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As We Were:

The Force of Memory, the Requirements of Allegory, and the Conduct of Time

in Henry James

by

Jonathan Andrew Warren

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of English
University of Toronto

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ABSTRACT

As We Were:
The Force of Memory, the Requirements of Allegory, and the Conduct of Time in Henry James

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Henry James renders the crises that charge his late fiction in specifically temporal terms. Yet, while his most devoted readers' accounts of Jamesian time generally submit to the seductive appeal of linear, biographical, or aesthetic-spatial models, the texts themselves uniformly challenge the validity of these explanations. James may seem to direct us to heed the stark linearity of past, present, and future, to normalize fictional life so that it conforms to a biographical progression from birth to death, and to circumscribe the fullness of time's awful immensity with aesthetic metaphor. However, the challenge for James's readers is to recognize that such gestures are scrupulously subverted by the terms of their articulation, which insist that textual time operates allegorically. The force of memory relentlessly alienates James's characters, from origin and from intent, and
inspires them to hope for the disjunction's resolution. Time, the force of this
estrangement, demands patience and activates vexed faith, upon which allegorical
meaning depends, as its only recompense.

This study proceeds as a series of close readings of three major novels—The
figures time's conduct as the inexorable activity of a memorial force and the performance
of allegorical rhetoric. The dissertation engages James's writing in the light of
structuralist and post-structuralist considerations of allegory, temporality, and mourning.
Chapter One charts Isabel Archer's emergence as James's figure of the promise,
strenuously resistant to time, transfixed by the purity of her potential. Chapter Two
traces Kate Croy's blighted struggle—as the final word of her familial sentence, the figure
of that sentence, and its grammar's victim—to face down memory's force, to escape the
inexorable haunting of a familial hex. Kate resolves to rescue Croy, a name meaning
both faith and debt, itself an allegory of Jamesian time. The ultimate financial generosity
of Milly Theale gives way, in this reading, to the dying American's ample power of
temporal explanation. Chapter Three interrogates Maggie Verver's failure to disperse the
claims of memory despite the destruction or suppression of its allegorical tokens.
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Introduction
Despite the challenging fact that James's most devoted readers continue to understand his figuration of time and its operations, on the rare occasions when they address it, against a conception of the real that is thought to precede it, to shape it, and to provide the most adequate basis from which to judge it, the figuration of time that emerges in the texts themselves argues strongly against such a strategy. James does not respond to any idea of time that is not already a projection of his own method. Therefore, instead of confirming or defying a set of preconceived notions—derived, for example, from scrupulous biographical research or energetic investigation into his

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Even James's most theoretically astute readers mishandle this important fact. John Carlos Rowe seems to distinguish himself when he argues disapprovingly that Gerald Graff typifies the readerly impulse to distinguish sharply between "critical questioning and imaginative creation" (11), to insist on a broad gulf between history and romance. However, Rowe does not adequately remedy the tendency of Graff and others toward such unwarranted bifurcation. Rowe continues by noting that fiction and its figures are, for James, "that which establishes a center of interest . . . but whose very center is nothing but the selective and transgressive interpretations that 'surround' it, that determine the artistic object as central" (11). Rowe moves too swiftly to this reader-response conclusion. In the case of the meticulous non-occurrence of a division between history and fiction, in James's texts, it is certainly more important first to recognize that, for James, the interpretive "surround," to which Rowe appeals, must always already be indebted to the "center" for its meaning, in disruption of Rowe's application of Georges Poulet's spatial model (Studies 351-52). René Wellek's consideration of James's value to the history of modern criticism proceeds, in large part, as an investigation into the relation of art to life for James. While Wellek notes that James's disapproval of "art for art's sake" derives from the author's rejection of "a false divorce of art from reality and morality" (218-19), he insists that "[a]rt can only achieve the illusion of life . . . inducing conviction, belief, acceptance in the reader" (220-21), and that James mostly accepts as a "fallacy" the notion that the novelist is a historian and narrative is a history. Wellek holds that James offers a "synthesis," between the separate spheres of art and life, that "presupposes an inclusiveness of art" and "forbids a partial view of reality" (223).
cultural milieu—for our best understanding, James's writing deflects the impulse to seek such an experiential account. Instead, his writing makes demands of its own that, in turn, subvert any claims made on the basis of a sense of the real that does not originate in James's texts. And though James, pointedly, does not render fiction distinct from history, this does not sanction, as it has been thought to, seeing his fiction as happy or troublesome exempla of an otherwise legible historical scheme.

In The Portrait of a Lady, The Wings of the Dove, and The Golden Bowl, James's explicit blurring of any familiar dissimilarity between fiction and history never encourages us to believe that a barrier has been removed, that fiction and history are in communication, that it is possible to imagine that a novelist takes himself to be anything but an historian and his narrative a history (Edel, Literary Criticism: Essays on . . . 1343). Yet this has provided little discouragement for the many readers who see James's

__2__ Michael Sprinker rightly asks, "[b]y what right and with what means do contemporary readers of James claim to see through the mystifications of the Jamesian imaginary in ways that, ex hypothesi, James's texts and James himself were not capable of realizing?" ("Historicizing" 204)

__3__ Leon Edel, the titan of Jamesian psycho-biographical criticism (see, for example, his five-volume Henry James), has recently been joined by Sheldon Novick, whose 1996 biography of James, the first volume in an anticipated series, is noted for its bold identification of a sexual affair between the young James and Oliver Wendell Holmes, and who, like Edel, seeks to clarify the fiction by psycho-biographical reference to the author's life: the example recalled by Millicent Bell in her review of the biography equates the young James, in his suspicion of evil at work in his family's household, with Maisie, from What Maisie Knew, "the victim of flagrantly fomicating, divorcing and remarrying parents" (Bell, "The divine, the unique" 4). Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick also depends upon a Jamesian sexuality that provides her a way of reading his fiction (see Chapter Two pages 69 and following below).

__4__ Roslyn Jolly plots out the nineteenth-century debates on the shifting relation between romance and history as that discourse bears on James's fiction and
fiction as only reflective of, or responsive to, period, place, or morality, for example, as
romantic interventions into a set historical reality, as thematic commentary on a world
larger than that created in its pages, as a virtual gesture without the weight or sanction of
criticism, in *Henry James: History, Narrative, Fiction*. Her own application of her
conclusions, to James's fiction and criticism itself, reveals the problems that emerge if we
allow the pre-existence of a distinction, external to James's writing, between fiction and
history. Jolly posits that James, in his criticism, erects an analogy likening fiction to
history so as to borrow, from history's respectability as a discipline, the solidity that his
contemporary critics believed romance to lack. Central to her project is an effort to show
how, in "The Art of Fiction" (1884), James, in "increasing commitment to realism" (Jolly
1), asserts the seriousness of the novel by aligning it with history, borrowing vocabulary of
*gravitas* from "the evidential procedures of historiography and law" (3), and distancing
it from Victorian "traditional imagery of fiction as confectionary, narcotic, or poison"
(12). Jolly's study ends by directing our attention to James's conception of his own late
method as the construction of "counter-realities" (196-223). According to Jolly, James's
career charts his struggle to reconcile two distinct zones. Yet James's texts resist Jolly's
effort to discover that they, too, accept history as the real and fiction as merely an
extension of, or analogy to, that real. To see how Jolly corrects the more provocative
claims of James's texts--claims that insist on the indistinctness of history and fiction--see
her evaluation of James's remarks in "Anthony Trollope":

> In a bold move, James argued that the work of the novelist in collecting evidence
> is even more difficult, and therefore deserves even greater cultural 'honour'.
> However, his claim that this increased difficulty is 'the only difference' between
> the novelist and historian is rather disingenuous: a more fundamental difference
> is that while a novel may refer to things in the world outside it, it also refers to a
great many imaginary things, and these imagined characters, objects, and events
> are generated by the act of narration, whereas in historical narrative the act of
> narration comes after the things to which it refers. James's effort in delineating
> the task of the novelist as historian (and indeed, the effort of realism in general) is
> to make the relation between story and narrative appear to follow the same order
> in fiction as it does in history--to reverse it, making the fictional narrative appear
to be reporting events that have already taken place. (24)

In this alarming passage, Jolly dismisses James's central point as disingenuous and then
corrects him by noting an extraordinarily simplistic division between fiction and history
to suggest that James stretches the truth because he is up against the establishment of
Victorian culture. The more profound force of James's claim is certainly its explicit
rejection of any substantial division between fiction and history, between the novelist and
the historian.
the actual. Nonetheless, James's texts do not oppose romance and reality. Indeed, James explicitly disallows dependence on any such binarism. If, as Jolly's assessment shows, the terms through which James rebuffs such binary thinking seem to reinscribe the binarism even in the register of protest, James's figures demand "a reading that looks past face-values and received ideas" (Esch, 1984: 5).

James often seems to discourage such a project by lacing his narratives with assurances that they will answer to reality, conceived on the basis of an opposition between fiction and reality, in the manner of a transparently comprehensible conversation: Isabel Archer is a perfect portrait of a lady insofar as she is the epitome of a familiar marriage problem; Milly Theale is an icon of charitable generosity; the golden bowl is an emblem of adulterous infidelity. Much of the challenge for James's readers is to recognize the manifest insincerity of such apparent promises as they are made and scrupulously subverted by the texts. James's writing does not thematize a set understanding of reality; it allegorizes a range of problems that proceed from such complacency.

Chapter One departs from the familiar thematic territory of marital politics and

5 Indeed, this tendency is a crippling problem for understanding the operations of time, specifically, in James's texts. Following Henri Bergson's lead, Paul Ricoeur finds the same two spheres as Jolly, Daniel R. Schwarz, and Rowe. For Ricoeur, fiction provides a metaphorical simulacrum of reality. See Chapter Three notes 8 and 28.

6 My considerations of The Portrait of a Lady, The Wings of the Dove, and The Golden Bowl engage with other readers of Jamesian time, often treating their claims—those of Jolly, Sedgwick, and Edel, for example—as provocations, but also finding—in Shoshana Felman, Tzvetan Todorov, Julie Rivkin, J. Hillis Miller, and Sheila Teahan, for example—understandings of James's figuring of time that are importantly sympathetic to my own.
Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond's treachery to discover that, in *The Portrait of a Lady*, Isabel emerges as James's figure of the promise. Long before Isabel makes her fateful promises—to Osmond and to Pansy—she is persistently rendered as the embodiment of vast potential, of enormous promise. Furthermore, the hope of maintaining the purity of her potential by doing absolutely nothing, by remaining inhumanly still, by resisting definition, transfixes Isabel's attention. However, what passes for stillness is always strenuously active resistance. This fact plays itself out in James's descriptions of setting, in his choice of proper names, and in the rhetorical weight of the novel's dialogue. All claims of stasis, even the precious security of Gardencourt's antiquity or the homely attractiveness of Isabel's Albany abode, serve as unhappy memorials to a flux they exist to stave off. The persistence of time asserts itself through the busy operation of memory. Yet Isabel remains contentedly ignorant of her engagement with time because the memory that awareness requires, that awareness also constructs, is what she is, until her famous vigil, happiest not to note. The vigil marks the end of Isabel's willed suspense, what Paul de Man considers the disjunctive output of the deferred promise. However, the knowledge that she gains in front of the dying fire is not the truth of her husband's diabolical scheme. The thematic potency of Isabel's later conversation with the Countess Gemini is more than counterbalanced by the hopeful transformation she accomplishes by facing memory.

Through attendance to her peculiar strategies, Chapter Two traces Kate Croy's blighted struggle, in *The Wings of the Dove*, to face down the force of memory, to escape the inexorable, haunting legacy of a familial hex. Kate is the final word of her damnable
familial sentence, the figure of that sentence itself, and the victim of its grammar; nevertheless, the novel insists that her sentence would end with a kind of meaning. Kate faces the damnably persistent force of memory with faith that she can elude it if only she can rescue her precious proper name, a token that comes to stand for her struggle, for the faith that inspires it, for the iniquity that impels it, and for the adamantine links among these senses. Through his figuration of Kate, James charts a troubling interplay of history, memory, and the past that links his project with Marcel Proust's and Walter Benjamin's. The ultimate financial generosity of Milly Theale gives way, in this reading, to the dying American's ample power of temporal explanation.

Whereas Kate indicates, at the end of her novel, that the past is irretrievable and that one can only stand in relation to a memorial version of it, Maggie Verver, in The Golden Bowl—the focus of Chapter Three—undertakes to impose her fondest vision of an alternative past, to misremember in accordance with her longing, to deny the uncomfortable liveliness of memory with a smothering effort of will. Throughout the novel, James plays with the idea of "nothing." As Fanny Assingham's shorthand way of dismissing the failed attachment between Prince Amerigo and Charlotte Stant, nothing is a notation for the same enormously disruptive force into which Kate Croy's family sentence drifts and from which she cannot escape. Maggie fails to disperse the claims of memory despite the destruction or suppression of its allegorical tokens—the bowl and the other characters—because history, by its nature, inevitably yields the irremediable gap—between the inaccessible past and its inexorable effect—that memory must trace and that Maggie's desperate efforts, Kate's sustaining faith, and Isabel's conclusive return may be
understood to mourn.

The selection of novels and the arrangement of these readings may seem to constitute a teleological claim about the trajectory of James's writing as a whole. However, instead of tracing a development in James's figuration of time, as my reading of James's figuration of revision and pretext in his preface to The Golden Bowl makes clear, these readings are chiefly concerned with interrogating what Teahan calls "a more oblique and complex rhetorical subtext" (Rhetorical Logic 16). By the end of my analysis, it is clear that the force of James's sustained rendering of time and its operations pervades the texts and troubles the impulse to think about progress outside its terms. Other texts may seem more readily available for this kind of investigation into Jamesian temporality. Elsewhere, James even foregrounds time as his explicit subject. From his earliest writing to the very end of his career--we may, for example, go all the way back to his first short story, "The Story of a Year" (1865), to his first novel, Watch and Ward (1871), to The Aspern Papers (1888), "The Altar of the Dead" (1895), "The Wheel of Time" (1892), or The Sense of the Past (left incomplete and posthumously published in 1917)--James stresses the crucial factor of time as it achieves its force through imposed suspense, impatient waiting, and inevitable retrospection. This fact helps us to see beyond teleology and to explain the choice of texts here. The Portrait of a Lady, The Wings of the Dove, and The Golden Bowl, in the context of James's other fiction, resist our reading them as considerations of time's force to the extent that, in these novels, this aspect hides its face.

Bowl establish that James, in his figuration of time and its operations, does not seek
conformity with neat linearity, biographical chronology, or spatial aesthetic models. At
the same time, these readings do not posit that the thrust of James's figures is ever
primarily the polemical rejection of such schemes. Indeed, James often generates
considerable irony by seeming to insist on the power of linearity, of biography, or of
spatial models, to explain even while he tests their limits and underscores their
insufficiencies. These strategies fall away as they fail adequately to explain James's own
temporal systems, modes of understanding the force of time and its operations free from
linear, chronological, and aesthetic means of account.

These readings confirm that James does not establish a metaphorical or
symbolical relationship between his imaginative world and the real one. However, this
does not mean that James's fiction has no bearing on reality. Schwarz certainly
misconstrues what "reality" means for James when he claims that "James believed that
the romance frees the artist from reality, from fact, and from observation" (48). As the
prefaces to the New York Edition of his works make clear, James adhered to a strict code
of responsibility when it came to his fiction's connection to reality and did not enjoy the
kind of heedless liberty Schwarz describes. Yet, Schwarz is right in his claim that
James's works do not communicate with reality through the conduit of mimesis:

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Rowe exaggerates James's project of rejection when he claims that James questions "the conventional in hopes of discovering its power to hold us in its thrall" (12). Rowe identifies James's "fundamental impulse" as the effort "to question and subvert the apparent stability of social truths sustained by secret arts" (14). In this way, Rowe asserts a polemical strategy for James's writing—the dismantling of surprisingly unstable social truths, an undertaking of commentary—and buttresses the binary field that James explicitly disallows.
"Because romance implies something of a play world, it also frees the artist from the rigorous concept of mimesis that insists that art should imitate life" (48).

These readings identify allegory as James's preferred procedure and prosopopeia as its most familiar form in the three novels analyzed here. James's novels stand in allegorical relation with the real world. The understanding of time that the novels found inspires a real rationale for conduct and a practical basis for knowledge in the novels and beyond them. James's meditations—on the inaccessibility of the past, the constructive force of memory and forgetting, the effect of history, and the disjunctive impact of time—suggest that far from reflecting a received epistemology or ontology, his novels should prompt the kind of revaluation of reality, and, specifically, of the force of time, that deconstruction undertakes.

That James's plots and characters foreground the struggle for agency amid a subversive world of counteraction and indeterminacy encourages deconstructive reading. And the appropriateness of the method is confirmed by its yield. Moreover, James's texts, when read deconstructively, do not lead their readers to any impasse of unassailable contradiction from which his figures do not also provide egress and help, in this way, to correct misapprehensions about the trajectory of deconstructive reading in general.8

8 See Rowe 4-7 where he maps two possible readings of a passage from James's The Ivory Tower, one in which the figures constitute a defence against radical uncertainty and another in which James's figures purposefully work "the undoing or subversion of form that all writing performs, the unravelling of the impulse toward completed meaning" (7). Rowe points out that "[t]he virtue brought by the deconstructive angel is, in fact, a sort of 'regeneration' or 'reenergizing' of literary texts" (20). Rodolphe Gasché, similarly, views aporia as more than an impasse, as a beginning, and as an encouragement ("Aporetic Experiences"). For his project, Rowe is crucially unsatisfied with what he characterizes as the aporia's paradoxical preservation of "its enduring
James renders the quest for meaning, in his novels, in rhetorical figures the very instability of which yields both despair and faith.⁹

Furthermore, to approach James's texts with the tools of rhetorical analysis benefits both James and deconstruction. James's figures do not crumble into signals of meaninglessness, and the kind of meaning they do offer is not radically sceptical. The kind of meaning to which James leads Kate Croy, for example, is not the vacant impossibility of meaning if it is not also the enduring promise of relevance. Jay Clayton (54-55) urges us to query the site of deconstruction's deployment to discern its continuing value as what Barbara Johnson calls, "the unbypassable site of the penultimate" (World 31).
II

James applied the lessons we find elaborated in his novels to the struggles of life with an absence of modification striking in its implication that fiction and history constitute an uninterrupted continuum, that, as James's final New York Edition preface concludes, "to 'put' things is very exactly and responsibly and interminably to do them" (The Art of the Novel 347). Yet as the rhetorical activity of his adverbs suggests, and as his enormous reliance on the claim of equivalence—made by the verb—confirms, James posits an allegorical relation of deep intimacy made clear in his next observation: "Our expression of them, and the terms on which we understand that, belong as nearly to our conduct and our life as every other feature of our freedom" (347). In his long correspondence with Grace Norton, the sister of Charles Eliot, whose value to the history of letters is uniformly fused with her activity as one of James's epistolary confidantes, James's letter of 28 July 1883 stands out. What she had written to prompt the author's reply was presumably lost to James's late-life bonfire of personal papers. However, it seems clear that Grace Norton faced a terrible personal crisis, planned for rash action, perhaps suicide, and prompted this measure of Jamesian solace:

Sorrow comes in great waves—no one can know that better than you—but it rolls over us, and though it may almost smother us it leaves us on the spot and we know that if it is strong we are stronger, inasmuch as it passes and we remain. It wears us, uses us, but we wear it and use it in return; and it is blind, whereas we after a manner see. (Edel, Selected Letters 191)

After professing his utter powerlessness before the suffering of others, James quickly
recommends the peculiar balm of time. More than simply an entreaty to endure, James's advice to his friend explains the specific yield of endurance: by withstanding the great waves, "we after a manner see." In the face of Norton's crisis, James does not encourage the paltry accomplishment of mere survival, but the faith that comfort and insight are contemporaneous.

To help in the struggle against a capitulation to sorrow's enormous blind power, James's counsel figures a resistance that is essentially temporal. He urges Grace Norton to wait:

My dear Grace, you are passing through a darkness in which I myself in my ignorance see nothing but that you have been made wretchedly ill by it; but it is only a darkness it is not an end, or the end. Don't think, don't feel, any more that you can help, don't conclude or decide—don't do anything but wait. Everything will pass, and serenity and accepted mysteries and disillusionments, and the tenderness of a few good people, and new opportunities and ever so much of life, in a word, will remain. (191)

James invigorates his writing with a suasive force that accounts for an imperative voice usually unheard in his fiction. However, James does not make demands of Grace Norton that he does not also justify; James seems, in his letter, keenly aware of a profound secret that he wants to share with his suffering friend. This letter, James assures his troubled friend, will not be his "last word" (190), but it must be his first. In this way, even as he offers the difficult counsel of waiting, of suffering the passage of time, he commingles a promise that makes such patience a form of faith, the reasoned caring regimen of, as
James signs off, an ever "faithful friend" (192). Strangely, perhaps, it is by recommending this palliative therapy that James confronts the crisis which he articulates early in his letter--"I don't know why we live" (191)--and begins to answer its challenge.

James's provisional solution to the problem of living is specifically temporal and allegorical. As he honours the occasionally overbearing responsibilities of knowledge and the "illimitable power" (191) of consciousness, James stresses the sustaining help of time: "The only thing is not to melt in the meanwhile" (191). For if we do not know who we are meant to be or what we are meant to do, time justifies a faith that we "will do all sorts of things yet" (191).

James urges Grace Norton to allow his insistence on her future to register as the voice of memory. In order for her to know herself and to save herself, it is necessary for her to remember herself--to return, as Isabel Archer does, to the memory of her other self--to recall whom she will be. This memory is a form of extrication and projection, of allegorical alienation and disjunction.

In the place of his friend's overwhelming "sympathies and tendernesses" (191), James inserts another story: that of her own "terrible algebra" (191). The connection we feel with others, and with other versions of ourselves, proceeds from the fact that "we are all echoes and reverberations of the same" (191). However, though linked by such irretrievable origin, as individuated elements of its legacy, as Kate Croy and Maggie Verver come to know, we are irremediably alienated from cohesion except by faithful compassion: an orientation toward unity, without the impossible accomplishment of it.

James's consolation, in his letter to Grace Norton and in the novels read below, is
this: all knowledge proceeds allegorically, as faithful resistance to what we remember we are not and as hopeful recollection of what we are not yet. In this way, "however fast the horse may run away there will, when he pulls up, be a somewhat agitated but perfectly identical G. N. left in the saddle" (192). The continual beating of misery's waves transfixes us but no more so than does the anticipation of "new opportunities and ever so much of life."
Chapter One

"Just you wait": Isabel's resistance to temporality in *The Portrait of a Lady*
Readers of The Portrait of a Lady have often discovered, in Isabel Archer, an emblem of the future circulating amid the landscape of the past. Critics who have exploited the role of the young American girl in connection with James's international theme depend on the fact that the author charges Isabel Archer with vast potential. Yet this feature of her characterization does not warrant reducing Isabel to a merely thematic device: the American abroad, a vagabond icon of the New World confronting the Old, the "charmingly ingenuous American girl, on a symbolic voyage to the Old World that would test, temper, and eventually threaten to destroy the very essence of American innocence" (Galloway 9). If Isabel is imbued with futurity—and that evaluation is always

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For example, see Edel, Henry James II.421. Inevitably a full report of existing efforts to read Isabel as this kind of thematic device must be abbreviated since the interpretive impulse is so well-established in Jamesian criticism. Nevertheless, such a summary would be incomplete without the following readings. Peter Buitenhuis situates The Portrait of a Lady as part of a career-long progression refining and broadening the "international theme" ("Introduction" 4-5). Richard Chase finds no problem in metonymically abbreviating the whole of the novel as the story of "Isabel's leaving an American house . . . for a European house" (18). Richard Poirier observes that Isabel "offers such a prospect of original accomplishment that bored and worldly Ralph Touchett is able to believe that here at last is something worth staying alive to witness. It is like a wholly new and different sort of drama which he has never before seen performed" (29 my emphasis). James W. Gargano claims "[s]he is Americana, with more established traditions and more intellectual values than the ingenuous Daisy Miller . . . . In all the tergiversations of her life, her choices and decisions will be complicated by a shaping, provincial heritage that will itself be reshaped by the actualities of an older, less innocent world" (124). Isabel herself casts all such readings into doubt by offering her own very similar assessment not of herself but of her friend Henrietta: "... she's a kind of emanation of the great democracy—of the continent, the country, the nation. I don't say that she sums it all up, that would be too much to ask of her. But she suggests it; she vividly figures it" (98).

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In addition to those critics cited in note 1 above, on the international theme in James see Marius Bewley, The Eccentric Design and Christof Wegelin, The Image of
only an unsettled one, proffered by cohorts with motive to misrepresent and fetishize Isabel, and complicated by Isabel's own unfolding understanding of the operations of time itself--this aspect is defied by her own more definitive efforts to resist such uncomfortable constraints.

James provocatively underscores Isabel's putative iconicity by recollecting, through her proper name, the pre-eminent imperial Spanish queen of the great age of European exploration and the beautiful and chaste goddess-huntress of classical legend, identities that seem to extend the magnificent coherence of distant fable and myth to James's young American (Edel, Henry James II.421). By the same extravagant gesture, James undermines his heroine's status as an emblem. Isabel's appealing thematic tranquillity cannot endure the pairing of visionary discovery and divine forbearance.³

³ We need only recall the important historical details that Edel's reading of Isabel's name both prompts and elides. With his reference to the famous Spanish Isabel--Isabella, Princess of Castile (1451-1504), "La Católica"--Edel appeals to her historical stature with the acumen of only the scantiest primer and activates another deeper consideration of the allusion's possibilities. Isabella aligns interestingly with Isabel but not in the way that Edel suggests: "[a]fter all, Ferdinand and Isabella had stubbornly refused to negotiate with Columbus until the fall of Granada was accomplished" (Davies 455), and the expansion of European control into the New World, so central a narrative to Edel's mind, was certainly not among the priorities of a Spanish monarchy preoccupied with the suppression of the Moors by the Christians in Iberia. The historical Isabella--as opposed to the mythical icon--does not readily consent to serve as an emblem for bold transoceanic discovery as much as for religious hatred (Davies 454). It is by considering her marriage to Ferdinand, Prince of Aragon (1452-1516), "El Católico," that the usefulness of casting back to Isabella, as bride to a vexed marriage, becomes clear.
Indeed, that uneasy coupling does not constitute any sort of harmonious unity opposing, as it does, abandon and abstinence. Surely little need be said to substantiate the curious fact that Isabel's futurity is read, out of her name to start, through reference to ancient antecedents. Isabel is, most definitely, imbued with futurity, but this aspect is defied by her peculiar attachment to the past, a tension that ruptures the emblem we seem to have been promised by other readers. Isabel's struggle against the definitive requirements of the past plays out as a combative engagement with memory. Her efforts to withstand fulfilling the expectations of others, and to preserve the ampleness of her own unscathed potential, render her a figure of such resistance: Isabel's acknowledged predilection to

Both bride and groom were heirs to . . . desperately troubled families, and to viciously disputed kingdoms. They were cousins, and knew well what to expect if their relatives or their nobles were allowed to gain control. Isabella, upright and devout, had been touted for marriage in Portugal, England, and France throughout her childhood, and had only been saved from the altar by the death of an unwanted suitor on his way to the wedding. Her claim to Castile only arose through the unlawful exclusion of her niece; and her accession in 1474 sparked off both a civil and international war with France and Portugal. Ferdinand, devious and devout, sought her hand as a means of escape from his own miserable circumstances.

(Chase 20; Lewis 152-55)

That "Isabel" also refers James's readers to Elizabeth, of which it is the Spanish version, or to the English Queen Isabella (1296-1358)—daughter of Philip IV, "the Fair," of France—"the She-wolf of France" who procured the mutilating execution of her husband Edward II, helps show that the name inspires more questions than it settles—that it bristles under the obligations of emblem (Oxford Dictionary of First Names 166; Brewer's 982). The name establishes a link between Hawthorne and James, noted by Lawrence Holland (21-22). Isabel's name has also prompted readers to dwell on her virginity (Matthiessen, The Major Phase 179; Galloway 45). David Galloway also affords a good example of under-reading James's other names (26n.1).

Chase seconds R. W. B. Lewis's assessment of the novel's movement from America to Europe as the description of a fall from Edenic innocence, an exile from Paradise (Chase 20; Lewis 152-55). Both, in this way, posit a chronology in which Isabel (and Daniel Touchett) figure as references to the pre-lapserian past. See Jacques Derrida, "Psyche: Inventions of the Other."
enjoy the freedom to forget yields traces that compose its own legacy and marks her as a captive to the past which, for James, is only the product of such vexed memory.  

In James's figuring of Isabel's early contexts, in the manner of her description by others, and in her own words, Isabel, instead of emblematizing the future, allegorizes resistance to such definition. She is a figure of imminence confounded by stasis. Isabel's appeal to futurity is undermined by the fact that, for her, the future seems as though it will never arrive: James describes Isabel's environment, history, and character as never-changing. Her great promise seems persistently suspended and postponed; her potential seems to remain, just that, potential. Isabel, though eager to accomplish a grand future, is also ironically content to allow the success of such apparent postponement: "With all her love of knowledge she had a natural shrinking from raising curtains and looking into unlighted corners. The love of knowledge coexisted in her mind with the finest capacity for ignorance" (213). She wants the future and cleaves to its delay; she loathes the past, yet functions as a memorial to her resistance to it. The nature of Isabel's resistance demands, furthermore, that we disengage the category of the future from chronological thinking. By embracing delay, like Kate Croy and Maggie Verver, Isabel strives to repulse an onslaught of preclusive definition that troubles her romantic faith in personal liberty.  

The antagonism Isabel brings to bear against definition, her care for the future, demands, furthermore, that we disengage the category of the future from chronological thinking. By embracing delay, like Kate Croy and Maggie Verver, Isabel strives to repulse an onslaught of preclusive definition that troubles her romantic faith in personal liberty.  

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5 Donatella Izzo writes: "For Isabel . . . a self is free only when isolated, when lacking a role by which others could identify it . . . If choosing constrains—rather than expresses—the self, every choice becomes a limitation of one's infinite potential" (36-37).

6 On the performance of delay as a typical Jamesian conduct, even a passion, see Ruth Bernard Yeazell 21-36. Yeazell posits that delay is a consciously
aims to defy the arrival of what is to come, of the "other chances" that she cites in her rejection of Lord Warburton. For this reason, and despite her asserted appetite for change, Isabel misconstrues, as the non-arrival of the future, the busy activity of guarding against its advent. This is Isabel's special project, and its long-standing performance, its faithful repetition, is her future as much as it is her past; this causes her to confuse the two.\footnote{Yeazell's reading relies on a spatial conception of time away from which my readings move.}

Isabel carries out her most fateful act in what she thinks is accordance with such resistance. By promising herself openly to Gilbert Osmond, Isabel fancies that she preserves the future intact and untouched, that through her promise she postpones defining herself in accordance with any restrictive iconicity. Through her pledge to chosen strategy employed by characters in the hope of maintaining a kind of psychic purity in the face of imminent and damnable knowledge. Yeazell's reading relies on a spatial conception of time away from which my readings move.

\footnote{Isabel fails to see that her repetition of a set scheme does not release her from the arrival of the future. Her energetic hope for the onset of some transformative future is itself so profoundly historical that she cannot see its repeated exercise as the conduct of the future. Ensconced in the odd seclusion of Albany, things seem to have always been the same for Isabel: each day a perfect copy of the last and the next. Yet repetition does not discharge the force of time. In a way, it underscores it. In Fiction and Repetition, Miller makes the distinction between two types of repetition that Isabel does not come to until chapter 42: "Platonic" repetition, in which "a solid archetypal model is untouched by the effects of repetition" and "[a]ll the other examples are copies of this model," and "Nietzschean" repetition which "posits a world based on difference," in which "[i]t seems that X repeats Y, but in fact it does not, or at least not in the firmly anchored way of the first sort of repetition" (8). Isabel proceeds under the assumption that each of her rehearsals is a perfect Platonic copy of that which came before it and that no performance refers to another except by reconfirming a flawless claim of identity. Yet, even this seemingly innocuous claim establishes an affinity among all the occasions in which any one memorializes all the others in the form of a relationship that exceeds the boundaries of the performance itself. Isabel is unready, until obligated by Osmond, to query that relationship, to see that it documents a claim of identity undermined by the "subversive ghost" of difference (Fiction and Repetition 9).}
Osmond, Isabel appeals to an indeterminate future which no longer exists for her simply because Osmond is not the vastly futural figure that she has imagined him to be. Rather, Osmond is the very embodiment of past contingency and treachery. After Isabel's marriage, the overwhelming and wholly unexpected alteration of her circumstances presses Isabel to search for an explanation, to reason out how the perfectly identical repetition of a set behaviour could yield such poisonous difference. By realizing Osmond's and Merle's duplicitous history, Isabel recognizes that she has not, until then, occupied an unchanging eternity in which the past merges innocuously with present and forever puts off the conduct of future, but that she has become a memorial to an ugly story. Isabel's difficult reconciliation of this personally baffling temporal schism, as revealed through her second promise, helps explain her ultimate choice.

The apparent absence of temporal differentiation between past, present, and future—the product of Isabel's willful effort of resistance that provides the epistemological basis upon which she depends for most of the novel—is an aspect of Jamesian fiction which Georges Poulet, of the so-called Geneva school, has explained as a necessary reduction of the otherwise stupefying immensity of James's sprawling consciousness. In this way, my identification of this seeming, or hoped-for, absence of change for Isabel recalls Poulet's consideration of the operation of time for James. Poulet's concept of ________________

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All considerations of Jamesian time must now necessarily engage Poulet's watershed commentaries on the subject. This intertextual demand has not occasioned much disharmony in James criticism as Poulet's claims centralize what Deborah Esch calls "the category to which the great majority of his [James's] critics sooner or later authoritatively appeal" (1989: 143), namely experience. That Poulet chooses to focus exclusively on the issue of time is itself exceptional in James studies. Jamesian critics who cite Poulet tend either generally to accept his interpretations of time or to situate his
"aesthetic time" (Studies 351), which he develops briefly in his essay on James, and elaborates into a totalized spatial model in The Metamorphoses of the Circle, posits that the "Jamesian novel . . . will most often be divested of the past" as James crafts "[a]n affair of the surface, and not one of depth; a movement in space, and not one in time" (Studies 351). Poulet maintains that James recoils from the overwhelming complexities of a full confrontation with the past. Though I suggest a curious resistance to time in Isabel Archer, this resistance precipitates her pivotal confrontation with it in chapter 42, a scene of crisis which helps Isabel render distinct the categories of the past, history, and

work in other non-temporal contexts. Paul Armstrong has noted the phenomenological underpinnings of Poulet's work (ix-x, 48). Donna Przybyłowicz accepts in passing Poulet's spatial temporal paradigm (175). There are few other studies which consider Jamesian textual time exclusively; though there are, of course, considerations of James's historical moment, his chronology, and so on; M. E. B. Grenander, B. J. Rahn, and Francine Valvo, for example, chart the chronology of the novel working from the date of Ned Rosier's arrival in Rome—November 1, 1876—the only specifically dated episode in James's text. Lawrence Leighton situates James in an historical context and sketches out the author's strategies to resist it in what Leighton calls "his combat with the most vulgar of ages" (380). Bell's reading of The Aspern Papers is noteworthy not only for its attention to textual time. Bell compellingly opens up the passage from The Aspern Papers which serves as one of Poulet's chief defenses of his notion of James's restriction to the "visitable" or "shallow" past ("The Aspern Papers" 121-22).

Poulet cites James's New York Edition preface to Roderick Hudson when he claims that, for James, "the formal order is an almost despairing way to escape from what he calls 'to work in terror, fairly, of the vast expanse of the surface'" (The Art of the Novel 5 qtd. in Metamorphoses 309 with Poulet's emphasis). From this prefatory remark, Poulet proceeds swiftly to describe James's elevation of barriers to "the admirable immensity" (The Art of the Novel 3) of relations that "[r]eallly, universally . . . stop nowhere" (5), an activity undertaken in the register of high anxiety. Poulet's subsequent reading suffers from insufficient attention to the rest of the paragraph of James's preface from which Poulet draws his italicized clause. James importantly modulates his suggestion of terror by characterizing his confrontation with immensity as a necessary "perpetual predicament," a fascinating seduction that "lead[s] on and on," and a welcome test of his "expertness" and "courage" (5-6).
memory. In this way, James's handling of Isabel's temporality typifies his very active involvement in facing textual pastness, presence, and futurity in a manner that cannot be reduced to Poulet's spatial "aesthetic" model.\(^\text{10}\)

Indeed, we see the very sort of temporal circumscription that Poulet assigns to James, in hopeful explanation of the author's fictive method, charge James's characterization of Isabel Archer. As with Poulet's assessment of James's resistance to time, Isabel's resistance is first imagined as a strategy of self-preservation in a swarming flux of overwhelming impressions. Isabel's progress in The Portrait of a Lady, away from the impossible refuge of seeming-eternity, away from an untenable resistance to temporality, directs James's readers away from Poulet's position that such timelessness is James's chosen solution rather than his carefully rendered problem. In The Portrait of a Lady, Isabel Archer resists the obliterative onslaught of time only to be confronted with a crisis of understanding that, according to Poulet, such resistance should have prevented. Instead, Isabel's crisis is precipitated by her resistance to time. In this way, Isabel emerges here as a figure for Poulet's misreading of Jamesian time.

From the outset of The Portrait of a Lady, James renders the context of the action as putatively eternal: eerily undaunted and unaffected by the unfolding of time. Indeed, the passage of the hours seems to yield to James's evocation of an idyllic synchrony, an eternal moment which the tick tock of a progression does not seem to affect; moreover, in

\(^{10}\) Esch provides the most convincing rationale for rejecting Poulet's "aesthetic" model of Jamesian time (see especially 1989: 143-44). Her consideration of his interpretation of James prompts my own identification of Isabel as a signal example of what is most wrong with Poulet.
James's figural language the advance of time is often not a progression at all, but an ancillary aspect of a world that shall not advance out of a plenary instant, an instant which subsumes the temporal and apparently discharges its force. It is just this sort of tableau aspect to which Poulet responds in describing his spatial concept of Jamesian "aesthetic time": "[i]t consists in establishing about a center a moving circle of points of view, from one to the other of which the novelist proceeds. There is no change except in point of view. Thus time is constituted by passage, not from one moment to another, but from one point of perspective to another" (Studies 351-52). However, Poulet insists on an unacceptably restrictive spatial paradigm. Indeed, in the opening lines of The Portrait of a Lady, James so purposefully foregrounds the timelessness of the Gardencourt setting that his artistic gesture cannot simply be accepted with the literalness Poulet's system would grant it. Poulet's reading fails insofar as it does not construe James's insistence as crucially problematic, as the narration of an all-important conundrum.

Holland calls the Gardencourt scene a "sketch," "a landscaped vista," and an "expansive tableau" (46): "As if within a frame, hung upon a wall or easel, figures sit or stroll undisturbed in equilibrium . . . . All is poised in a state of suspension within which the novel begins to unfold arcs of widening, deepening recognition" (46). Chase calls the first page of the novel, "a handsome pictorial representation" (15).

Poulet articulates his central argument: "A finite world finds itself linked with a thought which, itself, is finite. The universe no longer is a fleeing infinity. The novel's space is that which is enclosed in a visually and mentally determined field. To the finite space, moreover, a finite time corresponds" (Metamorphoses 312).

Schwarz recalls the key moments in James's prefaces to the New York Edition that likely underlie literalist misunderstandings of his appeal to spatial analogues but cautions that "the notion of art as a separate reality is in the Romantic tradition and reminds us that James has continuities with those, from Coleridge through Wilde and Stevens, who sought to build in art an alternative space and who believed that literature can create ghostlier demarcations and keener sounds than the real world" (41). In his
The novel's establishing scene exemplifies the static aspect as a starting point from which to proceed rather than as a terminus with which to be satisfied: "Part of the afternoon had waned, but much of it was left, and what was left was of the finest and rarest quality... From five o'clock to eight is on certain occasions a little eternity; but on such an occasion as this the interval could be only an eternity of pleasure" (1). The gathering on the lawn takes place during a little eternity that occupies the present moment between what has waned into the past and what is left. There is certainly a provocative hint at the promised fine and rare quality of the future, but this tease is overwhelmed by the vastness of the present; the future, in order to overcome its imminence and become actual, must endure a three-hour stretch that James dubs a little eternity.

That "eternity" is modified as "little" here suggests, of course, that the language is figurative; the afternoon is not after all an eternity, but only seems like one. This figurative description of the novel's establishing moment acquires more grotesquely literal significance when Daniel Touchett speaks of his son:

"It's because his [Ralph's] health is so poor," his father explained to Lord Warburton. "It affects his mind and colours his way of looking at things; he

preface to The Portrait of a Lady, James reflects that "it took nothing less than that technical rigour, I now easily see, to inspire me with the right confidence for erecting on such a plot of ground the neat and careful and proportioned pile of bricks that arches over it and that was to form, constructionally speaking, a literary monument," "a structure reared with an 'architectural' competence" (The Art of the Novel 52). This passage, of course, depends for our understanding upon the earlier elucidation of the "house of fiction." In the preface to The Awkward Age, James explains that "[t]he dramatist has verily to build, is committed to architecture, to construction at any cost; to driving in deep his vertical supports and laying across and firmly fixing his horizontal, his resting pieces--at the risk of no matter what vibration from the tap of his master-hammer" (The Art of the Novel 109).
seems to feel as if he had never had a chance. But it's almost entirely theoretical you know; it doesn't seem to affect his spirits. I've hardly ever seen him when he wasn't cheerful—about as he is at present. He often cheers me up." (6-7)

The elder Mr. Touchett's powers of recollection are strained by the attempt to imagine ever having seen his son when that younger man was not as he is at present. Though Ralph is certainly alive, his father's remark implies a strange appreciation of what constitutes life and prefigures Isabel's own strange valuation of life and death. Daniel Touchett finds gladness in his son's figuration of life as that which is thoroughly sapped of variance. Daniel esteems Ralph's failure to surprise and always to cheer. In this way, Ralph's mien is uncannily at odds with a liveliness understood through reference to chronology, to change or progress. He embodies a principle. His father is happy to read him as the expression of a comfortable theoretical axiom: to his father, Ralph is the persistent present.

Ralph is, as James writes of Isabel later, in a position to give value to any change. As the prosopopeia of his father's ironically pleasant grotesque, Ralph is a figure of suspense and any change in him will seem to have ramifications for the whole of the still Gardencourt world which he serves as its fleshly allegory. Yet Ralph promises change and this point helps provide Daniel Touchett with a compelling justification for his mode of reading his son as changeless. Ralph is dying.

With Ralph, James's figuration of the "little eternity" of Gardencourt's tea-time

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14 See the important similarities in Isabel's effort to account for the appeal of her empty Albany home, on page 46 below.
has, at its heart, another figure that helps explain that stately landscape, in which the old gentleman who himself seems all about the past, accompanied by his never-changing progeny who has always seemed as he does right now, takes tea in a never-ending moment on the lawn of their historical home. It would seem that the figurative and the literal implications of "a little eternity" oscillate here in and out of a sort of amber capsule of synchrony in the context of which the future is always imminent, but never realized. Yet the promise or threat of Ralph's failing health disturbs this model of stasis. The affinity he shares with his American cousin is redoubled on the level of figural significance: even before he takes it upon himself to influence his dying father to make Isabel a fortune, Ralph, as the figure of the disintegration of stillness, prefigures Isabel's confrontation with history and memory. In this very specific way, he embodies her promise: he constitutes, in the certainty of his own perishing, the likelihood of Isabel's transformation.

Ralph is more than an omen. His promise of mortal change has an impact in the "here and now" simply because his frailty memorializes in advance his coming death: "everything that we inscribe in the living present of our relation to others already carries,

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15 Holland reminds us that the languor of the scene is also charged with "latent energies," "immanent vitality and decay" (46).

16 Martha Banta, writing in another, thematic, register, concludes that the ghost of Gardencourt, which serves as a metaphor for Ralph Touchett's consciousness, leads Isabel back into life even though Ralph must die so that Isabel may fully experience life ("Tale-Teller's Strategies" 178).
always, the signature of memoirs-from-beyond-the-grave" (Derrida, Memoires 29). The Gardencourt scene finds a figure for its double resistance in Ralph: in apparent stillness Ralph resists alteration, and in promised extinction Ralph resists that resistance. In this way, Ralph is also a figure for allegorical figuration itself.\footnote{This formulation articulates a basic Jamesian premise for which Ralph serves as an early figure. To carry what Derrida calls the signature is to wield a certain and, for James, a crucial force. Broadly put, chapters Two and Three trace the operations of that force in The Wings of the Dove and The Golden Bowl. See also Benjamin's "The Storyteller," especially 100.}

Before her transatlantic journeys begin, Isabel undertakes the effort of resistance we find embodied in her cousin. At home in Albany, Isabel resists change insofar as any precipitous act will corrupt the immensity of her potential. In turn, this resistance deploys its own resistance; it constitutes the very corrupting act she seeks to avoid. However, Isabel remains fully unaware of this necessary subsequent turn until much later. This point is a crucial one. In order for the vigilant discoveries, of chapter 42 and the rest of

\footnote{Ralph's undeniable literal presence, his situation in the temporal "here and now" of Gardencourt, testifies simultaneously to the serene definition of Daniel's fancy and to its disintegration. Furthermore, he figures, by the promise of his death, the tension between the two possibilities. Derrida explains that: Paul de Man often stresses the "sequential" and "narrative" structure of allegory. In his eyes, allegory is not simply one form of figurative language among others; it represents one of language's essential possibilities: the possibility that permits language to say the other and to speak of itself while speaking of something else; the possibility of always saying something other than what it gives to be read, including the scene of reading itself. This is also what precludes any totalizing summary--the exhaustive narrative or the total absorption of a memory. (Memoires 11)

This aspect of allegory constitutes a law by which "we are never ourselves, and between us, identical to us, a 'self' is never in itself or identical to itself . . . . The selbst, the soi-même, the self appears to itself only in this bereaved allegory, in this hallucinatory prosopopeia--and even before the death of the other actually happens, as we say, in 'reality'" (Memoires 28-29).}
the novel, to amount to more than the denouement of a mystery, a mere confrontation with a plot, James requires Isabel's antecedent failure to note the activity of her own corrupting resistance. With this element, the discoveries of the latter portion of the novel constitute a deeper confrontation for Isabel, her discovery of a remarkably and necessarily alien self.

Like the first instance on the lawn at Gardencourt, the scene at Isabel's Albany home provides a pretext for understanding Isabel and for our reading of her mode of understanding time. In her Albany home, Isabel often lingers in the library and takes special charge of the dilapidated office:

... she had uncontrolled use of a library full of books with frontispieces, which she used to climb upon a chair to take down. When she had found one to her taste—she was guided in the selection chiefly by the frontispiece—she carried into a mysterious apartment which lay beyond the library and which was called, traditionally, no one knew why, the office... it was a chamber of disgrace for old pieces of furniture... (22)

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19 On the question of plot as it relates to "the process of self-recognition" (4) in The Portrait of a Lady, see Holland (3-16). Holland's remarks are especially apt on the preface's use of architectural figures. To put it simply, in the preface, Holland sees James first connect architecture to plot and then oppose architecture to "the action of the novel or story" (5). In the preface, James considers plot's failure to account for the novel's force; that force is "the figure of Isabel" (Holland 4-5). Holland shows that architecture—the preface's metaphor for plot—does not account for the centrality of figure—the figure that stood in isolation to James's retrospective imagination as he sought to account for the novel's provenance. On the other hand, architecture, in the novel, does offer such account because it is not metaphorically connected to plot, but allegorically emphatic of the central figure, Isabel. Holland's consideration of The Portrait of a Lady interrogates James's prefatorial asserted subordination of plot without noting the allegorical implications of architecture.
The passage in the library, like the tea scene at Gardencourt, provocatively suggests the eternal while implying its subversion. The Albany library is a storehouse of books, an archive of preservation in resistance to the ravages of time. Isabel's selection of reading material is guided by pictorial frontispieces, the frozen iconicity of which is disturbed by their dynamic capacity to pique curiosity and allegorically communicate stories. As these indications are not quite sufficient to communicate a timeless oblivion, Isabel seeks out and discovers a deeper seclusion.

The library provides only the failed promise of absolute stillness because the seemingly aesthetic model of Isabel's seclusion there, her encasement as it were, is disrupted by the citation of that which her isolation resists. Spurred by her very curious hope to attain a pure stasis, in a gesture of patience that itself constitutes a kind of agitation—energetically inclined towards stasis and, therefore, not stasis, but defined in opposition to it—Isabel lingers most often in the room that lay beyond the library, in the office. This effort of further seclusion typifies Isabel's essential perversity in James's novel and establishes her character as a complicated allegory of resistance. Furthermore, James identifies her with the resistance to flux, which he seems to provide with her Albany seclusion, so that she may safeguard the fullness of her potential. Yet the

20 The fact that no one knows why they called that funny little Albany chamber the "office" fairly directs the reader to explore the possible explanations. The repository of abandoned furniture is not an office of business. Instead, it functions as an office in one of the word's other senses. "Office" is a Middle English adoption of the Old French office from the Latin officium meaning "service, duty, and function" (OED 80). In this way, James dubs the queer little room in Isabel's Albany home "office" to indicate that it allegorizes Isabel's function, the peculiar role she serves, her office. The office as her office, then, becomes a sort of structural imperative: Isabel's role is contingent to that served by the abandoned vestibule.
multiple chambers are literally defined against, captivated by, the frenetic economy of the streets, and in this way they embrace, for our understanding of them, that which they reject by their enduring reference to that rejection. Isabel's resistance to flux memorializes—after and before the fact—the onset of the turmoil she shirks. This fact provokes no anxiety in Isabel because she is not aware of it until chapter 42.

Isabel's office is architecturally "beyond the library." This odd little room is also "beyond" in the sense that it surpasses the book room in librariness: the office is hermetic and hermitic and, apparently, more safely timeless:

The place owed much of its mysterious melancholy to the fact that it was properly entered from the second door of the house, the door that had been condemned, and that it was secured by bolts which a particularly slender little girl found it impossible to slide. She knew that this silent motionless portal opened into the street; if the side-lights had not been filled in with green paper she might have looked out upon the little brown stoop and the well-worn brick pavement. But she had no wish to look out, for this would have interfered with her theory that there was a strange, unseen place on the other side—a place which became to the child's imagination, according to its different moods, a region of delight or of terror. (23)

In the office, Isabel enjoys the fantasy that she can linger in a perpetual present, an eternity of ignorance. But any confidence that this project succeeds on these terms is seriously misbegotten. Indeed, Isabel has no direct knowledge of the busy realm just

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21 In this way, Isabel's predicament surpasses the binarisms of thematic trouble that Joel Porte assigns her when he explains that she is "ambivalently attracted/repelled, fascinated/disgusted—by the conditions of physical love" (8).
outside her paper windows. Yet, by fashioning such an involved architectural circumstance, James prompts his readers to consider not what Isabel literally does not know, but what she does and how she knows it. Instead of an emblem of ignorance and stasis, the office is a model of knowledge, the chamber an allegory of time.

Ensconced in the office, Isabel's only direct look at the busy outdoors remains imminent: "She had never opened the bolted door nor removed the green paper (renewed by other hands) from its side-lights; she had never assured herself that the vulgar street lay beyond. A crude, cold rain fell heavily; the spring-time was indeed an appeal—and it seemed a cynical, insincere appeal—to patience" (23). The formidable barriers, to anything other than the present reality of the office, seem to subvert the force of activity and to fulfill the promise of patience. Just as the promise of a later evening is confounded by the little eternity of tea-time on the Gardencourt lawn, just as that suggestion of the future is baffled by the immensity of the temporal expanse of the moment, and just as the promise of eternity in the opening scene is undermined by the very terms of its assertion, the opening of the bolted door in Isabel's Albany home remains only potential. The impossibly distant realization of that potential renders the interval between impulse and execution eternal. Yet the appeal of patience in the office remains cynical and insincere. Crucially, Isabel "had no wish to look out for this would have interfered with her theory" of what she might find there. The door may not afford passage between Isabel's interior and Albany's outdoors, but it does communicate a relationship between the two zones that is fully active in Isabel's hesitation. The historically bolted door, the lock of which she could not slide if she had tried, memorializes the basis of Isabel's epistemology and not
her imprisonment. If the outdoors provides a version of phenomenal truth in the drabness of the "little brown stoop" and the "well-worn brick pavement," Isabel prefers depictions available through romance, theory, and philosophy:

It had lately occurred to her that her mind was a good deal of a vagabond, and she had spent much ingenuity in training it to a military step and teaching it to advance, to halt, to retreat, to perform even more complicated manoeuvres, at the word of command. Just now she had given it marching orders and it had been trudging over the sandy plains of a history of German Thought. (23)

Surely a kind of time and progress wait outside, but they are no more real to Isabel than her own conviction that she triumphs over them. James confirms this when Mrs. Touchett's appearance is first sensed by Isabel's awareness "of a step very different from her own intellectual pace" (23). Isabel's understanding, forged in the theoretical seclusion of her "mysterious apartment" (22), would seem to proceed as the acknowledgment of such differences. However, Isabel resists seeing such disjunctions until, much later, Osmond and Merle's intimate association precipitates her famous vigil.

With Isabel's office, James really establishes three zones: the inside of the office, the outside that Isabel opts not to view, and the difference between them which is defined by Isabel's resistance to the rejected force of the non-theoretical and which is also, in this way, the activation of that force. For this reason, Isabel already conducts herself in accordance with that which exceeds the scope of her theorizing: it is the green window of

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22 This claim disagrees with Chase's assessment of Isabel's Albany existence as "a life of fantasy and reading, a life isolated from reality" (19).
her office, the horizon by which she orients her resistance. In this way, Isabel grounds her knowledge in counteraction. What she resists, in favour of the theoretical, may exceed her theory's grasp, but it nevertheless remains the basis against which her knowledge is defined. Isabel models the kind of Jamesian knowledge which, in *The Wings of the Dove*, Milly Theale details more precisely for her confused alpine travelling companion: conditional, theoretical, Isabel's knowledge proceeds by confronting a lack of knowledge, a persistent and inevitable gulf between reason and its object. Her consideration for the always unattainable object—at Albany, the outside—takes the form of a kind of inexorable mourning which, by virtue of its force, discovers or invents a shadow world—James calls it "theory"—that is fully real to her. In this way her understanding of knowledge and time is rooted, like Kate Croy's for example, in a deeply problematic resistance to self. The office allegorizes an ongoing rhetoric of impossibility: it argues in favour of theory in resistance to theory.

Isabel's sister and brother-in-law, in their ongoing discussion of her future, exemplify this rhetoric in a performance that also attests to their own stagnation. Its implications of hopelessness for Isabel's mired situation turns a commonplace interchange dark:

...the two things in life of which she [Lilian Ludlow] was most distinctly conscious were her husband's force in argument and her sister Isabel's originality.

..."I want to see her safely married—that's what I want to see," she frequently

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23 R. W. Stallman likens Isabel's mind to the bolted door (43). And Sandra K. Fischer writes, "[i]t is the promise of something outside the room that makes being inside so attractive to her" (52).
noted to her husband.

"Well, I must say I should have no particular desire to marry her," Edmund Ludlow was accustomed to answer in an extremely audible tone.

"I know you say that for argument; you always take the opposite ground."

(29-30)

As the elder Mr. Touchett cannot seem to recall his son Ralph ever being any way but as he is at present, the Ludlows are also trapped in an endlessly repeating pattern which spins out of an identical past and on into an unaltered future. They have helped each other through this interchange frequently enough that they anticipate one another's replies. Indeed, their postures are structurally pre-determined as Mr. Ludlow always takes the ground opposite that of his wife. The Ludlows are thesis and antithesis without the hope of synthesis. Moreover, the topic which they repeatedly discuss, in the same fashion from the same standpoints, is, ironically, the notion of Isabel's development:

"I'm sure all we've got to do," said Mrs. Ludlow, "is to give her a chance."

"A chance for what?"

"A chance to develop."

"Oh Moses!" Edmund Ludlow exclaimed. "I hope she isn't going to develop any more!" (30)

Edmund Ludlow's selfish hope is that Isabel's unfolding, her diachrony, will be stifled. But the example of his own much-rehearsed argument with his wife indicates that even the most rigidly held stasis--in this case, the terms of their debate--yields necessarily to its own corruption by dumb repetition which only poses as the eternal nonoccurrence of
change. The manner in which the eternal is evoked seems to differ between this scene and the other two, but it really only repeats their lessons.

The Ludlows' ongoing argument about Isabel pretends to define her but, through its repetitive irresolution, relentlessly fails in the effort and postpones definition instead. In this way, however, their debate is a kind of definition despite its irresolution. According to the nature of the Ludlows' contest, Isabel is that which is postponed even as one thinks one has identified it. The unresolved ideas that serve as the basis of the Ludlows' exchange are origin and translation or development. Lilian calls Isabel an original and Edmund says he favours translations. Lilian believes that her husband dislikes the fact that Isabel is an original, but, according to his own impassioned words, he likes even less the idea that Isabel might develop. This leaves James's reader wondering how Isabel can ever be the translation Edmund Ludlow wants her to be without developing, without differing from Lilian's reading of her. He argues for stasis but demands difference. Simply by will, then, the Ludlows accomplish their desires.

Lilian's evaluation is, after all, a translation itself, and the Ludlows' debate is an argument

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24 Esch's consideration of the novel proceeds from this question of translation to reject the critical tradition that finds, in the novel's title, sanction to read the book as if it were a painting. Isabel, as subject to translation, inspires Esch to confront the "problematics of translation" by which the "rhetoricity of the linguistic medium . . . threatens to interfere with the reliable production of meaning, and so with understanding" ("Understanding Allegories" 139). In this way, Isabel allegorizes the inevitable distance between vehicle and tenor. Furthermore, if Moshe Ron is correct when he claims that, for James, "verbal and pictorial representations are essentially interchangeable" (235), it is because both partake in the rhetoricity of the linguistic medium.
over interpretive versions of Isabel, a form of criticism. Though the couple is so well-paired, and though their rhetorical opposition is beyond resolution, this does not mean that, if they came to an agreement, the force of their disagreement would dissipate. Rather, their exchange allegorizes the intractability of the contest of understanding. Furthermore, Isabel, as the substance of their discussion, is the quantity in memory of which the Ludlows' performance is undertaken. That is, Isabel memorializes, for the Ludlows, the tension between origin and translation, stasis and development.

The Ludlow debate may not seem to have much gravity. In relation to those in the rest of the novel, the characters are slight, and any conclusions we draw on the basis of their scene together would, perhaps, be dubious if those conclusions were not reasserted by the implications of the Gardencourt and Albany settings. Isabel wants as little disruption of the kind of sustained self-definitive debate, exemplified by the Ludlows, as possible. The debate suspends her definition between two poles, as the resistance each brings to the other. Her eventual promise to Osmond seems, to Isabel, to be the proper way of sustaining the postponement through which she is defined. However, of course, he and Madame Merle shrewdly disrupt the Ludlows' debate—the allegory of resistance of which Isabel is the living figure—and fashion a collusion, a resistance to Isabel's resistance. Isabel is, then, necessarily defined in opposition to that resistance; she

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25 In "Literary History and Literary Modernity," de Man cites "Le Peinture de la vie moderne," the text that Baudelaire devotes to Constantin Guys: "The Constantin Guys of the essay is himself a phantom, bearing some resemblance to the actual painter, but differing from him in being the fictional achievement of what existed only potentially in the 'real' man" (Blindness and Insight 158).
memorializes Merle's and Osmond's sinister scheme.26

By their argument, Lilian and Edmund manufacture a tradition against which and, necessarily, by which Isabel is defined. If Isabel is defined as a memorial to her resistance to her definition—as a resistance to that memory—then she allegorizes forgetting, as James notably assures us that she does; indeed "of all the liberties the one she herself found sweetest was the liberty to forget" (242).27 We should recall that Ralph

26 James prefigures Isabel's ensnarement by Merle and Osmond in the young American's early consideration of Merle's fault ("it was that she was not natural" (205)) this way: "Isabel found it difficult to think of her in any detachment or privacy, she existed only in her relations, direct or indirect, with her fellow mortals. One might wonder what commerce she could possibly hold with her own spirit" (206). According to this passage, Isabel is made uneasy by what she and Madame Merle already have in common. Isabel, subsequently, reconfirms her misapprehension of their likeness when she rejects Merle's "metaphysical" disquisition on selfhood:

'I don't agree with you. I think just the other way. I don't know whether I succeed in expressing myself, but I know that nothing else expresses me. Nothing that belongs to me is any measure of me; everything's on the contrary a limit, a barrier, and a perfectly arbitrary one. Certainly the clothes which, as you say, I choose to wear, don't express me; and heaven forbid they should.' (216)

In her swift rejoinder, Isabel unwittingly says far more in agreement with Merle than in rejection of her. Nevertheless, for the younger American, their harmony figures as dissonance; her memory of Merle is an instance of Isabel's misremembering herself. Moreover, by insisting that "nothing else expresses me," Isabel continues, precisely and ironically, to enact her own likeness to Madame Merle by bristling against the implication that she is composed by such resistance, by paying enormous heed to "relations."

Recalling de Man's analysis of Hegel's Aesthetics, Derrida writes that "[o]ne is always playing one memory against another" (Memoires 70). The intellectual synthesis, that leads Isabel to a judgment of Madame Merle's dissimilarity from herself, necessarily urges a confrontation with the disjunctive estrangement from truth generated by memory itself (Memoires 66-67), a challenge which Isabel does not accept until her vigil.

27 With Isabel, James elaborates a specific kind of forgetting: not a psychoanalytic repression or the occasional vagueness of mechanical recollection, but a profound disquiet, an allegorical disjunction, at the heart of knowledge (a tension between what de Man, after Hegel, calls Gedächtnis and Erinnerung (Aesthetic Ideology 100 and following)). Because "[m]emory effaces remembrance (or recollection) . . . . The faculty that enables thought to exist also makes its preservation impossible"
serves, in the novel's establishing scene, as an allegorical resistance to his father's fantasy while he is also the bodily projection of that fantasy itself. In this way, Ralph prefigures Isabel's own characterization. He haunts our reading of Isabel long before his literal death and apparition at the end of the novel. As a ghost, Ralph reminds us that what he memorializes— even in advance of his own extinction—is the ghostliness of memory: its fleeting, impossible promise of accessing the "true" past and its ability to provoke the work of the future which is, itself, the conduct of memory which we are only pleased to think retrieves such a past. 

To elucidate his conception of time in the novel, James relies on the crucial and complicated insincerity, in the Gardencourt and Albany scenes, of the promise that time stands still. In his narration of the Ludlows' debate, James accounts for the way in which time's activity is obscured by ceaseless repetition. The Ludlows' rehearsal of their set

(Aesthetic Ideology 102). Therefore, the freedom to forget, which Isabel enjoys, is not a form of irresponsibility but a necessity of thought:

In order to understand thought, to think about thought, thought has to be represented, and this representation can only be that of the thinking subject . . . . [t]hought subsumes the infinite singularity and individuation of the perceived world under the ordering principles that lay claim to generality. The agent of this appropriation is language . . . . Thus the sign, random and singular at its first position, turns into symbol just as the I, so singular in its independence from anything that is not itself, becomes, in the general thought of logic, the most inclusive, plural, general, and impersonal of subjects. (Aesthetic Ideology 97)

De Man observes that, because of the unevenly matched competition, "the linguistic position of the I is only possible if the I forgets what it is (namely, I), if this knowledge is itself forgotten" (Aesthetic Ideology 99). In her freedom to forget, Isabel plays out the impossibility of saying "I" and the obligation always only to say "not I."

Upon their first meeting Isabel presses Ralph to show her the ghost as though it were some palpable artifact of the great old house. Ralph confirms that the ghost is a figuration of memory when he explains that the Gardencourt spectre is a vision enabled by great suffering and miserable knowledge (47-49).
argument has the same force as the contrived stasis of those other scenes. The Ludlows' exchange requires us to think back to Gardencourt and Albany; it helps underscore, in those scenes, the impossibility of discharging the force of temporality and achieving eternity or stasis. The persistence of time figures in each instance through the activity of memory. Daniel's failure to remember Ralph as anything other than that which he seems to be at that moment, is the precise performance of his resistance to his very successful memory of what Ralph's future is likely to be. The peace of Isabel's Albany office depends upon the exterior zone of flux that, contravening the serenity of the office's apparent promise, it actively excludes and memorializes.

From the novel's opening, Isabel cannot tell the difference between resistance to time and freedom from its operations; she is an instance of a "historical rhetoric . . . blind to [its] own rhetoricity" (Memoires 52). In his preface to the novel, James recalls that Isabel's "extraordinary meditative vigil" in chapter 42, "obviously the best thing in the book," itself recapitulates the tension between the activity of memory and stasis: "It is a representation simply of her motionlessly seeing" (James, The Art of the Novel 57). When Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond feign regularity Isabel cannot, at first, discern that they are different from what she has encountered before. She discovers that they are not as they have always been. Yet this literal fact alone does not justify James's evaluation of the chapter as the "supreme illustration of the general plan" (57). Because Isabel's vigil has "all the vivacity of incident and all the economy of picture" it figures the operative tension exemplified at Gardencourt, Albany, and between the Ludlows. By discovering the lively activity of memory, Isabel disrupts her misunderstanding of stasis.
Isabel does not, in fact, discover the literal treachery of Osmond and Merle until many pages after the vigil. What she sees in chapter 42 is the operation of memory itself: ironically, perhaps, the matter of the vigil is the vigil.

From the beginning, James foregrounds the activity of memory by skewing the consequences of time and by relentlessly appealing to the eternal. James disrupts presumptions about the fixed chronology of phenomenal time and provides a curious textual temporality that troublingly insists on the non-occurrence of passage, the negligibility of sequence, and the submission of diachrony. Yet, by crystallizing the dynamics of temporality into a sort of tableau vivant, James undermines Poulet's translation of his project into the conceptual vocabulary of aesthetic space. In each scenario, events, dialogues, and movements occur across the spatial plane and in a temporal mode. However, the mode is that of memory in which a diachronic spectrum of events is recalled, or foreseen, in an instant which requires no chronology and which undermines the very idea of chronology. In The Portrait of a Lady, James establishes the tension that will be clarified and refined in The Wings of the Dove and The Golden Bowl: a tension between the resistance to history and the inexorable memory of that resistance. In Portrait's evocation of an eternal dusk, an hermetic/hermitic office, and an almost-mechanically redundant dialogue, the margin between the timed and the timeless vibrates. James's figures of eternity are not merely imagistic elements that further the accomplishment of a general tone. They are instructive devices by which we discern the novel's enduring philosophical program. In the three novels under consideration here, Isabel is James's earliest prospopopeia of an unfolding consideration of time's conduct.
Grounded in duplicitous figures of stagnation, Isabel proceeds to a final apprehension of her own temporal predicament: her personal history in the chambers of eternity constructs her reading of time. James writes, "Tell me what the artist is, and I will tell you of what he has been conscious" (The Art of the Novel 46).

Though Isabel is associated with the simulation of stasis, until her vigil she remains contentedly ignorant of her predicament's important difference from an impossible noninvolvement with time. Instead, Isabel seems preoccupied by her vast potential, which James stresses repeatedly, and shrinks from actualizing it. Yet, Isabel's persistently enacted refusal is itself a memorial to the inevitable and inexorable operation of time. Isabel, who is so full of futurity and grand potential yields willingly to the apparent subversion of temporal progress in favour of dumb repetition or eternal stasis. However, Isabel gives herself over to the cynical promise of patience because, in James's temporal scheme, in which time is overwhelmed by the claims of stasis (as at Gardencourt, the hours from five to eight do elapse, but take an eternity to do so), there is scant room for expectation of anything else: the future is a forever postponed promise, a "cynical, insincere appeal to patience" (23).

Nevertheless, James leaves open the possibility that Isabel may discover the basis upon which he, on her behalf, calls the appeal to patience insincere. This, too, is a feature of Isabel's promise. By assuring his reader's expectation that eternal stasis is corrupted by the resistance upon which it is founded, and by figuring Isabel as the embodiment of such precarious stillness, James presents his heroine as an allegory for the intersection of eternity and futurity. Isabel's predicament places the infinity of timeless oblivion in
opposition to the promise of novelty. The novel reveals her through the language of
imminence and immanence. Imminence and immanence are not only appropriate to the
portrayal of Isabel Archer in their respective significances; that they are, in origin and
current usage, so like-sounding reminds us of their confusing interplay in her fate.

Isabel herself is rendered doubly as a dynamic force with an inevitable trajectory
of great future accomplishment and as the future postponed. We see this irreconcilable
duality from her first moments at Gardencourt. Her presence paradoxically quickens the
pace of the never-ending tea party from the moment that she picks up the Touchett's
scampering terrier and establishes, for Daniel Touchett and Lord Warburton, her
strangeness and independence (12):

The girl spoke to Ralph, smiling, while she still held up the terrier. "Is this
your little dog, sir?"

"He was mine a moment ago; but you've suddenly acquired a remarkable
air of property in him."

....

"I ought to tell you that I'm probably your cousin . . ."

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29 **Imminent** is an adoption of the Latin *imminens*, *-ent-em*, which is the
present participle of *imminère* which means "to project or lean over, overhang, impend,
be near." In English, the word suggests "an event (almost always of evil or danger) that is
impending threateningly, hanging over one's head, is ready to befall or overtake one, is
close at hand in its incidence, or is coming on shortly" (*OED* 66).

**Immanent** is an adoption of the Latin *immanënt-em*, which is the present
participle of *immanère*, meaning "to dwell or remain." In English, the word means
"indwelling, inherent; actually present or residing in; or remaining within." A rare, but
useful sense of this word is "an act which is performed entirely within the mind of the
subject, and produces no external effect; opposed to a transient or transitive act." This
sense was operative in the mid-nineteenth century (*OED* 61).
"Probably?" the young man exclaimed, laughing. "I supposed it was quite settled! Have you arrived with my mother?"

"Yes, half an hour ago." (13)

Isabel acquires an air of possession "suddenly," in all of a moment. When she states that she is probably Ralph's cousin, her "probably" is a structural appeal to futurity: it suggests a determination that will be made. Ralph discharges that possibility by expressing that he thinks the matter is not "probable" but "settled." Ralph's choice of words expresses a definitive rhetoric of eternity or stasis, but only as a resistance to Isabel's challenging future reference; thus, his response is a form of conservative maintenance. Yet, the next piece of information undercuts the novelty of Isabel's apparently sudden appearance: she has actually been at Gardencourt for half an hour; her suddenness, and its power to disrupt, is revised. Isabel settles into the context of eternity: she is not wholly other. Isabel quickens the pace in this scene, but it seems, finally, that she has only quickened the pace of eternity.

Indeed, Isabel's capitulation to Daniel Touchett's fantasy seems assured by her fascination with the historicity of Gardencourt; she is piqued by its pastness. However, Isabel has a curious and important sense of history's value. Her basis for understanding the past is established back in Albany, in her office. Even though Isabel's remarks to her aunt direct us back to Daniel Touchett's odd fantasy of his son—he is cheered by Ralph's apparent presentation of lifeless fixity—when she expresses herself in accordance with this epistemology, she leaves the pragmatic wife of her curious uncle wholly perplexed. Mrs. Touchett's failure to comprehend Isabel's meaning, then, gauges her estrangement
from her husband. Determined to remove Isabel to England, Mrs. Touchett challenges her to account for the appeal of her empty Albany home:

"In Florence we should call it a very bad house," said Mrs. Touchett; "but here, I dare say, it will bring a high price. It ought to make a considerable sum for each of you. . . . They'll probably pull it down and make a row of shops. I wonder you don't do that yourself; you might let the shops to great advantage."

Isabel stared; the idea of letting shops was new to her. "I hope they won't pull it down," she said; "I'm extremely fond of it."

"I don't see what makes you fond of it; your father died here."

"Yes; but I don't dislike it for that," the girl rather strangely returned. "I like places in which things have happened—even if they're sad. A great many people have died here; the place has been full of life."

"Is that what you call being full of life?" (26)

Always coupled with Isabel's characteristic appeal to futurity—her vast potential—is a peculiar devotion to the past which seems in keeping with her personal history of secluded resistance. But the past by which Isabel is so enthralled is the past provided by an active memory. Isabel explains her fondness for the Albany house by pairing its emptiness with its fullness. The present extinction, for which it serves Mrs. Touchett as a metaphor, acts for Isabel as an allegory; the house tells a story of the vivid plenty that preceded death. Her attachment to Albany is not sentimental, nor is it macabre. When

30 Holland reminds us that Mrs. Touchett is "still married to her banker husband but 'virtually separated from him'" (17). James's mysterious adverb finds some basis in Mrs. Touchett's alienation from Isabel.
her aunt first finds her, Isabel sees her present situation only as the intimation of memory. Naturally, Mrs. Touchett is nonplussed: Isabel looks at death and sees life. This seems like disturbing neurosis, if James's textual economy is thought to deal only in Mrs. Touchett's unimaginative metaphors and symbols. Isabel, on the other hand, is "a young person of many theories; her imagination . . . remarkably active" (51). She is pleased to look at the Albany house allegorically, to forget, if you will, its status as a signifier of death and barrenness and to remember only its story of life. Just as the pretension of stasis masks its own resistance to time and becomes the story of that resistance, Isabel's forgetting conceals a kind of memory. Her interchange with her aunt shows Isabel confident in her sense of the past not as that which is gone and yet retrievable in the present, but as that which is precisely constituted by the operation of memory in the present and the future.

Despite distinguishing herself, in Albany, by a system of allegorical temporal understanding, much clarified by Milly Theale in The Wings of the Dove, Isabel remains immune to fully grasping the implications of her way of thinking. Isabel sees through memory and constitutes a version of the past to suit her present understanding. Yet, at the same time, she vigorously favours divorcing herself from the past that, in that memorial way, she inhabits: "Isabel was in a situation that gave a value to any change. She had a desire to leave the past behind her and, as she said to herself, begin afresh. This desire indeed was not a birth of the present occasion; it was as familiar as the sound of the rain upon the window and it had led to her beginning afresh many times . . ." (31). Isabel wants to leave the past wholly behind. She does not merely desire new horizons but a full
break with her tradition and history. This is a problem for, as we have just seen, Isabel's notions of what is past are tangled up with what is present to her through memory. James's peculiar claim, that "Isabel was in a situation that gave a value to any change," suggests two readings. Most accessibly, this line seems to imply that Isabel herself valorizes change, that she craves it. This reading which, by attaching motive to Isabel, serves to buttress a traditional notion in James criticism—namely Isabel's peculiar American individuality—is undermined by closer inspection. Isabel may long for change, but her predicament, as a figure of memory, as the inspiration of the past—and, only in this way of troubled stagnation and eternal redundancy—casts true "change" as a value by virtue of contrast. The value of change is rendered doubly: as a personal desire and as a structural imperative. It would seem that the latter subverts the force of the former.

Furthermore, her interpretation of the Albany home shows that even the most radical change is undermined by her energetic memory, by her uncanny ability to forget change while staring it in the face. James underlines this complication by revealing that Isabel's impulse to begin afresh is daunted by her immanent memory. Her impulse to spring into futurity unburdened by the claims of the past, is itself derivative. She has always longed to recommence as a tabula rasa; the motive is so long-standing, so historical, that it seems habitual. It is as natural as the sound of the rain, but also as predictable and regular.

Moreover, Isabel's impulse is likened to rain's patter on the outside of a window. James's image places Isabel inside, as always, in her sealed office divorced from the promise of novelty. Her time-worn motivation has led to repeated efforts that have made the undertaking stale by rehearsal. What should be a fresh beginning has become a habitual
rite. In this way, Isabel's fascination with the purely futural is doubly undermined. It is cast as the mere rhetorical output of an overactive imagination. Furthermore, the redundancy of what should be singular drains the novelty from the putatively new. That Isabel views these serial starts as each, in its moment, a clean break shows that she misreads the temporal mode of her existence; change is itself part of the familiar vocabulary of her memory, of an imagination which "was by habit ridiculously active" (31).

Isabel's own words characterize her situation in conformity with the same sense of temporal complication established in her early settings and in the commentary of others. In response to Lord Warburton's proposal Isabel eventually breaks down and offers the reason for her refusal which she had characteristically, until a moment before, determined to preserve as occult:

"It's that I can't escape my fate."

"Your fate?"

"I should try to escape if I were to marry you."

"I don't understand. Why should not that be your fate as well as anything else?"

"Because it's not," said Isabel femininely. "I know it's not. It's not my fate to give up—I know it can't be."

Poor Lord Warburton stared, an interrogative point in either eye. "Do you call marrying me giving up?"

"Not in the usual sense. It's getting—getting—getting a great deal. But it's
giving up other chances."

"Other chances for what?" (140)

Isabel's appeal to her fate may seem melodramatic or coy, but it is also a profound revelation of her own self-knowledge. In her formulation, fate is not a pre-determined scheme to which one is necessarily bound. Rather, it is the opportunity for "other chances." Isabel imagines her fate as the undetermined, the open potential, and the imminent. However, Isabel relies on the ambiguous sense of "escape" which can mean "to get free" as well as "to avoid" (OED 283). The two meanings remain equally active in Isabel's strange explanation. "Escape" suggests that marriage to Warburton might be a sanctuary from the prison-house of her fate and that, by accepting his proposal, Isabel would free herself from the burden of her vast potential by acting, by discharging the force of all the other things she might do by doing this. At the same time, that achievement of freedom would yield its own trace, would memorialize Isabel's improper evasion. It is similarly difficult to reduce Isabel's grammar in "I should try to" to one

31 Poirier reminds us that "escape" from "the public expectations which are attached to the rôles they have assumed . . . was to have been Isabel's good fortune" (29). James "makes a considerable and unusual effort to protect her from being hemmed in by any too exclusive definitions of her character" (29). James "will not allow us to 'grind her' in the convenient typologies which literary and social convention provide for us" (29). Still, Poirier indicates that Isabel here resists constraints of type already prescribed and implicit, an assumed economy of meaning. Chase agrees with this understanding and sees Isabel as a thwarted climber who is punished for having "perversely" set her sights too high (24) even as he aptly acknowledges that, for Isabel, "self-fulfillment shall take place only at a high level of abstraction where the disinterested pursuit of perfection may be carried on" (26). Chase has little patience for Isabel's ideals and characterizes them as a foolhardy and frigid romance that ignores the practical value of good sense. This allows him to judge Isabel as a transgressive woman who acts in resistance to form because she loathes feeling. However, Isabel seeks egress from a more general or totalized definition upon which such typing itself, as a literary category, depends.
meaning. It is telling that she speaks in the indeterminate future aspect, but "should" implies obligation, duty, and propriety, as well as expectation and, thus, indicates both an open future and the resistance to that liberty, a doubling that we have observed before.32

Lord Warburton's question—"Other chances for what?"—goes unanswered by Isabel. Yet this question provides its own answer. "What" is an interrogative as well as an indefinite article. Warburton uses "what" interrogatively, but Isabel might just as well answer him with "what" in its indefinite sense: that she seeks other unspecifiable chances that are unnameable because they are, as yet, only potential.

Isabel's own words recall the complicated and reflexively destabilizing instances of redundancy and stasis we saw in Daniel Touchett's eager figuration of his son's hoped-for unchanging mien and in the Ludlows' set confrontation. In Isabel's rebuffing of her persistent American suitor, Caspar Goodwood, this resonance is manifest:

"If you'd only try to banish me from your mind for a few months we should be on good terms again."

"I see. If I should cease to think of you at all for a prescribed time, I should find I could keep it up indefinitely."

"Indefinitely is more than I ask. It's more even than I should like."

....

32 One further complication on this point. In British idiom "shall" and "should" stand in for the American "will" and "would" to communicate the plain future and the plain conditional, respectively. Though it is finally impossible to conclude whether James emulated British or American forms in his construction of the conditional sense in this case, Fowler's overview of the problem elucidates the scope of possible significances at work (548-51).
"When will you marry me? That's the only question."

"Never-- if you go on making me feel only as I feel at present." (165-66)

In lieu of outright refusal, Isabel postpones. Goodwood takes the postponement as an appeal to an indefinite and, the implication is, never-attainable future moment. A promise from Isabel would assign a definition to this indeterminacy. Such a vow, with an attached date and prescribed action, is what Caspar requires. He recognizes that a promise postponed is as good as no promise at all. Isabel, however, makes another point: by holding to a posture of imminence, she honours her promise to herself which is a resistance to preclusive promising. Goodwood's "prescribed time," an indefinite span akin to that of the novel's establishing scene, seems to him like an infinite duration, a forever-delayed future. Though Isabel, of course, hopes this is true, she has, in fact, already acted by resisting. The only question which concerns Goodwood is that of when Isabel will marry him: when will she promise to promise? In response to this question, Isabel lashes out against Goodwood's future-determining demands and redefines them: by insisting that she will never affiance herself to him so long as he goes on "making [her] feel only as [she] feel[s] at present," Isabel rebuffs Goodwood's demand for a promise and casts his posture of demand into a static argumentative pose like that of her brother-in-law towards her sister. Caspar does not, after all, propose marriage here: he does not say "Will you marry me?" but rather "When will you marry me?" He demands from Isabel a date when he will be sure of her acceptance. In this way, Isabel seems not to be put in the position of having to determine her future by accepting or rejecting a proposal. Rather, she is content to permit herself, here, to forego confrontation with the
future through the denial of Goodwood's demand, not of marriage, but of a set future consideration. Yet Isabel is also aware of her own failure, of the anxiety that her resistance to Goodwood produces.

In her rebuff of Goodwood, Isabel wants to flee from the cage of determinacy which Caspar represents; she wants to deny any promise, any predetermination of her future. Yet, ironically, by doing so, she remains trapped in her historical predicament, as the immanent imminent, and continues, as we see directly after Goodwood's exit, to make herself feel only as she feels at present. Isabel finally encourages Goodwood to "try me someday" (167). Isabel invokes "someday" in full hope that it only stands for postponement and indefinite delay: not a refusal, but a postponement of decision. Inevitably and to Isabel's dismay, postponement takes the form of a refusal itself. She does not want to say yes or no, to accept or to refuse. Upon Caspar's departure, Isabel immediately retires to the darkened bedroom, to the hermetic/hermitic Albany office of her past. Her doing so underscores the fact that her conversation with Caspar recapitulates her familiar, frustrating resistance and indicates that it is impossible for her to overcome the force of resistance without endorsing its practice:

"I must leave you now," said Isabel; and she opened the door and passed into the other room.

This apartment was dark, but the darkness was tempered by a vague radiance sent up through the window from the court of the hotel, and Isabel could make out the masses of furniture, the dim shining of the mirror and the looming of the big four-posted bed. She stood still a moment, listening, and at last she heard
Caspar Goodwood walk out of the sitting-room and close the door behind him.

She stood still a little longer, and then, by an irresistible impulse, dropped on her knees before her bed and hid her face in her arms. (174)

Isabel retreats to her office, here figured as "the other room," "darkness," and the crook of her arms where she hides her face: the liminal range of inanimate furniture, on the threshold of an exterior flux, where her hapless resistance to the definitions of others appears confirmed by a threatened stillness and the future seems to make no demands.33

In her well-known exchange with Henrietta Stackpole, Isabel expresses her "idea of happiness," as "a swift carriage, of a dark night, rattling with four horses over roads that one can't see" (177). Clearly, it is a foreboding statement, coming, as it does, on the verge of Isabel's fateful attachment to the shrewd Madame Merle. The visual clues in this pronouncement are surely rich, but so is the passage's temporal suggestiveness. The swift advance of the carriage recalls the appeal of futurity to Isabel. However, she qualifies the forward rush: it is undertaken in a darkness which obliterates her view of the passing scene. The force of time—imagined as a spatial advance—is undermined by Isabel's obliviousness to it only to the extent that she actively engages in the enforcement of her own ignorance, the practice of her own troubled freedom from care.

Isabel's freedom to forget is put at risk because Isabel records, by the effort to forget, the theoretical outside against which her manufactured carelessness would erect a

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33 Galloway misconstrues Isabel's constant "seeking of shadows" as "symbolic of Isabel's fear of the world, of human commitment and physical contact" (31).
The promise of freedom is undone by its attempted practice. This point accounts for Isabel's struggle to avoid action or, in other words, to maintain the suspension of her bright promise. Of course, the initiation of suspense is itself an action. As de Man explains, the suspendedness of the promise does not render it supra-historical; rather, "the text of the law is, per definition, in a condition of unpredictable change. Its mode of existence is necessarily temporal and historical, though in a strictly nonteleological sense" (Allegories 266-7). Moreover, the intra-temporal junction of the suspended law and the particular application of that law presents discrepancies between the two; just as "the fundamental incompatibility between grammar and meaning . . . becomes explicit when the linguistic structures are stated" (Allegories 269). De Man identifies a law by which the enactment of any promise assures the production of its own disjunction. The connection between de Man's evaluation of Rousseau and James's figuration of Isabel is clear:

The noncoincidence of the theoretical statement with its phenomenal manifestation implies that the mode of existence of the contract is temporal, or that time is the phenomenal category produced by the discrepancy. Considered performatively, the speech act of the contractual text never refers to a situation that exists in the present, but signals toward a hypothetical future . . . . All laws are future-oriented and prospective; their illocutionary mode is that of the promise. (Allegories 273)

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34 Miller would say that her need of Platonic repetition "calls up the other [Nietzschean], by an inevitable compulsion" (Fiction and Repetition 9).
Isabel's busy execution of postponed action corresponds, in this comparison, to the "theoretical statement," the speech act which "signals toward a hypothetical future"; Isabel is the future-oriented contractual text whose "mode is that of the promise." De Man continues, "every promise assumes a date at which the promise is made and without which it would have no validity . . . the present of the promise is always a past with regard to its realization . . . the eternal present of the contract can never apply as such to any particular present" (Allegories 273). The moment that Isabel acts, a discrepancy necessarily emerges. In de Man's example, this unavoidable discrepancy has political ramifications on a social scale; in Isabel's case, the disjunction precipitates a crisis of self-definition.

Isabel emerges as a difficult emblem of de Man's reading of Rousseau's text: difficult because, in distinction from de Man's reading of the theoretical environment, in which the necessarily skewed translation of a suspended potentiality into an actual application clearly reveals the disjunction involved in its own translation, Isabel's own transition from imminent to realized occurs repeatedly without the disjunction's announcing itself. For Isabel, as we have seen, the disjunction has always failed to register; her ignorance of the forceful operation of the disjunction characterizes her historical condition. Reared in her theoretical office, Isabel has always understood the future to consist of memories she calls the past. Furthermore, she has always, even reflexively, embraced the substance of her future without noticing that it traced her estrangement from her hope of liberation: "it had led to her beginning afresh many times" (31). The fact that Isabel engages the future through the faculty of memory, indicating
her submission to time, realizes the disjunction of the promise that de Man writes about. But de Man's promise is one of application; as something done, the promise is extensive. Isabel's promise is not simply such an extension: she promises, but she is also the figure of promise.

De Man notes the illocutionary mode of the law as that of the promise, which is always rendered "of the past" from the vantage point of its future fulfillment in actuality (Allegories 273). The failure of correspondence between a past-defined promise's notion of futurity and the actual future is for de Man "the situation . . . without solution" (Allegories 273); there is no getting around the failure of congruence. Isabel, as we have seen, fancies incorrectly that her resistance preserves her immunity from the operations of time. She thinks that she is as she has always been. We have seen how she is wrong about this, but she is also right. For, as the figure of promise, Isabel embodies a structural imperative, de Man's law, the tension between disjunctive memory and past expectation. It is for this reason that her discovery of the disjunction implicit in promising constitutes an ironic subversion of her status as promise.

After her marriage to Osmond, and before chapter 42, Isabel is deluded that her fate continues suspended and imminent while she has actually embraced action and, through that entrance, has violently disjoined herself from her office of resistance. Isabel translates herself from imminent promise to actual promiser through a future-oriented act and thus masks the disjunction inherent in her translation. She agonizingly refuses the proposal of Warburton and postpones the advances of Goodwood because both seem preclusive, somehow contrary to her vast potential; her history has been one of
postponement. Why should a promise of marriage to Gilbert Osmond, himself the putatively non-preclusive unknown quantity, which Isabel conceives as furtherance of her vast potential, be read by her as anything else? Isabel acts, exercises her personal promise, by promising and thus disguises any discrepancy between her potential and her vow, her promise and her promise, in continued delusions of immanent imminence and an eternal moment of multitudinous purposes.

Isabel trusts Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond not a little because of the manner of their temporal self-portrayal, which duplicitously appeals to the eternal. Merle and Osmond dissemble: suggesting and saying that they are as they always have been. Isabel accepts Osmond as a man with "[n]o career, no name, no position, no fortune, no past, no future, no anything" (211). If everything is as it always has been, then there is no possibility even for the imagination of treachery; treachery depends on plotting, which requires diachrony. Isabel still imagines her potential as vast even though her future and

Madame Merle establishes her seeming constancy and uncanny dominion over time with grand flourishes that border on extravagance. When Isabel first meets her, Merle goes on at some length about her own advanced age: "'I'm old and stale and faded,' she said more than once; 'I'm of no more interest than last week's newspaper. You're young and fresh and of to-day; you've the great thing—you've actuality. I once had it—we all have it for an hour. You, however, will have it for longer'" (209). She is pleased to indulge in hyperbole to make the point: "'I was born before the French Revolution. Ah, my dear, je viens de loin; I belong to the old, old world'" (210). Despite her antiquity, Merle claims eerie immutability. When Osmond deigns to pay her a compliment—"You're looking particularly well"—Madame Merle replies, "I think I always look the same" (255). She fairly revels in her masterful control of time: "'I was not late, by the way, the other day, when you came back from London; the clock was just at eight when I came into the drawing-room; it was the rest of you that were before the time'" (209). And when poor Pansy expresses disappointment, Merle offers cold comfort: "'You're very late,' the young creature gently said. 'My dear child, I'm never later than I intend to be'" (406).
Madame Merle's treachery have become contingent. The idyll of a carriage careering into the directionless dark continues to inform Isabel's fancy:

She [Isabel] had always been fond of history, and here was history in the stones of the street and the atoms of the sunshine. She had an imagination that kindled at the mention of great deeds, and wherever she turned some great deed had been acted . . . . Her consciousness was so mixed that she scarcely knew where the different parts of it would lead her, and she went about in a repressed ecstasy of contemplation . . . (310)

However, her ecstasy of contemplation in the dark gives way to apprehension about the mysteries of the unknown. Osmond's declaration of love yields a pang that seems like "the slipping of a fine bolt--backward, forward, she couldn't have said which" (335). Isabel's perception of her temporal predicament has not broadened, but it is increasingly narrated in the tones of anxiety; as in this particularly resonant tonal refiguring of her future: "Her imagination, as I say, now hung back: there was a last vague space it couldn't cross--a dusky, uncertain tract which looked ambiguous and even slightly treacherous, like a moorland seen in the winter twilight. But she was to cross it yet" (337). The twilight at Gardencourt in the novel's establishing scene is recalled here; however, that earlier pacific eternal is recast as a treacherous winter moorland.

Gardencourt's unstable figuration of eternity comes back to haunt Isabel. Ominously, James underscores the eerie lie, Daniel Touchett's sympathetic yet gruesome fantasy, by which Gardencourt enjoyed its serenity. And since Gardencourt prefigures Isabel herself, James insists that the transformed landscape assures Isabel's own change. The "last vague
space" is not an eternal landscape; rather, in this twilight, Isabel will serve as a dynamic agent who will cross the "dusky, uncertain tract" yet. Isabel will traverse this wasteland and thus pass beyond her historical office by confronting the normative falsity that perverts repetition and corrupts the promise of eternity.

During her vigil in chapter 42, Isabel finally discerns a discrepancy: the disjunction of past and present realities. Alone with the furniture in the darkness, as we have seen her before, Isabel concludes the chapter lingering over an image that rends the fabric of eternity: Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond have, simply, not always been as they have endeavoured to seem. The stunning revelations of Countess Gemini do not come for nine more chapters. It would appear, then, that before she learns of the substance of the discrepancy in Merle's and Osmond's past, and of the treachery it precipitates, Isabel is chiefly struck by the structural incongruence of a treachery and the discrepancy that it requires. Moreover, as she works her way across the darksome tract that is her vigil, Isabel wavers between her traditional affection for ignorance and an active scrutiny of the visions that memory presents. She discovers that her memory reveals more than a vast legacy Platonic sameness.36

Isabel begins her reflections by following her husband's directive to think about the possibility of Lord Warburton's continuing obligation to her. She feels sure that "[f]or herself nothing was changed; what she once thought of him she always thought; it was needless this feeling should change" (459). Yet, under enforced scrutiny, Isabel discovers that the comfortable inertia, a fondness for which inspires her characterization, is joined

36 See note 7 above.
by the vivid "palpable existence" (459), "an uneradicated predilection" (460), of a memory at odds with her peace: "[i]t was as thin as a hair, but there were moments when she seemed to hear it vibrate" (459). She depends on the dead simplicity of the stories that her memory tells her; yet, in thinking of Lord Warburton, she seems to find, and hopes unsuccessfully to quell, an active and irresolvable agitation. This trouble recalls her confident assessment of the Albany home's appeal. Isabel used to be comfortable with the discovery of life where one sees only its absence; at the outset of her vigil, it registers as unpleasant surprise and already gauges her difference from her previous self.

Isabel, it turns out, is only troubled by her thoughts of Lord Warburton as they throw into relief those of her husband: "It was as if he had had the evil eye; as if his presence were a blight and his favour a misfortune" (461). Isabel is accustomed to find life in death, but now this tendency only reminds her of Osmond's introduction of death into life:

She had taken all the first steps in the purest confidence, and then she had suddenly found the infinite vista of a multiplied life to be a dark, narrow alley with a dead wall at the end. Instead of leading to the high places of happiness, from which the world would seem to lie below one, so that one could look down with a sense of exaltation and advantage, and judge and choose and pity, it led rather downward and earthward, into realms of restriction and depression where the sound of other lives, easier and freer, was heard as from above, and where it served to deepen the feeling of failure. (461)

Isabel hoped to climb to mountainous heights, and she achieves, instead, the most
abysmal descent. However, James's spatial opposition is attended by a temporal implication. In expectation of "a multiplied life," Isabel accomplishes a premature burial. By not reading Osmond right (463), she has also misconstrued herself. When Isabel imagines that she finally sees "the full moon" and "the whole man" (463), recollection of her proper name alerts the reader to Isabel's present revaluation of self as well. For the first time, memory captivates Isabel and she does not resist its appeal with imposed forgetting. Or, rather, she thwarts her previous tendency to resist and allows herself to forget her office. To that end, Isabel dramatically misrecalls her own nature: "For herself, avowedly, the world had always interested her and the study of her fellow creatures been her constant passion" (467). Furthermore, she sees in Osmond a base approximation of what reminds James's reader of Isabel's traditional station: "... he had looked at [society] out of his window even when he appeared to be most detached from it" (467-68).

Despite James's repeated claims that the night of Isabel's vigil passes for her without heed of time, in chapter 42, Isabel plainly regards her "horrible" life "as she would have read the hour on the clock-face" (471). Isabel reviews her putatively open promise to Osmond as a wretched trap, her vast potential apparently baffled, and her future seemingly ruined. But the thematic potency of her epiphany is counterbalanced by the hopeful transformation it accomplishes: "Her mind, assailed by visions, was in a state of extraordinary activity, and her visions might as well come to her there, where she sat up to meet them, as on her pillow, to make a mockery of rest" (472). We find Isabel, at the close of chapter 42, in only apparently familiar circumstances. In the dark, isolated in
a room, Isabel struggles to discharge the force of what her theory cannot pacify, "trying to persuade herself that there was no reason why Pansy shouldn't be married as you would put a letter in the post-office" (473). Her efforts fail and, in an utter darkness that is her own figure of liberty, Isabel faces the "remembered vision... of her husband and Madame Merle unconsciously and familiarly associated" (473). As her subsequent actions prove, that vision is not the signal of Isabel's defeat, but of her difficult awakening.

Isabel shares an affinity with Gilbert Osmond's daughter that is not sufficiently explained by characterization alone. Pansy exists in a cloistered suspension among the good sisters. Her father keeps her in a sort of perversely constant pre-pubescent, in skirts that are always too short and hats that are always too large. She recalls Isabel's own stasis in a most gruesome way. Pansy is described early on as a *tabula rasa*: her "absence of initiative, of conversation, of personal claims, seem[s]... in a girl of twenty, unnatural and even uncanny" (533). Pansy lives in an eternal moment, just as Isabel seemed to before her marriage. However, unlike Isabel, Pansy is not said to have a vast potential; instead, we see that her desire is singular: the love of Ned Rosier denied by her father. Isabel's difficult advocacy of this young romance occupies the interval between her realization of a redefinitive historical schism, involving Merle and Osmond, and her final promise to Pansy. This project, though less than successful, forces Isabel uneasily to confront the ramifications of an imposed static posture: that is, Pansy's forced indefinite postponement of her life recalls Isabel's own office. Isabel does not remark on the similarity; she is "incapable of that large inward reference, the tone almost of the
philosophic historian" (438). Yet it provides a basis for her action: James assigns his heroine, who supremely valorizes her freedom to forget, one crucial remembrance. Isabel remembers Pansy.

Isabel's final encounter with Pansy comes at the convent, in the quarter of the Piazza Navona, at which the young girl has, once again, been installed. Isabel comes, almost directly, from her conversation with the Countess Gemini and is in full possession of the historical facts about Merle and Osmond. Isabel, in contrast to her earlier affinity for hermetic spaces, views the convent as a dark prison; looking out its windows she does not see the rain which earlier figured her impulse to start afresh:

On the other side of the window lay the garden of the convent; but this is not what she saw; she saw nothing of the budding plants and the glowing afternoon. She saw, in the crude light of that revelation which had already become a part of experience and to which the very frailty of the vessel in which it had been offered her only gave an intrinsic price, the dry staring fact that she had been an applied handled hung-up tool, as senseless and convenient as mere shaped wood and iron.

(602-3)

Looking out the window, a privilege she placidly foregoes in Albany, Isabel sees the hard fact of her contingency. Isabel stares at the incontrovertible evidence afforded now by her memory, for it "had already become a part of experience" (603), and does not resist "the dry staring fact." A moment later, as Isabel takes her leave of Pansy, fully aware of what Madame Merle has done—the woman herself waits at the bottom of the convent stairs—she recoils from the convent and the office to which she would once have run. More than
the activity of Isabel's mind, in this scene, memory is figured in every element of James's setting. Moreover, for Isabel, Pansy becomes the figure of this memory.37

Isabel's promise to Pansy has a double value. She literally offers a promise of return to the young girl.38 And she makes a promise to memory itself: she promises to

37 The name Pansy, a nineteenth-century flower name, comes from the French pensée which means "thought." In the nineteenth century, the gift of flowers relied on a fluctuating cultural vocabulary of implication. It is inaccurate to imagine that, for the Victorians, "the language of flowers was a socially agreed-upon symbolic language which men and women actually used to communicate with one another concerning matters of love and romance" (Seaton 1). However, while other blooms have sometimes widely diverse meanings, differing from book to book in the burgeoning, popular, Victorian library of sentimental flower manuals (Seaton 2), the implication of the pansy is relatively stable. These volumes assign the pansy the following senses: "I share your sentiments," "think of me," "you occupy my thoughts," and "forget me not" (Seaton 186-87). In this way, Pansy is a literal token of remembrance, a figure of memory's unceasing appeal. James's use of the name Pansy is also an intertextual reference to Hawthorne's The Dolliver Romance in which the three-year-old Pansy holds her great-grandfather back from death (Holland 20).

Also interesting, but too vast a topic to investigate adequately here, is the intersection of James's text and the period vogue for flower books as it bears on the question of translation and reading. James's reader recalls Isabel's activity in her office and the Ludlows' troubling over her status as original or translation, when we learn that there is very little evidence to suggest that "people actually used symbolic floral lists to communicate, even if the parties agreed upon what book to use for their meanings" (2) and that a Victorian bouquet was not "easily 'translate[d]' into a coherent message" (1). Flowers, in this way, like Isabel, allegorize the story of their resistance to coherence. That Osmond is "like a serpent in a bank of flowers" (Portrait 466) can, then, be read as more than an allusion to Paradise and the Fall, as Galloway (17-19) and Arnold Kettle (97), for example, would have it.

38 Efforts to explain the literal reasons for Isabel's return yield odd claims. Holland, for example, posits that Isabel returns to mother Pansy: "The pressure exerted by the novel at the end constitutes the role of parenthood as a mission, when Isabel's maternal feeling, a factor in drawing her to Osmond and his daughter in the first place, impels her to return to protect and comfort Pansy, even if it proves to be too late to help her" (52). Holland comes closer to my estimation of Pansy's figural value when he writes: "The relation of Isabel and Pansy is companionable rather than authoritarian (they are close to each other in age, and they embrace 'like two sisters' at their final interview)" (52).
return to a memory which will be the work of her future and, James's description assures us, a means of ascent:

At the top of the staircase they had to separate, as it appeared to be part of the mild but very definite discipline under which Pansy lived that she should not go down. Isabel descended, and when she had reached the bottom the girl was standing above. "You'll come back?" she called out in a voice that Isabel remembered afterwards.

"Yes--I'll come back." (608)

Without falling back into forgetful illusions of a forever postponed potential, in rejection of a radically imminent posture, Isabel promises a specific act. By her promise to Pansy, Isabel marks her own future definitively. More than this, James lays important stress on

Quentin Anderson reasons that "[s]ince Pansy cannot be helped by Isabel, Isabel's return is a return to the struggle with herself" (52). This is an adequate way of stressing that Isabel's confrontation with memory is hardly a neat solution. As note 27 above suggests, remembering memory requires its own supplementary flexion by which memory is effaced by the imposition of its own activity. Nevertheless, if Isabel, in this way, is left to remember not memory but the force of what memory is not, James's implication remains somewhat hopeful because, paradoxically, memory is what it is not. On the figural ambiguity of the novel's conclusion, see Fischer who reminds us that Isabel does not manage to escape, to burst through a bolted door: "Isabel reinforces the lock by putting her hand on the latch. If she is reconciled, it is to that within the chamber, not beyond the door" (48). Fischer argues that Isabel opts, at the novel's end, for a return to the kind of refuge from reality characterized by her Albany office. However, James's narration does not allow Fischer's interpretation on a number of levels. The literal differences, between Isabel's conduct in the Albany office and her handling of the Gardencourt door, are enough to make plain the inadequacy of Fischer's reading: at Gardencourt, Isabel holds the latch, controls its movement, and stands on the outside of the door.
the fact that Isabel remembers Pansy's voice: the fragile appeal of memory.\textsuperscript{40} By leaving for Rome before the novel's final page, Isabel reconfirms that she remembers memory. She leaves her resistance behind and relinquishes the damnable key to patience.

\textsuperscript{40} For this reason, this reading constitutes a rejection of William Veeder's psychoanalytical interpretation of Isabel's final choice as the embrace of nullity, the performance of Freud's Death Drive (118). Furthermore, understanding Pansy as a figure of memory helps remedy Maxwell Geismar's dissatisfying reading of her as "a dubious symbol of the European jeune fille" whose relation with Isabel, as such, is "never convincing" (49).
Chapter Two

The Broken Sentence: The Figuring of Genealogy in *The Wings of the Dove*
Kate Croy uncomfortably wields the damnable key to patience from the opening moments of *The Wings of the Dove*; indeed, an incrementally complicated system of patient and impatient delay is, if not her birthright, the undeniable legacy of her familial dissolution. The grim specifics of Kate's penurious desperation have yet to be detailed as James's establishing scene reveals her literally waiting on her obscurely sinister father, Lionel Croy. She attends his theatrically contrived, delayed emergence from the back rooms of his Chirk Street lodging in irritated resolution. She has been similarly detained before and, as we shall see, conspires, at once, to exploit and defy her legacy of imposed patience with a rigorously cautious pace and a reckless fervour.

The cause of the dissolution of the Croy family to which Kate is heir has been the energetic focus of several readers of James's novel. Most recently, Sedgwick has read a past action of sexual criminality out of textual clues (*Tendencies* 73-103). But the specifics, whether or not they conspire to indicate a specific past misdeed, are always blurred by James. The sense of a determined past cause is never engaged by James, who instead addresses the torments of being a Croy, of being the last Croy into whom all the detritus of the unnamed disaster has precipitated down, only in the terms of historical effect:

Her father's life, her sister's, her own, that of her two lost brothers—the whole history of their house had the effect of some fine florid voluminous phrase, say even a musical, that dropped first into words and notes without sense and then,
hanging unfinished, into no words nor any notes at all. Why should a set of people have been put in motion, on such a scale and with such an air of being equipped for a profitable journey, only to break down without an accident, to stretch themselves in the wayside dust without a reason? (2)¹

Rather than specify what caused such a fraying of the grammatical fabric of the Croy musical phrase, James only proffers the effect, that dispersion from the cohesion of musical harmony to silence: a progress of annihilation.² The organized sounds of musical arrangement are displaced, dispersed, until soundlessness prevails.³ The Croy family harmonics proceed to measure after measure of rests. Or, indeed, as rests are themselves a form of notation, the composition merely remains unfinished, or non-musical emptiness follows without any notational representation of the void.

James's gloss of Kate's predicament describes a transformation, but what is the

¹ Nicola Bradbury's consideration of the novel relies, in large part, on her own provocative reading of this passage ("Nothing" 88-90).

² James places much weight on the nihility that follows the text of the sentence, prompting his reader to wonder how to read a non-text, inspiring a desire to make that void somehow legible. However, the tattered end of the Croy sentence is not the exceptional case it first seems to be. Instead, our approach to it must direct our analysis of the other part of the phrase and of all the other apparently inviolate phrases of James's text. Yeazell reminds us that "[t]o approach the late James as if his language were a beautiful and mysterious screen placed between us and the moral facts of the novels is to miss more than half his power . . . a language which moves so fluidly between fact and desire . . . offers us, from moment to moment, consolations all its own" (14). Sprinker reasons that "the claim to 'see' what the text, its characters, James himself, and the culture that first received [his work] . . . were totally blind to rests upon a foundation of epistemological certitude that the text shows again and again to be highly dubious" ("Historicizing" 204).

³ For a consideration of James's use of musical references as they connect to the novel's thematic terrain, see Adeline R. Tintner, The Cosmopolitan World 295-96.
subject of the transformative process? In a figural description that baffles phenomenal
comparison, the genealogy of the Croy family initiates a tendency toward blankness. It is
not the house of Croy itself that moves toward vexing irresolution in this passage; such a
reductive reading does not take into account what James troubled to write. Rather, it is
the "whole history" of the family that has the effect metonymically rendered. The family
itself, as a positive phenomenal entity, is absent. The past to which Sedgwick appeals
goes undetailed. It is the history of the Croy "house" that is at stake here. By placing

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4 By concentrating on "The Figure in the Carpet," Todorov identifies this Jamesian interest in "effect":

The Jamesian narrative is always based on the quest for an absolute and absent cause. Let us consider the terms of this phrase one by one. There exists a cause: this word must here be taken in a very broad sense; it is often a character but sometimes, too, an event or an object. The effect of this cause is the narrative, the story we are told. It is absolute: for everything in this narrative ultimately owes its presence to this cause. But the cause is absent and must be sought: it is not only absent but for the most part unknown; what is suspected is its existence, not its nature. The quest proceeds; the tale consists of the search for, the pursuit of, this initial cause, this primal essence. The narrative stops when it is attained.

(145)

In anticipation of the objection that James's works are hardly so uniform, Todorov noted two qualifications to these remarks. He explains that he refers principally to the period 1892 to 1903 and that this proposed reading of James should be understood properly as a "notational grid" (146) from which James's accomplishments vary but to which they always refer. Yet even with those factors taken into account, Todorov's belief, that origins and causes are finally laid bare in James's texts, misconstrues the true aspect of Jamesian closure. Todorov indicates a measure of the discomfort to which I refer when he writes:

If Henry James's secret, the figure in the carpet of his work, the string which unites the pearls of the separate tales, is precisely the existence of a secret, how does it come about that we can now name the secret, render absence present? Am I not thereby betraying the fundamental Jamesian precept which consists in this affirmation of absence, this impossibility of designating truth by its name? (177)

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5 On the role of "effect" in James, see Felman, "Henry James: Madness and the Risks of Practice (Turning the Screw of Interpretation)." It is clear that Sedgwick's claim must be read within the context established by Felman (and by Todorov before
analytical weight on what James says about this history, we may arrive at a provisional understanding of what the category "history" means for James.

The "florid voluminous" phrase is, in its decay, first transmuted into the non-musical language of words and the curiously ambiguous "notes." Notes are, of course, the symbolic orthography of musical composition. So, when notes drop out of their coherent phrasing into isolation they may make sound, but not sense. As incoherence creeps, sound vanishes into inscription; or, rather, perhaps musical inscription—never

her). This school of thought posits that James, [o]n one hand ... deploys all his forces to attain the hidden essence, to reveal the secret object; on the other, he constantly postpones, protects the revelation—until the story's end, if not beyond. The absence of the cause or of the truth is present in the text—indeed, it is the text's logical origin and reason for being. The cause is what, by its absence, brings the text into being. The essential is absent, the absence is essential. (Todorov 145)

Sedgwick insists that James's absent cause is easily translated into the notation of the presence of a specific, though politely "unspeakable," crime. The unspeakableness that other critics reveal to be the fundamental basis of our understanding of Jamesian ontology is, for Sedgwick, mere prudish euphemism preserved "at the clownishly, squalidly formulaic level of epithets and invocations" (Tendencies 76). Sallie Sears offers a corrective when she writes:

To the extent that the novel is concerned with causes, it is as they exist in the combination of character and circumstance, not as they relate to the origins of character itself. And though James is one of the great scholars of human motives, his interest is in their processes: in the effects, the implications, the reverberations of self-interest and not in its psychodynamics. (67)

See also Ian Watt on James's rendering of impressions rather than the events that yield those impressions (534-36, especially 535). Writing on the first paragraph of The Ambassadors, Watt stresses the Jamesian primacy of the hero's definitive consciousness, noting that all we know of the novel's world is filtered through its effect on Strether's mind and reflected to us: "James has carefully avoided giving us the usual retrospective beginning, that pile of details which he scornfully termed a 'mere seated mass of information' . . . . Of course, this initially makes the novel more difficult, because what we probably think of as primary—event and its setting—is subordinated to what James thinks is" (540). Watt underscores the potency of Jamesian effect even while he presumes the existence of its antecedent source and opposes the nature of the reader's probable way of thinking about primacy to James's way.
sounded music at all—is here broken into its asemantic composite parts; or, unplayed but imagined—mentally sounded, or read—music proceeds from full grammatical phrasing to fragmented parsing. After all, actual sound imagery is absent from James's suggestive system. James does not offer a meditation on sound. When he curiously and purposively introduces his musical aspect here—"[a] phrase, say even a musical"—James does so to appose the musical to the grammatical. He continues to stress the notational aspect of musical and lexical inscription and phrasing, rather than the perhaps more obvious allusion of music's sometimes-attendant sounded performance. James's figural vocabulary is ambiguous, of course, but crucially grammatical in that it refers to parts of speech as its imagistic system. The force of this history is metonymically likened to the felt consequence of a grammatical transformation: the "whole" history has the result of the disintegration of another "fine florid" grammatical whole into parts.

In this way, in figuring the effect of the Croy family history, James seems to choose a system of causative symbols. By choosing a system of grammatical dispersion or concentration, James removes the impact of history from the phenomenal arena. The result of James's choice to use a grammatical model is that the impact of the historical process of the Croy family is non-linear. The family does not merely begin whole and devolve into fragments; James's figural vocabulary challenges such an assignment of sequence. Here cause and effect complicate the seductive ease of such apparent sequence. The family history has the impact of a grammatical parsing that yields fragments and untagged lacunae that speak potently. The dregs of dissolution are not mere waste in this grammatical system. They are specifically functional, as we shall see.
Furthermore, by figuring the potential of Croy history as a grammar, as a lexicon, as an inscription, James complicates the apparent systematic logic of cause-and-effect itself. That is, the effect of the family's history is likened to the transmutation of musical/grammatical effect into its notational cues/causes: the effective disintegration suggested by history yields the very causative elements that conspire to initiate the effect of their dispersal. The decay of the florid phrase yields not detritus, but fodder. Effect necessarily follows cause only if we insist on a phenomenological reading. In this system, however, effect yields cause. The grammatical metamorphosis that is the effect of history here is a crucible that yields concentrated signs. These signs, by virtue of their grammaticality, are the effects of the transformation—from the voluminous phrase to its notes and lacunae—and, in turn, the causes of further signification.6

After the grammar of the musical-lexical notations slips from arrangement into senseless disarray, a further stage of transformation ensues. The final yield of the process is silence, blankness, or the unwritten. For this reason, the process James describes seems to be one of degeneration.7 However, the reader may take the first transmutation of

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6 Banta calls this "James's 'truth,'" when she observes that "there is no past; there are only 'representations' of the past by means of texts" ("Beyond Post-Modernism" 102).

7 Along these lines, J. A. Ward reads the novel itself as an account of social disintegration. Dorothea Krook considers it as the detailing of an instance of moral corruption (203-15, 221-29). Another recent reading of this crucial establishing passage resolves that James describes a linear movement from sense to senselessness, from ownership to loss:

Kate's chagrin derives from the senselessness of her family story, a diminishment conveyed in a metaphor that emphasizes the representational nature of their loss. She traces the course of that story from stylistic extravagance ("some fine florid voluminous phrase") to a loss of significance ("words and notes without sense") to
arranged musical notes and grammatically associated words into "notes" not as a
dissolution, but as a concentration. James's "notes" themselves serve an allusive function.
Notes may be understood as the memoranda of a larger concept not yet, or no longer,
fully inscribed or elaborated. They are abbreviations. A note is a tag that refers
allegorically; that is, each note stands for a prior or future principle. In this way, the
voluminous phrase is not annihilated, but commemorated in fragmented relics and omens.

If the process described here is one in which phrases are concentrated into notes,
as I have described, then the trajectory of the process suggests that notes, in turn, are
concentrated into noteless silence. Blankness, the uncomposed or unnotated, then, is the
most potent form of allusion; it is the result of the most complete reduction of meaningful
ingredients, the ultimate part that stands for the wholest whole. Silence is not, then, the
absence of grammar, but the reduced, concentrated presence of all grammar. Indeed, the
silence into which the florid phrase descends is one of those troubling pauses that
necessarily refers to what it is not. It is here that the apposition of music proves most
instructive. The silence in this sentence is not merely an absence, but a taunt by which
the reader is naggingly reminded of all that is not present. This is explicitly the case as

Rivkin reads the Croy sentence as a metaphor for the devolution of sense. In turn, she
argues that Kate proposes to respond to the degenerative tendency in the sentence: to
reverse loss and to "recoup meaning" (91).
James describes the clause's final nothingness as following on what hangs "unfinished," as an ellipsis. It is a silence of irresolution; in the grammatical void is the palpable "hanging" presence of the unresolved. The void that, in silence, "speaks" of the suspension that yields it is a ghost.\(^8\)

James's figuring of this movement toward nothingness is a process of allegoresis in which the concentrated lacunae that are produced stand for the principle of dissolution that yielded them. In this way, the specific function of the transformation's resultant lacunae is retrospective. These silences, defined as the "hanging unfinished" of a precedent, necessarily refer back to that precedent and the process of its suspension by which they were created. In this establishing passage, history accomplishes a grammatical process that constructs lacunae that necessarily function as memorials to it.

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\(^8\) Indeed, in anatomizing her immediate family later on, James describes the Croys: "Her haunting harassing father, her menacing uncompromising aunt, her portionless little nephews and nieces . . . " (23). As Todorov concludes his reading of James's 1898 work, "In the Cage": "... we are, therefore, in the realm of the hidden. Yet there exists another case in which 'absence' cannot be conquered by means accessible to human beings: here the absolute cause is a ghost" (154). For further reflection on James's use of spectral causation, especially in the shorter writings of his later-middle and early-major phases, see Todorov 154-189. Sears gets it wrong when she reasons "that Lionel Croy's compromising influence does not really seem to have very much to do with Kate's deepest possibilities and energies" (67).

Rivkin discerns a similar system of concentration through annihilation later on in the novel:

In giving up Milly's letter to compensate Kate, Densher has not paid back his debt so much as created an ever-increasing and never to be satisfied sense of loss. Instead of settling accounts, the sacrifice produces an account that never ends, a series of possible "turns" that keep spiralling before him, enveloping Milly's original act with a covering of ever-increasing value like that of the lost pearl. Indeed, the destruction of the original letter has the paradoxical effect of reproducing the letter as a series of metaphorical copies, copies that multiply to the very degree that they fail to fill in for the absent original. (False Positions 118)
Commemoration is an inevitable by-product of history's grammatical impact. History "itself" recedes out of reach in this clearly crucial Jamesian passage; we only read what history's impact is like. This suggests a system of infinite regress in which we look to the original cause of the grammatical impact in order to discover history itself; but James's system suggests that such a quest for a super-preceding, original cause is very much beside the point. As Sharon Cameron notes in another context: "Language is the picture that replaces not presence but rather its image, different from the original and with space intervening; for presence never was, or, if it was, it was in a history so ancient that we could no longer recognize its true face" (Cameron, Lyric 198). The entire process of grammatical dispersion is a metonymy for history, an allegory of an absent principle. All we know of history are the metonymic symptoms that follow from its always already absent "presence."  

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9 As Jean-Luc Nancy elaborates, "... time presents itself to us as this spatiality or 'spacing' (espacement) of a certain suspension—which is nothing else than the epoch, which, of course, means 'suspension' in Greek" ("Finite History" 156). James does not encrypt a reference to sodomy. Instead, he offers a figure for Nancy's espacement yielded inevitably—that is, by definition (of the term "epoch")—by the irretrievable temporal location of presence in the distant remove of history.

10 Julia Kristeva, in her "Apologia for Metaphor," comments on a similar textual dynamic in Proust's writing. Kristeva claims that, for Proust, metaphoric binarism is irreducible in A la recherche du temps perdu: A representation, for instance a seascape by Elstir, can work only as a metamorphosis: not just a simple name but, by virtue of the substitution of one name for another, the metaphor incarnate. The narrator observes that: the charm of each of [the seascapes] lay in a sort of metamorphosis of the objects represented, analogous to what in poetry we call metaphor, and that, if God the Father had created things by naming them, it was by taking away their names or giving them other names that Elstir created them anew. The names which designate things correspond invariably to an intellectual notion, alien to our true impressions, and compelling us to
Only if grammar is understood to be at the service of logic (for example, the logic of cause and effect), does this system of ghost-writing seem paradoxical. Readers will note that the system I describe is in keeping with James's characteristic elliptical technique; indeed, the notes in this passage "hang fire," unfinished, in one of the most typically Jamesian constructions. All the meaning of inscription is suspended, not annihilated, in the container of silence. Similarly, the most telling suggestion of Lionel Croy's villainy, as Sedgwick agrees, is precisely that it is "spoken" in silences. Sedgwick draws a suggestive connection with "the love that dares not speak its name," but her queer-critical trajectory fails to address the further implications of James's establishing system once she asserts unequivocally that James's emphasis on silence is a knowing encryption of Croy's "homosexual" crime(s). Indeed, one's ability positively to assert a discernible past event is thwarted by James's system precisely because James does not refer to the past.

Rivkin notes a kind of misreason, in Kate Croy herself, identical to Sedgwick's erroneous presumption that the past is readily available. Rivkin says, "[Kate] values a fidelity to origins that does not result in deception or replacement--her wish to be her father's son and redeem the Croy name from disgrace reflects this commitment to

eliminate from them everything that is not in keeping with that notion. (Proust I.893 qtd. in Kristeva Proust and the Sense of Time 58-9)

Kristeva's observations suggest, for our purposes, that all we know of the past is in the grammar yielded by its history. We cannot approach the thing in itself, but may only gloss its representation. And, as Nancy reminds us, "the original and proper meaning of 'representation' is not a 'second presentation,' but 'a presentation to the self"' (154). The intervening veils between subject and past may seem to obscure a hidden determined thing, but the veils of metaphor do not impose themselves a posteriori; they are native to epistemology and determinant of it.
representation without loss or deviation" (False Positions 97). This passage marks one of Rivkin's most basic beliefs about The Wings of the Dove: that Kate seeks a return to a pure original state of identity. Rivkin confirms this interpretation by allowing Croy to name such an original place. Kate's mistake, according to Rivkin, is in her belief that the past is so simply retrievable. She reminds us that the very project of retrieval may, in fact, corrupt and efface the origin beyond recognition. While Rivkin is a clear ally in my rejection of Sedgwick, she narrowly misreads Kate by assigning her motives that offend James's characterization. It seems clear, for example, that in Kate's initial gestures and continuing motives, she seeks to revise her sentence, to craft something new and not to regain something old. There is something seductively tragic in the belief that Kate Croy mistakes the nature of origins and thinks that she can retrieve a lost identity. The novel, however, suggests another reading. Kate allegorizes the very elusiveness of such retrieval. Her final words to Densher are not an epiphany that corrects an error, but an admission that marks the culmination of an education.11

The structure of James's sentence, although it seems retrospective, is in fact, like the work of all memory, proleptic.12 The notes into which the sentence first moves may

11 Yeazell agrees that "the late novels have their climactic moments of discovery, but in those moments James's men and women confront what in some part of themselves they have long since known" (33).

12 The reading of Kate Croy's sentence undertaken here depends upon Derrida's fundamental remarks which indicate that the inscription of memorials is, first by their inscription, divorced from the past and provocative of a future consideration: The memory we are considering here is not essentially oriented toward the past, toward a past present deemed to have really and previously existed. Memory stays with traces, in order to "preserve" them, but traces of a past that has never been present, traces which themselves never occupy the form of presence and
be for future reference, as we shall see. I have said that notes are relics and omens. The retrospection that the final hanging suspension of the Croy family phrase necessitates is, simultaneously, an anticipation. On the simplest level, the lacuna yields an expectation of its own suspension when the nagging unfinished aspect will be resolved. More complicatedly, perhaps, the performance of retrospection unfolds temporally as a progress, a prolapse. The lacuna, then, accomplishes a grammatical transformation in which retrospection becomes prospection, looking back becomes the business of looking forward. As Benjamin notes, what is remembered is not what was experienced (crudely put), but what the process of remembering creates (Benjamin, "Image of Proust" 202). In this way, the sense of the lacuna as a concentrated suspension is the result of retrospection that must be enacted as a prospection. This prospection is the procedure of always remain, as it were, to come—come from the future, from the to come. Resurrection, which is always the formal element of "truth," a recurrent difference between a present and its presence, does not resuscitate a past which had been present; it engages the future. (Memoires 58)
In turn, Derrida refers us to de Man, whom his remarks memorialize. De Man's theorizes that:

[m]emory is the name of what is no longer only a mental "capacity" oriented toward one of the three modes of the present, the past present, which could be dissociated from the present present and the future present. Memory projects itself toward the future, and it constitutes the present of the present. The 'rhetoric of temporality' is this rhetoric of memory. (Memoires 56-57)
In "Sign and Symbol in Hegel's Aesthetics," de Man concludes that "[t]he faculty that enables thought to exist also makes its preservation impossible" (Aesthetic Ideology 102); See also the very useful analysis that leads de Man to this conclusion, especially 101-102; consider, as well, de Man's, "The Literary Self as Origin: The Work of Georges Poulet," (Blindness and Insight 79-101), especially 89-90, on the illusory potency of memory's seeming reference to the real past, and 92-93, for elaboration on the centrally important observation that "[t]he power of memory does not reside in its capacity to resurrect a situation or a feeling that actually existed, but it is a constitutive act of the mind bound to its own present and oriented toward the future of its own elaboration" (92).
memory that Benjamin associates with Proust's *Recherche* and that de Man reads in Wordsworth's *Essays on Epitaphs*:

the power to anticipate is so closely connected with the power to remember that it is almost impossible to distinguish them from each other. They seem like opposites, and are indeed at opposite poles if we think of time as a continual movement from birth to death. In this perspective, the source is at a maximal remove from the final point of destination, and it would be impossible to reach the one by way of the other. In a more reflective, more conscious concept of temporality, however, the two poles will, in Wordsworth's phrasing, "have another and finer connection than that of contrast." "Origin and tendency are notions inseparably co-relative" he writes. ("Time and History" 10)

Benjamin imagines the process of memory by recalling Homer's Penelope weaving at her loom. Penelope weaves by day and unweaves at night in order to fend off the advances of the suitors to whom she will submit when her handiwork is completed, that is fully woven. In this way, her textile is the product of a doubled action: the complete weave is not accomplished through sustained material production, but through the combined effort of construction and deconstruction. Proustian memory functions similarly according to Benjamin. Memory is not the accomplishment of sustained successful recollection of the past, but the combination of attempted recollection as altered by lapses, or lacunae, of forgetting: a work of spontaneous recollection "in which remembrance is the woof and forgetting the warp" (Benjamin, "Image of Proust" 202). Any determined past is lost in this project of recollection as memory constructs its own
Yet this process of remembering and forgetting erects our sense of the past. And, it must be added, this intimation is all that is, or ever will be, available to us. As the determined past inexorably retreats out of view, the process of memory yields its own native grammar that cannot be said to be symmetrical to this past. Though often and wrongly we imagine memory to reflect the past transparently, we do this quite simply because the restrictive grammar of memory, by nature of its definition, provenance, and scope, is our only means of accessing the inaccessible determined past. Finally, it is a futile, albeit irresistible project, to demand that memory take us where it cannot. Imagine a passenger in an illuminated train travelling through the night. If the passenger in such a carriage chooses to look out the window in the hope of discerning the nature of the landscape that is passing or passed or to come, the interposed window frustrates the project. More than the irreconcilable glimmers in the vast darkness, the passenger is confronted by the boldly lit reflection of the interior of the train's carriage, by the image of herself in the midst of the vexed effort to see beyond her determination to see.  

The whole history of the Croy house had the effect of a phrase, a "broken

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13 Terence Davies's reflections on the nature of memory in his film, *The Neon Bible*, are the source of this instructive figural system of nighttime train voyage. Davies's imagery is appropriate in the Jamesian context especially when we recall its similarity to Isabel Archer's "idea of happiness" as "a swift carriage, of a dark night, rattling with four horses over roads that one can't see . . . " (*Portrait* 177). Of course, Isabel's fantasy carriage is not said to have any windows at all let alone glass ones that might reflect. I have argued, in the preceding chapter, the importance of Isabel's obliviousness to the passing scene. When, in the denouement of *The Portrait of a Lady*, Isabel does choose to look out the window of Pansy's convent, as we have also seen, she fails to see the rainfall, the convent garden, the budding plants, and the glowing afternoon. Instead, the fact that "she had been an applied handled hung-up tool, as senseless and convenient as mere shaped wood and iron" confronts her (602-3). In place of the scene, Isabel gazes on the vanished past erected by her memory.
sentence" (3), musical or worded. In this way, Kate Croy's family history is literally a
"sentence"—or if it is something else, it has the effect of one, as James puts it. Kate's
familial legacy, then, is figured both as a grammar and as a punishment. Her place is
determined as the structural imperative of being, at once, an element in that sentence, and
the prisoner who must serve its terms.14 Like a convict before a judge, Kate's fate is
precisely that contained in the sentence pronounced upon her. Since she is a Croy, as
well, she is not only the recipient of that sentence, but is, at least, partially determinant of
it. Indeed, James places Kate explicitly in the sentence by apposition; "the whole history
of their house" is apposed with "[h]er father's life, her sister's, her own, that of her two
lost brothers" (2).15 However, the end of the Croy sentence is not pronounced; it is
suspended in silence, hanging unfinished. And Kate, as the heir to the phrase's preceding
clauses, is to provide the familial grammatical/musical/notational history and her own
sentence with a necessarily signifying predicate. It is specifically in this way, then, that
we may say that The Wings of the Dove is a novel of suspense.16 The anxiety

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14 Susan L. Mizruchi finds a similar dynamic of "grammatical submergence" (212) at work in the novel's first sentence "which typographically hems her in: 'She waited, Kate Croy, for her father to come in . . . . ' Bound by phrases on either side, Kate appears trapped in the sentence of which she is the subject" (212).

15 Holland writes that "Kate lives not only in Chelsea and Kensington but in the space defined by a virtually Faulknerian sentence which is nevertheless the medium of James's own syntax" (294).

16 In confirmation of this reading, and in anticipation of the next stage of my analysis, in which Kate's figuration links her to the language of her sentence (see page 86 below), Holland writes:
The language does not so much stipulate its meanings or describe its action as suspend them in a mode which is epitomized by the novel's opening sentences, where Kate Croy's hesitation between departing or remaining, between going
precipitated by the always-pending irresolution of James's suspense is rooted in the broken sentence. The relationship between the broken sentence and the novel itself is synecdochic. The mystery of James's plot, the question of how it will be resolved, the disquiet yielded by the characters' predicaments, find allegorical equivalence on the level of this crucial establishing sentence.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland provides an instructive intertext to James's format here. During the trial of the Knave of Hearts, alleged thief of royal tarts, "all on a summer day" (Carroll 106), the Queen of Hearts' demand for "Sentence first--verdict afterwards" (117) marks the climax of Carroll's courtroom lampoon. At this moment in Carroll's text, the fantastic substance of Wonderland transforms into a flurry of playing cards and Alice finds herself lying on the river bank with her head in her sister's lap. The ne plus ultra of Wonderland absurdity, that which prompts Alice to challenge the Queen of Hearts directly, is the very agenda that governs Kate Croy. Carroll's climactic episode relies on the jarring impact of time's apparent "reordering"; the Queen of Hearts asserts a sequence--in this case a jurisprudential order--that derives the force of its impact by clashing with its alternative (the implicit non-Wonderland formula that determines a sentence in response to a verdict). Wonderland order appears to be in stark opposition to familiar courtroom procedure. Yet, this provocative opposition is, of course, made more disturbing when one tries to see Wonderland and non-Wonderland order not in opposition, but in more apposite relation. It is not the task of this discussion, though it is

away or staying to see and help her father, presents the first version of the novel's central action and its basic rhythm. (288)
assuredly accomplishable, to demonstrate Carroll's doubled reference in his manipulation of time; the apparent reversal of temporal order in Wonderland and in Through the Looking Glass forces us to evaluate the opposition such reversal underlines and to discover a finer relation between the zones of verdict and sentence than that of linear and logical sequence. The Queen of Hearts' exchange of antecedent and sequent startles Alice because it is so alien to her reason. James's readers have been similarly startled on Kate's behalf by the unjust imposition of a preclusive or not yet warranted sentence. But beyond this, the transposition of verdict and sentence provokes reason to account for the Queen's system. Unreason or the absence of reason (senselessness) or, as James seems to have it, notelessness, is not the nihility of reason, but the concentrated intimation of reason's presence. In fact, it is the closest we ever get to a presence always suspended by Nancy's espacement; this is also what James and Derrida, in turn, mean by presence. The absent "implies and projects" the other case, the present one. Well-known references to this sort of temporal reordering serve to cap other episodes in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass.

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17 See note 34 below.

18 For example, when Alice comes upon Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum she finds herself suddenly swept up in a dance:

... they left off dancing as suddenly as they had begun: the music stopped at the same moment.

Then they let go of Alice's hands, and stood looking at her for a minute; there was a rather awkward pause, as Alice didn't know how to begin a conversation with people she had just been dancing with. "It would never do to say 'How d'ye do?' now," she said to herself: "we seem to have got beyond that, somehow!" (167)

Or, when Alice converses with Humpty Dumpty:

"How old did you say you were?"
Following swiftly on James's figuring of the power of the Croy family history is his initial description of Kate herself. The characterization resonates instructively with the grammatical figuring of her familial history: "The impression was one that remained, but as regards the sources of it no sum in addition would have made up the total. She had stature without height, grace without motion, presence without mass" (2-3). Kate is the material embodiment of the terms sketched out in the figuring of history just above. Kate's impact is offered with primary attention to its effects, but also with telling allusion to the absence of its apparent causes. She is herself a phrase of sorts, and when attention is paid to the ingredients that combine to bring her about, these parts fail to explain the resultant whole. And yet, James stresses the very mystery of this alchemy and keeps us looking. Indeed, the elements that substantiate Kate's presence not only fail to divulge their chemistry; when we look for these constitutive elements they vanish entirely. Also, her effect is one that, despite its lack of precept, remains; Kate's mien is all predicate, but the basis, its foundational principle, is unattainable. The sway of Kate's presence is that it, like the lacuna that ends the familial sentence, curiously endures. In this way, Kate is the prospopopeia of the system of history and memory that James constructed to explain her family: she is a construction of aporetic lacunae that produce an effect that, in turn, yields an inevitable retrospection for an absent cause. Kate's stature, grace, and presence direct us back to a height, motion, and mass that are absent because they were never

Alice made a short calculation, and said "Seven years and six months." "Wrong!" Humpty Dumpty exclaimed triumphantly. "You never said a word like it!"
"I thought you meant 'How old are you?'" Alice explained.
"If I'd meant that, I'd have said it," said Humpty Dumpty. (194)
there:

More 'dressed', often, with fewer accessories, than other women, or less dressed, should occasion require, with more, she probably couldn't have given the key to these felicities. They were mysteries of which her friends were conscious—those friends whose general explanation was to say that she was clever, whether or no it were taken by the world as the cause or as the effect of her charm. (3)

Kate Croy is more than than the final flower on her family tree, she is the animate figure of that genealogy itself. Further, the setting in which she is placed echoes Kate's characterization and the phrase-system that it recalls: "His daughter took the place in again, and it might well have seemed odd that with so little to meet the eye there should be so much to show. What showed was the ugliness—so positive and palpable that it was somehow sustaining. It was a medium, a setting, and to that extent, after all, a dreadful sign of life . . ." (8). The elements of Lionel Croy's Chirk Street back room conspire, almost alchemically, to yield a force that cannot be traced to their mingling. Yet, what they proffer lingers positively and palpably, like the lacuna at the end of the family phrase.

Kate's intractable predicament is interwoven into James's characterization and setting, then: Kate wants to seize and to redefine her role as a part of the Croy family while she is trapped by virtue of being the personification of that family and all its terms. Her damnable legacy, then, is an enforced subjection to a history that structurally demands memorializing in its final notes and lacunae—in herself. In vocabulary importantly different from mine, Jolly describes this very tension between the received
sentence and its hoped-for alternative in her comments on the place of reading in the lives of James's characters:

When [James's heroes and heroines] declare a lack of interest in reading novels, it is to profess all the more strongly their predilection for what was the feared result of excessive novel-reading—the desire to write, novelistically, one's life for oneself; expressions of disdain for novels only emphasize their confidence that they can outdo novelists in creating counter-realities . . . . In most cases, James's characters find that the book of life has already been written for them, and that they are not empowered to revise it. (Jolly 41)\(^19\)

It is certainly part of my task here to question the too-simple surety of Jolly's conclusion. Whether we discover that she is right or not in perceiving a futility in the project of revising "the book of life," we must second Jolly's analytical mode: the problem that Kate faces is one of reading and revising. Jolly also helps us to recall that, when we find her in her Albany office, Isabel Archer displays an apparent lack of enthusiasm for anything but the frontispieces of the books that surround her. I have claimed that this tendency suggests a pleasure in stasis; Jolly, who surprises her reader by not discussing the office scene during her chapter on The Portrait of a Lady, implies that it also belies a displeasure in received narratives that makes Isabel a precursor to Kate Croy, who resists the narrative that is inscribed for her—the sentence she occupies and embodies, the "test

\(^{19}\) Jolly's examination of James situates his career in a Victorian cultural milieu that denounces the reading of fiction: an anti-romance tradition with long antecedents. Jolly insists, finally too strongly, that James's artistic programme was an unswerving response to this historical atmosphere.
of Jamesian prose" (Holland 294).

How does one escape history—or rewrite it—when one is, by definition, a living memento of it? How does one escape memory? The answer to this second question is offered in the final pages of The Wings of the Dove.
II

James's preface to *The Golden Bowl* posits an equivalence between action and articulation upon which Kate, rejected by her father, quickly comes to depend as she struggles to manufacture her own rescue. The preface concludes with an impassioned plea for the ethics of art:

... the whole conduct of life consists of things done, which do other things in their turn, just so our behaviour and its fruits are essentially one and continuous and persistent and unquenchable, so the act has its way of abiding and showing and testifying, and so, among our innumerable acts, are no arbitrary, no senseless separations. The more we are capable of acting the less gropingly we plead such differences; whereby, with any capability, we recognise betimes that to 'put' things is very exactly and responsibly and interminably to do them. Our expression of them, and the terms on which we understand that, belong as nearly to our conduct and our life as every other feature of our freedom; these things yield in fact some of its most exquisite material to the religion of doing. (*The Art of the Novel* 347)

Here James establishes an equivalence between articulation and action: to 'put' is to do. This equivalence is functional for Kate Croy as it is for Isabel Archer. Isabel, as we have seen, essays to delay action so as to preserve the breadth of her potential. Kate strives from the opening moments of *The Wings of the Dove* to conceive precisely the right action to complete the grammatical model of her suspended, hanging, familial history and, by so doing/putting, to refigure her legacy and destiny which are prisoner to its
Kate's initial predicament is apparently intractable: the sentence which is her history entraps her even as she yearns to rewrite it. If the hanging sentence merely represents a devolution, then Kate, as the final word of that phrase, hangs unresolved and senseless; Kate, then, must grapple with the suspended end of the sentence. But, as that end, that final dangling part, she is herself unresolved and senseless. Though animate, she is deprived of sensation; made virtually comatose by these terms, she is the living dead. If the hanging sentence also represents a concentration, then Kate, the last word, is the precipitated essence of the preceding clause: she is the figural prosopopeia of the grammatical model of dissolution and concentration. She is the part that stands for the whole and a necessary memorial to that whole. In either case, the relationship between Kate and the sentence is one of doubled contingency: Kate is the sentence's last word and its concentrated essence, the final note, the epitome, of its doomed and dooming grammar.

The patience Kate Croy endures in James's opening scene is imposed on her, but also composed by her. We meet Kate, in the novel's first sentence, as she waits. Her

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20 It is for this reason that Rivkin's assignment to Kate of a naïve belief in retrievable origins is flawed. From the outset, Kate is beset by her lack of discernible origin, her divorce from causal account. Rivkin depends on a non-existent moment that precedes the narrative of the novel itself when she posits that Kate seeks some kind of return. This narrowly construes Kate as a character without seeing her, from the beginning of James's story, as the prosopopeia for the very problem of the nonalignment of origin and truth or identity. Rivkin sums up her reading of The Wings of the Dove this way:

The desire to restore a family name and fortune or to recuperate from an endangered state of health can be read as an attempt to prevent an inevitable dissemination of meaning and erosion of value, and the failure of any and all such
posture is described in the past tense; she has been waiting even before we first encounter
her. Her situation is enforced by her father ("he kept her unconscionably") but submitted
to by her ("[i]t was at this point, however, that she remained . . .") (1). Kate grapples with
her doubled contingency to the Croy family legacy, even as her waiting posture suggests
that, in her grappling, she is possessed by it—her situation is dictated. Kate's initial
strategy is curious, at least:

She hadn't given up yet, and the broken sentence, if she was the last word, would
end with a sort of meaning. There was a minute during which, though her eyes
were fixed, she quite visibly lost herself in the thought of the way she might still
pull things round had she only been a man. It was the name, above all, she would
take in hand—the precious name she so liked and that, in spite of the harm her
wretched father had done it, wasn't yet past praying for. (3)

projects of restoration and salvation in this novel can best be understood, I argue,
through the reckonings of a post-structuralist representational economy. (False
Positions 9)

Rivkin subsequently assigns these desires to Kate. I reject the use here of "restore,"
"recuperate," and "prevent." These terms suggest a chronological directive that James
does not feature. Rivkin nowhere sees Kate as the embodiment of the Croy legacy, but
only as its object. Rivkin's reading also strangely posits an origin before the beginning
of the novel. By claiming that Kate fixes her determined gaze on a sense before the
senselessness, Rivkin asks that we see Kate only as a thinking woman and does not credit
Kate as a flexible figure for the familial sentence that memorializes sublation itself and
does not promote a naïve belief in the past.

Kate's predicament here is recalled in what Edel considers "[s]ome of
[James's] greatest, his fullest and certainly his wisest letters": those addressed to Grace
Norton in 1883. James's friendship with Grace Norton dated from the late-1860s, but
Edel says of the early-1880s: "To this period belongs the forging of those links of
emotional intimacy and attachment which were to make this one of the most valued of all
his friendships" (Henry James III.73). At this time, Grace Norton was experiencing a
personal crisis: "a certain strain with her brother, a sense of isolation in the separate home
Kate is determined to recast the sentence through her fixation on the phrase's non-signifying element, the proper name, Croy. James's grammar is confusing here and the point that remains unresolved could not be more crucial for the novel. James writes that the "broken sentence . . . would end with a sort of meaning," with his own special emphasis on the conditional verb "would." Who is speaking here? Does the stressed "would" indicate the strength of Kate's resolve, as though she were saying "I will have it so"? If, alternatively, the voice is narratorial, the "sort of meaning" then sounds ominously ironic in tone; the broken sentence will end, but not in any fashion for which Kate might hope. It is one possible foreshadowing of Kate's tragedy that occupies the space between the "would" as though uttered on her behalf and the "would" inscribed as a narratorial admonition. The former implies her potency, the latter her helplessness. The

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she had fashioned for herself in Kirkland Street . . . " (Henry James III.73). In consolation, James wrote to Grace Norton:

Don't think, don't feel, any more than you can help, don't conclude or decide—don't do anything but wait . . . . We all live together, and those of us who love and know, live so most. We help each other—even unconsciously, each in our own effort . . . . Sorrow comes in great waves—no one can know that better than you—but it rolls over us, and though it may almost smother us it leaves us on the spot and we know that if it is strong we are stronger, inasmuch as it passes and we remain. It wears us, uses us, but we wear it and use it in return; and it is blind, whereas we after a manner see. (Henry James III.74)

James urges patience upon Grace Norton as he imposes it on Kate Croy. The reward of such stillness is, in this important piece of James's correspondence and in the early omens that James inscribes in The Wings of the Dove, that we "after a manner see." This formulation is strikingly similar to James's ominous gloss of Kate's sentence: that it would end with "a sort of meaning." One is left to wonder, for Grace Norton, after what manner she will see, as we ponder, on behalf of Kate Croy, what a sort of meaning, after all, is.
tension established here is that between Kate's status as subject and as object. Her determination to take her name "in hand" does not resolve the ambiguity of James's "would," nor does it, despite her mettle, simplify Kate's position for us. After all, Kate's apparent power is undercut, in this passage, by another "would": "had she only been a man . . . . she would take . . . ." The vision of Kate's possible vigour is apparently a transgender hypothesis.

James stresses that Kate is not a man by indicating what she would do if she were one. The further implication is that Kate will not succeed in her aim because, in its initial formulation, Kate's will is so clearly linked to the impossibly stubborn fact that she is not a man. James places Kate's will and being a man in apposition; James suggests that if she were a man she would be able to enact her will and, further, would do just that. From this subjunctive information, we cannot draw any simple indicative conclusions. We are not told what Kate will do or be able to do in light of the fact that she is not a man. In this way, James says nothing of the actual situation. He does not reveal what Kate will do or be able to do as a woman. James, then, elides any determined foreshadowing here. Nevertheless, from this apparent elision we cannot conclude that Kate will not be able to carry out her will. James hides his foreshadowing amid truisms of manly ability and, at

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22 Bradbury points out the apparent paradox at work here: "All this sounds like self-referentiality in the text, prompting recognition of Kate's authority, through an inwardness between her, the author and the reader, in the conjoint activities of invention and interpretation in the construction of meaning . . . . But the deconstructive text does not work this way" ("Nothing" 89).

23 On Kate's economic powerlessness as a woman, see Elizabeth Allen 149 and 154-57. On the "androgynous texture of genius," see Ross Posnock 28.
most, tacit gestures toward womanly disability; in fact, this latter point is only a chimera and not inscribed by James.

The undeniable thematic importance of gendered impotence, to which James indirectly refers here, may distract us from the project of thinking through her powerful and sustaining allegiance to her family name. Not a man, Kate would seem unable to take her name in hand as a legal property; that is, she would have to give it up upon marriage. She could not pass it on to her children. By focusing on the name, Kate may seem to give her project "a culturally specific masculine valence, for only sons are inheritors and preservers of a patronymic (Rivkin, False Positions 93). Yet such a limited understanding of the name is unwarranted. James offers no evidence whatsoever that such legal ownership is ever at issue for Kate. Such legal ownership is the only aspect of the proper name that favours the man. Rivkin depends upon this fact when she reads Kate's connection to her surname as a kind of profitless grasp of a debased coin that she will try to exchange for something of more demonstrable value. Rivkin reminds us that, "Although her desire is to 'take [the name] in hand,' she asks herself rhetorically, 'What could a penniless girl do with it but let it go?' . . . A daughter can make a fortune and save a reputation only through marriage; Kate will be able to save the Croy family only by ceasing to be a Croy" (False Positions 93-94; Rivkin quotes Wings 3). Rivkin undertakes her subsequent focus on the economics of Kate's manoeuvres too swiftly because here, in passing, Rivkin authorizes the meagre reading of Kate's surname as only a thematic referent to familial shame. Nevertheless, though James never gives an explicit explanation of Kate's fondness for her surname, we must try to account for it. The name
presumably is a testament to her father's iniquity, to the damage he has done it, and to his corruption and evil. It seems unlikely that Kate would embrace the mark which names such occult iniquity. The extent to which Kate's fondness for the name Croy runs counter to even simple expectations suggests that her devotion to it is a mystery. We must ask, then, what it is in the name that she does so prize.

James's notebooks furnish evidence of the author's habitual musing over names for places and characters. Usually James fashioned a list marked simply 'Names' and ran through a few dozen without explanation of their appeal. In his notes for The Wings of the Dove, James focuses on plot and does not name his characters. Indeed, one often finds that James uses names that he first conceived decades before he imagined the character and plot to which they would be attached. Nevertheless, scholarship on Jamesian onomastics has shown that his naming is not random. 24 Despite this fact, what has been written about Kate's surname is scanty and misguided. 25 Edel asserts an odd interpretation of James's selection which reductively focuses on Kate's predation and

24 Joseph B. McCullough's consideration of the apparent and important care with which James selected Madame Merle's name proves the value of inquiring after his names as significant words. In the course of establishing Merle's relation to literary history (Alfred de Musset's vindictive "Historie d'un merle blanc" and Ovid's "The Story of the Raven" in Metamorphoses) McCullough finds remarkable misreading in the work of Leslie Fiedler and surpasses Geismar's estimation that her name merely indicates the she is an "old-world magician" (Geismar 47). N. H. Reeve offers a suggestive analysis which pairs James's names with thematic issues in "Living Up to the Name: 'Mora Montravers'" (particularly pages 149-50). It is perplexing that Jamesian naming has not proven more productive of rigorous scholarship. See also Chapter One note 37, on the profound period implications of Pansy in the language of flowers.

25 Holland's passing explanation of Kate's surname, though it does not follow through on its great promise, is an important exception to this claim. See page 175 and note 73 below.
leads his readers to an immediate analytical impasse:

In the novel's imagery, Kate is a panther and she is named Croy— the crow, a blackbird, of which the name in French is merle (and Madame Merle in The Portrait of a Lady had played a similar role). The bird imagery is sustained in the name Theale— the silver-and-gold dove is also thus a little duck. (Henry James V.115)

The OED offers no English explanation of the word croy. Oxford's Dictionary of Surnames is similarly silent. But the French dictionaries are helpful. Croy is the root of a number of French words associated with the verb croire: croyance means "faith" or "belief." So, in holding to the name that 'wasn't yet past praying for,' Kate both enacts her faith and seizes its very name. But in grasping faith through her fixation on her family name, Kate does more: she clings to herself, for she is a Croy, and she allies herself with wordedness, the grammar of her intractable predicament.

Kate's treasured name has a double sense. It is both her desideratum and the label of the familial taint that she rejects in her yearning. The single syllable, Croy, names

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26 The word's appearance in a usage note to another entry is intriguing. See note 73 below.

27 Cameron lays out a similar situation in her assessment of Emily Dickinson's use of naming and, by so doing, helps to clarify Kate Croy's double bind: . . . finding new names for interior experience is an ambivalent process, for on the one hand by the very insistence upon its necessity, the invention of a new name defies the social matrix. On the other hand, since articulation is a matter of social coherence, it must make reference to that matrix. Hence, naming is in need of precisely that thing which it deems inadequate. (Cameron, Lyric Time 29)

This is another way of saying what I have said about Kate Croy's curious attachment to her name: she seeks a release that is necessarily contravened by the modus operandi of her escape, the conditional name, embedded in the "social matrix."

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both. However, in her allegiance to her name, Kate works to disjoin the two senses: she strives to take one name with two senses and transform it into two names each with its own sense. By her faith, the name Croy is both one word and two, itself and not itself. This proposition sounds paradoxical only if the name Croy is presumed to function as an inviolable unity. But, for Kate, the name Croy is doubled by her act of having faith in it. The name accomplishes its reference to faith by virtue of Kate's orienting herself toward its recuperation. For Kate, seizure of the name activates its etymological reference to faith—her hopeful action is a trace that memorializes its own source—and constitutes an effacement of the sense of the familial past encapsulated in it.\(^\text{28}\) In seizing the name, Kate expects to empty it of its historical content; she needs to divorce it from its familial reference in favour of its other history, its etymology as a sign of faith.\(^\text{29}\) Yet, the name, if it is to stand for faith, only does so by presenting traces of its own etymological origin, only by the necessary power of historical reference that Kate, so as to defeat the name's other, improper claims, seeks to disown.\(^\text{30}\)

\(^{28}\) Derrida would call the trace's memorialization of its own genealogy, its "mourning." See Memoires 28-39 and "By Force of Mourning" passim.

\(^{29}\) Tom Conley traces a transformation in Un Amour de Swann from the idealization of Odette by Swann to a state of "unrequited jealousy" (124) that recasts Swann's impression of Odette's character and name. Once an apostrophe to God—O dieu-Odette becomes odieux, odious. Cleverly, Conley calls this transformation the movement from proper name to improper name (125). Kate undertakes the reverse effort.

\(^{30}\) Bradbury briefly refers to William James's observations on the optimism we bring to the magic of names and on the way in which names thwart such hopeful expectation ("Nothing" 90). It is worth recalling the full text as its cautions bear on Kate Croy's determination to rescue her name (and on the value of the Prince's name for Maggie Verver in The Golden Bowl, see Chapter Three pages 213 and following). William James writes:
In another context, Cameron writes: "In the appalling place where presence is not, we hold to what can represent it. Language is what has the power of being in the absence of being—that which can still stand for something in the empty space whose task it is to sound with the inscrutable sweetness of its plain meanings" (Lyric Time 200). Yet Cameron's assessment of language's "plain meanings" is apt only insofar as we honor her critical statement's own ellipsis: the plainness of plain meanings is elusive and illusory by definition. We achieve plain meaning only if we efface the discrepancies inscribed in language. Cameron claims for Dickinson's lyric strategems a distaste for the mediacy of language resolved in an uneasy truce with the mediation of naming. Though it may seem

Metaphysics has usually followed a very primitive kind of quest. You know how men have always hankered after unlawful magic, and you know what a great part in magic words have always played. If you have his name, or the formula of incantation that binds him, you can control the spirit, genie, affrite, or whatever the power may be. Solomon knew the names of all the spirits, and having their names, he held them subject to his will. So the universe has always appeared to the natural mind as a kind of enigma, of which the key must be sought in the shape of some illuminating word or name. That word names the universe's principle, and to possess it is after a fashion to possess the universe itself. 'God,' 'Matter,' 'Reason,' 'the Absolute,' 'Energy,' are so many solving names. You can rest when you have them. You are at the end of your metaphysical quest.

But if you follow the pragmatic method, you cannot look on any such word as closing your quest. You must bring out of each word its practical cash-value, set it at work within the stream of your experience. It appears less as a solution, then, than as a programme for more work, and more particularly as an indication of the ways in which existing realities may be changed. (Pragmatism 52-3)

William James suggests first that the name's appeal is that of an emblem the full meaning of which we imagine we can know by possessing its name. Yet, he cautions that possession of the name would, then, require a total reconfiguration of epistemology and ontology in conformity with the name's full sense. In this way, having the name precipitates a process, and only by that process does having have any value. William James's observation connects well with Milly Theale's assessment of possession and presence (see page 138 below): to have prompts the sense of not having. On this passage from Pragmatism, see also Jolly 132.
initially unsuitable to posit Dickinson's spare verses against James's voluminous phrases, it proves instructive. Cameron suggests that Dickinson's argument with language's mediation stems from the poet's yearning to defy the naming function native to language and to open a "discovered space" (Lyric Time 200); "To understand the shape of an experience is, it would seem, to forfeit the need for an equative name" (Lyric Time 203). Such a statement seems, on its face, to suggest that Cameron claims an extra-linguistic reality as Dickinson's intended focus. But this is importantly not what Cameron indicates. According to Cameron, Dickinson does not merely struggle to defy language in order to present determinant experience without language's mediacy. Rather:

Between a label for stasis and its recapitulated action, between poems that break out of temporality or ignore it altogether and those that replace temporality by synchronic order, between a self fused with an experience it can barely name and the knowledge of experience steadied by a grip on words—between these extremes Dickinson's poems vacillate. (Lyric Time 206 my emphasis)

Such vacillation is precisely at issue for Kate Croy in the opening passages of James's novel. Cameron's assessment of Dickinson's "betweens" is active in my reading when I say that the name that Kate would seize and the name that directs us to the familial history that seems so to taint it, are identical and also divergent: the name is the topos of familial contingency and of faith.

It seems that Kate's own will accomplishes the simple difference between the two senses of Croy. If this were the case, Kate's mastery of her own fate would be paramount in these opening pages. However, James's irony defeats such easy triumph for Kate:
"She [Kate] had denied everything and every one, she reflected as she went away—and that was a relief; but it also made rather a clean sweep of the future. The prospect put on a bareness that already gave her something in common with the Miss Condrips" (32). Whereas Dickinson's confrontation with mediacy is said to be "steadied" by a grip on words, Kate's effacement of familial contingency is vexed. This is true not merely because language—specifically the operations of the name—is inescapable. No, Kate is vexed because her denial of everything—everything save her name—and everyone yields, in turn, a blankness. Yet, this nothingness is, like the notelessness of her inheritance, her bequeathed sentence, a functional bareness that belies Kate's ensnarement even in her struggle for escape. It is a bareness akin to her kindred. Kate seeks to cleanse herself of the taint of her familial legacy. Without reference to a specific past blight, Kate seeks liberation from the entrapping grammar yielded by her family's history. Her first step in this project is at least to attempt to relinquish all. By so doing, Kate causes a personal lacuna, a radical pause in her own sentence. But this suspension necessarily recalls the despised familial sentence, as James notes in closing the first book of his novel. The bareness achieved by such relinquishment already claims, in this way, to doom her to the paltry existence of the Miss Condrips. Kate's will may be free, but her choices are inescapable compromises that circumvent the liberty she seeks by exercising them.

But Kate does not relinquish all. In grasping the name Croy, she assumes a charm, a magical defense. However, the charm is a vague note, a meagre talisman. As we have noted, it literally names the family and recollects in its iteration all that Kate seeks to repel. Furthermore, even if we put aside the name's literal attachment, Kate's
concentration on it recapitulates anew the grammatical structure of that legacy she seeks to abandon: her sentence devolves into the reduced concentrated note of the name. In this way, Kate's bareness at the end of Book First is doubled. If she relinquishes all, she is left as void as her family itself; if she seizes the name, she assumes the mantle of that bareness and the grammar of the familial history that inscribes it. Through the name, James interweaves Kate's willful defiance and inevitable capitulation.31

But we have also seen that in seizing the name Crov, Kate does not, of course, mean to grasp its sinister referents. It is also clear that, in taking up the name, Kate cannot avoid assuming its full range of implications. Let us, however, for a moment, hypothesize that she can; let us allow Kate immunity from all but her name's etymological suggestions. The OED divides its definition of "faith" into three major parts: belief, trust, and confidence; inducement to belief or trust; and the obligation imposed by trust...

31 The suspension of history, according to Nancy, is the inevitable result of "any kind of presented essence" that "the Idea History should reveal or produce" (Nancy, "Finite History" 154):

This is the most intimate as well as the ultimate contradiction of history. Not the dialectical contradiction within a historical process, but the contradiction, beyond or behind dialectics (or at its heart), between moving history and resumed history, between subjectivity as process toward itself and subjectivity as presence to itself, between history as becoming and happening and history as sense, direction, and Idea. (And this is true even for history thought as an indefinite or perpetual process: for subjectivity, in this case, presents itself to itself as the process itself, or, what amounts to the same thing, as the subject always already present to its own becoming.) This is the "double bind" of history--which is easy to find in every philosophical theory of history. (155)

Kate's attempt to identify herself through the medium of her name must be a process the ultimate accomplishment of which is, by the very nature of history and subjectivity, always already deferred. The irony, then, in James's arrangement is that Kate seeks to grasp the name, the identity, what Nancy calls the "Idea" of faith which, in turn, inevitably names this scheme of slippery circumvention or "espacement."
Kate, clearly, bears the name Crov even before she resolves to seize it. In this way, she is heir not only to her familial legacy but to the name's etymological endowment.

Shortly after first meeting Kate, we discover her determination to seize her name; indeed, in the context of the opening scene, Kate's resolve in this regard is striking in its vigor. But, even if we set aside its eminently familial associations, the name has necessarily already imposed a range of implications on her. The first OED category denotes what Kate strives to grasp in the name, but these definitions also indicate the character of the woman doing the striving. She aspires to faith, but does so already bearing the name of faith. Kate has faith: belief in faith itself and trust in her ability to achieve faith. In this way, faith is itself doubled: it is both present and absent. Faith is already attained insofar as it is functional in her desire for it, but also longed for and not yet achieved. Furthermore, faith is futural (Kate yearns for it) and present (she exemplifies it in the act of aspiration for it) and past (its name is her legacy).

Faith, as a categorical entity, functions similarly to the notes into which the familial sentence has progressed. By virtue of its pastness, it is a relic. It is also an omen; it implies the future in which it will, perhaps, be "achieved" by Kate. The future she yearns for in the zone of faith directs our attention to her past as necessarily as lexical definition depends upon etymology. By linking her will to her name, Kate cripples her movement into liberty not merely because the name calls out the concentrated and suspended music of familial history, but because the concept of faith in the future itself is

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32 See page 167 for my related discussion of Lord Mark's name
so troubled by faith's attachment to the contingencies of the past. Isabel Archer, as we have seen in the previous chapter, mistakes dynamism for stasis; Kate Croy confuses the past with the future because they each bear the same name. Kate cannot do otherwise, for the OED also teaches, in the third portion of its definition, the obligatory nature of faith: faith also means "the duty of fulfilling one's trust; allegiance owed to a superior, fealty; the obligation of a promise or engagement" (952). So, if we allow Kate the ability selectively to define the name Croy, to divest it of its familial associations and assume it as a pure referent to faith, she is nevertheless stymied since the name of faith, perhaps like no other, also binds her future to her past.33

In "The Image of Proust," Benjamin refers to a children's game in which a toy is made of what Carol Jacobs has called an "oddly pedestrian image" (93), a rolled-up stocking that seems like three things at once: a stocking, a bag, and a present. The game involves opening the present, delving into the bag, by unrolling it, only to discover that the container only encloses the original stocking of which it was wholly comprised (Benjamin, "Image of Proust" 204-5). Benjamin's focus is what he calls Proust's "cult of similarity" (204) in illumination of what he identifies as that author's "dream world in which everything that happens appears not in identical but similar guise, opaquely similar one to another" (204). Benjamin claims that in this zone Proust discovers a rich interwoven network that yields resemblances between images exploited in his fiction.

33 This intricate system of obligation directs us, in turn, to another source of analytical intrigue that attaches to the name Croy: Croy as croix or cross or crux. Kate's name is not only a burden (a cross), but as a cross it is also the figure of the chiasmus: the inextricable crossing of past and future, of sentence and verdict.
The children's stocking has, for Benjamin, "the structure of this dream world when, rolled up in the laundry hamper" (205) it is bag, present, and stocking. The thing is constantly being changed into three things and back again into one simultaneously in a manner that suggests, more than the structure of metonymy, an inextricable and non-linear triad of meanings, irreducible to its elemental ingredients: a metaphor that cannot be divided into its constituent parts. Yet, according to Benjamin, despite the manifest impossibility of resolving the children's complicated object into a determined thing, or indeed because of the titillating frustration yielded by this impossibility, "Proust could not get his fill of emptying the dummy, his self, at one stroke in order to keep garnering that third thing, the image which satisfied his curiosity—indeed, assuaged his homesickness" (205). The point for Proust is not to outdo or overcome the stocking toy; after all, by its nature it is irreducible to any singularity. Kristeva calls this unity "the interface [which] brings together three elements: the felt, the thought, and the impression (which is also called 'hieroglyphic character' or 'cipher')" (Kristeva "Apologia"), what I have earlier noted as Kristeva's claim of Proust's irreducible metaphoric binarism or dyad. For Benjamin, the compulsion to handle this element that cannot be sundered, the irresistible manipulation of the children's object, serves as a figure for Proust's mémoire involontaire, the rejuvenating force which is a match for the inexorable progress of aging. When the past is reflected in the dewy fresh 'instant,' a painful shock of rejuvenation pulls it together once more as irresistibly as the Guermantes way and Swann's way become intertwined for Proust . . . 'Ah! que le monde est grand à la clarté des lampes! Aux yeux du souvenir que le monde est petit!' Proust has
brought off the tremendous feat of letting the whole world age by a lifetime in an instant. But this very concentration in which things that normally just fade and slumber consume themselves in a flash called rejuvenation. (211)

Jacobs furthers Benjamin's observation that the stocking toy is a sign for Proust's dream world and also the structure of that world. Children obsessively play with the stocking, transforming it into a pocket or pouch and back again into a stocking:

\[ \ldots \text{the frivolous nature of the sign does not surprise the children. For them the reach into the stocking is a game. They know from the start that the apparent container is empty. It is not their desire for a content which they have difficulty satisfying: they are obsessed rather with the goalless desire to repeat the game of transforming the pocket and contents into the stocking} \ldots \text{. The dummy that seemed to promise the plenitude was always a mere stocking. The gesture of Proust, like that of the children, is only a game. His insatiable desire is not the longing for the presence of the self, but rather simply the desire to repeat the movement, to transform the dummy over and over into the empty image.} \text{(95)} \]

The game is not only one of trying to grasp a spatially reified "self," as Jacobs and Benjamin both identify fleeting ungraspable contents of the stocking toy for Proust. The spatial thing, the stocking toy is also a temporal toy; children try to grasp a spatial thing, a determined thing, what Kristeva calls res ("Character"), that is always revealed to be not what one thought it might be. The end of the quest is always postponed in a cyclic coincidence of obsession and bafflement. Or, rather, one's disappointment in the non-conjunction of desire and fulfillment is anticipated, but the game, what Benjamin calls "a
constant attempt to charge an entire lifetime with the utmost awareness" (211), remains compelling anyway.

Etymology is only one system recalled by Benjamin's figural parable in its operations and implications. Childlike, as Benjamin has it, fascination and curiosity spur us to seek historical explanations of word usage. Moreover, usage is always already the vanishing point of a retrospectively and prospectively radiating continuum of shifting developments and, for this reason, enacts etymology, intimates history, even if one never undertakes scholarly investigation.

We have seen that Kate's familial name is similarly protean. Kate's desire, stressed by James, to achieve the true transformation of her surname, recalls the obsessed rapture of Benjamin's children before the stocking-pouch-present object. When the stocking is rolled into a pouch, its manipulator is tantalized by the possibility, indeed the steadfast certainty, the fidelity, that it conceals another object within. Kate's own faithful resolution to rescue Croy from its inextricable system of reference recapitulates Benjamin's system. Kate grounds her determination to manipulate her familial name in a belief rendered transparent by Benjamin's "pedestrian" image. If we look through the performances of Benjamin's children and Kate Croy, we see the conceptual machinery that impels those acts: the functional trope that motivates both systems is what James called "operative irony" and Derrida elaborates as a version of apophasis or "negative theology."34

34 In her discussion of The Ambassadors, Jolly directs us to James's own reading of a crucial communication in that novel: Little Bilham, by proposing to Lambert Strether that Chad Newsome and Madame de Vionnet share a virtuous attachment,
Kate's foundational claim to her familial name marks her as a figure of desire. Benjamin's analogue teaches us that Kate's "desire is an activity within a lack; it is an appetite stimulated by an absence. But it is never only a lack. Desire is a hallucinated satisfaction in the absence of the source of satisfaction" (Bersani 10). In the words that close Book First, James's figuration is clearly ominous. That is, the bareness effected by Kate's renunciation of all but her name functions as an omen. Kate, in her "clean sweep," triply binds herself to a fate akin to the Miss Condrips. At the end of Book First, Kate's

"implies and projects the possible other case, the case rich and edifying' which, regardless of whether he can give 'chapter and verse' for it, is justified by 'the sincerities, the lucidities, the utilities that stand behind it" (Edel, Literary Criticism: French Writers 1229 qtd. in Jolly 157-58). As Jolly emphasizes, James's remarks (from James's New York Edition preface to The Lesson of the Master and Other Tales) suggest a belief in the essential binarism at work in referential systems: the stated case 'implies and projects' the other case. Jolly reminds us (157) that many years before conceiving the theory of pragmatism, William James believed that: "philosophic study means the habit of always seeing an alternative, of not taking the usual for granted, of making conventionalities fluid again, of imagining foreign states of mind" (William James, "Teaching" 178). On "operative irony," see also Richard A. Hocks, especially 98-102. On negative theology, Derrida writes: "It holds desire in suspense, and always saying too much or too little, each time it leaves you without ever going away from you" (On The Name 85). Kate's name is a figure of apophasis; it inexorably does not do that which it especially does. Yet, because it is so charged, it also promises the "power of the possible" (85). It is also a figure of suspense and, like Lionel Croy, of haunting because it leaves Kate without going away from her.

James's description of that fate, which Holland takes up (293), is a potently scatological system apparently overlooked by Sedgwick in her identification in the novel of "‘fisting-as-écriture" (Tendencies 99; Epistemology of the Closet 208n33): "She [Marian] was little more than a ragged relic, a plain prosaic result of him—as if she had somehow been pulled through him as through an obstinate funnel, only to be left crumpled and useless and with nothing in her but what he accounted for" (26). Kate's sister Marian is likened, in this passage, to a morsel of biological waste; the sisters-in-law are, in this context almost obscenely, said to have "lived in a deeper hole" (31) than even Marian does. Kate refers to Marian's home as a "hole" (31) and Marian soon after imagines it the same way (31). Furthermore, to be a result of the familial process is explicitly to be a relic and a prosaic one; the family, as I have noted at length, produces
memorials to its grammatical process. Here that system is made bodily. The process of dissolution and concentration is rendered gastro-intestinal. Sedgwick's analysis (in Tendencies, Epistemology, and "Shame and Performativity") needs and ignores this point. A later passage sees Susan Shepherd likening Maud Lowder to "a capacious receptacle, originally perhaps loose, but now drawn as tightly as possible over its accumulated contents—a packed mass, for her American admirer, of curious detail" (120). Moreover, Edel's consideration of the novel in his biography of James would also benefit from a consideration of this aspect. Perhaps such scatological investigation seems foreign to Edel's method, but it should not. It is a subject for Edel's reflection that the germ from which James's novel grew was first planted at the time of Minny Temple's early death, a time when, according to Edel's generous citation of James's personal correspondence, the young author was touring Europe while suffering from a debilitating and persistent case of severe constipation. Edel focuses on the impact of Minny Temple's extinction and leaves the issue of "a recurrent and debilitating costiveness" (Henry James I.289) aside insofar as it might bear on James's fiction. I certainly do not want to argue such an intersection of biography and fiction, but it is curious that Edel, whose method proceeds by such alignments, does not.

More curious still is the fact that, in the final volume of his biography of James, where he narrates James's experience of composing and dictating The Wings of the Dove, Edel seems so close to revealing this scatological connection that his failure to do so must be called resistance. James's remarkably swift progress in composing the novel began on July 9, 1901 and continued pace into the new year (Henry James V.108-9). Edel links James's unusual pace in writing with the remembered troubles upon which James relied for source material:

So confident . . . of completing his novel at an early date that he sent off five hundred pages of the manuscript to Constable and was reading proof of the book even while writing its final two sections—the pages devoted to the rage of the elements in Venice as Milly, his heiress, dies in her rented palazzo. In the Venetian chapters James was reliving old memories, not only the long-ago death of Minny Temple, but the long wasting illness of his sister, and then the violent end—of Venice—of Miss Woolson. (Henry James V.108-9)

At the end of January 1902, James's speedy work with the novel was interrupted by painful illness: "[h]e described his ailment as an 'inflammation of the bowels.' He continued to have stomach upsets and gout . . ." (Henry James V.109). Edel quotes James's correspondence of the period in order to annex the author's "botherations, aberrations, damnations of the mind and body" (Henry James V.109) to "the subject or central dilemma of his novel, the death in Venice, [which] was a heavy charge on his emotions," and to the contemporaneous and "sudden death of his beloved little wire-haired terrier, Nick" (Henry James V.109). Edel proposes, in this way, that James's "botherations" refer to his overwhelming emotional recollections and not to his rectal unhappiness.

The biographical coincidence of gastro-intestinal preoccupation and grievous loss
bareness is tripled. Indeed, Kate is said to have suspected, in passing, that the Miss Condrips are omens: "There were times when Kate wondered if the Miss Condrips were offered her by fate as a warning for her own future—to be taken as showing her what she herself might become at forty if she let things too recklessly go" (31). However, like Isabel Archer, Kate apparently values the freedom to forget in this regard and does not pursue the omen's implications any further. The omen is a relic; it achieves its substance because of its reference to the past, to the established plight of the Miss Condrips specifically.36 In relinquishing everything by the first book's end, Kate does not risk the

at the time of the novel's earliest inception, and then again during its composition, would provide a unique avenue of investigation seemingly as potentially well served by the methods of Edel as by those of Sedgwick. To Sedgwick, whose consideration of James's novel asks "Is the Rectum Straight?" (Tendencies 73-103), this point does, in fact, prove especially instructive in light of James's choice of words; he calls his bowel trouble (or is it his emotional distraction as Edel has it?) "aberrations" which the OED connects to "deviation," "abnormality," and most provocatively, "moral irregularity" (4). See Sedgwick's "Shame and Performativity" 222-36.

Furthermore, Marian's married name has great potential as a bodily referent and prompts other very interesting readings that I can only hint at here. When we recall the French "con"—as an adjective meaning "stupid" or "damned," as a noun meaning "fool" or "idiot," but especially as a substantive vulgarism meaning "cunt" (Robert-Collins 141-42)—we reveal that Condrip is an instance of very base ridicule indeed. The various senses of "con" in English connect with a whole other system of thought active in The Wings of the Dove, The Portrait of a Lady, and The Golden Bowl. It is a form of the prefix "com," meaning "together" (OED 471), and it is an abbreviation of the prefix "contra" meaning "against" (OED 498): it signals coherence and resistance. As a substantive, throughout the nineteenth century, it has the sense "to get to know, to study or learn, esp. by repetition (mental or vocal); hence, in wider sense, to pore over, peruse, commit to memory" (OED 498); from it we get words like "cunning."

36 Kate's name is the kind of sign that Kristeva has in mind when, in introducing the thought of Mikhail Bakhtin to France, she famously determines that "each word (text) is an intersection of words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read" (Kristeva, "Word" 37). Kate's name is an operative omen precisely because "[a] sign can never be analyzed in isolation, for its meaning is always informed by the many, often conflicting ways it has been used by other speakers. The sign, in short, is 'dialogic'
unknown, but the known. Benjamin's children at play demonstrate that "[i]n order for plenitude to replace absence, the world we desire must replace the world we perceive. Desire is intrinsically violent both because it spontaneously assumes this annihilation of everything alien to it, and because its fantasies include a rageful recognition of the world's capacity to resist and survive our desires" (Bersani 13, my emphasis). The outcome of Kate's act of volition is foreshadowed even as she acts. The legacy of history is not discontinued. Kate experiences "a bareness that already gave her something in common with the Miss Condrips" (32 my emphasis).

and must be analyzed as part of a dialogue" (Clayton 37). Clayton discerns a critical genealogy running from Kristeva's derivation of this idea of intertextuality, from Bakhtin's dialogic economy of meaning, to Roland Barthes declaration that "[m]eaning is a force: to name is to subject, and the more generic the nomination, the stronger the subjection" (Barthes, S/Z 129-30; Clayton 39). In this way, Crov names a very vexed faith indeed: a rejection of the "appropriative violence" (Barthes, S/Z 130) native to the name's operation and memorialized, despite that rejection, in the fact of the syllable's re-definition. Yet this hopeful project is necessarily "caught up in a context of other utterances" (Clayton 37), Kristevan intertexts that simultaneously disallow or discredit its performance.

37 This elocution recalls James's advice to Grace Norton; see note 21 and, in my introduction, pages 12 and following above.

38 Posnock elaborates on the kind of inevitably vexed trajectory, that characterizes Kate's hopeful plans, to observe James's "equation of genius with passion, agonism, contradiction, and mobility, with the radical heterogeneity of mutually conflicting impulses that at once incite and doom efforts at resolution" (28). Posnock argues James's admiration for and commitment to the nourishment of relentless "dialectical mediation" (29): "By omitting from his simmering process a synthetic, harmonizing moment producing an absolute (as in Hegel), James emphasizes instead the production of difference generated by the dissolving of identity" (28-29). Posnock finds that this estimation of genius provides the basis for Jamesian metaphors for "the power and value of the irreconcilable and the uncontrollable in human experience," for a pragmatic resistance to absolutes (29). Yet, James writes in another register in which allegory requires a disjunction from synthetic resolution. Jamesian genius is not so much the willingness to choose irresolution, but the strength to bear its inevitability.
III

When James introduces us to Merton Densher, it is as a rather complicated foil to Kate Croy. Densher is introduced in relation to Kate; his character is made contingent upon hers. James has Densher serve Kate in these early scenes that foreshadow Densher's more grievous exploitation later on. In fact, the way in which Densher's early characterization is used to throw Kate's into compelling relief seems almost baldly schematic. When he is first introduced we are told:

Merton Densher had repeatedly said to himself—and from far back—that he should be a fool not to marry a woman whose value would be in her differences; and Kate Croy, though without having quite so philosophised, had quickly recognised in the young man a precious unlikeness. He represented what her life had never given her and certainly without some such aid as his, never would give her; all the high dim things she lumped together as of the mind. (35)

Densher stands for all the "lumped together" things Kate has never been given by life. His presence reminds Kate of an absence, a lack in herself. Indeed, Densher seems designed specifically with this in mind. The obscure suggestiveness of this passage is compounded when we note that James provides curiously few other clues to account for the couple's attachment to each other. To "lump together" the apparently decisive elements that forge their connection seems odd for James, an author not averse to

39 Neither Krook nor F. O. Matthiessen questions this. Matthiessen takes it as a given when he writes: "James makes an incisive contrast between Kate and Densher. He specifies that they have little in common except their affection" (The Major Phase 58).
enumeration and fine distinction. Moreover, when we recall that the bulk of the novel's ensuing machinations are devised by Kate in order to make this attachment less tenuous, it is unsatisfactory to dismiss this elision of the basis for the relationship's appeal.

Though the passage cited here implies that Kate and Densher balance one another in complementarity--Densher is "of the mind" while Kate is not--Kate's attraction to Densher is not a simple case of poles lulled into magnetic association. The rest of the novel hardly supports the claim that Kate is not "of the mind." 40 Importantly, it is in their both looking for difference that they are, in fact, rather the same. 41 Nevertheless, James does not at all make clear that Kate's and Densher's quests, for what each individually lacks, are defeated in their mutual attachment. James's narration of the basis for their crucial relationship implies that, in one another, Kate and Densher have succeeded in their search while it neglects their real failure to have found someone not similarly obsessed. From this, we must either conclude that Kate and Densher succeed in their attachment to one another for reasons not inscribed by James or that, in pledging themselves to one another on the terms James does offer, they fail to satisfy their wills. James claims, for each, the abstract appeal of difference as a clarification of the obscure

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40 Mizruchi reminds us that "[t]he early sections of the novel picture the necessity of Kate's powers of invention. Her instinctive skill with language, her impatience with the tired forms of her past, and her disdain for conventionality as exemplified by the unimaginative authoritarianism of her aunt, all condition her regard for Densher's singular mind" (197).

41 Consider James's notation of the Prince and Charlotte's contemporaneity in The Golden Bowl (Chapter Three page 248). Like Amerigo and Charlotte's, Kate and Densher's mutual appeal is put in explicitly temporal terms: they both seek something that they do not yet have.
basis of their affinity; Kate and Densher are structural counterparts to one another. However, to the extent that they are, in this foundational assessment of their pairing, so very similar, James's offer that they are so valuably different serves as an obfuscation of such seeming clarification. In this way, the narration of this important explanation is instead a contradiction of the role of explanation itself.

This reasoning may sound specious; a similarity based on an appetite for difference need not deny the presence of determinant difference. Indeed, James, as we have seen, notes a putatively real, though unsatisfyingly dim, difference between the two in Kate's perception that Densher "represented . . . all the high dim things she lumped together as of the mind" (35). It would seem that the only determinant difference between Kate and Densher, the "precious unlikeness" (35) Kate quickly recognizes, is ineffable. A more educative declaration of the basis of their relationship is deferred even while the narrative insists on the suddenness of their understanding the logic of their pairing, even as James stresses that Densher's appreciation of what Kate suddenly represents to him was known "from far back" (35). The failure of the explanation to satisfy and its only certain success being obfuscation and apparent contradiction leads us to consider that this historical knowledge that so potently motivates Densher and Kate is meagre.

Instead of recognizing in one another what each has been long known, has been historically situated, to desire, James's establishing account of their connection has nothing to do with fate and everything to do with will: despite the paucity of evidence provided by James that Densher and Kate so brilliantly satisfy each other's conditions, the narrative insists that they are extraordinarily well matched. This curious non-conjunction
of narrative evidence and narrative claim suggests that the history, to which James appeals on behalf of Densher and Kate to establish the pedigree of their attachment, is at issue. By situating their logic in the past, James relies on the past to establish the trustworthiness, the solidity of a logic that cannot be evaluated on its own merits simply because it is not offered up for examination. Despite the proferred provenance of their logic, the logic itself eludes us. Yet, James eases this troubling point by assuring us that, "Merton Densher had repeatedly said to himself--and from far back--that he should be a fool not to marry a woman whose value would be in her differences . . ." (35). James joins logic and the past and, in the absence of logic, we must account for the past that James attaches to it.

The initial encounter between Kate and Densher, James claims, fulfills an historic expectation. Yet, we are left not with a sense of destiny fulfilled, but of will exercised. The vague facts of their characters do not magically accommodate themselves to one another here. Instead, the curious and important dearth of true clarification is effaced by Kate's and Densher's pledge and by James's elision. We must look to the future and not to the past in order to understand this crucial joining. Why then do James, Densher, and Kate direct us to the past and the present for an explanation that is not there?

We determined earlier that the lacuna, into which the notes of Kate's familial history progress, functions as a silent memorial to the sentence it suspends. Further, from this we concluded that the blankness of suspension, even in its failure to articulate, alludes broadly to the sentence it disrupts. Also, we recall that Kate, in her establishing characterization, is the *prosopopeia* of such a lacuna. By directing us to a similar
blankness in order to explain Kate's attachment to Densher, James fashions a chiasmus. The Croy family sentence proceeds into a concentrated blankness which refers, as we have seen, to the disrupted grammar that sired it. Here, James explains Kate and Densher's affinity by pointedly indicating a congruent lacuna which silently murmurs the sense of their pairing, which commemorates a logic. The concentrated lacuna which interrupts the Croy family sentence allegorizes the principle of dissolution that yielded it. James posits his explanation of Densher and Kate's attraction, another blank that claims to be a reference to a logic, as a similar allegory. Though not every absence stands for a presence, the articulation of a lack always energizes the force of our anticipation of its remedy. James provides textual evidence that the lacuna we discussed earlier stands for a precedent. However, this later blank's allegorical capacity is only asserted; we must take it on faith that the blank does instruct, that the emperor wears clothes.

Alternatively, the non-explanation to which James guides us may stand as an allegory for something not yet narrated. The blank may allude to a sequent rather than to a precedent. If the blank explanation is an allegorical lacuna, perhaps the other sense to which it refers is futural. The non-explanatory sign may function anagogically or eschatologically. The explanation to which James directs us in Densher's past and Kate's sudden present may, if there is finally such a logic, in fact, await its elucidation in the future.

The earlier lacuna, the one that ends the Croy family sentence, as we have seen, functions not only as a memorial, but also as an omen. The pause in the sentence naggingly anticipates its resolution, the suspension of the suspension; as James insists, it
The blank that stands in the place of an absent logic that would clarify why Densher and Kate are suited to one another fails to denote a preceding logic. In this way, Kate and Densher's pledge is grounded in a blank sign that refers not to precedent explanation, not to logical antecedent, but to another blank.\(^{42}\) A determinant logic of the past is irretrievable, just as any past action determinant of Lionel Croy's infamy is inaccessible. The process of appealing to such an irretrievable logic is that of memory. Memory, as our consideration of Benjamin shows, is proleptic. By appealing to a past for rationalization of their compact, Kate and Densher refer to a future determined by the grammar of their memory and the story it fashions. Their non-explanation fails to retrieve a past logic. However, it does begin to erect a future one. Yet, the memory that serves in lieu of a determinant past logic, does not amount to a logic itself. The logic that memory begins to construct, at the moment in the novel when James directs us to it, is, at best, incomplete; it is an unfinished sentence that Kate and Densher, by pledging themselves on its basis, would have end with a sort of meaning.

Kate's pledge to Densher, then, is not grounded in a determinant logic of the past, but in the anticipation of a logic presently erected and to be erected in memory's proleptic fashion. Kate's pledge to Densher is an act of faith in the power of this prolepsis.

\(^{42}\) Rowe posits that the occasional instability of Jamesian assurances, such as his direction to the enigmatic past here, "simulate[s] the order, meaning, and value that we cannot expect from experience" (6). Furthermore, Rowe continues: We grow accustomed quickly to distrust writing itself in James, because it is subject to the vagaries of interpretation that threaten to detour every message from its proper destination . . . . [These vagaries threaten] to reveal the more fundamental mystery and ambiguity that lurk behind every ostensible clue to any possible "solution." (7)
eventually to account for the basis of her pledge. Kate's pledge to Densher is a pledge of faith, an engagement based on the hope and belief that faith will subsequently clarify and justify the pledge itself. Furthermore, Kate's secret pledge of engagement is a pledge to faith; faith is the recipient of the pledge. The pledge enacts an allegoresis in which Densher becomes the embodiment, the *prosopopeia*, of Kate's faith. In her pledge, Kate commits herself to and allegorically equalizes faith, embodied faith, and Densher. Kate's speech act transfigures Densher, renders him a figure that justifies the speech performance itself:

... the warm transparent irony, into which their livelier intimacy kept plunging like a confident swimmer. She suddenly said to him with extraordinary beauty: 'I engage myself to you for ever.'

The beauty was in everything, and he could have separated nothing—couldn't have thought of her face as distinct from the whole joy. Yet her face had a new light. 'And I pledge you--I call God to witness!—every spark of my faith; I give you every drop of my life.' That was all, for the moment, but it was enough, and it was almost as quiet as if it were nothing. (68)

In secretly promising herself in marriage to Densher, Kate finds a way to marry faith itself. In her promised marriage to Densher, Kate may literally fail to save her family name. However, by pledging herself to faith, she figuratively pledges herself to

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43 After Kate honours her oath, made at the end of Book Eighth, to come to Densher's "faded old rooms" (385)—a promise exchanged for his pledge to stay in Venice and to work his "free hand," his "clear field," his "chance," with Milly—Densher gives himself up "to the general feeling of his renewed engagement to fidelity" (387).
croyance; she figuratively engages herself to a Croy, the allegorical *prosopopeia* of the proper name's etymological sense, and, apparently triumphing over gendered impotence, saves that name even in marriage.

Literally, of course, Kate pledges herself to the eventual assumption of the married name *Densher*. It has become clear, however, that *Densher* figures another name, the name *Croy*. Nevertheless, it is worth considering Densher's literal name, since that proper name is the note that stands for the figure of faith that he comes to embody. Oxford's dictionaries of given names and surnames do not offer any reference to either Densher's given name or surname. The *OED* does not offer a definition of *densher*, but does direct us, I think helpfully, when we consider a homonym "denture," an aphetic form of "indenture" (687) meaning a "covenant," "contract [or] mutual engagement" (1413).

Allegorically, Kate's pledge attaches her to the figure of faith; literally and etymologically, it binds her to the covenant and obligation that faith entails.

Something must be said on the curious observation that closes the fateful scene: James seems to explain the sufficiency of the pivotal moment by allowing that it "was almost as quiet as if it were nothing." That the phrase relies on a subjunctive rather than an indicative construction serves to underline the fact that Kate's pledge is a mark of her faith. The subjunctive speaks for wishes, possibilities, hopes as well as for doubts. The mood of possibility or uncertainty established by the subjunctive suspends any certain assignment of meaning. Kate's spirited engagement memorializes that aspect of her familial sentence that makes it most damning: the fertile productiveness yielded by its suspension. Furthermore, the sound of a quiet so hushed that it could be taken not for
silence, but for nothing, is clearly an ominous rehearsal, on the occasion of her betrothal, of the music of nothingness that derives from her damnable legacy.

When we first encounter him at the beginning of the novel's Book Second we observe Densher "demean himself as a person with nothing to do" (33). He moves with apparent determination that lapses into "behaviour . . . noticeably wanting in point" (33). Full of "vagueness" and "vivacity" (33), "absent-minded" and "irregularly clever" (34), Densher's character is forged in a smithy of imperfect contradistinctions, what Gasché calls "an irreducibly endless series of interfaces" (Readings ix). The paired characteristics James offers are patterned in a way that suggests their relation to one another will be instructive: noting his internal contradictions, for example. But the progression from vagueness to vivacity is not a clearly significant trajectory—as vagueness to concision, for example, would be—and the distinction between "absent-minded" and "irregularly clever" is, again, rather indistinct. The path that James's characterization of Densher follows seems as noticeably wanting in point as Densher's movements are said to be. However, we cannot leave Densher's entrance into the novel—though at once explanatory and obfuscating—after merely naming its irony. James plays the observant and detached journalist, noting nuanced details in Densher's conduct.44 James signals his explanation

44 Jolly reminds us that "Barthes has demonstrated the function of excessive denotation and apparently useless details as 'reality effects' in narrative, arguing that the model for this is history, with its assumption that 'the having-been-there of things is a sufficient reason for speaking of them'" (Barthes, "The Reality Effect" 15 qtd. in Jolly 26-27).

As an example of Barthes principle, Jolly directs us to James's Washington Square. Her remarks on that earlier novel are worth noting here as they bring us back to the present reading of history in The Wings of the Dove, linking the novels in a thematically innovative way:
of Densher and then, apparently, offers no explanation at all.\textsuperscript{45} In this way, James's

The anti-romantic perspective shared by Catherine and the narrator has the moral and epistemological authority of history. However, an instability in the novel's formulation of 'history' is suggested in the description of an object in Dr Sloper's house in Washington Square. Between two windows in the drawing-room is a long mirror, at the base of which a bracket supports a backgammon board folded together in the shape of two volumes, two shining folios inscribed in letters of greenish gilt, *History of England*" (James, *Washington Square* 78 qtd. in Jolly 44) Jolly calls such voluminous detail "excessive denotation" (a practice that James noted and admired in the work of Balzac). It helps further the illusion of "referentiality." In addition, James's excessive denotation in this passage features the two shining volumes that are also, or actually, a backgammon board; English history is a kind of toy. This ironic comment on history itself recalls Benjamin's stocking figure. *The Wings of the Dove* carefully places its own faux-haphazard history volume in the hands of Milly Theale. James asks the book to document the wealth that ineluctably adheres to Milly: A less vulgarly, a less obviously purchasing or parading [Susan] couldn't have imagined; but it prevailed even as the truth of truths that the girl couldn't get away from her wealth. She might leave her conscientious companion as freely alone with it as possible and never ask a question, scarce even tolerate a reference; but it was in the fine folds of the helplessly expensive little black frock that she drew over the grass as she now strolled vaguely off; it was in the curious and splendid coils of hair, 'done' with no eye whatever to the mode du jour, that peeped from under the corresponding indifference of her hat, the merely personal tradition that suggested a sort of noble inelegance; it lurked between the leaves of the uncut but antiquated Tauchnitz volume of which, before going out, she had mechanically possessed herself. (86-87)

Tauchnitz was a firm of German printers and publishers from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. The volume does more than insinuate the young American's wealth. That Milly mechanically possesses herself of antiquated, unread history proposes a whole line of investigation that has little to do with Milly's money. In fact, Milly's wealth is perhaps the thing the book documents least evidently. See my discussion of the sense of the past that adheres to Milly on page 149. See also Holland's reading of Milly's initiation into English society as governed by the "metaphor of a book" (300-301).

\textsuperscript{45} Gasché, in a gloss of Derrida's "infrastructures" that contests Richard Rorty's imputed dissatisfaction with Derridean notions of the integrity (or lack thereof) of names, words, and concepts, remarks:

Derridean infrastructures differ from such Heideggerian notions as Ereignis or Gestell by the decidedly more heterogenous nature of what they tie together; by the singularity of their combination, which is not limited to that of an idiom; by the non-dyadic arrangement of the gathered traits; and, notwithstanding the fact that they represent combinations, by their lack of a unifying (einigen) thrust.
narrative follows Densher's footsteps very closely by striding with evident purpose off into the distance only to loll about in irresolution. It is worth recalling Densher's first appearance, where we observe James carefully attaching the questions raised by Densher's identity to those posed by his physical movements; Densher's aimless peripatetic performance sets forth his ambiguities, ambiguities we have seen before:

More than once during the present winter's end he had deviated toward three o'clock, or toward four, into Kensington Gardens, where he might for a while, on each occasion, have been observed to demean himself as a person with nothing to do. He made his way indeed, for the most part, with a certain directness over to the north side; but once that ground was reached his behaviour was noticeably wanting in point. He moved, seemingly at random, from alley to alley; he stopped for no reason and remained idly agaze; he sat down in a chair and then changed to a bench; after which he walked about again, only again to repeat both the vagueness and the vivacity. Distinctly he was a man either with nothing at all to do or with ever so much to think about . . . . It was a little the fault of his aspect,

(Inventions 6)

In this way, James's characterization of Densher produces such an infrastructure and may go far to explain his appeal for Kate: "[i]nfrasstructures . . . pertain to the conditions and limits under which a word can be either a unity of sense or merely a sema . . . . Because they articulate the laws and limits of intelligibility, they have, compared with words, a certain privilege" (6). Kate favours the privilege of Densher's non-dyadic arrangement not because she is drawn to the mystery of his ambiguity, but because it conforms to her own hopeful trajectory of liberation from the sense imposed by her legated trap: "[t]he traits that make up an infrastructure are without exception traits of pointing away from (themselves), being marked in advance by an Other, referring to an Other, and so on. Although these traits cluster to form an infrastructure, they can thus never give rise to a unity (of sense, of form, or even of a mark)" (6).
his personal marks, which made it almost impossible to name his profession. (33) James lights upon Densher in the midst of his stroll to offer us his characterization. The manner of Densher's progress—seemingly directionless and yet simultaneously purposeful—is mysterious. The same may be said of James's narration of it. James meanders with Densher in apparent non-explanation of the man. Yet Densher is properly explained through such non-explanation: his stroll is purposefully lacking in purpose. In the face of such non-presentation of identity, Gasché remarks on the presentation of non-identity, noting that upon "[c]oming to a text . . . the reader-critic normally expects that its constellation yields to the unity of a configuration of thought" (Readings ix), that its elements will cooperate in a grammar and that that grammar will suggest a meaning.46 Gasché goes on to ponder a text like that which first characterizes Merton Densher, one that "deliberately situates itself between figures, themes, or motifs that could, and normally would, authoritatively confer unity . . ." (ix) and concludes:

If the figures of thought at the crisscross of which the work places itself are neither identical to one another nor in a relation of otherness, the difficulty of the work increases considerably. This is definitely true when those figures are themselves inquiries into the intricacies of the in-between. The work we are speaking of, then, sides with an irreducibly endless series of interfaces. Lacking a determining negation by the other, not one of these figures of thought can reflect itself into mere identity; rather, the work in question remains suspended between

46 As Derrida writes: "Clearly, it will always be possible to say, and it will be true, that nonresponse is a response" (On the Name 17).
and between, to the side of, by right, only a virtual middle between nonidentical interfaces. (ix)

With Gasché's help, then, we must certainly see that James’s characterization of Densher recalls the suspense that charges Kate's character. On the literal level, Densher's apparent absence of goal, during his walk, is resolved by Kate's joining him. Such a reading is dangerously likely to allow tediously inappropriate cliché sentiment to intrude on James's scene. Beyond the literal, what Gasché's observations make clear is that Densher's difficult nature is not magically clarified by the presence of his beloved, but is only further obscured by his attachment to James’s prosopopeia of suspense. In James's characterization of Densher, Kate is once again figured as the last word. Yet if she completes and explains him, she only does so negatively by marking out the non-presence of his meaning and the suspension of his character.

In lieu of indicating either the presence or absence of definitive aspects, James's curious characterization of Densher operates by eliding such determinations and by laying stress on the gaps. James emphasizes Densher's failure to congeal; Densher is explicitly unformed and unfinished: "He suggested above all, however, that wondrous state of youth, in which the elements, the metals more or less precious, are so in fusion and fermentation that the question of the final stamp, the pressure that fixes the value, must wait for comparative coolness" (34). While Densher thus fails to demonstrate the possession of readily palpable qualities, James stresses that he might yet come to something. Densher is presented before completion. What he has most is the sense of not yet having; Densher's presence suggests an absence or a suspension eventually to be
resolved.\textsuperscript{47} In this respect, he and Kate are very much suited to one another, not on the basis of complimentarity that James stresses for us, but of similarity. Their actual similarity is established in the scene of their first meeting in which James allows an extraordinary coincidence to seal the match: they meet at the top of a garden wall having simultaneously scaled ladders on either side. Their second meeting is also a remarkable coincidence. They encounter one another by chance on a train: "they looked across the choked compartment exactly as if she had known he would be there and he had expected her to come in . . ." (38).

These episodes suggest that Densher, when we first meet him, is more like Kate in plight and action than James's pointedly undermined claims of difference suggest. By binding herself to Densher, Kate actually pledges herself to all that she already has. In recognition of this affinity, and in lieu of any other determinant offering, James establishes their allegiance: "They would have presented themselves thus as very old

\textsuperscript{47} On this point, it is useful to recall the by-now familiar biographical source material for James's novel opened up by Edel from James's notebooks and personal correspondence. In James's letters to his mother and older brother following immediately upon the death of his young cousin Minny Temple, Edel notes: "He experienced a feeling of 'absolute balm in the thought of poor Minny and rest--rest and immortal absence'" (\textit{Henry James} II.324). Later, as Edel claims, James's immediate despair progresses into eloquent reflection. James elaborates on the notion of the balm of absence:

Over and over its refrain is that Minny can now be translated from reality into an image of the mind. He had written his mother: "Twenty years hence--what a pure eloquent vision she will be" and now he reiterated, as if talking to Minny, "Twenty years hence we shall be living with your love and longing with your eagerness and suffering with your patience." (\textit{Henry James} II.325) The vocabulary of \textit{The Wings of the Dove} is recalled in a strange way by Edel and James here. The conversion, by her death, of Milly into the perpetuity of absence also translates her "from reality into an image of the mind." Edel uses translation to figure the Jamesian model of death's effect. He determines the afterlife as "of the mind," the basis of Kate Croy's attachment to Merton Densher.
friends rather than as young persons who had met for the first time but a year before and had spent most of the interval without contact. It was indeed for each, already, as if they were older friends . . . " (42). The novelty of their relationship is repeatedly tinged by James with a sense of its pastness. Nevertheless, the facts of the past in this instance are, unlike those Sedgwick claims for Lionel Croy, manifest. Kate and Densher share virtually no past. We must account, then, for James's insistent claims that their pasts are uncannily conjoined.

Their past together is shallow, but it is stressed as though its mere existence is somehow telling. Their encounter on the train is preceded by their earlier coincidental encounter at the top of the garden wall:

The extraordinary part of the matter was that they were not in the least meeting where they had left off, but ever so much further on . . . he instantly followed her out of the train. That had been the real beginning—the beginning of everything else; the other time, the time at the party, had been but the beginning of that.

Never in life before had she so let herself go; for always before—so far as small adventures could have been in question for her—there had been, by the vulgar measure, more to go upon. (39)

The significance of this accenting of the foundational moment of their relationship is not immediately clear, and we must account for it. The curious "real beginning," following on what had been "but the beginning of that," is a typically oblique Jamesian point that in its obscurity suggests further levels of profundity. What marks the second meeting between Kate and Densher as the "real" beginning is, as James explains, Kate's wholly
new willingness on that occasion to "let herself go." It is not this carefree response that makes the moment real, but the radical novelty that characterizes the response. Liberty of manner does not heighten this second meeting to the level of a preeminently real one. Rather, the distinction seems to be more of a categorical, structural kind: she had merely never behaved this way before and, thus, this moment is real. The pleasure of her apparent liberty may lead Kate to pair novelty and reality, but it is the result of the pairing that is finally most important.

Kate judges the novelty of her second meeting with Densher by referring to their first coincidental encounter. In this way, their second meeting is established as the real one by virtue of its relation to the other meeting that, in Kate's unstated assessment, must have not been the real one. One wonders at James's precision. Apparently, the two meetings, by virtue of their simple multiplicity, do not undergird the establishment of the young attachment so much as they afford James's reader the opportunity to observe Kate as she distinguishes between them. On its face, the conclusion drawn on Kate's behalf by James has nothing specifically to do with her connection to Densher. Rather, in distinguishing between the two encounters, Kate enacts an assessment of reality itself. Reality, in Kate's estimation, is a quality assigned to the second meeting and denied to the first.

For Kate, the chief determinant of reality, at this moment when the category's very nature is passingly but tellingly narrated, is the freedom that attaches to it. In granting Densher leave to call upon her, "she was just the contemporary London female, highly modern, inevitably battered, honourably free" (40). Kate, in this way, erects a personal
historical fiction that achieves the status of a municipal, if not national, myth. By allowing Densher to call upon her, Kate assumes a role that may substitute for the dreadful enforced waiting, the patience that her legacy imposes on her. Her suffering has been "inevitable"; her situation, merely "contemporary," "highly modern"; her prospects, "honourably free." Yet, we know from the preceding pages that this is all a quaint fiction. Kate drives this point home:

He had walked with her to Lancaster Gate, and then she had walked with him away from it—for all the world, she said to herself, like the housemaid giggling to the baker. This appearance, she was afterwards to feel, had been all in order for a relation that might precisely best be described in the terms of the baker and the housemaid. (39)

For Kate Croy, the chance second encounter with Merton Densher prompts her definition of reality. Indeed, it enacts that definition. The "real beginning—the beginning of everything else" is the setting for the erection of a fiction in precise defiance of the legacy of Kate's familial history. The fiction, narrated as a national myth or as a domestic comedy, stands as an ominous allegory insofar as it relies upon a lie: Kate is not free. She demands that her absence of freedom be accepted as its presence. Her non-attainment of liberty, the novelty of liberty, and the reality that comes with that novelty, masquerade as satisfaction. Kate's impulse to cast herself and Densher in the terms of these fictions verifies Bersani's claim that desire, in general, "is an appetite of the imagination . . . the deconstruction of the self and the diversification of our desires depend on our finding ways to repeat ourselves which don't point to hidden, permanent
and central truths about the self" (10-11). Yet, of course, Kate's "diversification" here memorializes its alternative: simply the fact that Kate is not what she desires to be.

Bersani could easily be referring to the strategies of Kate Croy that I analyze here when he recalls Rimbaud's *Illuminations* and the rudiments of Freudian psychology, pointing out that the "disguised repetitions of inhibited desires constitute the coherent self" (6).

Kate Croy's fictive recreation of self is, at once, the play of a faithful young woman—a performance of her faith—an apparent misrepresentation of the fact that she is not free, and itself the operation that produces her entrapment. Kate's determination to rescue her name, to prize the talisman of faith, leads her to narrate herself in terms damningly congruent to those that ensnare her. Susan Stringham's active mind

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48 For Rivkin, James's novel is best understood as a sustained pensée on the provision of such substitute forms or "false positions," what she calls "life like copies" (False Positions 82): personae or versions of identity that James's characters employ as they seek to remedy their inadequate originals: "The desire to restore a family name and fortune or to recuperate from an endangered state of health can be read as an attempt to prevent an inevitable dissemination of meaning and erosion of value . . ." (False Positions 9). Rivkin points out that such remediation or supplementation necessarily debases those originals or first notes, constructs, and creates their inadequacy (retrospectively): " . . . the failure of any and all such projects of restoration and salvation in this novel can best be understood . . . through the reckonings of a post-structuralist representational economy" (9). Rivkin's appreciation of James's project depends greatly on Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." She writes: "Indeed, the copy destroys the absolute singularity of the original, what Walter Benjamin would call its aura, at the same time that it suggests that the effect of singularity is produced by the very phenomenon of being subject to copying" (False Positions 88; see also Benjamin "Mechanical Reproduction" 217-51). The distinction between the present reading and Rivkin's fine assessment may be seen in the distinction between Benjamin's thinking on mechanical reproduction and his consideration of the image of Proust. Rivkin's "original"—its supplementation and its reflexive debasement—is inadequate if that original is not read as a temporal entity, itself the irreducible compact of implications that Benjamin considers by way of Proust's stocking/package/prize figure (Benjamin, "Proust" 95). See note 10 above.
rationalizes Kate Croy in terms famously menacing to readers of The Portrait of a Lady:

The handsome English girl from the heavy English house had been as a figure in a picture stepping by magic out of its frame: it was a case in truth for which Mrs Stringham presently found the perfect image. She had lost none of her grasp, but quite the contrary, of the other conceit in virtue of which Milly was the wandering princess; so what could be more in harmony now than to see the princess waited upon at the city gate by the worthiest maiden, the chosen daughter of the burgesses? It was the real again, evidently, the amusement of the meeting for the princess, too; princesses living for the most part, in such an appeased way, on the plane of mere elegant representation. (122)

Susan's merry fantasy imposes upon Kate by way of the passive voice: Milly is waited upon by Kate, and Kate is chosen by the burgesses. In this blithe tableau that relies on a tourist's clichés, Kate is the patient and favoured tool of those who own the house that frames her to such charming effect. Milly seconds Susan's impression in her own provocative terms:

Kate Croy really presented herself to Milly--the latter abounded for Mrs Stringham in accounts of it--as the wondrous London girl in person (by what she had conceived from far back, of the London girl; conceived from the tales of travellers and the anecdotes of New York, from old porings over Punch and a liberal acquaintance with the fiction of the day). The only thing was that she was nicer, since the creature in question had rather been, to our young woman, an image of dread. (122)
For Milly, Kate is a mythological creature—the wondrous London girl in person—burdened by a frame that recalls the one out of which she magically steps for Susan. For Milly, Kate's frame is a grammatical one and, the narrative sharply reminds us through ironical implication, Milly is sorely mistaken when she thinks that Kate truly loosens its bounds. Kate, as the personification of the capital city, is truly the niece of Britannia of the market place and inevitably sentenced. Milly misreads Kate, the captive of a legacy of notation; when she supposes her "nicer," she does so while gazing upon a walking spectre of dread.

Though Kate's second meeting with Densher is defined as real, it demands reference to the other encounter, the past one, in order to mark this claim. Kate judges by opposition. The reality of the second occasion is functional only to the extent that Kate and Densher's previous encounter can be said to have been unreal or less real. Yet, just as novelty on this occasion can only be acknowledged with reference to a precedent that was somehow not new, the reality of this occasion is grounded only if we grant that history is not real or is less real. Kate tries to will history away, to begin her sentence's narration anew, to overcome the prescription of patience. She asks this forced novelty to serve as reality and, indeed pathetically, her varieties of fiction to override the dictates of history.

Nevertheless, Kate's position is not much changed by these considerations. Her second meeting with Densher, their "real" beginning, is preceded by the other meeting that was the beginning of that beginning. The second beginning is notable not only for its "reality," for what it can teach us about Kate's understanding of what is real. This "real" beginning itself, even as an original moment, comprises a history: the beginning has a
beginning. Their earliest singular moment has precedent to which it refers. The sense in
which we understand the word "beginning," its recorded usage, is somewhat at odds with
its etymology. The OED offers eleven senses for the term, all of which propound the idea
of incipience (192-93). "Beginning," in its usage, makes no room for previousness,
ancestry, or any other preliminaries. Yet the etymology of the word's root, "begin," is
more flexible in this regard:

Of common WGer. or ?OTeut. formation: OE. bi-, be-ginnan is identical with OS.
and OHG. bi-ginnan, MHG., mod.G., Du. be-ginnen, MDu. beginnen; f. bi-, BE-
about + *ginnan, an original Teutonic vb., of which however only compounds
have come down to us, including (beside the preceding) Goth. du-ginnan to begin,
OE. on-ginnan, a-ginnan, to begin, OHG. in-ginnan. MHG. en-ginnen. The latter
(OHG and MHG) had the senses 'to cut open, open up, begin, undertake': hence it
is inferred that the root sense of *ginnan was 'to open, open up,' and that it was
cogn. w. ON. gina, OE. ginan 'to gape, yawn,' from a stem *gi-, appearing also in
OSlav. zij-ati, L. hi-äre 'to gape, open' . . . (192)

The senses in which "begin" and "beginning" are understood by the OED reduce the
possible variety of readings of their etymological root. The usage of "beginning" has
reduced its etymological idea of "opening up" to mean only the linear progress from an
original point. "Opening up" functions unidirectionally: from the present into the future.

But, James's beginning opens up, cuts open the past; Kate and Densher's second and
"real" beginning undertakes a narrative of that past, records its own history—"the
beginning of all that." James's inscription of Kate and Densher's real beginning makes
explicit this etymological sense in which beginning, which is to say beginning afresh or anew, is impossible. Beginning always has its own beginning, opens up its own origins, harkens back to its own prior foundations.

Kate may, then, really begin with Densher, but, real or not, this beginning cannot authorize a release from backward reference. To judge their second meeting as the real one requires that we discount the reality of the one that precedes it. To allow their beginning to be a point of origin we must read etymology selectively. This second meeting of Kate and Densher, the real beginning, indicates Kate's incipient progress toward freedom only if we read its implications selectively, only if we fail to take responsibility for all its references, only if we agree to deny its strong sense of the past. But to disallow that Kate remains uncomfortably in the thrall of patience is to embrace what she herself acknowledges as a fine fiction, mythic or domestic. By pledging herself to Densher, Kate ironically recapitulates the structure of Book First in which she pledges herself to the name Croy the legacy of which she seeks to escape and by so pledging herself rehearses the grammatical trap that is her sinister legacy itself.
IV

The fervour with which Kate and Densher pledge themselves to each other fails to substantiate the absence of palpable determinant qualities that they, in their pledging, so freely and unwittingly elide. Their relationship is grounded in their shared determination to allow absence to serve as presence. While their respective pasts do not instruct us as to why they connect so powerfully, James insists on their behalf that it is in that zone of pastness that such instruction abides. Yet, James's claim amounts to an ironic subversion: there is no demonstrable logic in the past even as he points us to it. This absence of logic, then, is James's clarification. This system of explanation as bafflement is introduced explicitly, by James, in the character of Milly Theale who first appears in Book Third in stark isolation from the characters we have encountered up to this point. Yet, despite Milly's alpine seclusion from the thorny dynamics introduced by Kate and Densher, she is from the first directly involved in them.

Milly, we quickly see, embodies the elision that characterizes the relationship between Kate and Densher. Milly's explanation of herself comes in reply to Susan Stringham in a continuing dialogue between the two women that begins in the Alps in Book Third and continues after their relocation to London in Book Fourth. The celebrated scene on the mountain precipice that introduces Milly Theale for the first time provokes Susan to ask after Milly's health:

Mrs Stringham . . . flared into sympathy. 'Are you in trouble—in pain?'

'Not the least little bit. But I sometimes wonder----!'
'Yes'—she pressed: 'wonder what?'

'Well, if I shall have much of it.'

Mrs Stringham stared. 'Much of what? Not of pain?'

'Of everything. Of everything I have.'

Anxiously again, tenderly, our friend cast about. 'You "have" everything; so that when you say "much" of it----'

'I only mean,' the girl broke in, 'shall I have it for long? That is if I have got it.' (93)

When Susan asks about Milly's pain, she means pain of a certain kind. Susan, of course, refers to the presence of pain. One either has pain or one does not; it is either present or absent. And these are, in Susan's estimation, the only categories of pain. Pain is of two kinds: present and absent. Really, presence is a prerequisite of pain; if one has pain at all, it must be of the present kind. This is phenomenology insofar as Susan's alarm over Milly's physical condition concerns itself with Milly's present experience of discomfort. To be "in trouble" or "in pain" is to "have" it; in turn, to have it is to be in present possession of it. Susan understands "having" to be an all or nothing matter; logic requires that presence is balanced only by absence. Furthermore, to have "much" of it only refers to the severity of pain's presence. Susan's initial failure to understand Milly's curious meanings stems from her conception of presence as positive and palpable, even spatial. For Susan here, to be in pain is to be in present possession of the substance of pain, to "have" the discrete thing that is pain. This understanding does not allow for degree which accounts for Susan's being at a loss when Milly introduces the idea of having much of
pain: "'Much of what?"' Susan stares. To have pain is simply to possess it palpably; it would seem impossible to have much of pain. This may seem a strange source of misunderstanding. After all, experience, the standard of judgment to which Susan refers, does allow for varied severity of pain: sharp pain, dull pain, minor pain, agony, and so on. But Susan does not think of the abundance of the substance of pain when she tries to think through the notion of "much." If one either has something or one does not, the principle of possession cannot work by degree. This is phenomenal logic.

By wondering over the illogic of quantifying the idea of possession, Susan fails to note, and thus underscores, the obvious question of duration. It is interesting to recall that earlier, when we first meet Susan, James casts back to the beginning of her journey with Milly, a pairing that began in Boston and continued through New York and on across the Atlantic. It may seem curious, in our present context, to recall that James then vests Susan with a keen sensitivity of vision that implies an extraordinary sharpness of mind: "She . . . had seen little of the girl—or rather had seen her but briefly, for Mrs Stringham, when she saw anything at all, saw much, saw everything" (74). James's phrase, once again, stresses the idea of duration as it clearly insists on the fineness of Susan's mind; yet, in this crucial alpine scene, faced with the first clues of Milly's crisis, a problem of foreshortened duration, Susan seems notably dense. James, in his praise of Susan's perception, underscores the functional binarism that troubles her comprehension of Milly's predicament: for Susan "when she saw anything at all, saw much, saw everything." This is an example of synecdoche in which a partial glimpse is allowed to stand for a whole vision. Yet, Milly needs Susan to think in another way.
Milly's replies here and later do not conform to the requirements of Susan's logic. Susan does not conceive of different degrees of possession itself. Rather, she quantifies the objects of possession, as if they are things in space, and is confused by Milly's meaning: "You "have" everything; so that when you say "much" of it—". "Everything" is already superlative and does not allow for the qualification "much." However, Milly's comments require a temporal understanding. Milly and Susan both think of ownership. Susan's spatial thinking defeats her. Perhaps she is as preoccupied with the heiress's magnificent fortune as the others in the novel soon become. In her replies, Milly deletes the spatial object of "pain" that Susan introduces in her questions. In its place, Milly speaks of time, of "everything," of "everything that I have." Instead of addressing herself to the absoluteness of her wealth, Milly participates in a conversation about lifespan that Susan, apparently, never even hears. Both women talk about the possession of some thing: for Susan it is the confusing notion of an object called pain, for Milly it is the dire element of time. Susan's questions prompt Milly to meditate on duration and, by extension, patience ("... shall I have it for long?"). Milly, in this way, demonstrates another mode for understanding possession, a logic beyond the mere opposition of presence and absence. Milly focuses on the idea that possession takes time. To have something, anything, depends on having the time to have it. Her reading of "possession" is temporal, not spatial. "Much" possession refers not to ownership of many things—even abstract things like pain—but to having time. It is in this ominous way that James introduces us to Milly's illness. Milly is uncertain of her possession, not of tangible things, but of sustainable, durable existence. Tenderly and anxiously, Milly wonders if
her presence itself, not the presence of the things she owns or the pain she may bear, will be imminently absent. For Milly, Susan's consideration of presence, assumed in uttering the idea of possession, is an intimation of absence.

When Susan introduces the idea of presence, Milly is struck instead by the note of absence. Susan abbreviates the stuff of possession, the things Milly has, by focussing on the apt question of pain. In lieu of indicating whether or not she indeed has pain, Milly accepts Susan's probing as an opportunity to comment on presence itself. Presence is the note that stands for absence, the "not yet" of her imminent annihilation; presence is a matter of time, always. The present certainty of palpable possession is only a mocking trace that stands for, that intimates, its opposite. Susan's emphatic insistence on Milly's possession of "everything," then, only serves as an omen of its alternative, as a reminder of what is to come, a note for the future.

It would seem, from this, that the episode in the Alps, the "odd passage" (94), is a sort of foreshadowing, a prefiguring of Milly's eventual fate. Susan stresses Milly's ownership of everything. Milly replies by reading Susan's emphasis as an intimation of what Mrs. Stringham does not say, as a suggestion of impending oblivion. Yet, the passage comes just after a performance of memory in which Milly casts back, not forward, in order to see what is to come:

'What was it that, in New York, on the ninth, when you saw him alone, Doctor Finch said to you?'

It was not till later that Mrs Stringham fully knew why the question had startled her still more than its suddenness explained; though the effect of it even at
the moment was almost to frighten her into a false answer. She had to think, to remember the occasion, the 'ninth', in New York, the time she had seen Doctor Finch alone, and to recall, the words he had then uttered; and when everything had come back it was quite, at first, for a moment, as if he had said something that immensely mattered. He hadn't, however, in fact; it was only as if he might perhaps after all have been going to. (91-2)

Milly asks Susan to recall the doctor's words and, by so doing, requests a rehearsal of the sentence he has pronounced for her. Yet, Doctor Finch's possible prognosis never was verbalized. Susan first recalls her time in the doctor's office with the sense that something had indeed been positively uttered only to immediately reconsider; instead of a recollection of a positive expression, Susan quickly remembers the absence of such pronouncement. Further, this absence is not a simple one; it is not merely that the specific sentence to which Milly refers, and to which Susan tries to cast her mind back, was never uttered. The absence is an intimation of presence, a note for what was not said: "it was only as if he might perhaps after all have been going to."

Susan's startled recollection of her time with Doctor Finch initially transforms an absent statement into a present one. The lack of statement is first recalled as though the doctor had uttered, had inscribed "something that immensely mattered" upon her consciousness. In the place of such a statement, James immediately informs us, is the recalled absence of any such voiced communication. But this latter recollection does not provide Susan with a conclusive sense of nothing having been said. Or, rather, the nothing that was said, even as it was said, has a sort of presence. In James's narration of
Susan's process of remembrance, the nothing that was said is called "something." Here in memory, nothing has the presence of something, the sense of palpable intimation. In this way, by saying nothing, Doctor Finch does say something. James stresses the strange profundity of this crossing of Doctor Finch's recalled forbearance and pronouncement through his concatenation of qualifying phrases: "it was only as if he might perhaps after all have been going to." Extraordinarily, there are five qualifications that prepare us for the transformation of Doctor Finch's nonstatement into the kind of Jamesian statement that demands close attention: "only," "as if," "he might," "perhaps," and "after all." These qualifications work, on the level of the sentence, as a kind of syntactic suspense, making the final revelation—that the doctor might have been going to say something—weighty. The intimated value of Doctor Finch's (non)statement is measured by James's intricate approach as an ample note.

These two passages, Susan and Milly's discussion of possession and Susan's consideration of her meeting with Doctor Finch in New York, work in tandem. The first sees Milly transmute Susan's assertions of presence, of having, into an ominous intimation of absence. Presence is merely a portent that reminds her of a possibly imminent oblivion. "Presence," of course, has a multiple sense. The word means: "[e]xisting at the time of speaking or writing; that is, or that is so, at this time or now, current . . . " (OED 2285). In addition, "present" denotes a futural sense: "[i]n the space of time that immediately follows, in a little while, before long, after a short time, soon, shortly" (2286). Presence, by definition, is a note for the moment and reminder of the next. In this way, Susan and Milly's consideration of presence affords Milly the
opportunity to remember her future. Presence is, necessarily, a memento mori, an anticipation of absence. In turn, just as presence is multiple in its reference, the absence that it brings to mind is not bound to one sense; absence, like presence, intimates its opposite, really making an opposition of the two categories inappropriate. Presence and absence are not reducible to the phenomenal linear chronology that places life and death in polar opposition (de Man, "Wordsworth" 10; quoted on my page 9). In these passages, James merges his plot's double focus—the consideration of the quality of Milly's life and the portent of her early death—with the non-linear binarism of presence and absence. The absolute nothingness of death is paired with the category of absence. Yet, absence is also, as it is at the end of Kate Croy's familial sentence, an intimation of presence. Susan's recollection of her meeting with Doctor Finch is first, and frighteningly for her, misremembered as a scene of pronouncement, and then as an instance of nonstatement, and then, by virtue of that nonstatement, as a resonant statement that, despite its immateriality, yields a trace. That trace, resurrected in memory, is the history of the meeting with the doctor. That Doctor Finch's failure to speak is reembodied, by Susan's memory, as an uncanny instance of communication shows how absence is a kind

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<th>Absence</th>
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Figure 1
of presence.\(^{49}\)

These two passages are an instructive preamble to Milly's laconic comment on life and death, presence and absence. Toward the end of Book Fourth, Milly takes the two binarisms—the linear chronology of life and death and the oscillating categories of presence and absence—and explains herself through the figure of chiasmus: "Since I've lived all these years as if I were dead, I shall die, no doubt, as if I were alive—which will happen to be as you want me. So, you see, 'she wound up, 'you'll never really know where I am. Except indeed when I'm gone; and then you'll only know where I'm not" (143).\(^{50}\) Easily remarked like an epigram, Milly's comment to Susan Stringham allows presence and absence, life and death, to trade places (see Figure 1). Or rather, Milly indicates that she knows that the zones of presence and absence are not distinct; they commingle. Milly figures the categories of presence and absence as biographical, or biological, absolutes: life and death. By discussing presence and absence this way, by positing the distinction between them in this manner, by likening them to the stark contraries of life and death, Milly would seem to argue that presence excludes absence and absence presence. After all, it would seem, life excludes death and death life. This is, importantly, just what Milly does not argue here. Instead, by relying on these familiar categories, Milly precisely challenges any confidence in the absolute nature of such distinctness. She depends not on the phenomenological understanding that demands that

\(^{49}\) On this system of absence and presence, see Bradbury, "Nothing" 85-96.

\(^{50}\) On the idea of "as if" see my final words on Kate Croy and William James (page 183 below). Holland also comments on Milly's "acting as if" (296-98).
death and life exist in mutual exclusion of one another, but on another way of seeing that
discounts such opposition.

In this passage, Milly characterizes her life as death; in turn, she likens her
impending death to life.\footnote{Alice James's \textit{Diary} provides the most ready and useful intertext for this
whole system. From its first entry the diary likens presence to absence: "I think that if I
get into the habit of writing a bit about \textit{what happens}, or rather \textit{doesn't happen}, I may lose
a little of the sense of loneliness and desolation which abides with me" (25 my emphasis).}
Milly apposes life and death. Furthermore, life, here, is
connected to the verbal construction "where I am"; death ("when I'm gone") is connected
to the phrase "where I'm not." At first, then, though life is defined, by simile, as death
and death as life, life does seem to be the zone of presence ("where I am") and death, the
zone of absence ("where I'm not"). However, Milly explains that while she is alive,
Susan will "never really know where I am." Presence does not easily attend Milly's life.

\footnote{In situating herself professionally among her siblings, Alice James exalted the supreme
difficulty of her own career in life: to "get myself dead, the hardest job of all" (211).}
Later she subverts that implication of a linear progression from life to death by arguing
that the lively expectation of extinction is death itself:

The fact is, I have been dead so long and it has been simply such a grim shoving
of the hours behind me as I faced a ceaseless possible horror, since that hideous
summer of '78, when I went down to the deep sea, its dark waters closed over me
and I knew neither hope nor peace; that now it's only the shrivelling of an empty
pea pod that has to be completed. (230)

Her convictions are, perhaps, clearest when she asks, "What is living in this deadness
called life?" (Diary 38).

Thomas Hardy seconds the notion of the epistemological force of expectation in
two stanzas each recount its speaker's regular hillside strolls. In the first stanza's walk the
speaker does not even think to remark on his solitude, so sure is he to find companionship
upon returning home. The second stanza reports the death of that other who would
provide such fellowship as the \textit{anticipation} of the entirely reconfigured sense which will
welcome the walker home: "Only that underlying sense/Of the look of a room on
returning thence" (340). It is the anticipation of that sense of loss that Hardy evokes as
the epitome of loss. The knowledge that expectation \textit{will} not be satisfied is the force of it
not \textit{being} satisfied.
Indeed, it is by virtue of her being alive, by being "where I am," that Milly defies presence. Such existence assures, in this passage, that Susan will never really know its presence. Though a kind of presence attends life, that presence is always a functional intimation of absence, of failure to really place presence. The presence that Milly associates with her life for Susan is the presence of the impossibility ever really to know presence. In turn, absence will not be the outcome of Milly's death: "then you'll know where I'm not." When Milly is dead, her absence will, in fact, be an indication or denotation of presence for Susan who will know, with a precision unavailable earlier, during Milly's life, where Milly is not; specifically, Susan will, then, know the presence of Milly's absence. In other words, Susan will remember Milly. Susan will only be able to place Milly in retrospect by noting the trace, what Holland calls the "sheer presence" (310-11), the now and forever, of her absence.\footnote{Again, James foreshadows this subsequent focus on the blurry boundaries between life and death when Milly and Susan initially forge their attachment. Milly travels to Boston "after a series of bereavements" (74) because it "was recognised, liberally enough, that there were many things--perhaps even too many--New York could give; but this was felt to make no difference in the important truth that what you had most to do, under the discipline of life, or of death, was really to feel your situation as grave. Boston could help you to that as nothing else could..." (74 my emphasis). In Milly Theale, James offers a character apparently troubled by a surfeit of death: "I'm a survivor--a survivor of a general wreck... I'm all that's left. But they died,' she went on, to be fair all round, 'of different things'" (172). But James's narratorial observation marks a passing claim about life and death that elevates Milly beyond the sentimental martyrdom of the doomed survivor. By apposing "the discipline of life" and the discipline "of death" James does not elide the distinction of two zones; he reveals no inkling of an antecedent thinking of death and life as distinct from one another or opposite to one another.}

In his biography, Edel proposes that, for James, Boston became a city of death, a place to which the writer periodically returned to bury loved ones. Yet if Boston inspired in James a sense of morbid gravity, thoughts of the grave, it was also for him a center of gravity, an attractive zone energetically (and thus vividly) fixing James's familial associations and American literary culture. The city of gravity (graveness) is the center of
While alive, Milly explains, her apparent phenomenal existence only serves to mark for us the place where she is, in fact, not. Her living presence (pre)figures her future extinction when she will only be available through recollection of the past. Moreover, according to Milly, and we have no reason to reject the concision of her observation to Susan, this double denotation—of future annihilation troubled by eventual backward glances—accounts for the entire function of her warm and breathing present, her corporeal presence.

Milly offers up the chiasmus during a conversation about pain. This is the first signal that James uses to direct us to think about Milly's body. Quickly, as we have seen, Milly rejects this somatic focus. Despite the move away from sensation as a topic, the chiasmus that Milly erects for Susan's education is a figure of prospopoeia: Milly embodies the tension that the chiasmus enacts. Furthermore, Milly instructs us on topics other than how to endure illness or bear its agonies. She articulates the basis for all knowledge.

Initially, the tension of the chiasmus seems specifically "the description of a future experience by means of a fiction of a past experience which is itself anticipatory or prefigurative" (de Man, "Wordsworth" 9). Milly's explanation to Susan indicates that knowledge is only available through memory. Moreover, this passage demonstrates the gravity (life). This is James's preferred strategy for positing life and death at that curiously passing, and remarkably telling, moment in The Portrait of a Lady when Mrs. Touchett discovers Isabel at the Albany home and questions the girl about her perverse attachment to the backwater (see Chapter One page 46). Isabel clearly does see the present absence of life as the presence of life because the mourned presence is, once again, all there ever is of presence. Mrs. Touchett does not grasp this, and consequently her stature is diminished.
Jamesian conviction that memory is the only kind of knowledge. The absence suggested by presence is an epistemological chasm. Certainty, the only kind of certainty, the curious species of the term that James allows, comes in retrospection; the certainty that arrives through this retrospection is a kind of knowledge of an always already vanished presence. Or, once again, perhaps presence itself never was, never had to be and never had "subsequently" to cease to be. Maybe presence, in the as yet to be thought of past, was not ovetaken by absence. This schema is far too literal, far too linear in its chronology. James offers Milly Theale to us in precise rejection of the sentimentally familiar notion that presence (life) yields to absence (death) and that we, the survivors, then remember absence and the presence that preceded it (more keenly because it has been lost in/to death/absence) as meaning or knowledge formed out of the detritus of that absence. With Milly, James asks: what if there were always only absence and that that could be remembered (membered again) as though it were substantial, for the first time, in memory? If memory is the sole constitutive force of substance, then only substantive presence manufactured through memory of absence yields meaning.

The obvious rebuttal points to Milly herself, a creature of substance and presence, as the agent who instructs her friend Susan and James's reader in the complexities of this system of understanding, difficult to the degree that it strains adherence both to phenomena as the standard of rational judgment and to sentimentality as our model for thinking of the dead. Certainly, we may insist that James has not avoided contradiction. He presents Milly, so she is not absent. From this it may seem reasonable to reject the conditional statement with which the preceding paragraph concludes. Yet just as we have
seen James connect the initial physical description of Kate Croy to the rhetorical apparatus that vexes her, he prefaces Milly's grappling with Susan's logical presumptions with physical clues that bodily mark the young heiress as anything but merely and simply "present." She is uncanny, inexplicable, yet she begs analytical attention:

Mrs Stringham was never to forget—for the moment had not faded, nor the infinitely fine vibration it set up in any degree ceased—her own first sight of the striking apparition, then unheralded and unexplained: the slim, constantly pale, delicately haggard, anomalously, agreeably angular young person, of not more than two-and-twenty summers, in spite of her marks, whose hair was somehow exceptionally red even for the real thing, which it innocently confessed to being, and whose clothes were remarkably black even for robes of mourning, which was the meaning they expressed. (75)

In the context of the present analysis, it would be difficult to stress too much the provocative significance of James's descriptive vocabulary. Earlier, Kate's force, her glamour, fails to yield to any attempt to discern its causes. Kate stands as a mystery before us and this accords with the rhetorical system of suspense that attaches to her. Though certainly mysterious, Milly's appearance differs from Kate's in that it does not indicate hidden arts at work. Instead, Milly is initially remarkable by virtue of her uncanny intensities of colour. Yet despite the high vividness of her "exceptionally red" hair and her "remarkably black" mourning clothes, Milly is a kind of living spectre, a "striking apparition," "unheralded and unexplained." Her "marks" spited by her youth, Milly is younger than she looks, but she is also eerily unaccountable to the inscriptions
that we might otherwise think transparently yield her. She is, even in her lively
colouring, a memento mori. The superlativity of her mourning black suggests the
intriguing possibility of a lively mourning in which the force of death is felt as though
animate; the radical absentia of death transfixes Susan's gaze with the force of life.
Indeed, it breeds a kind of perpetual life in Susan's memory. For Susan, Milly has the
power of an epitaph.

Milly is de Man's living figure of death that we know as such because, in defiance
of phenomenality, she enunciates her own epitaph:

It is always possible to anticipate one's own epitaph . . . but never possible to be
both the one who wrote it and the one who reads it in the proper setting, that is,
confronting one's grave as an event of the past . . . between the living and the
dead self, no analogical resemblance or memory allows for any substitution
whatever. The movement is only made possible by a linguistic sleight-of-hand in
which the order of time is reversed, rotated around a pole called self . . .

("Wordsworth" 9-10)

Furthermore, the text of Milly's epitaph indicates that she knows what her eventual death
will be like, as though it has already taken place; Milly speaks from the impossible
position that de Man describes, that of one already dead who casts back from that curious
vantage point not to speculate on the nature of the afterlife, but to document it
authoritatively in her epitaph. Milly explains to her perplexed friend that Susan does not
know where her mysterious young companion is even as that companion apparently
stands directly before her. Surely, we may take this passage as an indication of James's
rejection of mere phenomenal explanation of the relationship between life and death, presence and absence.  

Certainly, Milly does not offer up madness here; Susan Stringham, the novel's monument to Yankee good sense, finds herself provoked not by Milly's lapse from sanity, but by her young friend's eerie knowledge.

Susan's knowledge of Milly will be like her recollection of her meeting with Doctor Finch in New York: an uncanny intimation of presence yielded by her sense of past absence. This is not to say that, by remembering Milly, Susan will find solace in a knowledge of, a revelatory explanation of Milly's lived endurance, the mysteries of her patience revealed. The performance of retrospection yields a trace that owes more to the effort of memory than it may claim resemblance to any substance of the past not already constituted by memory itself. This is, of course, because no other such substance is ever available for comparison: no alternative substance exists.

Knowledge itself, then, is necessarily tinged with the sense of the past because it is only achieved through one's attempted recollection of presence: a kind of resurrection

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53 See my earlier remarks on Alice James and Thomas Hardy in note 51 above.

54 Indeed, "[i]t is Milly's distinction that she recognizes not only this but, more remarkably, the extent to which the same could be said to be true for those manipulating her . . . . Paradoxically, the condition of her perception, her consciousness, is also the condition of its insecurity" (Bradbury, "Nothing" 87).

55 In this regard it is useful to recall, once again, Isabel's glance out the convent window at the end of The Portrait of a Lady. Knowledge comes to Isabel as the intervention of the dry staring fact of her having been used. However we cannot really call such knowledge an intervention for it does not come between Isabel and another possible object. The staring fact is the medium of her knowledge and the end of her understanding.
in the face of absence. Yet, of course, James's understanding of memory, as it is
disclosed here, does not promise the possibility of resurrection. Despite Sedgwick's
efforts on behalf of Lionel Croy, one may only recollect a trace of the past as a trace and
not as the past "itself." Or, rather, the remembered trace is, for James, the past itself: not
all we will ever know of it, but all there is of it. In Milly's chiasmic statement, James
suggests no further reaches of inaccessible radically lost time. Instead, all that is past is
specifically accessible in Milly's foretelling of Susan's inevitable knowledge of absence:
the intimation of presence.

This should lead one to recall the exchange between Milly and Susan that
prompted these comments. Susan, in that "odd passage," troubles over the objectivity of
pain while failing to grasp the temporality of suffering. The absence that Milly, in turn,
ponders intimates its palpable chiasmic correspondent. Absence is, in this way, oddly
substantial: a thing to be possessed, something that one may indeed have much of. But it
is not a spatial thing and not phenomenally available; it is temporal and bears presence
without mass, another ghost. Derrida, in another context, calls this a paradox and helps
us to understand it:

For this force owes itself not to be. It owes it to itself not to be a being. It must
thus now be on intimate terms with what is not force, with its opposite, with the
"without-force," a domestic and paradoxically necessary commerce being

56 Consider also Banta's observation that "[e]nergies of continuation, rather
than the stagnation of ever falling backwards, also direct the narrative thrust" ("Beyond
Post-Modernism" 106). Banta finds that retrospective reference achieves a forward-
oriented momentum because the past is wholly unavailable and such reference is the busy
activity of what she calls "continuation."
established between them. The greatest force is to be seen in the infinite renunciation of force, in the absolute interruption of force by the without-force. Death, or rather mourning, the mourning of the absolute of force: that is the name, or one of the names, of this affect that unites force to the without-force, thereby relating the manifestation of force, as image, to the being without force or that which it manifests or lets be seen, right before our very eyes and according to our mourning. (176)

I have relied on a vocabulary of presence and absence that, it is now clear, is inadequate to the needs of James's text when we consider that absence has presence, that the past and the future, in other words, have a kind of presence. Derrida accounts for this presence when he registers its force. What I have called the intimation of presence in absence, Derrida clarifies as the forceful legacy of the without-force. The force that attends the without-force mourns its engine, and this mournful communication, between the force and the without-force, which is after all the self-same force, is available as image. The image has a value that corresponds to, that accords with, the mourning. Since force derives only from the mourning of its infinite renunciation, it is dependent on the without-force for its value. In this way, and in conformity with Alice James's estimation, death is a kind of life and life a kind of death.

James promises no mystical commingling of the substance of the past in the time of the present beyond the project of recollecting traces, that is, beyond the historical knowledge achieved through memory. Though knowledge is a function of reading pastness, of recollection tinged with forgetting, it is not reliant on the passage of time.
One does not need to wait in order to cast back from a future vantage point onto the present in order to understand the present in the transmuted form of the past. Rather, it is knowledge, the performance of knowing, that constructs this passage of time. Retrospection—the precondition of knowledge—does not require a future footing from which to operate. The performance of knowledge places the object of knowledge in the past: the zone of the past is the by-product of such interrogation.  

Milly's sentence, her epitaph, teaches us something important about Kate's broken family sentence. An epitaph is a note left for the living by the dead and, in this way, is itself a living (performative) emblem of the dead that it commemorates. It is constitutive of the dead. The epitaph is also, importantly, apostrophic. Apostrophe addresses "an absent or dead person, a thing, or abstract idea as if it were alive or present" (New Princeton 82, my emphasis). Apostrophe, in its usual application, allows the living to address the dead. In "Autobiography as Defacement," de Man observes that, by speaking to "an absent, deceased, or voiceless entity," apostrophe "posits the possibility of the latter's reply and confers upon it the power of speech" (Rhetoric of Romanticism 75-6).

57 Miller registers this idea when he explains that "the doing of the thing" is the "composition of its . . . memorial inscription" (Ethics 105). This operation does not depend upon a chronological basis; we do not wait for the future to arrive and then remember and understand. The operation is essentially temporal; the doing is the remembering. Miller writes:

Putting things in words, then, is an act of memory. It is narration as memorial in the sense of a preservative gathering of "recollection." In that word "recollection" memory and "thing" converge in a doing of things with words. The artist narrator of James's story "The Real Thing" ends his memorial record of a strange episode in his life which has damaged his art by saying: "I'm content to pay the price—for the memory." The doing of the thing, in this case, is the composition of its written record or memorial inscription, the record or accounting of the price paid for the value banked in the memory. (Ethics 105)
Apostrophe "confer[s] a mask or a face" (76), and vivifies the deceased. Epitaph reverses the standard apostrophic structure. In epitaphs, the dead speak to the living through apostrophe. Epitaph places the living in the position of the dead, radically estranging them from the speaker: the epitaph, because it is apostrophic, always seems to say, "I am alive" and "you are dead." Yet, as apostrophe, the epitaph also confers upon its dumb-struck recipient the mask of life. In this way, apostrophe subversively posits the life, or presence, of its audience and argues that life itself depends upon the implicit rhetorical "as if" which is the force of the trope and of Milly's reasoning. The epitaph is the lively performance of the dead, what Derrida would call an image of their force. In addition, because the epitaph is apostrophic, it is constitutive of the living.

Furthermore, the words of the epitaph function retrospectively rather than conclusively. They do not mark the end of presence, but inspire its continual intimation. Sepulchral inscriptions provoke the recollection that, as James teaches us through Milly, constitutes all we ever have of presence: namely, its trace, its epitaph. In epitaphs, life does end with a sort of meaning. In final sentences one discovers that, etched into the stony surface of tombs, meaning is first constituted. Yet, all this attention to the mortal

58 On the magical powers of apostrophe, see also Derrida, Memoires 47-48.

59 De Man writes: "... by making death speak, the symmetrical structure of the trope implies ... that the living are struck dumb, frozen in their own death" (Rhetoric of Romanticism 78). Again we should remember Alice James's powerful convictions on this point (see note 51 above) and Dickinson's "After great pain, a formal feeling comes" in which the "Hour of Lead" is not only the hour of death but the entirety of life.

60 Etymologically, apostrophe means "to turn away." Like Milly, who turns her face to the wall, apostrophe, in its turning, teaches the living that they are, in fact, the dead and that it is the dead who are alive.
frontiers of life and death should not overwhelm us into thinking that meaning is achieved only at the end of biographical time. We must remember well what I claimed in the preceding paragraph; one does not need to wait for the end of life for meaning to become available. With Milly Theale's mortality, James allegorizes the nature of meaning. We need not wait for the end of life in order to render all that preceded that end into some semblance of presence. James uses Milly's biography to stand for the nature of all sorts of meaning. All recognitions of meaning are reconstructions of traces of the past. All sentences function like epitaphs. The familial phrase with which Kate grapples is such an epitaphic sentence: notes that linger and then fall into notelessness and whose nothingness inspires their own recollection.

Some readers may grumble at the implication of a reading that seems to posit Milly as an explanation of Kate, that seems to subordinate the dying heiress to her conniving manipulator. The history of the novel, as emphasized by Edel and others, is so explicitly concerned with the centrality of Milly Theale, with doing justice in fiction to the memory of James's beloved cousin Minny Temple, that to begin and finally to return to Kate Croy may seem a misreading of the received biographical-contextual tradition if not of the novel itself. It should be clear, however, that this reading of The Wings of the Dove does honour the centrality of Milly Theale as the central figuration of James's philosophical principles at work in the novel. Characteristically eschewing mere literal or direct clarifications—simple-minded answers to complicated problems that, for James, would relinquish claim to explanatory power in direct proportion to their literality or directness—James fashions, with Milly and Kate, intricate figures that honour memory
and history specifically by failing to master those quandaries and by doing so in educative ways.

Milly speaks with eerie full knowledge of the constitutive power of retrospection, of what Derrida has memorably called the force of mourning. In her words to Susan, she honours the ineluctability of the past as an epistemological paradigm that derives its force from its nature as a grammar, from its structure as a sentence: James's first figure for the past in *The Wings of the Dove*. She also marks a disparity in understanding between herself and Kate Croy whose legacy is figured as a sentence seemingly more escapable than the death sentence Milly confronts and embodies standing in front of the uncanny Bronzino portrait. Yet it is, once again, more instructive to pursue how James connects these two women than to accept passingly their cruder distinctions. Though Milly's early demise does mark her as James's extraordinary heroine, she is not a sentimentalized victim. Milly's suffering, her patience, is instructive in a thoroughly unsentimental way. She is not a saint to whose perfection of gesture the other characters are left helplessly to aspire. She is not an exemplum of innocent flawlessness. We must resist this manner of reading because it limits Milly's power and leaves her ability to explain the rest of the novel in the shadows beyond her mystique. Most importantly, Milly Theale is the concentrated instance of a general tendency: Milly is the figural allegory, the *prosopopeia*, of James's temporal system in the novel. She teaches us the Jamesian way of seeing time for all of his characters. And, when, in the presence of her monumental medical doctor, "[s]he shook her head as with the easy habit of an interviewed heroine or a freak of nature at a show" (172), James is ironical about her difference from others. She
is, after all, not unique at all: "I'm a survivor—a survivor of a general wreck . . . . I'm all that's left. But they died,' she went on, to be fair all round, 'of different things" (172). When Milly reports these details to Sir Luke Strett, she speaks of her ill-fated family. Yet, the general wreck to which she refers is, beyond the Theale family context, a reference to the Croys, to the Denshers, to the Lowders, and to the Condrips.

When Milly stands before the Bronzino portrait she receives its meaning with a force that, in another context, Proust describes as: "the same feeling that we experience when in the stop-press column of the newspapers we read the very announcement that we least expected, for instance that of an untimely death, which seems to us fortuitous because the causes that have led up to it have remained outside our knowledge" (Proust 895-96). With these words, Proust describes the experience of suddenly coming upon a group that is remarkable by specific virtue not of its members' premature expiry, but of their uncannily lively survival. The fact of their existence is felt with the twinge of their having slipped away into an irretrievable past. Milly endures such a Proustian moment while standing in front of the portrait: "Milly recognized her exactly in words that had nothing to do with her" (157). Milly translates the portrait, notes it in words, and the words are an obituary, an enunciation of death. In Milly's alpine interlude with Susan, absence and presence, life and death, mingle provocatively; in front of the Bronzino, "[o]nce more things melted together—the beauty and the history and the facility and the splendid midsummer glow: it was a sort of magnificent maximum, the pink dawn of an apotheosis coming so curiously soon" (157). James pairs, on Milly's behalf, the lady's "slightly Michael-angelesque squareness" with "her eyes of other days"; "her full lips"
and "her long neck" with "her recorded jewels"; and her almost tactile brocade with her "wasted reds" (157). The squareness of her rendering, a seeming gesture of surety and definition, is undercut by her eyes; the presence of her bearing thwarted by the alienation of her mien. Similarly, her lips and neck, full and long, are themselves jewels like those "recorded." For Milly, James's translation of the Bronzino is a concatenation of sensuousness yielding to notation. Milly sees herself in the figure and, in this way, the portrait manifestly prefigures her own fate. Furthermore, the portrait speaks, in James's translation, the rhetoric of the premature obituary.

The physical similarity between Milly and the subject of the portrait is asserted, but not demonstrated, in James's famous paragraph. The Bronzino shows "a face... that must, before fading with time, have had a family resemblance to her own" (157). In this way in fact, we are told specifically, though obliquely, that the model in the portrait does not, in her present depiction, resemble Milly; James's limits his words importantly to

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61 Teahan writes that "the Bronzino coercively figures Milly's future self: a valuable but immobile and posthumous image" (Rhetorical Logic 115).

62 In commenting on this scene, James's readers have been careful to honour James's rhetoric of assertion and have sought to demonstrate the resemblance between the figure in the Bronzino and Milly through non-physical and often thematic comparison. Matthiessen echoes Lord Mark's claim; writing that "the wonderful Bronzino... looks so like" Milly, he calls Milly the "equivalent of a Renaissance princess" ("James and the Plastic Arts" 544). Miriam Allot, in identifying the specific Bronzino to which James allegedly refers, relies on the fact that Milly looks like the painting (23-5). Viola Hopkins Winner exemplifies the thematic approach when, in commenting on the Bronzino canvas identified by Allot, she notes that, "... the painting is not just a representation of a distinguished, cultivated, elegant woman... there is a tautness in the fingers, a slight strain in the posture, giving an impression of repressed inner agitation; the repose is qualified by the imperfectly hidden tensions" (81). Winner suggests that Maggie identifies with these qualities and is careful not to assert any other mode of resemblance.
the expression of a basis for a conviction of resemblance and does not report that resemblance. The uncanny power of the Bronzino owes remarkably little to the physical similarity between its subject and Milly. If we allow ourselves to suppose only that the woman in the Bronzino and Milly look alike, we leave unexplained the peculiar conversation between Milly and Lord Mark that leads us to the painting, a conversation that suggests important levels of meaning beyond that merely literal one.

After Lord Mark tells Milly that the Bronzino is so like her, she lingers thoughtfully over the word "like" in a way that must multiply the implications of Lord Mark's simple assertion for us as well. James does not favour a literal reading of Lord Mark's claim when he explains, apparently on Lord Mark's behalf, that Milly "was the image of the wonderful Bronzino, which she must have a look at on every ground" (154). While this claim heightens our expectations, it certainly fails to clarify the nature of Milly's similarity to the portrait. In front of the canvas, James allows the claim of resemblance to serve as his translation of an absence of resemblance; ironically, the painting documents a non-resemblance expressed as a claimed past similarity. Though the physical resemblance between the two women is lost, James insists—in a fashion that necessarily frustrates phenomenological interpretation—that the canvas records this

63 Bradbury seconds this observation: "The Bronzino scene, which might have been a definitive exercise, finding the perfect image for the heroine, and thus framing her in the narrative, is turned instead into the active negation of such procedures, through the assertion of difference and the celebration of absence" ("Nothing" 94). Readers who have interrogated the complicated value of portraits in James include Ron and Esch. See also Edel's "Introduction" (especially v-vi) as an example of the risks of insisting too strongly on the literality of James's reference. On the Bronzino scene, see especially Teahan's Rhetorical Logic (114-17).
palpable lack. Milly recognizes the obituary in the painting. It is the obituary that grants the canvas its remarkable force. And it is the fact that Bronzino's canvas acts as an obituary that makes it "like" Milly.

An obituary is a note that marks the new presence of an absence, that documents the force of the without-force. This analysis must, at this point, be unperplexed by Milly's apparent presence even as she confronts the depicted enunciation of her absence; Milly's standing before the Bronzino performs, for James's readers, the chiasmus that his young person voices in the Alps. Surely, one may bristle, Milly's obituary comes too soon, as did the scarring and untimely extinction of Minny Temple according to James's psychoanalytical readers. Yet, Kate Croy too is the recipient of such a premature claim. In the devolved concentration of her familial sentence, Kate also receives a note that stands for the presence of an absence. In the face of that notice of her own premature annihilation, Kate seizes a token of faith and pledges to resist her sentence. The distance

64 Mizruchi argues that the likeness which Milly and the painting share is so generally agreed upon that it constitutes a coercive force that smothers Milly, makes her dead, by pressing her, almost "bodily[,] into the picture frame" (201). Mizruchi likens this collective impulse to have Milly dead, in the Bronzino scene, to Milly's conception of illness at Luke Strett's office. Milly, "imagines herself captured in a photograph . . . set among [those] decorating the walls of this renowned London surgeon" (201). But here, Mizruchi finds, Milly does not liken such capture to death: "To be ill, and treated by Strett, is to be contained by "the listening stillness" of his inner sanctum. It is to be held in time, with the progress of disease, at least metaphorically, halted forever" (201).

65 Holland agrees that the portrait's likeness to Milly has "nothing to do with the portrait's subject" and that the Bronzino serves as a reminder "of her own death that she fears is imminent" (302-3).

66 The obituary articulated by the portrait is, like Milly's epitaphic comments to Susan in the Alps, an apostrophe that confers a mask on the living, calling them dead (see page 153 above). On this point, see Teahan 117.
between the claim of the obituary—"dead, dead, dead"—and the meaning of the claim is
the space of suspense. Furthermore, this suspension of the claim of a premature obituary
sentence, a sentence that marks absence as one's only presence and mourning as the only
force of knowledge, this suspense is time. What Nancy calls "espacement," a gap
yielded by the suspension of the claim of the obituary, what I earlier called a lacuna or
ellipsis, is a kind of waiting, a ritual of patience. That gap, that patience, memorializes
the suspension that created it. James's reiteration of the word "dead" beats a tattoo or
tolls a knell: the repetition lays a provocative stress on the descriptor. James's emphasis
is provocative because his uncharacteristic repetition of the word cannot be left to
function solely as a sonic device that mimics memorial rituals. The "words and notes"
into which the Bronzino reduces may, like those of "the whole history of [the Croy]
house," be apposed to "some fine florid voluminous phrase, say even a musical," but their
tantalizing likeness to sound must not preempt our reading the three monosyllables as
words. The repetition generates an awareness that even in the sonic sameness of the
tolling syllable there is a variation in sense. Repetition intensifies the meaning of James's
phrase musically, but also semantically: "dead" means "not alive" and it also means
"certain," "exact," "utmost," "absolute," "deep," and "profound" (OED 652). In the
repetition of the adjective, James multiplies the possible significations his chosen word
enjoys so that, even in seeming to name death, James only describes it, narrates it,
suspends its meaning. If we can think of the profoundly dead, the utmost dead, surely the

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67 Nancy elaborates: "'Our time' means precisely, first of all, a certain
suspension of time, of time conceived as always flowing" (155).
absolute meaning that the word suggests when spoken alone is dispersed. In this way, the word "dead" is itself only an obituary announcement of an absent quantity. Waiting always waits for the end of the suspension and the coincidence of the obituary’s claim and its effect. For this reason, patience is always an impossible struggle to fend off that which is immanent, the obituary claim that sires patience in the first place.

The memory that Kate seeks to escape is not that of her father's past sodomitical crimes, but of the obituary claim that she suspends and which hangs over the espacement that she opens up through her faithful suspension, defining the existence of that suspension as contingent on its own preeminent claims of annihilation. Kate cannot escape history or memory, but she does make the attempt by suspense, by delay, and by faith.

Milly allegorizes the suspension of absence's claim, but she does not resist her obituary as premature. Directly after her confrontation of the Bronzino ("on the morrow"), James narrates Milly and Kate's visit to Sir Luke Strett. The great doctor has only ten minutes to spare his young patient by reason of "a rare accident" (164). The irony of the Jamesian situation is exquisite: the magisterial figure of benevolence is incapable of dispensing more than a scant interval to the hapless heiress. Yet those brief minutes, "ebbing more swiftly than her little army of items could muster" (164), generate "an impression" (164) that merits recollection here:

At the same time that she struggled, however, she also surrendered; there was a moment at which she almost dropped the form of stating, of explaining, and threw herself, without violence, only with a supreme pointless quaver that had turned the
next instant to an intensity of interrogative stillness, upon his general good will . . .

. . . She had established, in other words, in this time-saving way, a relation with it; and the relation was the special trophy that, for the hour, she bore off. It was like an absolute possession, a new resource altogether, something done up in the softest silk and tucked away under the arm of memory. (164-65)

Milly's surrender comes simultaneously with her struggle; Kate's remains inarticulate until the novel's final moments. Immediately upon Milly's exit from the curious and abbreviated session with her medical specialist, Kate demands confirmation that a diagnosis has been made: "Is it out?" she seemed to ask as if it had been a question of a tooth; and Milly kept her in no suspense at all" (165). James explains that Milly does not force Kate to endure her impatient curiosity, a suspension of certainty, at all. Nevertheless, Milly's present revelation can only be said to resolve Kate's suspense, if such resolution must be ironical: "He's a dear. I'm to come again!" (165)

However, James's claim that Milly quashes suspense in this exchange when it is plainly evident that she does the exact opposite must not trouble our understanding at this point. In Sir Luke's examination room, Milly has been granted patience, the privilege of being a patient, and this is what she readily professes in circumvention of Kate's impatient suspense. But Milly does not equate patience with maddening delay; it is not the narrative of irresolution, but the enunciation of doom because, by being a patient, by being Sir Luke Strett's patient, Milly overcomes the burden of waiting:

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68 The conversation that Milly and Susan have in the Alps establishes Milly's understanding of "possession" (see page 137 above) Milly understands the sense of having, that Sir Luke bestows, as the promise of certain duration.
Now she knew not only that she didn't dislike this—the state of being found out about; but that on the contrary it was truly what she had come for, and that for the time at least it would give her something firm to stand on. It would be strange for the firmness to come, after all, from her learning in these agreeable conditions that she was in some way doomed; but above all it would prove how little she had hitherto had to hold her up. If she was now to be held up by the mere process—since that was perhaps on the cards—of being let down, this would only testify in turn to her queer little history. (168)

For Milly, patience—being a patient—precludes waiting; through it, Milly's own sentence achieves a kind of meaning. Furthermore, through indirect evidence the kind meaning is available to Milly. For example, Milly knows that she is doomed because Sir Luke expresses more than purely clinical curiosity in her: "Wanting to know more about a patient than how a patient was constructed or deranged couldn't be, even on the part of the greatest of doctors, anything but some form or other of the desire to let the patient down easily" (171). Earlier James suggests that the general rushed incursion of London implies the limited scope of Milly's own life:

Nothing was so odd as that she should have to recognise so quickly in each of these glimpses of an instant the various signs of a relation; and this anomaly itself, had she had more time to give to it, might well, might almost terribly have suggested to her that her doom was to live fast. It was queerly a question of the short run and the consciousness proportionately crowded. (114)

As a patient, the implication that may have earlier suggested itself to Milly had she had
sufficient time to realize it becomes clear to her. Unlike Kate and, for that matter, unlike Isabel Archer before her, Milly realizes that the sentence of her life hangs suspended impossibly even as its very suspense is controverted. The imminence of her doom is immanent to her.

Furthermore, this passage introduces the question of speed. Milly's doom shortens her life, but James figures this fact temporally, not spatially. Her life is not smaller because it is short, but it must be fast. If Milly has to recognize herself "so quickly," in "glimpses," so must we. Her profound alpine epigram is one such swift notation that concentrates, in the stunning economy of its grammar, the fullness of her life's meaning. In this way, readers who emphasize the striking contrast between Kate and Milly may distract us from their important likeness in this regard. Kate struggles to find a way out of both the awful abbreviated sentence and the, even more musically brief, notes that end it. Milly's life is also such a densely meaningful instant. The concentrated notelessness of Kate's sentence and Milly's doom to live fast provide a crucial point for comparison. Both are "queerly a question of the short run."

[69] Matthiessen's consideration of their differences is typical:
The contrast which James develops between Kate and Milly is one of quantity against quality, of blood against nerves, of robust health against haggard delicacy. It is sustained through every detail of their appearance. Kate's striking handsomeness depends on clearness of eye and skin, on the regularity of her features, on the smooth distinction of her social charm. Milly's pallor makes her hair seem exceptionally red, while her large irregular nose and mouth could allow her to be called beautiful only by an accidental residue of romanticism that, as the usual practice of Hawthorne and Melville, the innocent heroine is fair, and the dangerous worldly girl is dark. (The Major Phase 58-59)
Krook and Ward also grant the stark opposition of the two characters throughout their respective readings of the novel.
Alice James's memorable inscription in her *Diary* that, in the company of the accomplishments of her brothers' William and James, her career--of getting herself dead--has doubtless been "the hardest job of all" (211), helps us to see that death is not merely the end of life; it can be the business of life. When Milly clarifies her life to Susan as a kind of death, she is not being cagey. This all-important conflation of death and life, of absence and presence, the substance of Milly's revelation, troubles phenomenologist readers of James's novel because it is a matter of rhetorical reading of death figured as life, and *vice versa*. Seven years after the ruminations on the image of Proust, Benjamin's "*The Storyteller*" (1936) recalls a provocation by the German editor and writer, Moritz Heimann:

"A man who dies at the age of thirty-five . . . is at every point of his life a man who dies at the age of thirty-five." Nothing is more dubious than this sentence--but for the sole reason that the tense is wrong. A man--so says the truth that was meant here--who dies at thirty-five will appear to *remembrance* at every point in his life as a man who dies at the age of thirty-five. In other words, the statement that makes no sense for real life becomes indisputable for remembered life. The nature of the character in a novel cannot be presented any better than is done in this statement, which says that the "meaning" of his life is revealed only in his death. But the reader of a novel actually does look for human beings from whom he derives the "meaning of life." Therefore he must, no matter what, know in advance that he will share their experience of death: if need be their figurative death--the end of the novel--but preferably their actual one. How do the
characters make him understand that death is already waiting for them—a very definite death and at a very definite place? That is the question which feeds the reader's consuming interest in the events of the novel. (100-1)

If Benjamin does not demonstrate the irreconcilability of fiction and lived experience, he does imply the uselessness of reconciliation as a project. Instead, Benjamin points to an inevitable tension between experiential chronology and fictive time: experiential knowledge is retrospective, a form of memory. Yet fictive knowledge, as we have seen, is as clearly the yield of retrospection as it is the progenitor of the sense of the past that stamps knowledge with the face of retrospection, that mints the currency itself. And, if James's readers choose to read this fictional scheme against experience, certainly the truism of phenomenal chronology must be dismantled. This reading insists that that work is not carried out in James's novel. Yet, in her Diary, Alice James does fashion a philosophical challenge to linear biographical chronology, noting "[w]hen death has come close, how the emptiness seems palpable and to permeate the very atmosphere, making the sounds of life reverberate therein so loud" (185).

For Milly and for Alice, and in a finally explanatory way for Kate, absence is metaphorically equated with the anticipation of absence. This knowledge of imminence achieves a kind of pastness because that is how knowledge operates, by the manufacture of traces, a process of prospective retrospection. James insists upon this system when he

70 Arthur Andrew Brown's recent dissertation on the nature of death in the fiction of James, Poe, and Faulkner begins promisingly with reference to this most apt of Benjamin's writings, only speedily and disappointingly to attempt the repair of the illogic of fictional time so that it squares with expectations of experiential chronology (Brown 1-13).
first introduces Lord Mark at Mrs. Lowder's Lancaster Gate banquet honouring Susan and Milly's arrival in London. James informs us that Lord Mark "pointed to nothing; which was very possibly just a sign of his real cleverness, one of those that the really clever had in common with the really void" (127). Lord Mark's name is the basis of James's irony here. Though he is called Mark, he points to nothing. Furthermore, though the name may seem to refer to signage, it is not a sign itself. Rivkin's elaboration on this point is a useful starting point for our understanding of the name:

The "Mark" he bears functions as a kind of X, a pure sign, indicating nothing but that it stands in for something else. Like the "matter" with Milly, then, the "Mark" is not substantive but dependent on other terms to acquire some sort of meaning or identity or value . . . . Lord Mark is a figure for mediation: his value and identity . . . are based entirely on Aunt Maud's investment in them. Lord Mark thus serves as an emblem of how identity is not self-contained and original in the world Milly encounters but is constituted by the relations through which it is reproduced. (False Positions 100)

Rivkin's claims require some modification and beg elaboration. Her statement, equating the function of the "Mark" with that of "a kind of X" and that of "a pure sign," introduces a notion of signage that is, by definition, alien to the purity of the mark itself. The mark is not a sign; it is an asemantic place-holder for what Andrzej Warminski calls "another, new, rewritten" quantity (xxix). The nothing to which it points is neither logical nor rhetorical; the mark reserves a place upon which one may construe such nothingness. The mark itself presents an opportunity for such a reading, yet it clearly does not exclude
other rhetorical or logical assignments. For these reasons, we may say that Lord Mark
does not bear a mark, but that he is a mark, a purely insciptional, material place-holder.

In pegging Lord Mark as the avatar of derivativeness, Rivkin is too easily satisfied. Lord Mark's value and identity do rely on Aunt Maud's investment in them. But Lord Mark's indebtedness to Maud, because it is explicitly noted, is certainly in less need of appreciation than is the kind of investment made by the "Britannia of the Market Place" (22). Moments earlier, James elaborates on Lord Mark's nothingness and renders it specifically meaningful:

One knew people in general by something they had to show, something that, either for them or against, could be touched or named or proved; and she could think of no other case of a value taken as so great and yet flourishing untested. His value was his future, which had somehow got itself as accepted by Aunt Maud as if it had been his good cook or his steam launch. She, Kate, didn't mean she thought him a humbug; he might do great things--but they were as yet, so to speak, all he had done. (127)

James begins here by positing a way of knowing people by tangible properties that "could be touched or named or proved" only to indicate Lord Mark as an outstanding, for Kate indeed a singular, case in which knowledge is established precisely by its lack of tangible reference. Mark is known intangibly by his future. His value is not proven, but anticipated. James begins by positing that knowledge demands palpable tokens of ready reference. For this reason, knowledge of Lord Mark must not be knowledge at all. Rather, it is faith, faith in what is to come. Just as Kate Croy's initial characterization
relies on an absence of substantial explanations for her profound effect, the introduction of Lord Mark, here, affords James's readers an opportunity not to consider the palpable qualities that characterize him, but to wonder at their absence.\textsuperscript{71} As a mark (and not as a sign) he may, and for this consideration of \textit{The Wings of the Dove} he does, indicate a boundary, focus a target, end a pursuit, guide a traveller, and denominate a kind of wealth (\textit{OED} 1727).

James's passage begins by claiming that we must refer to factors that, in the present case, do not exist. In this way, in his introduction of Lord Mark, James again focuses on the absence of such palpable clues. This is not to say that Lord Mark is not James's subject here. James uses Lord Mark's characterization to comment on the nature of definition and knowledge in a way that sheds light on Milly's meaning, on Densher's as-yet-unstamped character, and on Kate's predicament, the broken sentence that will end with a kind of meaning. James foregrounds Lord Mark's failure to yield anything

\footnote{Lord Mark himself does not worry over the manner or substance of Aunt Maud's reading here. James reserves such preoccupation for other characters. Prince Amerigo, for example, spends the first chapter of \textit{The Golden Bowl} agitatedly straying about London or standing still in wondrous "general expectation" while reflecting on his own definition, played out in circumstances of exceptional similarity to that of Lord Mark:

\begin{quote}
He was taken seriously. Lost there in the white mist was the seriousness in \textit{them} that made them so take him. It was even in Mrs Assingham, in spite of her having, as she had frequently shown, a more mocking spirit. All he could say as yet was that he had done nothing, so far as to break any charm. What should he do if he were to ask her frankly this afternoon what \textit{was}, morally speaking, behind their veil? It would come to asking what they expected him to do. She would answer him probably: 'Oh, you know, it's what we expect you to be!' on which he would have no resource but to deny his knowledge. (18-19)
\end{quote}
Unlike Mark, Amerigo troubles over his eventual need to prove his value, to test the reading others assign him in good faith.}


demonstrable by which he may be judged. Instead, Lord Mark is vested with a valuable future, with the promise of quantities of demonstrables to come.

However, the faith in future tangibles is transformed here as if these things had been tangible property: "they were as yet, so to speak, all he had done." In this way, knowledge of Lord Mark, though based on intangible faith, is made tangible by locating his future in the past. Maud Lowder has faith in Lord Mark's future, but this faith in the future is merely an indication of her trust in the tangibility of the past. The future is valued only insofar as it can rehearse the tangibility of the past. Aunt Maud has faith in the open promise of the future only insofar as she can always see that promise as already fulfilled in the past. For her, then, there is no future in the radically unknowable noncontingent sense, but only reflections of past resolution playing themselves out retrospectively, which is to say, to Maud Lowder's mind, predictably.

James seems to remark upon Aunt Maud's sure mastery of these thorny temporal complications by way of the comfortable and confident figure of the Lancaster Gate dinner-party table itself over which she enjoys undisputed command. "[W]hile plates were changed and dishes presented and periods in the banquet marked" (114), the full scope of history, precisely by such marked reference to periodization, plays itself out on the surface of Aunt Maud's table. Here, the grammar that yields history for the Croy family, is reviewed as table etiquette. Aunt Maud commands the table-top procession of time.

Aunt Maud's command is a product of will, not of knowledge: she has always been sure that Lord Mark would amount to something and she rests confidently on this
long-standing belief, as though her dependance on it provides enough consolidating
pressure to render her faith into a palpable demonstrable fact that could bear her weight.
Lord Mark seems blithe under a controlling influence that we know from Kate's
experience of it succeeds by means of a nearly suffocating, and explicitly paralyzing,
constraint:

Sitting far downstairs Aunt Maud was yet a presence from which a sensitive niece
could feel herself extremely under pressure. She knew herself now, the sensitive
niece, as having been marked from far back. She knew more than she could have
told you, by the upstairs fire, in a whole dark December afternoon. She knew so
much that her knowledge was what fairly kept her there, making her at times
circulate more endlessly between the small silk-covered sofa that stood for her in
the firelight and the great grey map of Middlesex spread beneath her lookout.

(20-21)
Kate is marked by her domineering aunt, and against Maud Lowder's domineering
reading stands Kate's faith, an alternative reading and another force of will.

Maud Lowder is able to take advantage of Lord Mark because he is a mark and, as
such, an opportunity for Aunt Maud's reading. The name Croy provides a similar
opportunity to Kate as she reads, as she imposes upon the notelessness that the name
memorializes, as she requires the name to signal a faith of dim provenance that is curious
and sustaining. Kate's faith stands chiasmically against the notelessness that its name
memorializes. Yet, through her reliance on the name, the resistance Kate brings to bear
against the name proves vexed.
Kate requires much of the name Croy. Her transformation of the name is troubled by its failure to conform to a linear model of progress. That is, the name does not simply start out as a token of evil and end up a polished coin of faith. Kate does achieve a measure of success, as we shall see, but her accomplishment is not an alchemical miracle. Importantly, Croy records a number of chiasmic crossings (see figure 2). It is a vague note against a score (say even a musical) of notelessness. It is the faith that sublates an obscure legacy. The name documents Kate's faith as well as it underscores the project of resistance for which that faith is wielded. The name testifies to the tension between pure faith and faith as resistance. Croy is itself the name of the cross (croix): an onus, a burden, a talisman, a hex, the rhetorical figure of the intersection of these readings. The figure of the cross, inspired by the name, maps the interrelation among these elements.

Yet, as de Man teaches:

the inversion brought about by the cross-shaped figure is not, interestingly enough, simply chiasmic; it is fundamentally asymmetric. Indeed, contrary to the philosophical notion of the chiasm in which unity is achieved through an attunement turned back upon itself (i.e., through an all-inclusive totalization of all
oppositions), de Man's notion of the chiasm understands the reversal of polarities as a failing attempt to invert a "first" textual displacement. Instead of harmoniously linking parallel clauses or terms to their inverted order and thus creating unity, the chiasm in de Man's work fails to bring about unity because the inversion does not succeed in neutralizing the rhetorical character of the text.

(Gasché, Readings xviii)

The name Croy cannot escape the legacy of its other rhetorical entanglements. James's text agrees with de Man's assessment when Kate turns to take her leave of her father at the end of the novel's first scene:

'Well then good-bye, papa,' the girl said after a reflexion on this that had perceptibly ended for her in a renunciation of further debate. 'Of course you understand that it may be for long.'

Her companion had hereupon one of his finest inspirations. 'Why not frankly for ever? You must do me the justice to see that I don't do things, that I've never done them, by halves—that if I offer you to efface myself it's for the final fatal sponge I ask, well saturated and well applied.' (14)

In mockery, sympathy, or some other, more obscure mode, Lionel Croy proposes his own effacement: an eradication from presence via an obliteration of the markings that cluster to denote him. Kate's father imagines his removal as an erasure of something written in what de Man sees, in the chiasmus, as an attempt to invert an order so as to yield another unity. But an effaced Lionel Croy is hardly an absent figure. Indeed, immediately after his weird offer of spongy erasure, in response to Kate's remarking "I don't know what
you're like" (14), Lionel Croy puts into question the nature of the very presence he suggests his daughter wipe away: "No more do I, my dear. I've spent my life in trying in vain to discover. Like nothing—more's the pity. If there had been many of us and we could have found each other out there's no knowing what we mightn't have done. But it doesn't matter now. Good-bye, love" (14).  

Kate's father is "like nothing." So, to offer to become nothing for her is really a rather disingenuous proposal. Furthermore, he relies on a language of notelessness: "Let me put it—unfortunately without a witness,' she added after a moment, 'that there's only one word you really need to speak.' When he took these words up it was still with his back to her. 'If I don't strike you as having already spoken it our time has been singularly wasted'' (14–15). What is unsaid for Kate is, for her father, the already said. That the father and daughter exchange these remarks while he presents only his back to her only serves to underscore the degree to which his presence is already an inversion of, a turning away from presence and an activation of intense force.

Croy also names the impossibility of achieving a new unity through what Gasché calls an inversion. The name does this not only by recalling the performance of Lionel Croy that documents the impossibility of a rhetorically unencumbered transition. The name Croy refers to the abstract principle that Lionel Croy's behaviour confirms. In thinking through the implications of croyance, Derrida reminds us: "... the notion of

To pursue a Sedgwickian manner of reading would be to see this passage as Lionel Croy's late-life regret for the absence of a queer solidarity that would have helped its members to determine the basis for their affinity and the genre of their identity, and to live out the unimagined potential of their kind.
créance [belief, credence, credit, also debt, claim!—Tr.] can also lend itself to polysemic games: one only has to recall that in French croyance [belief] and créance are originally one and the same word, that in German Glaubiger means both croyant [believer] and créancier [creditor]" (On the Name 136n.3). Holland explains that, in a Scottish dialect, "[Croy] means the legal penalty paid, whether in goods or cash, for murder" (315). The name Croy, in this way, testifies to the idea of debt that troubles Kate's manipulation of it. Kate's faith does not overwrite this aspect of her name. The fundamental asymmetry of her chiasmus derives from faith's debt to the notelessness that prompted Kate's need of faith:

But this asymmetry becomes visible . . . only if one no longer understands the chiasm's crossed-connection-making, and the double participation that it implies, as the mixing of previously separate elements into the punctual identity and simplicity of a coincidentia oppositorum, but rather as a referral back (renvoi) "to a same that is not the identical, to the common element or medium of any possible dissociation." (Derrida Dissemination 127qtd. in Gasché Readings xix)

Only in this way is the name Croy both "a failing attempt" (Gasché, Readings xviii)—in

For this sense, Holland depends on the fifteenth-century usage of the antique Celtic "cro," itself a derivation from the Irish "cro" meaning "death," "blood," or "blood-wyte": "The compensation or satisfaction made for the slaughter of any man, according to his rank" (OED 606). The OED traces usage of cro and croy, with this meaning, up until 1872. Intriguingly, "bloodwite" is a compound word from parts meaning "blood" and "punishment" (OED 234). While the traced historical usage restricts its sense to a penalty paid for shedding blood, for murder, the idea that croy means "blood punishment"—family curse—is clearly among its active senses in James's novel. See also Conley's manipulation of Proust's Odette; the proper name becomes a suggestion of debt, "O dette" (130).
name and performance—to reevaluate itself and a "referral back," a "renvoi" not to its origins, but to a non-origin or non-identity. The "same" that is not the "identical" is non-identical because identity is displaced through what Nancy calls espacement. The project of seeking—to retrieve what Nancy calls origin, or to discover what Derrida calls the "same"—itself sublates those goals rendering them inaccessible. Memory only allows the same to be the non-identical. Memory is not a filter that obscures origins. Conversely, memory does not clarify origins. James's novel finally insists that we cede any such groundless orthodoxies. To posit either of these alternatives for memory is to trust without justification in the existence of origins untouched by grammar, to imagine wrongly in the possibility of a transparently available past, to deny vainly the definitive grammar of memory that is, for James, the only route to know what we were.

When Kate explains, "We shall never be again as we were!" (508) she speaks a truth rooted in her own version of Derrida's explanation that "the chiasm folds itself with a supplementary flexion" (Archaeology 134).74 Kate's reading of Croy simultaneously

74 On this point, Rivkin judges:
The supplement, like writing, is a stand-in supposed to alter nothing of what it stands in for; it is defined as an addition having no effect on the original to which it is being joined. Yet the existence of the addition implies that the original is incomplete and in need of supplementation; the paradoxical logic of supplementarity is that what adds onto also subtracts from, or reveals a lack in, the original. In fact, because the original needs the supplement in just the way that speech depends upon writing (that is, speech is constituted by signs), the original can only be said to exist through its supplement or copy. The prerepresentational immediacy of the original is thus illusory or ghostly. Moreover, while the supplement works to compensate for that lack, the very inadequacy it reveals produces the need for further supplements. (False Positions 15) This is, of course, the dynamic at work in Milly's alpine commentary to Susan. Even before her death, when Milly turns her face to the wall, she becomes, to Densher's agitation, the ghostly original for which supplementary works strive to compensate. Her
erects a reserve of irretrievable origin, a same that is not an identity, a father whose back
serves as his front, an heiress with her face to the wall, and a "were" as which "we" will
never again be:

It is the very reference to this reserve that makes the chiasm an unequal fork.
Hence, it is neither simply constitutive nor simply disruptive of totality; rather it is
the figure by which totality constitutes itself in such a manner that the reference to
the reserve or the medium of dissociation inseparably inscribed into the figure
clearly marks the scope and limits of totality. No unity engendered chiasmically
includes within itself the play of difference to which it must refer in order to
constitute itself. (Gasché, Readings xix)

The "were" to which Kate appeals is not a reference to origin. Origin is never available.
One may only stand in relation to origin; this arrangement or positioning is the grammar
of memory. One can never get to "were" because there is no such place as "were" but
only myriad glances that cluster to intend its likeness, that suggest a kind of meaning.
This is why Kate, in the company of the father who is a stranger to her, depends on
simile: "I don't know what you're like" (14). Her seemingly odd elocution documents her
estrangement from her father, and it foregrounds not his identity but his position against
identity. Kate does not profess ignorance of whom Lionel Croy is but of what he is like.
James's precise focus, underscored by its manner of enunciation, is very important. It is
wrong to imagine that James disallows the introduction of certain identity just as it is

absence, her absolute without-force, inspires the powerful mourning that is, at the novel's
end, Densher's insurmountable love of her.
foolish to claim that he speaks of certain identity through a cultural code. To say that James disallows the principle of certain identity, upon which so much criticism of his novel relies, implies that James somehow acknowledges and rejects a concept and thereby, through that negative act, accepts cohesive identity as an entity that can be manipulated even if only to be rejected. Yet his practice demonstrably posits that certainty is only ever as sure as the faith with which we read it. Kate concludes not that she and Densher shall never again be what they were, but that they will never again stand in identical relation to a same that is finally sublated by their conclusive memorial view of its traces: "We shall never be again as we were!" (509 my emphasis)

Kate's final remark to Densher is, in this way, not a mere renunciation of her engagement to him. Instead, it signals a final and extraordinary admission of knowledge from James's heroine. An apparent capitulation infused with wonder and conviction, Kate's statement must count as a kind of triumph for her. Despite the fact that a tendency to remark on the impossible charges the rhetorical analysis of the figure of the chiasmus, we must not too swiftly allow that Kate's end in The Wings of the Dove is a failure. Curiously, circumstances at the novel's end must count as a kind of success for Kate. Rivkin observes:

Kate distinguishes absolutely between the copy and the original: Densher must provide a simulacrum of love for Milly in order to preserve his original and authentic love for Kate, but he must never confuse the simulacrum with the original. While Kate wants her copies to be convincing—convincing enough to deceive Milly and Aunt Maud both—she does not want their verisimilitude to be
mistaken for truth. (*False Positions* 114-15)

Rivkin makes Kate out to be some kind of romantic fool. We must reject the idea that Kate is so naïve. Kate may resist James's notion that truth is, like identity, always relational. She may resent it. Yet, in her establishing scene Kate is made to embody Jamesian identity and Jamesian truth: an effect divorced from its causes, a functional disjunction between "as we were" and "what you're like." Her final words have less to do with James's "love plot" and its resolution than with Kate's understanding of her own nature.

Earlier we challenged James's assurance that "the broken sentence, if she was the last word, would end with a sort of meaning." The statement has at least two possible readings. It testifies to Kate's resolve and it seems to serve as an ominous narratorial claim. Taken either way, the promise of the broken sentence is accomplished in the novel's final remark. Kate's resolve to rescue her family name finds fulfillment in more than the literal sense that she remains unmarried at the novel's end. If we take James's ominous assertion as a reference to Kate's will, then we must allow that that will is finally accomplished. By taking the name in hand and reading it as a token of faith, even troubled by its sublated memorialization of its own iniquitous legacy, Kate discovers that she stands at a remove from the claims that the name makes on behalf of any identity, inherited or invented. Instead of enacting an impossible return to origins, Kate succeeds in imbuing Croy with a sort of meaning that is necessarily alien to its source.75

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75 James writes that Kate "didn't give their tradition up; she but made of it something new" (501).
meaning with which the sentence ends is this: the token of faith does not, cannot, resolve origin into a sense native to origin. Faith notes the distance between the name and origin, but does not access or manipulate a set of meanings that can properly be called original. What works for Kate as the name of faith, is what we can, for James, also call time (χρόνος/chronos/Cro~): the name of the disjunction of origin and sequent, of cause and effect, of truth and meaning. De Man shows this at the end of his reading of Proust: "As a writer, Proust is the one who knows that the hour of truth, like the hour of death, never arrives on time, since what we call time is precisely truth's inability to coincide with itself. *A la recherche du temps perdu* narrates the flight of meaning, but this does not prevent its own meaning from being, incessantly, in flight" (*Allegories of Reading* 77-78). Todorov points to this necessary noncoincidence of truth with itself, or identity with origin, in "The Jolly Corner," when he says James's tale "is based on the impossible quest for absence" (159). The faith whose name Kate seizes can only function in the conditional imperfect tense. That is, it can only ever be faith in a fulfillment that is always eventual, put off, and delayed. Kate's name is a promise, but a promise without an

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76 In this way, the novel itself emerges as a gesture of faith. James's preface to *The Wings of the Dove* confirms this observation with the author's reflections on his own alienation from his fondest hopes. James indicates that the force of mourning those hopes, in their non-accomplishment, in their failure to "fructify," is nevertheless "one's result":

... one's plan, alas, is one thing and one's result another; so I am perhaps nearer the point in saying that this last strikes me at present as most characterised by the happy features that were, under my first and most blest illusion, to have contributed to it. I meet them all, as I renew acquaintance, I mourn for them all as I remount the stream, the absent values, the palpable voids, the missing links, the mocking shadows, that reflect, taken together, the early bloom of one's good faith. (*The Art of the Novel* 296-97)
assigned consummation in love, wealth, matrimony or happiness, for example. This is so simply because the realization of any particular future is alien to the nature of faith, just as the concretization of any one potential is anathema to Isabel Archer's religion of delay and postponement.

The "sort of meaning" that would end Kate's sentence describes a kind of displacement: it distinguishes multivalent meaning from unambiguous truth. The phrase charts a displacement of self from original identity, from certainty into an alienation. Milly knows that such definition is necessarily always at least one step away from her grasp, that as Todorov says "[i]n this world, the verb to be has lost one of its functions, that of affirming existence and nonexistence" (159). There is always a gap, a distance, between meaning and a "sort of meaning." Faith does not remedy that gulf. It is defined in relation to the difference between the two sides of it. Faith is the yield of that difference and its only imperfect antidote.77

If we allow James's claim that the sentence would end with a sort of meaning to stand as a kind of narratorial warning, then we must also conclude that the novel's final sentence fulfills the expectation. By the end of The Wings of the Dove, James shows that Kate's struggle to master her own authority, to read her own sentence, is a continuing subjection to the molestation of debt (Said 84; Clayton 45). Yet, Kate's final words recall a faith in beginning, if not a triumph over claims of the past, then a continuing struggle of resistance resolved in the word "shall." Her final sentence ("we shall never be again as

77 Despite James's offer of such balm, readers remain unsatisfied with the profound insecurity of his implication. Graff, as Rowe points out, takes exception to James's reliance on "fictions of order he knows to be arbitrary" (Graff 53 qtd. in Rowe 8).
we were") echoes the grammar of her first ("it would end with a sort of meaning"). In this way, we may say that it memorializes that earlier grim conviction without possibility of emancipation from its claims. But we must also say that it reconfirms a faithful impulse to rescue herself from notelessness, and that to read the sentence that inscribes her familial legacy is always also to rewrite it.

Ironically, despite the apparent collapse of her money and marriage plots, at the novel's end Kate's faith remains intact. It is a faith independent of expectation, a faith reinforced by a knowledge of its nature. Faith does not tell Kate where she is, but it does clarify where she is not. The novel's closing remark documents Kate Croy's final ability to account for her own force. Kate does discover a new self, one in a way distinct from the legacy articulated by the Croy family sentence. William James writes:

We can act as if there were a God; feel as if we were free; consider Nature as if she were full of special designs; lay plans as if we were to be immortal; and we find then that these words do make a genuine difference in our moral life.

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78 For a reading of the novel's last sentence as it relates to that in The Ambassadors, see Bradbury, "Nothing" 83.

79 Ironically, the sort of false security that Graff bristles against in James's writing (see note 77 above), an invention of bogus serenity that promises only agitation and irresolution, also yields a sustaining matrix of expectation oriented toward a fantasy of control that, because it can never be attained, remains fixed, faithful, and secure. See also Banta's comments on James's 1910 essay "Is there a Life After Death" in connection with The Princess Casamassima: Banta notes that, for James, faith in the future does not depend on a sense of certainty that, in the future, liberty from debts to the past will obliterate such contingency, but on "the conviction that one would continue to take interest in striving, experimenting, going on . . . in spite of the fact that the terms of such a future will be no 'better' than the present" ("Beyond Post-Modernism" 103-4).
Kate Croy discovers that selfhood is only the necessarily patient faithful performance of that "as if" of resistance to what one is not.

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80 To be fair to William James, we should recognize the context of these comments, which he derives from Kant in the third lecture of his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, "The Reality of the Unseen." James writes:

My object in thus recalling Kant's doctrine to your mind is not to express any opinion as to the accuracy of this particularly uncouth part of his philosophy, but only to illustrate the characteristic of human nature which we are considering, by an example so classical in its exaggeration. The sentiment of reality can indeed attach itself so strongly to our object of belief that our whole life is polarized through and through, so to speak, by its sense of the existence of the thing believed in, and yet that thing, for the purpose of definite description, can hardly be said to be present to our mind at all. (55)

In this way, William James's initial rehearsal of Kant, while it conforms well with the final sense of his brother's novel, also further establishes the often-remarked distance between the two siblings' epistemological principles. Alice James embraces the sentiment less squeamishly when, with some exuberance, she describes life: "admitting defeat isn't the way to conquer and from every failure imperishable experience survives" (146).
Chapter Three

Recollections of Nothing: The Golden Bowl as It Was to Have Been
If Kate Croy achieves a kind of troubled triumph at the end of The Wings of the Dove, the difficult relationship she finally succeeds in establishing with history, the "kind of meaning" with which that novel ends, finds an odd place in The Golden Bowl. The tense interplay between a denial of the past, through a faithful allegiance to its hoped-for alternatives, and the inexorable claim of the historical grammar that frames even that allegiance reaches almost baroque levels as James imagines the resistance his characters bring to history as the rationale of nobility and the fullness of wealth. In The Golden Bowl, James makes clear that though Kate Croy may find herself literally penniless, at the end of her novel, her kind of knowledge is an ample, if cruel, treasure.¹

From the outset of The Golden Bowl, James's characters commemorate denials of historically functional legacies with such ornate gestures and generous tokens that readers feel certain that the characters' rites of self-congratulation are undue. The capacious, gilded crystal geometry with its indiscernible subcutaneous fissure, this novel's outstanding artifact, is itself an allegory for the quarrel between an imagined triumph over

¹ This chapter inclines to identify a kind of wealth that expands the range of possibilities noted in Matthiessen's reading of affluence in the novel (itself an expansive antidote to readings like that of William Bysshe Stein who claims that the novel is only about monetary value (Matthiessen, The Major Phase 81)). Matthiessen opines: "Since James, not Balzac or Dreiser, is the author, most of these [gold and jewel] images have aesthetic rather than commercial connotations" (The Major Phase 81). There is no need to oppose the aesthetic and the commercial. Indeed, Holland shows how the concept of value, in The Golden Bowl, involves the charged interplay of the two: "The drama of The Golden Bowl rests in large part on the tensions created by Adam Verver's money and the other values associated with the American character" (352). Also see Jonathan Freedman on aestheticism as another remedy to Matthiessen's oppositional thinking (242-45).
the past and the enduring claim that the past always stakes. In his last complete novel, James does not deny the tendency of his previous fiction. He does not allow Fanny or Bob or Maggie or Adam or Charlotte or Amerigo release from the requirements of legacy. Nor does James, finally and once again, ask the idea of the historical snare to serve alone. Instead, in *The Golden Bowl*, James renders precious the painful disjunction between the maw of past claims and the promise of a freedom discrete from such connections. With his bowl, James allows, at least for a time, that resistance itself to be the thing coherent, beautiful, and even majestic. James's trajectory in *The Golden Bowl* aims to reach beyond the final intractabilities suffered by Isabel Archer and Kate Croy, if only because James does not bestow the tensions that those two central figures suffer, from the outset of this later novel, on a definitively central consciousness.

In *The Golden Bowl*, the enormous gulf between hope and truth is glibly willed away in the energetic rationalizations of Fanny Assingham. Indeed, Colonel Bob in seeking to understand his wife's "favourite game" (48) imagines her not bridging such an expanse, but immersed in the forbidding waters of "the situations in which her finer consciousness abounded" (48). Upon Charlotte's startling reappearance—a surprise made more unsettling by her apparent determination to stir suspicion through arriving unannounced—in the face of Fanny's skillful effort to make her machinations conform to the always emerging challenges of novelty and surprise, Bob reflects: "He watched her, accordingly, in her favourite element, very much as he had sometimes watched, at the

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2 Cameron finds a punning reference to their constant activity in their name, linking Assingham to assignments and to assignations of meaning (*Thinking* 118).
Aquarium, the celebrated lady who, in a slight, though tight bathing-suit, turned somersaults and did tricks in the tank of water which looked so cold and uncomfortable to the non-amphibious" (49). The comparison explains a lot about the nature of the Assingham marriage: the somewhat uncompassionate pleasure the Colonel takes as a viewer of his wife's circus-like, not to mention scantily clad, entertainments. It also places Fanny right in the center of the chilly medium that, by virtue of the water's rebuff to human accommodation, signals a kind of barrier that Fanny inhumanly overcomes. That James assigns such remarkable mastery of the water to the uncanny acrobat underscores his sustaining conviction that the impossible abyss of the water marks the boundary of human power. To swim confidently in the depths of the tank is to be amphibious, non-human, freakish; to imagine that one can do so is to resist such definitive limits. Even as he renders her struggle superhuman, or meta-human—that is, allegorical—James, of course, also trivializes Fanny's efforts, her favourite pastime, by putting her in a Barnum-like display, contained and exhibited in a tank, spinning head over heel.

Fanny's aquatic display renders literal the kind of turning that characterizes her system of reason. When Bob asks Fanny to account for the connection between the Prince and Charlotte Stant, to explain "'What in the world, between them, ever took place,'" she explains, "'Why, nothing—except their having to recognize that nothing could. That was their little romance—it was even their little tragedy'" (53). In the exchange, James places suggestive emphasis on the word "nothing" and allows it to stand for the recognition that nothing could happen which is, of course, a very different kind of
meaning from the notion that absolutely nothing ever did happen, that the Prince and Charlotte share no past. ³ Fanny's description makes "nothing" stand for the commemoration of a dashed hope. That dashed hope was, perhaps, an expectation of everything. In this way, "nothing" refers to the force of anticipation of everything transformed, in turn, into the force of mourning the impossibility of that anticipation's fulfillment.⁴ Furthermore, the grammar of Fanny's sentence does not place the Prince and Charlotte's acknowledgment that their hopes could only ever be mourned specifically in the past. Fanny relies on the gerund "having" to render the verb "to have" into a noun form. Fanny's diction suggests that what happened was a thing, and that thing was their "having to recognize." The happening is an obligation that endures and is likely still to be happening; "having" is also the present progressive form of "to have," after all, and, as such, also asserts such duration. The nothing to which Fanny refers is, in these ways, specifically functional. That is, her reference activates a logical system more than it documents an absolute absence. It is a trace of the past that remains available for reading as a "romance" or "tragedy," according to Fanny, or simply as a "reason," as Bob calls it (53). Fanny's somersault, then, is realized in her ability to see the fount of an enduring connection between Charlotte and the Prince as the barren lack of one.

³ On the idea of "nothing," in James, as "a vital propellant for initiating communication" (Iser 195), see Iser's reading of "The Figure in the Carpet" which Rowe addresses (5-6).

⁴ "Nothing" is an abbreviation or shorthand for a vast other quantity, memorialized in its two syllables, like the end of Kate Croy's sentence in The Wings of the Dove or the noteless expanse toward which Amerigo fancies he proceeds (see page 243 below).
Despite the implications of her reply to Bob, Fanny requires that the "nothing" to which she refers be an absolute one simply because any trace of an active connection between the Prince and Charlotte, which is to say any connection at all, would endanger her position as benevolent matchmaker. James figures the "torment" (55) that Bob's questions introduce for Fanny metonymically as a darkly subterranean passage from which she must discover egress. She must attain the surface and leave the "nothing" buried as though dead and nonfunctional, no longer productive of anticipation, romance, tragedy, or reason. James offers Fanny's confidence through an image of emergence or disinterment: "She got up, on the words, very much as if they were the blue daylight towards which, through a darksome tunnel, she had been pushing her way, and the elation in her voice, combined with her recovered alertness, might have signified the sharp whistle of the train that shoots at last into the open" (57). Fanny, the energetic locomotive rushing toward the end of her tunnel, is a figure of force, of power. With James's train reference, we review Fanny's watery acrobatics as an athletic achievement of determination and energy; they are exercises of will. Likewise, then, as a train, Fanny imposes her own attractive, self-serving reading onto "nothing." With such overwhelming power at her disposal, she seems able to effect any result she chooses. Yet, even with impressive resolve, Fanny merely applies a gloss to the meaning of the Prince's and Charlotte's "nothing" when she dismisses any attachment with the confidence that Amerigo is similarly powerful and, thus, able wholly to forget Charlotte for Maggie: "He was capable of the effort, and he took the best way" (58). Yet, the very need to forget Charlotte clearly documents the trace of a connection that Fanny eagerly fails to
acknowledge; Fanny is, after all, to ape James's familiar locution, in a position to find value in such failure. Fanny is obligated to discover the reading to which she swiftly resorts. James describes Mrs. Assingham as a circus performer, a train, and a spring that must respond to the merest touch (58). Her interpretation is automatic, necessary, even mechanical. The urgent need to adhere to her story marks Fanny's frailty.

Fanny may find comfort in her vigorous emergence from the underground implied by Bob's curious questions, but James, by figuring her triumph as such a gaining of the surface, simultaneously lends credence to the existence of the subterranean world, a zone generated by Fanny's fantastic imagination that she can emerge from it. Without Fanny's imagined emergence, we have no justification for wondering about a difference between the above-ground and the subsurface. If "nothing" is absolute, then there should be no need, indeed no way, to bury it. Only through the imagined promise of emergence, by the faith that such a passage is even possible, does James's image discover its true force and value. Bob unwittingly catches Fanny in the act of concealing knowledge of a pretext between Charlotte and the Prince, and of emphasizing the scale of such a pretext by her account of it as the pair's, albeit bleak, consideration of a future, even as she thinks she confidently exposes the full dimensions of such a pretext's non-existence. Fanny's guilt, in this passage, is founded on her ability to confuse proper burial of something absolutely dead with the premature burial of something still alive. There is no reference to the former and much implication of the latter. As Fanny says much later of Charlotte and the Prince, "... whatever there may have been, it will also have been buried on the spot. Oh, they've known how--too beautifully!" (397)
Yet, Fanny resists any forthright indication that she knows of even the vaguest trace of the lovers' past connection. When Bob baldly suggests that Charlotte will need to marry in order to "cover her tracks," Fanny "looked at him, the good dry man, as if now at last he was merely vulgar" (66). She insists that Charlotte "will really make new tracks altogether" (66). Bob refers to the burial of criminal evidence of which Fanny refuses to acknowledge the existence. It is as though Charlotte has only first stepped into the world at this moment and has left no trace before. But Charlotte cannot make new tracks altogether because history is constituted in the pattern and arrangement, the order and grammar of her first tracks. Those first tracks are memorialized in all subsequent tracings.

Charlotte's marriage to Adam can only necessarily serve to mourn her non-marriage to Amerigo, a link that endures in the real fulfillment of their once only anticipated future of "nothing." Charlotte's achieved wealth ironically intimates the painful lack of wealth that attended the earlier tracks that led to her Roman and romantic impasse. In this way, the failure of one set of tracks to negate the other earlier set is

Yeazell observes, in Colonel Bob, a double function. He provides relief by pointing to a simple account of the world which Fanny agonizingly resists. At the same time, his implications strike us as inaccurate by virtue of their seductive clarity: ... by incorporating this ironic critic into the world of his novel, James encourages our laughter even while he wards off any more serious criticism. For the Colonel's bluff honesty, and directness are radically limited: his literal-minded reductionism cannot account for the complexity of thought and feeling which lies beneath the surface of his world—a complexity which Fanny, in her grotesque fashion, at least struggles to articulate. (91-92)

In this way, Bob is, himself, an enigma without solution: the astuteness of his observation is undercut by the literal-mindedness upon which it depends (Yeazell 139n.12).
exactly what constitutes the value of wealth. The breadth of difference between the hopelessness of her earlier relationship with the Prince and the plenty represented by her marriage to Adam Verver is the difference that allows James's reader to measure Charlotte's value. If she achieves monetary wealth, that vulgar coin only allegorizes the magnificent scale of the change she has sought to undergo in order to elude a future Fanny so breezily calls "nothing." That Charlotte is not as she was is the source of her value. We are only able to understand her wealth with reference to the value determined by this difference. James does not resort to assessments of affluence based merely on vulgar coin. However, because James determines Charlotte's value with reference to her former self, her value as Adam Verver's wife can only inspire readings of the figure that Charlotte was. Her value, then, is the potency of her status as a memorial to what she is not.

Charlotte represents the same kind of meaning that Kate Croy achieves. Charlotte's success, like Kate's, refers necessarily to a past from which it differs. This much would only seem to emphasize the degree of happy modification each character achieves for herself. But the value of each character's achievement depends for its definition on ineluctable reference to a past. Charlotte's wealth, like Kate's, is dependent on and constructive of memorials. In James's representational economy, memory and wealth are figures of each other.

There are clear reasons for Fanny to resist Bob's suggestion that the undertaking of Charlotte's future will be to bury her previous tracks. Fanny wants more than to deny the existence of those earlier footsteps. She requires that no such tracks ever existed and that
Charlotte's new tracks are altogether original. But this is also impossible because
Charlotte's tracks must, at the very least, serve to recall Fanny's and Bob's disquisition on
their potential variety of meaning; to insist on their newness only sublates their history
and inserts a memorial to that denial as their value.

The happenings of the past retain, in their surviving traces, what Benjamin calls
"the tiny spark of contingency, of the Here and Now" ("Photography" 243) only through
memory, which is to say only by the operation of memory which assigns them this force.
Charlotte's "new" tracks, as Fanny's eager logic makes plain, yield her old ones because
the tracks function as memory, and memory is constitutive of the past. Understanding

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6 Fanny's fantasy depends on the same kind of absolutely virgin surface, upon which Charlotte proceeds to leave tracks, that, in "Khōra," Derrida shows is impossible because it is corrupted by the merest pressure (like that of Fanny's hope):

... what is represented by a virgin wax, a wax that is always virgin, absolutely preceding any possible impression, always older, because atemporal, than everything that seems to affect it in order to take form in it, in it which receives, nevertheless, and in it which, for the same reason, is always younger, infant even, achronic and anachronistic, so indeterminate that it does not even justify the name and the form of wax? (On the Name 116)

7 Derrida describes an approach to the untrammelled domain, for which Fanny seems to wish, by thinking through the implications of what Plato, in the Timaeus, calls khōra:

But what is said about khōra is that this name does not designate any of the known or recognized or, if you like, received types of existent, received by philosophical discourse, that is, by the ontological logos which lays down the law in the Timaeus: khōra is neither sensible nor intelligible. There is khōra; one can even ponder its physis and its dynamis, or at least ponder these in a preliminary way. But what there is, there, is not." (On the Name 96)

By the operation of their interpretive method, Fanny and Bob's consideration of the trackless expanse yields its trace. Derrida writes: "Rich, numerous, inexhaustible, the interpretations come, in short, to give form to the meaning of khōra. They always consist in giving form to it by determining it, it which, can 'offer itself' or promise itself only by removing itself from any determination, from all the marks or impressions to which we say it is exposed" (On the Name 94).
this is as essential to the novel as it is to James's New York Edition preface to it, to which Fanny and Bob's talk of "tracks" inevitably refers us.

In his preface, James reflects on the curious task of revision. He figures his experience as the same track-making to which the Assinghams refer:

To re-read in their order my final things, all of comparatively recent date, has been to become aware of my putting the process through, for the latter end of my series (as well as, throughout, for most of its later constituents) quite in the same terms as the apparent and actual, the contemporary terms; to become aware in other words that the march of my present attention coincides sufficiently with the march of my original expression; that my apprehension fits, more concretely stated, without an effort or a struggle, certainly without bewilderment or anguish, into the innumerable places prepared for it. (The Art of the Novel 335)

It is in the portion of his preface introduced by this passage that James provides the guidance necessary for his later (though written earlier) use of the same figurative system.

James rediscovers his previous tracks and finds his revision comfortably at ease with their arrangement; the "terms" of each mark are, in their coincidence, contemporary. James's vocabulary strains any effort to ask it to conform to simple phenomenal chronology: in writing about two apparently distinct moments in such a chronology, James stresses coincidence and contemporaneity. The alignment of his pretext and his

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8 Gilles Deleuze's Bergsonism may contribute clarification to this point. Deleuze writes that lax familiarity with the idea of the present is perhaps responsible for the belief that chronological sequence is the only model by which to interrogate time, for the notion "that a present is only past when it is replaced by another present": Nevertheless, let us stop and reflect for a moment: How would a new present
revision is perfect: "unconscious, quite blissfully, of any bar to intercourse, any disparity of sense between us," so that the pretext and the revision conform to each other "as an image in cut paper is applied to a sharp shadow on a wall, matches, at every point, without excess or deficiency" (335-36). There is something importantly suggestive of a kind of determinism or teleology at work in James's cut paper image: the applied paper must conform to its shadow. In this metaphor, the revision and the pretext conform to one another through adherence to an imperative. Furthermore, it remains ambiguous whether the revision is the cut paper or the shadow. This ambiguity matters a lot. If the revision is the cut paper, then the pretext is its shadow, its inevitable perfect partner, and the procedure of revision requires that the pretext conform to the outline of the revision.

The revision produces its pretext. The pretext becomes the memory that the revision requires. The alternative requires the revision to conform to the cut-paper pretext.

come about if the old present did not pass at the same time that it is present? How would any present whatsoever pass, if it were not past at the same time as present? The past would never be constituted if it had not been constituted first of all, at the same time that it was present. There is here, as it were, a fundamental position of time and also the most profound paradox of memory: The past is "contemporaneous" with the present that it has been. (58)

By indicating the photographic "Here and Now," Benjamin refers to this specific force of memory, its power to make the past coincide with the present ("Photography 243). While Deleuze's Bergson seeks to account for a non-fictive reality the nature of which James does not accept as a given, both thinkers begin at least with provocatively similar formulations of the contemporaneity of the present and the past: "all our past . . . coexists with each present" (59). For James, the past that coexists with the present does so as memory. Bergson calls such recollection "virtual," making a distinction from the "real" that importantly never arises in James in the register of mimesis. That is, James does not presume a real to which he responds. He does not fashion metaphors that refer to a pre- or non-figural state. Rather, James employs allegory to establish its own ontology, a reality that issues a protest against the kind of metaphorical economy, which accepts its position as "virtual" in relation to reality. This is, perhaps, most clearly James's project throughout the New York Edition prefaces and in select correspondence.
James's ambiguity obligates us to face the possibility that both readings are simultaneously valid: the past yields an effect, a history, the business of which is to reconstitute a version of its origins through memory.

However, James's next consideration seems to disturb the apparent geometric precision of this operation. James describes the experience of revisiting his earlier works this way:

It was, all sensibly, as if the clear matter being still there, even as a shining expanse of snow spread over a plain, my exploring tread, for application to it, had quite unlearned the old pace and found itself naturally falling into another, which might sometimes indeed more or less agree with the original tracks, but might most often, or very nearly, break the surface in other places. (336)

With diminished assurance it seems, James's revision of his earlier work has only mixed success matching the old tracks; the frequency of the revision's breaking new ground measures the comparatively greater distance from his pretext. Yet James hardly remarks on this phenomenal forgetting as any sort of frailty:

What was thus predominantly interesting to note, at all events, was the high spontaneity of these deviations and differences, which became thus things not of choice, but of immediate and perfect necessity; necessity to the end of dealing with the quantities in question at all.

No march, accordingly, I was soon enough aware, could possibly be more confident and free than this infinitely interesting and amusing act of re-appropriation; shaking off all shackles of theory, unattended, as was speedily to
appear, with humiliating uncertainties, and almost as enlivening, or at least as
momentous, as, to a philosophic mind, a sudden apprehension of the Absolute.

(336)

In losing the sense of exact conformity between pretext and revision, James discovers
another relation between the two. This momentous discovery is not the opposite of
conformity. It is the exercise of memory in which revision freely re-appropriates pretext.

It is in this specific way, then, that revision yields pretext.9 James writes that the

9 Sprinker's recollection of a passage in the preface to The Golden Bowl, in
which James seems to ruefully reflect and embarrassedly apologize for the formal
weakness of some of his earlier fiction ("Monument" 47), misconstrues the relation
between pretext and revision by understanding pretext as the past instead of as memory.
James writes:

Inevitably, in such a case as that of 'The American', and scarce less indeed in those
of 'The Portrait of a Lady' and 'The Princess Casamassima', each of these efforts
so redolent of good intentions baffled by a treacherous vehicle, an expertness too
retarded, I could but dream the whole thing over as I went--as I read; and, bathing
it, so to speak, in that medium, hope that, some still newer and shrewder critic's
intelligence subtly operating, I shouldn't have breathed upon the old catastrophes
and accidents, the old wounds and mutilations and disfigurements, wholly in vain
... I have prayed that the finer air of the better form may sufficiently seem to hang
about them and gild them over--at least for readers, however few, at all curious of
questions of air and form. (The Art of the Novel 344-45)

As does Maggie in the latter half of the novel, James seems, through revision, to efface
the original historical event, to annul any temporal gap between the original and the
revision making the revision "a dispersion of possible relations" between the revision and
the text it revises ("Monument" 49). Sprinker makes his reading unambiguous: James's
preface to The Golden Bowl comfortably vitiates the force of the past:

Contrary to the Konstanz model (or that of Bakhtin . . .), in which historical
changes in the interpretation of a text involve continual adjustments of an
originary understanding, James's account of revision rests on a theory of reading
that posits the non-self-identity of the literary sign and the complete heterogeneity
of one textual event to another. The passage from unrevised to revised text is a
non-purposive, non-intentional submission to an entirely new and completely
irresistible formal cognition. ("Monument" 48)

But if Sprinker is correct, then James, in his final preface, embraces an understanding
opposite to that which motivates The Portrait of a Lady, The Wings of the Dove, and The
differences and deviations multiplied to the point that they became his "very terms of cognition" (336). If forgetting disrupts the perfect alignment of pretext and revision, James shows, revision acts to generate pretext through memory. The past is not behind us as Fanny Assingham might hope. According to James's preface, memory inexorably

Golden Bowl.

Through his iteration of qualifiers--"sometimes," "more or less," "often," "very nearly"—James makes clear that he does no such thing when, in his preface to the novel, he assures his reader that his new tracks "sometimes indeed more or less agree with the original tracks, but might most often, or very nearly, break the surface in other places" (336). Instead of a complete break, James establishes a foundation for allegorical reading in which the disjunction between textual events asserts the force of memory: revision is definitive of and oriented toward pretext. Pretext is always a version established by memory and, in this way, is an explicit force for James's revision. Sprinker seems to refer to the past when he allows for the forcelessness of James's pretext. However, James's qualifiers establish an interplay between pretext and revision that honours the force of memory, not the inaccessibility of the past. See also "Prefatory Postscript" in which Warnerinski considers that the central chapter of his book prefigures its own contextual revision, and the thinking back on previous chapters sublates them through the application of "another sense, the new, not-yet-written" (xxix).

Of this portion of James's preface, Teahan writes: "James's revision of his own figure revokes his initial claim to parity between past and present intention, since the deviation he finds is inevitable rather than fortuitous, constitutive rather than contingent" (Rhetorical Logic 132). Furthermore, that James's prefatory remarks on retrospection and creativity resonate so profoundly with the conduct of time in the novel helps to counter Wellek's distinction between the work of memory and of criticism when he writes: "The Prefaces, as a totality, judged as criticism, are disappointing: they are, no doubt, of great interest to the student of James's life and career as a writer, and they have the almost unique distinction of being an author's extended commentary on his own work. But the Prefaces are primarily reminiscences and commentaries and not criticism" (213-14). The most rhetorically sensitive reading of these issues, as they arise in the preface to The Golden Bowl, is Rivkin's "Doctoring the Text."

Benjamin expands on this idea when, in his consideration of Proust, he alludes to Penelope's work of weaving and unweaving. Memory yields "a Penelope work of forgetting" ("Proust" 202). Like Proust, James, in his preface and in the subject matter of the Assinghams' conference, describes a kind of recollection "in which remembrance is the woof and forgetting the warf" (202). Both are productive of memory.
places versions of it before us.

The root of Fanny's subsequent crisis is her pretense that she has forgotten or never knew what is merely inconvenient to know. Her revision depends upon a pretext that she describes as "nothing." Nevertheless, Fanny's willed ignorance cannot erase the traces of the past that memorialize a connection between the Prince and Charlotte that continues to live in Fanny's memory and theirs. James puts the liveliness of the trace Fanny would see smothered in the person of Charlotte Stant.

At the beginning of Part Third, at "a great official party in the full flush of the London spring-time" (179), James explains that after her marriage, "[f]or a couple of years now she had known as never before what it was to look 'well'--to look, that is, as well as she had always felt, from far back" (179). Charlotte's wellness of appearance testifies to the history of her feeling. The bearing finally provided by wealth only attests to Charlotte's historical self. The forceful activity of that historical trace in her bearing—her past "having felt" realized in her present "looking 'well'"—renders Charlotte a charged figure of Jamesian history and memory. Charlotte is a figure of history inasmuch as her clustered charms allegorize the process of their accumulation "from far back." In this way, her past feelings are translated into a present grammar of appearance; like Kate Croy, her remarkable look is the effect of the history she figures. She is also a figure of memory—of the construction of a version of the past made to serve as the past, as her "very terms of cognition" of the past—to the extent that her charms bear no credible connection to the past. After all, Charlotte's knowledge of wellness in the present is, in James's phrase, fully alien, and her grasp of it at the time of the fourteenth chapter is
importantly "as never before." Her wellness is, at once, the fulfillment of an historical promise, recorded in feeling and achieved in appearance, and the active manipulation of present knowledge to create a vision of a past that never was. Charlotte is the passive and lucky recipient of a history of feeling that, in the present, makes her look well. She is also the active and forceful manufacturer of pleasing visions. The tension between these two readings is underscored by James's placement of inverted commas around the word "well." It is either an adjective that characterizes Charlotte's concrete physical appearance, recording the outward and triumphant manifestation of long-germinating abstract energies of feeling, or it is an adverb that describes the expertise with which the young woman masters the force of vision willfully to project a version of herself that depends as much on properly recording the past as on creatively forgetting it. Surely we see some congruence between Charlotte and Fanny here. The younger woman embodies the deceptions of the older; James has Amerigo bring the point home: "'Mrs Verver too moreover—do her the justice—visibly knows how to swim'" (198). Charlotte, as amphibious as Fanny, can work the germ of old feelings—feelings of horrid disappointment—into a happy account that effaces that history and imposes another in its place.\(^\text{12}\)

The chapter charts Fanny's deepening agitation and, before her defeated return to Cadogan Place at the evening's end, she literally confronts the dynamic presence of the past in the active force of lively memorials to what she fondly hoped was beyond dead,  

\(^{\text{12}}\) See Charlotte's later claims about the return of her "old feelings" and the renewed joy they bring her, on page 274 below.
having never existed as more than "nothing." After her unsettling interlude with Charlotte, Fanny is joined by the Prince. Through the course of their conversation, Fanny grows increasingly suspicious of a distance between the words Amerigo speaks and another message he conveys. It is her awareness of the possibility of such a difference, more perhaps than the imagined subtext itself, that troubles Fanny's principles:

He could easily go on, for she didn't interrupt him; Fanny felt now that she wouldn't have interrupted him for the world. She found his eloquence precious; there was not a drop of it that she didn't, in a manner, catch, as it came, for immediate bottling, for future preservation. The crystal flask of her innermost attention really received it on the spot; and she had even already the vision of how, in the snug laboratory of her afterthought, she should be able chemically to analyse it. There were moments, positively, still beyond this, when, with the meeting of their eyes, something as yet unnamable came out for her in his look, when something strange and subtle and at variance with his words, something that gave them away, glimmered deep down, as an appeal, almost an incredible one, to her finer comprehension. (198)

Fanny experiences her conversation with Amerigo on three levels. Her immediate appreciation of his eloquence affords her a measure of delay in responding; in having to put words to "the black flag of repudiation" (197) she waves silently in her stupefaction. She anticipates her future opportunity to think back on his words, to "analyse" them in "the snug laboratory of her afterthought." Yet, Fanny remains troubled by the third sense of their intercourse, not by its postponing presence or its certain future yield, though her
conception of these aspects begs comment. As Amerigo speaks, Fanny is moved by her sense of his not saying something else. This unspoken narrative defines a limit beyond what is said and a gulf between the two that quickly preoccupies Fanny's attention. The difference between the two kinds of conversation is, because insubstantial and not readily captured in "the crystal flask of her innermost attention," as nothing. Yet that nothing is, in turn, an intimation of everything, "a quintessential wink," and a "far red spark, which might have been figured by her mind as the head-light of an approaching train seen through the length of a tunnel" (198). The sense that the Prince is presently at variance with what Fanny requires him to be certifies a history that is not nothing and signals a familiar Jamesian moment. However, Fanny does not think of the past. The historical inkling furnishes the engine of memory with a creative force that, in the image of an approaching subterranean locomotive, recalls the will Fanny brought to resist Bob's earlier implications. The meagre glimmer of trouble that is the conversation's third level is a trustworthy promise of the subsequent advent of a barrelling force. Furthermore, Fanny does not see the tremendous thing that is on its way as coming in the eventual future, but as gaining on her from the subterranean past. To her mind, the business of the future, the laboratory analysis of the present moment that she expects to occupy her attention after her time with Amerigo is through, will be an orderly evaluation of the "precious" elixir that she imagines herself fantastically able wholly to contain in "the crystal flask of her innermost attention." For Fanny, the future provides a forum for

13 On this point, see Chapter One pages 60 and following on Isabel's recognition that the past is not as she imagined it to be. Reeve, on the sudden discovery of the alienation of the past, is also apt (138).
complete control of the past, and her method resists experimental surprises. James's image of Fanny's fragile laboratory is an exquisite lampoon of a surety that will be smashed to bits upon the arrival of Amerigo's promised train. Fanny's laboratory will be responsible for the analysis of an antecedent that ruptures her glassware. The future is, for James, the activity of confronting that which precedes it as scripted for us by memory; Fanny's containment is impossible because the future itself is made of the material of memory. There is no absolute beyond the claim of memory, no crystal flask, no sterile laboratory of afterthought. Fanny's crisis is the discovery that the future is wholly made of the past, as rendered by memory and forgetting, and not merely a safely distant descendant of it.

When Amerigo first comes to Fanny, she reveals her essential misunderstanding of the nature of time and memory through her insistence that his marriage to Maggie Verver does not, as he worries, put him on the brink of all sorts of sequelae. Fanny gets it importantly wrong, misconstruing the certainty of aftermath because she misunderstands the nature of the future. The circumstances of that earlier meeting prefigure those that James sets out at the party that so trouble Fanny later on: the Prince is securely ensconced in the laboratory of his afterthought. Having fixed the date of his marriage, Amerigo is transfixed by the implications of the completion of that task: "[t]here was nothing to do as yet, but feel what one had done" (4). James writes of the Prince's recent past, his "shortly before" (4), first in the simple past tense, and then shifts to the subjunctive mode, placing the future in the past: the promise of his impending marriage is so definite that "[i]t was already as if he were married" (4). It will be necessary to
determine what James's movement from past to subjunctive means on behalf of the Prince, but before we come to that judgment we can be sure that Amerigo's profound fear of the future in the novel's establishing scene relies on that future's reference to the past that it will weave in memory. This sequence is the necessary one which Mrs. Assingham impulsively rejects when the Prince explains his anxiety this way: "I've now but to wait to see the monster come. They're not good days; they're neither one thing nor the other. I've really got nothing, yet I've everything to lose. One doesn't know what still may happen" (20). What Amerigo considers a rough and risky beginning is, to Fanny's mind, only a glorious end: "My own last [adventure], precisely, has been doing for you all you so prettily mention. But it consists simply in having conducted you to rest. You talk about ships, but they're not the comparison. Your tossings are over—you're practically in port. The port,' she concluded, 'of the Golden Isles" (21).

What Amerigo construes as a complicated beginning is, to Fanny, a simple end. In this way, however, she certainly upsets claims she later makes to Bob on behalf of "nothing." If the Prince's achievement of a glorious marriage can be imagined as the completion of a journey, of a movement towards, then surely the stretch of sea over which he has travelled is not nothing: it anticipates the happy goal that marks its terminus and enables subsequent inspection from that blessed spot. Fanny's reference to the Golden Isles translates her eventual allegiance to the idea of "nothing" into a doubled principle of anticipation and retrospection. Early on, when the Prince is not yet among the Golden Isles of marriage to Maggie, Fanny's energetic will to believe conflates the imminence of his accomplishment with its presence. Fanny mistakes the story of her
faith for the impossible truth of a tidy resolution. Captive to her own considerable will, Fanny does not honour the inexorable alienation from the accomplishment of such truth that The Wings of the Dove shows us faith demands. The Prince explains, by his verbal shift from the simple past case to the subjunctive mood, that his keen anticipation of his married future is a force able to eradicate the interval of imminence. Yet, the articulation of his expectation preserves the disjunction of anticipation from accomplishment. Where does expectation go upon the arrival of the thing to which he looked forward? Does the juggernaut of his forethought or dread merely vanish without its own trace? Mrs. Assingham, the amphibian with a chemistry set, can only hope so by appealing to a scientific bio-logic.

When Fanny imagines the Prince on the verge of the Golden Isles, she recasts her manner of thinking about the past, his past, and imposes a logic of life and death onto what she had earlier insisted be an absolute nothing, a total blank. Fanny's selfish reading of the Prince's story attests to her enthusiastic endorsement of the death of the past. She fairly dances on its imagined grave as she welcomes the Prince to the mythical land achieved by fictional heroes at the triumphant conclusion of their superhuman feats. Yet Amerigo does not allow Fanny to get away with it. When he speaks of his impending marriage as "so finished and ready" (23), the Prince unsettles the equation Fanny has drawn between completion and expectation. Fanny's Golden Isles are not open to Amerigo's use of "ready," nor is Fanny herself. Absolute completion, like absolute nothingness, should not intend further business. The power of Amerigo's anticipation does not evaporate into a deathly non-existence. Because Amerigo's and Fanny's lively
anticipation is able to vie for equivalence with the thing anticipated, once that thing is achieved—once the Prince and Maggie are married—it continues to preserve the equivalence by memorializing its preceding charged expectation. In this way, looking back on expectation, remembering, becomes the activity of the future. The future is defined by the past that anticipated it. One more thing needs to be said on this point: the memory of past anticipation does not share perfect congruence with that anticipation. This is why the train is always in distant approach and never arrives.\(^{14}\) The future of anticipation is its translation through memory into multiple versions. In this way, what Fanny requires to be seen as the accomplishment of a glorious biological death partakes with curious enthusiasm in the memorial activities of lively creativity. Looking back to the death of the past, looking to where that past and its eager and vexed anticipation of the future is buried, Mrs. Assingham does not see the "nothing" she requires. So, when the Prince's party conversation hints at a trouble that, in turn, coalesces into the fateful red light in the distance—when, in other words, the Prince indicates that the past is, in fact, alive—Fanny slips into a kind of perverse mourning for the death of a beautiful idea, perverse because it marks the demise of her fancied absolute and, by virtue of this fact, forces her to begin to reevaluate her idea of death as an absolute.

The crisis made manifest, the Assinghams return to Cadogan Place with Fanny deep in mourning for the death of her idea of death-as-nothing. Sapped of confidence and feeling "a little sick" (210), in the face of the past making itself felt as a kind of activity

\(^{14}\) On the non-alignment of memory and truth—Nancy's espacement—see de Man's closing remarks on Proust (Allegories 78).
through damnably productive memorials to a nothing that is not, after all, nothing, Fanny lingers feebly unable to move forward into a future that she no longer trusts as her own:

It made her so helpless that, as the time passed without her alighting, the Colonel came back and fairly drew her forth; after which, on the pavement, under the street-lamp, their very silence might have been the mark of something grave—their silence eked out of her by his giving her his arm and their then crawling up their steps quite mildly and unitedly together, like some old Darby and Joan who have had a disappointment. It almost resembled a return from a funeral—unless indeed it resembled more the hushed approach to a house of mourning. What indeed had she come home for but to bury, as decently as possible, her mistake? (210)

Fanny’s confrontation with the activity of memory, with the life in death, reverberates in James’s description of her arrival home in this passage. Fanny and Bob either return from or proceed to. James reminds us of what Derrida makes clear. As we saw in the last chapter, mourning is not only the mode through which we read the irretrievable past; it is precisely what gives value to the present and the future as well.15

Fanny’s realization recapitulates Isabel Archer’s. The past is alive with possibilities played out in memory. In The Golden Bowl, the epiphany is given to one of James’s ficelle characters.16 This may be because, at this late stage in the author’s career,

15 On this point, see my application of Derrida’s thoughts on mourning to Milly Theale’s alpine epigram (Chapter Two page 155).

16 On ficelles and their role in James’s fiction, see R. P. Blackmur’s introduction to The Art of the Novel (xxx) and Sara Blair 71-73. Yeazell suggests that Fanny “is a parody of the Jamesian artist” (97) and that Fanny and Bob “comically reflect [what] . . . Maggie makes deadly serious” (98-99).
this particular epistemological spasm is such a familiar philosophical trope. Like Isabel, Fanny strives to stay in her carriage, to somehow resist the inevitability of knowledge, to forget what she knows. As with Isabel, "[t]he sense of seeing was strong in her, but she clutched at the comfort of not being sure of what she saw" (202). In this regard, the important difference between the two characters is that Isabel favours forgetting even before she knows the truth, and Fanny grasps at the salvation of forgetting after:

For what she was most immediately feeling was that she had, in the past, been active, for these people, to ends that were now bearing fruit and that might yet bear a larger crop. She but brooded, at first, in her corner of the carriage: it was like burying her exposed face, a face too helplessly exposed, in the cool lap of the common indifference, of the dispeopled streets, of the closed shops and darkened houses seen through the window of the brougham, a world mercifully unconscious and unreproachful. (202)

Fanny finds solace "lurid as her prospect might hover there" in her ability to "give it no name" (202). The yield for Fanny, as with Isabel, is the provisional safety of postponement. And, as the Assingham brougham nears home, James's vocabulary abounds in the language of delay brought to resist a "sense of ebbing opportunity" (206). Bob's questions come patiently while he and the coachman wait in peace. Bob repeats three times the bloodless anodyne, made ironically sinister by his prolongation of the claim, that Charlotte and the Prince will "'manage in their own way'" (209). The shift, from confidence that her work is magnificently done to despair that has set a chain of events into further development, seems likely to be played out for Fanny in a dreary
succession of pauses that each testify to her failure to achieve the Golden Isles of her fondest hope.

In lieu of an impossible success, James burdens Fanny with suspense, but it is not one sapped of interest. Indeed, the delay that forever postpones the terminus of her scheme, that leaves those plans only forever oriented "toward" an end, gives potent value to that orientation. The necessary withholding of the absolute yields its worth. Fanny's resistance to the productivity of memory and to the unwanted liveliness of the past is also the faith that Kate Croy brings to her project of familial disassociation. Fanny's mourning becomes agitated expectation because mourning marks an absence and fosters an energy from that lack. In this way, the force of mourning makes itself felt. By the time the

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17 Of this fact, Emily Dickinson writes: "Success is counted sweetest/By those who ne'er succeed./To comprehend a nectar/Requires sorest need" (Final Harvest 7). The sentiment is not reducible to truism. Dickinson does not suggest that we simply long for what we do not have, but that the longing itself is the alpha and omega of value. This is clear when, in the final lines of "Undue Significance a starving man attaches," her focus shifts from food to distance:

Partaken--it relieves--indeed--
But proves us
That Spices fly
In the Receipt--It was the Distance--
Was Savory-- (103)

18 For Fanny, the death of her fondest hope is the death of the death in which she has previously invested all her faith. Before that hope is dashed, then, James establishes the busy forceful activity of death as a principle; he determines that death generates a force that sustains Fanny. We should not be surprised that that death's extinction manifests its own dynamism. Derrida writes:

The greatest force is to be seen in the infinite renunciation of force, in the absolute interruption of force by the without-force. Death, or rather mourning, the mourning of the absolute of force; that is the name, or one of the names, of this affect that unites force to the without-force, thereby relating the manifestation of force, as image, to the being without force of that which it manifests or lets be seen, right before our very eyes and according to our mourning. ("By Force of
Assinghams return home again, this time from their retreat to Matcham, Fanny has found that delay is the impasse that defies her model of progress and accomplishment. Delay is also the antidote to that blockage:

'We must simply watch and wait. And meanwhile,' said Mrs Assingham, 'we must bear it as we can. That's where we are--and serves us right. We're in presence.'

And so, moving about the room as in communion with shadowy portents, she left it till he questioned again. 'In presence of what?'

'Well, of something possibly beautiful. Beautiful as it may come off.'

(281)

Fanny does more than merely seek to divest herself of responsibility by this shift in focus. In Fanny's explanation to her husband, James schematizes his shift from *The Wings of the Dove* to *The Golden Bowl* and gauges the way in which the later novel exceeds its predecessor. Fanny recapitulates James's assurance to the reader of *The Wings of the Dove* to insist that this novel's sentence, too, will end with a kind of meaning. Beyond this, Fanny's remarks here suggest a dense set of implications. Fanny's use of the imperative "must" underscores the Jamesian premise that the absolute always eludes accomplishment in time. She sees that the position from which one grapples with the absence of the eventual, of the anticipated achievement toward which one is only ever inclined, is presence. To be in presence is to gaze upon an irretrievable past and, by so doing, resurrect a version of that past through the operation of memory. To this Fanny's

*Mourning*" 176)
comments add the idea that the future only comprises this memorial grasping: we must watch and wait because that is all there is to do. Furthermore, what we mean by "the future" is also determined by our memorial derivation of what we have meant by it. That is, memory draws on a legacy of hopes for an always tantalizingly out-of-reach absolute—for the end of history—to produce the future. We can discern this "temporal" system in The Wings of the Dove. What takes The Golden Bowl beyond that novel is James's allegorizing of his entire scheme, first here under the rubric of beauty, in the Prince's own name, and in the golden bowl itself. The delay, born of the inevitable non-arrival of Fanny's hoped-for absolute, affords an opportunity for beauty; it is an intimation of beauty. The value of the necessary delay, its strange wealth, is its promise of beauty.

After this passage and as the prominent conclusion to the first of the novel's two books, Fanny discovers a new feeling of confidence and revisits her earlier claim that "nothing" happened between the Prince and Charlotte. However the nothing to which

19 In The Picture of Dorian Gray, Oscar Wilde has Lord Henry Wooten opine that beauty is delay and inaction:
'... beauty, real beauty, ends where an intellectual expression begins. Intellect is in itself a mode of exaggeration, and destroys the harmony of any face. The moment one sits down to think, one becomes all nose, or all forehead, or something horrid . . . . Your mysterious young friend, whose name you have never told me, but whose picture really fascinates me, never thinks. I feel quite sure of that. He is some brainless, beautiful creature, who should be always here in winter when we have no flowers to look at, and always here in summer when we want something to chill our intelligence.' (19)

Lord Henry's comments are also useful in connection with the question of translation taken up later (see pages 240 and following below). He suggests that beauty is necessarily corrupted into horrid ugliness by any attempt to translate it into intellectual expression, and he knows "the precise psychological moment when to say nothing" (30). Of course, the central invention of Wilde's story is the power to maintain the literal physical beauty of expectant youth, of what Fanny would call staying "in presence," despite the passage of time.
Fanny refers at the end of Book First differs importantly from her earlier meaning. As if to clarify matters for her husband, Fanny says, "Nothing—in spite of everything—will happen. Nothing has happened. Nothing is happening" (294). The nothing that stands "in spite of everything" is, simply by standing this way, precisely not the nothing to which she previously staked her claim. The oblivion of absolute nothing cannot properly enjoy such a full verbal conjugation as that offered by Fanny here. No, the nothing to which she strikingly refers is not the abyss. It has a past, a present, and a future. It describes a history. It is something. Together Fanny and Bob undertake a contract that assigns the name of nothing to the enigmatic thing that goes unspecified. This nothing is Fanny's name for the beauty, or rather for the promise of possible beauty, for which she and her husband must watch and wait. Its perfect nonoccurrence marks its sublime uncanny value.

With Fanny and Bob's conspiracy, their performance of a secret ceremony of naming which requires the name "nothing" to stand for the idea of history that they leave uncharted, James once again draws his reader's focus to the idea of the name. To the extent that the Assingham "nothing" finally fails to stand for absolute nothing, the name is a false one. Its reference is delay, the gap that always intervenes before the absolute, and not the absolute itself. But the name is also a true one because its indication of the delay is the performance of the fullest reference to nothing ever available from within time.  

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20 The name is an instance of that which "takes place after taking place, in a slight, discreet, but powerful movement of dis-location, on the unstable and divided edge of what is called language" (On the Name, 61). Because absolute nothing, by definition,
The idea of the name requires us to interrogate another moment in the novel when Fanny considers its function. Recounting how Maggie first met Amerigo—how "[t]hey had met . . . seen each other well" and come to be "in relation" (59)—Fanny explains the magnetic power of the Prince's name. Indeed, as Fanny attests, in the history of Maggie and the Prince's attachment, the discovery of his name stands out as a watershed:21

21 It is important to note that James's narrative takes some pains to deny the incident of name exchange the status of "origin." The Prince and Maggie do not trace their connection back to a singular vanishing point somehow supremely and purely available, if not to the vagaries of memory then to another sense that avoids memory's forgetful pitfalls, to report the past with absolute truth in a way that no other moment in James affords. Indeed, as we have seen in the case of Lionel Croy, James scrupulously avoids the offer of an ideal and untroubled access to the past. Even if the name exchange had been the moment upon which the two met, an attachment founded on the basis of a name—an opportunity to read and, in the case of the Prince's particular name, to read historically—projects its own history further into the consuming mist of the past. Nevertheless, the Prince and Maggie are already in relation when accident communicates the fateful information. As Fanny reports,

'The ways were all taken; they were taken from the moment he came up to our carriage that day in Villa Borghese—the second or third of her days in Rome, when, as you remember, you went off somewhere with Mr Verver, and the Prince, who had got into the carriage with us, came home with us to tea. They had met; they had seen each other well; they were in relation: the rest was to come of itself and as it could.' (59)

With these details, the super-antecedent origin of the connection is put off into remote irretrievability simply because at the moment the Prince first appears, the "ways" were all taken. His very advent instantaneously generates a train of past-oriented conclusions, a sense of the past in the present. Finally, of course, we must recognize that the whole report of the incident of their meeting is the substance of Fanny's memory. Fanny accepts, as comfortable and settled, an explanation that is, by necessity, always only the provisional work of memory. James makes clear that memory is the only means by which we know the past. In this way, the fluctuating and ambiguous interplay of memory and forgetting is also the most stable means of knowing the past; it is the only means. By staking the claim of Fanny's recollection—the story of Maggie and Amerigo's first being
It began, practically, I recollect, in our drive. Maggie happened to learn, by some other man's greeting of him, in the bright Roman way, from a streetcorner as we passed, that one of the Prince's baptismal names, the one always used for him among his relations, was Amerigo: which (as you probably don't know, however, even after a lifetime of me) was the name, four hundred years ago, or whenever, of the pushing man who followed, across the sea, in the wake of Columbus and succeeded, where Columbus had failed, in becoming god-father, or name-father, to the new Continent; so that the thought of any connection with him can even now thrill our artless breasts. (59)

The quality, if we can call it that, that secures the Prince's position and Maggie's interest, is the sign that affords her an opportunity for "romantic" (60) reading. Amerigo earlier

"in relation"--on ambiguous ground, inevitably disjoined from the origin for which it seeks and claims to account, and by withholding the impossible stability of a perfect awareness of, or conjunction with, what de Man, in "The Rhetoric of Temporality," calls "an unreachable anteriority" (Blindness and Insight 222), James underscores the fact that Fanny's assessment is subject to subsequent revision; it is a living claim, grounded in an unavoidably imperfect foundation, the shifting currents of memory. Furthermore, Fanny's remembered account is itself an episode of memory, "an allegory of disjunction" (Derrida Memoires 75), which Derrida characterizes as a "thread trailing in the labyrinth" (76):

... what can an allegory of disjunction signify when the structure of allegory itself has as its essential trait this dis-traction from self that is disjunction?... If allegory is disjunctive, an allegory of disjunction will always remain a disjoined reflexivity, an allegory of allegory that can never, in its specular self-reflection, rejoin itself, fit itself to itself. Its memory will promise but never provide a chance for re-collecting itself, for the Versammlung in which a thinking of being could collect itself. (76)

In this way, Fanny's recollection, an impulse to fill in a gap, describes that lack without replenishing it or, we should say, without "plenishing" it. Moreover, the material Fanny hopes vainly to use to resolve the gulf is that which yields it: "Didn't it name a gaping opening, an abyss or a chasm? Isn't it starting out from this chasm, 'in' it, that the cleavage... can have place and take place?" (On the Name 103)
insists on the romantic American imagination (9) that quickly adheres to his baptismal name, the sign by which he will conquer (60).

The Prince's name, unlike that of Lord Mark in The Wings of the Dove, is not an unvalued mark when Maggie comes to it. It is instead a quantity with an historical value and a range of allusion or reference already associated with it. The name refers to a history and, in this way, it is a rhetorical tool, "the fine side of the wedge" (60) that concentrates a persuasive and attractive story into four syllables. The Prince's name is an allegory of argument, and it depends upon power or force.22

As an argument, it is also a reference to a history of plain falsehood, for it is the name of "the pushing man" who followed Columbus and succeeded in getting his name enduringly associated with the new world illegitimately. Amerigo Vespucci is, of course, only "the make-believe discoverer" (59) of the new world. To underscore the name's value as a token of falsity, to stress that the name memorializes an historical untruth, with its implication of national and political guile, James clusters innuendoes of familial

22 By their names, Matthiessen links Maggie's father and the Prince with what he identifies as an ongoing thematic concern in James's novels:

The character most comparable to Adam Verver in James' earlier work is Christopher Newman, in The American, and that comparison is instructive for James' development. The first names of both men call attention to the quality that James was most concerned to endow them with: both are discoverers of new worlds, just as, in turn, Prince Amerigo's name symbolizes how he must be a re-discoverer of America, or of what may prove even harder, of Americans. (The Major Phase 88)

Matthiessen sees these names as the placid symbols which James's elaboration, on the curious derivation of the Prince's name, proves they are not.
deceit. Amerigo's name comes down to him matrilineally. When traced nearly all the way back to its source, one finds it was transmitted "[b]y the women— that is by some obliging woman, of old, who was a descendant of the pushing man, the make-believe discoverer, and whom the Prince is therefore luckily able to refer as an ancestress" (59). That the name has been passed through the family's women is odd on its own, suggestive as it perhaps is of the patrilineal line's requiring concealment, of some illegitimacy of birth, but certainly of a healthy tradition of exploiting false advantage. That the woman who originated the tradition is enigmatically called "obliging" surpasses these oddities. Fanny seems to use the word in its secondary sense to mean "to confer a benefit or kindness, or favour" (OED 1964). Nevertheless, the word cannot be divested of its other, primary sense; it must also mean "to bind, promise, contract, tie, engage, constrain, force, compel" (1964). The Prince's name preserves in itself the dual and conflicting obligatory aspects— as a kindness and as a coercion— of its first transmission. In this familial way also, then, it testifies to an entrenched duplicity. Amerigo's possession of his name is further troubled by Colonel Bob's characteristically wry implication that the Prince wields his name with the specific intent of snaring a romantically-inclined American spouse: "He knew, Amerigo, what he was about. And I don't mean the old one" (60).

The Prince is, despite the claims made on his behalf by his name, remarkably

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23 Cheryl B. Torsney misconstrues the appeal that the name makes to duplicity by linking Amerigo, by way of James's reference to his ancestor, "the most wicked pope," to the extremities of Borgia iniquity.

24 Again it is useful to recall William James's observations on the appeal of names: they appear first as solution, then as a "program for more work" (Pragmatism 53). See Chapter Two note 30.
forthcoming to Maggie about the duplicity he represents:

'It's you yourselves meanwhile,' he continued, 'who really know nothing. There are two parts of me'—yes, he had been moved to go on. 'One is made up of the history, the doings, the marriages, the crimes, the follies, the boundless bêtises of other people—especially of their infamous waste of money that might have come to me. Those things are written—literally in rows of volumes, in libraries; are as public as they're abominable. Everybody can get at them, and you've, both of you wonderfully, looked them in the face. But there's another part, very much smaller doubtless, which, such as it is, represents my single self, the unknown, unimportant—unimportant save to you—personal quantity. About this you've found out nothing.' (7)

In a revelation of his understanding closely akin to Kate Croy's own, Amerigo distinguishes between history and individual self without specifying what that latter quality, in fact, is. However, James's lack of apparent positive reference does serve as a kind of ironic clarification for the Prince's claim. The individual self is defined as that unspecifiable "quantity" that is somehow distinct from history. Amerigo's claim suggests that his "single self" is the resistance he brings to history, the struggle he performs with legacy like that undertaken by Kate Croy.

Amerigo seems to claim that he has an identity that is completely discrete from history. That claim is first weakened by the manner of making it. The quantity he calls his "single self" can only be understood, in the Prince's statement, against the implied opposition of history. History, in this way, inevitably defines the vague element to which
he refers. Furthermore, when Maggie expresses her charming commitment to seek to find out more about the Prince's non-historical self, when she calls this enterprise "the promised occupation of my future" (7), Amerigo discourages her. He remarks that "[t]he happiest reigns, we are taught, you know, are the reigns without any history" (7): a strange thing to be "moved to reply" (7) after encouraging Maggie to see her goal as worthy of discovery and not as history. This indicates that Amerigo's hidden self is not separate from the rest of history. It is merely a history that is recorded in non-public texts, unavailable for easy reference. Indeed, like Kate Croy's again, the history that Amerigo calls "self" is the record of his resistance to abominable history.

There is another alternative that will have a direct bearing on the later stages of this discussion. Because history is, as we have seen in The Wings of the Dove for example, the grammar yielded by the memory of the past, the Prince may suggest here that his hidden "single self" is truly distinct from history but only because it remains unread and untouched by this grammatical operation.\(^{25}\) In this sense, the non-historical Prince is such because he is also the radically non-textual Prince. Maggie's enthusiastic anticipation of her eventual gloss of that hidden self implicitly rejects Amerigo's confidence in any such case because it presumes the availability of marks to which she will inevitably assign meanings. Indeed, such marks are immediately available for

\(^{25}\) Maurice Blanchot takes up this possible immunity from reference when he writes about the Museum. For Blanchot, the Museum can only preserve the inviolable integrity of its contents from mingling with our admiration, if it remains impregnably sealed, its contents, consequently, "insignificant" (157). To follow Blanchot's terms, if Amerigo discourages Maggie from discovering his "single self," it is because her reading will liberate his meaning from the hermetic storage upon which he, ironically, already has come to depend for his security.
Maggie as she takes the Prince's description of himself itself as the note for future reference. The Prince's denotation of an enigmatic nothingness, about which the Ververs have yet to discover anything is suddenly the connotation of a certain force. This point represents something of a crisis for the Prince who, despite the breeziness of his conversation, is genuinely agitated at the thought of not living up to Maggie's romantic image of him as a "galantuomo" (6). Amerigo can only "devoutly hope" (6) to continue to enjoy the happy effacement of his "actual situation" (8) by living "deep into the sense of his advantage" (8). In "The Photographic Message," Barthes provides a useful analogue that helps to explain what the Prince intends in reporting his two selves to Maggie and to establish this early scene as a careful foreshadowing of the later importance of photographs to Maggie's discovery of Amerigo's deceit. Barthes first allows that photographs are wholly denotive analogons of reality. While the Prince's public self is linked to writing, to "archives [and] annals" (Golden Bowl 8), his single self is like a photograph, what Barthes calls "the photographic analogue" (198), that proffers a paradoxical picture of invisibility. Even as he wields it he enjoys the soothing bath of the Ververs' good faith that assures him that it cannot inform because, unlike his other self, it is a blank. Beyond this it is a miniature blank, "very much smaller doubtless" (Golden Bowl 7) than his public self. Yet, Barthes reminds us that "[f]rom object to its image there is of course a reduction—in proportion, perspective, color—but at no time is

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26 On this point, see Matthiessen's chapter on The Golden Bowl, (The Major Phase 81-104) especially the pages leading up to his insistence that the discrepancy in the Prince's value "remains the crucial question for the rest of the novel, whether the Ververs have paid too much for their Prince" (84).
this reduction a **transformation** (in the mathematical sense of the term)" (196). The Prince's protest, that his "single self" supplements his recorded familial history, is a meagre one. He offers it to Maggie with the knowledge of its inaccessibility and the assumption of its complete inscrutability. But despite its diminutive size or its invisibility it remains legible even though "[c]onnotation is not necessarily immediately graspable at the level of the message itself (it is, one could say, at once invisible and active, clear and implicit)" (198). Amerigo offers a blank photograph that denotes its blankness and, ironically, begs a reading that Maggie seems ready to undertake. The Prince's single self "can then be seen as the co-existence of two messages, the one without a code (the photographic analogue), the other with a code (the 'art,' or the treatment, or the 'writing,' or the rhetoric, of the photograph)" (198). More than this, the code that emerges must first transmit the photograph's resistance to yield to any reading even as the Prince's provision of the opportunity for such reading may seem a function of his candour. In this way, the Prince's single self is a doubled document: a blank prompt to exploration and a promise to defy investigation.  

James further elaborates the Prince's strategy of resistance and confirms the aptness of the photographic analogue when he writes:

... he was somehow full of his race. Its presence in him was like the consciousness of some inexpugnable scent in which his clothes, his whole person, his hands and the hair of his head, might have been steeped as in some chemical

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27 Wellek distinguishes between picture as a metaphor for composition and as an analogy for the concentrated force of an idea (229-30).
bath: the effect was nowhere in particular, yet he constantly felt himself at the mercy of the cause. He knew his antenatal history, knew it in every detail, and it was a thing to keep causes well before him. What was his frank judgment of so much of its ugliness, he asked himself, but a part of the cultivation of humility? What was this so important step he had just taken but the desire for some new history that should, so far as possible, contradict, and even if need be flatly dishonour, the old? If what had come to him wouldn't do, he must make something different. He perfectly recognised--always in his humility--that the material for the making had to be Mr Verver's millions. There was nothing else for him on earth to make it with; he had tried before . . . . (13)

Beyond showing that the Prince's "single self" is very importantly tied up with history, indeed itself obliged to history for enabling a claimed opposition through which it may define itself, James indicates, in this passage, that Amerigo's undertaking, less a project of opposition than of hoped-for extrication or derivation of self from history, is itself the work of a history from which he cannot emerge. Amerigo's effort keeps his legacy "well before him" as the format of his future, and his past merely acknowledges history's defiance, for "he had tried before." History ensnares the Prince from both sides. He is wedged between a legacy of defeat and a future of memorializing those antecedent lost causes. Moreover, Amerigo is himself the allegorical figure of his own entrapment. By figuring Amerigo's movement from bachelorhood to marriage as the transfer from "some chemical bath" (13) to "waters . . . tinted . . . as by the action of some essence, poured from a golden-topped phial" (8), James describes the shift in the Prince's station in life--
from wretch to voluptuary—as the development of a photographic print that testifies in its substance to the engine of its manufacture.

The novel's establishing scene confirms the linkage of the Prince's single self to history: once again, as Wordsworth has it, "another and finer connection than that of contrast" (Wordsworth 608). As Amerigo takes his appreciative stroll through London amid what James calls on his behalf, "a more convincing image of the truth of the ancient state than any [the modern Romans] have left by the Tiber" (3), the landscape, so congruent with temporally distant Imperium, resounds for him simultaneously with the caught "echoes of his own thoughts" (8). By the time those intercepted reverberations coalesce into the discernible details of their important story, before James writes, "[w]hat had happened was . . . " (4), the description of the urban scene through which the Prince strolls already prefigures the Prince's comparatively brief recent history: the ceremony of fixing the date of his and Maggie Verver's nuptials. The Prince's reading of the cityscape conflates the British capital's suggestiveness of imperial history and the reverberated projections of his personal predicament. It is, however, remarkable that James does not offer his readers this alignment of the Prince's immediate story and the comparatively vast legend of western civilization ironically. The imposing edifice of empire is comfortably apposed to the Prince's situation in this opening passage. James's pairing provokes none of the sense of inappropriateness or implausibility upon which irony depends. James's odd failure to register any irony in this scene is important. The historical weight of the scene is not opposed to the "psychological" impression the Prince discovers in its midst. The nonoccurrence of a claim of complementarity—between the city's "image of the truth"
and the Prince's internal musings—indicates another claim. The cityscape, with its rich suggestion of *Imperium*, figures the history of the man who walks through it. The connection between character and setting is allegorical: Amerigo is the prospopoeia of the urban scene, and, in turn, that cityscape is congruent to the frailties of his character.

This kind of mutual connection is what James elsewhere calls "contemporaneity."²⁸

²⁸ Ricoeur seems to promise a subtle understanding of James's ideas about reality and fiction when he cautions that we not fail to give "fiction per se the power to explore the modes of temporal experience that escape philosophical conceptualization, due to its aporetic character" (2.190). Disappointingly, Ricoeur does not elaborate adequately on the idea of contemporaneity when he remarks on James's use of "synchronic and consonant narrative, where the narrator is contemporary with the hero" (2.186). Nevertheless, Ricoeur's reading of Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* (2.130-152), though insufficient in important respects, directs us to a valuable corrective to his glancing injustice to James. Two of Ricoeur's observations on Proust clearly serve for James. For Proust, Ricoeur writes:

> [the] metaphorical relation, brought to light by the elucidation of happy moments, becomes the matrix for all the relations in which two distinct objects are, despite their differences, raised to their essence and liberated from the contingencies of time . . . . Metaphor reigns where cinematographic vision, which is purely serial, fails to relate sensations and memories . . . . Time regained . . . is time lost eternalized by metaphor. (2.148)

This discovery, which exaggerates the role of metaphor and ignores the activity of allegory, leads Ricoeur to misconstrue the following well known Proust passage which begs for a Jamesian alignment in consideration of the fact that, for James, reading tends to take the place of experience (Esch, 1986: 2):

> "Real life, life at last laid bare and illuminated—the only life in consequence which can be said to be really lived—is literature, and life thus defined is in a sense all the time immanent in ordinary man no less than in the artist. But most men do not see it because they do not seek to shed light upon it" (III.931). . . . [This statement] posits an equation which, at the end of the work, should be completely reversible between life and literature, which is to say, finally, between the impression preserved in its trace and the work of art that states the meaning of the impression. (Proust qtd. in Ricoeur 2.150-51)

In this passage, Ricoeur finds the same two spheres as Bergson, Jolly, and Schwarz: life and literature. Bergson finds fiction provides a virtual simulacrum of reality. Jolly disputes James's own hesitancy to render romance distinct from history (24-5). Schwarz sympathizes with what he thinks is James's attraction to the opportunity of freer playfulness within fiction (48). Ricoeur misreads a passage of Proust as a statement of
As the Prince strays through the British capital into Bond Street, as James also
guides his reader to monuments that "recover a little the sense of [Imperium]" (3), to
London Bridge and to Hyde Park Corner "on a fine afternoon in May" (3), the spoils of
Empire bristle about Amerigo; behind windows, "objects massive and lumpish, in silver
and gold, in the forms to which precious stones contribute, or in leather, steel, brass,
applied to a hundred uses and abuses, were as tumbled together as if, in the insolence of
the Empire, they had been the loot of far-off victories" (3). Though "the young man's
movements . . . betrayed no consistency of attention" (3), it would be wiser, surely, for
him to heed the city his course reveals: a stockpile of treasure, a vaulted storehouse of
plunder. In the midst of the overbuilt urban capital, the Prince unwittingly succeeds in a
casual bit of archaeology, recovering "a more convincing image of the truth of the
ancient" embedded within the modern. He discovers, but fails truly to note (recovering
and re-covering, covering up again), the richness of empire, its seized loot. James tells us
that the Prince "catches echoes of his own thoughts" in the midst of this bounty; the
Prince discovers himself--hears his own thoughts echoed--in the midst of this plunder. In
this way, the directionless Prince is first likened to the booty, haphazardly tumbled
together. Moments later, James attaches the more sinister and provocative element of the
straightforward metaphorical equivalence between life and literature. They all render the
two spheres wholly distinct before describing the relation between them.

In fact, the ideology of Proust's passage has much in common with the Jamesian
principle underlying the narration of Amerigo's walk through London. Proust, like James,
does not say that life is truly reflected and known through the conduit of literature. Proust
and James write that real life is literature. Both explicitly defy the dichotomy that
preoccupies their readers. Literature is not a metaphor for life; it does not imitate life.
Literature figures life; the claim can only be understood allegorically. The relation
between Amerigo and the City exemplifies this principle.
loot's description—that it is securely ensconced, vaulted, displayed—to the Prince with this precise information:

What had happened was that shortly before, at three o'clock, his fate had practically been sealed, and that even when one pretended to no quarrel with it the moment had something of the grimness of a crunched key in the strongest lock that could be made. There was nothing to do yet, but feel what one had done, and our personage felt it while he aimlessly wandered. It was already as if he were married, so definitely had the solicitors, at three o'clock, enabled the date to be fixed, and by so few days was that date now distant. He was to dine at half-past eight o'clock with the young lady . . . . (4)

In this way, by proximal arrangement and imagistic binarism, the Prince himself is sealed, locked up, trapped in a kind of container as impregnable as those that store the spoils of British mercantile colonialism.

The Prince is a trapped man. This much is clear in his figural association with the secured treasures that testify to the city’s wealth and power and in James’s chosen assessment of Amerigo’s fixing of his wedding day earlier that afternoon as a "crunched key in the strongest lock that could be made." Yet we cannot leave James’s implication of the Prince’s ensnarement directly. For the complicated nature of the trap is all-important to James’s representation of the past and memory in this novel. James does not offer the Prince’s own precise reasons for any feeling of bondage associated with his recent engagement or impending nuptials at least until the dramatic return of Charlotte Stant at the end of the second chapter. Even at that moment, James’s meanings are all implicit.
We never receive warrant to reduce the novel to a simple infidelity plot, and this point is perhaps clearest in James's establishing scene. Here the Prince is less trapped by the reality of his impending marriage, less figured as a flesh-and-blood bridegroom, than he is ensnared in the strata of history as a figure of pastness, of secret memories. James links the Prince to the historical predicament of the city and to the inanimate objects that document the city's value. These points on their own sanction our reading Amerigo as a complicated figure of history. James introduces the Prince as both the vivid prosopopeia of empire in search of itself and as one of its lifeless assets. Amerigo strolls through the establishing moments of The Golden Bowl as one of the living dead or, since the loot of empire never enjoyed life, as both animate and inanimate. In this way, it seems apt that he is allowed the freedom of perambulation even as he is figurally locked away in a sturdy vault.

James introduces the Prince as "one of the modern Romans" facing "the legend of the City to which the world paid tribute" (3). In this way, James may seem to set up a linear time line with the Prince at one extreme looking across to the other: the present considers the past. Of course, the Prince does no such thing in James's figuration. Amerigo ponders the sense of the classical past, the Roman Imperium, alive in the body of the present city, the modern city of London. The forceful operation of the past is a key element in James's description of Amerigo's London as it is in his characterization of the Prince himself.

James's novel begins in the middle of things: at a moment of retrospection and prospection for the Prince. Amerigo faces the lumped objects of colonial despoilment as
he receives the caught echoes of his own possession through his representative's arrangement at three o'clock to fix the date of his marriage to Maggie Verver and anticipates his dining that night at eight-thirty with the young lady. The stroll about London takes place between these two scenes and, in this way, James's narrative pattern introduces the Prince as a figure embedded in a time line of obligation.

The immediate past faces him as the presence of the cityscape. Indeed, the future that the Prince awaits is unavailable to his contemplation: "There was nothing to do as yet, but feel what one had done." In an intertextual echo of Kate Croy's predicament at the outset of The Wings of the Dove, James limits the business of the Prince's prospection, the unfolding of his temporal trajectory, to the work of retrospection: by looking forward he can only see where he has already been. Amerigo strains to find his way into a future, out of the treasure vault in which we find him so securely placed. Yet the past hangs about him like a chemical stench. Even if Amerigo were to see his way to a path forward, that deliverance would be foiled by the larger problem of his inescapable smell "the effect [of which] was nowhere in particular"; James reminds us that the stench is a trap, that Amerigo "constantly felt himself at the mercy of the cause" (13). We must appreciate James's provision of a particularly inescapable form of legacy for the Prince as a carefully rendered trap. Through Calderoni, his poor man of business, Amerigo appoints the date of his wedding and expresses "the desire for some new history" in acknowledgment that "he must make something different" (13). The Prince muses at length over the possible nature of his hoped for vita nuova:

He had an idea—which may amuse his historian—that when you were stupid
enough to be mistaken about such a matter you did know it. Therefore he wasn't mistaken—his future might be scientific. There was nothing in himself, at all events, to prevent it. He was allying himself to science, for what was science but the absence of prejudice backed by the presence of money? His life would be full of machinery, which was the antidote to superstition, which was in its turn, too much, the consequence, or at least the exhalation, of archives. He thought of these things—of his not being at all events futile, and of his absolute acceptance of the developments of the coming age . . . . (13)

Amerigo clings to a technological faith in the possibility of his total redemption from history. Caught amid the exhaled vapours of the archives, he stupidly expects an antidote in the science of his future; the mechanical interactions of money and disinterest, he hopes, will free him from the claims of his past. But this is alchemy, not technology. James points quite clearly to the futility of the Prince's expectation and, for this reason, this passage becomes another kind of indication. As the allegorical figure of his own entrapment, in fact because he is that figure, Amerigo retains the power to resist by projecting visions of his future emancipation like the one above. His hopeful allegiance to "the developments of the coming age" are as realized as they will ever be. Though the engine of money and disinterest will not purify him, his faith in an always eventual purification provides him with a "kind of meaning." Still the large demands he makes of the future here must also be seen in the proper context of the early scenes from which they are taken. The future represents a zone of acute anxiety for Amerigo. His fanciful notion of an empowering vita nuova is already marred by its debt to Amerigo's edgy fear
of the future that inspired it and that ties it to the past as a memorial of his crisis. The Prince remains as hopeful as he is prematurely buried and already foul with the scent of a chemical bath.

Despite Amerigo's characterization along these lines, Maggie remains untroubled by news of his hidden self and loves him on the basis of public history and her naive trust in the congruence of the known and the unknown. While James presents the Prince as an active emblem of the vitality of the past, in his history of resistance and defiance, Maggie is content to see all history as happily and conveniently dead even as she unwittingly points to the fact that it is also alive. Like Fanny, who allows the Golden Isles of death to serve as both a locus of beginning and as a terminus, Maggie sees the past as dead except when her fancy demands that it be alive. Fanny is also an American, born in New York, whose want of children and of wealth find appeasement in her juniors. When James writes that Fanny is "in fact pretty well the doyenne above ground, of her transplanted tribe" (27-8), he makes Maggie all but a blood descendant and certainly the obedient subordinate of Mrs. Assingham, eager to avail "herself to the full of her incapacity to doubt" (27). Maggie's father has not passed down to his daughter any inkling of a reason to doubt that the past is thoroughly subject to willful domination.29 His "supreme idea"

29 The link established here—among Fanny and Maggie and, perhaps, Adam—has also provided a thematic subject for other readers who comment on the Ververs' impulse, not to deny the force of the past as I suggest, but to aesthetically objectify that which they seek to control. Phyllis van Slyck calls Maggie a willful portraitist: "... when Maggie Verver insists ... that the man she has chosen is and will remain what she believes him to be, the reader is immediately wary of Maggie's need to remain outside—and thereby in control of—the very relationship into which she is presumably entering" (180). Van Slyck's analysis depends on Martha C. Nussbaum's assessment that Maggie requires moral beauty be provided by an imposed consistency of conduct (as a wife and a
(106) is, after all, the establishment of a museum of "civilisation condensed" (107), a spatial container of all history as reified in a treasury of mementos assembled with the full "majesty of delay" (107). Adam Verver's passion to possess the fullness of time stilled in a warehouse of total synchronicity sits comfortably with his only daughter. Maggie and Adam, and Fanny certainly until her mournful return to Cadogan Place in chapter sixteen, favour the fantasy of such "a house on a rock" (107).

James offers Adam Verver's supreme idea in Part Second after the business of the novel's Part First ominously forecasts the impossibility of stilling the past: in Fanny's daughter) (128): "in Maggie's speech... we have a sense that bulwarks of ignorance are being erected against some threat that presses in from the world; that knowledge of some truth is not simply absent, but is being actively refused for the sake of beautitude" (127). Yet, James affords little reason to see the aesthetic objects, to which van Slyck and Nussbaum believe Maggie looks for a sense of innocent perfection, as quiet emblems of rectitude. Nussbaum writes:

To live with works of art is to live in a world enormously rich in value, without a deep risk of infidelity, disloyalty, or any conflict which might lead to these. It is the Ververs' brilliantly resourceful idea that the moral life, too, can be flawless and innocent of violation, while remaining full of value, if only persons can be made to resemble aesthetic objects, things to be displayed in a gallery for innocent attention. Closely linked with Mr. Verver's aestheticization of Charlotte is a wish "for some idea lurking in the vast freshness of the night, at the breath of which disparities would submit to fusion." (The Golden Bowl qtd. in Nussbaum 132) Nussbaum argues that flaws develop in these perfect aesthetic object "under the strains imposed by the intertwining of our routes to value in the world" (133). My analysis rejects this moral reading by underscoring the fact that the objects do not become flawed under such thematic pressure, but allegorize the necessity of flaw throughout.

F. R. Leavis stresses the "stale, sickly and oppressive atmosphere" yielded by the plutocratic acquisitiveness of the Ververs (195-96) and remarks on James's apparent ignorance of the distaste prompted by their inhumane greediness (196). The Ververs' project is not, pace Leavis, an undertaking of avaricious immorality, but an enormous macro-allegory that will, they romantically hope, still and store all memorabilia and reduce the lively forces of history, in the manner of Barthes' photograph, to an impossibly concentrated and, most importantly for them, a supremely pacific emblem.
somersaulting use of "nothing," in the Prince's figuration, and most dramatically, of course, in the return of Charlotte Stant and the advent of the bowl. In this way, on the level of narrative, the historical grammar that leads up to the exposition of Adam's idea already shows the failure of the past to submit to the rich American's project. The irresolution of history argues against its domestication in a museum. History does not submit to Adam's stasis because, as Benjamin's woof and warf model suggests, it is always a matrix of memorial readings that respond to and produce new grammars. If judged by the Verver standard, history must always be flawed simply because historical narratives are not past. They are vividly active, alive with discrepancies and tensions that appear as fractures, traces of the falsehood of a flawless objectivity. It is ironic indeed that Maggie cannot see these Jamesian truths because she is so subject to her own familial legacy, a naïve and inherited ontology and ideology that allow her completely to misconstrue the Prince's character.

Maggie plays along with what she thinks is Amerigo's acute joke when he produces two alarming ways of imagining his own future as part of the Verver clan. When James describes the Prince's recent fate as the turning of a "crunched key" in the "strongest lock," his narrative tantalizes the reader with the chilling and familiar imagistic vocabulary of Gothic horror. Indeed, the Prince's first dialogue with Maggie, his wife-to-be, advances this claim and provides Maggie with the first opportunity to acquiesce, with thorough sweetness, to an abhorrent implication:

'I'm like a chicken, at best, chopped up and smothered in sauce; cooked down as a crème de volaille, with half the parts left out. Your father's the natural fowl
running about the bassecour. His feathers, movements, his sounds—those are the parts that, with me, are left out.'

'Ah, as a matter of course—since you can't eat a chicken alive!'

The Prince had not been annoyed at this, but he had been positive. 'Well, I'm eating your father alive—which is the only way to taste him.' (6-7)

This alarming conversation affords Amerigo the opportunity to praise Adam Verver's vitality, by likening him to a vivacious bird, and simultaneously to explain that he himself is another kind of fowl: dead, dismembered, and smothered by the Ververs' odd generosity, a disposition of wealth with the peculiar purpose of enacting Adam's supreme idea of gaining the past. Though Maggie takes the Prince's remarks as a lark, his words rehearse with precision the Jamesian format for thinking about time, history, memory, and the past. Even as a cooking chicken, pieced apart, and "cooked down," Amerigo is not obliterated, nor is he truly transformed. James's reader correctly recalls his manipulation of the Croy family sentence when we read of Amerigo culinary reduction into notes that preserve his totality, into synecdochal parts that continue to reference his whole. This time James relies on the vocabulary of taste rather than sound. The link between the two passages, in the two novels, is further reinforced when we recall that, in The Wings of the Dove, the sound to which James's passage seems to refer is finally never realized. That passage is more about the concentration of notation than the performance of music or the experience of sense. Likewise, Amerigo's remark refers less to the consumption of the dish he is to become, less to cannibalism, than to his concentration into memorial notes that act to preserve him even despite having "half the
parts left out." Amerigo imagines his future first, then, as the endurance of a savage process of dismemberment that, despite its thoroughness, shall fail to smother the liveliness of the chicken the flavour of which, after all, grows all the more intense as it is reduced.31

The Prince's conversation is at once an instance of engaging and endearing self-deprecation and a narrative premonition of the concerns James will explore in the rest of the novel, concerns that link The Golden Bowl to the iniquitous system of static bafflement in The Portrait of a Lady and the all-important insistence in The Wings of the Dove on the force of the inaccessible as the operation of mourning which constitutes the present.32 The Prince is both congenial and savvy in his comments to Maggie, for the Prince's new wife enjoys a peculiar relationship with her father; any praise of him is, for this reason, a particularly valuable indication that her husband not only admires the man himself, but appreciates her unique alliance with him. In response to the Prince's fanciful simile, Maggie maintains the light tone established by her husband's remarks while she reveals the first explicit inkling of a familial ceremony: a tendency of Adam Verver's that is of a kind with the Prince's cooking imagery, but definitely more grim in its

31 In charting the idea of cosmopolitanism to its Jamesian zenith in The Golden Bowl, Tintner finds "an intrusion of cosmopolitanism" and "Wildean" technique in James's use of "food as an art" (Cosmopolitan World 45). She notes that "James revealed in his most cosmopolitan novel, The Golden Bowl, his own by then highly developed palate in his description of . . . the ideal meal" (124-25). See also Yeazell's consideration of the startling impact of the figure of cooking and dismemberment (46).

32 It is noteworthy that the Prince describes his death as a relative position. He is dead and smothered only in comparison to Adam Verver's uncanny liveliness. Rather than an opposition of absolutes, the Prince figures life and death on a shifting scale that recalls the discoveries made in The Wings of the Dove.
implications. Maggie reports:

'There are things,' she had gone on, 'that father puts away--the bigger and more cumbersome of course, which he stores, has already stored in masses, here and in Paris, in Italy, in Spain, in warehouses, vaults, banks, safes, wonderful secret places. We've been like a pair of pirates--positively stage pirates, the sort who wink at each other and say "Ha-ha!" when they come to where their treasure is buried. Ours is buried pretty well everywhere--except what we like to see, what we travel with and have about us. These, the smaller pieces, are the things we take out and arrange as we can, to make the hotels we stay at and the houses we hire a little less ugly. Of course it's a danger, and we have to keep watch. But father loves a fine piece, loves, as he says, the good of it, and it's for the company of some of his things that he's willing to run his risks. And we've had extraordinary luck.'--Maggie had made that point; 'we've never lost anything yet. And the finest objects are often the smallest. Values, in lots of cases, you must know, have nothing to do with size. But there's nothing, however, tiny,' she had wound up, 'that we've missed.' (10-11)

In the establishing scene of the novel, we find Amerigo amid a London cityscape that serves primarily as a treasure house. His thoughts echo back to him while he walks through this setting and, in this way, he is placed within the treasure house with his thoughts bouncing off the impregnable walls that guard the "massive and lumpish" piles of imperial loot. Maggie, in enthusiastic and witty response to the Prince's own cue, develops this imagistic system further. Maggie replies to the Prince's joking self-portrait
of himself as a dead and smothered bird by sharing the private familial information that the Verver's are themselves energetic buriers.

Maggie's admission functions on at least two levels. Adam and Maggie Verver store masses of things and, like pirates, partake in the business of empire. On this literal level, the vocabulary of Maggie's confidence fails to yield its fullest effect. The things that the Ververs hide, they retrieve for the sake of the "company" they may provide and for their ability to counter the ugliness of hotels and houses through which the father and daughter roam. Maggie does not offer any more specific information about the precise kind of "things" that get buried. The literal implication is, of course, that she refers to the substance of their material wealth. Yet the more profound suggestiveness of Maggie's report is that they bury their beloved which they subsequently dig up, as it suits them, for the pleasure of "company." It is clear that Maggie's statement serves to foreshadow James's plot: when something beautiful and valuable is retrieved from burial it may risk unspecified "danger." That James may refer here to his novel's infidelity plot is of less interest to us than Maggie's understanding of the burial imagery she employs. This is the statement's other level.

The Verver's valued things, things that keep company in a fashion that suggests they are living, are stored through burial, through premature live interment. The Ververs stash away their prized possessions in "wonderful secret places" and dig them up for companionship. James has already figured the Prince in his introductory stroll as a victim of such premature burial akin to the loot of empire. He is acutely sensitive to the implications of Maggie's story. Though the tone of their exchange remains breezy and
witty, the Prince follows the Verver system to its monstrous conclusion: "'But it's something not to be so big that I have to be buried.' 'Oh,' she had returned, 'you shall not be buried, my dear, till you're dead. Unless indeed you call it buried to go to American City.' 'Before I pronounce I should like to see my tomb'" (11). This exchange marks Maggie's important second acquiescence to a profoundly grim joke. Her blithe willingness to follow through on the Prince's lead in this way may attest to a kind of American lack of caution that has been the subject of much critical attention in connection with the international theme. Without deciding that question here, we may still safely remark that James uses Maggie to describe further the understanding of history already hinted at so provocatively in the earlier cooking simile. Maggie unwittingly explains the central Jamesian truth, on the matter of history, that is at issue in her conversation with Amerigo. After chopping him up and reducing him down in the cooking simile, Maggie acknowledges, in this series of vault references, that even the tiniest things can have enormous value, that value has nothing to do with size. Amerigo pieced apart, smothered in sauce or buried in a tomb, remains fully himself. History as allegorized in precious objects, as concrete three-dimensional collectibles, remains actively referential. Of course, Maggie relies on this point for her occasional enjoyment of the things she and her father stash away.

One important aside is necessary here. In defense of my suggestion that Maggie's carefree repartee is properly understood as dark Jamesian irony the dimensions of which Maggie is pivotally unaware, there is ample documentation that the fear of the horrible

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33 See Chapter One note 2.
fate of premature live burial obsessed the scientific and popular imagination of the
Victorian and Edwardian period. The practice of the physiological determination of
death was in its relative infancy and popular period literature is rife with sensational
accounts of premature live burial. Tebb and Vollum collect a striking range of accounts:
of family members opening sealed funerary crypts to discover the body of their loved one
cowering in the corner of the tomb having escaped the confines of the coffin, but having
ultimately perished behind the gates of the mausoleum; of disinterred coffins opened to
reveal that the presumed dead actually died underground in paroxysms of fear and
asphyxiation; and of the widespread practice of willing that one's remains go unburied
until the onset of putrefaction to certify death. A variety of contraptions were devised to
prevent common and terrible accidents: tubes inserted into a buried coffin could transmit
sound to the surface and air to the hapless victim of premature live burial; wires that led
from below-ground to the surface of the grave were attached to the finger of the dead
before burial so that the slightest quiver would ring a bell or raise a flag and alert help.
For these reasons, it seems insufficient to conclude that Amerigo and Maggie merely
share a timely, topical, and macabre sense of humour. Rather James clearly relies on the
period resonance of the idea of premature burial. In this context, Maggie's discovery of
cause for humorous banter marks her as insufficiently fearful or brazenly reckless.

To Maggie's understanding the amusements that she magically resurrects for

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34 See William Tebb and Edward Perry Vollum for a detailed popular and
medical history of, and vast bibliography of period works on, the perils of premature
burial. Despite his book's often alarming unsubstantiated claims, it is also worthwhile to
see Lyall Watson's The Romeo Error: A Matter of Life and Death.
enjoyment merely answer to her whim. They are alive when she demands it of them. Their status is wholly congruent with her requirement. This precisely cannot be the case for her with the Prince, not because he will remain literally alive while in the Ververs' "possession," but because the historical falsehood he embodies and the resistance to history that is his self cannot be quelled while preserving his identity intact, without doing the real violence to his character's integrity the effects of which are documented in the novel's final words.

In their early conversation, Amerigo, in fact, indicates that Maggie accepts as coherent and resolved what is necessarily otherwise. When he asks Maggie, "'You do believe I'm not a hypocrite? You recognise that I don't lie or dissemble or deceive? Is that water-tight?'" (12), he points to an important and rather complicated truth that Maggie misses completely. Amerigo does not lie. The duplicity he embodies, however, remains functional because the difference between history and self is not his "fault," so to speak. It is a necessary rupture that he presents. Amerigo refers to the disjunction between history and self, what I have elsewhere called "faith," the resistance one brings to what one is not, or against the claims of the historical grammar that identifies or molests us with alien implications. When Amerigo seeks Maggie's assurance that she does not sense any hypocrisy in him he means that this disjunction is not hypocrisy. Yet Maggie has never even conceived of such a disjunction and, in this way, thinks herself wholly concordant with a history that wields no power. After all, the emblems of history have only ever been her macabre living-dead playthings. She trusts that the vitality of history is absolutely past. Nevertheless, in his dire questions, Amerigo is and points to a rupture
inherent in history. Indeed, his disjunction merely stands for an infinite number of ruptures that James figures as one, what he calls Amerigo's "quantity" (7). Maggie insists on missing Amerigo's point because she only confides in her mastery of the past:

The question to which he had given a certain intensity, had made her, he remembered, stare an instant, her colour rising as if it had sounded to her still stranger than he had intended. He had perceived on the spot that any serious discussion of veracity, of loyalty, or rather of the want of them, practically took her unprepared, as if it were quite new to her. He had noticed it before: it was the English, the American sign that duplicity, like 'love', had to be joked about. It couldn't be 'gone into'. So the note of his inquiry was—well, to call it nothing else—premature . . . . (12)

Amerigo explains that he is not as she thinks he is and asks for her word that he has not been duplicitous. He has revealed the existence, if not the specific nature, of his rupture with his known history, and he has trusted that she knows that history is alive. Maggie thoroughly misconstrues Amerigo's remarks and ensconces herself, in the imagery of her reply to Amerigo, in the privileged cabin of surety: "'Water-tight--the biggest compartment of all? Why it's the best cabin and the main deck and the engine-room and the steward's pantry! It's the ship itself--it's the whole line. It's the captain's table and all one's luggage--one's reading for the trip'" (12).35 By these remarks, Maggie positions herself confidently against risks the very existence of which she does not appreciate. Her

35 With this remark, Maggie documents James's meditation on Poe. In The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym, Poe places his protagonist himself in a compartment in a ship's hold that becomes a virtual tomb as Pym fears that he has been buried alive.
reference to "water-tight" is the idea that the superstructure of history is not beset by flaws imperilling the ship itself. This is precisely the opposite of what the Prince intends. He wants only some indication that their communication is without leaky flaws, that they are equally aware, that their understanding is sea-worthy, that they are "water-tight" in their shared knowledge that the sea to which Maggie refers is turbulent with historical activity. Moreover, Maggie's imagery suggests unwittingly that her whole world is defined by the belief in the absence of such flaws and that she expects, in her "reading for the trip," never to discover any. Maggie misses that Amerigo crucially claims not the absence of a rupture, but the absence of any duplicitous denial of such a rupture's inevitable force.

Amerigo refers to no specific rupture—between the claims of public history and the resistance he brings to it, and to that resistance itself—but he does limit his vocabulary to suggest that whatever rift he might note, or Maggie might discover, it will be singular. The singular rift, furthermore, only stands for a range of forces tearing at the placid face of history. Amerigo may be vague on this point because his eloquence is somewhat uneven over the course of the novel. Yet this explanation seems unsatisfactory.

Amerigo's effort is really one of translation, and if, by the end of The Golden Bowl, the Prince demonstrates his ready fluency in English, Italian, and French, he nonetheless struggles when trying to produce "a transparent and adequate interexpression" that conveys his meaning to Maggie's understanding (Esch, 1987: 138), that faithfully reports his "semantic tenor with as little interference as possible from the
constraints of the vehicle" (Johnson, "Taking Fidelity" 145).36 James requires that we accept Amerigo as a coherent character, that we understand the duplicity he embodies as the integrity of selfhood. There is no hypocrisy at work in him. The Prince figures doubleness without discharging its force as a duplicity; the force of duplicity is held in reserve, so to speak, by the singularity of character. We have also noted that James renders the Prince's fault--his sturdy duplicity--doubly: it is what he is and what he presents. This other double introduces the question of translation: the Prince may think that he is composed of two selves, but the report of that belief--to himself and to Maggie--necessarily translates it into terms that inevitably alienate the origin of the belief, the always unavailable pretext of Amerigo's conviction.37 Ironically, his presentation of that

36 Johnson goes on, importantly, to explain that despite the fact that tradition has always required that we understand translation as "the translation of meaning" ("Taking Fidelity" 145), the original text is, itself, "always already an impossible translation that renders translation impossible" (146). Johnson underscores this point: "the more a text is worked through by the problem of translation, the more untranslatable it becomes" (146).

37 This is so, as Johnson explains, because "[t]ranslation is a bridge that creates out of itself the two fields of battle it separates" ("Taking Fidelity" 148; see note 39 below). Johnson's bridge of translation is also James's figure for the work of art. Teahan recollects the following passage, from James's preface to The Wings of the Dove, to stress the instability of Kate's and Densher's accomplishment at the end of that novel, to underscore the inveterate "displacement of the center" (Rhetorical Logic 128) that I identify as the force of memory:

How much and how often, and in what connexions and with what almost infinite variety, must [an author] be a dupe, that of his prime object, to be at all measurably a master, that of his actual substitute for it--or in other words at all appreciably to exist? He places, after an earnest survey, the piers of his bridge--he has at least sounded deep enough, heaven knows, for their brave position; yet the bridge spans the stream, after the fact, in apparently complete independence of these properties, the principal grace of the original design. They were an illusion, for their necessary hour; but the span itself, whether of a single arch or of many, seems by the oddest chance in the world to be a reality; since, actually, the rueful
belief can only announce the impossibility of its communication outside the register of translation. In this way, Amerigo is also the prospopoeia of translation itself. Of course, Amerigo himself stresses this law by erecting, for Maggie's consideration, the twin edifices of things that are written and things that are "unknown, unimportant" (7). With careful honesty, the Prince reports his doubleness to Maggie: he does not lie or deceive when he says that she will, essentially, only ever know him in translation, on the basis of what is available for her perusal in the vast public archive. For Amerigo, it is "water-tight" that the vehicle of communication always already overwrites the tenor of its semantic claim. Yet this declaration is, in the terms of its utterance, also already available for translation by Maggie, for estrangement from the truth of truth's relentless builder, passing under it, sees figures and hears sounds above: he makes out, with his heart in his throat, that it bears and is positively being "used." (Art of the Novel 297)

Teahan explains that "[t]he artist seems to enjoy the mastery of his finished work, but that work is itself only a substitute or copy of its original conception, of which he is already the unwitting dupe" (Rhetorical Logic 128). See my consideration of Kate Croy's family sentence and the impossibility of the quest for a super-preceding original cause (Chapter Two pages 77 and following).

38 See page 217 above.

39 This point, taken up in my next sentence as a claim available for Maggie's subsequent translation, is, for Johnson, the curious stability of translation: "The bridge of translation, which paradoxically releases within each text the subversive forces of its own foreignness, thus reinscribes those forces in the tensile strength of a new neighborhood of otherness" ("Taking Fidelity" 148). The bridge is also Wellek's figure for James himself as the writer that spans the gulf between early-nineteenth-century and modern criticism (237). If we read Wellek's figural claim in accordance with Johnson's, James becomes the translating conduit by which we know both kinds of thought.
Furthermore, the Prince is also hopeful of attaining the romantic world of historical noncomplicity that Maggie thinks she occupies. He is certainly ambivalent about the discrepancy between his world view and that of the Ververs as he undertakes to enter into his matrimonial attachment to it. Despite the first chapter's figuring of Amerigo's progress as a dismemberment or interment, he experiences little anxiety on the basis of these seemingly certain bad omens:

He had stood still, at many a moment of the previous month, with the thought, freshly determined or renewed, of the general expectation—to define it roughly—of which he was the subject. What was singular was that it seemed not so much an expectation of anything in particular as a large, bland, blank assumption of merits almost beyond notation, of essential quality and value. (18)

The Prince imagines himself moving into an enigma of blankness.41 The fancy and ease

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40 What Esch writes of Isabel Archer also applies to Maggie here: From the novel's outset, Isabel, like most readers, naively takes for granted the possibility of successfully determining reference, with a faith in intelligibility that extends as well to figures of speech. She operates on the assumption that tropes can be translated into their proper referents, so long as one can tell the literal from the figurative senses. (1987: 139).

41 In this passage, James furthers his allusion to Poe. James indicates a little further on, with an explicit reference to The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym, that Poe was at least on his mind. James's critical evaluations of the work of Edgar Allan Poe are marked by a certain ambivalence. In his 1879 homage, Hawthorne, James remarks on the early American literary milieu out of which Nathaniel Hawthorne sprang and on Poe in particular:

There was but little literary criticism in the United States at the time Hawthorne's earlier works were published; but among the reviewers Edgar Poe perhaps held the scales the highest. He at any rate rattled them the loudest, and pretended, more than any one else, to conduct the weighing-process on scientific principles.
Very remarkable was this process of Edgar Poe's, and very extraordinary were his principles; but he had the advantage of being a man of genius, and his intelligence was frequently great. His collection of critical sketches of the American writers flourishing in what M. Taine would call his milieu and moment, is very curious and interesting reading, and it has one quality which ought to keep it from ever being completely forgotten. It is probably the most complete and exquisite specimen of provincialism ever prepared for the edification of men. Poe's judgments are pretentious, spiteful, vulgar; but they contain a great deal of sense and discrimination as well, and here and there, sometimes at frequent intervals, we find a phrase of happy insight imbedded in a patch of the most fatuous pedantry. (Edel, Literary Criticism: Essays on . . . 367)

Three years earlier, in "Baudelaire," James recorded the trouble he felt in connection with Poe's influence on the French writer:

For American readers, furthermore, Baudelaire is compromised by his having made himself the apostle of our own Edgar Poe. He translated, very carefully and exactly, all of Poe's prose writings, and we believe, some of his very valueless verses. With all due respect to the very original genius of the author of "Tales of Mystery," it seems to us that to take him with more than a certain degree of seriousness is to lack seriousness one's self. An enthusiasm for Poe is the mark of a decidedly primitive stage of reflection. Baudelaire thought him a profound philosopher, the neglect of whose golden utterances stamped his native land with infamy. Nevertheless, Poe was vastly the greater charlatan of the two, as well as the greater genius. (Edel, Literary Criticism: French Writers . . . 154)

Even when we recall these strongly worded assessments, the specific exceptions that James takes to Poe's style remain the subject of guesswork until the 1909 appearance of the preface to the New York Edition's volume XVII, introducing The Altar of the Dead and Other Stories. Here James records his distaste for Poe's practice in "Arthur Gordon Pym" where Poe fashions a "would-be portentous climax" but fails to provide "the indispensable history" that follows from a Jamesian mediated point-of-view. James opines that, in Poe's story:

the phenomena evoked, the moving accidents, coming straight, as I say, are immediate and flat, and the attempt is all at the horrific in itself. The result is that, to my sense, the climax fails--fails because it stops short, and stops short for want of connexions. There are no connexions; not only, I mean, in the sense of further statement, but of our own further relation to the elements, which hang in the void: whereby we see the effect lost, the imaginative effort wasted. (The Art of the Novel 256-57)

James reveals, in this way, that his objection to Poe is rooted in his general distaste for the mere "platitude of statement" (The Art of the Novel 137), the "flat" omniscient narration that claims implicitly to inscribe the mysterious and uncanny as the straightforward. Readers of both authors may bicker with James's reading of Poe, yet his judgment remains an instructive intertext here: The Golden Bowl provides a macabre
with which he moves toward this zone mark him as a romantic as well. For if Maggie misunderstands the animation of history's perpetual conflicts, Amerigo misunderstands history's lively way of accessing the past and memorializing it, making it an active force. The Prince imagines himself approaching a stretch of notelessness like that on which James remarks in his preface and which he calls the "absolute," a region devoid of all marks, "almost beyond notation." It is also the vexed and ragged end of Kate Croy's family sentence in The Wings of the Dove: not the pure or purifying future which Amerigo seems to imagine, but the concentrated place-holder for all history's claims. In fact, James takes very important exception to the Prince's romantic fervour by writing that the zone, which the Prince nears, is only "almost beyond notation" (my emphasis).

Amerigo's desire for some "new history" (13) immediately harkens back to his earlier references to establish itself, defining chronology this way: "He liked in these days, to mark them off, the women to whom he hadn't made love: it represented—and that was what pleased him in it—a different stage of existence from the time at which he liked to mark off the women to whom he had" (17). With the arrival of Charlotte, the new history and the old collapse into one another. She is a woman to whom he made love and was unable to make love. Her return to presence disrupts the Prince's fascinated musings on the approach of salvation from history in the zone of the Ververs' absolute.

The incursion of the past into the present in the form of Charlotte makes Amerigo narrative of premature live burial not as a scientific Poe-like observation of the literal practice, but in richly meaningful Jamesian figural subtext. Our task will be to describe the manner in which this generically frightful tendency attaches to the novel's figuration of memory, the past, and history.
distinctly uneasy. Their little shopping trip together immediately tests his faith in the approach of absolute freedom that he imagines his imprisoning marriage represents. Amerigo's presumptions, of course, rest on the idea that the past is completely over and done with because it is passed. He does not, until Charlotte makes him, acknowledge the constructive force of history and memory in the present and future. The past, by which I mean a version of the irretrievable, Charlotte shows, is always available via history's inexorable operation. Charlotte herself is that historical force for the Prince. James marks the moment of Amerigo's recognition of this fact as a kind of pause, a postponement to delay not the future but the aggressive onset of the past:

... what had made him, while they stood at the top of the stairs, demur just long enough for her to notice it--was the sense of the resemblance of the little plan before him to occasions, of the past, from which he was quite disconnected, from which he could only desire to be. This was like beginning something over, which was the last thing he wanted. The strength, the beauty of his actual position was in its being wholly a fresh start, was that what it began would be new altogether. These items of his consciousness had clustered so quickly that by the time Charlotte read them in his face he was in presence of what they amounted to. (71)

That curious phrase in the middle of this passage, "from which he was quite disconnected, from which he could only desire to be," only seems clarified by the comparatively more straightforward claims of the following sentences. They suggest that the Prince is disconnected from the past and, given his circumstances, such sundering is in complete accord with his wishes. If this is the proper reading, we are faced with the discordant
implication that Amerigo is just as he desires to be: an observation that James carefully rejects everywhere else we look. There is another, an alternative better reading that asks whether the Prince is indeed detached or only desirous of such disjunction. In this way, James underscores the difference between the faithful novelty that constitutes the Prince's fondest hopes and legated attachment to the past through the ongoing dynamism of its inexorable history. Amerigo cannot disengage the past but can only desire to. By describing the Prince's desire as what he could "only" do, James suggests that the Prince's hope is a kind of imperative, that he is incapable of anything else. This reading squares far more agreeably with Amerigo's characterization as the resistance to the claims of history. In his urgent need to view his circumstances as "new," Amerigo "has on the spot clutched, in the light of this truth, at the happy principle that would meet every case" (71). Despite this enthusiastic solution, the novelty of his situation is based on a falsehood that taints its, that makes it only almost new. Amerigo's hopeful claims of newness mask a secret and efface the past that stands right in front of him in Charlotte. All newness is, then, defined against that denied past, that secret story. Everything in the present refers to that secret past and is its history. The denial emphasizes the point. The desire to be disconnected removes any possibility of severance. Finally, Amerigo's shopping excursion with Charlotte is itself a secret congruent to the hidden connection they share, a connection Amerigo happily buries alive in this passage.

It is important to distinguish Charlotte's role as not that of the past, but of history in this scene. Charlotte's presence performs an historical function for Amerigo. He appreciates her presence as the visitation of his history. At least initially, James does not
allow Charlotte more agency than this. She is a walking referent to Amerigo's past, a ghost. Significantly, James makes this linkage between Charlotte and Amerigo when he calls them "so irretrievably contemporaneous" (35) and, until Maggie begins to pity her much later, Charlotte remains a subordinate figure of Amerigo's history:

... it was, strangely, as a cluster of possessions of his own that these things, in Charlotte Stant, now affected him; items in a full list, items recognised, each of them as if, for the long interval, they had been 'stored'—wrapped up, numbered, put away in a cabinet. While she faced Mrs Assingham the door of the cabinet had opened of itself; he took the relics out, one by one, and it was more and more, each instant, as if she were giving him time. (35)

Already, then, before their shopping trip, Charlotte figures for the Prince as an object allegory. By patiently waiting while Amerigo accommodates himself to her sudden arrival, Charlotte allows him a moment to steady himself.42 She also gives him time by constituting its force. Charlotte's presence and Amerigo's presence, suddenly thrust together, James calls them "irretrievably contemporaneous" (35), can only be understood by the method that the Prince selects: "to interpret them in the sense of the already known" (35). Amerigo interprets Charlotte as the fulfillment of some unexpected

42 In "The Time of the King" (Given Time 1-33), Derrida also begins by understanding the gift of time as a metonymic substitution for some other thing:

... how can a time belong? What is it to have time? If a time belongs, it is because the word time designates metonymically less time itself than the things with which one fills it, with which one fills the form of time, time as form . . . . as time does not belong to anyone as such, one can no more take it, itself, than give it . . . . one can only exchange, one can only take or give, by way of metonymy, what is in time. (3)
promissory note "in which the present of the promise is always a past with regard to its realization" (de Man, Allegories 273): her presence generates, for the Prince, a sense of their irretrievable past, but this sense is only the force of the disjunction between the present and the past which is time itself.

With the gift she seeks, Charlotte intends a gesture reiterative of history, a memorial to their shopping trip itself and, since their shopping also quickly becomes a memorial allusion to the attachment between the pair that Fanny is pleased to call "nothing," a kind of revivified history, a reference to the manifold web of historical associations from which Amerigo yearns for release. In this way, Charlotte intends a memento that will always be functional, always countering the Prince's urge for a clean slate. It will be a hex: "'What I want is that it shall always be with you--so that you'll never be able quite to get rid of it--that I did'" (73). According to Charlotte's explanation, the object, the gift they finally fail to buy, is merely a sign of her wanting to give it. This is what she means by "that I did." However, this is also what makes the gift impossible: a gift is "that which interrupts economy . . . . that which, in suspending

43 Holland remarks that "[s]he wants to instill in him the inescapable memory of her presence" (344). Cameron finds that "the conversation points to the novel's paradigmatic action: one character's attempt to prescribe meanings for another, to assume responsibility for reference so that he doesn't need to or so that he isn't able to" (Thinking 92).

44 Derrida explains that the gift is deployed, "to constitute its own unity and, precisely, to get its own identity recognized so that identity comes back to it, so that it can reappropriate its identity: as its property (Given Time 11).
economic calculation, no longer gives rise to exchange" (Derrida, *Given Time* 7).\(^4\) By wanting something in return, indeed by being explicitly motivated by her own want, Charlotte actively corrupts the idea of gift.

As they fail to find a gift for Charlotte to give to Maggie, Amerigo suggests that he give Charlotte something to memorialize their little hunt. In the exchange that marks this shift in purpose, James's vocabulary directs us to Fanny's much hoped-for "nothing."

Charlotte and Amerigo's intercourse places weight on the concept of "nothing" that, through their consideration of the possibility of memorializing that non-quantity, reveals its profound substantiality. Amerigo begins:

'Well, why not—as a small ricordo?'

'But a ricordo of what?'

'Why, of "this"—as you yourself say. Of this little hunt.'

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\(^4\) This is the essential distinction between gift and commerce: For there to be a gift, there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, countergift, or debt. If the other gives me back or owes me or has to give me back what I give him or her, there will not have been a gift, whether this restitution is immediate or whether it is programmed by a complex calculation of long-term deferral or difference. (*Given Time* 12)

When Charlotte prohibits the Prince's offer of a countergift, she reveals her understanding of the definition of gift and suggests that, before this turn of events, her own real goal had never been to give a gift, but only and wittingly to secure an obligation: "to pay [her]self with a symbolic recognition" (*Given Time* 14, 27).

We can oppose the conduct of Charlotte and Amerigo in this scene with that of Charles Gould and the future Mrs. Gould in Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo* (1904): The two young people had met in Lucca. After that meeting Charles Gould visited no mines, though they went together in a carriage, once, to see some marble quarries, where the work resembled mining in so far that it also was the tearing of the raw material of treasure from the earth. Charles Gould did not open his heart to her in any set speeches. He simply went on acting and thinking in her sight. This is the true method of sincerity. (81)
'Oh, I say it—but hasn't my whole point been that I don't ask you to.
Therefore,' she demanded—but smiling at him now—'where's the logic?'

'Oh, the logic—!' he laughed.

'But logic's everything. That, at least, is how I feel it. A ricordo from you-
-from you to me—is a ricordo of nothing. It has no reference.' (81)

The potential gift, as yet itself nothing other than the vague promise of an eventual
something, would be the ricordo of another linked nothing; it would memorialize only the
hunt for the gift itself which, until this moment, they both seem committed to interpret as
nothing in itself. This is why Charlotte rejects the Prince's proposal; she does not need to
further her sense of obligation to him by accepting a gift. Her devotion to Amerigo is
already at its highest pitch and requires his submission to it; Charlotte needs Amerigo to
succumb to obligation. Furthermore, if the Prince's gift has, as she says, "no reference,"
her acceptance of it would constitute a capitulation and a farewell: the precise opposite of
what she intends. Ironically, Charlotte interprets the Prince's seemingly generous
proposal as a kind of cruel snub. However, we know that the hunt makes Amerigo think
of "occasions, of the past, from which he was quite disconnected, from which he could
only desire to be." For this reason, a ricordo of the little hunt is, by extension, a
reference to the excursion's role as a powerful trace of the past, as history. This is why
Amerigo turns down Charlotte's counter-proposal that she give him something.

Furthermore, the ricordo is history concretized as a thing. James validates this
observation by having Amerigo refer to the possibility of a gift as a ricordo, a record. For
this reason, it is certainly apt that the gift is called "impossible" (83) for the substantial
"nothing" to which the shoppers refer is, in its impossibility, an accurate record of Charlotte and Amerigo's Roman discovery of the impossibility of any future together.

The gift remains, of course, unfound and ungiven. In the phenomenal sense, the literal gift is nonexistent; it remains an impossible and unfulfilled fantasy. Nevertheless, in James's narrative world, the gift achieves precise dimensions and distinct value in Amerigo and Charlotte's prospective conversation about it and its impossibility.46

The gift to which the pair refer is and is not the golden bowl. On the literal level, Amerigo and Charlotte do not, after all, purchase the bowl. It would seem for this very basic reason that the bowl does not fulfill their hope to discover an apt gift. But, even on the simple level of plot, the bowl does satisfy their desires just because it is not given, because it does not serve. If the golden bowl does not become a literal gift, it does become an allegory of everything that leads up to and follows from the couple's impulse to exchange a memento.47 James clearly marks the bowl as the thing that Amerigo and

46 They are not, after all, able to forget absolutely the impossibility of the gift and are obliged, therefore, to remember the exchange that serves in its stead (Derrida, Given Time 16). On the gift and forgetting, see Given Time 16-19, 23.

47 The bowl, in this way, constitutes the kind of absent center to which Francis Fergusson responds when he writes: "... the Bowl plays its part in the plot; it is a piece of loot-of-empire influencing the different characters in different ways. To rationalize it more than this would be to try to do what James, for his reasons, carefully refrained from doing" (1934: 413). Despite Fergusson's conclusion here, the responsibility of James's readers to account for the bowl's force is hardly excused by James's non-provision of explicit clarification; it is demanded by it. Derrida judges that "[t]he gift itself—we dare not say the gift in itself—will never be confused with the presence of its phenomenon" (Given Time 29). In rejection of Fergusson's claim, we must agree with Derrida that "[e]ven if the gift were never anything but a simulacrum, one must still render an account of the possibility of this simulacrum and of the desire that impels toward this simulacrum" (Given Time 31).
Charlotte do not give to one another, an account of the pretext of which they cannot give anyone else.

Despite their arguments, the gift is neither impossible nor illogical. Its possibility resides in its referentiality as an unfulfilled potential, as an unattainable future, as a nothing that is not nothing but rather the couple's romance or tragedy. The gift cannot point to an accomplishment—a betrothal, an anniversary, a renunciation even—but it does, especially in their failure to purchase it, allegorize the narrative force of a non-accomplishment. The logic of the gift follows from this particular kind of possibility.

Amerigo's rejection of Charlotte's offer of a gift, dwelling as it falsely does on such a gift's lack of memorial reference, helps the reader discern a kind of reason at work. The Prince seems to suggest that he and Charlotte share no past and that the effort to memorialize one is merely absurd. Clearly we know that Amerigo does not intend his remarks to be read as so cruelly dishonest. He may, on the other hand, suggest that the history he and Charlotte share is one of nothing, of failed hopes and unfulfilled expectations, and that, as such, it is as nothing, but a very pregnant nothing. To memorialize their stillborn attempt at life together would be to lend that failed effort an existence in memory, a gesture that Amerigo finds unreasonable. Certainly, there is a logic to this reading, but it defies phenomenal reason in which death does not yield life. In recognition, then, of the real allure of the logic of any gift-giving gesture, Amerigo

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48 On the point of the possibility of memorializing impossibility, Gasché asks, "are 'trace', 'differance', and all those notions that I have called 'infrastructures' conditions of possibility to begin with? Not only are they older 'in a certain and very strange way' . . . but they are . . . at the same time conditions of impossibility" (Derrida, Margins of Philosophy 22 qtd. in Gasché, Inventions 4).
resorts to an exertion of power. He defines reality as counter to that which would sanction such a gesture and does so in a pattern of phrases that ironically recapitulates their historical failure on the level of dialogue:

'Would you allow me--?'

'No,' said the Prince into his little box.

'You wouldn't accept it from me?'

'No,' he repeated in the same way.

She exhaled a long breath that was like a guarded sigh. 'But you've touched an idea that has been mine. It's what I've wanted.' Then she added: 'It was what I hoped.' (82)

Amerigo's repeated present refusals are themselves a memorial relic of the frustration of past hopes. In this way, the very performance of their little hunt is already the ricordo that the Prince thinks he can deny by refusing Charlotte's gift. James confirms that the couple's manner of dialogue is properly read as itself a memorial ricordo by allowing them the important, and insufficiently private, affectation of Italian banter.49 He also writes of their intimately shared manner: "They had between them often in talk the

49 This point reintroduces the question of translation. During their shopping trip, chatting to one another in Italian seems, quite simply, to revivify their past. They speak to each other in the language that saw them to the unhappy end of their original association. But their Italian is itself only a ricordo that, by striving to recapture its original use, stubbornly estranges the Prince and Charlotte from it, expressing genesis as nostalgia. In turn, we also know, that "the original text is always already an impossible translation" (Johnson, "Taking Fidelity" 146), that the idealized past to which their Italian cannot take them is the time of their abysmal failure and not the jubilant era that their nostalgia requires it, through translation, to be. On nostalgia's role in this operation, see Derrida Given Time 7.
restrain, jocosely, descriptively applied, of 'old Roman'. It had been, as a pleasantry, in the other time, his explanation to her of everything" (83). Their hunt has happened and, by necessity, it serves in lieu of any physical gift as a gift. Furthermore, it has been witnessed by the odd little shopkeeper and is itself a kind of document. Finally, it is allegorized by the bowl which they do not buy.

James asks that we understand the gift that is not given as a gift nonetheless. Though not an object of exchange between the Prince and Charlotte, without a physical presence, the non-transaction they finally pursue generates its own references and yields its own trace. In this sense it is a document. Because it is a document, because it has the productive energy of a ricordo, their aborted shopping trip does not script a preclusive narrative; it does not tell a dead story of final failure. Instead, it continues to testify to their little romance or tragedy. Unfulfilled, their little hunt fosters the same kind of suspense or portent as the Croy family sentence which hangs unfinished. That the hunt is preserved for future reference is, of course, a crucial detail for the accomplishment of James's plot, which hinges on the remarkably improbable coincidence that allows Maggie's discovery of it. The failed hunt, like the failed future Charlotte and Amerigo discover together in their Roman past, continues to tell.

Readers have seen the golden bowl, which cannot be conflated with the unpurchased gift, as the object reflection of Charlotte's and Amerigo's faithlessness, its

50 This aspect of Jamesian figuration, in which a non-object achieves the stature of a figure, receives its best consideration in Sprinker's "Monument and Organism: Henry James and the Ideology of Art," especially pages 40-49 in which he identifies the trouble with the impulse to ground "the stability of its interpretation in an intuition" (42), "a stable thematic entity whose phenomenality is never finally in doubt" (43).
subsurface fissure as physical evidence of their deceit and of the imperfection of Maggie's happy plan, as a symbol, in short, of "the breakdown of social relations that have been sustained by deception, but . . . also . . . the story of how social equilibrium and moral harmony are restored by facing the necessity for lying. The bowl symbolizes aesthetic reintegration of a social reality shattered by a destructive consciousness aware of the fissured substance of truth" (Sprinker, "Monument" 50-51). Yet this is only the most obvious and least instructive of its functions. To see the bowl this way is to subordinate it, to make it the untroubled reflection of the novel's infidelity plot.

Literally, the bowl memorializes the past as a physical remnant that survives from the past. Furthermore, the bowl constitutes James's figuration of the ongoing operative force of the past as memento. The bowl, because it is a container, would seem to hold the past in its precious basin. In this way, the walls of the bowl would be the physical analogon to the function of memory; they contain, without spillage, the stuff of the past.

Yet James does not provide such simple perfection. Though its capacious form may seem to secure its reliability as an ample container, its concealed fissure jeopardizes any confidence that memory merely preserves the past. The bowl, with its crack, figures

51 Sprinker admires Blackmur's eloquence but questions his inclination to read the bowl this way and, by extension, to see Maggie's "'holding together' the fragments of the shattered bowl . . . [as] the very type of the 'poetic symbol'" for facing down Charlotte and Amerigo's infidelity with a kind of "formal integrity" (Sprinker, "Monument" 53). Indeed, Sprinker shows that, late in Blackmur's career, he questioned the inclination himself. Sprinker shows Blackmur shifts: "[h]is 1963 introduction to The Golden Bowl exactly reverses his 1952 judgment on the novel. No longer is the sacrifice of truth compensated for in the embrace of the beautiful" (Sprinker, "Monument" 53). Yet "Blackmur's reversal of the valence of James's aesthetics does not, however, elude the power of aesthetic formalization, which continues to govern Blackmur's conception of James's fiction and the ideology it incarnates" (53).
memory. The crack has a double implication. It suggests that the past for which the bowl stands as a memorial is itself somehow imperfect. This is the reading favoured by those who see the artifact as an emblem for Charlotte’s and Amerigo’s failed romance. Reading along these lines presumes that a fulfilled romance, a happy match between the Prince and Charlotte, would yield a flawless crystal. But James gives no warrant to abandon the bowl upon reading it this way. Because the bowl is a memorial we cannot conclude with any surety that it recollects a past failure. It does not provide untroubled access to a past in which we discover its crack rendered as the performance of Amerigo and Charlotte’s miserable renunciation. Rather the bowl’s distinct features underscore memory’s frailty; with the crack James stresses the trouble with accessing the past, not the disquiet we might find there. The physicality of the flaw, the fact that it survives, as part of the bowl, from the past into the present as a literal remnant suggests that the structure of memory remains constant over time, inevitably troubling any clear discernibility of the past. Ironically, the way in which we would conclude the static structure of memory itself relies on the flawed crystal of the memorial. In this way, the bowl with its crack is precisely the preservative and productive force, of which the little hunt partakes and for which it stands as a ricordo. James refers to the allegorical force of the bowl and its crack in the series of documentary figures that follow.

When, many pages later, Charlotte daringly offers her husband-to-be the opportunity to read the telegraphic message sent by Amerigo in response to their nuptial hopes, Adam refuses his attention, asking, "Is it funny?" (178) This remark links the unread telegram, Charlotte’s document, back to Charlotte and Amerigo’s unfulfilled
shopping excursion because funniness is precisely the quality that Charlotte hopes to achieve in her gift to Maggie. Charlotte begins the little hunt with the Prince by explaining that because she cannot financially afford an expensive wedding present, hers will have to have a funniness. Charlotte first attaches the adjective "funny" to the thing sought. For Charlotte, funny means "some little thing with a charm. But absolutely right in its comparative cheapness" (69). By saying this, Charlotte complicates her reference considerably. "Funny" is not a quality of the thing in itself. Instead, "funny" is equated with a comparative value that suggests its ironic, uncanny, and allegorical dimensions. "Funny" is ironic because, though cheap, it is absolutely right in its cheapness. "Funny" is uncanny because the cheap thing's paltriness is precisely what allows it to pay out richly in rightness. It is allegorical because, though a scant label, it pays out in so complicated a fashion; the adjective recapitulates the story that, long before Maggie's discovery of the bowl to which it comes to refer, records a past from which Amerigo could only desire to be disconnected.

After determining her plan to find something funny for Maggie, Charlotte finds another, totally separate and crucial way of using the adjective. She recalls her shopping with Amerigo in Rome and his remarkable skill for "beating down" (69), for haggling. The Prince is dispirited by alien British consumer practice which limits his opportunity for such bargaining. In the difference between British and Italian shopping rituals, and between their present and their past, Charlotte discovers her other reference. In response to Amerigo's feeling of alienation in Britain, Charlotte says, "[o]ur amusement here is just that they don't understand us. We can make it amusing. You'll see" (70). Suddenly,
Charlotte refers not to her gift for Maggie but to her shared past with Amerigo. Amerigo confirms this important shift: "The amusement surely will be to find our present" (70). In this way, what is funny, charming, and absolutely right is their search. The thing they find will not fail to be funny, but its funniness and its absolute rightness will derive from its reference to their attachment.

Charlotte and Amerigo's attachment is figured by Charlotte in this section as amusing by virtue of its invisibility or inscrutability. The fun that she and Amerigo will share in finding her gift is equal to the London merchant's failure to understand them. So, the funniness of their hunt is concretized in the funniness of a sought object that is the funniness of their conjoined inscrutability, the thrill of their secret pairing. Yet, "concretized" is perhaps an overstatement because, importantly, the sought object is not found, and the thrill issues its trace on the surface of nothing.

When Adam asks after the telegram he revivifies James's earlier precise vocabulary. The telegram is funny because it is an object allegory that refers to Charlotte and Amerigo's attachment. It does so explicitly, as a telegram from him to her, as well as secretly, as a telegram with unspecified contents. The enigma of its message magnifies its resonance as a result of its silence in much the same way as do those supremely concentrated notes of the Croy family sentence. It all but goes without saying that the non-message functions as another reference to the nothing that is their legacy.

Charlotte explains that the telegram is not funny by calling it "'grave . . . . very grave'" (178). However, this translation does not efface the earlier use of "funny." More than a literal report of the physical telegram itself, Charlotte's reading, her interpretation
of it, is a grim ricordo of her delightful earlier use of "funny" and an interpretive second reading of the idea of that adjective. Charlotte calls "funny" "grave." Nevertheless, the telegram is still funny by virtue of Charlotte's impulse to hide it crumpled in the pocket of her coat. It becomes, through this action, a memorial of secretion and duplicity even though she offers it for Adam's reading.

James calls it a "document," "her document," but what does the telegram document? It is tempting to project a conclusive reading onto it, to assume that had Adam read it, he would have evidence of Charlotte and Amerigo's guilty association, that it is an implication of adultery. However, it is unread by Adam and can only be a document of his failure to read it and of Charlotte's eagerness to crumple it once he has freely opted for ignorance of its contents. The telegram is a sign of a rupture between appearances and truth, between versions of history.52

Adam's decision not to read it may deny him a kind of knowledge, but the document remains functional as a document. It documents Adam's apparent naïveté, his potential innocent ignorance. Alternatively, it also suggests his distaste for confrontation with anything with which his romantic American fancy does not find congruence: a characteristic James already associates with Adam when he has him imagine the mounting of his fortune as the "scaling [of] his vertiginous Peak" (105-6). Adam

52 Those multiple versions are not resolved when James discloses the contents of the telegram. It begins in French and ends in English: "A la guerre comme à la guerre then . . . . We must lead our lives as we see them; but I am charmed with your courage and almost surprised at my own" (212). Moreover, as Holland points out, "[e]ven two years later Charlotte cannot resolve with certainty the ambiguities of the treasured telegram" (365), the text "reserved for no eyes but her own" (212).
imagines that he approaches his "eminence" as did Cortez. He allows the "historic fact" that the explorer mounted his Peak without the company of ladies "to determine his inference" (106), that with one he risks "the wilderness of mere mistakes" (105). However, for his fanciful notion of himself, Adam depends on the romance of Keats's sonnet "On first looking into Chapman's Homer" and not on historical fact. The first European to gaze on the Pacific was not Hernando Cortés, but Vasco Nuñez de Balboa.\footnote{Furthermore, Balboa was not silent on that peak, but was reported to have exclaimed, "Hombre!" (Drabble 61)}

In any case, we must trouble less over what specific information Adam opts to forego. James insists, of course, that his readers forego the same information in any form other than its most potent one: its tantalizing absence from view. The non-information of the telegram is the certain indication of another opportunity unfulfilled and, hence, an ironic figure for Charlotte's own past. The telegram is a document of an attachment between Amerigo and Charlotte not because its text lays such a relationship out in the mere platitude of statement but because it is undisclosed. Just as the husband of Madame Merle would be likely to be dead, Charlotte is the sort of fiancée likely to have a crumpled telegram in her pocket. It memorializes a rupture even as it is stored away. It provides future reference even though it is never referred to explicitly again. To call it "grave" is to acknowledge its potency as well as to suggest its burial. Indeed, the telegram is a center of gravity. It is a non-articulation around which all James's action moves. It stands for a past attachment without speaking in the present, seemingly without becoming history because it is unspoken. Yet it serves as an allegory that is history.
Having extended her urgent call for Fanny's attendance, Maggie expands upon Charlotte's earlier use of "funny" to describe the oddly productive energy of the basest goods: both their ironic ability to yield meaning and their uncanny power to tell because of their seeming paltriness of speech. Maggie also calls this meaningful energy "fun" (413). More precisely, Maggie takes ease, finds fun, in not needing to worry about finding, for her father's birthday, anything but a "foredoomed aberration" (413) free from valuation on the same scale as his many treasures. Yet, the fun does not really depend on freedom; it finds its worth in tight relation with the scale of value to which it does not need to comply. The more it strays from that standard, "the more it showed, and the more one cherished it for showing, how friendly it had been" (413). James assigns a whole other class of evaluative principles for Maggie's shopping: "The infirmity of art was the candour of affection, the grossness of pedigree the refinement of sympathy; the ugliest objects, in fact, as a general thing, were the bravest, the tenderest mementoes" (413). Here each pairing apposes an apparent lack with its antidote: infirmity with candour, grossness with refinement, and ugliness with bravery or tenderness. More than this, James pairs art with affection, pedigree with sympathy, and objects with memory. The rhythm of the language with which James describes the system of Maggie's shopping establishes a link that elevates this passage to the level of doctrine. It recalls the stirring final lines of James's preface to the novel: "art is nothing if not exemplary, care nothing if not active, finish nothing if not consistent, the proved error is the base apologetic deed.

54 Holland notes the connection between the vocabulary Charlotte brings to her search for a wedding present and Maggie's when seeking out a birthday gift (347).
the helpless regret is the barren commentary, and 'connections' are employable for finer purposes than mere gaping contrition" (The Art of the Novel 348). If we can call this an echo, considering the fact that the preface was written after the novel and the novel reconsidered in light of the preface, it signals the ideological grandeur of the scene that follows.

The fun in shopping for her father's birthday present is that, in the choosing and then in the giving, the gift obtains its value. The degree of its value is relative only to the memory of its intent. In this way, fun is exactly the difference between the thing's status as a material object and as a sign with meaning. The gift given is as much a sign of the giver's candour, refinement, bravery, and tenderness as it is a memento of their desire that it be so. Also, the gift must memorialize the idea that its object's meanings do not inhere natively in it but are applied to or read onto it. In this way, "fun" is a kind of contract. Between Maggie and Adam, that contract tacitly specifies the agreement that the past will only present itself as one attractive history. The gift is the proof of this history and its relic. Yet, Maggie's expectation of fun—of infirmity's suggestion only of candour, of grossness's imputation only of refinement, of ugliness's intimation only of bravery and tenderness—does not prepare her for any dissonance. Yet, precisely because she is unprepared for dissonance, one would expect Maggie to be struck by the string of oppositions her contract details. She allows dissonance to be consonance and requires, in this way, that ugliness never be ugliness.

55 This is, as Derrida shows, precisely what keeps the gift from being a gift. See my consideration of Charlotte and Amerigo's shopping trip on pages 249 and following above.
The golden bowl supplants the Louis-Seize clock which Maggie moves to accommodate the bowl's central position above the fireplace. Before James details any discovery that Maggie makes in connection with the bowl, it already supplants the clock as a gauge of time. Maggie purchases the bowl in accordance with the contract for fun that she has always enjoyed with her father. The familiarity of the ritual may seem to sap it of temporality: it has always been like this and she is unprepared for any surprising novelty. In this way, it is difficult even to claim that Maggie and Adam submit to a contract. They do, but without realizing it. The bowl, in the fullness of its implication, describes a gulf between Maggie's presumption of happy synchronicity and a secret truth; the distance is time and the bowl its measure. As Charlotte and the Prince make clear, the bowl, their own non-purchase and the non-physical gift that they do exchange, is "the pretext" (83) for which they cannot give an account to the Ververs and the existence of which Maggie never suspected. The bowl itself signals the rupture that is, though hidden, its chief feature. The relationship between the flaw and the bowl is synecdochic. Furthermore, the crack in the bowl announces the bowl's meaning because it is hidden. The flaw is concealed, buried, yet fully functional, richly referential of the activity of the secret history with which Maggie finds herself confronted for the first time once she is in possession of the object. The flaw's concealment is a necessary aspect for James's purpose: it testifies to the lively enigma of history supplanting Maggie's romantic faith in the absolute death of the past.

The bowl does more than set out a difference between Maggie's notion of things and another accounting which takes precedence over hers because it antedates it. The
bowl does document such a difference and, by so doing, it is a timepiece that measures out units not of seconds or minutes or hours, but of degrees of alarmed alienation from truth. In addition to documenting the remove of such truth—of what Charlotte and Amerigo call pretext—the bowl constitutes that pretext allegorically.

The bowl functions deictically and allegorically. It points to a meaning and it embodies a meaning. Moreover, its allegorical meaning is doubled because that meaning is the pretext's operative force—the activity of history in the present and the future—and the impossibility of that pretext's presence—the literal irretrievability of the past of which it is a trace, a memory. The bowl is a relic of Amerigo's and Charlotte's pretext in every sense of the word: it is a physical remnant of their collusion, a piece of that true cross, and it refers abstractly to the fact of their association.

Interestingly, James employs the word "relic" a scant three times in the course of a novel so concerned with memorials to and monuments of the past. Charlotte's surprising arrival at Cadogan Place prompts the Prince to imagine himself taking long wrapped-up relics out of a previously sealed cabinet. Adam Verver, uncharacteristically alone and enjoying his solitude in the first pages of Part Second at Fawns, treasures his momentary isolation, "his portion not to feel himself surrounded and committed," and "the blessed impersonal whiteness for which his vision sometimes ached" (93). James allows Adam the odd pleasure of "making believe that he had no conscience, or at least that blankness, in the field of duty, did reign for an hour" (93). Adam passes that rare time indulging himself:

[with a] quaintness . . . involved in the preservation by an adult of one of
childhood's toys. When he took a rare moment 'off', he did so with the touching, confessing eyes of a man of forty-seven caught in the act of handling a relic of infancy—sticking on the head of a broken soldier or trying the lock of a wooden gun. It was essentially, in him, the \textit{imitation} of depravity—which, for amusement, as might have been, he practised 'keeping up'. (93)

Amid the busy world of colourful obligation, Adam occasionally finds respite in a fantasy, at least, of the kind of blank field of white that James reintroduces in his preface as the zone of the absolute.\footnote{Here, the white field that has not received any footprint, any marking, is infancy which means the "inability to speak" (OED 1426). On this image see Miller, \textit{Ethics} 114 and following and Sprinker's revision of Miller in "Monument."} It is during this childlike play time that Adam acts as though caught fingering his relics. The broken-headed soldier and the toy gun are images of impotence, certainly. His playthings are martial referents, but sadly ineffectual.\footnote{The scene, that James emphatically calls an "imitation of depravity" does seem to have a sexual dimension: a scene of pretended masturbation. Nevertheless, the frailty of Adam's activity is truly his powerlessness to find life in the relics he fingers. The past, to which they refer as relics, does not respond to his manipulation unless we can see their failure to respond as a kind of success, as the seeming absolute death of the past in the wealthy man's hands.} His "artlessly-artful interludes" (93) try to revivify a faith in the liveliness of relics that his enthusiasm for the activity suggests characterized his early youth. Still, in Adam's present at Fawns, the relics memorialize the "charm of the pathetic" (93). Without adequate time, the connoisseur's passion devolves into the necrophiliac's obsession. For this reason, Adam's interlude is also a scene of mourning for the liveliness of his things. James preserves what Adam thinks and what he knows as an enigma, and Verver's treasured
moment is typical in that it prompts more questions than it answers. Consider the following passage which comes directly after Adam's figural toying with his infantile relics:

The greatest of wonders, moreover, was exactly in this, that so interrupted a man should ever have got, as the phrase was, should above all have got so early, to where he was. It argued a special genius; he was clearly a case of that. The spark of fire, the point of light, sat somewhere in his inward vagueness as a lamp before a shrine twinkles in the dark perspective of a church; and while youth and early middle age, while the stiff American breeze of example and opportunity were blowing upon it hard, had made of the chamber of his brain a strange workshop of fortune. This establishment, mysterious and almost anonymous, the windows of which, at hours of highest pressure, never seemed, for starers and wonderers, perceptibly to glow, must in fact have been during certain years the scene of an unprecedented, a miraculous white-heat, the receipt for producing which it was practically felt that the master of the forge could not have communicated even with the best intentions. (93-94)

While this commentary surely indicates the keen industry of Adam's purpose, it also renders inexorably hidden the specific engine that works the wonder of his affluence. Adam's urge to seek, however ineffectually, a kind of communion with the freedom of his past through the relics he handles in his private moments serves as James's compelling suggestion that such grasping at the past is the energy that drives Adam's acquisitive machine. If, as Miller notes, "[p]utting things into words . . . is an act of memory" (Ethics
105), then James allows us to find Adam Verver seeking mystical communion, unmodulated by memory, with an irretrievable past of unutterable allure. Adam's workshop, if this is the implication, witnesses only his pathetic simulacrum of memory in which the rigorously assembled relics of the past only memorialize his present impotent begging of them to reinstate the past. Of course, they cannot do anything of the sort, but only memorialize his sad but glorious history of regret. On the level of the sentence's vocabulary, James underscores the idea that, despite his vast material wealth, Adam's true goal eludes him. Adam's solitary compulsion is merely an imitation of the quest to repossess himself of an imagined past freedom. James himself lays stress on the distance that "imitation" puts between Adam's performance and its goal. That goal, furthermore, itself vanishes even as James refers to it. While the trajectory of James's characterization of Adam, in this passage, leads his reader to expect the American's imitation to be "of innocence" or "of liberty," the formulation even precludes the inscription of those impossible desires, calling them "depravity," and obliterating even the opportunity to call his fondest hope—his deprivation—anything but the name of perverse corruption.

The third use of relic is Fanny's reference to the cross that Maggie wears concealed against her skin. The fact that Maggie possesses a hidden relic, congruent in its description to the subcutaneous fracture in the golden bowl itself—down to the fact that, though made of silver, Fanny calls it Maggie's "golden, personal nature" (381)—makes clear that the bowl does not merely serve as an emblem for Charlotte's and Amerigo's infidelity, but as an allegory of history with lessons for all its handlers. The cross that she wears against her skin signals Maggie's single self and is at odds with her
other, public self. Fanny concludes that Maggie, in hiding it, has been too modest to share herself fully. However, the pendant's presence, under her clothes and against her skin, suggests that Maggie's misapprehensions, about her husband and about history, are also very personal folly: a failure to know her own most intimate self.

The golden bowl allegorizes each of these instances of "relic." It is a literal kind of remainder because it was with Charlotte and Amerigo on their little hunt. The OED notes five sense for the word relic. The first three identify the relic as the physical survival of something old from the past into the present. It emerges into Maggie's ownership from the unsealed cabinet of that past. Furthermore, the OED's fourth and fifth sense for relic are as follows: "A surviving trace of some practice, fact, idea, quality . . . . An object invested with interest by reason of its antiquity or association with the past" (2480). In accordance with this part of the definition, the bowl corresponds to Amerigo's and Charlotte's ungiven gift while it also cannot be that gift. It embodies the precious past and, in its flaw, testifies to that past's inevitable irretrievability or inaccessibility as past, as the unreconstructed original source, and to the present working, the operation of memory, the fractured series of versions that can only stand in relation to the past as its simulacrum. And it recalls Maggie's own relic of her true self.

The particular value that the golden bowl is able to represent for Maggie, the real basis of its suggestiveness of wealth and amplitude, is generated by the rupture that it conceals. The rupture, the reference to the inevitable remoteness of truth, may be buried just as characters may efface the inexorable espacement of time, but it is not absolutely dead: it tells, it narrates or inspires history. Many pages before Maggie's fateful
afternoon with Mr. Crichton at the Museum and her subsequent shopping stroll through the "funny little fascinating' places" (412) of Bloomsbury, Maggie encounters Amerigo through an important manner of Jamesian figuration that foreshadows her later interrogation of the bowl, in the same way that Isabel Archer's famous vigil greatly precedes the Countess Gemini's revelations.

After the Prince's time away with Charlotte at Matcham, the Princess notes a change in her relationship with her husband and initiates an experiment. She resolves to spend more time with Amerigo and Charlotte, and this provokes her revelation of their collusion that is only validated by the bowl later on. Days after Amerigo's return from Matcham, Maggie observes:

... he had stood there before her as if restored from some far country, some long voyage, some combination of dangers or fatigues. This unquenchable variety in his appeal to her interest, what did it mean but that—reduced to the flatness of mere statement—she was married, by good fortune, to an altogether dazzling person? That was an old, old story, but the truth of it shone out to her like the beauty of some family picture, some mellow portrait of an ancestor, that she might have been looking at, almost in surprise, after a long intermission. (313)

Maggie considers her husband's presence as that of a returned voyager. In this way, her musings recall all the implications that cluster about Amerigo's name. If earlier Maggie was drawn to the Prince's name, here his presence figures as an appeal to her interest. He has come to embody his name and to perform, to her imagination, its romantic implications of discovery. For Maggie, he personifies the name's implications. It is in
this way that he dazzles his wife. As an image of himself, and not as himself, he shines with a blinding brilliance and baffles any effort really to discern him. Maggie acknowledges that the rhetorical nature of this account of Amerigo’s appeal is "an old, old story." Yet, in observing this, she does not suggest that somehow its antiquity argues against its force. For Maggie, the dazzling light is the same thing as truth. The truth of her story of his appeal "shone out to her like the beauty of some family picture." The light that dazzles is also the truth that shines. It is aestheticized: a sensual, visual, and visible truth. 58 In another Jamesian homage to Keats, for Maggie the glamour of truth is like beauty. The truth of the old story is like an old picture of an ancestor, a familiar representation of a well-known subject. James’s first dissonant remark comes when he writes on Maggie’s behalf that the effect of looking at the familiar image is surprise. Maggie finds the shock of the new in the face of the familiar and the familial. In the family portrait, Maggie discovers an unexpected opportunity for reading. Maggie finds novelty or life where she has only anticipated lifeless sameness. It is this surprise that yields, for her, a sense of time marked, the impression that she has come to the portrait "after a long intermission." The feeling of novelty tolls a knell. The reading yields the intermission and defines its parameters. Maggie encounters her husband as though he were a picture, a document of the past. And the feeling of newness, of the revivified lively presence of the past in that picture is her encounter with what Benjamin calls "aura." Her experience is a particularly photographic one.

Whether Maggie looks at Amerigo as a painting or a photograph goes unwritten.

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58 On this point, see Sprinker, "Monument" 47.
In any case, however, James does not refer to a literal object. This is important because Benjamin's account of the experience we have of photographs interests us less in connection with James's passage if we read that passage as a prescriptive elaboration on the process of epistemology generated by a specific literal photograph—which it is not—than as a system we can call "photographic," like that inspired by a photograph—which it is. As Benjamin writes:

> With photography . . . we encounter something new and strange . . . there remains something that goes beyond testimony to the photographer's art, something that cannot be silenced, that fills you with an unruly desire to know what her name was, the woman who was alive there, who even now is still real and will never consent to be wholly absorbed in art. ("Photography" 242-43)

Benjamin points to an excess that cannot be silenced, that provokes curiosity, that endures, and that cannot be contained. The force of the photograph's aura is not so much an impact derived from the past as it is the energy generated by the present impulse to account for something unspecified and ungraspable. This recalls James's description of Kate Croy in the early pages of The Wings of the Dove in which one searches unsuccessfully for the origins of the effect that Kate's presence yields. For Benjamin, the origin of the excess is not the past which uncannily endures as the literal presence of the photographed subject, but in the uncanniness of the photograph as a document. This excess is congruent to Maggie's impression of Amerigo and to her discovery of the golden bowl's uncanny ability to tell. Read through Benjamin, these two Jamesian encounters can properly be called photographic.
Benjamin's assessment of the photograph continues:

Immerse yourself in such a picture long enough and you will recognize how alive the contradictions are, here too: the most precise technology can give its products a magical value, such as a painted picture can never again have for us. No matter how artful the photographer, no matter how carefully posed his subject, the beholder feels an irresistible urge to search such a picture for the tiny spark of contingency, of the Here and Now, with which reality has so to speak seared the subject, to find the inconspicuous spot where in the immediacy of that long-forgotten moment the future subsists so eloquently that we, looking back, may rediscover it. (243)

The magical value, for Benjamin, inheres not in photography's special ability to preserve the tiny spark of contingency. Just as, for James, there is no magical locus of the past as past in the present. Benjamin's "magical value" describes a force derived from the photograph, prompted by it, to seek out such an impossible presence. This is precisely the impulse that Maggie fails to register even as she commits to its exercise when she tells Amerigo that discovery of his single self--the identity that bristles against the constraints of history, that vividly orients itself to a hoped-for future freedom from contingency, and wherein Amerigo's vision of his future subsists so eloquently--would be the business of her future.

Maggie's ownership of the bowl prompts a reassessment of the way in which she reads her circumstances in much the same way that the kisses exchanged by Charlotte and Amerigo at Portland Place, as Chapter Seventeen ends, yield this impression for
Amerigo:

The sense of the past revived for him nevertheless as it had not yet done: it made that other time somehow meet the future close, interlocking with it, before his watching eyes, as in a long embrace of arms and lips, and so handling and hustling the present that this poor quantity scarce retained substance enough, scarce remained sufficiently there, to be wounded or shocked. (218)

The Prince's recollection, in the arms of Charlotte Stant, does not, however, make the past present. Rather, it constitutes a flimsy argument about the past. "[B]efore his watching eyes," their embrace constructs history on the basis of memory. There is not any real "were" at work in Amerigo's thoughts. He enthusiastically yields to the most convenient fantasy version of "as we were" and denies all past memorial similes that testify to the littleness of the couple's Roman tragedy. Charlotte may claim that "'[i]t makes me feel as I used to—when I could do as I liked'" (219), but the reader knows that Charlotte was never in such a position. In their remarks, the lovers obliquely contract that they will never again be as they were. But when Charlotte remarks, "'It seems to me now that I then liked everything. It's the charm, at any rate . . . of trying again the old feelings. They come back—they come back. Everything . . . comes back'" (219), we know that only the promise of a doomed love can come back. All else is new and only read as old. Charlotte and Amerigo longingly misread their past through the memorial lens of adulterous license.

Once Maggie is in possession of the bowl, her vision may seem considerably sharper than that of the lovers. Apparently, she does not misconstrue the past with wildly
unlikely memorials. Yet, the confidence she brings to her assessment is premature because she relies on the golden bowl only to substantiate one of its possible readings. The bowl is evidence of (421)\(^\text{59}\), witness to (419), documentation for (420), and proof that (417) the Prince and Charlotte "went about together" (417). But the bowl does not inform Maggie of this fact. The strange little shopkeeper does upon seeing photographs of the Prince and Charlotte in Portland Place's "little red room" (444). The photographs inspire the merchant's recollection and, in turn, Maggie accomplishes her revelation. The bowl attends this process but seems like an awkward contrivance, there only to make sure the other, important information gets conveyed. Maggie does not more fully read the bowl and appreciate its implications until the novel's final lines, and there the structure of memory and history for which the bowl stands are only implicitly and ambiguously grasped.

Maggie invests the bowl with a perfect ability to testify that the photograph importantly does not have. A photograph may prompt the search for a perfect report of the past as though that past were wholly available in it in the present. But the search itself sublates any trace that antedates it. Maggie rightly aligns the bowl with photography in a relationship of total congruity, but she does so without fully understanding the nature of its testimony as the negotiated product of memory. Instead, Maggie sees only the indication of treachery in the photographs and in the bowl without seeing the report of

\[^{59}\text{On James's thoughts about photographs as evidence, see Julie Grossman 310. Grossman provides a thoughtful reading of the preface and the novel, examining how the characters distinguish reality from its many reproduced, photographic versions. She does not, however, consider instances of literal pictures in the novel.}\]
that treachery as only the vanishing point of an assortment of other histories that remain active. Furthermore, as a figure of memory, the great cup itself frames the way in which those histories remain active. The bowl's flaw is memory's inability wholly to account for the past in anything more than cracked and imperfect versions which are, after all, the most we ever have of the past and what we easily confuse with the past.

The indiscernibility of the bowl's fissure, its concealment beneath the comforting veneer of yellow metal, prompts a series of considerations. The concealment figures the ease with which one may confuse memory and the past. The definite physical presence of a crack seems to claim the certain difference of memory and the past. However, at the same time, that James remarks on the total indiscernibility of the crack blurs that claim of difference with the introduction of ambiguity: either the crack is really there or its presence is the result of an odd faith in its being there. Because the bowl is a figure of memory and because it is cracked, memory is necessarily a flawed crystal. In order to have faith that memory conforms perfectly with the past, one must have faith that the bowl does not conceal a crack. If Maggie accepts, as she does, the forceful implication of the crack in the golden bowl, she undermines her faith that the bowl, as a memorial, perfectly reports the past. Though James leaves it to Fanny to smash the precious object, it is Maggie who does interpretive violence to the bowl, overwhelming it with the dictates of her own memorial requirements.

The developments of the novel's second half, Maggie's supposedly masterful reworking of the adulterous situation and simultaneous preservation of her father's peace of mind, rely on the bowl, certainly, but only on an incomplete understanding of the bowl
as a figure. Maggie takes the moment of her gaining literal knowledge as the absolute starting point, the origin, of her project of rearrangement. This is why Fanny can seize upon the bowl's crack as an indication of its overall faultiness, its inability to report accurately, its unreliability as evidence. Fanny supposes that if the bowl cannot be trusted, if it is imperfect, then Maggie cannot use it as the basis of her disruptive plan. Like a photograph, the bowl does document a past in the present. But its flaw does not simply correspond to the imperfection that is Amerigo's fidelity. Even on the literal level, about which we are now thinking, the bowl has not stood for this until this point in the novel. It has, instead, literally documented the unfulfillment of Charlotte and Amerigo's romance. The lovers try to be sure, but their meeting as we have seen is a desperate romantic fiction meant to revivify a freedom that was never there. This, of course, is the secret truth, if it is not better to call it the secret lie, that underlies their attachment.

Similarly, the bowl's crack is, of course, wholly undetectable even if one knows to look for it. The bowl, with its crack, figures the impossibility of the kind of knowledge that Maggie thinks she has come to, in possession of both it and the merchant's facts. To the Prince, she stresses what she thinks is the fullness of her knowledge, saying that she has ceased "to be as I was. Not to know" (447). But all she really knows is how little she has known. We could say that instead of possessing the golden bowl, it possesses her. Deleuze writes, "In the novel, it is Proust who says that time is not internal to us, but that we are internal to time, which divides itself in two, which loses itself and discovers itself in itself, which makes the present pass and the past be preserved" (Cinema 2 82). The bowl figures the uncertainty of memory, paradoxically, as the only and utmost kind
of certainty. The bowl's implications possess Maggie. The true fount of Maggie's agitation, in her scene with Fanny, is not her ready knowledge of the lovers' infidelities, but the agony of her own ignorance. As with the experience of Benjamin's photograph, Maggie's knowledge of the past, her keen impulse to discover what the future was then, is filtered through the flawed crystal of memory, and Maggie's imagination cannot accommodate the liveliness of the past even in the face of it. Maggie's disquiet starts with the fact that she "didn't understand" and "knew too little" (416). Even her sense of Amerigo's and Charlotte's misdeeds is derived from ignorance not knowledge: "What one considers intimate? Well, I know what I consider intimate now. Too intimate," said Maggie, 'to let me know anything about it" (417). We misread the dramatic chapter in which the bowl is wielded and shattered if we take it as a turning point in which Maggie comes into sudden full knowledge upon which, and for the remainder of the novel, she acts. The destruction of the golden bowl signals instead only the beginning of an education that Maggie strenuously resists.

When Amerigo appears in the doorway of the room, Maggie's pleasure is that the crisis should be very much not at hand:

There it was that her wish for time interposed—time for Amerigo's use, not for hers, since she, for ever so long now, for hours and hours as they seemed, had been living with eternity; with which she would continue to live . . . . It was extraordinary, this quality in the taste of her wrong which made her completed sense of it seem rather to soften than to harden, and it was the more extraordinary the more she had to recognise it; for what it came to was that seeing herself finally
sure, knowing everything, having the fact, in all its abomination, so utterly before her that there was nothing else to add—what it came to was that, merely by being with him there in silence, she felt, within her, the sudden split between conviction and action. (434-35)

In the face of the unexpectedly wide gulf of her own ignorance, and in an echo of Isabel Archer's capacity for delay in pursuit of potential, Maggie opts characteristically for romance over knowledge:

'Well, what I want. I want a happiness without a hole in it big enough for you to poke in your finger.'

'A brilliant, perfect surface—to begin with at least, I see.'

'The golden bowl—as it was to have been.' And Maggie dwelt musingly on this obscured figure. 'The bowl with all happiness in it. The bowl without the crack.' (456)

Maggie defies the true meaning of the bowl and seeks out a liberation from its contingencies thinking that she can change the past. The contingencies of the bowl are, crucially, not the contingencies of the past, as Maggie seems to think. The bowl's crack is no dumb indication of Charlotte and Amerigo's crimes or of Maggie's own romantic blindness. The contingencies of the bowl are those of memory. Maggie wants the same thing that Kate Croy does: an impossible release from the obligation to memorialize an unattractive past. But she can only have the bowl with its flaw, with its obligation to recall the always imperfectly known shock that put it there. The crack is the enigma that memory cannot resolve. Maggie's desire to have the bowl as she imagines it "was to have
been" shows that romantic fiction is her mode of memory and tinges all her subsequent machinations with the use of power, to resist the dictates of memory, that taints what she calls "happiness."

The romantic vision for which Maggie opts is importantly distinct from the one that initially drew her so ineluctably to Amerigo. That was vision and what she contrives after the scene in which poor outwitted Fanny smashes the bowl is witting revision: a disciplined refusal to allow circumstances variance from her consciously preferred mode of memorializing them. The chief difference in the two modes is that Maggie's second approach is defined against the other and necessarily memorializes it. She may think that she works to achieve the bowl "as it was to have been," but that aim has no connection with any past and only documents her willful exercise of power to rewrite a version of the past that suits her needs. Maggie's preferred version of memorializing the past continues to be to see it as absolutely dead, to defy its operation even as her

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60 On the necessary memorial contingency yielded by invention like Maggie's, see Derrida "Psyche: Inventions of the Other" in Reading de Man Reading. Gasché's gloss of Derrida justifies the label "invention" for Maggie's undertaking in the second half of The Golden Bowl. As Gasché demonstrates, invention comprises an antagonistic binarism, at once absolutely divorced from all but novelty and dependent, for definition, upon convention. Invention claims to be a radical "inaugural event" (Inventions 8), but it relies on a "system of conventions that will ensure for it at the same time its recording in a common history, its belonging to a culture: to a heritage, a lineage, a pedagogical tradition, a discipline, a chain of generations" (Derrida, "Psyche" 28 qtd. in Gasché, Inventions 9). James links Maggie Verver to Kate Croy via their shared impulse to invent in the face of the troubling memorial of the bowl and the annihilating legacy of the familial sentence, respectively. Each invention is undermined by virtue of its status as invention insofar as invention functions as the relic of its own evaluation.

61 For more useful alignment of Maggie's activity in the second half of the novel with James's overall aesthetic project, see Sprinker, "Monument" 57-60.
revelation insists on the vivid activity of the past as the charged economy of history and memory. Her playthings have come to life in ways that she never anticipated, and she intends to bury them so that they will never surface again. Maggie is finally left not with "the Prince's respect for her forbearance" or "his deep love" (Matthiessen, The Major Phase 101), but only with the haunting and inescapable memory of this deed.

When Maggie and Adam revisit their favourite garden bench at Fawns in Chapter 37, Maggie seeks refuge from the onslaught of a history she never expected: "She might have been wishing, under this renewal, this still more suggestive visitation, to keep him with her for remounting the stream of time and dipping again, for the softness of the water, into the contracted basin of the past" (486-87). However, in searching for a return to that fantasy absolute, Maggie hopefully extends a romantic yearning for the attractive and only hoped-for true nothing of a past that exists because she and her father have agreed that it be so. This reading of James's "contracted" is the only sensible one in context. By the end of their conversation Maggie feels, "as if she had held a blank letter to the fire and the writing had come out still larger than she had hoped" (497). Through this image, Maggie extends her sense of helplessness and receives written instructions from her marvellously beneficent father. However, by so doing, by receiving implicit direction from Adam, she corrupts the innocent relationship that she fancies she has not yet risked sacrificing.

James figures the romance with which Maggie sublates the full meaning of the bowl as the blank letter of her ignorance. The letter recalls Maggie's impoverished appreciation of the bowl as it conceals its meaning from her even as she anticipates the
force of that meaning. A letter cannot properly even be a letter if it is only a blank sheet of paper unless the blankness can be said to have a kind of meaning, as a denial of specificity, for example. According to this logic, when Adam bestows his light and makes the writing discernible to Maggie, he creates the letter as a letter. He does not just enable his daughter's romance, he substantiates it. There is another reading, that challenges Adam's status as bountiful papa, in which Maggie burns a blank letter—holds it literally to the fire—and discovers not its destruction but its creation. The blank which Maggie destroys, because it is a blank but still impossibly a letter, suits the terms of the bowl's literal history as a memorial to another "nothing" which is not merely nothing. To destroy the blank letter is to refuse the bowl, to resist the adultery it seems to document. But the refusal cannot merely efface that history because the act of recasting its meaning to suit her own romantic needs yields its own history, a story of resistance like that which Amerigo calls his "single self." In this way, the destruction of the blank letter allegorizes the production of memorial meaning in exactly the same way as the golden bowl does. The blank letter is an imagistic echo of the bowl and its complicated nothing. Burning the blank letter only proves its inexorability. Holding the blank letter to the fire magnifies its message: "the writing had come out still larger than she hoped" (497).

Adam, Charlotte, and Amerigo "might have been figures rehearsing some play of which she was the author" (470). These others are cast as players in the Princess's troubled revision. Like the letter, despite her manipulation, they inevitably serve to
reflect back to her only the fullness of her purpose. Even under Maggie's nullifying pressure the integrity of their own memories and histories endures as the thing against which Maggie's resistance scripts its history and owes its inexorable debt. Though Maggie seems to miss these points until her final encounter with her husband, her awareness of and resistance to the status of her revision, as a memorial foregrounding that which she would efface, evolve over the course of the novel's latter half.

Maggie finds the least difficulty reducing her father to the rank of type. Adam, by volunteering the idea of a return to American City, becomes the epitome of munificence: "the 'successful', beneficent person, the beautiful bountiful, original, dauntlessly wilful great citizen, the consummate collector and infallible high authority he had been and still was—these things struck her, on the spot, as making up for him, in a wonderful way, a character she must take into account in dealing with him for pity or for envy" (497-98). Adam becomes, under his daughter's admiring gaze, "the named and dated object, the pride of the catalogue, that time had polished and consecrated" (498).

Maggie treats Charlotte as the crack that needs filling over and discovers along the way the magnetic and unbearable agony of the precious specimen she has required

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David M. Craig, in commenting on Maggie's "attempt to arrange and control the drama in which she and the other characters participate" (139), concludes that "Maggie finds her triumph disquieting because she discovers that having specified her end—her reunion with her husband—and the means for achieving that end—her social artistry—she cannot know the end itself" (140). Craig seems aware of the insufficiency of this account. The novel's final gesture, in which Maggie buries her eyes, would seem merely to recapitulate the fact that her knowledge is finally vexed; because Maggie cannot know, she hides her eyes. But James makes clear that Maggie hides her eyes in response to what she does see; she does not mime her ignorance, but resists her knowledge. Craig writes that "the Princess must continually attempt... to explain the world that she has invented, to explore the geography of the end" (144).
Charlotte to become. Charlotte is no longer fully human. As Charlotte paces about Adam's galleries with their other guests, Maggie observes her report to them on the ostensible subject of the estate's precious holdings. As Matthiessen correctly puts it, Charlotte "becomes the tortured lecturer on herself as she recites her lesson" (The Major Phase 99):

'The largest of the three pieces has the rare peculiarity that the garlands, looped round it, which, as you see, are the finest possible vieux Saxe, are not of the same origin or period, or even, wonderful as they are, of a taste quite so perfect. They have been put on at a later time, by a process of which there are very few examples, and none so important as this, which is really quite unique--so that, though the whole thing is a little baroque, its value as a specimen is, I believe, almost inestimable.' (511)

Though Maggie's "after-sense" (512) is able to acknowledge the "awful mixture of things" (512) manifested in Adam's blushing anguish for Charlotte, she soon after disavows responsibility. She figures the cause of Charlotte's suffering as "some poetic line in a dead language, subject to varieties of interpretation" (549). Stung by the sense of her own

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63 Following Matthiessen's lead, Holland begins his consideration of The Golden Bowl with a reading of this scene (331-35). He judges that: Charlotte's remarks about the layers of history contributing to the 'baroque' effect of the vase and the spatial composition of the scene hold in a taut suspension the main patterns of movement in The Golden Bowl which radiate from the tortured sacrifice sounded by Charlotte's shriek of pain to those revealed in the imagination of Maggie. (332) Holland concludes that the scene in the gallery establishes the pastness of memory and the pain of "launching... a new life" (332) in America, making it, too simply, a watershed moment in which the past is laid to rest and the difficult transformations, promised by the future in American City, are confronted.
obligation, Maggie evaluates the source of Charlotte's "pain" and "torment" (549) in accordance with her willful revision of history. In the pages leading up to the novel's final scene, Maggie imposes the self-serving rationale of the anonymously authored poetic line, that emerges from the dimmest depths of the most remote past, to account for the projection of her own romantic memory, her reading of the bowl as uncracked.64

After Adam and Charlotte make their final departure, James remarks on the extraordinary stillness "not restored" but "created" (565). This stillness seems to correspond with the imposed quiet of Maggie's fond hope, with the death of the troubling past and with her triumph over history through a merciless version of memory that insists upon the bowl's flawlessness and does not accommodate the presence of the flaw, its literal existence and its forceful implication. Yet, the perfection of the stillness, the crystal apparently without flaw, marks Maggie's basest failure for she has not preserved the perfection of the past, the idea of romance and the impossible bowl as it was to have been.65 Instead, she has precisely denied the past and struggled with imperfect success to

64 Cameron's reading of the gallery scene confirms that it foreshadows Maggie's final discovery in her husband's arms at the novel's end (see page 286 and following below):

Charlotte is sacrificed by the making of her suffering meaningless—by the making of her suffering not in fact hers, since her being understood depends on the others' not wanting, as well as not having, access to her thoughts. She is the text rendered inscrutable so that other characters can "interpret" her in the absence, specifically the annihilation, of any meaning she might specify for it. (Thinking 100)

65 The ending of The Golden Bowl has occasioned a remarkably disharmonious response in readers who assign it a solely thematic value. In Jamesian criticism, the final scene between Maggie and Amerigo is either a triumph for love or a moral vanquishment. Matthiessen, finding a triumph there, writes: "As a result of what she has passed through, she can meet him now on the level of his mature wisdom . . . .
resist its memory. She has fashioned a final encounter that only memorializes herself:

her enormous isolation from romantic happiness that stands both as her resistance to

[Maggie] seems to get an unnatural knowledge of evil since she keeps her innocence intact" (The Major Phase 101). Similarly, Krook concludes that Maggie has "succeeded in restoring the dignities, decencies, and serenities of their common life, which figure the harmony and stability of the universal moral order" (323). Edmund Wilson remarks that Maggie has "score[d] morally off an Italian Prince" (404). Nussbaum sees the novel's final passage as a failure redeemed, in turn, by a kind of triumph. Left with her husband, Maggie embraces a "hero' violating love for the sake of love, purified by no inner sympathy, no note of higher consciousness" (137). For Nussbaum, Maggie turns her eyes away in a gesture of non-judgement—"a gentleness that goes beyond, and covers, knowledge" (137)—and enormous sacrificial love. Nussbaum implicitly endorses Lewis's reading which concludes that the novel's closing offers "a startling inversion of the Adamic tradition; it is the world, this time, which is struck down by aggressive innocence" (154). Yeazell posits, contra Matthiessen, Krook, and Lewis, that Maggie "implicitly chooses . . . the ultimate loss of her own innocence" (101), and, contra Nussbaum, that "James is most profoundly concerned not with the vexed question of morality, but with problems of knowledge, of passion, and of power" (103). Yeazell explains that the last lines leave James's readers "[d]enied a means of clearly distinguishing the social world of the novel from Maggie's invention of it" (125). Where Yeazell refers to "the irreducible 'facts'" (127) of "the social world," my reading requires that we see the force, generated through memory and forgetting, that Maggie cannot withstand simply because she assists in its production and memorializes it in her resistance to it; this helps clarify what Yeazell calls "that haunting power" (127) of the novel's final lines. For other agreeable readings of the final lines see Auchard 149-50 and Cameron, Thinking 102, 112. Craig provides a useful overview of the critical controversy provoked by the novel and its conclusion (133n.2). Teahan reasons that the text "not only allows but demands" seeing Maggie's "authorial power" as both "destructive" and "beatific," "ironic" and "redemptive" (Rhetorical Logic 138).

In the parting of the two couples, "sombre ghosts of the smothered past, on either side, show, across the widening strait, pale unappeased faces . . . raise, in the very passage, deprecating, denouncing hands" (352-53). If these phantoms do not silently gesture at the adultery, that Maggie has long feared the parting would underscore, they unavoidably indicate her busy undertakings of denial. Bradbury opines that "Maggie Verver has mastered deconstruction (the reading the text demands—including its multiple conflicting possibilities) only to reassert a prior formulation (the authorial text); and her authority for this lies precisely in her own self-consciousness: the awareness of the limitations imposed by the individual self" ("Nothing" 84).
history and her capitulation to a history of such resistance.  

When Maggie appeals finally to Amerigo to assist her to bear the weight of her memorial responsibility, she discovers that she has not saved her marriage but has only annihilated whatever there had been of it. Maggie finally asks Amerigo if he shares her vision of Charlotte's helpful splendour, a magnificence in the face of the oppression of Maggie's will that, the Princess hopes, may provide redemption from the terrible guilt of her own after-sense: "'See'? I see nothing but you.' And the truth of it had, with this force, after a moment, so strangely lighted his eyes that, as for pity and dread of them, she buried her own in his breast" (567). Maggie emerges as the true discoverer in the final passage of the novel, and Amerigo, true to his name, only basks in the reflected glow of her horrid invention as part of it.

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67 Susan M. Griffin puts it this way: at the end of The Golden Bowl "[Maggie] lives in a world that mirrors her. Despite Maggie's undeniable activity as a deeply interested perceiver of the present, she ends by looking back" (85).
The force of memory thwarts the struggle to escape the claims of the past. Even as the effort is undertaken, the traces of that force survive as images that conform to the mourning of what has been irretrievably lost. The attempt to elude the potency of those traces activates their continual manufacture. While the endeavour ends, in these novels, with a sort of meaning, for Isabel Archer, Kate Croy, and Maggie Verver, that sense does not and cannot attest to the successful eradication of its antecedents, to the impossible attainment of a pure, of a sterile, future. To efface the past is always, inevitably and inexorably, to stir a memory of it, to engender a history of vexed protest.

Yet, as James makes clear, the relentless force of memory, if it is damnable, is also the engine of faith. If the echoes and reverberations of memory—the "great waves" of sorrow—are strong, as James consoles Grace Norton, "we are stronger" (Selected Letters 191). Milly Theale knows that she cannot escape the claims of the past. Yet, even as she leaves her Tauchnitz history on the path to her alpine precipice, she can scrawl "à bientôt!"—a promise to endure and a gesture of faith—across the volume's cover. The antagonistic interplay of memory and faith accounts for the alienation Maggie Verver is stunned to discover in her husband's final embrace, but, also, for Isabel's fondness for her humble Albany home and for her final choice, for Kate's formidable and sustaining self-possession, for the enigmatic white light of Adam Verver's magical forge, and for the tremendous worth of the golden bowl.
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