M. A. Thesis

THE VALUE OF PERCEPTUAL EXPERIENCE AND REBIRTH IN JAMES'S PROTAGONISTS [THE AMBASSADORS AND THE GOLDEN BOWL]

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THE VALUE OF PERCEPTUAL EXPERIENCE AND REBIRTH IN JAMES'S PROTAGONISTS [THE AMBASSADORS AND THE GOLDEN BOWL]

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ABSTRACT

The theme and title of this thesis is The Value of Perceptual Experience in James's Protagonists. It is a study of the life and behavior of the main protagonists of two Jamesian novels, namely, The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl.

Our purpose in this study is to show how the protagonist of The Ambassadors, a middle aged-man, re-evaluates his moral values through reflections on his experiences in a new environment; while the central character of The Golden Bowl, a young married woman, achieves maturity and frees herself from a strange emotional relationship with her father, through the refinement of vision and her sensitivity.

Both the protagonist of The Ambassadors and that of The Golden Bowl achieve awareness and change their lives for the better through recourse to experience, observations and finally renunciation.

This study produces evidence that James, in these particular novels, moves almost completely away from the typical American dichotomy, which James himself had treated

earlier, between Europe as a symbol of Evil and America as a symbol of Good and stresses individual life experience.

We focus on the importance of the central consciousness, as a device through which James makes the novels emerge from the protagonists. Therefore, at the same time, James uses his centers of consciousness and projects himself on them in order to demonstrate his dual capacity, not only as creator, but also as scientist of the unreal.

We then demonstrate what circumstances lead the protagonists to make observations and consequently what causes them to react.

Finally, we analyze why these Jamesian protagonists change their values, as well as the price they pay for their metamorphosis (rebirth or reeducation).

RESUMO

O tema desta pesquisa é The Value of Perceptual Experience in James's Protagonists, ou seja, O Valor da Experiência Perceptiva nos Protagonistas de James. Este trabalho desenvolve um estudo sobre a vida e o comportamento dos personagens centrais de duas novelas de Henry James, respectivamente, O Embaixador e The Golden Bowl (sem título em português).

O que queremos evidenciar é que o personagem central de O Embaixador, um homem maduro, reavalia seus valores morais através de reflexões e sua experiência em um novo ambiente, enquanto que a principal protagonista de The Golden Bowl, uma jovem casada, amadurece e liberta-se de um estranho relacionamento com o pai através da percepção visual e o lado sensitivo.

Tanto o personagem principal de O Embaixador quanto a personagem central de The Golden Bowl atingem o conhecimento interior, e mudam de vida, recorrendo à experiência, às observações e à renúncia.

Este estudo mostra que James nestas duas novelas não se prende a típica dicotomia entre a America (o Bem) e a Europa (o Mau), mas que enfatiza profundamente o valor da

experiência individual.

Evidenciamos ainda a importância da consciência central (o fulcro narrativo), um recurso que James utiliza para fazer o romance fluir dos personagens. Assim, James utiliza-se de seus personagens ao mesmo tempo se projetando em cada um para demonstrar a sua múltipla capacidade não só de criador, mas, também, de cientista do irreal.

Mostramos, também, as circunstâncias que levam os personagens a fazerem observações e consequentemente o que causa a reação dos mesmos.

Finalmente analisamos porque os personagens mudam seus valores e o preço que eles pagam por suas metamorfoses (renascimentos ou reeducações).

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the problem

Several important works on the Jamesian novels of the Major Phase have analyzed James's idea of awareness. The analysis presented here, however, shows this concept to underlie only part of the process the main protagonists undergo, and gives evidence that not only awareness or the refinement of vision, as Edel, James's best biographer, labels it, but also the concept of metamorphosis is of fundamental importance to James's work of this period. The connection between these two concepts, refinement of vision and metamorphosis is analyzed through the behavior of the main protagonists of The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl. James's preoccupation, in the novels of the Major Phase, with development of consciousness or achievement of awareness, on the one hand, and maturity, on the other, is seen as a result of certain processes the protagonists go through to achieve these states; the achievement of awareness as the result of observation and experience, and maturity as the result of metamorphosis.

All three of James's last long novels present the

connection and contrast between aesthetics and moral philosophy. Nevertheless, only The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl were chosen for analysis. The Wings of the Dove was excluded from this study because, in spite of dealing with this connection, it goes one step further, examining the theme of death. In general terms, when the concepts of awareness, metamorphosis and renunciation are applied to the lives of the main characters of The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl, we find that they both achieve awareness and are led to modify their lives through direct experience, observation and reflection on that experience. Finally they are led to renunciation. The main protagonist of The Ambassadors, a highly sensitive middle-aged man, is led to reevaluate his European experience (experience in a completely different environment) and reflections on that experience. The main protagonist of The Golden Bowl, a young married woman, achieves maturity, consolidating her father's and her own marriages, and freeing herself from the strange emotional involvement with her father, through the progressive refinement of her vision.

This study will follow neither the biographical nor the psychological approach, concentrating mainly on contextual criticism, as well as analyzing the narrative technique and the characters. Special importance is given to the discussion of James's use of the center of consciousness as a narrative technique, since it is through this technique that James, as author, gains distance from his characters. The use of this technique reinforces the idea that it is the experience and the reflections of the characters themselves that are the main factors in their development;

by the same token, he avoids creating the impression that the reflections and observations are controlled by the author himself.

Review of Criticism

It would be impossible to write briefly about all the critics of Henry James because of the quantity of that criticism. Reviewing all the criticism on him would be on the one hand impossible and on the other completely undesirable, for the criticism is inevitably repetitive. Therefore, in this review I intend to present a brief summary of the best of modern commentary on James, especially on his Major Phase. The comments in this review also include some of the controversy which exists concerning James and his long novels.

Matthiessen (1969), one of James's best critics, labels James's three longest novels as his Major Phase. As the title suggests, for Matthiessen, these novels constitute the best of the Jamesian production. Matthiessen however, in spite of saying that in terms of structure The Ambassadors is one of the greatest novels in English, he also observes that *the burden of The Ambassadors is that Strether has awakened to a wholly new sense of life. Yet he does nothing at all to fulfill that sense. (p.47)*

Fogel (1977), explains that the implication of Matthiessen's remarks is that Strether, to validate his knowledge, ought to remain in Europe (rather than return to America) and that he should act upon his discovery of all

he has missed by marrying Miss Gostrey or, alternatively, by continuing in Paris, in his devotion to Mme de Vionnet. But, after all, it is part of James's *donnée* for the novel that Strether's knowledge comes for himself, too late. For what Strether gains, as James writes in his Preface to The Ambassadors, is a priceless vision. Unlike Matthiessen, Fogel agrees with James. Thus he states that Strether's final position can be described as the combination of the best of his American background and his European experience.

Several years before writing The Ambassadors, the creation of Strether, the main protagonist of this novel, was projected by James:

> *He has never really enjoyed - he has lived only for Duty and conscience - his conception of them; for pure appearances and daily tasks - lived for effort, for surrender, abstention, sacrifice ... I don't see him as having battled with his passions ... or as having, in the past, suspected, very much, what he was losing, what he was not doing. The alternative wasn't present to him ... It is too late, too late now, for HIM to live - but what stirs in him with a dumb passion of desire, of I don't know what, is the sense that he may have a little supersensual honor in the vicarious freedom of another.* (Notebooks: 373-5)

Later James specifies Strether's dissatisfaction with his own life:

> *He feels tired, in other words, without having a great deal to show for it; disenchanted without having known any great enchantment, enchanters, or above all enchantresses.* (Project of Novel: 377)

In fact, Strether meets his *enchantress*, his ideal lover. The problem is that she likes him as a friend, not as a lover. Certainly she stimulates and helps him to grow toward maturity, but that is all. Therefore these

quotes taken from James's *Notebooks* and his *Project on Novel* easily justify Strether's final position.

In the novels of the Major Phase many critics have observed a tendency towards fable or romance. In Anatomy of Criticism, Frye (1973), discussing the forms of the novel and the romance, points out a rule that bears directly on James's situation at this time. Frye writes that *The novelist deals with personality, with characters wearing their personae or social masks. He needs the framework of a stable society, and many of our best novelists have been conventional to the verge of fussiness. The romancer deals with individuality, with characters* in vacuo *idealized by revery, and, however conservative he may be, something nihilistic and untamable is likely to keep breaking out of his pages. (p.305)*

In fact, in the novels of the Major Phase James combined the stable European society and depicted conventions of the novelistic tradition with idealized American characters of romance to produce a conflict that often has the possibility of containing disintegration for a short period. In fact, there is more preparation for the moment of the conflict than the conflict itself, for the persons involved in the conflict, when they are face to face, react calmly. A good illustration of this would be that moment in The Ambassadors, when the confrontation of Sarah Pocock and Mme de Vionnet takes place. Another example occurs in The Golden Bowl, when Maggie Verver is prowling around the house while the other characters of the novel sit playing cards. On the one hand, the imaginary towns of Woollett, Massachusetts (The Ambassadors) and American City

(The Golden Bowl) which stand for restriction and narrow conscience are still seen as sources of moral spontaneity and integrity. On the other hand, the stable hierarchical societies of London and Paris, by contrast, often seem almost melodramaticaly sinister. Moreover the conflict between the American and European characters frequently takes place in a rarified atmosphere of romance.

James is also included in Leavis's The Great Tradition. Leavis (1948), sees James as a great novelist, but holds the belief that his novels of the Major Phase are not similar to his other productions, for their structure, style and imagery are not of good quality. As to The Ambassadors he states *We are asked to admire The Ambassadors (1903); and The Ambassadors seems to me to be not only not one of his great books, but to be a bad one. (p.147)* Probably Leavis makes this comment because he thinks in terms of the *energy demanded for the reading. (p.186)*

Bennett in her essay *A Disagreement* counterattacks Leavis remarking that the effort one makes when reading The Ambassadors is *rewarded at every turn, not only because we share with James the discovery of important truths; but because we are continuously spell-baund by his story and amused by his irony, his wit, and his charm in presenting what he sees. (Criticism: 441)*

Another critic who disagrees with Leavis is Edel. He claims that the reading of The Ambassadors is not a painful experience. Edel says that James *wrote The Ambassadors for the attentive reader, and a reader capable of seeing with him and accepting his pointer-sense , his brush-work , his devotion to picture and to scene and above all his need to*

render this in a highly colored and elaborate style, so as to capture the nuances of this perceptions. (Criticism: 442)

Through Edel's comment we can understand that he sees James as an impressionist, for James, like the impressionist painter, is eager to catch the moment.

It has been seen that the types of criticism addressed to James's work varies. There is controversy concerning his work and there is also one critic who is completely against James's style, structure and material. He is even against the other critics who write about James. I am speaking of Geismar (1965) who writes that he cannot understand why critics like Matthiessen and Edel, see James as a major novelist. Geismar gives several reasons for not accepting James as a great novelist.

First, he states that James's preoccupation with awareness, which is very much related to the factor of *discovery* and *revelation* can be *biological and sexual in the sense of James's predominant voyeurism and exhibitionism - in his wanting to be revealed - it was even more clearly social and repressive and deeply inhibited in Henry James's equal need not to be revealed for what in his heart, and his most pertinent fiction, he believed himself to be. (p. 431)*

Second, according to Geismar, James's revival took place during the 1940's and 1950's with the critics who followed the New Criticism, a period marked by the decline of the classic modern American writers, namely, Hemingway, Faulkner, Steinbeck, Dos Passos, etc. For Geismar that was a period of conformism and sterility. On the one hand, there was the New Critic who emphasized the use of method, which also denied or blocked the historical and the human element

in the work of art. On the other hand, there was in the U.S.A. an atmosphere of fabricated fantasy life while the rest of the nations were suffering the consequences of the Second World War. In contrast to those nations, there was in the U.S. the atmosphere of a *leisure class* nation, similar to the atmosphere of the class that James used to depict in his novels. James then, became a *symbol of national make-believe on the highest level of intellectual or cultural status and respectability. (p.447)* Therefore James's aestheticism and morality were the right things to make the Americans have a romantic view of their own country.

Finally, Geismar states that money was essential to James's literary world. Usually the bad characters were the ones who had not enough cash. His good female characters were the ones who got their fortunes because of their charm (Isabel Archer, The Portrait of a Lady), his good male characters were those who refused a contaminated fortune (Merton Densher, The Wings of the Dove).

Krook (1963), finds a justification for the money motif in the Jamesian universe. According to Krook the *money - values are there for exposure, never for praise. (p.14)* She explains that the millionaires who appear in the Jamesian world are there because James is concerned with the instrument of power in our society. Since the instrument of power in the modern society is money, James's employment of the moneyed classes in his novels has the same function the aristocracy had in a Shakespearean play.

Therefore the Jamesian millionaires and heiresses represent all humanity in the modern society, for they become symbols of prestige and power. In this way whatever

happens to them (happiness - suffering) is surely the right example and instruction for the purposes of drama in the same sense that Shakespeare took the destiny of a Hamlet, a Macbeth or a Lear to serve as example and instruction for his readers.

Like the Shakespearean representatives, the Jamesian major characters have beauty, richness, possess cultivated taste and have the opportunity to keep them. Moreover the Jamesian representatives are also gifted with intelligence and imagination, sensibility and moral insight. Their intelligence is surely not academic, their sensibility is not trained and their insight into morality seems to have nothing to do with the offices of teachers or preachers.

Greene (1963) is another critic who compares James's long novels to Shakespeare's work. In Greene's essay *The Private Universe*, James like Shakespeare, is seen as a writer who has a realistic view of the world, for in his novels he shows both the triumphs of selfishness, as well as the propensity wicked souls have to be chained. A good illustration of this aspect of Jamesian realism is related to Charlotte Stant and the Prince, for they have the opportunity to satisfy their passion, but the price charged for their passion is their separation. James, says Greene, like Shakespeare, punished the egoist. Thus James employed the same type of justice Shakespeare used. Probably these were the reasons for Greene to state that James *is as solitary in the history of the novel as Shakespeare in the history of poetry. (p.122)*

Usually James is considered a difficult writer. In fact, Eliot (1963) in an essay called *A Prediction*

writes that James is a difficult writer for Americans because he is Europeanized, that he is difficult for the English readers because he is an American. Yet he says that James might not be difficult for the extremely sensitive reader who is neither American nor English.

Eliot also comments that James's style is not to be imitated. However what he sees as fundamental in James is his concept of integrity and his way of expressing it.

James may be seen as a difficult writer, but there is certainly a constant in all of his works. The Jamesian works (and these include The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl) end as Conrad (1921) puts them:

> *One is never set at rest by Mr Henry James' novels. His books end as an episode in life ends. You remain with the sense of life still going on. (p.17)*

Statement of purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to show that what James considers fundamental in the novels The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl is the value of individual life experience. Despite returning to his favorite theme - the contrast between Americans and Europeans - he does not emphasize the dichotomy between Good (America) and Evil (Europe), for in these novels, both the Old and the New Worlds produce people who are neither wholly good nor wholly evil.

We shall see that the main protagonists of the two novels achieve awareness and maturity. However in changing their lives for the better, they must undergo a necessarily painful process which begins with their stepping

decisively into experience, is consolidated by the reflections and observations they make, and ends with the sacrifice or renunciation of one of the people or things they most care for.

Through these concepts or achievement of awareness and subsequent rebirth, James presents what he considers to be the fundamental human problem (since everyone has good and evil in them) that is, the necessity of learning how to combine aesthetics and morality. Success in this almost impossible task causes an inevitable break with life as it has been lived up to that moment, and leads to the need to make crucial choices. For James, these choices necessarily lead to the renunciation of someone or something: the main protagonist of The Ambassadors renounces both life in Europe, and his ideal lover; the main protagonist of The Golden Bowl renounces the company of her father. We shall see that James's main protagonists follow the christian pattern of rebirth.

Naturally the quantity of criticism addressed to James's works is enormous; first, because of his revival as a superior novelist and stylist; and second because of the volume of his literary production. The result of this is that most critics who have written about James, especially about the novels of the Major Phase, have at least touched on the subject of this study.

In this thesis we shall examine the following points: in the first chapter we will focus on how the center of consciousness technique operates in relation to the moral development of the main protagonists; in the second, we will show, in some detail, the process through which the main

protagonists in The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl achieve awareness; in the third, we examine the circumstances under which James's main protagonists are led to make the observations which cause them to react against the oppression of family and friends, which Pound (1963) calls *the impinging of family pressure, the impinging of one personality on another; all of them in highest degree damn'd loathsome and detestable*. In the two final chapters, we will analize why the main protagonists change their values as well as the price they pay for their rebirth.

FRAMING THE CENTER OF CONSCIOUSNESS

In this chapter we shall examine the importance of the center of consciousness and the use of *ficelles* or confidantes in The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl, devices which are a constant in James's later novels as well as a feature of his sophisticated later style. Besides the attempt to show how the center of consciousness operates, we shall also try to explain how this device is related to the moral development of the main protagonists.

In the history of literature James belongs to the group of writers who regard literature as an art-form to be discussed in terms of aesthetic considerations. In this respect his most important contribution to the art of the novel lies in how he conceives the center of consciousness in his work. Through the center of consciousness, James created a narrative style in which the central character thinks out loud, thereby combining the advantages of third-person objectivity and first-person subjectivity. Moreover through the center of consciousness James presents:

> *the writing of stories in which the hero would be his own historian - which sounds like no novelty - but in a new way: what would "happen" in such stories, that is, what would matter, would be less and less the action in which the hero is involved and increasingly what he thought about that action - what it meant to him, what*

> *difference it made on him, and what difference it made in him. (Powers, 1970: 138)*

In terms of technique, James was testing and developing the idea of the

> *"reflector"*, the highly observant, highly sensitive character devoted to penetrating and understanding the events about him, through whose filtering intelligence all events are seen. (Bowden, 1956:88)*

In The Ambassadors, the center of consciousness lies exclusively in Strether. In fact, the entire action is seen through the eyes of the one *reflector*, Strether. Naturally on this all critics agree. However, since in The Golden Bowl James divides the novel into two parts, the situation is different: the action is seen from the point of view of the Prince (Part I), and from that of the Princess (Part II). However, some critics e.g., Todasso (1962) and Bradbury (1979) feel that in The Golden Bowl, in addition to the Prince (Amerigo) and the Princess (Maggie), both Adam Verver and Charlotte also take the role of center of consciousness. Others, e.g. Edel (1972) and R. P. Blackmur (1969) feel that there is only one center of consciousness for each of the two parts of the novel. We prefer the line taken by R. P. Blackmur, who, in agreement with James, comments

> *... The novel was not a play however dramatic it might be, and among the distinctions between the two forms was the possibility, which belonged to the novel alone, of setting up a fine central intelligence in terms of which everything in it might be unified and upon which everything might be made to depend. No other art could dramatize the individual at his finest; and James worked this possibility for all it was worth ... And*

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* A term used by Henry James to refer to the center of consciousness.

> *this central intelligence served a dual purpose ... It made a compositional center for art such as life never saw. If it could be created at all, then it presided over everything else, and would compel the story to be nothing but the story of what that intelligence felt about what happened. (Blackmur in Allen, 1979:275).*

In James's Preface to The Ambassadors he explains that the center of consciousness as a narrative technique fits better in a longer piece of fiction than the first-person narrator because the latter *is a form foredoomed to looseness. (p. 10)* Since The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl are both long novels, the author with this claim justifies his choice of narrative technique. It would be also appropriate to add that, before selecting the kind of narrative he would employ in The Ambassadors, James thought of making it autobiographical, in a style similar to René Lesage's Gil Blas or Charles Dickens' David Copperfield, in both of which the story is told by the central character. Yet James gave up that idea due to his belief *that one makes that surrender only if one is prepared not to make certain precious discriminations (Preface to The Ambassadors p.11).* Here by *discriminations* James means the use of both first-person subjectivity and third-person objectivity in narrative; types of narrative that James combines in order to have the point of view of a main protagonist (as in The Ambassadors) or that of a main protagonist and a character (as in The Golden Bowl) prevail in the narrative. Furthermore the handling of a character's point of view in a novel is, as Powers (1970) puts it, *a means of removing narrative authority from the hands of an omniscient and omnipotent author. (p.137)* Thus the center of consciousness technique is especially suited to expressing those *discriminations*, for they enable James to achieve the

dramatization of what is going on in the mind of his center of consciousness. In fact both The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl present the stories of their protagonists' consciousness while these same protagonists are caught at a crucial moment of awakening.

Besides registering everything for the reader, the center of consciousness is useful in another way. Since he or she is a participant, not merely a spectator in specific problem situations, the center of consciousness must find a solution to the problem. Moreover, the center of consciousness cannot fail in this task.

If the center of consciousness has a task to perform within a specific situation, it is because James wants him or her to deal with experiences in a particular way. Since the center of consciousness is to participate in living situations he or she must possess an openness to experience, and a *bewildered mind* *.

The relevance of a person's openness to experience will be more fully discussed in the next chapter, where the concept of experience is taken up in more detail. The *bewildered mind*, when applied to the center of consciousness, may be defined as the stages through which that mind gropes toward, and finally achieves awareness.

What is fundamental about the groping of the *bewildered mind* is that it is through this process that the center of consciousness proves his or her credibility as narrator of the story which is being seen through his or her

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* This term is borrowed from Lebowitz (1965).

eyes. In this manner, the center of consciousness becomes a

> *means of expressing the degree of clarity that a character's vision has attained: what - and how much - he tells us he is conscious of lets us know how good that consciousness is (Powers, 1970:139).*

The center of consciousness can also be interpreted as the process through which James commits his narrative to the words and insights of one or another character, making first one, then another the center of information and moral wisdom until the very question of knowledge becomes the primary issue.

In addition to the reasons discussed above there are other reasons why Strether is the obvious candidate for the role of center of consciousness in The Ambassadors. On one level, there is Strether's superior intelligence, by means of which he proves to be the wisest among the four ambassadors: he is the only one to achieve awareness and rebirth. On another, we may cite his capacity for conduct, that is, the capacity for choice and judgement within human relations, taken together with his capacity to be tempted. A good illustration of this would be his decision to help Mme de Vionnet. By siding with her he proves that, unlike the Woollett people, he does not see her as a *venal* woman. In taking this attitude he proves that he accepts the possibility of temptation. The capacity to be tempted is crucial here, because without the possibility of making a wrong choice a human being's conduct cannot be tested.

In The Golden Bowl, Maggie is the obvious choice for the role of center of consciousness due to the same factor that marks Strether for the role in The Ambassadors, that is, her intelligence. In fact, Maggie is presented as knowing more than Amerigo (the Prince) and Charlotte, saying more than

Adam and understanding more than the Assinghams. They all learn to respect her rather than protect her. On the other hand, Amerigo also has credibility as center of consciousness because James's treatment of Amerigo demonstrates that Amerigo is not naïve. Amerigo has critical sense, a gift that evokes the reader's sympathy. Moreover he is a real prince. He possesses breeding and tradition, marks of intelligence and superiority. Indeed Amerigo as the center of consciousness in The Golden Bowl (Part I) is of great help because a good deal of the reader's knowledge of the Ververs and Charlotte comes through him. Yet it is only at the end of the novel that Amerigo achieves moral awareness. Since his insights in the sphere of morality come to him through his wife, Maggie Verver, and his conversion is a consequence of Maggie's struggle, this study will concentrate mainly on Maggie.

However, to understand fully the nature of the center of consciousness we must first discuss another, allied technique that James uses in both novels. James discovered for himself that exclusive use of this type of narrative would generate the disadvantage of giving the reader enormous quantities of explanation, with the result that the reader would get lost and tired in the midst of so many words. Therefore James decided to elaborate something that would tie the strings of his narrative together. In the case of The Ambassadors, James

> *... had thus inevitably to set him [Strether] up a confidante or two, to wave away with energy the custom of the seated mass of explanation after the fact, the inserted block of merely referential narrative, which flourishes so, to the shame of the modern impatience ... (P:11)*

However much of the novel belonged to Strether, the author

claims in his Preface that he, the author, still has to have someone who relates to the reader for him. As a result of this necessity, James uses ficelles. The term ficelles originates from the French idiom ficelles du theâtre, meaning *stage tricks**. Some critics label them confidantes, others *Greek chorus*. In this study we shall use the term confidantes.

The confidante was a common figure in European drama, but developed its highest degree of conventionality in the French theater.

> *In the theater the confidante is used to let the audience know what it otherwise would not; she blurts out secrets; carries messages; cites facts; acts like a chorus; and is otherwise generally employed for comic relief or to represent the passage of time. (Blackmur, 1969:52)*

As a literary device the confidante is usually stupid, or possesses a type of brightness that is usually followed by gossip and malice. Yet in James's novels of the Major Phase the confidante possesses

> *a kind of bottom or residual human stupidity and each is everlastingly given to gossip; but the gossip has a creative purpose - to add substance to the story - and the stupidity is there to give slowness and weight and alternative forms to the perceptions and responses which they create. This is the gossiping stupidity for which there is no name in any living language, but which the Sanskrit calls Moha, the vital, fundamental stupidity of the human race by which it represents, to the human view, the cow, or as we would say the sheep. It is what the man has been caught in when he gives you a sheepish look; he was caught a little short of the possibility he was trying to cope with. It is this role - so much more fundamental than the conventional*

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* Taken from a footnote of the Preface to The Ambassadors.

> *original - that James's confidante is given to play; and saying so much it should be evident that she will qualify as well as report action, she will give it substance, and gain substance by it, as well as precipitate it. (Blackmur, 1969:52-3)*

After reading The Ambassadors, most readers feel that Maria Gostrey, the confidante of this novel, fits into the category of center of consciousness. Nevertheless James insists this is not so, explaining that she functions as

> *an agent ... preengaged at a high salary, but waits in the draughty wing with her shawl and her smelling-salts. Her function speaks at once for itself, and by the time she has dined with Strether in London and gone to a play with him her intervention as a ficelle is, I hold, expertly justified. Thanks to it we have treated scenically, and scenically alone, the whole lumpish question of Strether's past. (P:12)*

She may be classed as a sophisticated confidant, for her urbanity compels Strether to achieve a social style to communicate and, indeed, understand his visions. Furthermore, Strether's discussions with her invest the visions with a kind of ironic sophistication that changes the texture of Strether's sense of his experience.

Although Maria Gostrey shares the gossip and the creativeness of the Assinghams (the confidantes in The Golden Bowl), she goes beyond them. Her superiority over them lies in:

> *the difference that she is the go-between who has something in common with both things she goes between, and that her creativeness is not a substitute and seldom a mistake, for she is, rather, when she pushes herself, clairvoyant ... This ... gift of seeing so into the center of things to become a part of them, and of doing so merely by nature and the skill of a lifetime, gives her powers quite opposite to those of the Assinghams. Instead of hopelessness she creates hope; instead of futility possible*

> *use, instead of emptiness fullness; and she never makes tolerable that which ought to remain intolerable. (Blackmur, 1969:53)*

Another aid to the reader in The Golden Bowl, though less important than Maria Gostrey, is Waymarsh. Among other things, it is through him the reader learns Strether's reason for coming to Europe. Waymarsh is a person unable to respond to culture because of what Strether labels his *sacred rage*. Because of his own insensibilities Waymarsh feels the need to prevent Strether from becoming an aesthetic idler. Indeed, it is Waymarsh who contacts Woollett and promotes the visit of the Pococks to Paris.

Waymarsh was originally called Waymark by James, a name that seems to stand for a moral signpost of the severest type. Thus we may take him to represent a piece of the old New England conscience, unable to break free from the traditional prejudices of his ancestors. The way he behaves speaks for itself. He tries to reduce Europe to a place to be purchased, and later in the novel when Sarah Pocock arrives in Europe, a sudden change comes over him, but the transformation is not for the better. While in Paris, these two stern moralists search together for shops and entertainment such as the circus.

Fanny Assingham, the confidante in The Golden Bowl is a little less important than Maria Gostrey because she does not possess the kind of sophistication and experience that Maria has. For instance, Maria Gostrey is presented as a financial failure, but she possesses social presence because of her urbanity. Moreover she is at ease when conversing with Strether and we never see her puzzled about Strether's' conflicts. Unlike Maria Gostrey, Mrs Assingham is sometimes

puzzled, and always needs the help of her husband to interpret the topic of their discussion. Naturally the objective of their discussions is to help their dear friend Maggie Verver. While the Assinghams talk they make use of images which reflect revelation and justification. It is also through their dialogues that they themselves and the reader make discoveries.

While in The Ambassadors Maria Gostrey is a close friend of Strether's, in The Golden Bowl Fanny Assingham is Maggie's closest friend. Besides being Maggie's confidante, she is a true friend of the Verver's. That is why she wants to protect Maggie. She thinks Maggie *wasn't born to know Evil. She must never know it. (The Golden Bowl (GB) p.80).* Later in the novel, she reiterates the idea, saying that Maggie should not be exposed

> *To what's called Evil - with a very big E: ... To the discovery of it, to the knowledge of it, to the crude experience of it. (GB:286)*

Fanny Assingham's involvement with the Ververs (Adam, Maggie, Charlotte) and the Prince becomes evident when Charlotte's position as *mother-in-law* gives the former lovers (Charlotte and the Prince) a new intimacy which only Fanny among the representatives of society is qualified to suspect. Fanny works hard in order to slow down or interrupt Charlotte and Amerigo's relationship, but her efforts are all in vain.

Therefore from a protective consciousness, Fanny withdraws to the position of an onlooker, witnessing the larger operation of Maggie's understanding. In spite of this attitude, Fanny does not deny her original role, that of

protecting Maggie:

> *Our relation, all round, exists - it's a reality, and a very good one we're mixed up, so to speak, and it's too late to change it. We must live in it and with it. (GB:86)*

It is true the Assinghams' *relation* with the Ververs exists, but it is also true that Fanny Assingham can no longer interfere at this point, due to the change in her position to that of spectator. Thus if she is not able to deal with the situation successfully, Maggie will do it. For this reason, Maggie will go beyond her to become the strongest character, the main protagonist in The Golden Bowl.

What has been said about Fanny leads us to conclude that she is not a very competent commentator, since a large part of Colonel Assingham's function is to make his wife's interpretations clear. The Assinghams together promote the attempt at understanding, rather than solving the problem which their friend, Maggie Verver, is going through. Indirectly Fanny's incompetence is a measure of Maggie's challenge, insofar as Fanny's incapacity to solve the problem is one of the elements that forces Maggie to make the attempt, in which effort she is finally successful. Fanny's most important function in the narrative process is that of demonstrating to the reader how complete an immersion in the novel's process is required.

So far, we have examined how James's choice of narrative technique is very much related to his notion that for the reader to be able to follow the main protagonist's moral development he must learn how the protagonist is affected by perceptions. In fact, it is through the center of consciousness that James seems to ask how much we can know

and how important or valid our knowledge is.

How much one can know and how valid one's knowledge is, are questions that James asks himself throughout The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl. These questions preoccupy him because, for him, a person who possesses an incomplete vision of reality is a person who is incomplete as a human being. Naturally the Pococks and Mrs Newsome in The Ambassadors are innocent, yet at the same time, they are hopelessly incomplete as human beings. As a counterpart to the Pococks and Mrs Newsome, there is Mme de Vionnet who is no longer innocent, and her lack of innocence makes her complete as a human being.

We have discussed this technique relatively exhaustively because it is a means of framing and showing how the process of awareness of reality is developed in the minds of the main protagonists of The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE AESTHETICS AND THE MORALITY OF PERCEPTION IN JAMESIAN PROTAGONISTS

In both The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl James shows his preoccupation with values that help man conduct himself through life. In these novels he stresses the importance of individual life experience. For James, observations and openness to experience are the primary tools for refining one's understanding of life. Therefore in this chapter, we shall focus on the value of individual life experience in Jamesian protagonists. However, before getting into this subject it is essential to give an idea of James's view of experience, as well as to trace a brief outline of the stories of the two novels.

In a famous metaphor, James explains his view of experience:

> *Experience is never limited ..., it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of the consciousness, and catching every airborne particle in its tissue. It is the very atmosphere of the mind; and when the mind is imaginative - much more when it happens to be that of a man of genius - it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations. (1968:85)*

If we expand this metaphor we will understand more clearly the behavior of Lewis Strether, the main protagonist of The Ambassadors, and that of Maggie Verver, the main protagonist of The Golden Bowl.

In most of James's fiction there is usually present a protagonist who possesses a deep sensibility. It is not the type of sensibility that connotes weakness; it rather connotes strength. The possessor of such sensibility is not a person who is easily hurt, but a person who possesses stronger sensing powers through which he or she absorbs more information and lessons of life. In James's definition, he claims that experience is the *atmosphere of the mind*, that is to say, experience is the element that feeds the mind, maintaining the mind alive. Besides the unlimited capacity to make observations, the mind is seen as even more powerful if it happens to be *imaginative*. Indeed the Jamesian main protagonist is usually very *imaginative*. Within certain restricted circumstances, that is, not materially changing his or her economic or social status, he or she has the capacity to visualize alternative modes of living and, in the light of these alternatives, to change his or her behavior for the better. For this reason, I believe, Ward (1969) claims that the Jamesian world is composed of the *fixed* and the *supple* (p.352). The *supple* refers to the owner of the *imaginative* mind, that is, the possessor of sensibility, whose mind is more open to certain transforming experiences. In opposition to the *supple* we have the *fixed*, a term Ward uses to describe that type of person temperamentally closed to certain kinds of experience. An illustration of a *fixed* person, according to Ward's definition, is Sarah Pocock, Chad's sister, in The Ambassadors. About Sarah Pocock, Strether, the sensitive main protagonist of the novel remarks,

> *she doesn't admit surprises ... She had, to her own mind, worked the whole thing out in advance ... Whenever she has done that, you see, there's no room left; no margin, as it were, for any alteration ... She won't be touched ... (The Ambassadors (A):337-8)*

These various aspects of James's definition of experience may also be applied to himself, as a writer. In fact, we might add that it applies to the author of fiction, generally. James sees the writer as a person of genius, the possessor of an imaginative mind. Thus the writer with his *genius* or talent, his imaginative mind and his sensibility is able to make revelations. These revelations surely contain the information or lessons of life the writer has gathered. Hence we may conclude that the writer tells his reader about what he has learned of life, while James's protagonists use this information for their own benefit.

Since we are interested in what *supple* persons like Maggie Verver and Lewis Strether experience during a certain period of their lives, James's view of experience is obviously essential to this present study. It is also important to point out that both protagonists are presented as never having used their full range of sensibility before the situations they are forced to confront in the novels lead them to. However, to understand the factors that bring Maggie and Strether to use their full range of sensibility, it will be valuable to sketch briefly the situations each of them confronts. First, then, The Ambassadors.

Lewis Lambert Strether is a middle-aged, prejudiced, frightened, inhibited American who arrives in Chester on a mission for a middle-aged widow (Mrs Newsome) he plans to marry. At the same time, he is sensitive and receptive to beauty and truth, freedom and independence.

Strether's only knowledge of himself is that he is a tired financial failure. In Chester, where he is supposed to meet an American friend, Waymarsh, Strether meets a lady of thirty-five, Maria Gostrey, who introduces herself and gradually becomes Strether's confidante. Right after their introduction, Strether explains that he is in Europe in order to convince Mrs Newsome's son, Chad, to return to America to take over the presidency of the family business in Woollett. Strether and the Woollett people believe Chad will not return to America because he is involved in an illicit love affair with a base woman. Maria Gostrey advises Strether to judge that woman only after he has seen Chad.

Following the route of his mission, Strether goes to London and from there to Paris with Waymarsh and Maria Gostrey. In Paris, Strether tries to get in touch with Chad but the latter is out of town. Although Chad is away, Strether receives mail from Mrs Newsome and sets about getting information on Chad. One day, when strolling along the streets of Paris, Strether happens to find himself opposite Chad's apartment and sees a young, unfamiliar man leaning against the balcony. Strether decides to go up to the apartment and meets Little Bilham, a friend of Chad's who is living in Chad's apartment while he is away. Although Strether feels Bilham is acting on Chad's orders Bilham and himself become friends.

One evening, Strether and Maria Gostrey go to a performance at the Comédie Française. They invite Bilham, but he gives an excuse for not accompanying them which Strether accepts, though he perceives the excuse to be a weak one. That same evening Chad makes his appearance at the box

Strether and Maria Gostrey are occupying. Strether is struck at once by the surprising change in Chad. Right away, he sees that Chad is refined and more mature, not the crude and unrefined youth he remembers.

That same evening Strether tells Chad the reason for his mission to Europe. After this scene, Strether, while reflecting on Chad, realizes that he himself is not so confident as he was when he first arrived. Strether senses Chad is biding his time for some reason, and, sure enough Chad soon announces that two friends of his, a mother and a daughter, are coming from the south and that he would like Strether to meet them. Strether figures out that Chad's affair is with the daughter and wonders exactly what Chad's friends are like.

Strether meets Mme de Vionnet and her daughter, Chad's two friends, in the garden of a famous sculptor, named Gloriani. Strether is aware that Chad has in mind something special for that day and with this in mind Strether has prepared himself for whatever might happen. In fact, Chad makes his appearance almost casually. Chad appears accompanied by a beautiful lady, dressed in black. He introduces her to Strether, but Strether and the lady do not get to talk to each other because the lady goes off with another distinguished guest. Strether then turns to Bilham, who comes to sit near him. In the conversation which follows, Strether intimates that he has been reconsidering his mission, his relationship to the U.S. and to Mrs Newsome, and the assumption that he would return to Woollett immediately upon the completion of his task of confronting Chad.

After the party in Gloriani's garden there is

another get-together, this time at Chad's apartment, and it is there that Bilham hints to Strether that Chad is ready to return home. By this time, Strether is so deeply attracted to Mme de Vionnet that he promises to help her concerning Chad if he can. Soon afterwards, Strether receives an ultimatum from Mrs Newsome and in consequence of this Strether begs Chad to remain in Paris. Here in Book Sixth we find the situation reversed: whereas before, it was Strether who was anxious to return and Chad who was not, now both have changed their minds. Thus in the next six books, it appears to be Strether rather than Chad, who will not return. Sensing this, Mrs Newsome sends her second wave of ambassadors.

With the arrival of the new ambassadors in the persons of Sarah Pocock, Chad's sister, her husband Jim, and Mamie, Jim's sister, whom the people in Woollett have in mind as Chad's intended, Strether feels uneasy. He feels this way because he does not know how Sarah will behave towards him. Nevertheless he and Sarah do not talk immediately upon her arrival. First, Chad and Mme de Vionnet take care of her. Strether is convinced that Chad and Mme de Vionnet are dazzling Sarah with their manners and by introducing her to their sophisticated friends. Meanwhile, Waymarsh, who becomes a constant companion to Sarah and who Strether thinks is in touch with Mrs Newsome in Woollett, informs Strether that Sarah wishes to talk to him. Sarah wastes no time and demands Strether's total submission; all Strether is able to do is ask for a little more time while the Pococks and Waymarsh make a tour of Switzerland.

While the Pococks are away on their tour, Strether spends a day out in the country, stopping for dinner at an

isolated inn. Before dinner, he walks out to a small platform overlooking a nearby river, from where he accidentally catches sight of a small boat on the river. In the boat he recognizes Mme de Vionnet and Chad. This moment of recognition and the thoughts Strether will later have of this embarassing evening together with Chad and Mme de Vionnet, tell Strether that their relationship is not as virtuous as he had come to imgine.

After the scene by the river, Mme de Vionnet invites Strether to visit her at her house. Now Strether is aware of the truth. Mme de Vionnet makes a last appeal to Strether to persuade Chad to remain in Paris. Strether assures her that he will try, but when he talks to Chad, it becomes clear that Chad desires to return to his family business in the New World. In the light of Chad's decision, Strether has his last talk with Maria Gostrey. Strether knows she loves him, but he also knows that he must return to America even though everything there will be different for him. Through his experience in Europe he has learnt: that he loves Mme de Vionnet, and therefore cannot accept Maria Gostrey; that he remains true to his character, and therefore cannot take advantage of his mission as ambassador for Mrs Newsome.

Through this brief outline of the story of The Ambassadors, we accompany Strether, a highly sensitive middle-aged man, when he goes to Europe on a mission, where certain events take place which affect him deeply, due to his sensibility and willingness to accept them. The result of this is to cause an inner revolution to take place in him. This inner revolution leads him to take a position (or to react)

in order to achieve his own integrity and his inner peace. To face this revolution is not an easy task and to do so, Strether must be armed with courage, love and intelligence until the moment his old lights fail and his new lights appear. But his new lights do not appear immediately because he must continue to undergo and digest individual life experience. Therefore the understanding of this matter will be better followed if we trace the parallel development of Strether's consciousness. It is interesting for us to follow this process, but for Strether it is something both complex and subtle because he has to submit to his inner world of confusion.

When Strether arrives in England, he feels *launched into something of which the sense would be quite disconnected from the sense of his past (A:9)*, and this something begins *with a sharper survey of the element of appearance. (A:9)* This is a new facet of Strether's behavior. As Tanner (1966) says of Strether, this happens because Strether is *trying to learn the proper way to handle appearances (p.47)* It is something he was not used to doing in his life back in America. In Chester, Strether starts to pay closer attention to the *appearance* of things and this continues throughout the book. In London this is repeated in his meeting and dinner with Maria Gostrey, his confidante. While they dine before going to the theater, he notices the *rose-coloured shades and the small table and the soft fragance of the lady*, as well as her *cut-down* dress and her *red velvet band. (A:33-4)* He contrasts this evening with his evening back with Mrs Newsome. Back in

America he would never dine before going to the theater. Moreover Mrs Newsome's way of dressing was often serious and she would never wear a fetching *red velvet band* round her throat. Through these contrasts, which are consequences of Strether's sudden interest in the sensory surface of things, Strether begins to doubt the rightness of his mission in Europe. In fact, his doubt increases in Paris. Shortly after his arrival in Paris, he goes for a walk along the *rue de Seine (A:53)* till he reaches the Luxembourg Gardens, the famous park on the left bank of the River Seine. In the Luxembourg he questions himself on his feelings:

> *His greatest uneasiness seemed to peep at him out of the imminent impression that almost any acceptance of Paris might give one's authority away. It hung before him this morning, the vast bright Babylon, like some huge iridescent object, a jewel brilliant and hard, in which parts were not to be discriminated nor differences comfortably marked. It twinkled and trembled amd melted together, and what seemed all surface one moment seemed all depth the next. It was a place of which, unmistakably, Chad was fond; wherefore if he, Strether, should like it so much, what on earth, with such a bond, would become of either of them? (A:59)*

After this scene, Strether continues strolling along the streets till he finds himself on the Boulevard Malesherbes, the place where Chad Newsome lives. Since it is the first time he has passed Chad's house he lingers on the opposite side of the street looking up at a balcony on the third floor. His first feeling towards the balcony *was that the balcony in question didn't somehow show as a convenience easy to surrender. (A:64)* Furthermore, Strether likes Chad's house because it is *high broad clear ...* and the windows ... *took all the March sun. (A:64)* All these observations concerning Chad's house lead Strether to pause before the

house for a few minutes. As a matter of fact, Strether pauses before Chad's house because he is meditating on what to do about Chad. At this point he is not sure, but while he is looking at the balcony, he sees a young man come out, light a cigarette and lean on the railing. Strether soon feels himself observed by the young man, who proves not to be Chad. The young man in question is John Little Bilham. Bilham is a friend of Chad's, occupying his apartment while Chad is in Cannes.

Soon after Strether meets Bilham, Maria Gostrey arrives in Paris. Of course, Strether wants Maria Gostrey to meet Bilham and the meeting takes place at the Louvre. Maria thinks Bilham is all right. Both Strether and Maria are aware that Bilham is behaving under Chad's instructions, but they do not care because they genuinely like Bilham. Already Strether is beginning to realize that the process of evaluating Chad's life in Paris and convincing him to return to the U.S. is going to be more complex than his sponsor, Chad's mother, and his own previous training have led him to expect.

Chad seems to be out of Paris on purpose. He wants Strether to make his own connections and form his impressions for himself: he wants Strether to become acquainted with the Boulevard Malesherbes, with Bilham, and above all, with, as Maria Gostrey puts it, simply *Europe* and *dear old Paris*. *(A:87)* Chad finally makes his calculated appearance by walking into the box at the Théâtre du Comédie Française. Strether and Waymarsh are there with Maria Gostrey. Maria's invitation had also included Bilham, but he had declined. In a way, the empty seat in the theater box foreshadows Chad's appearance. It is interesting to note that he appears in the box during,

and not before or after the performance. On the one hand, this situation gives Strether an opportunity to observe Chad without the two being able to talk. On the other hand, it creates a somewhat melodramatic atmosphere, because, before this scene James spends a lot of time talking about the setting, and about Maria's verbal preparation concerning Chad.

In fact, when Chad suddenly appears Strether is so astonished that he does not realize that all he has to do is to excuse himself from the box with the young man and have a chat in the lobby. Instead, Strether remains there and watches the play. Nevertheless he cannot behave differently, so impressed is he by Chad's appearance. Also, by remaining in the box Strether has a good opportunity to make reflections. His reflections on Chad, once Chad has appeared, are very important because they will color a great deal of Strether's subsequent behavior. Here Strether's developing response to the elements of appearance reaches its culminating point. Strether is struck by Chad's transformation: *Chad had improved in appearance. (A:96)* Now Chad looks refined. The boy Strether remembered was crude, rough and lacked distinction. He is touched by Chad's transformation, but he does not know if the change goes any deeper. It seems that, for the time being, appearances are sufficient to make him determined to go more deeply into the matter; hence his comments: *All one's energy goes to facing it, tracing it ... Call it life ... call it poor old life simply that springs that surprise. (A:109)*

As a result of Strether's discovery about Chad's transformation, Strether's sense of duty impels him to, communicate quickly with Woollett his new discovery; but his

burden of conscience makes *his heart* [sink] *when the clouds of explanations gathered.* James continues

> *whether or no* [Strether] *had a grand idea of the lucid, he held that nothing ever was in fact - for any one else - explained. One went through the vain motions, but it was mostly a waste of life. A personal relation was a relation only so long as people perfectly understood or better still, didn't care if they didn't. From the moment they cared ... it was living by the sweat of one's brow. (A:92)*

If Strether cannot cable an adequate explanation of what he has seen, his puritan ethic of *living by the sweat of one's brow* at least makes him tell Chad right after the play:

> *I've come, you know, to make you break everything, neither more nor less, and take you straight home; so you'll be so good as immediately and favorably to consider it. (A:95)*

With these words Strether expresses his mission and his point of view. Chad replies he will make his own decisions. This makes Strether jump to the conclusion that since there is not a woman involved in the case, Chad can go home right away. Neverthless Chad says that there may be other things which keep him in Paris. Right after this Chad asks Strether, *Do you think one's kept only by women? Is that what they think at Woollett? I must say then you show a low mind! (A:103)* Although Strether refuses to accept this last statement, he really thinks that the Woollett people believe in the existence of a *venal* woman.

The result of this exchange is that Chad will tell Strether when he is ready to go home. Meanwhile Strether accepts Chad's attentions. Chad, for his part, pays attention to his mother's ambassador due to Strether's engagement to his mother, Mrs Newsome.

As we have said in the chapter about the center of consciousness in the later Jamesian novel, Maria Gostrey, Strether's confidante, is the one who helps Strether to interpret what Strether sees. Therefore after Maria Gostrey has formed her opinion of Chad she assures Strether that there must be a woman involved in Chad's transformation, but that Strether should reserve his judgement about the woman. Maria Gostrey also comments that Chad is not so good as Strether thinks he is. Strether is indeed anxious to find out about Chad's transformation. He wants to see as much as he can due to his new interest in *the elements of appearance. (A:9)*

By the time Book Fourth is finished, Strether, through the help of Bilham, becomes aware that Chad is not really free to act as he pleases and return to America. It is true there is a woman involved in the situation but it is *a virtuous attachment. (A:117)* This statement of Bilham's is all Strether needs to reassure his puritan ethical sense.

Another crucial moment in Strether's development of consciousness takes place when he is to meet Chad's two friends, who are arriving from the south of France. The meeting occurs in Gloriani's garden. In this scene we are made to feel that a representative selection of Old Europe has gotten together under the supervision of the famous and enigmatic artist Gloriani. At Gloriani's garden-party Strether lets *himself go (A:124)*, deeply affected as he is by the scenery, the *queer old garden* next to *the house of art* and by the elegance and sophistication of the people gathered there.

Strether has been emotionally affected by Europe

since his arrival and here his confusion increases more than ever. So, instead of shutting this confusion out, he opens *the windows of his mind ... letting this rather grey interior drink in for once the sun of a clime not marked in his old geography. (A:126)* It is in this atmosphere that Mme de Vionnet is introduced to Strether. On meeting Mme de Vionnet, Strether is struck by her *air of youth* and her whole appearance. Although the two have a chance to talk, it is only a brief talk because the lady walks off with other guests. In addition, it is in this atmosphere of confusion that Strether goes into a long speech to Little Bilham:

> *Live all you can; it's a mistake not to. It doesn't so much matter what you do in particular, so long as you have your life. If you haven't had that what have you had? ... I see it now. I haven't done so enough before - now I'm old; too old at any rate for what I see. Oh I do see, at least; and more than you'd believe or I can express. It's too late ... one lives in fine as one can. Still, one has the illusion of freedom; therefore don't be, like me, without the memory of that illusion. I was either at the right time, too stupid or too intelligent to have it ... Do what you like so long as you don't make my mistake. For it was a mistake. Live! (A:140)*

Strether's speech is a plea to Bilham to live his life as fully as possible. It is also a comment on everything that has happened to Strether himself since his arrival in Europe. As a matter of fact, everything that has been happening to Strether is a product of his reflections and his new interest in the sensory surface of things. Through this new facet of his behavior Strether has discovered he has not lived. He feels this way in spite of holding, in terms of Woollett, a good position, he is the editor of a magazine called *Review*, and in spite of having had a wife and son who had died some years before.

Although this speech is the product of reactions on both emotional and aesthetic levels, an attitude of this sort in a man with a severe puritan background like Strether's cannot but foreshadow a great metamorphosis.

Later Strether asks again if Chad's relationship with Mme de Vionnet is *virtuous*. Bilham replies *it's what they pass for* and continues *But isn't that enough? What more than a vain appearance does the wisest of us know? I commend you ... the vain appearance. (A:130)* For Strether, the *vain appearance* is that Chad and Mme de Vionnet's relationship is *virtuous*. At this point, still in the garden-party, Strether questions himself about his conflict and finds out two important things. First, that he half envies Waymarsh's incapacity to be opened to what Europe can offer. Second, that he himself is exposed to sensory stimuli. And it is under the effect of this conflict that he makes a remark about appearance. While commenting on Europeans in general he says:

> *You've all of you so much visual sense that you've somehow all "run" to it. There are moments when it strikes one that you haven't any other. (A:133)*

Strether is indirectly referring to moral sense, as Bilham's friend Miss Barrace figures out, for she replies,

> *I dare say ... that we all do here, run too much to mere eye. But how can it be helped? We're all looking at each other - and in the light of Paris one sees what things resemble. That's what the light of Paris seems always to show ... (A:133)*

Naturally, the eye plays an important role when the focus is appearance. Therefore Miss Barrace goes on:

> *"Everything, everyone shows ..."*
> *"But for what they really are?" Strether asked.*

> *"Oh I like your Boston "reallys". But sometimes Yes". (A:133)*

Here Strether asks how much we can believe in *vain appearance*. Certainly pretty much because since infancy, sensory impressions are the way through which we get knowledge of the world. Moreover, sensory impressions give us knowledge of the present world all through our lives. Nevertheless there are persons that do not want to see; first they consult their narrow moral code. Waymarsh is a good illustration of the type because his moral response to the world is based on his refusal to see. He is narrow-minded because he has no openness to life.

The highest moment in Strether's development of consciousness is achieved when he accepts the aesthetic view. When this moment occurs many things have happened. Chad has told Strether he is ready to go home, but they have remained in Europe because Strether has asked Chad tc do so. Strether has fallen in love with the charm of Mme de Vionnet. Mme de Vionnet's daughter has become engaged to a remarkable man. Mrs Newsome has sent her second wave of *ambassadors*, this time to rescue Strether. Sarah Pocock, Mrs Newsome's daughter, has demanded Strether's submission, but Strether has refused to obey her. The second wave of *ambassadors* has decided to take a trip to Switzerland because Strether has asked for more time in Paris.

By accepting the aesthetic view, Strether leaves Waymarsh far behind. So one day, when Strether decides to take a day out in the country, the landscape reminds him of a Lambinet he once in his life wished to have purchased, but at the time could not afford. Strether feels exhilarated by the French countryside. Here he tries to measure reality up to

art. He recalls Lambinet's painting, for *it was France, it was Lambinet. Moreover he was freely walking about in it. (A:342)* It seems to him that the world of actual appearances can be equated with art. Yet suddenly something spoils the moment:

> *What he saw was exactly the right thing - a boat advancing round the bend and containing a man who held the paddles and a lady, at the stern, with a pink parasol. It was suddenly as if these figures, or something like them, had been wanted in the picture, ... It had by this time none the less come much nearer - near enough for Strether to fancy the lady in the stern had for some reason taken account of his being there, to watch them. She had remarked on it sharply, yet her companion hadn't turned round; it was in fact almost as if our friend felt her bid him keep still ... She had taken in something ... [Strether] too had within the minute taken in something, taken in that he knew the lady ... if he knew the lady, the gentleman ... was ... none other than Chad. (A:348-9)*

From now on, Strether realizes that under the happy and romantic appearance there is moral doubt. Moral reality does not appear directly to the eye, it is something discovered within the interpretations made by the human mind. Thus he cannot regard the real world as a painting because moral problems can appear without being invited. Moreover human problems are not derived from aesthetic values, but are derived from the complexities and cruelties of human conduct. Europeans, as Strether sees them, respond actively to a wide variety of sensory stimuli without organizing them into moral frameworks. As an American, Strether himself feels fully acquainted with moral frameworks which rule out the input of sensory stimuli. Only by modifying and combining the two can one become a truly full Jamesian person.

Finally, through the scene by the river at Cheval

Blanc, Strether has his epiphany. He finally discovers that Chad's relationship with Mme de Vionnet is not *virtuous*. After this episode, Strether spends hours meditating on this and concludes that there has merely been a lie in the whole affair and that he should accept the truth. This is the last challenge Strether has to face, and it is the reason for his visit to Mme de Vionnet. During his visit he sees her suffering and her fear of losing her lover. He cannot forget all the good she has done to Chad and yet Chad, without any strong reason, is ready to leave her to take over the running of the Newsome's industrial empire. Here Strether achieves a vision that goes beyond everything he has known and identified with until this point, for he sees that *it was appalling that a creature so fine could be, by mysterious forces, a creature so exploited. (A:366)* If Strether recognizes Mme de Vionnet as being *exploited*, it is because he learns two important things. First, he sees Mme de Vionnet as victim in the whole affair. Second, that Chad, as Maria Gostrey has pointed out, is not such a fine person, after all. Moreover Chad's exploitation of Mme de Vionnet shows Strether that Chad's refinement is only superficial. It seems that Strether's new lights are beginning to appear, for after thoroughly investigating Chad's transformation he realizes that this transformation is merely apparent.

The second part of this chapter will be similar in structure to the first; we shall trace a brief outline of the story of The Golden Bowl; and then follow the stages of the development of Maggie's consciousness.

Before the opening of the story, Prince Amerigo, a Roman galantuomo, and Charlotte Stant, a brilliant and

beautiful woman in the style of the Florentine golden age, have been deeply in love. Because they feel they are both poor and too magnificent to live without money, they do not marry. To remedy this, their good friend Mrs Fanny Assingham suggests that they each make a splendid and financially advantageous marriage. This, indeed, is the starting point of the story. As a consequence of this suggestion, the Prince marries Maggie Verver, the daughter of an American millionaire and collector of European art. This millionaire intends to take to an American city objects of art in order to endow that city in the New World with an art museum of the best quality. Maggie loves her husband and is pleased with the match. But she also loves her father, with whom after her mother's death she has become very close; and she now fears her marriage will make her father lonely and sad. With this anxiety concerning her father, Maggie decides to persuade her father to marry her dear friend Charlotte Stant.

The marriage of Mr Verver to Charlotte Stant fulfils the second part of Fanny's suggestion. Charlotte, like Prince Amerigo, has made her splendid marriage. Adam Verver has acquired a wife in order to compensate him for the loss of his dearest Maggie. Now Maggie Verver is free from her anxiety, Amerigo has a wonderful wife, a splendid father-in-law and is close to his former mistress. Naturally, Maggie and her father do not know about Amerigo's former attachment to Charlotte.

These marriages create an ironic situation because they do not achieve what Maggie had intended they should, that is, the separation of father and daughter; instead, they are drawn together even more closely than before. This effect

is exacerbated after the birth of the Principino, Maggie's son, which event grants Amerigo and Charlotte the opportunity to become close again, especially since the Ververs prefer to stay home and have Amerigo and Charlotte represent them in the season's receptions of London social life. The Ververs act as though their lives can maintain this course for ever. Yet they cannot and they do not. It is an absurdity that the Ververs do not yet perceive. As a result of this absurdity, the former lovers become lovers again.

In fact, the story of The Golden Bowl centers around the act of betrayal practised by the Prince and Charlotte. This act of betrayal precipitates the suffering of Maggie, the main protagonist of the story. In the story the reader learns about Amerigo's and Charlotte's affair during a great reception, at which the two meet the Assinghams. There Amerigo gives Fanny Assingham a significant wink. This wink tells Fanny what has happened and the situation leaves her in despair (despite her former suggestion), because of her attachment to Maggie. Fanny immediately communicates the news to her husband.

Maggie does not discover the betrayal until after a country party at Matcham. The Prince and Charlotte go to this party and stay longer than is natural. With this delay of theirs Maggie's eyes are at last opened, and the first part of the story draws to a close. The second part of the novel is told through Maggie's consciousness, and shows the reader how almost alone she recovers what has been lost through Charlotte's and her husband's adultery.

In this second part Maggie Verver feels it is her task to draw her husband back to herself, separate him from

Charlotte and restore Charlotte to her father. When Maggie starts her work of redemption she is weak and humble because she is afraid of the three people she most cares for in the world; her husband, her father and her friend. Maggie fears the Prince because of the power of his sexual charm. She fears Charlotte because of her ability to deal with people. Mostly, however, she fears that her father will become aware of the situation. She wants to protect him because of his goodness. Maggie senses that if Mr Verver gets to know about Charlotte's adultery, they will all be ruined because he will almost certainly leave Charlotte. Not wanting this to happen, Maggie sets about the task of restoring their marriages.

As a matter of fact, Amerigo does not find out that Maggie knows everything until the golden bowl is broken. After the incident with the bowl none of them utters a word to Adam Verver, who seems to know nothing about the whole matter from the beginning to the end.

As for Maggie, she is fully aware that she must bring all her perceptiveness and intelligence to bear in order to attain her objectives. Thus, exercising these faculties, she realizes that neither Charlotte nor Amerigo wishes to lose the positions they have gained through their marriages, and she uses this fact to put pressure on the two lovers. As a result of her efforts, Amerigo realizes that she is not simply a foolish little girl, overly attached to her father, and his admiration and respect for her increase enormously. Using her intelligence, guided by love, then, Maggie succeeds in saving both marriages and gaining her husband's love and respect.

This brief outline of The Golden Bowl shows that

the main theme of the novel is the re-education of a young married woman, who is initially unprepared for life. Maggie Verver is neither cruel nor evil; her only problem is that she is naïve in her desire to be both perpetual daughter and wife as well. Her ingenuousness leads Amerigo, her husband, and Charlotte, her stepmother, to become lovers again, which act generates moral disorder.

Since everything hinges on Maggie's lack of maturity, we shall trace the stages in the development of her consciousness in order to see how she restores moral order. We shall see that, as Krook (1963) puts it, *Maggie starts by being ... as simple-minded as she is simple hearted; and ends still simple hearted but no longer simple-minded. (p.254)*

The process begins when Maggie, feeling the need to evaluate and analyse the reason for her existence suddenly perceives that something has gone awry. She feels specifically something is wrong with regard to the relationships of the two couples. This feeling of hers comes to her first as an image - as a pagoda. Indeed, the pagoda she sees in her imagination seems to embody the situation she is in. Moreover it makes Maggie analyze the situation realistically, and see that she and her father are as close as ever in spite of their marriages. She and her father are still so close that she sees their relationship as a temple without doors or windows:

> *It had reared itself there like some strange, tall ivory tower, or perhaps rather some wonderful, beautiful, but outlandish pagoda, a structure plated with hard, bright porcelain, coloured and figured and adorned, at overhanging eaves, with silver bells that tinkled, ever so charmingly, when stirred by chance airs. She had walked round and round it...that was*

> *what she felt; she had carried on her existence in the space left for her circulation, a space that sometimes seemed ample and sometimes narrow; looking up, all the while, at the fair structure that spread itself so amply and rose so high, but never quite making out, as yet, where she might have entered had she wished ... The great decorated surface had remained consistently impenetrable and inscrutable. (GB:301)*

Also through the image of the pagoda Maggie understands that she is beginning to feel uncomfortable with her life as it is. For the first time in her life she realizes that her own life has been shut off from her:

> *... to her considering mind, it was as if she had ceased merely to circle and to scan the elevation, ceased so vaguely, so quite helplessly to stare and wonder: she had caught herself distinctly in the act of pausing, then in that of lingering, and finally in that of stepping near. (GB:301)*

After these reflections, Maggie realizes that her relationship with her father has remained the same in spite of her marriage with Amerigo and his with Charlotte. Furthermore Maggie starts to notice that her husband and her stepmother seem to be having an affair. At this point, Maggie begins to see the absurdity of her life. In her efforts to eliminate this absurdity, she starts exercising her mind and observing Charlotte and Amerigo's behavior with a view to restoring the marriages and gaining her husband's love.

As her awareness grows, Maggie continues to embody her state of consciousness with images that show her fear of deception

> *... she tried to deal with herself, for a space, only as a silken-coated spaniel who has scrambled out of a pond and who rattles the water from his ears. Her shake of her head, again and again, as she went, was much of that order, and she had the*

> *resource, to which save for the rude equivalent of his generalizing bark, the spaniel would have been a stranger, of humming to herself hard as a sign that nothing had happened to her. (GB:303)*

Despite her fear of deception, a fear that is quite natural since this is the first real challenge she has ever faced, she continues her attempts to restore the marriages. At first, she feels weak and sees herself as a person without importance: a mere wheel of the family coach:

> *So far as she was one of the wheels she had but to keep in her place; since the work was done for her she felt no weight, and it wasn't too much to acknowledge that she had scarce to turn round. (GB:315)*

As we observe her during the early moments of her awakening she is in despair because she discovers she can personally break the connections in their relationships; she feels alone, but determined to act as the element of salvation. Hence her decision to work hard to solve a problem created by her own lack of maturity. In making this decision, she realizes two important things: first, that her anxiety was her *stupid idol (GB:355)* and second, that she should have let her father live his own life.

After the country party at Matcham, Maggie goes through hard times. On one of Fanny's visits Maggie talks to her about her *dilemma (GB:375)*, that is, that she knows about the adultery between her husband and Charlotte, but cannot decide on what to do about it. Fanny, however, does not help her; she limits herself to reassuring Maggie that such a relationship is *impossible. (GB:382)* In point of fact, Fanny knows that Maggie is right since she has observed Charlotte and Amerigo behaving very unlike mother-in-law and son-in-law in two grand receptions they attended without the

Ververs. Nevertheless Fanny, like Maggie, is still unsure of the facts and so she says nothing to Maggie. Moreover she feels the need to protect Maggie because she sees Maggie as completely incapable of facing up to reality.

After this talk with Fanny, Maggie asks her to give a small dinner party at her home. She also asks Fanny to invite a few other persons besides the Ververs, Amerigo and herself. Through these parties at the house of friends, Maggie intends to observe her husband's and Charlotte's behavior. By this time her plan of action is ready to be set in motion. All she needs is a little time to make her observations.

Actually the critical event occurs not at Fanny's party, but on the morning of the same day. Since Mr Verver's birthday is approaching and the two couples, Maggie's son and some friends of theirs are all going to Fawns, Mr Verver's country house, in a few days, Maggie goes downtown to buy her father a present. She wants to buy him something exquisite, but not an objet d'art as Mr Verver thinks birthday presents should be exempt of art value. In her search for the present, Maggie happens on the same Jewish antique shop that Charlotte and Amerigo had once visited when shopping for a *ricordo (GB:101)* as a wedding present for Amerigo. The *ricordo* to which Charlotte had been drawn was a bowl, which Amerigo had rejected due to a hidden crack. Maggie, like Charlotte before her, does not notice the crack and buys the bowl at a high price, not having the benefit of Amerigo's observation. Naturally, Maggie does not know that her husband and Charlotte have visited the shop. But when the owner of the shop takes the bowl to Maggie's house he feels guilty about the high

price he had charged and decides to talk to her. While he is waiting for Maggie in her living room, he happens to see a picture of Amerigo and Charlotte. So, when Maggie appears, he tells her that he recognised the young couple and that the lady had wanted to buy the golden bowl for her companion. Yet that gentleman had not accepted because it had a crack. Thus it is through the dealer, or, more precisely, through the golden bowl, that Maggie finds out for certain about the alliance between the two lovers.

Maggie relates these facts to Fanny, who at first, merely examines the bowl objectively, seeing it as *a capacious bowl of old-looking, rather strikingly yellow gold, mounted, by a short stem, on an ample foot. (GB:408)* After their talk, Fanny, realizing the negative effect that the bowl will have on Maggie's future life, given its associations with Charlotte and Amerigo's relationship, tries to eliminate it from Maggie's life. For this reason, she commits the single act of violence in the whole story - she throws the bowl to the floor. It splits into three pieces. Before either Maggie or Fanny can utter a word, Amerigo enters the room. When he sees the three pieces of the golden bowl he becomes pale. Maggie observes his reaction, and confirms what she already half knew. Meanwhile Fanny leaves the room without a word. Left alone, Maggie and her husband talk about how she found out about the bowl. Amerigo also asks her if Mr Verver knows what she knows, but Maggie tells him to find out for himself.

Nobody ever mentions this episode again. That evening they all go to Fawns, where Maggie continues her task. It is there that Maggie, now armed with courage, love and

intelligence, and aware that neither her husband nor Charlotte will do anything to spoil their marriages, reaches the peak in the development of her consciousness. She feels so lucid, in fact that she finally decides to face the *crack* in her life squarely. This occurs while she is walking on the terrace and watching her husband, her father, Charlotte and Fanny play bridge:

> *Meanwhile the facts of the situation were upright for her round the green cloth and the silver flambeaux; the fact of her father's wife's lover facing his mistress; the fact of her father sitting, all unsounded and unblinking, between them; the fact of Charlotte keeping it up, keeping up everything across the table, with her husband beside her; the fact of Fanny Assingham, wonderful creature, placed opposite to the ... next card to be played. (GB:455-6)*

Now that Maggie has seen *evil seated, all at its ease, where she had only dreamed of good (GB:459)*, now that she has faced up to the first falsity in her life, she feels better equipped to understand life. Now she has ceased to be *simple-minded*, she has become aware of the harsh facts of reality. Nevertheless she is still *simple-hearted* wanting as she does to keep the two marriages intact. Even though she knows that her lack of maturity contributed to the betrayal, she is not so selfish as to wish to preserve only her own marriage. She wants to preserve both marriages.

While Maggie is walking on the terrace, she recalls that before she came out she had been tempted to tell the others the truth. She feels glad she could not do it because when she happened to look at the players' eyes she could read:

> *an appeal, a positive confidence ... that*

> *was deeper than any negation and that seemed to speak on the part of each of some relation to be contrived by her, a relation with herself, which would spare the individual the danger, the actual present strain, of relation with the others. They thus 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 change her self with it as the scape goat of old, of whom she had once seen a terrible picture, had been charged with the sins of the people and had gone into the desert to sink under his burden and die. (GB:457)*

Naturally they did not want her to die:

> *That indeed wasn't their design and their interest, that she sould sink under hers; it wouldn't be their feelings that she should do anything but live, live on somehow for their benefit, and even as much as possible in their company to keep proving to them that they had truly escaped and that she was still there to simplify. (GB:457)*

Since Maggie feels she must act as the element of salvation, there is one more thing she has to do; she has to confront Charlotte. In fact, when Charlotte leaves the bridge game and gives her place to Colonel Assingham, she immediately goes to the terrace to join Maggie. Maggie fears meeting Charlotte. Nevertheless their meeting is brief and normal. Moreover it is Charlotte who sets the tone of their discussion. She begs Maggie to tell her if she has anything against her. For this reason, Maggie can lie that *I accuse you - I accuse you of nothing. (GB:468)* At the end of their dialogue there is the dangerous and *prodigious kiss. (GB:469)* The gesture is entirely Charlotte's and Maggie on her part *couldn't say yes, but she didn't say no. (GB:469)* This scene is witnessed by Amerigo, Mr Verver and the Assinghams. Hence it fulfils its function as *high publicity. (GB:469)*

But Maggie's struggle to maintain their connections

has not ceased. She feels she must now separate one couple from the other, so she has a long talk with her father with a view to forcing him to return with his wife to America. As for Charlotte, Maggie needs to sound her on her reaction to her imminent departure for America. It is interesting to note the way Maggie approaches Charlotte. She approaches her with a book, the work of a printer. It is the first volume of a three-volume novel. Charlotte has picked up the second volume by mistake. So when Maggie meets her, Maggie can say, ambiguously, *You've got the wrong volume, and I've brought you out the right. (GB:510)* Here moral order is finally restored. As Edel (1972) puts it: *Order, sequence, chronology are restored. Maggie has her husband, Charlotte hers. Each has the right volume. (p.222)*

We may see Maggie as successful, because she restores the marriages and wins her husband's love; she achieves, at the same time, her own awakening. In fact, Amerigo learns to love Maggie because she is no longer the little daughter, attached to her father. Moreover Amerigo comes to see her as an intelligent woman and Charlotte as *stupid, (GB:533)* for failing to see what Maggie has done.

It has been pointed out that the theme of openness, and *suppleness* is involved in both Maggie's and Strether's moral education because their situations are quite similar. They have in common elements both of their personalities and their situations. For instance, before the process of development of consciousness begins in them neither of them has used the full range of their sensibility, and yet they are extremely receptive to new experiences. Furthermore they struggle for the same type of goal, that is, they want to

achieve emotional stability. In The Golden Bowl Maggie is part of a love quadrangle, formed by Mr Verver, Charlotte, Amerigo and herself, while in The Ambassadors Strether belongs to a more traditional love triangle made up of Chad, Mme de Vionnet and himself. On the one hand, in The Golden Bowl Maggie is unable to perceive that the fairy tale world that she wants to possess does not exist; on the other hand, in The Ambassadors Strether is launched into a completely unfamiliar environment on a mission for his fiancée. Yet there is a certain moment in their lives in which the lights of their consciousness begin to grow. It is this process of enlightenment that has been the main focus of this chapter, in which we have examined the development of consciousness.

Considering each protagonist's process of increasing discernment, we have seen that both processes turn out to be based on quite similar principles, since the two develop their capacity to achieve discernment through observations and reflections. The trigger which causes the development of this capacity, in both cases, is the confrontation between received values and a situation which is totally inexplicable in terms of those values. Their minds expand as they make observations about, and exercise their mind through reflections on, the dilemma they are faced with, in order to find the best answer to their problem. Their development is, strictly, a process, for it is a matter of benefiting from individual life experience.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT DRIVE THE PROTAGONISTS TO REACT AGAINST THE OPPRESSION OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

In this chapter we will be concerned with how and why Strether and Maggie react against the oppression of family and friends. To this end we shall examine Strether's behavior in the light of the imposition of a *fixed* person, (Mrs Newsome) which occurs simultaneously with the opportunity he has of living in a more flexible society. We shall then examine Maggie's behavior in the light of the clash between the Ververs' moral code and Amerigo's and Charlotte's aesthetic code, a clash occasioned by the act of betrayal practised by Amerigo and Charlotte, which generates Maggie's loss of identity (honor).

The most flagrant oppression (or imposition) of a *fixed* person in The Ambassadors is that of Mrs Newsome, who represents the world of Woollett, Massachussetts. Mrs Newsome does not appear in the novel physically, but her presence is kept before the reader throughout the novel in several ways. First, she is constantly in Strether's thoughts, because of the nature of his mission to Europe and because of his engagement to her; for this reason also, she is a constant presence for the reader. She is also present in the novel because of the influence she exerts on Strether

as the sponsor of the literary magazine he publishes. In fact, she is Strether's employer. Her presence is also strongly felt through her correspondence with Strether, Chad and Waymarsh. Later, with the arrival of her daughter Sarah Pocock in Europe, Mrs Newsome's presence is even more intensely felt because of the similarity between Sarah and herself. In all her actions, Sarah shows herself to be little more than an extension of Mrs Newsome.

It was mentioned above that Mrs Newsome represents the world of Woollett. Woollett is a world in the sense that it represents certain kinds of people and their ideas. The kind of world that Woollett is, is shown to us through several examples; for instance, just as the book opens, we find out that the Woollett people believe that the only reason for Chad's continued presence in Europe is that he is under the spell of a base woman. Therefore, it is Woollett that makes the decision that Chad has to be saved. Later, it is again Woollett that, distrusting Strether, demands his return to America. Finally, at the end we see that it is Mrs Newsome's, and, by extension, Woollett's philosophy that is victorious over her son.

Mrs Newsome is a very rich woman and in Woollett she is also considered to be a highly moral person. However Strether, as he gradually comes to see that the core of her morality is hollow, compares that morality to an *iceberg in a cool blue northern sea. (A:338)* In using this comparison Strether implies that it is from Mrs Newsome, the real moral iceberg, that derives the coldness of Sarah Pocok, her daughter. For Strether, Sarah *is all - cold thought. (A:336)* Here *cold thought* clearly refers to Sarah's denial

the existence of warm and giving relationships. Indeed, the image of the moral iceberg can be perfectly applied to both mother and daughter. As an extension of her mother, Sarah refuses to acknowledge or accept anything or anyone that does not fit into the scheme of things dictated by her mother. They are both *fixed* persons, they have no openness to or awareness of life. Hence their need to oppress those closest to themselves. It seems that the oppression (or imposition) of a *fixed* person usually derives from the inflexibility of his or her own intrinsic moral values. This image of the cold yet unbendingly correct moral person is contradicted by the implied origin of Mrs Newsome's wealth; in the novel we are led to believe that she has made her money selling a domestic product of low quality and continues to succeed through corrupt means. Thus we can easily take Jim Pocock's image of his wife and Mrs Newsome, *they don't lash about and shake the cage ... and it is at feeding time that they're quietest. But they always get there (A:239)*, in order to establish this combination of dirty commercial exploitation with moral self-congratulation.

Since Mrs Newsome is Woollett and Woollett is Mrs Newsome it is obvious that the moral code accepted in Woollett is narrow and strict, the mark of an inflexible society. It is inflexible in the sense that people like Mrs Newsome usually judge others before knowing the facts. The society of Woollett possesses the kind of morality that does not discriminate, a morality that Hartsock (1965) labels *the morality of ... the not-to-be-questioned community code. (p.415)*

The strict code of values of Woollett is transmitted (to the reader) throughout the novel by the

unseen presence of Mrs Newsome and is at its clearest when Sarah has her single talk with Strether. *What is your conduct,* Sarah asks, *what is your conduct but an outrage to a woman like us? I mean your acting as if there can be a doubt as between us and such another - of his* [Chad's] *duty? (A:312)* Through these questions Sarah makes clear to Strether that for Woollett, Chad's relationship with Mme de Vionnet is still evil, consequently, as far as they are concerned Mme de Vionnett herself is evil.

By the time Sarah conveys the Woollett point of view to Strether, she has already met Mme de Vionnet and talked to her several times. Yet, despite their meetings, the only yardstick she possesses to judge Mme de Vionnet is her own pre-judgment of things. Europe and Mme de Vionnet represent nothing to Sarah. This inability to see the qualities of Europe and Mme de Vionnet clearly indicates that Sarah is indifferent to culture and aesthetics. Furthermore she is unable to discriminate because she has no *imagination.* According to James, Strether, in spite of being a product of Woollett, is a man who does discriminate. That is why James states in his preface to The Ambassadors that he will picture a man of *imagination,* a man who really discriminates:

> *The false position, for our belated man of the world - belated because he had endeavoured so long to escape being one, and now at last had really to face his doom - the false position for him, I say, was obviously to have presented himself at the gate of that boundless menagerie primed with a moral scheme of the most approved pattern which has yet framed to break down on any approach to vivid facts ... The actual man's note, from the first our seeing it struck, is the note of discrimination, just as his drama is to become, under stress, the drama of discrimination. It would have been his blest imagination, we have seen, that had already helped him to discriminate; the element of my cutting thick ... into his intellectual into his moral substance. (P:7)*

It is true Strether is a different kind of person, not a typical product of Woollett. But it is also true that before coming to Europe he was prejudiced. The major difference between himself and the people of Woollett was his integrity in his professional field, which, inevitably, given the environment he lived in, caused his complete failure. However in addition to, and possibly more important than this difference, he possessed an openness to life that really began to flourish only after his exposure to a new environment (Europe).

As a *fixed* person, and consequently an ideal representative of a society whose fundamental characteristic is its inflexibility, Mrs Newsome sees no reason not to impose her will upon those closest to her. In this respect, and several others, Mme de Vionnet represents everything that Woollett is not. First, Mme de Vionnet represents, for James, the best that European civilization has to offer, having beauty and charm. Second, she is clearly a more flexible person, the product of an environment with more flexible moral values. Third, she represents culture seen from the European point of view, which, with its attractiveness and charm stimulates Strether to see life in a different light. It is this factor of stimulation to change, rather than oppression to remain the same that really sets Mme de Vionnet apart from Mrs Newsome.

We shall now discuss in some detail the episodes involving Mme de Vionnet which stimulate Strether to such a degree. However, it is the mere reality of Mme de Vionnet's beauty and charm that contribute the most important part of Strether's experience of living in a more flexible society.

Furthermore it is the beauty and charm of Mme de Vionnet that help create the circumstances that lead Strether to react against Mrs Newsome's (and, by extension Woollett's) oppression.

Mme de Vionnet, as a representative of the world of Europe, strongly stimulates Strether because he sees her as culturally so superior. The following passage summarizes what she is for him:

> *At the back of his head, behind everything, was the sense that she was - there, before him, close to him, in vivid imperative form - one of the rare women he had so often heard of, read of, thought of, but never met, whose very presence, look, voice, the mere contemporaneous fact of whom, from the moment it was as all presented, made a relation of mere recognition. (A:161)*

In spite of being culturally superior, Mme de Vionnet's simplicity is inseparable from her heritage, which is extraordinary. For this reason, her house in the Faubourg Saint Germain has a special meaning for Strether. He is especially impressed by her *possessions not vulgarly numerous, but hereditary cherished charming, ... old accumulations*, the reverse of *any contemporary method of acquisition, with the spell of transmission* and *the air of supreme respectability. (A:155-7)* Mme de Vionnet's possessions affect Strether to such a degree that he cannot control his impulse to contrast them with Miss Gostrey's *museum of bargains. (A:156)* This contrast leads Strether to look on Mme de Vionnet's possessions as *objects she or her predecessors might even conceivably have parted with under need, but Strether couldn't suspect them of having sold old pieces to get 'better ones'. (A:156)*

One of the most stimulating moments in Strether's

experience in Europe is his chance encounter with Mme de Vionnet in Notre Dame Cathedral. This moment clearly anticipates his Cheval Blanc epiphany. As he enters the Cathedral, he sees Mme de Vionnet praying. Yet just before recognizing her, he perceives the lady at prayer as *one of the familiar, the intimate ... for whom these dealings had a method and a meaning. (A:187)* Because of this encounter at the Cathedral and his subsequent discovery that she is fond of churches, Strether becomes convinced that someone who attends church in this fashion can hardly be anything but *unassailably innocent. (A:181)*

Their meal on the quay, after the scene in Notre Dame also stimulates Strether as it leads him to reflect that he has *travelled so far since that evening in London, before the theater, when his dinner with Maria Gostrey ... had struck him as requiring so many explanations. (A:192)* During this meal Strether realizes that *explanations* are impossible. On a lower level, Strether accepts this moment as lacking explanations due to the moral impression Mme de Vionnet made on him at the Cathedral. On a higher level, this moment is really striking because it shows us that Strether is beginning to disconnect himself from Woollett's strict moral code, as may be seen from the following quote:

> *He had at that time* [during his dinner with Maria Gostrey] *gathered them in, the explanations - ... but it was at present* [during his meal with Mme de Vionnet] *as if he had either soared above or sunk below them - he couldn't tell which; he could somehow think of none that didn't seem to leave the appearance of collapse and cynicism easier for him than lucidity. How could he wish it to be lucid for others, for any one, that he for the hour, saw reasons enough in the mere way the bright clean ordered waterside life came in at the open window? - the mere way Madame de*

> *Vionnet opposite him over their intensely white table-linen, their omellete aux tomatoes, their bottle of straw-coloured Chablis, thanked him for everything almost with the smile of a child, while her grey eyes moved in and out of their talk, back to the quarter of the warm spring air, in which early summer had already begun to throb, and then back again to his face and their human questions. (A:192)*

The most significant moment for Strether is his Cheval Blanc epiphany, when he realizes the ingenuousness of his interpretation of the relationship between Chad and Mme de Vionnet. At the Cheval Blanc, Mme de Vionnet, in order to overcome the embarrassment caused by their chance meeting is forced to lie to Strether. She does this because it is always she who does all the giving throughout the novel. We are aware that Chad's refinement is almost exclusively due to Mme de Vionnet's efforts. Yet *Chad had, as usual, let her have her way* [i.e., having Mme de Vionnet explain the embarrassing situation]. *Chad was always letting people have their way when he felt that it would somehow turn his wheel for him. (A:363)* Chad acts this way because his refinement does not run deep. This is why he does not really benefit from Mme de Vionnet and the culture she stands for. Unlike Strether, whose powers of discernment allow him to grow, Chad does not achieve fulfilment because of his inability to see.

Mme de Vionnet's own powers in connection with the culture she represents have a deeper effect on Strether; these powers produce in Strether a response that is directly connected to the way his life was interrupted twenty-five years ago on his first trip to Europe. This triggers a process he intends to continue beyond the end of his mission, despite his age. In fact, Strether himself, in his last talk with Maria Gostrey, says *I shall see what I can make of it. (A:322)*

Although Mme de Vionnet is the main agent of change in Strether, there are other agents that directly and indirectly affect Strether's behavior in important ways. Chad for instance, greatly impresses Strether on their first meeting in Europe, due to the obvious improvement in his appearance and manners, but by the end of his mission it is plain to him that Chad is like many wealthy Americans who visit Europe merely to take what they can, exploiting its valuable aspects to the profit of their own businesses before returning to America. Indeed, Chad's decision to return is not made explicit in the novel, but Strether, I believe, sees it implicit in the way he reacts to Strether's exhausting attempt to show Chad the cruelty of abandoning Mme de Vionnet. His efforts are all in vain: Chad merely switches the conversation to advertising, showing clearly how little Europe means to him, and how selfishly he regards his experience there: his comment in answer to Strether's efforts, *It* [advertising] *really does the thing, you know (A:386)*, where *the thing* refers to the accumulation of riches, reveals his desire to accumulate money, an instinct that is part of the Newsomes. Thus, in spite of having lived in an environment which possesses subtler values, Chad demonstrates his incapacity to disconnect himself from his values.
So it is hard to imagine that he will remain with Mme de Vionnet much longer.

Since it is implicit in the novel that Chad leaves Mme de Vionnet at the end, we may conclude that what for Mme de Vionnet is real love, for Chad is merely a temporary amusement. It is temporary because for him it is just a way of spending time before going into business. Chad's

short-sightedness and egotism are so pervasive that they leave him unable to appreciate the kind of wisdom that Mme de Vionnet has. Throughout the novel we see that Chad takes and Mme de Vionnet gives. In fact, she has done all the giving, she has refined Chad and married her daughter to a fine man. Nevertheless she alone will achieve dignity in her suffering because, in spite of her despair she still finds the strength to comment to Strether that

> *What I hate is myself - When I think that one has to take so much, to be happy, out of the lives of others, and that one isn't happy even then ... The wretched self is always there, always making one somehow a fresh anxiety. What it comes to is that it's not, that it's never a happiness, any happiness at all, to take. The only safe thing is to give. (A:365)*

In spite of his selfishness, Chad is largely responsible for Strether's response to the new way of life, because it is through him that Strether makes the acquaintance of Mme de Vionnet, Little Bilham and his artistic circle (Miss Barrace, Gloriani etc.). In each of the situations in which these people interact with Strether, he absorbs some part of the form and subtlety of the world he enters as an alien and has the chance to live in for such a short time.

I have not yet mentioned Maria Gostrey because not only did Strether meet her before seeing Chad again but indirectly it is Chad that provides the opportunity for the relationship between the two, for Strether makes Maria's acquaintance on first landing in England, the initial stage of his mission for Mrs Newsome.

Right from their first meeting, Maria identifies with Strether, for she sees herself and Strether as *beaten brothers in arms (A:31)* Maria notes this similarity between

herself and Strether because both have failed in their quest for economic and emotional stability. Strether, however, in no way sees Maria as a failure; she has charm and social presence, and probably this is the reason for his accepting her as his guide into the world of Europe. In fact, Strether really likes Maria, especially since she has the capacity to enlighten and soothe him. As Jones (1975) puts it, *with her (Maria) there is none of the tension he feels with Mrs Newsome, and part of the reason for this, Strether knows, is that they have met in the frank air of Europe. (p.265)*

Maria Gostrey is partially responsible for the initial awakening of Strether's response to the new way of life that greets him in Europe. There are several episodes in which her role as a catalyst is clear. First, she helps him overcome his feelings of regret over his frustrated attempt to visit Paris when he was younger, and over his adult life of loss. She also helps him accept his own limitations. Finally, although she does not introduce him to anyone, she is always willing to do what she can, listening, arguing, in short, never stinting in her efforts to help him interpret his impressions of the new world that surrounds him. A good example of this is when she hints that Mme de Vionnet may not be the *femme fatale* Woollett supposes her to be, but rather a woman of superior taste. Of course, this hint of hers prepares Strether for his discoveries of the potentialities of Europe.

So far we have examined two different worlds; namely the world of Woollett and the world of Europe, the first marked by inflexibility and imposition, the latter by flexibility and openness to life. Strether's whole life

belonged to the world of Woollett, yet he suddenly begins to respond to the new set of stimuli provided by the new environment. According to Ward (1969), Strether's response to these stimuli is due to two major factors: first, the opportunity he has of living in a new and more flexible environment, which is *at once intense, beautiful, resonant, and sharply different from what he has known before, (p.352)* second, his openness to life, which is, for him, a previously unexplored area of his consciousness.

While it is the oppression and inflexibility of Mrs Newsome and Woollett that drive Strether, when faced with life in a new and more flexible society, to react against all of his past experience, we shall see that the circumstances that drive Maggie to react against her immature way of life are, first, the clash between the Verver's moral code and Amerigo's and Charlotte's aesthetic code, second, the act of betrayal performed by Amerigo and Charlotte, and finally Maggie's loss of identity (honor).

As the first book of The Golden Bowl starts, James points out that Amerigo is puzzled about what the Ververs will expect of him in the sphere of morality. He is aware that his values are not the same as those of the Ververs', he knows that his ancestors were sometimes wicked, bloodthirsty and had different values. This leads him, just before his marriage, to seek out Mrs Assingham and charmingly confess what he lacks:

> *The moral dear Mrs Assingham. I mean always as you others consider it. I've of course something that in our poor dear backward old Rome sufficiently passes for it. But it's no more like yours than the tortuous stone staircase - half-ruined into the bargain! - in some castle of our*

> *quattrocento is like the "lightning elevator" in one of Mr Verver's fifteen-storey buildings. Your moral sense works by steam - it sends you up like a rocket. Ours is slow and steep and unlighted, with so many of the steps missing that - well, that it's as short, in almost any case, to turn round and come down again. (GB:48)*

After listening to Amerigo's problem, Mrs Assingham's only recourse is, ineffectually, to soothe him. Being herself so unaware of the Ververs' moral standards, she is completely unable to enlighten him in any way as to how to approach their different posture, one that puzzles him so deeply. Moreover from the passage just quoted, it is easy to forecast a clash, or at least a certain incompatibility between aestheticism and morality. The reader is thus forewarned of the impending conflict between Amerigo, the Prince, and the Ververs.

Another hint of this possible clash between aestheticism and morality comes to the reader through Amerigo and Charlotte's conversation at the antique shop in Bloomsbury. They are talking about Maggie and the wedding present Charlotte wants to buy her. Charlotte tells Amerigo that *Anything, of course, dear as she is, will do for her. I mean if I were to give her a pin-cushion from the Baker Street Bazaar. (GB:96)* Amerigo entirely agrees with her. And Charlotte continues:

> *But it isn't a reason. In that case one would never do anything for her, I mean; Charlotte explained, if one took advantage of her character!*
> *'Of her character?'*
> *'We mustn't take advantage of her character! the girl, again unheeding, pursued. 'One mustn't if not for her, at least for one's self. She saves one such trouble!*
> *She had spoken thoughtfully, her eyes on her friend's; she might have been talking,*

preoccupied and practical, of some one with whom he was comparatively unconnected. 'She certainly gives one no trouble, said the Prince. And then as if this were perhaps ambiguous or inadequate: 'She's not selfish - God forgive her - enough!
'That's what I mean; Charlotte instantly said! She's not selfish enough. There's nothing, absolutely, that one need do for her. She's so modest; she developed - 'she doesn't miss things. I mean if you love her - or, rather should say, if she loves you. She lets it go'.
The Prince frowned a little - as tribute, after all, to seriousness. 'She lets what - ?'
'Anything - anything that you might do and that you don't. She lets everything go but her own disposition to be kind to you. It's of herself that she asks efforts - as far as she ever has to ask them. She hasn't much. She does everything herself. And that's terrible.
The Prince had listened; but, always with propriety - didn't commit himself.
'Terrible?'
'Well, unless one's almost as good as she. It makes too easy terms for one. It takes stuff within one so far as one's decency is concerned, to stand it. And nobody, Charlotte continued in the same manner, is decent enough, good enough, to stand it - not without help from religion or something of that kind. Not without prayer and fasting - that is without taking great care. Certainly, she said, 'such people as you and I are not.

From this conversation, we can see that both Amerigo and Charlotte are aware that the seeds of conflict are present in Amerigo and Maggie's relationship, given their very different approaches to life. The reader also becomes aware that the conflict is heightened by another factor, namely, the dimness of the awareness, on all sides: on the one hand, Maggie's complete involvement in her own way of doing things, her slavish following of the morality within which she was brought up; on the other, Amerigo's (and Charlotte's) inability to see that Maggie's code of conduct, which they perceive, though dimly, as different from their own, may have virtues they do not suspect.

It is also shown through this dialogue that Amerigo is capable of being grateful to the Ververs in spite of all his evasiveness. We can also see that Charlotte, more than Amerigo, seems to grasp that aestheticism cannot be the only guide in one's life. Nevertheless her understanding of this is very incomplete; therefore she, like Mrs Assingham, cannot warn Amerigo about possible further conflicts.

During this first major crisis, which takes place at the Jewish antique shop, the golden bowl appears for the first time. In fact as Spencer (1957-58) points out, *its appearance is timed to coincide with the moments in the story at which the moral disparity, the dramatic and thematic development are brought to a point of crisis. (p.334)* As soon as Charlotte sees the golden bowl, she decides that it is the right wedding present for Maggie and Amerigo. It is the right present, for it is rare and low-priced.
Yet Amerigo refuses it. He refuses it not because accepting it would be immoral, but merely because accepting it would betray their intimacy. He also does not accept the bowl because of the crack he finds in it. If he were to accept the bowl, Amerigo would take it as a symbol of his marriage: an imperfect bowl as a symbol of an imperfect marriage. But perfection for Amerigo is only in manners; he does not worry about the morality which is inextricably involved with manners. We may conclude, with Spencer, *that it is this assumption - that perfection in manners counts above all else - which leaves the Prince and Charlotte free to enjoy their future sexual intimacy. (1957-58:336).*

After this scene of moral disparity everything is becalmed. The wedding occurs in an apparently natural

atmosphere and it seems that Charlotte does not give any wedding present to Maggie and Amerigo.

Two years of married life elapse and Amerigo is still unable to understand the code which underlies the Ververs' conduct. *We haven't the same values, (GB:121)* is Amerigo's incomplete and superficial explanation. Yet Mr Verver sees Amerigo as perfect. For him, Amerigo is *a contact ... with practically yielding lines and curved surfaces ... you're variously and inexhaustibly round, when you might ... have been abominably square ... For living with, you're a pure and perfect crystal. (GB:119-20)* Of course, Amerigo's *curves* are no surprise to himself. In contrast to Mr Verver, Amerigo's experience is that *one had always, as in the world, taken curves, and in much greater quantities too, for granted,* and *one was no more surprised at the resulting feasibility of intercourse than one was surprised at being upstairs in a house that had a staircase. (GB:121).*

What stands out is that during these two years Amerigo is not tested and does not understand what morality requires of him. He still follows the only standard he is familiar with. Indeed he behaves according to a standard which causes Maggie to describe him as a *morceau de musée*. If he is a museum piece, that is for Maggie a thing of beauty and immense value, then Amerigo sees this in the field of manners. Consequently his response to this is that his value is a just return for services rendered. The discrepancy between Amerigo's knowledge of the Ververs and the Ververs' of Amerigo generates the central misunderstanding. On the one hand, there is Amerigo's polished and perfect manners that the Ververs interpret as the expression of his morality.

On the other hand, there is Amerigo's inability to see as completely free from manners the morality from which the Ververs' behavior stems.

Throughout The Golden Bowl the reader is led to understand the similarity between Amerigo and Charlotte as a function of the fact that the two conduct their lives *in the light of the touchstone of taste. (Krook, 1963:246)* Furthermore Mrs Assingham once describes Charlotte to Adam Verver as *real*, a thing of great value. Actually, Charlotte, although American by birth, has Tuscan blood. Because of this, she is at home in the world of appearances. She is able to give slight most subtly, without giving the appearance of offense. An example of this would be the steps she takes in driving away Mrs Rance and the Miss Lutches. Both Mrs Rance and Charlotte are interested in Mr Verver as a husband. But even though Mrs Rance has the help of the Miss Lutches, Charlotte is more than a match for her. In Mrs Assingham's opinion this action of Charlotte's may be compared to the Borgia's offer of wine to their guests. This comparison makes a direct link between Charlotte and the bloodthirsty and wicked ancient civilization of Amerigo's ancestors. However, her actions never exceed the dictates of good taste and are executed with the utmost charm and discretion.

Amerigo identifies with Charlotte because she conducts her life under the guidance of aestheticism. Nevertheless there is a distinction between the kind of aestheticism which is acquired, and the kind which is inherited. Charlotte's aestheticism is acquired but it is so deeply ingrained that it appears as natural as Amerigo's. In Charlotte the aesthetic principle is shown in several ways,

namely her social presence, her taste for clothes, her courage, her sensuality and her beauty. The kind and quality of her beauty is disclosed to the reader through Amerigo, the day before his wedding:

> *He saw again that her thick hair was, vulgarly speaking, brown, but there was a shade of tawny autumn leaf in it, for 'appreciation' - a colour indescribable and of which he had known no other case, something that gave her at moments the sylvan head of a huntress. He saw the sleeves of her jacket drawn to her wrists, but he again made out the free arms within them to be of the completely rounded, the polished slimness that Florentine sculptors, in the great time, had leved, and of which the apparent firmness is expressed in their old silver and old bronze. He knew her narrow hands, he knew her long fingers and the shape and colour of her fingernails, he knew her special beauty of movement and line when she turned her back, and the perfect working of all her main attachments, that of some wonderful finished instrument, something intently made for exhibition, for a prize. He knew above all the extraordinary fineness of her flexible waist, the stem of an expanded flower which gave her a likeness also to some long, loose silk purse, well filled with gold pieces, but having been passed, empty, through a finger-ring that held it together. It was as if, before she turned to him, he had wieghed the whole thing in his open palm and even heard a little the clink of a metal. (GB:59)*

Maggie, on the other hand, even after two years of her marriage, still wants to be a devoted daughter. It is this that leads her to make the match between her father and Charlotte, her best friend. But her father's marriage does not change her desire to be both devoted daughter and wife. The situation becomes an absurdity that the Ververs do not perceive. In addition, Mr Verver's dislike of big parties and visits even at grand homes makes the Ververs suggest and put into practice a plan of their own. They decide that Charlotte and Amerigo should represent their respective

families in society.

Amerigo and Charlotte notice the absurdity of such a situation, a consequence of the Ververs' great ignorance and innocence: *it becomes evident that the principal (and most dangerous) bond between them* [Amerigo and Charlotte] *is their free play of mind - their capacity to see the rich irony of things, and in particular the irony of their own situation vis à vis the Ververs. (Krook (1963:247))*
Both Amerigo's and Charlotte's capacity to visualize *the rich irony of things* is a result of the principle of aestheticism by which they conduct their lives. In fact, when Amerigo and Charlotte become lovers again, Amerigo finds a subtle justification for their adultery. His justification is given in the atmosphere of a great country party at Matcham. Here is a sample of the strength of aestheticism in Amerigo which comes in the form of justification:

> *There were situations that were ridiculous, but that one couldn't yet help, as for instance when one's wife chose, in the most usual way, to make one so. Precisely here, however, was the difference; it had taken poor Maggie to invent a way so extremely unusual - yet to which, none the less, it would be too absurd that he should merely lend himself. Being thrust, systematically, with another woman, and a woman one happened, by the same token, exceedingly to like, and being so trusted that the theory of it seemed to publish one as idiotic or incapable - this was a predicament of which the dignity depended all on one's own handling. What was supremely grotesque, in fact, was the essential opposition of theories - as if a galantuomo, as he at least constitutionally conceived galantuomini, could do anything but blush to 'go about' at such a rate with such a person as Mrs Verver in a state of childlike innocence, the state of our primitive parents before the Fall. The grotesque theory, as he would have called it, was perhaps an odd one to resent with violence, and he did it - also as a man of the world*

> *- all merciful justice; but, assuredly, none the less, there was but one way really to mark, and for his companion as much as for himself, the commiseration in which they held it. (GB:251-3)*

Amerigo is not only a *galantuomo* but also a product of worldly intelligence, therefore he masters the principles of aestheticism with charm and beauty. As Krook (1963) puts it, the *touchstone of taste [aestheticism] is seen not merely to sanction adultery but positively to insist on it - as the only intelligent, the only brave, the only decent thing to do in the circumstances. (p.249)*

As to Maggie, her eyes are only opened after the Matcham party. Before the party, Maggie is exactly like what Mackenzie (1974) says of the Jamesian character: *the James character begins by being relatively unashamed and unselfconscious. (p.351)* This statement describes Maggie's state of awareness, for the development of her consciousness begins only when she undergoes the shock of Amerigo's and Charlotte's act of betrayal.

The discovery of the adultery between her husband and her closest friend leads Maggie to lose her identity, her honor. In the social and psychological context I take honor to be *the value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of his society. It is his estimation of his own worth, claim to pride, but it is also his acknowledgement of that claim, his excellence recognized by his society, his right to pride. (Pitt-Rivers in Mackenzie (1974:350))* As a result of such a loss, Maggie feels despair and wants *to die of shame.** Yet she sets up a plan to overcome this loss and acquire a

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* I do not give the page reference, since this phrase is repeated several times through the course of The Golden Bowl.

new identity, a new honor.

Psychology tells us that guilt gives us the compulsion to confess, whereas shame gives us the compulsion to conceal. The compulsion with shame fits Maggie's case, hence her desire *to bury the face, to sink into the ground* and *to die of shame*.* For this reason, Maggie knows that she must use secrecy in order to regain advantage, freedom and identity, or honor. Maggie does not use secrecy in an unethical sense but rather positively and defensively. She uses secrecy *as a way of achieving a kind of moratorium during which [she] strengthens [herself]*. In addition, she uses secrecy in order to coerce Amerigo and Charlotte into breaking off.

Psychologically Maggie's use of secrecy (silence) is explained because a person, after having died of *shame* often finds refuge in silence. By choosing silence, instead of revenge (another possible psychological reaction), Maggie proves that she is growing toward maturity. Furthermore, secrecy in Maggie's situation combines also with the touchstone of taste, for secrecy is an exercise of worldly intelligence. We have seen in the story of The Golden Bowl that during the moment of major moral crisis - when Amerigo is confronted with the broken bowl in Maggie's presence and realizes that she knows *everything* - there is peace and Maggie shows herself to be totally in command of the situation. Through the serenity of her behavior Maggie proves to Amerigo that she is able to show perfect civility

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* I do not give the page reference, since these phrases are repeated several times through the course of The Golden Bowl.

and good manners. Also what follows this scene is complete silence. Therefore Amerigo's admiration and respect for his wife begins to grow. He sees Maggie is capable of good manners in a way he had never expected her to be.

What is relevant behind Amerigo's opinion about Maggie is that Maggie is doing a hard task; through her attempt to restore moral order among the two couples, she is on her way to becoming a full Jamesian character. She is beginning to discern that not only morality is fundamental, but rather that one needs the combination of aestheticism and morality to conduct one's life satisfactorily.

As the days go by, Amerigo notices that his wife's intelligence and manners in this awkward and delicate situatio are connected to something else that he cannot label. He recognizes this as something superior to the principles of aestheticism. His recognition is shown to the reader through a talk between Maggie and Amerigo, which takes place after Maggie has decided to ship her father and Charlotte back to America. Maggie has arranged for the two couples to spend the last evening before their departure together. The same evening Maggie suggests to Amerigo that he might like to spend the evening alone with Charlotte. To her suggestion Amerigo's reaction is to let his wife see *that he took [it] for no cheap extravagance either of irony or of oblivion. (GB:530)* Then when he thinks over her offer of *an opportunity to separate from Mrs Verver with the due amount of form, (GB:531)* he tries to find fault in his wife's suggestion by consulting his touchstone of taste. But it fails him because for the first time in his life he finds himself *unable to treat himself to a quarrel with it on the score of taste.*

(GB:531) This happens merely because:

> *Taste in him as a touchstone was now all at sea: for who could say but that one of her [Maggie's] fifty ideas, or perhaps forty-nine of them, wouldn't be exactly that taste by itself, the taste he had always conformed to - had no importance whatever? (GB:531)*

Amerigo learns that the touchstone of taste has *no importance whatever* because of his wife's love and her conduct which has been motivated by love. Futhermore he has seen what Maggie really is, and he is amazed at the fact that Charlotte cannot perceive it. Hence his final comment about Charlotte: *She's stupid (GB:533)* Through this remark Amerigo marks his recognition of the moral sense he once confessed to Mrs Assingham he lacked.

We have examined thus far the circumstances that drive both Strether and Maggie to react against oppression or imposition of family and friends. The terms oppression or imposition were chosen due to the fact that both Strether and Maggie are, during a certain period in their lives, dominated by the persons to whom they are most attached emotionally. In Maggie's case we have seen that her husband and her mother-in-law (also her best friend) betray her through their love affair. In doing this, both Amerigo, her husband, and Charlotte, her mother-in-law, in a sense, oppress her. It is oppression or imposition because their act of betrayal is done beautifully, and in conformity with the good handling of appearances. Even Mr Verver oppresses Maggie a little. His indirect contribution to this imposition is reflected through her desire to protect him. If Mr Verver were an average (or normal) type of father he might have had a good talk with his

daughter and told her to live her own life. Instead he merely remained silent, going along with whatever Maggie decided. Fortunately, these circumstances lead Maggie to react against their oppression. As a result of this, she feels the conflict between morality and aestheticism. This conflict causes Maggie's world to collapse with the result that she loses her identity. Yet she alone is responsible for the situation, and she alone can remedy it. Thus she sets about reestablishing moral order among the two couples. When she achieves moral order, she also achieves her second identity, which gives her both poise and happiness.

We have seen that Strether, for his part, has the opportunity to compare the world of Woollett to the world of Europe. Unlike the world of Woollett, Europe, or the new environment in which Strether finds himself, is a world that does not possess a strict code of moral values. This environment happens to be formed by more flexible people. They are not different in the sense that they are superior to the ones that constitute Strether's milieu, but rather because of their history, romanticism, charm and simplicity. According to Strether, what is outstanding here *isn't the people. It's what has made the people possible. (A:289)*

Through this comparison, we understand that Strether most probably realizes that Mrs Newsome, Sarah and Waymarsh (the world of Woollett) somehow oppress him. As a result of this realization, Strether reacts against them. The result of his reaction turns out to be his love for Mme de Vionnet (the world of Europe).

In the last analysis, both Maggie and Strether

react to oppression or imposition of family and friends because of the circumstances they find themselves in. In the previous chapter, we discussed Maggie's and Strether's development of consciousness; in the light of the development of their consciousness, and the circumstances, discussed in this chapter, that lead to this development, we may conclude that both Maggie and Strether are typical Jamesian characters. They may be described as such due to the circumstances they find themselves in, their openness to life and their capacity for discernment. Moreover what is fundamental in these characters is that they begin their experience relatively unselfconscious, and end up aware that neither morality alone nor aestheticism alone can guide them toward a better life. They realize rather that morality and aestheticism combined form the basis for one's refinement of himself and consequently for a better understanding of life.

IMPULSES THAT MOTIVATE LEWIS STRETHER AND MAGGIE VERVER TO CHANGE THEIR VALUES AND RECONSTRUCT THEIR LIVES

In this chapter we will examine the impulses that motivate Strether and Maggie to change their values and reconstruct their lives. We will see that this change or conversion is the product, first, of the protagonists' ability to modify their conduct and open their minds, demonstrating their intelligence in choice and judgement and, second, of their courage in accepting metamorphosis.

Throughout this study we have seen that the typical Jamesian protagonist is open to experience and gifted with imagination; consequently he or she is usually reflective and accustomed to interpreting his or her own acts of reflection. This is a trait that suggests Emerson, who in *Self-Reliance* claims that ... *a man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within. (in Hausdorff (ed) 1971:192)* This state of reflection and interpretation occurs due to the fact that one part of their mind becomes the scene of the process of their conversion and the remaining part becomes the bewildered observer of that process. Such a state of mind occurs in both Maggie and Strether, in their desire to reach a state of full awareness and thus achieve the clarity of vision needed in order to

lead successful or good lives.

For James, a character struggling to reach this state of full consciousness must, of necessity throw him or herself into experience; he or she must face evil or the fall. Experience, however, necessarily has the power to destroy, as may be seen in the case of Daisy Miller, or in that of Christopher Newman, whose ideals were destroyed by experience. But no matter what the circumstances are, the true Jamesian character has to throw himself into experience in order to achieve the complete metamorphosis of his previous self. Only the character who has faced evil or his or her fall may emerge as a complete human being, fully aware of reality and able to cope with the evil that exists in the world. Naturally, through this process of re-education, the character achieves full development and maturity as a human being. Finally an essential element of the typical Jamesian character is that he or she, unlike Hamlet, acts decisively at the crucial moment of his or her experience.

Since Strether is a typical Jamesian protagonist, he throws himself into experience. Of course, his plunge into experience is motivated by certain impulses, that inevitably lead him toward his own conversion. The impulses that motivate his change may be described as follows: first, his pre-disposition for tolerance and receptivity; second, his acceptance of the several lies which are told to him (an acceptance which goes beyond any expectable degree of tolerance); third, his ability to compare and contrast different values; and finally, his true morality as demonstrated by the correctness of his choice, which, in turn stems from his awareness and ability to modify his conduct.

Throughout Strether's experience in Europe his tolerance and receptivity are plain. He is reluctant to condemn Bilham's lack of employment; he insists on believing in the innocence and lack of malice of Bilham's artistic friends. In addition to his reluctance to condemn these people there is the presence of his dear friend Maria Gostrey, and that of Bilham, both of whom encourage him to maintain his tendency toward tolerance and receptivity. On a certain occasion Bilham even comments to him *you're not a person to whom it's easy to tell things you don't want to know. Though it is easy, I admit, it's quite beautiful - when you do want to. (A:130)* A good illustration of Maria Gostrey's help in encouraging Strether in this direction is her advice to Strether to be careful not to prejudge anything related to Mme de Vionnet.

Even though they encourage Strether, both Maria Gostrey and Bilham actually lie to him as well. Because of their lies they become the most important agents in this conversion. Others who lie to him are Chad and Mme de Vionnet. They all lie to him because they perceive in him an eagerness to regard his experience in Europe as a beautiful painting, to accept only the aesthetic aspect of Europe. As a result of this, they do their utmost to introduce him into the circles which will satisfy his desire, and ensure his presence at the best artistic and cultural events.

There is also another reason for these people to lie to Strether: they intend to preserve their sensibilities and the civilized system. We may compare the lies to which Sthether is exposed, to Marlow's lies in Conrad's Heart of Darkness. A possible interpretation is that both Conrad and

James explore the question of the importance of lies to show us that in life there are certain occasions in which lies are not only relevant but also an essential part of reality. As Mackenzie (1974) observes *if a lie will help toward impunity, then it's admirable, not shameful but actually honorable. (p.355)* There is no doubt that Bilham gives a technical lie in answer to Strether's question about Mme de Vionnet and Chad's relationship. Moreover Mme de Vionnet and Chad lie to Strether about her *sublimity*. In a sense, Maria Gostrey also hides the truth from Strether, for she conceals her knowledge about Chad's love affair with Mme de Vionnet. Nevertheless, in the end Strether realizes that she conceals her knowledge about the relationship for the express purpose of preventing *a revulsion in favor of the principles of Woollett. She had really prefigured the possibility of a shock that would send him swinging back to Mrs Newsome. (A:374)*

Strether's receptivity and capacity for modifying his conduct play a crucial role in his conversion because without this capacity the possibility would not exist for him to be tempted and consequently to face his fall.

When Strether finally faces his fall, he is already deeply involved with those around him and is questioning fundamental values he has brought with him to the old world. The dilemma he faces is a moral one, caused specifically by the clash of values of Europe and those of the New World.

We may see this process at work in The Ambassadors in the different sets of values represented by the houses of Maria Gostrey, on the one hand, and Mme de Vionnet, on the other. Both women play important roles in

Strether's life due to the different types of affection that he feels for them. Strether is tied to Maria Gostrey because of the friendship he feels toward her (in spite of her love for him). At the same time he is tied to Mme de Vionnet because of the love he feels for her (in spite of Mme de Vionnet's feelings of mere friendship toward him). These two women are instrumental in helping him grow toward his conversion. Maria Gostrey helps him interpret his reflections on the new reality he is faced with, and Mme de Vionnet stimulates him to act in life, to put thought into action.

For a better understanding of how their houses represent different sets of values, let us examine more closely Strether's impressions of them. To Strether, Maria Gostrey is a collector of possessions. This is probably the reason why the semi-dark rooms of her house have an intense effect on him. While visiting her house he feels that

> *the life of the occupant struck him ... as more charged with possession even than Chad's ... wide as his glimpse had lately become of the empire of 'things', what was before him still enlarged; the lust of the eyes and the pride of life had indeed thus their temple. It was the innermost nook of the shrine - as brown as a pirate's cave. (A:78)*

To him Maria Gostrey's acquisition of things is at odds with the kind of disinterest that he wants to achieve in life. In spite of recognizing that he learns from her, he does not become like her, for he goes a lot deeper into things than her knowledge permits her to do.

In contrast, Strether understands immediately that Mme de Vionnet's house is quite different from Maria Gostrey's, for it is full of rich and exquisite objects. Observing her

belongings he comments:

> *They were among the matters that marked Mme de Vionnet's apartment as something quite different from Miss Gostrey's little museum of bargains and from Chad's lovely home; he recognized it as founded much more on old accumulations that had possibly from time to time shrunken than any contemporary method of acquisition or form of curiosity. Chad and Miss Gostrey had rummaged and purchased and picked up and exchanged, sifting, selecting, comparing; whereas the mistress of the scene before him, beautifully passive under the spell of transmission ... had only received, accepted and been quiet. (A:156)*

Through this observation of Strether's it is natural to conclude that Mme de Vionnet has inherited her possessions, making her someone who possesses history. The attitude toward possessions that Strether sees in the contents of her house is indicative of her superiority over Maria Gostrey in other ways, especially in the knowledge and acceptance of her own limitations. She has become a selfless person. This is why, at the end, when Chad leaves her (a fact which is only implied in the novel, by the sharp contrast between Chad's fascination for the art of advertising and his total lack of interest in the subject of Mme de Vionnet), she is able to tell Strether that *it's never, a happiness, any happiness at all, to take. The only safe thing is to give. (A:365)* Mme de Vionnet is, moreover, able to suffer with dignity because she has transcended the *wretched self*, her egotistical side. This fact is evidenced throughout the novel, for it is she who has done all the acts of giving (she has refined Chad, she has married her daughter to a fine young man, etc.). In the end she receives nothing for herself, yet she is still able to think in terms of goodness.

At the end of the novel Mme de Vionnet asks

Strether where his home is. This is a pointed question, for by now Strether is, spiritually speaking, homeless. He has renounced the possibility of making a home with any one of the three women of his life, namely, Mrs Newsome, Mme de Vionnet and Maria Gostrey. He can accept Mrs Newsome no longer, because from the perspective he has acquired in Europe he has discovered that she is corrupt; he cannot have Mme de Vionnet because she is in love with another man; and he cannot accept Maria Gostrey because he does not love her. With this attitude Strether proves that he has emerged on the other side of experience. Our final view of him is of a homeless man, though one who possesses extreme clarity of vision (awareness). As Tanner (1966) observes,

> *Strether recognises that with his particular form of consciousness he cannot commit himself to this or that dwelling, just as he will not limit himself to any specific edifice of values. (p.44)*

In The Ambassadors James shows us that the capacity for the protagonists to modify their conduct implies a capacity for choice and judgement. Yet the capacity to modify their conduct is meaningless if the person lacks the capacity to be tempted. We have noticed that Strether has such a capacity, for he is open to experience. Because of his experience in Europe (an alien environment) he gains clarity of vision: in the end, he has the true measure of Mrs Newsome, Mme de Vionnet, and himself as well. Moreover it is fundamental that, because of his true morality, he has developed a capacity for disinterested appreciation. We may conclude this because of his awareness that moral axioms or codes are not sufficient. He has discovered, rather, that morality involves great and sensitive explorations of the

human being. For this reason, it is easy to be moral in the way the Newsomes are, since it involves only a strict adherence to a moral code, but hard to be moral in the way Strether is. It is hard because Strether realizes that a person's consciousness is always responsible for its own integrity; what lies outside this consciousness is of no importance.

Like Strether, Maggie also throws herself into experience. Of all the typical Jamesian characters Maggie is the most successful in her efforts to modify her conduct. Her acceptance of the evil or the fall in her own life does not destroy her. Like the other typical Jamesian characters, she is genuinely transformed by her experience, into a mature young woman. Yet unlike other Jamesian characters (Daisy Miller, Milly Theale, Christopher Newman and Strether, etc), she is able to gain not only a profoundly human understanding of reality but also emotional stability, for she wins her husband's love in the process.

Maggie reacts to her fall by putting thought into action, by being decisive, because she, like Strether, is motivated by impulses. These impulses lead her toward her change or re-education. To follow this process, we will first examine the reason for Maggie's break with her father; we will then see the reason for her lies; and finally, we will discuss the influence of her own morality on her decisions.

At the time James wrote The Golden Bowl *the 'incestuous' element of father and daughter, did not constitute a difficulty. The Victorian daughter was expected to be devoted to the father; she was expected to sacrifice*

her own interests. (Edel, 1972:210-11) But one can surely interpret Maggie's relationship with her father as incestuous, and James was aware of this fact. Indeed, this interpretation may be correct, if we accept as true Bradbury's (1979) statement that James *arouses the reader to a similar recognition through frequent stress on their extraordinary closeness. (p.179)* In fact, strong evidence of Maggie's strange relationship with her father comes to the reader in the form of a comment made by the author:

> *It was of course an old story and a familiar idea that a beautiful baby could take its place as a new link between a wife and a husband, but Maggie and her father had, with every ingenuity, converted the precious creature into a link between a Mama and a grandpapa. The Principino for a chance spectator of this process, might have become, by an untoward stroke, a hapless half-orphan, with the place of immediate male parent swept bare and open to the nearest sympathy. (GB:132)*

Maggie's most serious problem is that during the first years of her married life she continues to live in the fairy-tale world her father has made for her. Like Daisy Miller, she is involved in a scandal and does not know it. When, finally, she perceives the evidence of scandal in her life, she decides to face up to reality. She realizes that she has to eradicate the evil at its source, that is to say, in the relationship between her husband and her mother-in-law. This realization leads directly to her decision to disconnect herself from her father. She understands that she cannot *live in a fool's paradise of perpetual daughterhood - that is, be a perpetual child. (Edel, 1972:215)* The link that existed between father and daughter was not right. Furthermore this behavior was clearly a product of her own immaturity, of her reluctance to accept her role as an adult

and a married woman. It is only when she recognizes her own immaturity, to which her selfishness, she realizes, has contributed significantly, that she is able to face up to the harsh facts of reality without rose-colored spectacles.

In facing her own fall squarely, she steps into experience, she becomes an active participant in life. As an active participant, she decides to have an honest talk with her father to try to show him that he, like herself, has been very selfish. After this talk which they have more or less in secret (because by now Maggie is trying to restore the marriages), both of them recognize the *immorality* or *selfishness* of their behavior.

Because of their *selfishness*, which for them had been translated into a desire to lead the same kind of life they had led before their respective marriages, Maggie had remained a foolish child for too long. Only when she decides to leave her fairy-tale world, a world which is a reflex of her own immaturity, and descend into the arena of reality, an act dictated by her perception of her fall, does she reach adulthood.

In accepting herself as an adult Maggie leaves her childish world far behind. We can agree with Powers (1970) that *James is quite Blakean in* <u>*The Golden Bowl*</u> *in insisting that childish innocence protracted into adulthood becomes positively evil. (p.95)* Fortunately Maggie recognizes her fault in time and is thus able to warn her father about their *selfishness*, with the result that both of them agree to behave like real adults.

When Maggie realizes that it is her own immaturity that has opened the door to the existence of evil in her life,

she decides to set her house in order. However, in her efforts to overcome her immaturity, she finds herself forced to tell several lies. Nevertheless, in her own mind, the lies and deceit are amply justified by her love for Amerigo and her consequent desire to preserve their relationship. To this end, she goes a little further than Strether, actually telling lies, where Strether only interprets other people's lies.

After the incident with the golden bowl, Maggie understands everything. Nevertheless she does not go about her task openly. It is because of this secrecy that she lies to Amerigo when he asks her whether Mr Verver knows of his affair with Charlotte: Maggie merely suggests he find out for himself. It is both a lie and a wise answer because she herself does not know whether her father is aware of the truth. Indeed, no one knows how much Mr Verver is aware of, since his silence leaves him in a position of ambiguity right up to the end of the novel.

When the moment for an honest talk with Charlotte arrives, Maggie feels at ease because it is Charlotte who sets the tone of their confrontation: Maggie has merely to respond. Since it is Charlotte who presents the challenge, Maggie feels she can lie with impunity. So when Charlotte asks her whether she wants to accuse her of anything, Maggie can reply with a clear conscience: *I accuse you - I accuse you of nothing. (GB:468)* In fact, Maggie goes so far as to swear upon her honor, thus achieving the position Charlotte has challenged her to adopt.

Maggie lies rather than claim her right to revenge or resentment because she is aware not only that everything happened just because of her immaturity, but also because

acting in secrecy is the most effective way of restoring the marriages.

At the end Maggie is mature enough to lie again when Charlotte asks *You recognize then that you have failed? (GB:514)* In fact, she not only lies but she is even *ready to swear that it is she herself who has failed absolutely in the quest for Europe, Charlotte never. (Mackenzie, 1976:181).*

Maggie tells several lies because as James suggests, *Everything is terrible, in the heart of man. (GB:534)* However although there are lies which may serve no useful objective, we must agree with Edel (1972) that Maggie's are *the lies by which civilization can be held together. (p.215)* Although Maggie is the character who makes the greatest use of lies, both Mr Verver, in the sense that he does not commit himself, accepting everything Maggie says or does, and Charlotte,are also perjurers to a certain extent. Fanny also lies; this is clear from the decision she makes with her husband that they must lie to protect Maggie. Thus for Edel (1972), The Golden Bowl *seems to imply, that the terrors of the heart should not be translated into life. They would be unbearable. James had felt, in his early days in Rome, the dead past must be kept buried; the primitive, uncovered, was too dangerous to continuation of life. (p.215)*

Finally, we may observe that Maggie, through this process of re-education becomes a mature woman because she also possesses, as Bowden (1956) claims, *a true morality, a feeling for the life of others,* [that] *is the necessary adjunct of taste, and without it only egotism, sterility, and evil will follow. (p.60)* In Chapter II, we discussed in some detail how Maggie learned how to deal

with appearances; nevertheless *a feeling for the life of others* is something she did not have to learn, since she possessed it from the first. Therefore we may conclude that it is because of her real morality that she decides to redeem, not to conquer her husband. Her morality also helps her appreciate that everything is in her hands - the lives of Amerigo, Adam, and even Charlotte.

Having examined the impulses which motivate both Strether's and Maggie's conversion, it can be fairly stated that they both possess a creative consciousness. It seems that in The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl, James shows us that full and creative consciousness is the highest form of goodness. James shows us that this stage can only be achieved by a deep sense of moral responsibility. This responsibility depends mainly on utter clarity of vision and complete understanding of the truth within the self.

Yet the conversion of both Strether and Maggie occurs due to the courage they display when facing metamorphosis. It occurs because of their strength, which enables them to make their change into a real metamorphosis. In addition to their strength and courage they make use of their creative consciousness, in order to decide which direction to take.

THE COST OF REBIRTH

In this chapter we will analyze the idea of rebirth which is closely related to both Strether's and Maggie's achievement of awareness. It will be seen that both of them achieve awareness following the Christian pattern of rebirth (re-education). They change their ideas and lives for the better, yet their conversions have a price. It is a price which does not end *in death but in the living analogue of death, sacrifice and renunciation. (Blackmur, 1969:49)* Therefore this chapter will be mainly concerned with the kind of price both Strether and Maggie must pay for their rebirth.

According to Blackmur (1969), most of the great European novels follow the Aristotelian ideas of recognition, reversal and intrigue. Recognition and reversal apply to the major motions of plot, whereas intrigue applies to the minor motions of plot. He also claims that *instead of the journey of hubris or overweening pride, we have the journey of the pilgrim, the searcher, the finder. (p.49)* Since the journey focuses on the Christian idea of the pilgrimage, instead of catharsis the novelists make their protagonists follow the Christian pattern of rebirth, redemption, a complete change in ideas and in life itself. He also observes that for

James, *the end is always a heightened awareness amounting to an exemplary conscience for life itself, accomplished by the expense, the sacrifice, the renunciation of life as lived in the very conditions on which the consciousness and the conscience are meant to prevail. (p.49)*

James makes both Strether and Maggie follow the Christian pattern of rebirth. They both arrive at recognition; Maggie's eyes are opened when Amerigo and Charlotte stay too long at the country party; Strether's moment of recognition occurs at the end of the novel, during the Cheval Blanc episode; there is intrigue in both novels, the events are surrounding the act of betrayal, in The Golden Bowl, and those surrounding Strether's primary mission in Europe, as an ambassador for Mrs Newsome in The Ambassadors; finally both novels show a clear reversal: Maggie changes from a passive immature girl into a mature woman, fully in command of the situation; Strether's reversal becomes clear through his complete change of position with regard to Chad's, and indeed his own, continuing presence in Europe. At the end of the novels The Golden Bowl and The Ambassadors, both Maggie and Strether achieve awareness and consequently rebirth, (re-education). Yet their rebirth has a price. Unlike the traditional tragic hero or heroine, Strether and Maggie do not die, they rather have to pay a price, sacrificing one of the things they most care for in life. The payment or the sacrifice they make for the awareness and rebirth they achieve takes the form of renunciation. Since for James the cost of rebirth is renunciation, we will now examine what both Strether's and Maggie's renunciation involves.

At the end of his mission in Europe Strether is completely homeless. As Tanner (1966) observes, if Strether were to go back to the security of life with Mrs Newsome, it would be a complete reversion from his acquisition of a new perspective on life. On the other hand, if he were to stay on in Europe, he would probably become spoiled by the environment. Naturally, he does not want to show that he has chosen the world of appearances (in opposition to his old world of moral essences). He does not want to change sides; he wants to prove that he has transcended the egotistical self. In this respect, I agree with Tanner because it seems that, for James, the highest form of good is selflessness, a Christ-like selflessness that not only asks nothing for itself but also wants to give all to others.

Strether is the most selfless of all Jamesian characters: he has finally achieved an almost sublime level of maturity and wisdom. His arrival at this stage of utter recognition makes him into an almost unbelievable character, in a way that Maggie is not, even though she is more successful in the fulfilment of her purposes. However he is an exact image of what James set out to create in The Ambassadors: *an ideal beauty of goodness the invoked action of which is to raise the artistic face to its maximum. (P:2)*

As a human being Strether is beautiful but we cannot entirely disagree with Fiedler (1975) that the end of The Ambassadors *is one of the saddest in all our literature, leaving us with the heart-breaking image of Strether as the man who sees everything but can do nothing, understands everything but can possess nothing. (p.343)*

Fogel (1977) treats Strether's final position as

a combination of his best American background with the best of his European education. We may observe the extent of Strether's scruples not only in his rigorous avoidance of personal profit from his relations with Miss Gostrey and Mme de Vionnet, but also in his persistence, right up to Book Twelfth, in showing Chad where his responsibility lies toward Mme de Vionnet. Naturally, at this point, Strether no longer thinks Chad is too good for Woollett, he simply believes that it would be cruel for Chad to abandon the countess to the suffering which we feel she is doomed to undergo. Strether has acquired this capacity for disinterested appreciation, for James the most splendid form of love, because through his experience in Europe he has learned to see. Under the spell of the new environment he comes to see, with increasing clarity, Mrs Newsome, Mme de Vionnet, Maria Gostrey and himself as well.

Jones (1975) gives specific reasons for Strether's being alone at the end. He says that Strether's new self demands the renunciation of everything (even his job) and everyone he permitted himself to be used by (his fiancée), gave himself to (his ideal lover), or depended upon (his confidante). He renounces everything because he has a new perspective on life. Armed with this new perspective, he plans to redirect *his sense of responsibility toward awareness, tolerance, and independence; to do otherwise would be to fragment his new-found wholeness and compromise all he has learned. (p.271)*

Other critics, like Leavis (1948) see Strether's renunciation as foolishness. They believe Strether could have had either Mme de Vionnet or Maria Gostrey.

It is clear however, that Strether's renunciation is not foolishness. He renounces everything, for, according to James's central idea in the novels of the Major Phase, Strether, like Maggie and Milly (The Wings of the Dove), has to pay a price for his rebirth. Again, the idea is clearly Christian in origin; given the idea of the pilgrimage, involving the searcher, followed by that of rebirth, it is only consistent that the rebirth should demand a high price of the searcher; since the tendency is clearly Christian, it is appropriate that this price should be renunciation and sacrifice of the things or people the searcher, now the finder, most loves. For this reason Strether cannot have any of the three woman who affect him so deeply. He cannot accept Mrs Newsome because of her corruption; he cannot have Mme de Vionnet, because of her love for another man; and he cannot accept Maria Gostrey, because of his love for Mme de Vionnet. At the end most readers feel sorry for Strether, yet we cannot deny that Strether himself is not in despair because of his imminent return to the New World. Certainly he pays a high price for his clarity of vision, but he knows that what he gained is beyond any price, for he has achieved complete awareness and is full of hope, knowing as he does, that *there will always be something* and adding that he will *see what he can make of it. (GB:392)*

Like Strether, Maggie also has to pay a price for her rebirth. Her payment takes the form of renunciation of her father's company. According to Edel (1972) the idea of renunciation is a constant in James's works, especially in the novels of the Major Phase. Edel believes that in life *one could not always have the best of all worlds. Maggie had*

to lose her father to keep her husband; the Prince had to lose his mistress to keep his wife. Henry James had to give up America in order to have Europe. (p.219)

In The Golden Bowl it is explicit that Maggie's renunciation is for love. Gradually she comes to perceive that she cannot be both a perpetual daughter and a wife. She understands this, for she is both an acute observer and an agent, acting with strength and determination to obtain what she wants. So, if she is to assume what she now sees as her real position, that is, a wife, she must in fact cease to be a daughter. She has learned that to keep her husband she needs to disconnect herself from her father. She renounces him in favor of her happiness with Amerigo.

Mackenzie (1976) observes that in Maggie's disconnection from Mr Verver there is only the divorce of a lie between her father and herself. However, although we may agree with Mackenzie's interpretation of their separation, in the context of the novel, that is, for Maggie and her father, their sacrifice takes on sublime proportions, because they not only give up each other's company, but also transcend and redeem Amerigo and Charlotte's act of betrayal.

I entirely agree with both Edel and Mackenzie, for Maggie renounces her father's company for love; the maturity she has gained shows her that she is, above all, a wife. This leads to her (and only her) decision to sacrifice herself, depriving herself of her father's company. As we have seen, her renunciation is both an act of sublimity and redemption.

Although we can now understand the reasons why Strether and Maggie, in renouncing something or someone the

love, pay a high price for their respective rebirth or re-education, we cannot deny that both of them undergo complete metamorphoses, and achieve clarity of vision, a priceless accomplishment. Nevertheless Maggie goes on to become the most successful of the two characters, for her clarity of vision has an immediate positive effect. It is true that both make their choices, yet Maggie goes further because she is able to keep her husband. The story of The Golden Bowl finishes with the union of Amerigo, Maggie and their son. For the first time in James such an ending takes place. We are left with the idea of love, union and hope, whereas in The Ambassadors we are left only with the idea of hope.

CONCLUSION

In this study, we have analyzed how the main protagonists of The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl achieve awareness, or develop their consciousness (through observation and experience) and, in the process, achieve maturity (through metamorphosis). In our analysis we verified that the achievement of awareness, and subsequent maturity caused the protagonists to break with their previous way of life. We then followed the process by which this break, a result of their complete change, or rebirth, necessarily led them to renounce someone or something they most cared for.

We examined also how James's use of the center of consciousness technique is an essential element in the development of the plot of both The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl. Through this technique, James gives the novels a deeper sense of reality making the action emerge directly from the protagonists. We also noted that the presence of the center of consciousness in a Jamesian novel is intimately related to the process of moral development and achievement of awareness, for it is within the minds of the protagonists that this process takes place.

Throughout this study, we have observed that, for

James, one of the fundamental themes is the development of consciousness. For him, an experienced person is someone who has a complete view and understanding of reality; the pre-requisite of this state of full consciousness is a willingness to step into experience and participate in life, allied with an openness to life.

It is through this participation in life that the truly Jamesian character learns that to lead a good or successful life, he or she must modify and integrate moral and aesthetic values. This capacity to discern and integrate moral and aesthetic issues is developed through the use of the protagonist's full range of sensibility and his or her receptivity to new experiences.

We have seen that the main protagonists of the novels under analysis begin their experience relatively unselfconscious and unashamed, never having been forced to use their full range of sensibility. However, both Maggie and Strether, faced with situations to which neither of them has been exposed before, plunge into their new experiences, and come to realize that neither morality nor aestheticism alone can guide them through their lives.

It is worth pointing out here that the main protagonists of these novels are typical Jamesian characters in that they come to understand clearly that they should modify and integrate the variety of sensory stimuli to which they are exposed into moral frameworks. For this to happen, though, they have to realise that morality alone is not sufficient; aestheticism also is essential, for morality, by itself, rules out the possibility of acceptance of sensory stimuli, which are clearly part of the aesthetic code.

Strether's realization of this fact, in The Ambassadors, occurs when he is forced to reevaluate his past experience in the light of the opportunity he has to live in a new and more flexible environment. Maggie's enlightenment occurs when she is exposed to the conflict between aestheticism, as represented by Amerigo and Charlotte, and the moral framework within which she has lived so comfortably up to the moment that she has to face the brutal reality of Amerigo and Charlotte's act of betrayal.

Although several critics (e.g. Krook (1963), Tanner (1966), Todasso (1962), and others) believe that the central theme in James's novels of the Major Phase is the achievement of awareness, we have concluded here (see especially chapters four and five) that the idea of rebirth or metamorphosis is equally important when analyzing the typical Jamesian character of this phase. In our analysis, the achievement of awareness is only the first stage in a three-stage process: achievement of awareness (through observation and experience) → rebirth → renunciation.

James also shows us that reeducation, rebirth, in fact change in general, is not age-specific. Strether, in his fifties, and Maggie, in her twenties, undergo strikingly similar processes of metamorphosis. What counts, above all, in this process of metamorphosis is that the person be entirely responsible for the integrity of his or her own consciousness; this, combined with the capacity to modify one's conduct (courage to change) and the capacity to be tempted (openness to life) are the principle prerequisites to becoming a complete person, according to James.

In undergoing rebirth, Maggie and Strether emerge

as mature adults, gifted with the ability to see and feel the reality which surrounds them, no longer limited by the rigid moral frameworks within which they had lived so comfortably before. We see, though, that rebirth has its price. The price of rebirth is renunciation. James shows us here that choice is an integral part of existence since in life we cannot live all possibilities. However the choice must be made carefully and consciously: otherwise we risk not coming to terms with our limitations. What is fundamental is being consistent with our personal ideal of integrity, regardless of external influences.

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