher and the reader, the narrator occasionally flags the distance that separates his version of what Densher is thinking from what Densher is "really" thinking. Yet what becomes clear in some of the DN is that the narrator may be representing Densher's point of view in stronger terms than Densher would himself--that is, the narrator delivers a version of Densher's thoughts, then qualifies it as "perhaps" what Densher "might" be thinking. In the absence of any other version of Densher's inner life, the reader is left with the impression the narrator's discourse has created, an impression not likely to be affected much by the narrator's tardy caveat lector.

The first pages of Volume Two, for example, concentrate on Densher's growing sense of frustration--much of it sexual--in his relationship with Kate. He imagines to himself a scene in which she refuses to accompany him into his rooms,

and characterizes the "respect" that so determines their actions as "somehow--he scarce knew what to call it--a fifth wheel to the coach" (188). The terms in these passages of Densher's ruminations on love, on "bringing his mistress to terms," on his "pride of possession," and on "his final sense" that "a woman couldn't be like that and then ask of one the impossible" (189), all reported by the narrator, sound convincingly like Densher's own.¹¹ Densher's thoughts on his inability to steer Kate in a direction more in accordance with his own desires turn after a while to "little Miss Theale," and his secondary suspicion that while Kate is putting him off on the one hand, she is with the other cultivating a relationship with his "little New York friend" that is "greater than he had gathered" (191). The growth of his awareness of the friendship between Kate and Milly becomes "in the retrospect more distinct to him," says the narrator, who then speculates himself on the nature of Densher's actual thoughts in relation to his, that is, the narrator's, characterization of them:

Thus it was that there could come back to him in London, an hour or two after their luncheon with the American pair, the sense of a situation for which Kate hadn't wholly prepared him. Possibly indeed as marked as this was his recovered perception that preparations, of more than one kind, had been exactly what, both yesterday and today, he felt her as having in hand. (191)

Here the narrator admits how conjectural his narrational methods are without indicating how we are to distinguish between what is guesswork and what is not. Are we to see Densher's "sense of a situation" as more of a definite feeling on his part than his "recovered perception" of what he suspects are Kate's plans? Or are we to take these words as the narrator's confession of his own inability to see clearly into Densher's thoughts?

An even more interesting example of the way the narrator seems to take over Densher's thoughts occurs as Densher prepares to call on Milly in London for the

first time in Book Sixth. Here Densher seems to be mentally rewarding himself for a cast of mind that "ministered, imagination aiding, to understandings and allowances and which he had positively never felt such ground as just now to rejoice in the possession of" (225). It is this cheerful inclination that makes it possible for him now to take up again an acquaintance with Milly. What follows this thought is a sentence in FFID whose status as FID or DN is radically in question: "Many men--he practically made the reflexion--wouldn't have taken the matter that way, would have lost patience, finding the appeal in question irrational, exorbitant; and, thereby making short work with it, would have let it render any further acquaintance with Miss Theale impossible" (225).

The tone of self-congratulation in this sentence is familiar from earlier representations of Densher, and may well be a quality attending this particular thought. But does he in fact think this thought at all, or does the phrase within dashes turn the whole sentence into what the narrator is certain Densher might well have thought, or even what Densher was on the verge of thinking, or perhaps even what Densher did think, though not in the same terms, or in so definite a way? In short, just how close this particular representation of Densher's thoughts is to what he did or could think, we cannot know. The narrator's hastily inserted comment also suggests both a growing impatience with his material (he has to make the reflection for us that Densher doesn't quite make for himself), and an almost forgotten sense of responsibility to readers to qualify his presentation of characters' thoughts with the admission that this is, after all, conjecture. We are left with the feeling that there is a possibility that the narrator is filling in the uncertainties he detects in other characters' thoughts as much as he is reporting them. The narrator is being drawn ever further into the drama he is supposed to be merely observing, and his "objectivity," defined as his intention to concentrate on the "impressions" made by

Milly on others, is being replaced by a subjective involvement in the events he sees.

Evidence for the narrator's personal involvement in the narrative lies not only in numerous passages of ambiguously constructed ID and FID, but also in the narrator's own discourse, laden as it often is with terms used by other characters. Shortly after Densher sees Kate off in her cab in Book Sixth, the narrator describes him walking

northward without a plan, without suspicion, quite in the direction his little New York friend, in her restless ramble, had taken a day or two before. He reached, like Milly, the Regent's Park; and though he moved further and faster he finally sat down like Milly, from the force of thought. For him too in this position, be it added--and he might positively have occupied the same bench--various troubled fancies folded their wings. (192)

In this passage the narrator explicitly connects Milly and Densher, bringing them together imaginatively in his discourse well before they have resumed any significant relationship in fact. Since Densher is unaware of Milly's walk through Regent's Park, only the narrator sees any significant echo in Densher's having wandered in the same direction, and it is clear that only in the narrator's fancy might Densher and Milly have chosen the same bench. What is also of interest is the narrator's use of imagery associated with Milly as the dove of the novel. As early as the dinner at Lancaster Gate, long before Kate actually calls Milly a dove, the narrator says of Milly that "our young lady alighted, came back, taking up her destiny again as if she had been able by a wave or two of her wings to place herself briefly in sight of an alternative to it" (105). That serendipitous choice of metaphor, later to be chosen by Kate, appears here with the subtle power of a symbol in the making. Similarly, the narrator's placing of Milly and Densher in imaginative connection reinforces our

sense of this narrator's abiding inclination toward the romantic, as he minimizes the differences between Milly's "troubled fancies," which after all involve her health and very life, and Densher's, which centre more on how to assert his will over Kate. Without stating his intentions outright, the narrator has nevertheless begun a process of matchmaking through narration, has played Pandarus in a situation from which he himself is inevitably excluded. And in so doing, in surrendering to the romantic and idealizing impulses shared by other characters in the novel, and through his position as narrator, to cultivate that tendency in readers, the narrator has contributed to the success of Maud Lowder's plan to retain control over Kate's future by substituting an etherealized Milly for Kate as the object of Merton Densher's attraction and love.

Examples of the hypothetical discourse found in Volume One proliferate in Volume Two as well, often appearing as substitute conversations, apparently in Densher's mind, as when, in chapter one of Book Sixth, pondering his and Kate's peculiar situation as lovers with nowhere to go, the narrator reports him as thinking that

He would have said to her had he put it crudely and on the spot: "Now am I to understand you that you consider this sort of thing can go on?" It would have been open to her, no doubt, to reply that to have him with her again, to have him all kept and treasured, so still, under her grasping hand, as she had held him in their yearning interval, was a sort of thing that he must allow her to have no quarrel about; but that would be a mere gesture of her grace, a mere sport of her subtlety. (190)

As with earlier examples of hypothetical discourse, this passage displays similar ambiguities regarding responsibility for terms. It is even more difficult to separate the narrator from Densher in sections of prose such as this one. The feelings of

resentment Densher is developing toward Kate, and which are expressed in phrases such as "under her grasping hand," are beginning to appeal to the narrator, and appear in that undecideable floating discourse not enclosed in quotation marks, not marked as ostensibly the responsibility of Densher, but not adequately distinguished from the discourse of the narrator either. What seems to be taking place in these passages of hypothetical discourse surrounded by sentences of floating FID is a gradual seepage of terms and phrases from the discourse of characters such as Densher into the narrator's discourse--a discourse easily mistaken for authoritative as its hesitations and qualified evaluations of scenes and players are replaced by more definite declarations of judgement and value.

The most striking examples of this seepage or contagion from DC to DN occur in Volume Two, in which Milly Theale becomes less and less a visible character, and more and more an occasion for figural discourse. At the Lancaster Gate dinner in chapter three of Book Sixth that takes on for Densher "the air of a commemorative banquet, a feast to celebrate a brilliant if brief career" (206), Susie Stringham watches the discussion of Milly's social success

very much as some spectator in an old-time circus might have watched the oddity of a Christian maiden, in the arena, mildly, caressingly, martyred. It was the nosing and fumbling not of lions and tigers but of domestic animals let loose as for the joke. Even the joke made Mrs. Stringham uneasy, and her mute communion with Densher, to which we have alluded, was more and more determined by it. (209)

It is possible for this passage to be read as a record of Densher's interpretation of the look on Susie's face as she listens to her princess' rise to prominence explained in terms other than Milly's innate superiority. The image of the circus has been attributed to Densher's thoughts before, in relation to Aunt Maud in Volume I. The passage is not securely located in Densher's mind, though. The

simile follows a reference to "Milly's anxious companion," a description compatible with the narrator's ostensibly "objective" observation and narration. The narrator's inclusion of the joke in the sentence making reference to his own narrating activities-- "to which we have alluded"--raises the possibility that he, rather than Densher, is reading Susie's discomfort in this way, and that he, rather than Densher, is at this point responding to the unspoken appeal from Susie that someone share her point of view.

Even more striking is the narrator's extended description, in Book Seventh, of the relationship between Milly and Kate in Venice. The nature of the intimacy between these two women is explained in terms of actresses or performers who, in private moments, "wearily put off the mask" (261). The dramatic metaphor is extended by the narrator to suggest that in "the gesture, the smiles, the sighs" that accompany the unmasking might be found, "strangely enough . . . the greatest reality in the business" (261). It is the narrator who notes this oddness of manner between Kate and Milly--"Strangely enough, we say"--and it is the narrator who is responsible for the theatrical, even melodramatic, colour of the following passage:

Thus insuperably guarded was the truth about the girl's own conception of her validity; thus was a wondering pitying sister condemned wistfully to look at her from the far side of the moat she had dug round her tower. Certain aspects of the connexion of these young women show for us, such is the twilight that gathers about them, in the likeness of some dim scene in a Maeterlinck play; we have positively the image, in the delicate dusk, of the figures so associated and yet so opposed, so mutually watchful: that of the angular pale princess, ostrich-plumed, black-robed, hung about with amulets, reminders, relics, mainly seated, mainly still, and that of the upright restless slow-circling lady of her court who exchanges with her, across the black water streaked with

evening gleams, fitful questions and answers. The upright lady, with thick dark braids down her back, drawing over the grass a more embroidered train, makes the whole circuit, and makes it again, and the broken talk, brief and sparingly allusive, seems more to cover than to free their sense. . . . Such an impression as that was in fact grave, and might be tragic (262)

Crucial elements of this construction, which is extant only in the imagination of the narrator--the only character in observation of Milly and Kate at this point--have already been encountered in the thoughts and impressions of Merton Densher and Susie Stringham. It is Susie in Book Third who is mockingly described by the narrator as having set aside time to read the works of Maeterlinck and Pater so as to be "as consciously intellectual as possible" (80). So typical is the passage quoted above of Susie's ultra-romantic tendencies, and so heavily does it borrow from Susie's own vocabulary (with Milly as the princess and Kate as the lady of the court), that the narrator remarks that "Kate's predicament in the matter was, after all, very much Mrs. Stringham's own, and Susan Shepherd herself indeed, in our Maeterlinck picture, might well have hovered in the gloaming by the moat" (262).

The narrator has also borrowed the metaphor of theatre from Densher, who in Book Sixth comes to see his situation as that of a spectator "in his purchased stall at the play," with the drama involving Kate as "the poor actress" and Aunt Maud as "the watchful manager" (204). The narrator seems only to be recording Densher's slow recognition of "something like the artistic idea" in Aunt Maud's high estimation of Kate's value, but as the metaphor of the spectator at a play is elaborated, we find the following comment: "Such impressions as we thus note for Densher come and go, it must be granted, in very much less time than notation demands; but we may none the less make the point that there was, still further, time among them for him to feel almost too scared to take part in the ovation" (204).

The narrator here draws the reader's attention to the differences between the reality he perceives and the version of that reality he is able to communicate. Accenting in this way the inevitable corruption that occurs in the process of chronicling the thoughts of characters, the narrator awakens the reader's sense of how his record of these rapid impressions may differ from what was "actually" registered in Densher's mind, and at the same time confirms the necessity of accepting this version of events in the absence of something demonstrably more reliable. What the reader is left questioning is not only how the time lag that keeps graphic representation forever behind thought affects this particular instance of narration, but in how many other ways narration may be affected by the presence of an observing as well as an apparently observed mind.

Hypothetical discourse and narration play a central role as well in Densher's construction of his relationship with Milly Theale. As in earlier chapters, where this kind of discourse often appeared to represent Densher's thoughts, and in particular, his thoughts about the impression he made on others, hypothetical discourse in the later chapters of the novel is associated more often with Densher than with any other character. It appears at first in relation to Kate, for example in Book Sixth when the narrator says that Densher "would have said to her had he put it crudely and on the spot: 'Now am I to understand you that you consider that this sort of thing can go on?'" (190); then again when Aunt Maud "appeared to say quite agreeably: 'What I want of you, don't you see? is to be just exactly as I am'" (203); and once more when Densher "would fairly have liked to put it, across the table, to [Kate]: 'I say, light of my life, is this the great world?'" (210). The moment during which Densher comes close to saying this is followed, says the narrator, by another during which, "doubtless as a result of something that, over the cloth, did hang between them--when she struck

him as having quite answered: 'Dear no--for what do you take me? Not the least little bit: only a poor silly, though quite harmless imitation'" (210).

Hypothetical discourse stands here in place of actual dialogue between Kate and Densher, and the possibility that what Densher imagines Kate ready to reply is very close to what she actually does say is suggested in the narrator's next sentence: "What she might have passed for saying, however, was practically merged in what she did say, for she came overtly to his aid, very much as if guessing some of his thoughts" (210). This comment in itself, though on the surface lending credence to Densher's imagined communication with Kate, does not actually indicate how close the hypothetical discourse we read came to what was said out loud. Such comments by the narrator do not diffuse the ambiguity of hypothetical discourse but rather extend it.

In his visit with Milly in Book Sixth, Densher relies on his "impression" of American girls as "the easiest people in the world" to get on with (225). Densher's impression of ease is sustained and confirmed by his attribution to Milly of motives we are by no means sure she has, and words and phrases we are never certain she even speaks. Instead, Densher, through the narrator, constructs for himself a verbal correspondence almost entirely related in hypothetical terms. It is even difficult to tell, reading sentences such as "He went so far as to enjoy believing the girl might have stayed in for him; it helped him to enjoy her behaving as if she hadn't," whether the narrator is merely reporting what Densher believes to be Milly's responses to him, or if the narrator is supplying us with reasons to believe that there is more to this friendship than might at first be obvious. The narrator's report of Densher's arrival at Brook Street provides an example:

She had begun this, admirably, on his entrance, with her turning away from the table at which she had apparently been engaged in letter-writing; it was the very possibility of his betraying a concern for her as

one of the afflicted that she had within the first minute conjured away. She was never, never--did he understand?--to be one of the afflicted for him; and the manner in which he understood it, something of the answering pleasure that he couldn't help knowing he showed, constituted, he was very soon after to acknowledge, something like a start for intimacy. When things like that could pass people had in truth to be equally conscious of a relation. It soon made one, at all events, when it didn't find one made. (226)

The exact location of these thoughts is impossible to pin down. The interjected question, ostensibly telegraphed silently from Milly to Densher, is in the form of FID, but this "record" of Milly's unspoken communication does not seem to be the narrator's responsibility, but is rather embedded in Densher's thoughts, which are in turn delivered to us via the narrator. Although there is no way to assess the reliability of Densher's reading of Milly's behaviour towards him, his interpretation of her actions becomes for him the basis of "a start for intimacy."

The "relation" presented in Book Sixth between Densher and Milly is not so much described as constructed by both Densher's and the narrator's reliance on appearances. Very little actual dialogue is reported by the narrator; instead, the narrator concentrates on Densher's tendency to read Milly in accordance with his expectations of her. So close is the narrator to Densher in these passages that it is once again difficult to distinguish Densher's discourse from the narration in which it is embedded:

He saw it with a certain alarm rise before him that everything was acting that was not speaking the particular word. "If you like me because you think she doesn't, it isn't a bit true: she does like me awfully!"--that would have been the particular word: which there were

at the same time but too palpably such difficulties about his uttering.

(228)

Here too it is impossible to declare with certainty that the sentence in quotation marks is precisely what Densher does not say, that it is Densher rather than the narrator who identifies the unspoken sentence as "the particular word," and that it is Densher, not the narrator, who sees so clearly the difficulties involved in his speaking up. If Densher and the narrator share responsibility for the formulation of these thoughts, it is also impossible to say just where the narrator's word choice no longer dominates, and where Densher's thoughts can be most clearly apprehended.

So laden is Densher's visit to Milly with examples of hypothetical discourse, and so consistently is the narrator involved in this scene, that it is possible to read the "relation" initiated by that visit as the product not of personal affinity, but of narrative technique: "These were not all the things she did say; they were rather what such things meant in the light of what he knew. Her warning him for instance off the question of how she was, the quick brave little art with which she did that, represented to his fancy a truth she didn't utter" (229). On what authority either Densher or the narrator declares what Milly really intends to say, even though she never says it, is never made clear. Neither is it clear just on what conversational basis the friendship between Densher and Milly proceeds, since for Densher, "The matters he couldn't mention mingled themselves with those he did; so that it would doubtless have been hard to say which of the two groups now played most of a part" (229).

The "sweet universality" of the tender view of Milly which has developed over the course of Volume One has its uses particularly for Maud Lowder, who promotes it in Volume Two most actively in conversation with Densher. Having learned, as Kate feared, where best to "have" Densher, Aunt Maud feeds that young man's self-admitted transcendental notions with impressions of Milly congruent with his spiritual

pretensions, in hopes that these will in the end draw him away from her niece. Aunt Maud's goal of replacing Kate Croy with Milly Theale as the object of Densher's affections is accomplished with a rhetorical efficiency which is all the more remarkable for being almost unnoticed by nearly every character in the novel, and by most readers of the text. Aunt Maud's methods of persuasion are given early representation in the novel by Kate's thoughts of Maud's "reticule" of prejudices "as deep as that other pocket, the pocket full of coins stamped in her image, that the world best knew her by" (37), and it is Kate who warns Densher to move carefully in his attempts to "square" their "prodigious" antagonist. Kate remains the only character sufficiently alert to the danger Maud presents, and spells this out to the still uncomprehending Densher in Book Eighth:

"She takes it as 'of a natural' that at this rate I shall be making my reflexions about you. There's every appearance for her," Kate went on, "that what she had made her mind up to as possible is possible; that what she had thought more likely than not to happen is happening. The very essence of her, as you surely by this time have made out for yourself, is that when she adopts a view she--well, to her own sense, really brings the thing about, fairly terrorises with her view any other, any opposite view, and those, not less, who represent that. I've often thought success comes to her"--Kate continued to study the phenomenon--"by the spirit in her that dares and defies her idea not to prove the right one. One has seen it so again and again, in the face of everything, become the right one." (287)

The view that Aunt Maud has decided should prevail is one of Milly as the delicately fading dove, and Densher as the attentive suitor. Introduced by Maud in conversation with Susie Stringham in Book Seventh, the idea that Densher and Milly should be brought together dominates the final books of the novel. Such a pairing

satisfies both Susie's hope that Milly's health will improve, and Maud's desire that Densher be kept away from Kate. The energies of both these women are from this point on directed to that end, with Maud Lowder as the person who actually voices the possibility that Milly and Densher might marry (247), yet it is Kate Croy who is castigated by readers for her callous engineering of the "romance" between Densher and Milly, even though it is Densher who finally puts the question--"Since she's to die I'm to marry her?" (308).

The success of the created romance between Densher and Milly in Volume Two can be traced in both the discourse of the narrator and in the (apparently) recorded thoughts of Densher in the final books of the novel. As late as the beginning of Book Eighth, visiting Milly is for Densher "as simple as sitting with his sister might have been, and not, if the point were urged, very much more thrilling" (279). Although Densher acknowledges that Maud, Susie, and Kate see Milly "as a princess, as an angel, as a star," for him she remains "the little American girl who had been so kind to him in New York" (279). The rapidity with which Densher's attitude to Milly changes is a tribute, not to his ability to recognize Milly's intrinsic worth, or her spiritual significance, but rather to his own inability to resist Maud Lowder's discourse, which plays to his vanity and intellectual pretensions.

At a different level of narration, the narrator too continues to be affected by the events he observes, registering these effects in the terms of his discourse, a discourse which operates, finally, in concert with Aunt Maud's view of how things between Milly and Densher should be made to happen. Though the narrator has throughout the novel played a part in the construction of the thoughts and feelings of characters, his own narration has been shown to be vulnerable to contagion by the terms of those characters' attitudes. The boundary between the narrating and the narrated world is permeable, with words and phrases of suggestive power--metaphors

of drama, similes of siege and battle, of artistic performance, figures of romantic distress--drifting back and forth between what are usually radically disjunct levels of narrative.

The triumph of Maud Lowder in the defeat of Kate and Densher is the triumph of a skilled rhetorician, one who persuades through eloquence. She is aided in her scheme by the narrator's abetting discourse, which absorbs the terms she uses to define Milly's value for Densher at the level of diegesis, and disseminates them throughout the narration. Thus Maud Lowder and the narrator share the same language where Milly is concerned, and both use that language to persuade others to share that point of view: Maud persuades Densher, while the narrator persuades the reader. The irony of the rhetorical alliance between Maud and the narrator, exercised at different but mutually transgressive levels of narrative, is that for Maud the language of transcendence she uses to appeal to Densher is merely instrumental, while for the narrator, it is genuine.

That the narrator has adopted much of the attitudes of the sentimental Susie Stringham toward Milly is indicated as well by his habitual references to Milly as "poor Milly" or "the poor girl" (216, 240, 262, 269, 289) in the second volume that echo both Kate's and Densher's rather self-conscious pitying of her (218, 224, 228). It is as if the narrator, much like Densher at Milly's final dinner party talking to Susie, finds himself "as a kind of consequence of communion with her, talking her own language" (296). This language forms a more and more insistent part of the narrator's presentation of Densher's impressions of Milly, so that by the evening of Densher's visit to Milly after Kate has come to his rooms, Milly is described as "divine in her trust, or at any rate inscrutable in her mercy" (316). The narrator follows Densher's point of view with the observation that these were "transcendent motions, not the less blest for being obscure."

The coincidence of religious terminology in both the DC and DN here reveals the similarities between Densher and the narrator that will render both of them susceptible to Aunt Maud's brand of persuasion. Both Densher and the narrator share a taste for elaborate figures of speech (as when Densher compares Maud to a lady in a circus, or a manager of a play, and the narrator describes Milly as "the warned, the anxious fighter of the battle of life," 239) and both refer to their professions as writers and editors of texts. Both pride themselves on their ability to "read" other people's appearances and actions, and both are assured of their superiority to most of the people they observe. This feeling superiority is indicated by the narrator's use of ironic or distancing tags in the presentation of the thoughts or feelings of characters whose perceptions he does not at first share or respect. Densher's convictions of his own worth are evident early on in his dismissal of Aunt Maud as "colossally vulgar" (62), and persist in his irritation at Milly's servant Eugenio for treating him as if he were "an inferior man," even though he realizes that "the vulgar view" happens "so incorrigibly to fit him" at this moment (325). However, thinks Densher, "[O]ne had come to a queer pass when a servant's opinion so mattered" (326).

The fact that opinions of others do matter to Densher is part of what allows Maud to succeed with him, for Densher's need is above all to exempt himself from responsibility for having engaged in anything he conceives of as low or vulgar. This is the motive for his remaining in Venice even after Milly has refused to see him, in order, "purified though he was, to mark his virtue beyond any mistake" (330), and on the heels of this thought he is ready to see Kate as having "provided for herself" in coming to his rooms just before her departure from Venice.

The sense of Milly's greatness of spirit that dominates Books Ninth and Tenth comes to Densher first in conversation with Susie after Milly has "turned her face to

the wall" (331). Fearing that Milly has somehow discovered evidence of his dishonesty, and hearing that if she has, she will not speak of it, or what he might have done, to anyone, Densher says to Susie that Milly "must be magnificent" (334). That he can see generosity in her willingness not to expose him, but that he cannot, as Kate puts it, lie to Milly "to save her life" (358) severely qualifies Densher's established position in James criticism as the measure of morality in the novel. His professed willingness to have "chucked" Kate in order to make the denial of connection with her true--even after Kate has given in to his demand for sexual demonstration of her love--betrays Densher as the character who, more than any other in the novel, simplifies in order, as Kate sees, to save his conscience (360).

It is as a rich, ample, and "prodigious" aid to his conscience and appeal to his vanity that Aunt Maud works on Densher in Book Tenth, providing, in her exegesis on the meaning of Milly Theale, a view of his actions more in keeping with Densher's opinion of himself than Kate's vision has ever been. In so doing, Maud confirms the value of Milly for the narrator as well, who has, much like Densher, fallen in love with a dying girl, or at least, with her idealized likeness. Aunt Maud's interview with Densher on his return from Venice is given in indirect discourse, with Maud's "sentimental" voice clearly audible in the surrounding DN:

Yet she needed no reminder that the scene precisely--by which she meant the tragedy that had so detained and absorbed him, the memory, the shadow, the sorrow of it--was what marked him for unsociability. She thus presented him to himself, as it were, in the guise in which she had now adopted him, and it was the element of truth in the character that he found himself, for his own part, adopting. She treated him as blighted and ravaged, as frustrate and already bereft; . . . Stranger than anything moreover was to be the way that by

the end of a week he stood convicted to his own sense of a surrender to Mrs. Lowder's point of view. (366)

The surrender of Densher to Maud's point of view, predicted and dreaded by Kate Croy, is accompanied by the narrator's own capitulation to the crudely sentimental language of romance that infuses Mrs. Lowder's discourse, and begins to pervade Densher's as well.

The metaphor of drama that has persisted throughout the narrator's discourse, and that appears as part of Densher's thoughts appears again in the description of Aunt Maud, in the second chapter of Book Tenth, listening to Densher talk about his last days in Venice with Milly:

It was almost as if she herself enjoyed the perfection of the pathos; she sat there before the scene, as he couldn't help giving it out to her, very much as a stout citizen's wife might have sat, during a play that made people cry, in the pit or family circle. What deeply stirred her was the way the poor girl must have wanted to live. (368)

The uncomplimentary presentation of Mrs. Lowder in this passage is perfectly audible, but whether it is the shared responsibility of the narrator and Densher is unclear. Densher seems to be distancing himself from Maud's response to his story at the same time that he is beginning to acknowledge his freedom with her, a freedom he does not share with Kate. The simile could also be the comment of the narrator, critical of Maud's vulgarity, though sharing her view of Milly as a pathetically affecting creature. The concluding sentence may record Densher noticing how truly affected Maud is by the picture he paints of the suffering Milly, may be the narrator reporting what he sees as Maud's genuine reaction to the tale, or may be an indirect version of Maud's own thoughts about how this above all really moves her about Milly's struggle against death. The impression of vulgarity conveyed by the earlier description of Maud is confirmed by the talk that follows, in which Maud

mentions "The mere money of her" as a large part of the tragic air that surrounds Milly's early death. The narrator gives the particulars of that tragedy to us in indirect discourse:

Aunt Maud mentioned it--and Densher quite understood--but as fairly giving poetry to the life Milly clung to: a view of the "might have been" before which the good lady was hushed anew to tears. She had had her own vision of these possibilities, and her own social use for them, and since Milly's spirit had been after all so at one with her about them, what was the cruelty of the event but a cruelty, of a sort, to herself? (369)

Aunt Maud's tendency to see herself at the centre of all relations is clearly indicated by the narrator's indirect report of her words--and perhaps coloured by the narrator's critical view of Maud as not mindful enough of the tragedy as it affected Milly herself--and Densher seems willing to see Maud's references to Milly's fortune in the most sympathetic of lights, as an aesthetic effect. The aestheticizing of Milly continues in Densher's composition of a picture of Milly which works her wealth as well as her pathos into the scene:

He allowed it all its vividness, as if on the principle of his not at least spiritually shirking. Milly had held with passion to her dream of a future, and she was separated from it, not shrieking indeed, but grimly, awfully silent, as one might imagine some noble young victim of the scaffold, in the French Revolution, separated at the prison-door from some object clutched for resistance. Densher, in a cold moment, so pictured the case for Mrs. Lowder, but no moment cold enough had yet come to make him so picture it to Kate. (369)

The effect of the conversations Densher has with Aunt Maud is similar to that produced by the displacement of Milly in conversations by tropes and figures which

indicate her value to others as a linguistic counter. Here too, Milly's value as a person is confirmed by figuration, by the ability of Densher and Maud to confer value on her through hyperbolic simile. The climax of these interviews is the narrator's depiction of Densher in the vast firelit room of Lancaster Gate, entertaining the purveyors of "London gossip" with the best description of the "sublime" and "princely state" of his reception at Venice:

The gossip--for it came to as much at Lancaster Gate--wasn't the less exquisite for his use of the silver veil, nor on the other hand was the veil, so touched, too much drawn aside. He himself for that matter took in the scene again at moments as from the pages of a book. He saw a young man far off and in a relation inconceivable, saw him hushed, passive, staying his breath, but half understanding, yet dimly conscious of something immense and holding himself painfully together not to lose it. The young man at these moments so seen was too distant and too strange for the right identity; and yet, outside, afterwards, it was his own face Densher had known. He had known then at the same time what the young man had been conscious of, and he was to measure after that, day by day, how little he had lost. At present there with Mrs. Lowder he knew he had gathered all--that passed between them mutely as in the intervals of their associated gaze they exchanged looks of intelligence. This was as far as association could go, but it was far enough when she knew the essence. The essence was that something had happened to him too beautiful and too sacred to describe. He had been, to his recovered sense, forgiven, dedicated, blessed; but this he couldn't coherently express. (370)

The indirect report of the colloquy between Densher and Aunt Maud parallels Maud's indirect and subtle shaping of Densher into "a man haunted by a memory"

(370). As Densher has before built "relations" with Milly and Susan Stringham out of what he believes to be their silent communication, so he now is persuaded by "their associated gaze," and by Maud's willingness to listen to and encourage him, to elaborate his relationship with Milly to such an extent as really to become his obsession. Densher meanwhile benefits by this exaltation to the status of mourning lover, while indulging his journalistic fondness for the effectively rendered scene.

One effect of this association between Densher and Maud is the constant attendance of his own religious or literary terms by economic terms or references provided by Maud. Quoted above is Densher's understanding of Maud's mention of money as being in its own way, poetic. The alliance of words and money--and through Densher, of explicitly journalistic words--is suggested in their interview on the steps of Sir Luke Strett's house:

"So you have had your message?"

He knew so well what she meant, and so equally with it what he "had had" no less than what he hadn't, that, with but the smallest hesitation, he strained the point. "Yes--my message."

"Our dear dove then, as Kate calls her, has folded her wonderful wings."

"Yes--folded them."

... "Unless it's more true," she accordingly added, "that she has spread them the wider."

He again but formally assented, though, strangely enough, the words fitted a figure deep in his own imagination. "Rather, yes--spread them the wider." (377)

The figure deep in Densher's imagination is here unnamed, but seems to refer obliquely to his assumption that Milly has, in her letter, left him a fortune. When

Kate uses similar words a few pages later, the implied metaphor is apparently completed:

"I used to call her, in my stupidity--for want of anything better--a dove. Well she stretched out her wings, and it was to that they reached. They cover us."

"They cover us," Densher said.

"That's what I give you," Kate gravely wound up. "That's what I've done for you." (403)

The enfolding or covering that Kate refers to here is an act of love on Milly's part. For Kate, Densher's inheritance is the expression of that love, and she wishes, somewhat like Aunt Maud, to poeticize the reality of the benefit Milly's wealth has always represented to her. For Densher, the money he inherits becomes curiously more significant than the love of which it is, for Kate at least, a sign, and it is that, the money, that he sees as covering them. As he once demanded proof from Kate of her love for him, insisting on the simple equation of love and physical possession, so the last few pages of the novel show Densher in retreat from the reality he has faced all along, and seeking, through another simplifying process that equates Milly's money with his own bad faith, to escape the consequences of his involvement with her by making renunciation of her fortune the condition of his marriage to Kate.

The poetic language that has dominated the discourse of characters who describe Milly Theale reaches its apex in these last few pages of the novel. It is particularly in the narrator's presentation of Densher's thoughts about the unread letter that what Rowe calls "the apotheosis of Milly Theale" is achieved, and it is this transformation--an extension of the unrealized Milly has undergone throughout--that readers have accepted as representing James's own confirmation of Milly's value as a textual icon. The term Densher uses to describe Milly's last letter to him as he holds it out to Kate for her to tear open--"I've wanted to let you see--and in

preference even to myself--something I feel as sacred"--appears a few paragraphs later in what appears to be the narrator's own tag, when Kate is reported as "taking from him the sacred script" (393). The coincidence of terminology seems to corroborate Densher's reading of Milly's meaning, that she is in some inexpressible way significant of spiritual truths. Then again, there might be a slight tinge of irony in the narrator's use of the word, suggesting Densher's excessive dramatization, and his own desire to cover up what he knows is the reality of the message contained in the letter by evasive romanticisms.

The romanticism that Densher is so prey to, and that rapidly substitutes memories of the dead Milly for any more concrete, and thus more complex, relationship with a living woman such as Kate Croy, overtakes him in chapter six of Book Tenth as he sits indulging his "favourite pang,":

Then he took it out of its sacred corner and its soft wrappings; he undid then one by one, handling then, handling it, as a father, baffled and tender, might handle a maimed child. But so it was before him--in his dread of who else might see it. Then he took to himself at such hours, in other words, that he should never, never know what had been in Milly's letter. The intention announced in it he should but too probably know; only that would have been, but for the depths of his spirit, the least part of it. The part of it missed for ever was the turn she would have given her act. This turn had possibilities that, somehow, by wondering about them, his imagination had extraordinarily filled out and refined. If had made of them a revelation the loss of which was like the sight of a priceless pearl cast before his eyes--his pledge given not to save it--into the fathomless sea, or rather even it was like the sacrifice of something sentient and throbbing, something that, for the spiritual ear, might have been audible as a faint

far wail. This was the sound he cherished when alone in the stillness of his rooms. He sought and guarded the stillness, so that it might prevail there till the inevitable sounds of life, once more, comparatively coarse and harsh, should smother and deaden it--doubtless by the same process with which they would officiously heal the ache in his soul that was somehow one with it. It moreover deepened the sacred hush that he couldn't complain. He had given poor Kate her freedom. (398-99)

This indirect report of Densher's thoughts confirms Densher's growing obsession with memories of Milly, and fixes for us his tendency to reduce her to a series of abstractions in which nothing remotely human can be detected. These abstractions complete the effacement of Milly Theale, begun with a vengeance at Matcham, with the comparison of her to the Bronzino. Milly now rivals the portrait, as the art of the romantic journalist replaces the disturbing effects of Milly on his relationship with Kate with an unchanging, unrealized, ethereal, and finally dead image of spiritual perfection immune to the challenges of a living woman. The images in Densher's discourse that explicitly associate perfection with death are particularly disturbing, as are the number of critical responses that accept this imagery as evidence of Milly's unqualified spiritual authority, and of Densher's equally remarkable sensitivity.

Far from proving his sensitivity, this extended rumination on the imagined wail that accompanies the destruction of the letter testifies to the morbidity that haunts romance in this novel--witness the earlier comparisons of Milly to victims of crisis (in the Roman arena, in a shipwreck, in the French Revolution, under seige from her aunt), and the final triumph of the romantic attitude over two living women: Milly Theale and Kate Croy. Neither Densher nor the reader is any closer to Milly's "real" nature at the novel's conclusion, but both are farther from Kate Croy than at the novel's start, although in many ways the more lasting tragedy of the book is not

Milly's death, but Kate's defeat. Skillfully out-manoeuvred by Aunt Maud, Kate's position in the novel's final paragraphs echoes her entrapment in the opening scenes. She has the added bitterness, though, of having lost her lover not to anything as concrete as money, though Densher, reductive to the end, continues to offer the inheritance as the remaining obstacle to their union, but to Densher's own morbid romanticism, and the memory of a friend she herself understood and loved more than he ever did.

The difficulty of distinguishing the narrator's discourse from the discourse of characters in this novel mirrors the difficulty of resisting the rhetoric of another's discourse that takes place at the level of story, and that confronts characters with the problem of authorship. Characters struggle, with greater or lesser success, to disengage themselves from another "plot," a form of social narrative constructed and articulated by another character. Kate Croy, for example, sees both Milly and Densher as characters in her own story of escape from Aunt Maud, while at the same time she tries to resist the pressure exerted by her father, sister, and Aunt Maud to become a character in Aunt Maud's story of her rescue from abjection and eventual marriage to Lord Mark.

One of the questions in Wings becomes that of the use to which such narrative material as Milly Theale, Merton Densher and Kate Croy herself can be put without risking reification, turning others into mere things in the construction of one's own story. Kate proves herself less vulnerable to reifying Milly than Densher, Susie Stringham, Aunt Maud, or even the narrator, but her emotional and material interest in the outcome of the narrative she projects raises the issue of whether or not it is possible to narrate with disinterest or humility, or whether all narrators risk violating the integrity and complexity of others in the construction of their stories.

The same problem surfaces in connection with Maggie Verver in The Golden Bowl, whom the narrator of that novel attempts to reify in much the same fashion as the narrator of Dove reifies Milly Theale. Maggie's resistance to the efforts of those around her to manipulate her turns her into a figure of ambivalent authority, especially for the narrator, who confronts in her intractability to his narrative desires a crisis which threatens his own ability to narrate.

Notes

¹ Many of these critics cite James's young cousin, Minny Temple, as the model for the heroine of Wings. At times, this putative connection to a source in James's "real" life seems to colour critical approaches to the fictional Milly Theale with an excess of tenderness. Though James may have fashioned elements of Milly Theale after Minny Temple, the possibility of a biographical source is not sovereign to the narration of the novel, or to the characterization of Milly Theale.

² Fictional drugs are not only effective on the naive: in the Preface to The Turn of the Screw James declares that the novella was "an amulette to catch those not easily caught . . . the jaded, the disillusioned, the fastidious" (The Art of the Novel 172).

³ L. C. Knights, in "Henry James and Human Liberty," argues that narrow definitions of morality are inappropriate in relation to James's later fictions. In James's work, Knights declares, we are not faced with "any kind of didactic morality, but with something much more profound, that shows itself in the life--the livingness--of a work of art; we are concerned with what Pound called the amount of perceptive energy concentrated in the major works, and since perceptive energy shows itself in the handling of the language, our pursuit of a particular theme demands a lively concern with particular words in particular order" (5). What Knights suggests here is the possibility of regarding Jamesian narration as an enactment, rather than just a representation, of morality.

⁴ Much of what Segal says here could be argued for The Ambassadors, in which the narrator is almost perfectly aligned with Strether's point of view, and is so like

him that he seems to have unobstructed access to what we take to be Strether's consciousness. My objection is to the application of that narrator's characteristics to the narrators of other novels, who occupy very different positions in relation to the characters they observe.

⁵ In Thinking in Henry James, Sharon Cameron notes that in Wings as well as in other James novels, "thinking is often represented as if its inception occurred outside the mind" (124). Cameron's approach to the representation of thought in Wings would be clarified by a recognition of the narrator as the source of this illusion. Thought does not occur "outside the mind" in James; rather, it occurs inside the narrator's mind as well as inside a character's. If one does not allow for the presence of an engaged, active narrator in the novel, then certain comments, observations and speculations will indeed seem disembodied, even magical.

In one of her notes on Chapter One, Cameron acknowledges the narrator as the missing link in her study:

On the subject of the alliance of James's thoughts with those of his characters, J. Hillis Miller has pointed out to me that a crucial instance of the sharing of thought--that between the narrator and the characters--is conspicuously absent from my discussions. Specifically, Miller has pointed out that I treat James in relation to his characters as if there were no narrator. This is perhaps because I see James as standing (albeit fictitiously) in an unmediated relation to his characters, almost as if in the novels--experientially, though of course not technically--the narrator becomes a screen for James's direct

identification with his characters. "Direct" obviously not in point of fact, but I think in point of effect. (177)

Cameron's understanding of the relationship between James and his narrator, and between the narrator and other characters, is rather muddled. What is clear though is her unwillingness to resist the effect of "direct identification" with characters that James's narrative method creates. Cameron thus stands as a perfect example of a reader who surrenders, apparently knowingly and without apology, to what I call the rhetoric of narration in James.

⁶ It is important too, in the context of Yeazell's mention of "facts," to remember James's concept of second order presentation in fiction: the first order is what actually might be said to happen; the second order, in which James becomes increasingly interested, is the way the things which are perceived to happen are felt by the characters who perceive the events. These feelings or impressions are in the late novels so inseparable from the "facts" that they may be said to become part of them. In the Preface to Wings this conception is expressed in terms of the author's interest in the effect Milly Theale has on those drawn, "as by some pool of a Lorelei" (5) to her situation, and his admitted method of "watching her, as it were, through the successive windows of other people's interest in her" (16).

These references are to The Wings of the Dove, ed. J. Donald Crowley and Richard A. Hocks, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1978. All other references are to this edition of the novel, and will appear in parentheses in the text.

⁷ This sudden shift in reference suggests a bit of coolness on the narrator's part--perhaps a hint of disapproval at Kate's decision to go to Lancaster Gate.

⁸ Nicola Bradbury notes that the tendency of readers to rely on stereotypes contributes to the persistence of Susie Stringham's version of Milly as "substantially accurate, and the myth of the fragile princess is sustained more readily than the robust and extraordinary character James actually creates." Bradbury claims that because of "deliberate vagueness" on the author's part, Milly "is never robbed of the status originally attributed to her by Mrs. Stringham" (Henry James: The Later Novels 87-8).

I argue that it is not the author's vagueness, but rather the deliberateness of the narrator's romantic obsession, that contributes, especially in Volume Two, to the vagueness of Milly's characterization.

⁹ William McNaughton stresses that in this scene it is "important to observe [Milly's] shrewd, edgy capacity for smelling out the 'machinations of sympathy' (166) and dealing with them. At times she copes with the emotion's potentially demeaning effects by a rueful, reluctant, and attractive acceptance" (97).

¹⁰ This is the narrative method described in the Preface to The Awkward Age, where James speaks of drawing on a piece of paper "the neat figure of a circle consisting of a number of small rounds disposed at equal distance about a central object. The central object was my situation, my subject in itself, to which the thing owed its title, and the small rounds represented so many lamps, as I liked to call them, the function of each of which would be to light with all due intensity one of its aspects" (The Art of the Novel 110).

In this novel, Milly Theale occupies that central position as a problem in reality for other characters to interpret. Their relationship to her is a complex one of

illumination and reflection: as their "lamps" of perception cast light on her, so her personal light illuminates aspects of their characters as well. By this analogy, James's fictional subject may be described as the play of light against light.

¹¹ I find it astonishing that Densher's persistence on the subject of Kate's physical surrender to him, and his ultimatum of sexual blackmail, are not more sharply criticised. Instead, it is Kate who is condemned--essentially, as a tease. Daniel Mark Fogel, for example, reads her embraces of Densher, her holding of his hands, as "a display of sexual power," and claims that "Densher cannot be so toyed with without at last being driven to press his demand" (64).

CHAPTER THREE: THE NARRATOR, TRANSFERENCE, AND
THE LAW OF NARRATION IN THE GOLDEN BOWL

"It occurred to Ulrich that the law of life for which, overburdened and dreaming of simplicity, one longs, is nothing other than the law of narration!--that simple order that consists of one's being able to say 'when that happened, the other occurred!' It is the simple series, the reduction of the overwhelming multiplicity of life to one dimension, as the mathematicians say, that comforts us; the stringing of everything that has happened in space and time on one thread, that famous thread of the story; out of which the thread of life is made."

The Man Without Qualities

The frustrations of James's late style have tempted many readers to reduce the complexity of The Golden Bowl to one dimension, while at the same time allowing them to refer to the novel's "ambiguity" or "indeterminacy."¹ The reductive tendency in critical readings of The Golden Bowl testifies both to the novel's almost intolerable diffusion of meaning, and to the possibility of extracting from its narrative texture one explanatory thread that will finally resolve the problems created by the presence of other, often contradictory, possibilities.² For these readers, both the problem and its solution are located in the novel's style, the site, variously, of James's moral ambiguity, moral ambivalence, or moral authority. The style of the novel can then be taken as an obscure expression of James's definite views on the rightness or wrongness of his characters, or as a test of the reader's ability to judge the characters rightly--i.e. as James would--in the absence of overt authorial guidance. This critical evasion of the difficult narrative discourse of The Golden Bowl is ironic in light of the

novel's depiction of its characters' struggles with the limits and the power of knowledge.³

For some critics the difficulty and contradictions of the late style can be resolved by an appeal to the author's presumed moral consistency and narrative control. R.B.J. Wilson, for example, sees the "authorial vantage point" of The Golden Bowl as the "constant referent that resolves ambiguity" (24). The coincidence in the novel of the "redemptive and the pessimistic," for instance, and the "idea of their inseparability" would equal "not fusion by James but confusion in James," and so they are "incompatible" (23), because James, in his "authorial capacity" (80), would not be confused. Gabriel Pearson makes a similar appeal when he detects in one of the Prince's remarks "the feel of direct authorial sponsorship" (301). For other readers, such as David Carroll, the presence of an omniscient author in the Jamesian style is no less inevitable, but is a bane rather than a comfort, evidence that James would probably disapprove of the experimentation "with shifting perspectives and voices" found in most recent "New Novels" (51). Whether thought of as benevolent or tyrannical, the omniscient author is invoked in each case, regardless of the degree to which he can be convincingly imagined as the source of the late style. In this way the actual obscurities and contradictions of The Golden Bowl are sacrificed to a pre-existing notion of James's narrative rhetoric.

Even readers who see in The Golden Bowl evidence of James's "protomodernism," such as Carl Malmgren, Mary Cross, and Joseph Boone, tend to simplify the narrative strategy of the novel. Malmgren claims that in the late novels James either completely effaces the traditional authorial figure, or displaces it by substituting "the voice or consciousness of one of the characters" (22), but never mentions the presence of a non-omniscient narrator as an example of James's literary modernism. Cross, who focusses on the syntax of the late style as proof of James's modernist interest in "a new order of consciousness" (34), never attributes this style

to a narrator, but always to "James." Boone too refers to what "James tells us" in the novel (381), and writes of The Golden Bowl as an "open-ended text [which] passes its tensions on to the reader, who must actively struggle with the unsettling questions raised but left unsolved by the prior narrative" (377). Oddly, he does not seem to consider this the narrator's struggle as well.

What all these critics, whether traditional or post-modern in approach, pass over is the narrator as the middle term in the relationship between reader and narrated event. In contrast to these positions, I maintain that James's modernism resides not in a seamless transference of the problems of interpretation from author to reader, but in a multiplication of them as they are channelled through a non-omniscient, first-person narrator. Rather than argue a particular side of the question of whether or not Maggie Verver redeems or manipulates her husband, father, and friend, this chapter focusses on the way in which such a question becomes an issue in the novel. My concern is the narrative discourse of the novel, and with the kind of narrator who can be postulated as employing that discourse. It is not just the reader who questions Maggie Verver's motives and character in The Golden Bowl but, first and foremost, the narrator. This contention affects the way in which I view the novel's bi-partite structure, and the understanding I have of the principle of the drama of consciousness in James. There is no single character of central consciousness in Book First, and far from balancing the perspective of "The Prince," Book Second, "The Princess," is a belated attempt by the narrator to find, and ground his narrative in, the point of view of an appropriate protagonist. Moreover, it is not the Prince's nor Charlotte's nor Adam's nor Maggie's consciousness that is fully dramatized in the novel, but rather the narrator's. The drama enacted in that consciousness is the meta-narrative of The Golden Bowl: the narrator's search for a central character, a protagonist, from whose perspective the story will resonate with

the greatest significance, amplified by his loss of certainty that Maggie is the heroine of the romance narrative he has constructed, rather than a scheming Machiavel.

In The Language of a Master, David Smit writes of the need to identify the "tone" or "voice" of the late style before anything further can be said about the function of that voice:

Thus the problem for the critic is to characterize the persona of the late style and offer an explanation of why James would want to project that kind of personality. As far as I know, no critic has characterized the persona of the late style very thoroughly, but we might variously describe that projected personality as either fastidious or fussy, profound or merely dense and abstract, complex or merely complicated, detailed or preoccupied with minutiae, concerned with nuances or merely with the trivial. The question is why James would wish to project such a controversial persona. (77)

The answer, I think, is that the difficulties of the late style are the effects of the narrator's limited perception, and that there is a rhetorical and moral value for James in the limited perception, not only of his major characters, but of his narrator as well. As Malmgren notes, James refers repeatedly in the Prefaces to the necessity of "bewilderment" in "the generation of compelling narrative" (17), which determines his choice of the non-omniscient narrator, for as Wayne Booth explains, "there can be no illusion of life where there is no bewilderment, and the omniscient narrator is obviously not bewildered" (45). The result of bewilderment is uncertainty in the perceiver about the nature of the thing perceived, if indeed anything can be identified at all, as well as doubt as to its "real" meaning, and thus ambiguity in the terms used to describe that vision to someone else. How else is the narrator to allow for the possibility that he may not understand, or may misunderstand, what he sees, if he

does not provide the reader with enough evidence for forming a conclusion altogether, or even slightly, different from his own?

The moral value of perceptual limitation in The Golden Bowl is explored by Martha Nussbaum, who sees in the "explicit design" (47) of the novel its acknowledgement of human imperfection. Unfortunately, Nussbaum too writes of the "authorial voice" (46) in this novel, obscuring the dimension added by the presence of the narrator to the "secular analogue of the idea of original sin" (34) that she finds in The Golden Bowl. Her recognition of the "interested and interpretative" nature of "all human attention" (46), though, is essential to my view of the narrator as someone who dramatizes what Dorothea Krook calls "the ordeal of consciousness" in James: the necessity of judgement in a world in which the relation between signifier and signified is radically indeterminate.

The narrator of The Golden Bowl is one of James's famous limited perceivers, capable of eloquence, compassionate observation, and of what appears at times to be unobstructed penetration of a character's mind. Like the narrator of The Wings of the Dove, however, this narrator cannot deliver without qualification the contents of characters' thoughts and feelings, or provide us with a clear statement of their motives--partly because of his non-omniscience, and partly because, like all human beings, the people he watches do not always know their own minds. Even when he constructs a motive from their words or behaviour he is likely to be partly wrong, for the link between thought and action is not necessarily clear, but, "like some poetic line in a dead language, subject to varieties of interpretation."⁴ James's narrator is thus committed to what he hopes is a fair representation of the events he is witness to, but inevitably bound by the partiality of his own peculiar vision and the obscurity of others' motives as well as his own. That the world he narrates is in linguistic upheaval complicates his role.

What the characters in The Golden Bowl face is a failure of language to represent adequately both their motives for living as they do, and the meaning of the lives they live. In what ways, for example, does the word "Prince" refer to the impecunious Amerigo, or "Princess" to his non-aristocratic wife? What motive can Maggie give for wanting her father to marry Charlotte that will not sound merely self-serving, and in what senses can the word "sacred" possibly refer to Amerigo and Charlotte's affair? What is missing here is an interpretive community to validate the new terms these people choose to represent those motives and those lives, and a central term on which they can found this system of meaning. The problem, then, is not so much a failure of signification as a slippage or drift of signification away from some permanent standard of meaning akin to the "floating signifier" or "etymon" of structural anthropology and linguistics, "whose ubiquity and perfect consistency endowed it with the power to act as a pure semantic value" (Said 317).

That the moral problems of the novel are engaged with linguistic ones is obliquely recognized by readers such as Philip Weinstein, who claims that as a result of Maggie's actions "the terms 'good' and 'evil' lose their meaning" (184), and Mark Reynolds, for whom the appearance of the bowl "dramatizes the ambiguous relationship between signs and interpretation in the novel" (15). John Auchard notes that "[h]owever silver-tongued James's characters may appear, they speak haltingly, in response to a loss of faith in language" (9). In his book-length study of James and contemporary theory, John Carlos Rowe makes a comprehensive statement about all of James, seeing in his work a "profound ambiguity that inheres in language. Learning not only how to recognize this fundamental ambiguity, but also how such ambiguity provokes necessary and inevitable efforts at determinate meaning and the institution of legal, political, economic, and familial authorities, is the hermeneutic imperative of James's fiction; such an imperative is directed at the reader, thematized by way of the characters, and finally returned to check the author's own will to

mastery of his literary materials" (Theoretical Dimensions 65). This imperative is also "thematized" through the narrator, though Rowe doesn't separate James from his narrator, or the narrator from any of the other characters inhabiting the novel.

Yet this linguistic crisis is particularly keen for the narrator, whose struggle is with both the characters' reliability with signifiers--the degree to which their words adequately represent their thoughts--and their reliability as signifiers--the degree to which the narrator's words adequately represent their place or meaning in the narrative. The narrator's discourse, as the medium through which the world of The Golden Bowl is represented, becomes a locus for the intersection of these two variables, which cannot always be distinguished from one another. Thus the novel's ambiguities embrace both "levels" or "planes" of narrative identified by narratologists as the level of discourse and the level of story. When certain characters or objects are significant to both levels of the narrative, we see the systemic rather than the local effects of this ambiguity most clearly.⁵ The golden bowl itself is a case in point: is it the sign of the essential flaw in Maggie's marriage, or a symbol of the redemption that so many readers find in the novel? Can it be both at once? How closely is the bowl related to Maggie herself, and is the meaning and value ascribed to it by her as object transferable to her as character? Is Maggie's equation of her marriage with the bowl "as it was to have been" (445) a restoration of the etymon, with Maggie herself as its human equivalent? Or is she rather the female version of Machiavelli's Prince?

These questions press most directly on the narrator, for he is charged with the delivery of a coherent diegesis at the same time that he suffers the same human limitations as the novel's other characters: his view is partial, non-omniscient, and subject to influence by others' awareness and use of the ways in which meaning can be created. But unlike the other characters, the narrator of The Golden Bowl seeks a centre outside himself, the compositional "zero point" from which events can be

narrated, that is, "revealed as possessing a structure, an order of meaning, which they do not possess as mere sequence" (White 5). Locating the centre of the novel in a character whose perspective the narrator sees as the most compelling and appropriate is an act of faith, signifying the narrator's decision to invest this particular point of view with all the limited authority of his position. Thus, the narrator's adoption of a particular character's perspective (in the ideological sense identified by Susan Lanser 17-18) in the process of narration is analogous to the adoption of an etymon, the central defining term which authorizes meaning and value. Unfortunately, the world of The Golden Bowl is not one in which the split between signifier and signified can be restored so easily. Misled not only by his structural non-omniscience but also by his personal vulnerability to romance, the narrator of The Golden Bowl makes the wrong choice in nominating Maggie Verver as the heroine of his romance.

Identifying the presence of a discrete narratorial voice in The Golden Bowl involves, in Janet Holmgren McKay's terms, "accounting for voices" (3) in the text through an assignment of discourse to either a character within the story or to a narrating presence outside it. Only by assigning responsibility for discourse to the narrator (DN) or to a character (DC) can we identify the particular perspective represented by an utterance, and say with certainty that it is the narrator who thinks this, and the character who feels that. Problems similar to those found in the discourse of The Wings of the Dove surface in this novel too, as more often than not, the narration of The Golden Bowl takes the form of free indirect discourse (FID), hypothetical discourse (HD), or what I call floating free indirect discourse (FFID), discourse types which refuse to settle securely in the realm of DN or DC.

The presence of these often intractable discourse types in The Golden Bowl functions as indicators of what McKay, using a term from Harold Kolb Jr.'s study of American realism, calls "antiomniscience" (8). McKay uses the word "to designate

narrators who pointedly disclaim any pretense of omniscience" (note 8), and quotes Kolb's claim that antiomniscience is a hallmark of American realism, resulting "in a twofold attempt to remove the external presence of the author through dramatic representation and through the effort to present description and summary, even when it is written in the third person (traditionally the territory of the omniscient author), from the single angle of vision of the characters" (qtd. in McKay 29). McKay herself elaborates on the necessity to substantiate the notion of antiomniscience in the context of realist fiction:

If realism involves limitations on the author/narrator's role and representation of characters' perspectives, then a clearer understanding of point of view in fiction, based on the way in which character and narrator voices interact, is necessary to the exposition of the realistic style. . . . Such an analysis should answer some of the questions that the discussion of realism raises. For example, how does an author/narrator demonstrate his antiomniscience? How does an author represent a character's perspective? How does an author arrive at a 'common vision,' as Edwin Cady calls it, through the representation of individual perspectives? (31)

The novel of James's that McKay chooses for her discourse analysis is The Bostonians, one not revised for inclusion in the New York Edition. McKay finds the narrative voice of that novel intriguing precisely because it "does not exhibit the control we have come to associate with the later James" (40). It is this lack of control that McKay sees as contributing to the ambiguity of the novel, the product of a narrator who becomes "increasingly involved with and affected by the characters and the action of their stories," and whose consequent loss of authority "reveals itself in a mingling of voices--the narrator's and the characters'--and ultimately a representation of multiple perspectives" (36).

My claim is that the narrator of The Golden Bowl is no more "in control," in the sense of "more omniscient," or "more detached" than the narrator of The Bostonians, and in fact, that the mingling of narrator discourse and what appears to be character discourse is more persistent and ubiquitous in this than in any other of James's novels. I would agree with McKay though that this mingling of voices can lead to a "representation of multiple perspectives" in the sense that the narrator is involved, as are the other characters, in a crisis of perception that necessitates for him a discourse that takes into consideration every imaginable way of representing an event. The narrator's discourse occupies the curious realm of both the rhetorical, in that it inevitably contains traces of judgement and evaluation of characters and their actions, and the non-authoritative, in that any human way of telling a story is limited in its authority.

The characters of The Golden Bowl experience knowledge in visual terms: what they understand is what they "see," which raises the question of what, if anything, Maggie understands at the novel's end, when she buries her face in her husband's breast, and what Amerigo knows when he says that he sees only her. Of necessity their understanding is given to us in words which reach us through the narrator, who is able to give us only what he too sees, or understands, of the characters he observes. Separating what the narrator sees others "see" from what he himself sees is often difficult in this novel, for as Ruth Bernard Yeazell points out, however we may try to keep the minds of the narrator and his characters properly distinct, the language of the late novels themselves continually defeats us. Occasionally the narrator does intrude in propria persona; occasionally he attributes a mental phrase or image quite explicitly to one of his characters, but far more characteristic is [an] ambiguous blurring of voices Of course in part this is simply

a convention of third-person narrative, to be accepted like any other: in le style indirect libre, as it is often known, we move imperceptibly from the narrator's account of his character's thoughts to intimations of that character's own inner language--what we take to be, at least, his private mental diction and syntax. (12)

Yeazell's description of the blurring effects of free indirect discourse can be confirmed through analysis of the discourse of The Golden Bowl. What can also be demonstrated is the impossibility of proving that a character is actually responsible for what may look like FID--that we really have, as readers, any more than "intimations of that character's own inner language." Although Yeazell acknowledges that FID gives us nothing more substantial than "what we take to be . . . [a character's] private mental diction and syntax," she does not explore the narrative implications of this trompe l'oeil. The verbal trace of the narrator's thoughts and observations is the narrator's discourse (DN), which seems at times to contain elements of the characters' own thoughts, but which is an odd mixture of authoritative statement and hesitant conjecture. The superior knowledge of a character's thoughts and feelings that the narrator seems at times to possess is a familiar trait of the third-person omniscient narrator, but the presence of words and phrases that qualify that knowledge, for example by suggesting the impossibility of putting into words the character's exact thoughts, is a departure from this mode of narration which persists throughout the novel, permeating the narrator's discourse with the air of the conditional tense.

The presence of these conditional features in the narrator's discourse limits the usefulness of typologies of narrative modes described by Dorrit Cohn, which are offered as examples of what an omniscient narrator, or a narrator capable of figural presentation of a character's mind, uses in the process of narration. The narrator of The Golden Bowl moves very freely from descriptions of characters' external

behaviour to what seem to be inside views of their thoughts and feelings, but which cannot be proven to be anything but the narrator's versions of those innermost realms. Often, he even supplies for the reader's benefit one or more versions of what a character is thinking, which gives the impression that he has direct access to their minds; so well does he seem to know these people that he can put their own inarticulate feelings into words.

This is one of the functions of what Dorrit Cohn calls "psycho-narration": the presentation by the narrator of a character's often non-verbal thoughts. This mode of narration, which Cohn defines as the most indirect technique for the fictional presentation of consciousness, since it attempts to represent realms of the fictional mind which are often too profound for language (11), always indicates to some degree "the narrator's superior knowledge of the character's inner life and his superior ability to present it and assess it" (Cohn 29). The narrator of The Golden Bowl also resembles Cohn's "consonant" psycho-narrator: "a narrator who remains effaced and who readily fuses with the consciousness he narrates" (26). The difference between this narrator and Cohn's, though, is the absence of any consistently demonstrated ability on the part of this figure to know what characters are thinking. The narrator's discourse may seem at times to be psycho-narration, and may indeed occasionally approximate the truth of a character's thoughts--though this can never be proven--but it can never be verified as the fusion of the narrator with the actual consciousness of the character, and it does not necessarily indicate the narrator's superiority to any of the other characters. Instead, what the DN of this novel reveals is a narrator skilled in the art of observation, who, perhaps building on past knowledge of these people or others like them, constructs convincing approximations of what people like the Prince or Maggie or Adam or Charlotte might actually be thinking.

At other times, the narrator of this novel appears to step back from his narrating role, pulling aside the veil of mediation and providing the reader with a direct glimpse into the mind of a character. These glimpses are given in what seems at times to be FID, or what Cohn calls "narrated monologue," a discourse form that hovers between psycho-narration and interior or quoted monologue (Cohn 105). Like McKay, Cohn bases the distinction between these three discourse types on linguistic and grammatical features: narrated monologue displays the tense system and person reference of psycho-narration (analogous to McKay's DN), but lacks the "mental verbs" of psycho-narration, and so can be distinguished from it (104). Narrated monologue imitates "the language a character uses when he talks to himself," but "casts that language into the grammar a narrator uses when talking about him, thus superimposing two voices that are kept distinct in the other two forms" (Cohn 105). Once again, the use of "narrated monologue" to describe passages of The Golden Bowl presumes the presence of an omniscient narrator, or at least a narrator capable of making accessible to the reader the actual contents of a character's mind. This is the illusion created by much of the narration of The Golden Bowl, but it is still an illusion: there is no finally convincing evidence that this narrator knows for certain what any of these characters actually thinks, at least in the exact words which embody those thoughts. Confusion much like this presides in The Golden Bowl, though what the reader encounters in this novel is not an author who willfully seeks to confuse, but a narrator who cannot be certain of what he sees.

Narration in Book First

Although the division of the novel into two books has led readers to assume that the relationship between the Prince and the Princess is presented "from roughly opposing viewpoints" (Boone 382), neither one of these characters is the sole perspectival centre of their respective volumes. Joseph Boone acknowledges in a

note that scenes between Fanny and the Colonel "punctuate" both books, and that Book First, "although predominately centred on the Prince, veers in its middle section to Adam's point of view" (387). But the narrative perspective of Book First is even more complex than this observation suggests. Yeazell points out that Book First has not only the Prince as a focus, but also "moves freely through the minds of Adam Verver, Charlotte, Fanny Assingham, and even, briefly, of Maggie herself" (103). What the structure of Book First exposes is a very demanding narrator who moves from one character to the next in search of a suitably capacious consciousness from whose vantage point he (as well as the reader) is likely to enjoy the most generous view.

In Book First, three of the novel's four major characters are "occupied" by the narrator; that is, he establishes a provisional centre for the novel in the perspective of each of these figures for at least a chapter, withdrawing his interest when he senses that the character whose part he has taken is, according to his own narratorial standards, unsuitable as a protagonist. Of these three experiments in fictional centres, only Adam Verver seems to fit, for a few chapters, the narrator's profile of the ideal protagonist--someone with a finely-tuned aesthetic and moral sense who is perceptive, subtle, and above all, disinterested. The Prince and Charlotte are dismissed after a relatively short run, the Prince for uxoriousness and venality, Charlotte for her opportunism and consequent rationalizations. Fanny Assingham is never a contender; so strong is her dread of being exposed that the reader can fathom her motives for encouraging Adam and Charlotte, and for discouraging Maggie in Book Second, without the narrator's help.

The ebb and flow of the narrator's allegiance to each character's point of view can be traced in his use of discourse types. The use of indirect discourse forms--free indirect discourse, floating free indirect discourse, and hypothetical discourse--creates the impression of moral, aesthetic or emotional identity with a character, even

of unmediated access to the contents of that character's mind. When the narrator loses faith in the character as centre, passages of direct discourse relieve the intensity of this impression. But neither species of discourse, indirect or direct, is really reliable for the narrator or for the reader: the impression of omniscience is not the same as omniscience, and people do not always say what they really mean.

Of the six chapters of Part First, only Chapter 1 is given in indirect discourse focalized through the Prince. Chapters 2, 3, 5, and 6 present the Prince in conversation with either Fanny Assingham or Charlotte Stant, but do not dramatize his impressions of the world with the same intensity as the novel's opening pages. This is an effect of discourse, as these later chapters consist mainly of direct discourse between the major characters, accompanied by the narrator's expositions of scene and setting, or a brief excursion into what appear to be a character's thoughts. The most powerful impressions the narrator receives from Amerigo in the first few paragraphs of the book are of his vulnerability to "objects massive and lumpish, in silver and gold" in shop windows, and his awareness of "possibilities in faces shaded, as they passed him on the pavement, by huge beribboned hats" (29). After Chapter 1, the narrator abandons the Prince as sole compositional centre of Book First, returning to him in later chapters only to present him in relation to the two women who are of most concern to him, Fanny and Charlotte. Maggie appears only in indirect reports of what are apparently the Prince's thoughts, and then often as a source of perplexity to the Prince--near the end of Chapter 20, for example.

In Part Second of Book First, the narrator gives Adam Verver pride of place: Adam's perspective dominates all seven chapters of this section. It is as if the narrator has been mulling over the Prince's and Maggie's comments about Adam Verver being "a real galantuomo" (31), and had decided to invest some time in Adam himself. The impression of seeing the world from Adam's point of view is again the effect of discourse. Almost three chapters are narrated through some form

of indirect discourse focalized through Adam--two more chapters than were focalized through the Prince--and not until the last page of Chapter 9 do we encounter a line of direct discourse, when Maggie asks her father "What is it, after all, that they want to do to you?" (140). Conversation between Adam and Maggie makes up much of Chapter 10, but Chapter 11 returns to indirect discourse: the conversation between Adam and Fanny in that chapter is remembered by Adam rather than directly reported by the narrator. Closer examination of the indirect discourse in this and the following chapter also indicates some sort of reservation or uncertainty on the narrator's part concerning Adam Verver's "two recognitions" (172), one of the value of the Damascene tiles, the other of the value of Charlotte Stant.

Until this point, the narrator is more intensely attached to Adam than to any other character in Book First, and even after it, the narrator remains unsure of Adam's final value and capacity. For this and other reasons critics such as Boone suggest that Adam Verver, "ruthlessly aggressive behind a placid and even boring exterior, may be exerting more control over the shifting balance of relationships than anyone is aware--especially Maggie" (381). I would add that in this sense Adam is the missing centre of Book First, a character the narrator is drawn to but cannot account for, who perhaps most deserves the title of Prince, with all its Machiavellian baggage.⁶

Charlotte Stant herself becomes the centre of the narrator's attention for the first few pages of Chapter 14, the first chapter of Part Three of Book First. Once again, it is as if the narrator's interest has been piqued by Maggie's and Fanny's estimations of Charlotte's greatness, of her being "the real thing" (159); or perhaps he feels some sympathy for her moment "of supreme surrender" (189) to the acquisitiveness of Adam Verver in the previous chapter. Charlotte is, for a brief time, "our young woman" (191), and though the Prince and Fanny dominate Chapter 15 with their conversation, reported in direct discourse, Charlotte and the Prince

share Chapter 17, with the indirect discourse of that chapter focalized through both of them. It is in the next chapter though that Charlotte falls short of the narrator's hopes, echoing the Prince's rationalization that their relationship is "sacred" (237). To the narrator, this is proof that Charlotte, knowing better, will cloak erotic self-interest in the language of Christian love and selflessness.

The Prince returns as the centre of focalization for Chapters 19 through 22, "more inwardly occupied," the narrator tells us, with Fanny Assingham "than with any other person except Charlotte" (243). It is with these two women that the Prince remains concerned for the rest of Book First--with Fanny out of fear for his safety, with Charlotte out of desire.

Thus the narrator finds no perfect centre of consciousness for Book First, only a succession of characters--of flawed consciousnesses--who are confused by, or fail to discriminate between, love and greed, or collecting antiques and collecting people. Deciding whether or not these characters are honestly confused or willfully hypocritical is the narrator's task; it is also the reader's. What complicates the reader's role is precisely the powerful impression created by the narrator's discourse that he is some way omniscient on the one hand, and the repeated disclaimers of his ability to know some things for certain on the other. While the reader can never be sure that any of the content of the novel's indirect discourse actually belongs to a character, she also cannot be sure that it does not. As the narrator picks his way through a world of moral and linguistic instability, so the reader too confronts that instability in the narrator's discourse.

Besides the problem of point of view in Book First, there is also the problem of figurative language. As the narrator moves from character to character in search of the perfect compositional centre, so he moves from image to image in search of the figure which best characterizes the scene or the person before him. The narrator's use of figures is especially problematic in light of his non-omniscience, as

this perceptual limitation virtually guarantees his reliance on simile and metaphor to represent things he himself cannot know for certain--such as the contents of other characters' minds. However, it is impossible to say for certain that images which cluster in the narrator's discourse, and which are attributed by the narrator to a character, are not, perhaps, a part of what that character thinks, for there is no other authority to whom the reader can appeal for confirmation of the verisimilitude of the narrator's language.

In a similar way, images the narrator uses to characterize Adam, Amerigo, Charlotte and Maggie enjoy a paradoxical status. They may very well be accurate representations of essential personality traits of these characters, but that accuracy cannot be independently verified, as neither the narrator nor the reader can pronounce with final authority on the true nature of any of the characters. These images become powerfully persuasive elements of the narrator's discourse which can be contradicted only by the direct discourse of the characters (which may also be unreliable), or by the actions of the characters (which must in turn be described by the narrator in ways which make their contradictory significance clear).

Certain figures appear with regularity in the discourse, both direct and indirect, of Book First. One set of images involves boats and water--the bath Amerigo imagines himself sitting up to his neck in (34), the water-tight compartment Maggie speaks of (37), "the waters of talk" (140) that surround Maggie and her father, and the "boat" of Adam Verver's money (206). Another set of theatrical or dramatic images, introduced in Chapter 2 of Book First, develops more significance in Book Second. There are also in Book First quite a few images of wealth, particularly of gold, as when the Prince is described as if he were an "old embossed coin, of a purity of gold no longer used" (43), when he observes the likeness of Charlotte's body to "some long, loose silk purse, well filled with gold pieces" (59), or when the Prince, hearing Charlotte explain that they are staying on at Matcham together, turns away

"with the chink of this gold in his ear" (260).⁷ The most suggestive set of images in Book First though, are those of chalices, cups, and crystal, for unlike the other image clusters, which have no corporeal diegetic referents, these images follow the appearance and the travels of a real golden bowl in Chapter 6 and later, and supply the novel with its title.

The means by which this particular set of images achieves its privileged position is another problem in the text, the outline of which can be traced in the discourse types of Book First. While the appearance of the antique golden bowl is itself brief, its persistence in the discourse of both the characters and the narrator gives it a resonance often assumed to be symbolic. This assumption is based on readers' acquiescence to the rhetoric of the narrator's indirect discourse rather than on the actions or direct discourse of the characters. The golden bowl has great appeal for the narrator as an emblem of romance, as perhaps even the holy grail⁸ itself, just as certain characters have great appeal for the narrator as characters of central consciousness. The coincidence of the two--the appearance of a satisfactory central character who can be equated with an equally satisfactory symbol--is prepared for and anticipated in Book First by the narrator, though not until Book Second will these romantic and narrative expectations be, or appear to be, fulfilled.

The sense of this narrator as in some way omniscient is created in the opening pages of the novel, particularly in sentences such as "Capture had crowned the pursuit--or success, as he would otherwise have put it, had rewarded virtue" (30), in which the narrator seems able to tell us in what other words the Prince would have described his situation. When the Prince apparently thinks of the son-in-law that he intends to be, in comparison to "lots of fellows he could think of," the narrator tells us that "he used, mentally, the English term to describe his difference" (30), which confirms our initial impression of having unobstructed access to the Prince's thoughts.

These apparent demonstrations of the narrator's perceptive powers appear within long sections of third-person exposition which seem to contain elements of the Prince's direct thoughts, apparently represented by emphasized words, fragmented phrases, or questions inserted into longer sentences, as when the narrator muses on the Prince's comfort with the English language:

He found it convenient, oddly, even for his relation with himself-- though not unmindful that there might still, as time went on, be others, including a more intimate degree of that one that would seek, possibly with violence, the larger or the finer issue--which was it?--of the vernacular. (31)

The Prince here seems to be mentally examining his relationship to a foreign language, which we are to understand is the language of those very thoughts, and which does not yet take the form of colloquial expression. The narrator seems in turn to be reporting those thoughts to us, but it is already difficult to tell whether the word "oddly" is to be read as the narrator's comment on the curiosity of the Prince's mental reliance on English, or if it is the Prince's own recognition of that anomaly. Similarly, it is difficult to know if the emphasis on the word "that" is given by the narrator or by the Prince. The question fragment that interrupts the final clause of the sentence has the immediacy of tone that might belong to the Prince, that might well represent his quick question to himself. Its sudden appearance in this passage of narrative material, which the reader takes as an indirect report of the Prince's mind, seems to place us in the middle of the Prince's own thought processes without the mediating curtain of the narrator's presence. This appears to be an example of what Dorrit Cohn, after Leo Spitzer, calls "stylistic contagion": "where psychonarration verges on the narrated monologue [Cohn's term for FID] marking a kind of mid-point between the two techniques where a reporting syntax is maintained, but

where the idiom is strongly affected (or infected) with the mental idiom of the mind it renders" (Cohn 33).

It is difficult to say for certain, though, whether the purpose of these questions and sentence fragments is to represent something the characters might be asking or thinking to themselves, or whether they are editorial, indicative of the ruminating presence of the narrator. The ambiguity of the rhetorical status of these verbal fragments makes them difficult to categorize using the discourse typologies of Dolezel, Cohn, and McKay. If they are read as belonging to the DN of the novel, then they are the questions and comments of an active, though perhaps uncertain, narrator. If they are read as narratorial representations of the characters' own uncertainties, they may be defined as examples of indirect discourse (in which the narrator may be responsible for the interrogative form of the phrase, or for some part of its content) or of free indirect discourse (in which the character's mind is supposedly fully exposed, and both the content and the interrogative form of the utterance is the character's responsibility).

The decision to label these sentence fragments or questions as some form of DC implies that the agitation or uncertainty suggested by the form or content of the phrases is located at the level of histoire, and that the narrator's discourse is immune to these forces. Conversely, acknowledging the possibility that the narrator is responsible for these phrases highlights the narrator's presence as a character in the novel and not just as an instrument in the transmission of the story to the reader. However, awarding this discourse to the narrator without the qualification that some of its elements might reside in the mind of the character under observation relegates the significance of their form and content to the level of discours only. The problem in this novel is that both levels of narrative are infected with a systemic uncertainty which renders distinctions between histoire and discours indeterminate. The result is the proliferation of "floating free indirect discourse," discourse which displays the

past tense and third-person reference of free indirect discourse, but without the verbs of thought and the deictic markers typical of FID, and which therefore can also be read as the direct discourse of a non-omniscient first-person narrator.

More questions of the sort quoted above surface in the midst of the Prince's recollection of his recent meeting with Maggie Verver, when the narrator tells us that the Prince thinks to himself, in respect to the "exquisite colouring drops" of Maggie's replies to him, that "They were of the colour--of what on earth? of what but the extraordinary American good faith?" (34). This seems to be the narrator's representation of the Prince's dawning realization of how definitely his betrothal to a rich man's daughter has changed his life. It is, after all, more than credible here that the Prince's sense of bewilderment at his rapidly changing circumstances should, in the narrator's view, take the form of broken, half-formed sentences, and indeed, the narrator's role in the presentation of the scene is acknowledged in one of the sentences that follow: "What he had further said on the occasion of which we thus represent him as catching the echoes of his own thoughts while he loitered--what he had further said came back to him, for it had been the voice itself of his luck, the soothing sound that was always with him" (34). The narrator gives us, in this convoluted utterance, a sense of how complex his relationship (and by extension our relationship) with the Prince really is. He draws attention to the way in which his narration "represents" the Prince as able to catch only echoes of past conversations, reminding us that there is, in fact, a mediating mind between us and the Prince. At the same time, though, the narrator reinforces, by his comments on the "soothing sound that was always with him," our faith in his knowledge of what is typically true of a character, in this case, the Prince.

These passages of the Prince's recollection are fascinating too in that they contain the first examples of apparently direct discourse of the novel, which in fact is not direct discourse at all, but conversation remembered by the Prince (and

perhaps by the narrator, who might well have been there) and commented on by the narrator, as when we read that "The young man remembered even now how extraordinarily clear--he couldn't call it anything else--she had looked, in her prettiness, as she had said it. He also remembered what he had been moved to reply" (34).

In spite of the narrator's ease in moving from exposition of a scene to the representation of inside views of characters, at times he makes explicit reference to the limitations of his knowledge, and to the inevitable discrepancies that exist between his perceptions of characters, and his rendering of those perceptions for the reader. Particularly interesting in this context are those sentences which make some sort of comment on the approximate relationship of the narration to the events narrated, as when the narrator tells us that "Something of this sort was in any case the moral and the murmur of his walk" (39), or, having described the first meeting between the Prince and Charlotte Stant, that "The little crisis was of shorter duration than our account of it . . . (60).

Glimpses of what might be the narrator's perceptual liabilities also take the form of conditional words and phrases, such as "might have" or "would have," which at times seem to represent uncertainty within the mind of a character, and at others seem indicative of the narrator's own uncertainty about the character. Often these two uncertainties coincide in the same sentence. Carl Malmgren uses Boris Uspensky's phrase "words of estrangement" in regard to the conditionality of the narrator's discourse in The Awkward Age:

That is, the speaker prefaces all incursions beneath the surface [of a character's mind] with lexical markers that obviate any authority or privilege the statements might confer upon the speaker. The text is heavily marked by verbs of speculation like "it seemed" or "it appeared" or "there might have been" and by words of speculation like

"apparently," "perhaps," and (the speaker's especial favorite) "as if." Taken in combination, these words create what Uspensky has termed a synchronic narrative situation. The speaker presents himself as merely an observer present on the scene, one whose scope of knowledge is as limited as that of any "normal" observer. (20)

In contrast to the narrator Malmgren finds in The Awkward Age, the narrator of The Golden Bowl does not deliberately present himself as limited in knowledge; to suggest so would be to imagine the narrator as a coyly manipulative observer without providing any rationale for that characterization.⁹ Rather, this narrator strives against that limitation, and his bewildered state in the construction and delivery of his story.

Darsan Singh Maini too writes about "a dark streak of doubt" in the late novels in relation to James's "detached observers and narrators": "Do they indeed tell all that they see? Do they remain really uninvolved? And finally, does not the tale change in the telling in that the language itself, though our sole vehicle of communication, has built-in insufficiencies" (130). This doubt has its manifestation in the "marked increase in the incidence of qualifying clauses and parentheses, punctuation, pronouns and adverbial phrases" in the late style. Maini regards these phenomena as "the result, rather than the cause of the obscurity we find in the later style" (187).

An example occurs when we read that what the Prince "rather seemed to himself not yet to have measured was something that, seeking a name for it, he would have called the quantity of confidence reposed in him" (42-3). While leaving us with a strong impression of showing us the Prince in the process of thinking to himself, the sentence does not really tell us much of the actual content of those thoughts, not even if the Prince is really seeking a name for whatever it is that he feels. Later, when the Prince is in conversation with Fanny Assingham, the narrator says that he

"seemed to speak certain words instead of certain others" (46). How the narrator has received this impression, whether from the Prince's hesitation, the look on his face, or some other clue, is not certain. Neither is it certain that the impression is at all correct. Nevertheless, it is passed on to the reader. This contributes to our sense of the Prince as discontented with his situation, and suggests too that he is capable of dissembling, of keeping back his real thoughts, or even of concealing things from himself. The virtue in such ambiguous representation is that any or all of these states of mind might account for the Prince's apparent hesitation and subsequent remarks, and the narrator, committed to the most adequate formulation of the scenes before him, introduces all of these possibilities into his language.

Other qualifications suggest the narrator's uncertainty about the motive or meaning of a character's words or actions. These remarks often turn up in the tags and narratorial comments surrounding direct discourse, in which the narrator supplies probabilities--sometimes in the form of credible similes--for what these people might really be thinking. During this same scene, the narrator reports Fanny as returning a particularly intense look from the Prince "as if it had made her wonder" (46), and says of her later on, "She might quite have been waiting to see what he would come to, but she spoke with a certain impatience" (48). The Prince answers her "as if glad to be able to say something very natural and true . . ." (53). The Prince's tendency to say other than what he really thinks is suggested again: "But this word came out as if a little in sudden substitution for some other" (53).

It is during this interchange in Book First that the Prince becomes aware of Mrs. Assingham's discomfort, of there being "something the matter" with her that he cannot help but notice. "He had not frightened her, as she had called it--he felt that; yet she herself was not at ease" (49). This is one of the first examples in the novel of these characters' remarkable sensitivity to the signals--of tension, fear, comprehension, suspicion--thrown off by others in the course of interaction which are

indications of mental or emotional agitation. Of course these marks of emotional states are also imperfect signifiers of the thoughts which lie behind or beyond them, and so are not necessarily reliable indicators of what any of these characters actually thinks or feels. The Prince is thus introduced as one of a number of skilled "readers" of the social scene, who construct out of the behaviour they observe in others motives for it, which they then test. The Prince, though not an omniscient observer in the way the narrator appears to be, nevertheless guesses correctly that Fanny is disturbed by something, which proves to have been the arrival of Charlotte Stant in London.

That the narrator is no less a careful and perspicacious witness is demonstrated in his description of the tension between the Prince and Fanny in the following passage:

It fairly befell at last, for a climax, that they almost ceased to pretend--to pretend, that is, to cheat each other with forms. The unspoken had come up, and there was a crisis--neither could have said how long it lasted--during which they were reduced, for all interchange, to looking at each other on quite an inordinate scale. They might at this moment, in the positively portentous stillness, have been keeping it up for a wager, sitting for their photograph or even enacting a tableau vivant.

(50)

The effect of this passage is a curious and complex one. The narrator's choice of words--"positively portentous stillness"--creates for the reader a scene of unbearable tension, in which one person waits for the other to do or say something. When the narrator interrupts his own narration to tell us that neither one of these two could have told, later, how long this crisis lasted, we have again the impression of his proximity to their thoughts, his ability to "see" their stress from the inside. At the same time, the comment draws attention to the delay between the scene being

narrated, and the characters' own reminiscence of that scene, which the narrator mediates. That there is something at stake for these people in saying or not saying what they think or feel is suggested by the narrator's comparison of their silence to a wager that one is bound to lose. The transformation of two friends into betting adversaries introduces the spectre of politics, of battles of the will, into Fanny's drawing room, and we remember that shortly before this she had called the Prince a Machiavelli (48). Searching for an analogue that will best serve his sense of the scene, the narrator moves from photography to a "tableau vivant," a figure that captures the combination of formality and drama he detects in the placement of the Prince and Fanny. None of the interpretations the narrator offers for this scene fits the most likely facts, and his restless movement from figure to figure becomes itself a meta-figure for his frustrated search for an adequate signifier. His arrival at the comparison of Fanny and the Prince to parlour actors leads him to project for their scene an observer, described in the third person:

The spectator of whom they would thus well have been worthy might have read meanings of his own into the intensity of their communion-- or indeed, even without meanings, have found his account, aesthetically, in some gratified play of our modern sense of type, so scantily to be distinguished from our modern sense of beauty. (50)

In this strange passage the narrator, perhaps unconsciously, reveals the process of his own narration, one which is dependent on the conjectural constructions of an intensely interested, though limited, perceiver. The narrator has multiplied, by this flight of fancy, the observers of Fanny and the Prince to include a pair of eyes not demonstrably unlike his own, or those of the reader. Even the interpretive abilities the narrator posits for this hypothetical spectator are as riddled with qualifications as his own. When we read that this spectator "might have read meanings of his own into the intensity of their communion," we seem to be being informed, albeit

obliquely, that the narrator may be prone to precisely the same thing, of reading significance into the words and actions of others that may not necessarily be the characters'. This is also the first use of a theatrical simile in the novel, and the presence of theatrical figures and metaphors in the narrator's discourse, particularly in regard to Maggie Verver, is crucial to his representation of events later in the novel.

The narrator makes another reference to a hypothetical observer in Chapter 7: "Adam Verver at Fawns, that autumn Sunday, might have been observed to open the door of the billiard-room with a certain freedom--might have been observed, that is, had there been a spectator in the field" (111). That this imagined spectator is pictured as inhabiting the diegetic world of the novel, and not the privileged world we assume for the narrator, seems clear from the absence of self-reference in the sentence. A few sentences later, though, the narrator's inclusion of the reader in the "we" that watches Adam Verver sounds rather disingenuous:

We share this world, none the less, for the hour, with Mr. Verver; the very fact of his striking, as he would have said, for solitude, the fact of his quiet flight . . . ; investing him with an interest that makes our attention--tender indeed almost to compassion--qualify his achieved isolation. (111)

Though the narrator places himself and the reader as witnesses to Adam Verver's retreat from the advances of Mrs. Rance, the exploration of Mr. Verver's thoughts that follows seems to distance the narrator from the merely human spectator--such as Mrs. Rance herself--who might have followed Adam into the billiard-room:

For it may immediately be mentioned that this amiable man bethought himself of his personal advantage, in general, only when it might appear to him that other advantages, those of other persons, had successfully put in their claim. It may be mentioned also that he

always figured other persons--such was the law of his nature--as a numerous array (111)

The narrator moves on to inform the reader of Adam Verver's "habit--his innermost secret, not confided even to Maggie, though he felt she understood it, as she understood, to his view, everything-- . . ." (112).

Such interventions as these by the narrator do much to repair the damage done by earlier comments to our belief in the narrator's superior knowledge of the novel's characters. This is particularly striking in the lengthy passages of narrative discourse that comprise Chapters 7 and 8 of the book, and which have Adam Verver as their subject. The bulk of narration in these two chapters is given in indirect discourse, with the narrator making claims about his knowledge of Adam even more sweeping in their confidence than those made of the Prince in the opening chapters of the novel:

Mr. Verver, it may further be mentioned, had taken at no moment sufficient alarm to have kept in detail the record of his reassurance; but he would none the less not have been unable, not really have been indisposed, to impart in confidence to the right person his notion of the history of the matter. (118)

The narrator speaks with assurance about the content of Adam's thoughts--"it may also be mentioned," "it may further be mentioned,"--and clearly enjoys being able to impart this knowledge to the reader. Once more, the impression given by the narrator's discourse is of a plunge deep enough into Adam Verver's mind to detect the subtlety, uncertainty, or evasiveness of his thoughts. Yet the negative expression of this apparent knowledge--"would none the less not have been unable"--drains the narrator's representation of those thoughts of all definition. Thus the narrator's tendency to thrust himself forward as a source of occult information about Adam, being bold enough at one point to say "It was not in him--we may say it for him--"

(114), is answered by the occasional sign that at least some of the information so offered is not necessarily what Adam actually thinks, but what the narrator invents to stand in for those thoughts: "A dim explanation of phenomena once vivid must at all events for the moment suffice us" (113); what the narrator thinks Adam would have thought: "His greatest inconvenience, he would have admitted, had he analysed, was in finding it so taken for granted that, as he had money, he had force" (115); or what he almost thought, but, according to the narrator, didn't actually think: "He almost wished, on occasion, that he wasn't so sure he would do it" (117). This last sentence may be more exactly described as an example of perfectly ambiguous discourse, which I call floating free indirect discourse, in which it is impossible to tell if the narrator is detecting uncertainty in the character's mind, or expressing uncertainty about his ability to read that mind.

Near the end of Chapter 8 the narrator provides us with another complex passage which describes the instantaneous comprehension that Maggie demonstrates of her father's vulnerability to pursuit:

The quest had carried them to the door of the billiard-room, and their appearance, as it opened to admit them determined for Adam Verver, in the oddest way in the world, a new and sharp perception. It was really remarkable: this perception expanded, on the spot, as a flower, one of the strangest, might, at a breath, have suddenly opened. The breath, for that matter, was more than anything else, the look in his daughter's eyes--the look with which he saw her take in exactly what had occurred in her absence: The anxiety, it is true, would have been, even though not imparted, shared; for Fanny Assingham's face was, by the same stroke, not at all thickly veiled for him, Each of these persons--counting out, that is, the Prince and the Colonel, who didn't care and didn't even see that the others did--knew something, or

had at any rate had her idea: the idea, precisely, that this was what Mrs. Rance, artfully biding her time, would do. . . . Mr. Verver fairly felt in the air the Miss Lutches' imputation--in the intensity of which, his propriety might have been involved. (130)

The agility with which the narrator apparently moves from one mind to the next is breathtaking. The words "determined for Adam Verver" seem to locate us in the narrator's mind, but it is Adam's "sharp perception" that we register through the sensitive agency of that narrator. The appearance of italicized words--"was really," "saw her take in," --adds to our feeling of reading a direct transcription of Adam's thought. However, the simile of the flower opened with a breath floats perfectly between Adam and the narrator. It resembles FID in that it is untagged, and it has the effect of transparency, of giving the reader a clear view of a character's inner language. It is possible that Adam, who spends much of his time at Fawns walking through the gardens, might seize upon the figure of a blossoming flower to describe to himself his new awareness. The simile might also be the narrator's responsibility, untagged because it is part of his discours, his own notion of Adam as a simple fellow whose self-consciousness suddenly blossoms under the more knowing eyes of his daughter.

The source of the qualification "would have been, even though not imparted, separately shared," is ambiguous, as it could represent the narrator's rapid scan of the ranged faces, and the summary of what he found there, or be a record, in some sense, of what Adam also takes in with a look. The comment on the Prince's and the Colonel's blindness to what is happening seems to belong to the narrator, while the last part of the sentence, beginning after the full colon, is another example of floating free indirect discourse. The narrator makes a curious equation between knowledge and conjecture--"Each of these persons . . . knew something, or had at any rate had her idea"--and then puts into words what that idea is: "the idea, precisely, that this

was what Mrs. Rance, artfully biding her time, would do" (130). Notwithstanding the narrator's claim, it is impossible to know that this is exactly what each of the female observers of the scene thinks to herself. Here the narrator performs a curious function: the terms of his discourse, for example the italicized "would," reposes in no one identifiable consciousness, though it resembles FID in its third-person construction, and in its mimicry of what one of these characters might possibly think. Neither does it float, as other narrative elements have seemed to, between the narrator and only one other character whose mind we have the impression of reading. Rather, the DN here becomes a locus for communal recognition, for the possibility, articulated by the narrator, of shared recognition and understanding of an event. At this point, we realize that the narrator is either fully omniscient, capable of assessing and summarizing the collective thoughts of any number of characters, or that, like the Prince, Fanny Assingham, and Maggie, he can "read" the significance of other people's faces, actions, and attitudes, and offer convincing versions of what is most probably going through their minds. The status of the interjection "--since Mrs. Rance was a handful!--" is similarly ambiguous, appearing as a record of collective, rather than individual, thought.

The narrator's habitual verbal hesitations return in the following sentences, when we read that the "special shade of apprehension of the Miss Lutches might indeed have suggested the vision of an energy supremely asserted," and that Adam Verver "fairly felt in the air the Miss Lutches' imputation--in the intensity of which, his propriety might have been involved" (130). In his contradictory fashion, the narrator can measure the significance of an impression for a character, telling us that this last for Adam Verver "was but a flicker," and in a first-person aside, admit that what was given above to us was in some way a hint of what was actually or probably there: "what made the real difference, as I have hinted, was his mute passage with Maggie" (130). This reference to the actual time of the witnessed event as against

the time taken to narrate it draws our attention again to the narrator's role in the delivery of fictional material. Cohn's stress on the usefulness of psycho-narration in the deliberate distortion of temporality is of value here: "if it can contract the long timespan, it can also expand the instant" (38).

This "mute passage" is the first of significance since the one between the Prince and Fanny on the day of Charlotte Stant's arrival in London, but the narrator is much more involved in the representation of this one to the reader:

His daughter's anxiety alone had depths, and it opened out for him the wider that it was altogether new. When, in their common past, when till this moment, had she shown a fear, however dumbly, for his individual life? But time had finally done it; their relation was altered: he saw, again, the difference lighted for her. This marked it to himself--and it wasn't a question simply of a Mrs. Rance the more or the less. For Maggie too, at a stroke, almost beneficently, their visitor had, from being an inconvenience, become a sign. . . . He became aware himself, for that matter, during the minute Maggie stood there before speaking; and with the sense moreover, of what he saw her see, he had the sense of what she saw him. This last, it may be added, would have been his intensest perception had there not, the next instant, been more for him in Fanny Assingham. Her face couldn't keep it from him; she had seen, on top of everything, in her quick way, what they both were seeing. (131)

The narrator appears to use consonant psycho-narration in this passage, mixed with sentences which sound like FID--"But time finally had done it; their relationship was altered"--to represent for us the knowledge shared by these various observers. Once more, the DN becomes the medium through which characters soundlessly communicate to each other what they know, expressed by the narrator through the

metaphor of sight. The messages telegraphed from face to face are rapid and subtle, and the narrator uses phrases such as "had the sense of" to represent the delicacy of these perceptions. Delicate and fleeting though these thoughts may be, it is crucial to the story that all these people see, and therefore understand, the same thing. Mrs. Rance has "become a sign," the meaning of which--predation--can be agreed upon. That this moment of shared and sharp understanding is perhaps over-dramatized, however, is suggested by the narrator's next sentence: "So much mute communication was doubtless, all this time, marvellous, and we may confess to having perhaps read into the scene, prematurely, a critical character that took longer to develop" (131). This admission on the narrator's part that he may have taken liberties in his depiction of the scene once again puts his reliability in question.¹⁰

David Smit reacts to the difficulty of separating the narrator's discourse from the characters' in the late style by suggesting that the late style "may simply be the narrator's voice" (105). Smit finds evidence in the early short fiction of fusion between the narrator's and the characters' thoughts, and focusses much of his discussion of James's style on his development of techniques for depicting consciousness (92-98). James relies, according to Smit, on the third-person limited point of view in the late novels:

So when I read about the thoughts of James's characters in these books, I am all too aware that I am reading the words of a person some distance from the action, viewing it, describing it, indeed creating it, as he goes along, and what I am reading is the narrator's interpretation of those thoughts. In those rare cases when I do become aware of Free Indirect Thought, I am so conscious of how the narrator is imposing his language on the thought of the characters that I have

great difficulty realizing how the transcription could be even an approximation of what the characters are thinking. (106)

If the narrator of The Golden Bowl is in any way as careful and assiduous an observer as other characters in the novel--as even Fanny Assingham, for example--there is no real reason why his offerings, even in what appears to be but is not actually FID, of what others think or feel might not resemble their thoughts in some finally unknowable way. Exasperated by his wife's incessant musing over the meanings and motives of others' behaviour, Bob Assingham asks Fanny "What's the good of asking yourself if you know you don't know?" (71). Fanny, like the narrator, knows very well that she doesn't know many things for certain, but knows for certain a few things. It is on these few things that she bases her elaborate hypotheses about what motivates Adam, the Prince, Charlotte, and Maggie, and while there is no guarantee that she is always right, she herself admits that she has launched so many probable explanations of what is happening around her "that they make a chance for my having once or twice spoken the truth" (286). Arlene Young sees the Assinghams as "a model for the relationship between the narrator and the reader. Fanny produces fictions, hypothetical explanations of events, which Bob tests with his queries; the narrator produces fiction, the story he relates, which the reader probes for meaning" (386). Thus, while the narrator also has no guaranteed access to the truth, his perceptual abilities, or at least his sensitivity to possibilities, transcend Fanny's own.

The narrator of The Golden Bowl is not always as audible as the narrator McKay finds in The Bostonians, but he is still a palpable presence, calling attention to himself much more often than some critics seem to notice. Paul Armstrong, for example, refers to one of the narrator's "rare intrusions" (144), and Martha Nussbaum to "one of the most striking incursions of the authorial voice" (31) in the

form of a comment on Adam Verver's collecting of both old Persian carpets and human beings. I find the terms "intrusion" and "incursion" misleading, as they suggest that there are times when the narrator disappears from the novel, and others at which he suddenly reappears in order to make a judgement on an event or a character. I would argue that there are simply times when the narrator's voice is so mingled with what is taken to be the character's inner speech and thought that he is "naturalized" by the reader and goes unnoticed until he reminds us of his presence, perhaps by referring to himself in the first person. The narrator never disappears from the novel, for the novel exists only through his discourse.

This narrator is audible throughout the novel in countless sentences which begin with or contain a word such as "Well," or "Ah," and which reinforce the sense of the story as being delivered orally to a listening audience, such as when the narrator says of Amerigo that "Well, he was of them now, of the rich peoples" (39), or, of how Amerigo responds to Charlotte in the antique shop, "Ah, there, better still, he could meet her" (109). These sentences most often contain an italicized word, suggesting an emphasis whose source is the mind of the character, but is actually the editorializing narrator, as when Adam is reported as thinking of the Prince, "Oh, if he had been angular!--who could say what might then have happened?" (119).

In fact, the status of the entire novel as discours rather than as histoire (in Benveniste's terms) is indicated by the narrator's frequent--not rare--use of singular and plural first-person pronouns. From early in Book First, the narrator usually refers to himself and the reader using the plural, as in "at the moment we are concerned with him" (29); "as we join him" (30); "on the occasion of which we thus represent him" (34). The reader is thus immediately recruited to the narrator's task of observing and representing the Prince even as the novel begins, which establishes the reader's relationship with the narrator as one of intimacy.

There is also evidence of the narrator's detachment from the events of the novel when he says of the Prince that "He had an idea--which may amuse his historian--that when you were stupid enough to be mistaken about such a matter you did know it . . ." (38). The narrator's presentation of himself as an objective viewer of events is echoed in later remarks which also feature his first use of the first person singular: "the gravity of the hour, that gravity the oppression of which I began by recording" (39); "what meanwhile marked his crisis, as I have said" (40); "which I began by speaking of" (40). While claiming status as the detached historical recorder, the narrator is nevertheless present as an "I" to the undetermined audience to whom he speaks.

So far, then, the relationships between reader, narrator, and narrated world seem pretty conventional. The narrator appears to be both extra- and heterodiegetic, which in the nineteenth-century tradition James is heir to, is a mark of omniscience and reliability. As the novel progresses, though, it is possible to see in the narrator's references to himself and to the trials of narrating, the emergence of a narrator who more closely resembles the unreliable first-person narrators of twentieth-century fiction. Both in the first and the second volumes of The Golden Bowl, when the narrator draws attention to himself as a narrator, it is often to reflect on the difficulty of performing the duties of the distanced observer on one hand, or to admit his lack of omniscience on the other. Such self-conscious comments often appear in relation to a character whose motives the narrator seems unsure of--the Prince and Adam Verver in Book First, for example. In Book Second, these self-reflexive comments are gradually replaced by an increase in the narrator's use of indirect discourse forms to represent Maggie Verver's point of view, which lends her presentation a degree of intense identification and sympathy the reader never experiences with any other character. Again and again, the narrator's self-consciousness foregrounds both his

limitations as a perceiver, and his compensating involvement in the composition of material he claims to be merely recording.

The narrator's use of personal pronouns falls off somewhat after the first sixty pages of the novel, but increases with the appearance of Adam Verver as a subject in Chapters 7, 8 and 9: "We share this world, none the less, for the hour, with Mr. Verver" (111); "our friend's amiability" (113); "we may say it for him" (114); "the possibility of them, I say" (129); "we have made some mention" (132). Here too, personal references are often tied to some observation on the less than precise nature of his narration, particularly when he is faced with such an obscure subject of attention as Adam Verver and his history: "A dim explanation . . . must . . . suffice us" (113); "we may in fact well surmise" (121); "on the occasion round which we have perhaps drawn our circle too wide" (128); "as I have hinted" (130). All of these remarks, instead of invoking the convention of the omniscient narrator who records from a position well removed from the diegesis, work against it. Instead of a narrator who sees all, and merely reports what he sees, we have a narrator who is not omniscient, who acknowledges the limitations of his vision, and who offers conjecture and speculation in place of what he cannot know for certain.

One of the clearest statements of the narrator's imperfection at this point in the novel is in the opening sentence of Chapter 9, referred to above: "So much mute communication was doubtless, all this time, marvellous, and we may confess to having perhaps read into the scene, prematurely, a critical character that took longer to develop" (131). This sentence follows a description of knowing looks exchanged between Maggie Verver and her father regarding the amorous intentions of Mrs. Rance. Mrs. Rance does indeed precipitate a conference between the two on the wisdom of matrimony for Adam Verver, but the narrator's confession that he has offered a premature interpretation of the scene belies his earlier claims to impartial historian status. Another such remark appears near the end of that chapter, as the

narrator describes Maggie and her father sitting together in the garden: "but mightn't the moment possibly count for them--or count at least for us while we watch them with their fate all before them--as the dawn of the discovery that it doesn't always meet all contingencies to be right?" (140). Here the narrator ventures away from neutral observation into tentative interpretation, indicating by his desire to find significance in the scene his lack of knowledge as to how the two people involved actually felt the moment "count" for them.

The reader feels the limitation of the narrator's knowledge most in situations where an omniscient narrator might be expected to provide an inside view of an enigmatic character's thoughts or motives--Adam Verver's, for example. In fact, the reader relies heavily on the narrator's assessment of characters such as Adam, the Prince, and Maggie to provide some standard by which their behaviour may be measured. Yet in the chapters devoted to Adam, which climax in Book First with his proposal to Charlotte, the narrator avoids statements either of direct judgement or of reassuring approval concerning Mr. Verver. Instead the narrator offers remarks such as the oddly suggestive confession of narrative inadequacy noted above by Armstrong and Nussbaum: "Nothing perhaps might affect us as queerer, had we time to look into it, than this application of the same measure of value to such different pieces of property as old Persian carpets, say, and new human acquisitions . . ." (160). Pleading the constraints of time allows the narrator to comment indirectly upon what may be a serious moral flaw in Adam Verver's view of the world, without actually confirming for the reader that Adam does indeed see the acquisition of Charlotte as essentially the same as the acquisition of the Damascene tiles.

Without some demonstration of direct access to Adam's mind, which would prove that he really does think this way, the narrator can resort only to similes to communicate his uneasiness, comparing Adam to "fortunate bachelors, or other gentlemen of leisure" whose "entertainment of compromising company" is so managed

as to place them beyond reproach (160). Immediately after this, though, the narrator admits that "That figure has, however, a freedom that the occasion doubtless scarce demands, though we may retain it for its rough negative value" (160). This is another in a string of subtle admissions on the narrator's part that his knowledge of certain characters is severely limited, and that consequently his depiction of them is often rough and impressionistic rather than precise. In this case, the narrator's profound ignorance of Adam's inner workings leaves the ambivalence unresolved. Mr. Verver remains a figure the narrator, and thus the reader, cannot fully account for.

More such references by the narrator to himself as observer appear in the depiction of Adam and Charlotte's courtship: "at which we have just glanced" (163); "while, I say, he so listened to Charlotte's piano" (164); "that quantity, I say, struck him . . ." (169). Another comment on narrative rendering appears in Chapter 19: "Well, that Charlotte might be appraised as at least not ineffectually recognizing it, was a reflection that, during the days with which we are actually engaged, completed in the Prince's breast these others . . . that we have attempted to set in order there" (242). How successful the attempt is the reader can only guess. The narrator is distinct when pointing out that "it was, as I say, at Matcham" that the Prince had occasion to ruminate on a conversation with Fanny Assingham (247), but much less clear about how exactly to express the Prince's thoughts on the oddity of his wife's behaviour since their marriage: "Deep at the heart of that resurgent unrest in our young man which we have had to content ourselves with calling his irritation . . ." (252). After this, the self-referentiality of the narrator's comments disappears in a sea of indirect discourse for the remainder of Book First, only to surface when the narrator confronts, as do the other characters, the Princess of Book Second, whose growth in knowledge and sophistication must be newly assessed by everyone.

A curious feature of the figurative language in Book First, particularly that which refers, or seems to refer, to the bowl of the novel's title, is that it too often hovers between the narrator and the characters in sentences of indirect or floating free indirect discourse. This makes it difficult to assign images of gold, of crystal, or of cups to either a character or the narrator, and consequently, difficult to assess the rhetorical purpose of those images. After the gilded crystal bowl has been declared "a ricordo of nothing" because "it has no reference" (101), it nevertheless reappears in the conversation between Adam and the Prince remembered in Chapter 7, in which Adam calls Amerigo "a pure and perfect crystal" (120). The narrator seems impressed by this metaphor, and develops it in his description of Amerigo's response: "and nothing perhaps even could more have confirmed Mr. Verver's account of his surface than the manner in which these golden drops evenly flowed over it. They caught in no interstice, they gathered in no concavity; the uniform smoothness betrayed the dew but by showing for the moment a richer tone. The young man, in other words, unconfusedly smiled . . ." (120). Adam's choice of figure is coincidental with both the narrator's and Amerigo's remembrance of the antique bowl, a remembrance that the narrator guesses is responsible for Amerigo's reply, in which he talks of cracked and flawed crystals coming cheaply to the buyer (121). Adam's figure may have appreciation as its motive, while Amerigo's interpretation of the metaphor may be prompted by guilt. The narrator may be using the metaphor ironically, to comment on the smoothness of Amerigo's sophistication, or genuinely, since Amerigo has not yet shown the "crack" of infidelity. It is impossible to say for certain what the narrator intends, though at this point in the novel he seems to regard the Prince as in some way equivalent to the bowl--though whether in terms of its quality or its flaw is unclear.

A similar metaphor appears in Chapter 8, when Adam Verver's consciousness of the difference Maggie's marriage has made to his life is compared to "wine too

generously poured," which overflows the containing cup (126). Since the passage in which the metaphor appears is in indirect discourse, it may be the narrator, thinking, perhaps, of the Prince's earlier reference to the Bloomsbury bowl, who supplies the terms of the figure, indicating by it his view of Adam as a potentially more secure vessel of consciousness than the Prince. It is difficult too to place the cup metaphorically handed to the Prince by Fanny Assingham in the opening sentences of Chapter 20 (246). Again, either the Prince or the narrator could be responsible for this choice of words, since the figure appears in indirect discourse, and both of them have a memory of the antique bowl to refer back to for an image. The significance of the figure though, remains, as it does in connection with Adam Verver, obscure and indefinite.

One possible context for the imagery of cups in Book First is offered in a passage representing the Prince's observations on the Americans "among whom he was married" (238):

He might vulgarly have put it that one had never to plot or to lie for them; he might humourously have put it that one had never, as by the higher conformity, to lie in wait with the dagger or to prepare, insidiously, the cup. These were the services that, by all romantic tradition, were consecrated to affection quite as much as to hate. But he could amuse himself with saying--so far as the amusement went--that they were what he had once for all turned his back on. (238)

The conditional language typical of the narrator's representations of thoughts not directly available to him is here, which suggests that he might be responsible for the wording of what are offered as the Prince's thoughts, though it is possible that the Prince himself constructs these figures, and is thinking of the dark family history Maggie has credited him with. The context for these images is explicitly romantic, and vaguely Machiavellian, and the cups of the narrator's and characters' thoughts either

the wedding cup or the poisoned chalice. But there is still no clear indication of whether or not the reference to the romantic tradition is the Prince's or the narrator's, and thus if this narrative context has its source in the awareness of the characters, or if it is the invention and imposition of the narrator. Both Amerigo and the narrator may, for example, be remembering Fanny's early reference to the Prince as a Machiavelli, though with very different attitudes. It is possible that though the Prince may have turned his back on these romantic "services," the narrator has not, and continues to view with sincerity what others treat with irony.

If Amerigo is responsible for the Machiavellian terms which cluster around him, it is possible that their presence is merely coincidental with Fanny's and Maggie's characterizations of him. If the narrator is to some degree involved in the choice of these terms, then it is possible that they are chosen for a particular rhetorical purpose, and that the narrator has in mind not only Fanny's observation, but also the recent scene between Amerigo and Charlotte in which they formed their "sacred" family alliance, and vowed to trust each other with the "conscious care" of their sposi (236). If this is true, it is very possible that the narrator's consideration of the ways in which Amerigo might illustrate the qualities of Machiavelli's Prince is a part of the narrator's search for, and inevitable construction of, the meaning of these characters in the story he narrates--the narrator's search for a character to sustain the etymon is itself creative. It is as if the narrator is applying the linguistic figure of the flawed golden bowl to various characters in hopes that in relation to it, they will become legible as signifiers within the narrative. The problem he confronts, though, is his inability to read these characters clearly in relation to the cups, chalices, and bowls he either detects in or supplies for their thoughts. This failure has its roots not only in the narrator's limited perception of these characters, but also in the vagaries of any language that could be used to describe them, or by which their thoughts and motives could be given approximate shape. This unintelligibility is

particularly noticeable in the proliferation of these apparently symbolic cups and chalices, or in references to the "crystal flask of her innermost attention" (208), and the "crystal current" (254) that surface suggestively in connection with Fanny Assingham, but again, without declaring their significance. The oddity of these images is partly due to their fragmentation. That is, the reader may anticipate some coherence and completeness in the incidence of the imagery. But the various qualities of the Bloomsbury bowl--its flawed crystal base, its gold covering, its shape, its potential function as cup--are divided up in the images associated with the Prince, Adam, and Fanny. With the possible exception of the narrator, who alone carries a conception of the bowl as the potential unifying symbol of the story, no one character in Book First is associated with all the characteristics of the golden bowl. This sense of fragmentation and random association persists in the appearance of a cup in the indirect discourse representing the Prince's thoughts of himself and Charlotte in Chapter 22: "So, therefore, while the minute lasted, it passed between them that their cup was full; which cup their very eyes, holding it fast, carried and steadied and began, as they tasted it, to praise" (267). It is unclear whether Amerigo and Charlotte's designation of their affair as "sacred" carries any authority at all for the narrator--whether the imagery of the shared cup operates in keeping with their private re-creation of meaning, or whether this language indicates the narrator's view of their relationship as sacrilegious.¹¹

If the narrator is responsible for the metaphor of the cup in this sentence, then its appearance here is inconsistent with its earlier function as a sign of Adam Verver's understanding of his daughter's marriage. In the context of the Prince and Charlotte, the shared cup of consciousness connotes an awareness of a possibly adulterous connection. But the figure might belong to the Prince, for he does say to Charlotte, moments later, that he feels the day at Matcham "like a great gold cup that we must somehow drain together" (269). Still, the image is robbed of certain

significance, because Charlotte has to remind the Prince of the real bowl--the one the reader assumes the Prince is referring to, even though he is not.

At the moment in the novel where the Prince and Charlotte supposedly enjoy perfect understanding, they really do not understand each other at all. They may exchange metaphors that accidentally resemble each other, but they have no common referent. The same may be said of the imagery of cups and crystals in Book First. Though these images proliferate in the discourse of the narrator and the characters, it is impossible to confirm a common referent in the minds of all these people that lifts these images out of the realm of the accidental. It is also impossible to know whether they are meant to signify ironically or not. The tension created by this particular doubt permeates Book First, but is relieved in Book Second, in which the narrator, out of exhaustion, hope, or love, trades disinterest for belief in Maggie Verver.

One of the ways in which the narrator demonstrates his remarkable sensitivity to the feelings of those he observes is through his use of hypothetical discourse. The presence of this discourse has been noted by many readers: R. B. J. Wilson calls it "hypothetical utterance," and quotes Barbara Hardy's reference to it as "the remarkable short cut' of 'intuition . . . exaggerated into telepathic communication between all kinds of people and in all kinds of circumstances'" (qtd in Wilson 25). Sharon Cameron refers to these remarks as "unspoken utterances" in Thinking in Henry James (83-121). Carren Kaston calls this same verbal phenomenon "imagined speech" (140), but as Arlene Young points out, limits its appearance to Maggie's consciousness, and its function to "the imaginative reshaping of her world" (2). Young, on the other hand, sees hypothetical discourse in The Golden Bowl as a "ficelle," a way of dramatizing "not only that words are inadequate to express reality, but that reality is unknowable, both in fiction and in life" (396).

Hypothetical discourse hovers suggestively in the uncertain realm between narrator discourse and character discourse. Marked by linguistic features typical of direct discourse--dashes, first-person pronouns--and enclosed in quotation marks, it masquerades as direct discourse, benefitting from that resemblance in that it may at times be mistaken for what a character actually says. But hypothetical discourse is also in some measure reported discourse, the province of the narrator, though as Cameron, among others, points out, "unspoken utterances are indeterminately attributable to the character who imagines them and to the one to whom they are assigned" (83-4). To what extent hypothetical discourse contains elements of the reported character's actual thoughts, and to what extent it is merely the invention of the narrator (is the narrator responsible for the quotation marks, for example?) is a pressing question in The Golden Bowl, where the narrator's reliance on it in his narration seems in direct proportion to his uncertainty over what it is that he is reporting.

The effect of hypothetical discourse as a rhetorical device is similar in many ways to the effect of other discourse types which strand the reader in uncertainty. Especially interesting in this context of a relationship between free indirect discourse types and hypothetical discourse is the presence, in Book First, of sentences in quotation marks that anticipate some of the problems of hypothetical discourse. One of these is a comment apparently offered by the narrator as an index to Fanny Assingham's personality: "'Sophisticated as I may appear'--it was her frequent phrase . . ." (51). The quoted speech is given as verbatim, a simple repetition of a remark that Fanny habitually makes, but its appearance here is not anchored in any particular time or place. A similar air surrounds the words which the Prince apparently recalls Maggie saying to him: "'Oh, I've been writing to Charlotte--I wish you knew her better:' he could still hear, from recent weeks, this record of the fact . . ." (63).

Both of these phrases are understood by the reader as being "typical" of the reported speaker. Because they appear in quotation marks, they carry much of the power of direct discourse, but they are nevertheless a part of another character's indirect discourse. These comments are also very clearly contained within another character's memory, which limits their suggestive autonomy. Hypothetical discourse is related to this sort of discourse because it too takes the form of quoted speech which is attributed to another character, and which functions as a convincing approximation of what that character might indeed be thinking or on the verge of articulating. However, the indeterminacy surrounding hypothetical discourse--the difficulty of assigning it with certainty to either a character or the narrator, or of accounting for the degree of their mutual involvement--gives it a peculiar autonomy. It floats in a world of suggestion and probability. The increase in hypothetical discourse in Book Two of the novel is a sign of, as well as a reaction to, the inability of the narrator and the other characters to know for certain the meaning of events in which they find themselves caught up. Hypothetical discourse is the verbal manifestation of that condition, a condition out of which all fiction arises.

The vigilance demanded of the reader by these complex and finally indeterminate discourse types is considerable, as the "voice" that David Smit identifies as the most distinctive quality of the late novels is difficult to resist, as it is our only, albeit limited, access to what may in some way resemble the truth. Nicola Bradbury writes that "scrupulous attention to the source of judgements" in the narrative, "while alerting the reader to the importance of this awareness, only prompts him to see where it is not finally satisfied. It is the difficulty of maintaining an alertness adequate to the narrative process which prepares the reader for the much deeper difficulty of confronting the problems raised within the narrative by Maggie's position and those inseparable from the use of the novel form itself" (Later Novels 163).

Hypothetical discourse first appears in a section of psycho-narration describing the Prince's attempts to understand the strange American people he is now involved with. The DN is laced with what Dorrit Cohn calls "psycho-analogies"--"It was as if he had been some old embossed coin"--and with questions given in that ambiguous floating FID: "What would this mean but that, practically, he was never to be tried or tested?" (43). The Prince seems to consider asking Fanny outright what exactly it is that others expect him to do: "She would answer him probably: 'Oh, you know, it's what we expect you to be!' . . ." (43). The imagined answer the Prince seems capable of giving to his own unasked question appears to belie his incomprehension of Fanny: he knows her well enough to predict with probability her response. The hypothetical discourse itself follows a series of sentences in which the Prince's agitation over his inability to comprehend either the Ververs or Fanny Assingham herself is indicated by a number of italicized words: "all that was before him was that he was invested with attributes"; "the seriousness in them that made them so take him"; "what was, morally speaking, behind their veil?". It is as if the Prince's frustration over the obscurity of Americans finally erupts in a statement he can attribute to Fanny, and which sums up the blithe unconcern for his difficulty that he finds so maddening in her.

Much more challenging is the example of hypothetical discourse found in Chapter 8, in which the narrator presents Adam Verver's thoughts through indirect discourse: "The applications, the contingencies with which Mrs. Rance struck him as potentially bristling, were not of a sort, really, to be met by one's self. And the possibility of them, when his visitor said, or as good as said, 'I'm restrained, you see, because of Mr. Rance, and also because I'm proud and refined; but if it wasn't for Mr. Rance and for my refinement and my pride!--the possibility of them, I say, turned to a great murmurous rustle, of a volume to fill the future . . ." (129). As Young points out, the introductory tag, "said or as good as said"--suggests that Mrs.

Rance did not utter exactly these words, but provides no information about how she manages to give Adam Verver this impression:

It could be a paraphrase of an actual statement or statements made by Mrs. Rance, or it could be an interpretation of her attitudes, actions, or body language. In either case, the likelihood of subjective colouring of the perceptions by the interpreter produces an unresolvable indeterminacy, making it impossible to ascertain whether accountability for the impression Mrs. Rance produces resides more with her than with her observer. Indeed, even the identity of the interpreter of her apparent communication is open to question, for while the interpretation seems to belong to Adam, there is nothing to indicate that it could not be assigned to the narrator or to a combination of the narrator and Adam. (387-8)

Unlike the earlier example of hypothetical discourse attributed by the Prince to Fanny, here the words in quotation marks are not remembered by either Adam or the narrator, and therefore definitely contained within just one consciousness. The narrator's self-reference in the remark "the possibility of them, I say," seems to indicate his sensitivity to the impression Mrs. Rance conveys to Adam, and hints at his involvement in the choice of words attributed to her. I would hazard that even Mrs. Rance, forward though she may be, would not say these particular words directly to Adam, but that they are "distilled" by the narrator or by Adam, or by both, from what she really does say, if she really says anything at all. That there is also some message to be read in her actions seems clear enough in the narrator's tag--"or as good as said"--which is a comment on the transparency of Mrs. Rance's intentions to an interested observer such as the narrator.

The question of the narrator's omniscience in regard to hypothetical discourse is discussed in detail by Arlene Young, who points out that this sort of discourse

balances "precariously between extraordinary insight into the workings of a character's mind and dangerously bold but unfounded assumptions on the part of the narrator" (388). That the narrator appears still to have some ability to get beneath the surface of a character's demeanour is indicated by the following passage:

It was on Fanny Assingham's lips for the moment to reply that this was, on the contrary, exactly what she didn't see; she came in fact within an ace of saying: 'You strike me as having quite failed to help his idea to work--since, by your account, Maggie has him not less, but so much more, on her mind. How in the world, with so much of a remedy, comes there to remain so much of what was to be obviated?' But she saved herself in time, conscious above all that she was in presence of still deeper things than she had yet dared to fear"
(203)

The confidence with which the narrator reports to us not only the precise words that Fanny did not say, but also how close she came to actually saying them, seems to prove Seymour Chatman's claim that narrators who are able "to report what a character did not in fact think or say" are capable of taking "deeper than ordinary plunges into the mind" (225-226). It is altogether possible, though, that of all these characters, it is Fanny who is easiest for the narrator to "read," and it is about her that his hypothetical constructions are most likely to be true.

A more complex relationship exists between the narrator, Charlotte, and the Prince in the sentence of hypothetical discourse found in chapter 17 of Book First. The preceding paragraph is in indirect discourse, focalized, in Genette's term, through Charlotte. It is also Charlotte whom the narrator reports as knowing what "was at the bottom of [Amerigo's] thought, and what would have sounded out more or less if he had not happily saved himself from words" (221). Shortly thereafter appears the comment that "If her friend had blurted or bungled he would have said, in his

simplicity, 'Did we do "everything to avoid" it when we faced your remarkable marriage?'--quite handsomely of course using the plural, taking his share of the case . . . " (221).

The narrator has earlier described Charlotte's receipt of a "particular prolonged silent look" from Amerigo, a look into which she has apparently read a decision by him not to say the words we read in single quotation marks above. But whether these words are really what Amerigo was thinking "more or less" of saying, or whether they are the narrator's report of what Charlotte is convinced the Prince is thinking of saying, is impossible to ascertain. That is, it is impossible to decide whether the hypothetical sentence should be read as Charlotte's attribution of words to the Prince, fed to us by the narrator exactly as Charlotte worded them to herself; whether they are exactly what Amerigo does indeed think better of saying out loud; or whether they represent the narrator's approximation of what Amerigo is thinking, but does not utter. All of these possibilities surround hypothetical discourse, and their presence raises questions about the limits of the narrator's perception (Young 390). Examples such as this suggest that the narrator may have the ability to represent with some degree of success the thoughts of one character at a time, but in situations in which he watches one character watch another, his knowledge of the latter figure is even more likely to be speculative, occluded as it is by the presence of the character with which he is more directly concerned. This doubling of perspectival relationships is an example of mise en abyme, for the narrator occupies, in relation to Charlotte watching the Prince, the position of the reader of the novel, who watches the narrator watch both Charlotte and the Prince without knowing anything for certain about their thoughts.

Indeterminacy also attends the sentence of hypothetical discourse associated by the narrator with the Prince in Chapter 21, when he approaches Fanny Assingham and is described as not saying "Ah, see what you've done: isn't it rather your own

fault?" (254). The quoted words are the most direct expression of what the Prince could say to Fanny in order to confirm her suspicions about what is going on between himself and Charlotte, and, obliquely, to threaten her with exposure should she make a fuss. It is impossible to say whether the sense of sinister bluntness in this sentence is indeed what the Prince is thinking of saying, or whether the narrator is summarizing, in a far more reductive and vulgar way, what is communicated by Amerigo's manner toward Fanny. But one of the effects of the unuttered sentence is to present the Prince as someone not above gloating over an opponent paralyzed by her implication in the affair she detects. Whether this effect is intended by the Prince, registered by Fanny, or merely a creation of the narrator's perception of them both remains finally uncertain.

The impression described above is slightly contradicted by an exchange between the Prince and Charlotte a few sentences later in which the Prince represents to Charlotte the gist of his conversation with Fanny, a conversation presented to the reader through the narrator's indirect discourse. Although the Prince says to Charlotte that Fanny "understands all she needs to understand" (255), there is in his reconstruction of their talk no vulgar sense of the unspoken threat present in the earlier example of hypothetical discourse:

'She can't of course very well put it to us that we have, so far as she is concerned, but to make the best of our circumstances; she can't say in so many words, "Don't think of me, for I too must make the best of mine: arrange as you can, only, and live as you must." I don't get quite that from her, any more than I ask for it. But her tone and her whole manner mean nothing at all unless they mean that she trusts us to take as watchful, to take as artful, to take as tender care, in our way, as she so anxiously takes in hers.' (255)

All the bluntness of the hypothetical discourse has been drained from the Prince's words to Charlotte. Here the Prince too becomes an example of mise en abyme, for he plays the narrating role, representing to Charlotte the meaning of Fanny's tone and manner. He even mimics the narrator's methods by attributing thoughts to Fanny that "she can't say in so many words" and that she doesn't actually utter. And though he acknowledges that these words are not quite what he heard Fanny say, he nevertheless proceeds to his conclusion about her thoughts as if he had heard something like them.

The appearance in the Prince's direct discourse of hypothetical discourse associated with Fanny thus dramatizes the likeness of the narrator of The Golden Bowl to the characters he observes. As their conjectures about each other, based on "readings" of tone and manner, are likely to have some measure of truth in them, so are his about them. But while the Prince shares with the narrator some of his talent for observation and interpretation, he is not a disinterested observer, as the narrator is presumed, by most readers, to be.

Narration in Book Second

Although Malashri Lal writes in a recent article that it "would be difficult to arrive at a consensus regarding the central character of The Golden Bowl" (169), it is usually the case that readers see Maggie Verver as the putative heroine of the novel--even if, like F.O. Matthiessen, Sallie Sears, and John Carlos Rowe, they are not happy with that nomination--based on her primacy in Book Second. Even critics who regard Maggie as less than splendid and good often hedge their comments against the pressure they detect in the narrative to accept her view of the world simply because that view is dominant. Ruth Bernard Yeazell, for example, says that "the fact that Maggie's interpretation is the last--and most comprehensive--inevitably draws us closer to her vision of events. The novel compels us to identify with

Maggie, not so much because she is the most virtuous inhabitant of her world, as because her knowledge of that world is nearest to our own" (103). Frederick Crews also refers to the novel's "final and greatest exercise of power" (86) in relation to Maggie, who "steps into the spotlight and remains there permanently" (88).

But it is not just Maggie's late appearance in the novel that lends her actions a considerable degree of rhetorical force, but also the narrator's representation of her in terms which cast her as the living analogue of the etymon: the golden bowl itself. For the narrator, Maggie Verver is the last hope that among these people he will find someone capable of sharing, even of embodying, his vision of the world as one in which moral vision and moral action, based on a shared system of value and understanding, is still possible. Maggie's importance to the narrator vibrates on both the narrative and the thematic levels of the novel. She is the compositional centre from which a powerful story of a quest for meaning, linked to the golden bowl as the holy grail, may be narrated. She is also the character, motivated by love and the desire for knowledge, whose persistence in the face of bewilderment most resembles the narrator's own determination to find meaning in the events he witnesses. Also like the narrator, Maggie learns to interpret signs--the bowl itself being the most crucial--and thus echoes his exegetical function in the text. For all of these reasons, and out of a profound sense of his own spiritual isolation, the narrator's discourse inclines more and more toward Maggie Verver, projecting on her his need for company on the quest for the sacred in a de-sacralized world.¹²

The effectiveness of the narrator's rhetoric can be measured in the response of a critic like R.P. Blackmur, who writes of Maggie that in Part Fourth "[s]he has herself become the golden bowl" (157), or Nicola Bradbury, who, though she mentions "the disturbing problem" of accounting for words and images "which strike the reader as shocking," nevertheless concludes that "Maggie, at least, we must trust, if we are to follow the novel at all" (Later Novels 194). But trusting Maggie also

involves trusting what the narrator tells us about Maggie, for much of what is given as evidence of her heroic and redemptive qualities is presented through indirect and hypothetical discourse, in which the narrator, or other, less percipient characters, may play a significant part. The reader can never be certain that Maggie is thinking in exactly the terms the narrator has supplied for her thoughts, or be sure that the narrator's preoccupation with her as the incarnation of the etymon, the principle or law of narration itself in this story, does not allow him to squint at her words and actions when they seem to contradict the coherence of his narrative.

Maggie's prominence in Book Second is predicted by Fanny Assingham's comments about her in the last chapter of Book First, which William MacNaughton sees as James's "notebook" or "scenario" for what transpires in Book Second (109). In contrast to MacNaughton's view, I see in the transition from Book First to Book Second a narrator who is impressed by Fanny Assingham's declaration to her husband that Maggie will "take it all on herself," that she will "carry the whole weight of us," and that she is "a little heroine" (283), much as the narrator in Book First seemed influenced by what characters said of each other. Based partly on Fanny's thumbnail character sketch of Maggie as awakening, like some modern Sleeping Beauty, from a sleep of ignorance, and partly on the fact that there is no other character whose point of view the narrator has not "tried," the narrator chooses Maggie as the protagonist of The Golden Bowl.

This choice on the narrator's part manifests itself in a much more sustained relationship of narrative focalization between the narrator and Maggie than has been enjoyed by any other character since Adam Verver in Part Second of Book First. MacNaughton mentions "James's willingness to move inside Maggie's skin" (111) in Book Second, while Boone notes the way Maggie's consciousness "eventually dominates the novel's action" (382). Bradbury points out that "the closeness of the

narrative point of view to the heroine's raises many of the questions of authority associated with first-person narrative" (Later Novels 194), but does not consider the possibility that "the heroine's" point of view may be in some way a trick of light. What these readers observe without specifying is the degree of the narrator's identification with what he believes to be, at least for the first two parts of Book Second, Maggie's point of view.

Discourse types once more provide some measure of the narrator's preoccupation with what he represents as Maggie's perspective. Of the ten chapters of Part Fourth, one is given to the Assinghams; the rest have Maggie as their primary focus. Chapters 25, 28, and 32 consist entirely of indirect discourse focalized through Maggie, while Chapter 26 contains only three sentences of direct discourse, spoken by Maggie herself. Of the five chapters containing conversations between Maggie and other characters, the sentences of direct discourse are surrounded by extended passages of indirect discourse, again focalized through Maggie. It is also in these chapters that the narrator's reliance on hypothetical discourse becomes more marked than it had been in Book First. In this section of Book Second, indirect and hypothetical discourse establish the reader's intimate connection with the narrator's conception of Maggie, a conception that the last two parts of the novel presume upon, and test.

Part Fifth, set at the Ververs country home, Fawns, provides the most intense impression of the narrator's alliance with Maggie, even though only one of its chapters, Chapter 38, is given in indirect discourse. The other three contain a mixture of direct and indirect discourse, with the narrator still intent, in the material surrounding direct discourse, on representing Maggie in the best possible light. So committed is the narrator to his version of what Maggie thinks or feels in this Book that the effects of the earlier concentration of indirect and hypothetical discourse in Book Fourth persist. Strangely, it is to this part of the novel that critics point most

often when arguing either that Maggie's central place in the novel is justified by her demonstration of sympathy and love for Charlotte, or that she is a heartless, manipulating woman.

The last two chapters of the novel also consist of mixed discourse forms, with the great difference that the narrator's attraction to Maggie as spokesperson for the ideal seems to have waned. There is more distance between Maggie's point of view and the narrator's in these chapters than in earlier ones, and less of a tendency for the indirect discourse to be filtered through what is taken to be Maggie's consciousness. As with the three other major characters who were abandoned as centres of consciousness in Book First, Maggie too loses her place as the heroine of the narrator's romance.

Though the narrative of Book Second is marked by conditional words and phrases similar to those found in Book First, here conditional language does not at first seem to function both as an expression of the narrator's uncertainty, and his representation of a character's uncertainty, as it did in Book First. Instead, the impression created by the narrator's discourse is that his vision--especially his vision of Maggie--is unimpaired. He seems able to report with certainty on the contents of characters' minds, even if what he sees is their uncertainty. In fact, the characters' uncertainty offers the narrator opportunities to demonstrate his knowledge of the shapes taken by doubt, or to say what Maggie in particular would have said or thought in another circumstance: "she would have been at a loss to determine to which order, that of self-control or that of large expression, the step she had taken . . . belonged" (305); "Maggie would have described herself as . . . torn" (308); "She couldn't have narrated afterwards--and in fact was at a loss to tell herself--by what transition . . . their drive came to its end" (344); "She couldn't have definitely said

how it happened" (347); "If she had dared to think of it so crudely she would have said that Fanny was afraid of her" (370).

Still, this sense of the narrator's omniscience, his ability to track the finest mental sensation, is occasionally directly contradicted by tags such as "Something of this kind was the question that Maggie . . . asked of the appearance she was endeavouring to present" (309), or undermined by sentences which suggest that the narrator cannot really see all that clearly into others' minds, as when Maggie, sitting by the fire waiting for the Prince to return from Matcham, "might have been fixing with intensity her projected vision, . . . might have been watching the family coach pass" (315). More puzzling though are sentences in Book Second which combine claims that a character sees or thinks a certain way with qualifications so convoluted as to cast doubt on the substance of the narrator's impressions. These sentences suggest that he is so certain of what he thinks others see, that he will represent as truth what can only be conjecture. Such is the effect of the following: "It was in fact even at the moment not absent from her view that he might easily have made an abject fool of her--at least for the time" (310); "The given case would be that of her being to a certain extent, as she might fairly make out, menaced, . . ." (351); "it was actually not even definite for the Princess that her own Amerigo . . . had arrived at the golden mean of non-precautionary gallantry . . ." (394); "It is not even incredible that she may have discovered the gleam of a comfort . . ." (397); "she seemed to see him hear her say" (427); "she but just failed to focus the small strained wife of the moments in question as some panting dancer . . ." (449). The contradiction between words such as "in fact," "actually," in some of these utterances and the negatives which qualify them makes it impossible to know just how certain the narrator is of any of the things he describes--such as the extent to which Maggie is really menaced by the Prince, yet the impression of that threat, faint as it is, remains with both the narrator and the reader.

Notes of qualification are present even in the first sentences of Book Second, which contain the much commented upon image of the pagoda:

This situation had been occupying, for months and months, the very centre of the garden of her life, but it had reared itself there like some strange, tall tower of ivory, or perhaps rather some wonderful, beautiful, but outlandish pagoda, a structure plated with hard, bright porcelain, coloured and figured and adorned, at the overhanging eaves, with silver bells that tinkled, ever so charmingly, when stirred by chance airs. (301)

Oddly, the sentences which elaborate on the image of the pagoda never indicate the possibility that the pagoda is an approximation of what Maggie is thinking. The narrator describes the pagoda as if it were, in every detail, exactly what Maggie were picturing to herself. Uspensky's "words of estrangement" are reserved instead for what is apparently Maggie's doubt about the particularities of the pagoda's architecture and surroundings: "she had carried on her existence in the space left her for circulation, a space that sometimes seemed ample and sometimes narrow;" "but never quite making out, as yet, where she might have entered had she wished"; "though her raised eyes seemed to distinguish"; "to her considering mind, it was as if she had ceased merely to circle"; "the thing might have been . . . a Mahometan mosque" (301-02).

Though the pagoda has been assumed to represent metaphorically Maggie's awareness of the curiosity her married life has become, some readers have noticed that the image may not be Maggie's invention at all, but rather the narrator's. Both this image and the one of the tower of ivory are presented as alternative similes in indirect discourse qualified by the word "perhaps," which is impossible to locate in either the narrator's discourse or Maggie's mind, so effective is the impression of fusion between Maggie and the narrator. Yeazell refers to Peter Garrett's claim that

the pagoda must belong to the narrator, as it is "too complex and exotic a metaphor for the Princess's newly awakened imagination," but goes on to say that "if one passage suggests that the oriental pagoda fantasy is the narrator's, not Maggie's, in another the distinction seems simply have dissolved" (13). David Smit identifies the same confusion when he writes of "James" imposing his narrative voice on the thought of his characters, pointing out that it is not clear whether the metaphor belongs to Maggie or to the narrator:

If the pagoda metaphor is an authorial device to "represent" Maggie's thought, then Maggie may not be thinking about a pagoda. The image of the pagoda may be a way for the narrator to dramatize how elaborate and artful are Maggie's ruminations. On the other hand, James does say that Maggie looked at the pagoda, that she 'walked round and round it--that was what she felt.' (111)

So developed is the metaphor of the pagoda that it is easy for readers to take it for Maggie's own figure rather than for the narrator's approximation of her thoughts, and even to miss the conditional nature of that approximation, which is revealed by the following comment: "If this image, however, may represent our young woman's consciousness of a recent change in her life . . . it must at the same time be observed that she both sought and found in renewed circulation, as I have called it, a measure of relief from the idea of having perhaps to answer for what she had done" (302). That the narrator does not hint at his role in the creation of the metaphor until after it has appeared certainly adds to the illusion of immediate access to the contents of Maggie's mind.

The audibility of the narrator in the pages that follow the pagoda passage reminds the reader that there is indeed a mediating figure between the reader and the story. This use of the first-person temporarily punctures the intense impression of fusion with Maggie's point of view created by the narrator's reliance on indirect

discourse at the very beginning of Book Second, and also provides evidence of the narrator's involvement in the choice of figures used to describe Maggie's situation.

The narrator acknowledges his role in the rhetorical rendering of the scene when he describes Maggie's excitement as an eagerness that must at once be nourished and concealed: "The ingenuity was thus a private and absorbing exercise, in the light of which, might I so far multiply my metaphors, I should compare her to the frightened but clinging young mother of an unlawful child. The idea that had possession of her would be, by our new analogy, the proof of her misadventure . . ." (304). The chatty apology for the stretching of a figure, and the reference to "our new analogy" seem to construct the reader as a listener, and the narrator as a teller who occasionally comments reflexively on the shortcomings of his method. One of the collateral effects of the remark on the proliferation of metaphors is also the suggestion that the narrator may be in some part responsible for all the metaphors in the previous passages, including the figure which constructs Maggie "as a silken-coated spaniel who has scrambled out of a pond" (303). As in Book First, what at times appear as the character's own thoughts or feelings may in fact be the narrator's creative approximations of what he imagines the characters to be thinking. In this particular case the narrator's choice of metaphor casts Maggie as a rather melodramatic and sympathetic figure of abandonment and determination.

Self-references by the narrator are fairly frequent in the early pages of Book Second: "as we have mentioned" (305); "she was to preserve, as I say, the memory of the smile" (312); "I must add, moreover, that she at last found herself rather oddly wondering"; "and if I have spoken of the impressions fixed in her" (323); "but we have seen how there was also in the air, for our young women" (327); "as we have understood" (328); "Her view . . . may give us the measure of her sense" (331); "we may add" (335); "the clutching instinct we have glanced at . . ." (349). All of these examples have a conversational air to them, the feel of a self-conscious raconteur

who perhaps takes liberties with his role, and adds a note or two of his own for greatest effect on his audience, as when the narrator says of Maggie that "She would have been easily to be figured for us at this occupation; dipping, at off moments and quiet hours, in snatched visits . . . into her rich collections . . ." (305). At times the narrator supplies a word as if it were the character's, only to reveal it as his own in the next breath: "Such were some of the reasons for which Maggie suspected fundamentals, as I have called them, to be rising, by a new movement, to the surface . . ." (352). In another instance, the narrator alerts the reader to the significance of a scene before providing the details on which such a reading could be based: ". . . and it will at once be seen that the hour had a quality all its own when I note that . . . the Princess whimsically wondered if their respective sposi might frankly be meeting . . ." (353).

Even when the narrator doesn't refer to himself in the first person, the editorial "we" is present in comments which seem to pass judgement on characters' actions or summarize the contradictions of their situation: "What she must do she must do by keeping her hands off him; and nothing meanwhile, as we see, had less in common with that scruple than such a merciless manipulation of their yielding beneficiaries as her spirit so boldly revelled in" (372-3). The earlier picture of Maggie as pitiable unwed mother is contradicted here by a vision of her enjoyment of "merciless manipulations." More subtle still are those sentences in which the narrator is not named, but in which he is understood as the subject of the passive voice: "It must be added, however, that she would have been at a loss to determine . . ." (305); "a definite note must be made of her perception . . ." (323); "It is not even incredible that she may have discovered . . ." (397); "It may be said of her that . . ." (398); "It was as if, under her pressure, neither party could get rid of the complicity, as it might be figured, of the other . . ." (441). The graduation in these remarks from a claim of neutral notation, to indirect speculation--"not even incredible that"--to the offering

of a fairly damning word--"complicity"--as a possible description of the state of Amerigo and Charlotte's relationship, suggests how involved the narrator has become in this drama, and how his version of its key actors may in turn affect the reader.

As the narrator becomes intrigued by the scenes he describes, he becomes more and more immersed in his version of what is happening, to the extent that his self-references disappear in Book Second, replaced by constructions like those above. As the narrator's references to himself as an "I" fade, the reader may get the impression of having direct access to the mind of the character the narrator has chosen as a focalizer. Another effect of the narrator's infrequent self-references is the impression that comments made independently of a character's perspective somehow carry the imprimatur of a final authority equivalent, in some sense, to James himself.

Certainly the narrator's omniscience is called into question by the lengthy passages of hypothetical discourse found in Book Second of the novel. Young has described these passages as "lengthy, convoluted, and increasingly difficult to assign to either a specific character or the narrator" (389). I see this deepening crisis of assignability as a crucial element in the novel's rhetoric, as discourse comes more and more to embody the only kind of knowledge available to the narrator as well as to these characters: the fine impression. The importance of hypothetical discourse in Book Second is not only that it challenges attempts to award it to someone, but that it is being used with increasing frequency by the narrator, who is himself increasingly unable to comment with any hope of certainty on the characters before him, and who resorts instead to a sort of ultra-fiction to represent what he cannot possibly know, e.g. to a subplot in which parallel hypothetical characters say tentative things in defraction of their actual speech.

As Book Second progresses, this discourse type comes more and more to stand for what the Princess seems, at least to the narrator, to be thinking or almost thinking or almost but not quite saying. This association of hypothetical discourse with the Princess seems to be a result of the narrator's growing interest in the development of Maggie from innocence to experience, and connected to the considerable power Maggie demonstrates in this volume. The ambiguity of hypothetical discourse is a perfect vehicle for the ambiguity of this power, for if it seems at times to give voice to what the narrator conceives of as Maggie's unuttered thoughts and feelings, it also becomes a way for Maggie or the narrator, or Maggie and the narrator, to invent thoughts, feelings, and motives which are attributable to others. This can function for some readers as the "transforming power of human love" (Krook 240) that Maggie shows in her talent for sympathetic identification with others. Some other readers, however, such as Mark Seltzer, see in Maggie's "mildness and benevolence" a "strategy of control" (62).

In this activity of attributing thoughts and motives to others, Maggie begins more and more to resemble the narrator, whose speculative constructions about other characters have been the basis of the reader's knowledge of those characters. And as the speculations of the narrator cannot be confirmed against any reality that lies outside the boundaries of his own narration, neither can Maggie's. Hypothetical discourse in Book Second thus demonstrates Maggie's narratorial capacity. At times, Maggie's attributions of words or intentions to others appear to be contained within the narrator's discourse, while at other times they seem independent of it. It is as if another fictional narrator--Maggie--emerges from the narrator's ultra-fiction to project another world into being.¹³

The first long passage of hypothetical discourse in Book Second appears when Maggie faces the Prince after the latter's return from Matcham. The moment of their meeting is filled with tension, and the narrator reports Maggie as fearing

"[t]hree words of impatience the least bit loud, some outbreak of 'What in the world are you "up to", and what do you mean?'" (310). The narrator's next comment, that "any note of that sort would instantly have brought her low," makes it already hard to know if the hypothetical question quoted above is the one Maggie actually dreads, or one which the narrator supplies for us. These possibilities multiply in consideration of the following passage:

"'Why, why' have I made this evening such a point of our not all dining together? Well, because I've all day been so wanting you alone that I finally couldn't bear it, and that there didn't seem any great reason why I should try to. That came to me--funny as it may at first sound, with all the things we've so wonderfully got into the way of bearing for each other. You've seemed these last days--I don't know what: more absent than ever before, too absent for us merely to go on so. It's all very well, and I perfectly see how beautiful it is, all round; but there comes a day when something snaps, when the full cup, filled to the very brim, begins to flow over. That's what has happened to my need of you--the cup, all day, has been too full to carry. So here I am with it, spilling it over you--and just for the reason that is the reason of my life. After all, I've scarcely to explain that I'm as much in love with you now as the first hour; except that there are some hours--which I know when they come, because they frighten me--that show me I'm even more so. They come of themselves--and, ah, they've been coming! After all, after all--!" Some such words as those were what didn't ring out, yet it was as if even the unuttered sound had been quenched here in its own quaver. It was where utterance would have broken down by its very weight if he had let it get so far. (311-312)

The ambiguity typical of hypothetical discourse governs this entire passage. Though enclosed in quotation marks, and, as Young notes, "characterized by features of oral speech, such as emphasis on certain words (indicated by italics) and pauses or hesitations (indicated by dashes)" (391), these words are not actually spoken aloud by Maggie to her husband, though the delayed narratorial tag makes the reader aware of this only after the passage has been read, and understood, as actual speech. It is not even clear to the reader that Maggie thinks these words to herself. Though these words might well be close to the ones Maggie has in mind, it is also possible that the narrator, knowing of the Prince and Charlotte's "ramble" into the Bloomsbury shop, and of Charlotte's reference to the day at Matcham as "a great gold cup" (269), links the possibility of adultery to the possibility of its detection by inserting the metaphor of the cup into Maggie's hypothetical speech. The appearance of the bowl as a trope in what seems to be Maggie's silent speech might also reveal the narrator's unconscious association of Maggie with the bowl in his representation of her thought, and signal, even here, his inclination to see Maggie as almost mystically connected to the bowl.

Strangely, the narrator seems unable to provide the reader with a reliable record of what Maggie actually said, if she said anything at all, or what she actually thought, while still claiming, in an oblique way, a knowledge of Maggie superior to the reader's own. The narrator's comment, that "Some such words as those were what didn't ring out," is a paradoxically authoritative statement: the narrator is certain that something like this was not said. What the narrator is unable to supply, are the actual contents of Maggie's thoughts, if, indeed, the words in quotation marks are meant to resemble, in some indeterminate way, her thoughts to herself.

Though it cannot be awarded as utterance or thought exclusively to either the narrator or the character, hypothetical discourse is an important element in the novel's characterization of Maggie Verver. The terms of this inaudible speech are

those of a passionate woman, able, even in apparent silence, to "testify" to her husband her love and desire for him. Her communication, however accomplished, is effective in delivering its emotional message to both the narrator and, apparently, to Amerigo. The narrator says that "it was as if even the unuttered sound had been quenched here in its own quaver," and observes of Amerigo that "at the end of a moment, he had taken in what he needed to take": "After all, after all,' since she put it so, she was right. That was what he had to respond to; that was what, from the moment that, as had been said, he 'saw', he had to treat as the most pertinent thing possible" (312).

Since responsibility for hypothetical discourse remains problematical, it is incorrect, though tempting, to label the passage quoted above as merely "self-dramatizing," since it is possible that the narrator, as well as Maggie, is involved in its construction. But hypothetical discourse does display the emotionally excessive language associated with dramatic speech or soliloquy, and even of melodramatic self-expression. In The Melodramatic Imagination, Peter Brooks speaks of melodramatic rhetoric as tending toward "the inflated and sententious. Its typical figures are hyperbole, antitheses, and oxymoron: those figures, precisely, that evidence a refusal of nuance and the insistence on dealing in pure, integral concepts" (40). Brooks suggests that melodramatic speech "represents a victory over repression," that it gives form to "identifications judged too extravagant, too stark, too unmediated to be allowed utterance" (42).

In this critical context, hypothetical discourse appears as a vehicle of dramatic characterization through rhetoric, but a rhetoric that cannot be finally located in the consciousness of either Maggie or the narrator. Even Brooks' comments on the centrality of pantomime in melodrama are relevant to the silent eloquence of hypothetical discourse: hypothetical discourse appears when the characters themselves fall silent, often at times of emotional intensity. The words offered to the

reader in place of the muteness which is the actual character of the scene are supplied by at least one consciousness that, in crisis, attempts some translation of the unspeakable and unknowable into approximate speech. Describing the effect of this mute communication in narratological terms taxes critical vocabulary, for such discourse is like a decreasing infinite sequence in mathematics that converges to, but never reaches, zero. It is always possible to find something of significance in any part of it, though taken as a whole, the sequence is meaningless.

Two other important examples of hypothetical discourse appear in the confrontation between Maggie and Amerigo following Fanny's smashing of the golden bowl. The narrator, describing the scene, mentions the "rapid play of suppressed appeal and disguised response" that occurs between Maggie and her husband, a circulation of knowing glances that finds approximate gloss in the following passages:

"Take it, take it, take all you need of it; arrange yourself so as to suffer least, or to be, at any rate, least distorted and disfigured. Only see, see that I see, and make up your mind, on this new basis, at your convenience. Wait--it won't be long--till you can confer again with Charlotte, for you'll do it much better then--more easily to both of us. Above all don't show me, till you've got it well under, the dreadful blur, the ravage of suspense and embarrassment, produced, and produced by my doing, in your personal serenity, your incomparable superiority."
(425)

"Yes, look, look," she seemed to see him hear her say even while her sounded words were other--"look look, both at the truth that still survives in that smashed evidence and at the even more remarkable appearance that I'm not such a fool as you supposed me. Look at the possibility that, since I am different, there may still be something in it

for you--if you're capable of working with me to get that out. Consider of course, as you must, the question of what you may have to surrender, on your side, what price you may have to pay, whom you may have to pay with, to set this advantage free; but take in, at any rate, that here is something for you if you don't too blindly spoil your chance for it." (427)

The status of these two examples of hypothetical discourse as convincing approximations of what Maggie silently communicates to Amerigo is impossible to verify, for the narrator's claims to authority in regard to their verisimilitude are contradictory. In the first instance, the introductory tag indicates that the quoted words are what Maggie "wanted to say to him," while the sentence that follows the passage states confidently that she "was within an ace, in fact, of turning on him with this appeal" (425). The narrator's omniscience is apparently re-established, and the reader understands that Maggie is indeed thinking very clearly of naming Charlotte to her husband, of confronting him with her knowledge of his infidelity.

In the second of the quoted sections, the accuracy of the narrator's report of Maggie's unspoken words is clouded by the tag which interrupts the first sentence in quotation marks. The phrase "she seemed to see him hear her say even while her words were other" creates a scene in which Maggie apparently speaks while simultaneously imagining Amerigo hearing other words. Instead of a narratorial assertion that Maggie really did see Amerigo "hear" the words given in hypothetical discourse, the narrator confesses uncertainty over what he sees Maggie see in Amerigo, which throws a shadow over the words given as the substance of that communication. Does the narrator make up the words he thinks Maggie sees Amerigo hear? Does Maggie, in any way, telegraph to her husband that she is "not such a fool as [he] supposed," or is this exchange of intelligence the invention of a narrator who does not have access to the most profound messages these people send

each other through their charged glances, but who does have a taste for drama? Is hypothetical discourse a substitute for what the narrator can't know, can't report, which contains just enough of what the characters under scrutiny might be supposed to think or say to be admissible as evidence?

It is perhaps precisely because hypothetical discourse is so ambiguous that it plays such a prominent role in Book Second of the novel, where Maggie Verver must confront her suspicions about the shape her life has taken without very much in the way of concrete evidence to support her hunches. In this way, hypothetical discourse does more than merely confront the reader with an abyss of indeterminacy. There is, in the tendency of hypothetical discourse to approach the vanishing point of infinite regression, an odd and compelling rhetorical power, for it demonstrates the inevitably incomplete knowledge one person possesses of another, and the inevitability of building provisional judgements (and of basing one's actions) upon that uncertain foundation.

This is most evident in the role of hypothetical discourse in the construction--whether by Maggie, the narrator, or an indecipherable combination of the two--of complicity and colloquy between characters that cannot actually be independently confirmed by the reader. An example occurs when Amerigo's reaction to Maggie's declaration--"If I didn't love you, you know, for yourself, I should still love you for him"--is compared to Charlotte's reactions to similar statements made by Maggie to her:

He looked at her, after such speeches, as Charlotte looked, in Eaton Square, when she called her attention to his benevolence: through the dimness of the almost musing smile that took account of her extravagance, harmless though it might be, as a tendency to reckon with. 'But, my poor child,' Charlotte might under this pressure have been on the point of replying, 'that's the way nice people are, all

round--so that why should one be surprised about it? We're all nice together--as why shouldn't we be? If we hadn't been we wouldn't have gone far--and I consider that we've gone very far indeed. Why should you 'take on' as if you weren't a perfect dear yourself, capable of all the sweetest things?--as if you hadn't in fact grown up in an atmosphere, the atmosphere of all the good things that I recognized, even of old, as soon as I came near you, and that you've allowed me now, between you, to make so blessedly my own.' Mrs. Verver might in fact have but just failed to make another point, a point charmingly natural to her as a grateful and irreproachable wife. 'It isn't a bit wonderful, I may also remind you, that your husband should find, when opportunity permits, worse things to do than to go about with mine. I happen, love, to appreciate my husband--I happen perfectly to understand that his acquaintance should be cultivated and his company enjoyed.'

Some such happily-provoked remarks as these, from Charlotte, at the other house, had been in the air, (327)

Although these words are not actually spoken by Charlotte to Maggie, the careful wording, and the inclusion of complimentary terms and endearments, suggests familiarity with Charlotte's mode of public expression. The tone of the words attributed to Charlotte is rather condescending, perhaps indicating that Maggie is now resentfully aware of how she has been regarded by her friend, and obliquely, since Amerigo's expression has sparked the comparison to Charlotte, how even her husband has come to think of her--though that is maybe too painful to be thought of in more direct terms. The hypothetical language that hovers "in the air," serves, apparently in Maggie's imagination, to ally Amerigo with Charlotte in a polished

campaign of appearances as perfectly constructed as the sentences Charlotte does not actually say.

The reader is reminded of the conjectural nature of the passage by two phrases: "Charlotte might under this pressure have been on the point of replying," and "Mrs. Verver might in fact have but just failed to make another point" (327). The first sounds like an observation Maggie herself might make of Charlotte, watching as she is for any sign that Charlotte is aware of Maggie's suspicion, but could just as easily be the narrator's guess as to what Charlotte might be on the verge of saying. The second tag makes the circumstances of Charlotte's non-utterance of the sentences which follow seem more precise, even though there is no way of knowing whether Charlotte indeed "just failed to make another point," or if this were the point she just failed to make. Whether the substance of the hypothetical discourse bears any relation to what Charlotte is capable of actually voicing is impossible to know, just as it is impossible to know if Charlotte or the Prince senses any real threat from Maggie's "extravagance." And yet, the effect of such discourse is to provide the reader with more evidence for indicting Charlotte and the Prince as heartless schemers, and authorizing Maggie to take action against them.

Instances of hypothetical discourse in Book Second abound, often representing what Maggie longs to hear, what she dreads hearing, and what she thinks she almost hears from others--or what the narrator thinks she does. Again, the fact that a third person--Fanny, Charlotte, Amerigo or Adam--is usually being watched by Maggie hopelessly complicates the question of responsibility for, and degree of accuracy in, hypothetical discourse.

In the carriage with Amerigo, Maggie waits for him to say to her, "'Come away with me, somewhere, you-- . . .,'" but the words don't sound, even though we read that "there was a supreme instant when, by the testimony of all the rest of him, she seemed to feel them in his heart and on his lips" (340). The word "seemed" in the

concluding tag appears to reflect Maggie's own hopeful uncertainty over what she senses in Amerigo, but may also express the narrator's doubt about what he sees her see in her husband. Later on, thinking of her father, whose own consciousness of the situation she cannot measure, Maggie imagines brief but painful conversations in which his dreaded reply is "Separate, my dear? Do you want them to separate? Then you want us to--you and me?" (350), or wills herself not to hear in her father's presence the words "Sacrifice me, my own love; do sacrifice me, do sacrifice me!" (356).

Maggie even begins to construct conversations she couldn't possibly overhear, and whose actual articulation is never confirmed, such as one between her father and Charlotte: ". . . she heard them together, her father and his wife, dealing with the queer case. 'The Prince tells me that Maggie has a plan for your taking some foreign journey with him . . .'. Something of that kind was what, in her mind's ear, Maggie heard . . ." (359). Or she thinks she knows what her father is thinking: "He had said to himself, 'She'll break down and name Amerigo; she'll say it's to him she's sacrificing me; and it's by what that will give me--with so many other things too--that my suspicion will be clinched'" (480). Maggie seems here to have usurped the position of the traditional omniscient narrator. In contrast, the tag following the first example shows our own narrator once more unable to declare that these were indeed the words Maggie imagined Charlotte saying to Adam, and silent, after the second example, on the matter of whether or not Maggie is right about her father. Right or not, Maggie conducts herself, in the presence of others, as if these conjectures were true.

Maggie's powers as observer are once again suggestively fused with those of the narrator's in Chapter 38, when she muses over the spectacle of her public reconciliation with Charlotte. The sentences of indirect discourse leading up to the short sentences of hypothetical discourse found here are focalized through Maggie,

but contain enough conditionals to create ambiguity over whether the description of the impression this display of affection made on others is Maggie's responsibility or the narrator's. This ambiguity extends to the hypothetical discourse itself: "There had been something, there had been but too much, in the incident, for each observer; yet there was nothing anyone could have said without seemingly essentially to say: 'See, see, the dear things--their quarrel's blissfully over!' 'Our quarrel? What quarrel?' the dear things themselves would necessarily, in that case, have demanded; and the wits of the others would thus have been called upon for some agility of exercise" (486).

The embedding of this hypothetical material in a section of ID which is filtered through Maggie makes it possible to understand it at least two ways. It may not only be the narrator's assessment of "the responses of Amerigo, Fanny and Adam to Charlotte and Maggie's embrace" (Young 389), but also Maggie's consideration of the various ways in which others watching her and Charlotte could have interpreted their actions. The words in quotation marks may be Maggie's dramatization of what she thinks Amerigo, Fanny and her father must have thought better of saying, for fear of giving themselves away as knowing more about the situation than any one of them was prepared to admit.

In the later chapters of Book Second, hypothetical discourse also becomes a strategy for representing Maggie's growing awareness of her own power. She seems to imagine others not wanting to hear her words. Wondering why her father hasn't asked her what is wrong, the narrator reports Maggie as concluding that "He was terrified of the retort he might have invoked: 'What, my dear, if you come to that, is the matter with you?' " (361). The narrator also presents Maggie as imagining Fanny as afraid of hearing her: "You've such a dread of my possibly complaining to you that you keep peeling all the bells to drown out my voice What in the name of all that's fantastic can you dream that I have to complain of?' Such inquiries

the Princess temporarily succeeded in repressing . . ." (371). Watching Charlotte's reaction to her own appearance among the trees at Fawns, Maggie senses Charlotte's fear of her (or so the narrator reports): "Yes, it was positive that during one of these minutes the Princess had the vision of her particular alarm. 'It's her lie, it's her lie that has mortally disagreed with her' This, for a concentrated instant, Maggie felt her helplessly gasp . . ." (509).

The abysmal ambiguities surrounding both the assignability and the reliability of hypothetical discourse make it impossible for the reader to know for certain if any of the characters whose putative "thoughts" are represented through HD are really thinking these things. Thus it becomes a matter of faith rather than knowledge that Maggie is really "almost moved" to say to Charlotte "Hold on tight, my poor dear--without too much terror--and it will all come out somehow" (491). Perhaps this is what the narrator wants to think that Maggie is thinking of saying to Charlotte, for it softens the growing impression of Maggie's manipulative cruelty that might well be forming in the narrator's mind, as well as in the reader's.

So sensitive, apparently, is Maggie's spiritual ear in Book Second that another of Amerigo's intense looks is translated by her into the words "Leave me my reserve; don't question it --it's all I have, just now, don't you see? . . ." (448). Immediately after this though, the narrator's tag--"She had turned away from him with some such unspoken words as that in her ear"--suggests that these words are supplied by the narrator in place of others that are for some reason unavailable to him, and therefore, to the reader. A little later though, the narrator introduces the following passage of HD as "Maggie's translation" of her father's "wordless, wordless smile," which she "held in her breast till she had got well away . . . as if it might have been overheard . . ." (493):

'Yes, you see--I lead her now by the neck, I lead her to her doom, and she doesn't so much as know what it is, though she has a fear in her

heart which, if you had the chances to apply your ear there that I, as a husband have, you would hear thump and thump and thump. She thinks it may be, her doom, the awful place over there--awful for her; but she's afraid to ask, don't you see? just as she's afraid of not asking; just as she's afraid of so many other things that she sees multiplied round her now as portents and betrayals. She'll know, however--when she does know.' (494)

This piece of HD is not bracketed by any other narratorial information that lets the reader know if indeed this "came out" behind closed doors in the form of whispered speech, or if the narrator is providing a reliable rendering of Maggie's mental translation of her father's enigmatic smile. If the above is an accurate account of that smile, and Adam Verver really is indicating to his daughter the terrible power he holds over his wife, then Charlotte Verver is to be pitied. Perhaps this vision of her father as a potentially sinister child, his ear pressed to the heart of his terrorized wife, is one that Maggie would rather avoid confronting. Then again, it is possible that this translation of Adam's wordless smile is the narrator's, and that it is the narrator who is beginning, after his enthrallment with Maggie earlier in Part Fifth, to exhibit doubts about the form her victory over Charlotte may take.

Maggie's fear of having her thoughts guessed or overheard appears justified in light of the silent communication between her and Fanny, and especially between her and Adam, as Charlotte gives visitors a tour of the gallery at Fawns. Fanny turns from watching Charlotte to look at Maggie "long enough to seem to adventure, marvellously, on a mute appeal. 'You understand, don't you, that if she didn't do this there would be no knowing what she might do?'" (496). Moments later Maggie's tears start as she listens to Charlotte's voice, detecting in it the "shriek of a soul in pain" (497), which makes her turn to face her father:

'Can't she be stopped? Hasn't she done it enough?'--some such question as that she let herself ask him to suppose in her. Then it was that, across half the gallery . . . he struck her as confessing, with strange tears in his own eyes, to sharp identity of emotion. "Poor thing, poor thing"--it reached straight--"isn't she, for one's credit, on the swagger?"

Maggie's unspoken question is once more posed as one she might have put in these (or other) words, and as Young points out, "its precision is further diluted by her mental presentation of it as something Adam will receive as a supposition" (395). The words offered in HD may be very near the mark in terms of reliability, as their sense seems to be supported by Maggie's tears and her father's blush. There is no way though, for Maggie to know if her father actually shares her compassion for Charlotte. The words he strikes her as confessing are very different in tone from those which she reads in his earlier smile, which suggests that Maggie has backed away from that more unnerving perception of her father's potential for brutality. She, no less than the narrator and the reader of this novel, operates on supposition. The suppositions and conjectures that proliferate in the form of these and other examples of hypothetical discourse confront both the narrator and the reader with a wealth of often contradictory material about these characters that is both impossible to rely on, and impossible to ignore in the search for knowledge.

The tinge of melodrama in the narrator's choice of similes is the most obvious signal of his almost sentimental attitude toward Maggie Verver, and related to the air of romance readers detect in Book Second of The Golden Bowl, but that most attribute to Maggie herself. Dorothea Krook describes the novel as "a great fable" (240), while David Craig and Carol Sklenicka refer to its "fairy-tale ideal" (Craig 133), and "fairy tale elements" (Sklenicka 51). Joseph Boone claims that, as she appears to move from "girlish naivete to worldly knowledge," Maggie "inhabits one stereotype

after another; despite potential gains in self-assertion, she remains trapped in limiting social definitions of gender" (380). In Boone's opinion, this explains why Maggie's character "cannot be pinned down as either totally 'good' or 'bad'" (380-81).

It is the narrator, though, not Maggie, whose discourse reveals him as trapped in stereotypes, and whose influence can be detected in passages which contain elements of extreme characterization typical of melodrama, as when we read that "by her little crouching posture there, that of a timid tigress, she had meant nothing recklessly ultimate" (306). Classifying this sentence according to discourse typologies is once again made difficult by the similarities between what may be FID and what may be DN. If the sentence is presumed to be free indirect discourse, then the oxymoron may be Maggie's own, and may be her way of representing to herself her uncertainty over how she may appear to Amerigo when he returns from Matcham. If the sentence is taken as part of the narrator's own discourse, then the figure may sum up the conflicting impression Maggie gives to the narrator as he observes her waiting. The terms of this contradictory impression are themselves rather stereotypical: Maggie is at once the mousy, fearful wife and the ferocious, possibly vengeful woman, ready to spring at the man who has wronged her.

The narrator also makes quite a few observations and comments about Maggie in Book Second that he does not make about other characters. Whereas in Book First his method was to avoid direct statement about characters, here his method of representing Maggie veers between the definite and the suggestive, depending, it seems, on which strategy enhances her image as either long-suffering or heroic. At the end of Chapter 26, for example, it is the narrator who is clearly responsible for the image of the "vaguely clutching hand with which, during the first shock of complete perception, she tried to steady herself," and who describes Maggie, poignantly, as feeling "very much alone" (330). Two chapters later, the narrator says that "She was to feel alone again as she had felt at the issue of her high tension with

her husband during their return from meeting the Castledeans in Eaton Square" (350). These direct, and apparently, authoritative descriptions of Maggie's isolation seem almost to justify, in the narrator's view, Maggie's later desire "to possess and use" other people (333). There is no direct record of the words Maggie uses to invite the Castledeans and the Ververs "unconventionally, almost violently" to dinner (334), of the words which are her "approach to irritation" with her maid (355) or of the behaviour "that might have been called assertive" by Fanny Assingham (402), and which might qualify Maggie's pathetic appeal to the reader. There is only the narrator's exultantly partisan declaration that Maggie was "[m]ore and more magnificent now in her blameless egoism," that she was "as hard, at this time, . . . as a little pointed diamond," and that she "showed something of the glitter of consciously possessing the constructive, the creative hand" (398-99). MacNaughton sees these comments as signs that James is not only willing "to put Maggie's unlovely obsessiveness on display," but that he also "tries to create sympathy for her," and "make her treatment of the Assinghams seem admirable" (112), while John Bayley writes of James's "collusion" with Maggie in this scene as a part of his "enchanted supervision" of her (236-7).

The narrator's own association, in these last chapters of Part Fourth, of Maggie's egoism with artistic creation rather than with manipulation, is amplified by his depiction of Fanny Assingham's worshipful regard for Maggie's self-assertion in the chapters leading up to the smashing of the golden bowl. These scenes follow the conversation between the two women in which Fanny calls Maggie "terrible," to which Maggie responds by claiming that she is "mild," and that love is her motive (379). The colloquy between the Assinghams in Chapter 31 makes it clear that Fanny realizes how vulnerable her social reputation is. This makes Fanny's gratitude to Maggie for not confronting her directly appear more than a little slavish. Fanny

appears willing to participate in the Princess's plan to "make them do what I like" (378) in return for protection from public embarrassment.

It is therefore not entirely clear with what degree of sincerity the narrator represents Maggie, apparently from Fanny's point of view, as standing in her rooms "like some holy image in a procession, and left, precisely, to show what wonder she could work under pressure," especially when the narrator adds that Fanny "felt--how could she not?--as the truly pious priest might feel when confronted, behind the altar, before the festa, with his miraculous Madonna" (404). The interjected question "how could she not?" could be read as FID, as Fanny's justification to herself on the rightness of seeing Maggie this way, but is just as likely to be the narrator's own comment on the impossibility of his imagining that Fanny could see Maggie in any other way. While these terms could easily stand for what Pearson calls Fanny's "sentimental religiosity," (349) in the next few chapters this language becomes a part of the narrator's own discourse as his endorsement of Maggie's spiritual significance becomes more and more marked.

Much of this endorsement is routed through Fanny, who is used in Chapter 33 as a focalizer for impressions of Maggie which verge on the beatific:

To the small flash of this eruption Fanny stood, for her minute, wittingly exposed; but she saw it as quickly cease to threaten--quite saw the Princess, even though in all her pain, refuse, in the interest of their strange and exalted bargain, to take advantage of the opportunity for planting the stab of reproach, She saw her--or she believed she saw her--look at her chance for straight denunciation, look at it and then pass it by; and she felt herself, with this fact, hushed well-nigh to awe at the lucid higher intention that no distress could confound . . . deep within the whole impression glowed . . . her steady view, clear

from the first, of the beauty of her companion's motive. It was like a fresh sacrifice for a larger conquest (410)

It is difficult to know in this passage how much of what is represented as what Fanny "quite saw," or "believed she saw," in Maggie is actually what was there to see, and not projected by Fanny or the narrator; or even how close these words are to what Fanny might have made out in her friend's face. It is by no means certain, for example, that the narrator is qualified to report with authority on what lies "deep within" something as insubstantial as another's impression--unless it is his own that he unconsciously refers to here. Unmitigated by any overt ironic comment by the narrator--who might even be responsible for the final simile quoted above--this animation of what either Fanny or the narrator or both see as Maggie's potential for personal sacrifice has a lasting effect on how Maggie is represented in the rest of Part Fourth, and in the bridge scene in Part Fifth.

A few pages later, for example, the religious language that has permeated the material quoted above makes its way into the narrator's own comments, independent of any character focalization, that a "long, charged look" between the two women "found virtual consecration when Maggie at last spoke" (414); and that, in the silence after the bowl has been smashed, "[s]omething now again became possible for these communicants, . . . something that took up that tale and that might have been a redemption of pledges then exchanged" (422).

This language, and the characterization of Maggie that it contributes to, finds its apex in Chapter 36 of Part Fifth, during the bridge scene at Fawns. Though the chapters in this section of the novel contain more examples of direct discourse between characters than the chapters in Part Fourth, and fewer long examples of hypothetical discourse, which would usually relieve the impression of proximity to a character's mind, the impression created in Chapter 36 is of an almost claustrophobic identification with Maggie Verver, and an excruciating experience of her capacity for

awareness. Here too the various figures which have accompanied Maggie in Book Second--figures of the dancing girl or actress, of the artist, and of the religious sacrifice--cohere in long passages of indirect discourse, apparently focalized through Maggie herself, which seem to confirm her place and value to the novel as its human equivalent of the golden bowl "as it was to have been. . . . The bowl without the crack" (445)¹⁴:

It all left her, as she wandered off, with the strangest of impressions--the sense, forced upon her as never yet, of an appeal, a positive confidence, from the four pairs of eyes, that was deeper than any negation, and that seemed to speak, on the part of each, of some relation to be contrived by her They thus tacitly put it upon her to be disposed of, the whole complexity of their peril, and she promptly saw why: because she was there, and there just as she was, to lift it off them and take it; to charge herself with it as the scapegoat of old . . . had been charged with the sins of the people and had gone forth into the desert to sink under his burden and die. . . . they might have been figures rehearsing some play of which she herself was the author Spacious and splendid, like a stage again awaiting a drama, it was a scene she might people, by the press of her spring, either with serenities and dignities and decencies, or with terrors and shames and ruins, things as ugly as those formless fragments of her golden bowl she was trying so hard to pick up. (458)

This is one of the many passages in Chapter 36 that takes the form of what I have called floating free indirect discourse, discourse that can be read as either FID, a verbatim presentation of what Maggie actually thinks or says to herself; as ID, the narrator's representation, in an indeterminately approximate form, of what Maggie thinks or says to herself; or as DN, the narrator's commentary, addressed to an

invisible listener or listeners, of what he thinks Maggie thinks or says to herself, based on what he sees her doing. It is precisely the indeterminate nature of floating free indirect discourse that accounts, I believe, for the massive amount of exegesis devoted to this scene, for if the discourse through which the scene is presented is ambiguous, then crucial terms within that discourse are difficult, if not impossible, to attribute with any but provisional authority to either Maggie or the narrator. This in turn suspends the rhetorical effects of the passage in a curious authoritative limbo, as it is difficult, and perhaps impossible to say for certain from where these terms emanate, and with what authority they are deployed.

Most interpretations of this passage congregate around the image of "the scapegoat of old" as an authoritative, ironic, or self-deceptive description of Maggie as she walks along the terrace. But in order to make a claim about how that description functions, one must first decide whose responsibility it is, and in what narrative context it operates. Some of the features of this passage, its third-person reference, its back-shifted tense, even its emphasized words--"there just as she was," "That indeed wasn't their design,"--qualify it as FID, and thus as an unmediated presentation of Maggie's epiphanic comprehension of her role in the salvation of both marriages. On the other hand, the same features which mark the sentence containing the scapegoat image as Maggie's FID also allow it to be read as the narrator's own discourse--his dramatic, and perhaps over-wrought projection of Maggie as someone carrying out a supreme sacrifice.

Like other indirect renderings of what Maggie supposedly thinks or feels, this passage also represents the narrator's approximation of an impression, a sense that Maggie apparently receives from "the four pairs of eyes" watching her. These eyes "seemed to speak" of "some relation" that is "tacit" but not explicit, until it is defined, again apparently by Maggie herself, as the relation of the scapegoat to the sinful community. If Maggie is understood as the source of the scapegoat image, the reader

must decide how to respond to it, and this response may very well be influenced by the narrator's attitude toward her in earlier chapters of Book Second, as well as in this scene. Of course, it is also possible that the image of the scapegoat is supplied by the narrator, whose discourse has been permeated by explicitly religious terms and imagery for the last three chapters, and who began Book Second with Fanny's prophecy of Maggie's spiritual generosity in his ears. It is also possible that Maggie really does think of herself in this or some similar way, and that the narrator senses, and accepts, this self-characterization.

In short, there is no final authority in this passage for either accepting or dismissing, without careful qualification, the simile of the scapegoat as in some way appropriate to Maggie in this situation. Given the absence of that final authority, the critical agony over the question of Maggie's status in this scene and in the remainder of Book Second is understandable, though misplaced. The point of the scene is not, I think, to present Maggie as definitively Christlike or as cravenly hypocritical. Rather, the indeterminate authority of this image at what is regarded as the climax of the novel is another, though more urgent, sign of the crisis of authority that permeates the entire book, and which is focussed in the discourse of the narrator. The contradictions of the narrator's discourse betray this crisis, which takes the form of a logomachy, a struggle over the terms which will determine both the meaning of characters, and their significance to the narrative in which they figure.

This struggle is present in the contradiction, in the passage quoted above, between the egoism and power associated with artistic intention, and the selflessness of the sacrificial victim. The conflict between these two ways of characterizing Maggie is a result of the narrator's inability to know for certain what her thoughts, feelings, or motives really are, as well as his circumscribed vocabulary for representing a woman who appears to combine qualities that he seems to think are incompatible. Limited both in his knowledge of her and in his knowledge of how to describe her,

he can turn only to analogies to represent his own imperfect impression of her. That his two choices suggest the extremes of selflessness and selfcentredness, and threaten the coherence of his narrative has not gone unnoticed by readers, who comment on an insistent impression of both personal abasement and manipulative power in Maggie.

Pearson, for example, points out that the "oddest feature of this passage is that which makes Maggie into a creative dramatist by virtue of all that she does not let happen" (352). Crews writes that power in this novel "is seen to consist in several virtues, both Christian and Machiavellian, but above all in the virtue of not letting one's antagonists know what is on one's mind" (89). Fogel says that Maggie's vision of herself as the scapegoat "shows that she is not entirely above self-pity," but goes on to say that it "even more strongly indicates [her] heroism and self-denial" (111). Yet he admits that one of the "paradoxes" of Book Second "is that Maggie's deep personal involvement in the situations depicted in it goes hand in hand with her detachment from them, a detachment that shows both in her ability to manage appearances with increasingly cool theatrical skill and in her ability to hold those who have wronged her in high esteem" (111). Boone sees Maggie as having reached this "point of control" over others in Part Fifth "by perfecting her acting skills, learning to read between the lines, making imaginative leaps, imposing her omniscience on others Ominously self-absorbed, she wills into being a traditionally romantic fiction" of which she is both author and heroine (383). The problem is that it is impossible, given the mutually exclusive terms the narrator offers in Part Fifth as signifiers of Maggie's nature, to address one set without ignoring the other--unless one is prepared to call Maggie "a good Machiavel" (Fogel 115), which not many commentators on the novel have been prepared to do. But why shouldn't Maggie be someone who is prepared to use the power available to her to get what she wants, and still have a claim to the reader's interest, if not unalloyed sympathy?

The pathetic description of Maggie trying to piece together the fragments of the bowl also hovers in the uncertain space between narrator and character: it is possible that Maggie, having made the earlier comment to Fanny about the bowl "with all the happiness in it," pictures her actions to herself in this manner. It is also possible that the narrator is the one for whom Maggie and the bowl are now synonymous--that through what the narrator sees as her suffering, isolation, and "lucid higher intention," she has become the one person he believes is really capable of transcending eros in the name of agape.

Pearson remarks that in this novel "Maggie ceases to be in any traditional sense a heroine, and becomes the hero of her book" (311). This powerful sense of Maggie's transcendent heroism, particularly as it is tied to a vision of the golden bowl, places her, for the narrator, in the romance tradition of the spiritual quester--even, perhaps, in the tradition of Galahad, whose personal purity allowed him a vision of the Grail, and effected the release of those in the Castle Perilous from their death-in-life. Maggie has had her "idea" since the day of her husband's late return from Matcham, which she has been labouring to make concrete, and in the service of which she has resisted her own physical desire for Amerigo. This determination to sacrifice personal gain and pleasure for the sake of knowledge and understanding qualifies her, in the narrator's eyes, as the moral and spiritual centre of the narrative he wishes to tell--as the incarnation of the etymon.

But Galahad's perfection is at least in part an effect of his stylization, and the illusion of his unblemished state can be sustained only by keeping a certain distance from him. So close has this narrator's romantic desire brought him to Maggie--or to the fiction he has constructed in her place--that her human frailties and contradictions are now clearly visible to him, though irreconcilable with his narrative rhetoric. The narrator's helplessness in the face of the confrontation between Maggie and Charlotte on the terrace is a product of his inability to conceive of the world in terms of lived

and painful contradiction rather than in romantic dualities; in the face of this crisis, his description of the scene between these two women is almost incomprehensible:

If she could but appear at all not afraid she might appear a little not ashamed--that is not ashamed to be afraid, which was the kind of shame that could be fastened on her, it being fear all the while that moved her. Her challenge, at any rate, her wonder, her terror--the blank, blurred surface, whatever it was that she presented--became a mixture that ceased to signify (466)

The figure for whom Maggie ceases to signify is the narrator, who can no longer read in her face or her actions the narrative he has projected for her. In this scene and in the chapters which follow, the suffering of all four of these characters is echoed at the level of narrative discourse, as the narrator's struggle to describe the events he witnesses becomes a kind of anti-narration, an unravelling of his own narrative hopes. In losing faith in Maggie's supreme and unalloyed goodness, the narrator also loses the compositional centre for what might remain of the story he wished to tell--he loses the etymon. This loss has an effect on the narration of the remaining chapters of the novel, which, instead of tending towards a conclusion resonant with renunciation or transcendence, as in The Wings of the Dove, offer a deeply ambivalent picture of the qualified triumph of social form over emotional and psychological chaos.

The narrative pressure to accept Maggie as "an agent of mercy" has created what Crews calls "a critical problem of great delicacy," one of the responses to which is to take some of these religious overtones "as hypocritical or ironical" (105-6). A more convincing alternative is to see Part Fifth as the climax of the narrator's romance narrative, rather than as the climax of James's novel, and to see in the

ironies of the book's later chapters the narrator's growing awareness of the cost, to his commitment to accuracy of description, of his romanticization of Maggie. Charles Samuels approaches this position in accusing James, but not his narrator, of wanting Maggie "to be more than someone who outgrows a damagingly self-protective innocence," of wanting her "to be perfect" (217). This desire is so strong, maintains Samuels, that it survives the "conscious perjury" (Bowl 469) of Charlotte's kiss, and the sacrifice of everyone around Maggie in the name of her own happiness. Though he confuses James with the narrator, Samuels identifies in the narration of the novel a "tendency to make rhetorical love to surrogate characters: what I should call the 'Milly Theale syndrome'" (218). He is also sensitive to the disjunction between the way in which Maggie is represented in the narrative, and the import of her actions:

One must describe The Golden Bowl, then, as a novel whose wisdom is qualified by nostalgia for immaturity. Maggie grows up, but James's enthusiasm is less than complete. . . . Within the moral skeptic capable of subtly apportioning praise and blame there is a moral idealist who would rather keep them ineluctably separate so as to cleave to one. The skeptic wrote The Golden Bowl, but the idealist also lives in its pages. (224)

What Samuels comes close to naming is the failure of Maggie, in the final few chapters of the novel, to live up to the standard of behaviour set for her by the narrator. It is the narrator of The Golden Bowl, rather than James himself, who is the moral idealist of the book, and it is the narrator whose desire to find in Maggie a textual icon for his belief in the possibility of sacred narrative has led him to make her the standard against which all other characters are apparently to be measured. The narrator's tendency toward rhetorical lovemaking is strong throughout Part Fifth, for example in the passages of DN and hypothetical discourse that comprise Chapter

38, and that show Maggie's compassion for Charlotte. Yeazell notes that "it is Maggie alone who keeps alive for us the memory of her rival's splendour" (112), while Fogel claims that "the depth of our sense of Charlotte's suffering is, by and large, a direct result of Maggie's empathy with her" (115). These responses are based largely on impressions created by passages such as the following:

She was thus poor Charlotte again for Maggie even while Maggie's own head was bowed, and the reason for this kept coming back to our young woman in the conception of what would secretly have passed. She saw her, face to face with the Prince, take from him the chill of his stiffest admonition It was positive in the Princess that, for this, she breathed Charlotte's cold air--turned away from him in it with her, turned with her, in growing compassion, this way and that, hovered behind her while she felt her ask herself where then she should rest. Marvellous the manner in which, under such imaginations, Maggie thus circled and lingered--quite as if she were, materially, following her unseen, counting every step she helplessly wasted, noting every hindrance that brought her to a pause. (490)

For all the detail of Maggie's apparent empathy with Charlotte, the status of these words as exact renderings of Maggie's thoughts is indeterminate. The narrator's ability to say with certainty that it was "positive in the Princess" that she shared Charlotte's cold air is as questionable as Maggie's own ability, through "a fantastic flight of divination," to "hear" Amerigo tell Charlotte "that one must really manage such prudences a little for one's self" (490). The narrator may claim that Maggie "felt, in all her pulses, Charlotte feel" something, and may represent Maggie as "almost moved to saying to her: 'Hold on tight, my poor dear--without too much terror--and it will all come out somehow'" (491), but there is still no guarantee that these indirect discourse forms bear any relation to what Maggie actually imagined

Charlotte as enduring, or that Maggie was indeed moved almost to say words like the ones above to Charlotte. However, there is also no reason, unless one shares the narrator's high expectations of Maggie, to think that it is impossible for her to feel Charlotte's pain in the midst of her own, or to think that it is not precisely the necessity of causing Charlotte pain that Maggie finds so overwhelming. Maggie's head might well be bowed in recognition of her own capacity for cruelty, something both she and the narrator would rather not know about, but a truth Maggie herself confronts with more capacity than does the narrator.

Having immersed himself, and consequently the reader, in Maggie's point of view for much of Book Second, the narrator returns--as if shaking himself awake from a trance--as an identifiable linguistic entity for the remaining chapters of Part Fifth. Almost one hundred and fifty pages pass between the narrator's use of the first person in Chapter 28, and his next direct reference to himself in Chapter 38: "If, as I say, her attention now, day after day, so circled and hovered, it found itself arrested for certain passages during which she absolutely looked with Charlotte's grave eyes" (491). This return of the narrator in propria persona parallels an increase in the use of the plural pronoun after its marked absence in the middle sections of Book Second. References to the observing "we," such as "the momentous midnight discussion at which we have been present" (383), had disappeared as the narrator restricted himself more and more to Maggie's point of view, engrossed by his own vision of her as the incarnation of the golden bowl. There are only a few references to "our young woman" (453, 460) or "our couple" (472) before Chapter 38, and the reappearance of the narrating "I" in that chapter lessens the intensity of the illusion of communion with Maggie which the absence of that "I" encouraged in previous chapters.

It is as if the narrator has stepped back from his heroine at the point at which he is convinced that she will behave in a fashion consistent with his characterization of her--that she will somehow manage to "take it all on herself," as Fanny predicted. He refers to Maggie consistently as "our young woman," demonstrating a kind of persistent attachment to Maggie's point of view, and many of his comments make reference to what he claims he and the reader already know to be true of Maggie: "There had been, through life, as we know, few quarters in which the Princess's fancy could let itself loose . . ." (488); "She had had, as we know, her vision of the gilt bars bent . . ." (490); "but Maggie's provision of irony, which we have taken for naturally small, had never been so scant as now . . ." (491); "and it was not closed to her after-sense of such passages--we have already indeed, in other cases, seen it open-- . . ." (497).

These remarks by the narrator seem to appeal to his own, and to the reader's, previous experience of what Maggie seemed to be in the earlier chapters of Part Fifth as proof against her appearing too smug or too cruel in her "merciless manipulations," particularly now that they have succeeded. The narrator tempers his portrayal of Maggie enjoying her triumph by directing the reader's attention to her awareness of her father's power over Charlotte: "and those indications that I have described the Princess as finding extraordinary in him were two or three mute facial intimations which his wife's presence didn't prevent his addressing his daughter--nor prevent his daughter . . . from flushing a little at the receipt of" (493). But if Maggie is aware of Charlotte's suffering, her flushes could just as well be from embarrassment or self-consciousness at the way her plan has resulted in the exclusion of Charlotte from any knowledge of what is happening to her, or why. Pearson treats this scene as one of father and daughter meeting "in an unspoken complicity over the torture of Charlotte" (327), and the impression of conscious cruelty on the part of Maggie and her father seems to be dominant for the narrator as well.

The real impact, though, of what the narrator has earlier called Maggie's "blameless egoism" is felt most powerfully in the pages following Adam's wordless smile, in the description of Charlotte's voice as she ushers visitors through the gallery at Fawns:

Maggie meanwhile, at the window, knew the strangest thing to be happening: she had turned suddenly to crying, or was at least on the point of it--the lighted square before her all blurred and dim. The high voice went on; its quaver was doubtless for conscious ears only, but there were verily thirty seconds during which it sounded, for our young woman, like the shriek of a soul in pain. (496-7)

Though the narrator has been committed to Maggie's self-portrayal of isolation and pain in Part Fifth, the interruption of Charlotte's anguish is a shock from which he, at least, seems to recoil. In this, he is revealed as oddly less sensitive than Maggie herself, who has not drawn away from her recognition of Charlotte's anguish. It is still not certain, however, with what authority the narrator reports that Maggie is indeed on the point of crying, or how audible Charlotte's grief really is. There is also the question of how conscious Maggie's ears really are, if she can apparently think to herself in the moments following Charlotte's wail that there was "honestly, an awful mixture in things," and that "the deepest depth of all, in a perceived penalty, was that you couldn't be sure some of your compunctions and contortions wouldn't show for ridiculous" (497).

The narrator's belief in the morality of Maggie's victory, shaken by the silent scream, is shaken as well by the pleasure Maggie takes in the manipulation of Charlotte in Chapter 39, as when he describes "our young woman" as having passed, "in all her adventure, no stranger moment; for she not only saw her companion fairly agree to take her then for the poor little person she was finding it so easy to appear, but fell, in a secret, responsive ecstasy, to wondering if there were not some supreme

abjection with which she might be inspired" (511). Maggie's inspiration in the confrontation with Charlotte is another lie, much like the one she told the night of the bridge game, but this one is unaccompanied by the wealth of sacred imagery and language which characterized the earlier scene of Maggie's near-deification on the terrace. Instead, the passages of direct discourse between the two women are bracketed with the narrator's tags, in which any impression that Maggie feels anything akin to real agony is much muted, replaced by the narrator's description of Maggie's "sharp, successful, almost primitive wail," which, in its effect on Charlotte, "attested for the Princess the felicity of her deceit" (513). What Maggie demonstrates in this conversation is her real command of political performance. The comparisons of Maggie throughout the novel, but especially in Book Second, to an actress (322, 455), a circus performer (347), or "little trapezist girl" (503), are finally justified in this scene of cultivated and dramatic abjection.

It is finally unclear just how convinced the narrator is by the novel's end that Maggie and her father are not at least as monstrous in their mild victory as the pair of scheming lovers had been earlier in the novel. There is, for example, the extended metaphor of the glass wall behind which Charlotte is pictured as trapped: "She could thus have translated Mrs. Verver's tap against the glass, as I have called it, into fifty forms; could perhaps have translated it most into the form of a reminder that would pierce deep" (521). The narrator's use of the first person once again alerts the reader to his influence in the construction of the metaphor, and by extension, his own sympathy for Charlotte Verver.

In the passage of hypothetical discourse that follows this metaphor, a chalice is the implicit vehicle for the unspoken words credited to Charlotte: "Ours was everything a relation could be, filled to the brim with the wine of consciousness . . ." (521). As in other examples of hypothetical discourse, these terms may represent what Maggie is willing to imagine Charlotte wanting to say from behind the

entrapping glass. But it is more likely that it is the narrator--remembering that Charlotte, at the end of Book First, was the one who connected the antique golden bowl with the day at Matcham--who is now beginning to understand what Maggie has done--well after Maggie herself. It is Charlotte, not Maggie, who is being driven out to the desert--otherwise known as American City--and it is with her that Maggie assumes that the sins of her early irresponsibility and more recent manipulations of those around her, will be carried.

Certainly it is the narrator who seems most alert to the monetary implications and ironies of Maggie's marital triumph, which again clouds his presentation of the couples' last visit before the Ververs leave for American City. As the narrator expressed ambivalence over the coincidence of Adam Verver's purchase of a wife and some antique tiles, so he now communicates his doubt over Maggie and Adam's ability to appreciate their sposi as other than fine acquisitions:

The two noble persons seated, in conversation, at tea, fell thus into the splendid effect and the general harmony; Mrs. Verver and the Prince fairly 'placed' themselves, however unwittingly, as high expressions of the kind of human furniture required, aesthetically, by such a scene. The fusion of their presence with the decorative elements, their contribution to the triumph of selection, was complete and admirable; though, to a lingering view, a view more penetrating than the occasion really demanded, they also might have figured as concrete attestations of a rare power of purchase. There was much indeed in the tone in which Adam Verver spoke again, and who shall say where his thought stopped? 'Le compte y est. You've got some good things.' (541)

In the absence of some more superior knowledge of Adam and Maggie than lies in his possession, this narrator can only indicate the direction of his speculation--"and who shall say where his thought stopped?"--hoping perhaps in this way to prod the

reader into a similar consciousness of the way in which the intentions and actions of these characters remain, "like some famous poetic line in a dead language, subject to varieties of interpretation" (531).

Notes

¹ Almost every critic of this novel refers to its difficulty in these terms, except Allon White, who prefers the word "obscurity" to describe the effect of the late style. See Edmund Wilson, J. A. Ward, Wayne Booth, Charles Samuels, and John Carlos Rowe on the matter of Jamesian ambiguity. Oddly, Shlomith Rimmon's book length study of ambiguity in James does not mention The Golden Bowl. Discussion of ambiguity usually centres on the issue of James's authorial control, pitting those who see ambiguity as a symptom of artistic or even moral confusion (Wilson, Samuels, A. Berland, and Booth among them) against those who see ambiguity as the expression of a finer artistic or moral intention (Ward and L. C. Knights, for example). "Did he mean it or was he just muddled up?" is White's summary of this debate (131).

In a recent article on "Henry James and Euphemism," Douglas Robinson argues that "James's infamous late style comes out of his increasing sense of just how messy and complex human relations always are, and how naive it is to reduce human messes to tidy formulations . . ." (407).

² The desire to construct intelligible arguments about the meaning of The Golden Bowl leads some readers to overlook or omit material that might count against those arguments. Marianna Torgovnick, for example, acknowledges that others may take special note of scenes in which Maggie Verver appears as a "destructive figure," but says that "[s]uch passages--crucial for some critics--are accordingly omitted from my discussion" (445).

³ An outstanding exception to this evasion is R. W. Short's essay "The Sentence Structure of Henry James." Short claims that in the sentences of the late James,

"meanings float untethered, grammatically speaking, like particles in colloidal suspension. . . . In these peculiar sentences, facts remain tentative, intentions fluid, and conclusions evanescent" (74). Short goes on to posit what I consider to be a convincing rhetorical purpose for the late style: "James plunges many of his characters . . . into situations wherein previously established frames of reference no longer possess validity, and they are forced to make a fresh adaptation to environment, particularly moral environment. Their very epistemology must be born anew. This, and the demand that the reader fully share in the reorientation, may be called the major, general aim of his art" (76-7). I would include the narrator of the late novels in the cast of characters set adrift in these referentially unstable situations.

⁴ Henry James, The Golden Bowl (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966) 531. All subsequent references are to this edition of the novel, and will be made parenthetically in the text.

⁵ I disagree with Allon White's claim that ambiguity is "a linguistic structure deployed within [a novel's] range of obscuring processes to produce mild, localized perplexity (the ambiguity in James is never aggressively arresting, it simply gives pause)" (132). On the contrary, ambiguity is an effect of James's conception of the problem of narration which affects the entire body of the novel, collapsing distinctions between fabula and *sjuzhet*.

⁶ In this sense, if Adam Verver is the figurative rather than nominal Prince of Book First, then Maggie, as she grows in awareness of her personal power (backed as it is by her father's wealth), proves herself his rightful heir, and a true Princess, in her exercise of that power. In this way, the novel can be read as a tale of political succession.

⁷ Images of money are generally prominent in the late James--one thinks of the pile of money Milly Theale sits on top of, or the reticules dispensing money and opinions held by Maud Lowder in The Wings of the Dove, or of the money-bags of Mrs. Newsome (whose name even sounds like money: "new sum") in The Ambassadors.

Studies of money in James's fiction (as both literal social force and as a source of figural language) include Newton Arvin's "James and the Almighty Dollar," Laurence Holland's The Expense of Vision, Donald Mull's Henry James's Sublime Economy, and recently, Mimi Kairschner's "Traces of Capitalist Patriarchy in the Silence of The Golden Bowl," John Alberti's "The Economics of Love: The Production of Value in The Golden Bowl," and Peggy McCormack's The Rule of Money.

⁸ For mention of "the aura of the holy grail" surrounding the golden bowl, see Ruth Taylor Todasco, "Theme and Imagery in The Golden Bowl."

⁹ Readers react in various ways to the uncertainty of the late Jamesian narrator. Those who see James himself as the narrator, or who assume that his narrators are omniscient, have accused James, or his narrator, of being deliberately ambiguous, of having odd moral lapses, or of perversely knowing more than he tells his reader.

Frederick Crews, for example, writes of James's "lifelong devotion to ambiguity for its own sake" (82), while Allon White says that James "cultivated obscurity" (130), and that the ambiguities in his novels "produce a textual encounter with a narrator who at significant moments refuses to enter the mind and body of the person discussed, who refuses to be 'at one' with the subject of his own discourse, and who

therefore holds off identification" (132). Peggy McCormack mentions the lack of narratorial reflection on Maggie's acceptance of her father's treatment of Charlotte as one of the "most perplexing silences in The Golden Bowl, and wonders what accounts for these "blank spots" in the "voraciously curious" intellect of the "omniscient narrator" (84-5). Very recently, Nina Schwartz has written about "secrets" in James's fiction as necessary to the generation of mystery, and of the desire to know as a cause for embarrassment or shame (69-72).

These opinions are nothing new. As far back as 1913, in The Spirit of American Literature, John Macy expressed frustration at encountering narration such as "What she was thinking of I am unable to say" with this comment: "The reader's inner self retorts, 'My dear sir, you made her; if you do not know, you ought to, or there is no use pretending that you knew all you told us a few pages back'" (334).

¹⁰ John Macy, in The Spirit of American Literature, says of this comment, which he attributes to "our author," that it "sounds like candour and ought to strengthen the illusion that the writer is telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth as he knows it. But its effect is quite otherwise; it disturbs credulity, ruffles illusion, as when the theatre drop with the castle painted on it wavers in a gust from the wings" (334).

¹¹ Malashri Lal, though never referring specifically to the narrator's attitude toward Charlotte and the Prince, nevertheless claims that their version of romance, which is heroic and tragic, is revealed in the novel as superior to Maggie and Adam's aesthetic romanticism. The adulterous couple's "passionate sense of life," expressed

through their "indifference to the established forms of behaviour," makes them vulnerable to Maggie's oppressive reconstruction of the Victorian family (169-171).

The possibility also exists of viewing the relationship between Charlotte and the Prince as hierogamy manquee--with the proximity of the (cracked) golden bowl or sacred wedding chalice to Charlotte indicating the traces of a sacred structure which is no longer fully intelligible.

¹² Peter Brooks mentions the heightened, melodramatic strain of language in James, attributing it to "the effort to perceive and image the spiritual in a world voided of its traditional Sacred, where the body of the ethical has become a sort of deus absconditus which must be sought for, postulated, brought into man's existence through the play of the spiritualist imagination" (11). Brooks awards this attitude to James personally, whereas I see it as the context for the narrator.

¹³ In "The Jamesian Lie," Bersani notes the presence of these passages, remarking that "Maggie is constantly imagining what people might have said or thought, but, interestingly enough, these conjectures are generally set apart from the 'real' text in quotation marks, like a warning to the text not to let itself be seduced by its own suggestiveness" (150). The appearance of these putative thoughts in the form of hypothetical discourse might also be a way for the narrator to represent his own uneasy, half-denied sense of Maggie's own rhetorical power to make others do as she likes--his sense of her Machiavellian potential.

¹⁴ The possibility of a sacred context for Maggie's wish for perfect happiness, for an incarnation of the bowl "as it was to have been," is supplied by the Kabbalistic tetragrammaton. According to this tradition, the sacred name, YHVH, signifies both the marriage in heaven and the marriage on earth (Schachter 19), with Maggie's

desire allying her vision of restored harmony and unconditional love with the heavenly marriage. But though the presence of the Principino indicates a kind of cosmic blessing on her union with Amerigo, Maggie's longing is finally prevented from signifying in any but a secular way by her earthly motivations and political methods.

CONCLUSION

This moment was that in which language invaded the universal problematic; that in which, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse . . . that is to say, when everything became a system where the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the interplay of signification ad infinitum.

Jacques Derrida

The crisis in structure described by Derrida is a break with the idea of a fixed centre on which the notion of a coherent structure--of metaphysics, of philosophy, of literature--is based. The collapse of the conceptual centre into the free play of signification renders distinctions between the centre or principle of a system and the operations of that system unreliable, insecure. Although Derrida does not locate this moment of rupture precisely, he indicates its effect in the thought of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Freud. The effect of this rupture is also detectable in the late novels of Henry James, manifest in the indeterminate discourse of the rhetorical narrator.

Narration in The Wings of the Dove and The Golden Bowl occurs in a world constituted by and as discourse, in which there is no transcendental signifier, no etymon secure from the endless play of meaning. The narrators of these novels, though they are themselves characterized only through discourse, wish to transcend the vagaries of language through a search for and recovery of the etymon, conceived in terms of religious or sacred myth. Only by grounding their own narrative discourse in the etymon--the living dove, the golden bowl "as it was to have been"--can these narrators enjoy an authority guaranteed outside and prior to the world of discourse.

But there is no world apart from discourse, and though these narrators desire authority, their own narration reveals their non-omniscience and thus their bewilderment when confronted with the radical unknowability of other minds. The struggle for lucidity in the face of non-omniscience, and for some recoverable "law" of coherence in the face of language's refusal to signify finally and authoritatively, provokes a proliferation of figures in the narrators' discourse. It is as if one image--dove, princess, scapegoat--could halt the play of meaning and supply the absent centre that thwarts coherence in these novels. No one of these images can find absolute authority, however, for the community of observers, which includes other characters as well as these narrators, shares no set of values. It is possible for Kate to call Milly a dove not because the word has inevitable spiritual connotations for Kate, but precisely because it does not. And it is possible for Charlotte and the Prince to call their relationship sacred because that word has lost the power it once had to refer to something universally recognized as sacred.

The frustration of these narrators in a world of limited perception and endless significance pervades their own discourse with a systemic uncertainty, the source of which is impossible for the reader to locate. These narrators cannot be finally certain of exactly what they see; neither can they report with certainty what another character sees, or thinks, or seems to see or think. Nor can they say for certain what the meaning of anything they see or seem to see is, if indeed any of what they observe in these novels can be said to have a meaning in any but the most provisional and contingent sense. Thus it is difficult for the reader in turn to say with authority that a given example of ambiguity in narrative discourse is a function of the narrator's perceptual limitations, or that it is a function of linguistic indeterminacy, so radically fused are *fabula* and *sjuzhet*.

In the absence of either the etymon or an established community to guarantee the authority and meaning of discourse, some other way must be found to "fix belief,

not in the individual merely, but in the community" (Peirce 129). This is the realm of rhetoric, which Renato Barilli argues "finds fertile ground only in a situation in which one doubts that truth may exist as a given outside the interaction of human beings, their exchange and comparison of opinions that necessarily occur through language" (4). Barilli writes of the Sophists in this context as having done away with truth in favour of appearances: "truth coincides with what is likely or probable" (4). Probability is also a part of Aristotle's *logos*, which proceeds by "actual or seeming demonstration," though *logos* is eclipsed in rhetorical power first by *ethos*, the character of the speaker, and then by *pathos*, the appeal to emotion (*Rhetoric* 60).

These late narrators employ all of Aristotle's persuasive methods in the construction and delivery of their narratives. Their appropriation of the authoritative stances associated with the omniscient third-person narrator, and their genuine sensitivity to the people and events before them are all a part of ethical persuasion. The empathy for major characters that they communicate to the reader also functions as a powerfully persuasive narrative method, as do statements of probability offered in place of what they cannot possibly know.

For all their rhetorical skill, though, these narrators are unlike the figure Richard Lanham labels *homo rhetoricus*, a figure joyfully immersed in discourse, for whom life is a series of argued positions rather than a committed and serious pursuit of knowledge or truth (Lanham 3). These Jamesian narrators are suspended between the serious and the rhetorical worlds described by Lanham. Composed of discourse, their desire is to transcend discourse, to achieve through narration a world whose shape conforms fully and finally to their desire. They are, as narrators, persistent in their romantic quests for something which will ground and secure significance--their own as narrators, and that of others as characters in their narratives. But the danger for them is the temptation to fix meaning, to fix belief, on what can only be partially

known, and to substitute pre-conceived notions of the world and its meaning for the flux that actually confronts any observer.

In each of these novels that danger takes the form of reification: the materialization of abstractions and the consequent translation of people into things. In The Wings of the Dove the process of reification is tropological. The tropes various characters use to describe Milly Theale compete for authority. The narrator's own assumptions about the nature of the world, his partis pris, make him vulnerable to the trope which coincides with his own desire to narrate a story of transcendence. This is the attraction of the figure of Milly as dove, sanctioned by a tradition of religious narrative no longer pre-eminent, but longed for by the narrator. So enraptured does the narrator become with the idea of Milly as the sacrificing and sacrificial dove of his narrative that his complicity with the self-serving sophistry of a character like Maud Lowder goes unacknowledged. What is also unacknowledged by both the narrator of this novel and most readers of it is the way in which the insistence on turning Milly Theale into a symbol, into the etymon, results in the effacement of her as a human being. In effect, she dies long before she turns her face to the wall.

A similar situation obtains in The Golden Bowl, though the object which is eventually located by the narrator as a possible etymon for the story--the golden bowl itself--is smashed. Instead of confronting the implications of this act for his own narration, the narrator transfers his desire for the etymon from the bowl to Maggie Verver, initiating a process of reification that reaches its climax in the terrace scene in Book Second. It is Maggie's resistance to this process, though, which marks the difference between these two novels. Kate Croy's passionate pledge to Densher that she will hate him forever if he spoils for her the beauty of what she sees might also be imagined as the narrator's declaration to Maggie in The Golden Bowl, if he could speak to her across the diegetic boundary which separates them. In the face of the

narrator's desire for Maggie's perfection, Maggie herself demonstrates her human failings and strengths, to the shock not only of the narrator, but also to readers who share his desire to project onto her his own desire for transcendence. Like the narrator, these readers wish to be ravished by and confirmed in their belief that something or someone can be known fully, and can signify finally, authoritatively, and intelligibly in accordance with their most deeply felt wishes.

The power of narrative to ravish the reader is attested to by James himself in the Preface to The Golden Bowl. He writes there of his experience as his own reader, subject in part to the rhetoric of his own narration:

As the historian of the matter sees and speaks, so my intelligence of it, as a reader, meets him half-way, passive, receptive, often even grateful; unconscious, quite blissfully, of any bar to intercourse, any disparity of sense between us. Into his very footprints the responsive, the imaginative steps of the docile reader that I consentingly become for him all comfortably sink; his vision, superimposed upon my own as an image in cut paper is applied to a sharp shadow on a wall, matches, at every point, without excess or deficiency. (14)

James goes on in the Preface to claim that if the prose offered to the reader lacks "the touch that operates for closeness and for charm, for conviction and illusion, for communication," then the reader has been cheated (24). This is true, he continues, not of non-poetic forms of writing, "but of those whose highest bid is addressed to the imagination, to the spiritual and the aesthetic vision, the mind led captive by a charm and a spell, as incalculable art" (24).

The tension between narrative art that threatens to overcome the reader with its almost hallucinatory power, and the reader who must meet the narrator "half-way" while at the same time remaining "responsive" to narrative's charm, is dramatized over and over again in the discourse of the late novels. To be fully responsive to the

discourse of the narrators of the late novels is to feel the temptation to surrender to the idea of perfection, even if it means diminishing the complexity of the phenomenal world. To be the reader James describes in the Preface is also to resist the temptation to substitute romance, "the things that can reach us only through the beautiful circuit and subterfuge of our thought and our desire," for reality, "the things we cannot possibly not know, sooner or later, in one way or another" (The Art of the Novel 31-2).

James's own rhetorical intentions are indicated by his decision to make each of these narrators suspend his narration in the midst of a crisis. Crisis, or judgement, is the end of all rhetoric, and while James's narrators supply rhetorical arguments for interpreting these stories in certain ways, they cease narrating at precisely the moment at which they, like Maggie Verver herself, stop seeing clearly enough to continue. In so doing they pass the burden of judgement on to the reader, who in turn confronts the problem of narration: the impossibility of judgement in a world in which knowledge is always partial. The apparent choices are between the romance that erases Milly Theale, and the relativism that attends the smashed golden bowl. Each of these, though, is one of the "easy glosses" against which Maggie Verver shakes her head (Bowl 421).

What James's flawed narrators attest to is that it is impossible for anyone ever to know enough about anyone else, or about herself, to arrive at final judgement. And yet the struggle for knowledge and intelligibility, for ever more inclusive descriptions of the situation that calls for judgement, is of value, for only through that persistence, in the form of narration, is "the adventure of one's intelligence" (Preface to Bowl 20)--in other words conscious life itself--recorded.

The world of these novels will not conform to the beautiful dream of perfectibility that each of these narrators wishes to impose upon it. Instead, the terms offered by these narrators as the formulae of the crises they confront are the

only beauty possible, and it is the adequacy of these terms as provisionally convincing representations of the situation to be judged that the reader must consider. Judgement, then, and the morality upon which it is based, is a matter not of character or action alone but of how that character and how that action is or can be framed, by another character, by a narrator, and finally, by a reader. The morality of the late novels is a morality of composition, the only "positive beauty" (The Art of the Novel 319) for James, and his narrators are to be evaluated by the intense impression of a complete reality that their art effects in the reader. The rhetoric of narration is finally the persuasive power of all art, for it is art, as James wrote to H. G. Wells, which "makes life, makes interest, makes importance"

James's refusal to pre-empt the crisis of these novels by solving the problem of non-omniscience in his narrators is the final turn in his own rhetoric of narration. For the effect of these imperfect narrators is to implicate the reader in the narrative act, while James himself, whom Shoshana Felman compares to the absent Master of Bly in The Turn of the Screw (205-6), abdicates all claims to authority, walking away, in effect, from his own creation.

James thus achieves release from authority, for in the absence of a figure within the text who possesses perfect knowledge, the reader is persuaded to take up the task of narration and attempt some final declaration of fictional meaning, some mastery of the text. Questions of narratorial authority are thus not resolved by James's narrative method, but multiplied, with the reader of James, like his late narrators and all other creators of fiction, finally alone in a world about which it is impossible to know, or to say, anything for certain.

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