

## **‘A style which defies convention, tradition, homogeneity, prudence, and sometimes even syntax’: Henry James’s *The Portrait of a Lady* and Edith Wharton’s *The Age of Innocence***

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Keywords:  
Henry James,  
Edith Wharton,  
style, corpus  
analysis,  
spirituality

**Abstract:** Combining the methods of linguistics and literary criticism, this article takes a fresh look at two texts that have been analysed *ad nauseam*: Henry James’s *The Portrait of a Lady* and Edith Wharton’s *The Age of Innocence*. I use James’s late style as a touchstone to compare and contrast the two texts. Analysing syntax by means of close textual analysis of the novels’ opening paragraphs as well as their metaphorical language, and employing the corpus analysis programme AntConc to survey the entire texts, I aim to show that James’s 1880 text anticipates his late style and Wharton’s 1920 text appropriates it to suit her own agenda. However, in respectively anticipating and appropriating this style, James and Wharton create different effects. James intensifies his female protagonist’s ‘world of thought and feeling’ (Eliot 1963: 56), creating a fictional world with literary equality for both genders, while Wharton subverts gender roles in a scathing critique of Gilded Age society, which did not allow for this other ‘world of thought and feeling’. In addition to positioning both novels as feminist, this article compares Wharton’s writing to James’s, but without presupposing the latter’s influence on the former. Instead, acknowledging the fluidity of style, I aim to put forward a convincing case that there are subtle differences that make these authors’ styles Jamesian and Whartonian, respectively.

### **1. Introduction: Re-evaluating ‘Henry James’s Heiress’**

Edith Wharton would not have wasted a second glance on the title of this introductory section. In 1962, Leavis relegated Wharton to a position no more original than ‘Henry James’s Heiress’, and so do the contemporary reviews from the start of her literary career. Critics have praised her work to be ‘Henry James to the life’ (Barry 1992: 13). In 1904, Wharton (1988: 91) complained about ‘the continued cry that I am an echo of Mr. James’. Despite Bell’s (1959: 621) and Lewis and Lewis’s (1988: 11) claims that her 1905 bestseller *The House of Mirth* left no question about Wharton’s originality, not even her Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Age of Innocence* escaped reminders about her literary indebtedness. In 1920, she is James’s ‘dazzling disciple’, and James ‘her idol and master’ (Perry 1992: 283, Phelps 1992: 284). Literary criticism, seasoned and recent,

has drawn parallels to a specific text of James's: *The Portrait of a Lady*.<sup>1</sup> Evron (2012: 40) goes as far as to propose that the earlier novel 'constantly hovers in the background of [the later one]'. Thematically, the connections between *Portrait* and *Age* have been explored extensively, as outlined below. As far as style is concerned, however, the two novels deserve a fresh look. This article will use James's late style as a touchstone, arguing that *Portrait* shows development towards and *Age* retrospectively approximates it. The late style is best described in James's (1984b: 244) own words (although he writes about Daudet here): 'a style which defies convention, tradition, homogeneity, prudence, and sometimes even syntax'. In both texts, this style sketches 'another world of thought and feeling' – T. S. Eliot's (1963: 56) verdict on James will be shown to progress from the idea of offering glimpses into a character's interior world to Hutchison's (2006: 102) interpretation that the uncertainty of language approximates another spiritual, 'unutterable' world. But the anticipation and reverberation of James's late style have different effects. In *Portrait*, the emphasis of James's (1984a: 61) 'psychological reason' generates literary equality for Isabel, and renders the text inherently feminist, while *Age* creates a mocking tone, satirising a society that leaves no room for this other 'world of thought and feeling', and highlights Wharton's subversion of conceptions of gender. Overall, intrinsically expressive of the texts' meanings, the authors' deployment of specific stylistic features enhances the perception of a spiritual dimension of the texts.

## 2. Methodology

One of the features that, for Wharton (1997: 21), renders authorship original is style, which she defines as 'the most personal ingredient', as the manner in which incidents are 'given back in [the narrator's] words'. Words, as 'the exterior symbols of thought', steep the author's 'creation in unfading colours'. Similarly, for James (1984a: 1212), style is inseparable from meaning; their relation is 'in as close a compression as that of body and soul'. James is writing about Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, but Hutchison (2006: 137-8) states that much the same could be said about *The Golden Bowl*, 'the culmination of his artistic vision'. James's idea of style as the art of fiction is for him best reflected in his late style, which he developed throughout the 1890s and immortalised in his three late masterpieces: *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903) and *The Golden Bowl* (1904). Consequently, discussions of Jamesian style have focussed on the late novels. Chatman (1972) describes the late style minutely, analysing syntax, deixis and intangibility, amongst other features. Watt (1960) employs close reading techniques to dissect the first paragraph of *The Ambassadors*. Norrman (1977) examines features such as punctuation, ellipsis and pronouns in an effort to pinpoint ambiguity, and Cross (1993) discusses syntactic and semantic ellipses. Finally, Krook (1962) and Hutchison (2006) analyse metaphorical language with respect to consciousness and spirituality,

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Fryer (1984: 154), Edel (1986: 15), Kress (2002: 165), Gorra (2012: 206), Scherzinger (2015: 21). Hereafter *Portrait* and *Age*; page numbers always refer to the following editions: James (2016a) and Wharton (2003). Different editions were used for the analysis with AntConc (James 2016b and Wharton 2000); however, these are based on the same copy-texts.

respectively. Though written by literary critics, these books' focus is on the linguistic aspects of James's late style, and their methods are in many ways stylistic. In comparing *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Age of Innocence* to James's late style, I will take these authoritative works as reference points throughout.

The methodological focus varies throughout the chapters, but overall, this is a qualitative piece of research, employing methods such as close reading and corpus analysis, firstly to analyse specific parts of the novels (the opening paragraphs and two key chapters), and secondly to survey the works in their entirety to determine patterns of metaphors. When numbers are cited, their purpose is to give the reader an understanding of my definition of proportionate and disproportionate use of terms or complexity of features. More specifically, the third chapter relies on Chatman (1972) and Watt (1960), employing close reading to analyse syntactic features of the opening paragraphs of *Portrait* and *Age*. In particular, features of importance are parentheses, end focus, subject intangibility, nominalisations and cleft sentences. Parenthesis will be used as an umbrella term for both its *OED* (2017) definition – '[a] word, clause, or sentence inserted as an explanation, aside or afterthought' – and, following Wichmann (2001), Cui (2014) and Moss (2014), as clauses that are fronted to delay the end focus, that is, the commonality 'to process the information in a [sentence] so as to achieve a linear presentation from low to high information value' (Quirk et al. 1985: 1357). The analysis is conducted qualitatively, as, contrary to expectation, syntactic complexity is not conditioned by sentence length. Wharton's opening paragraphs present the reader with long sentences averaging at 47.7 words.<sup>2</sup> This is reminiscent of the common conception of James as a difficult writer; his late novels are – if we were to trust Evron's (2012: 44) judgement – 'tortured explorations' of consciousness.<sup>3</sup> By contrast, the opening paragraph in *Portrait* is divided into fifteen sentences averaging at 28.9 words, contrasting with Hutchison's (2006: 9-12) analysis of style in *The Golden Bowl*. Both texts, however, demonstrate syntactic complexity in their amalgamation of a range of different features, which serves to convey nuances of meaning. Hence, the section will discuss the above-mentioned features to determine the connectivity between syntax and meaning on the level of the plot.

The fourth section makes use of Cross (1993) and Norrman (1977) as reference points for the use of ellipses and pronominal reference in late James. Specifically, I have employed close reading of one key chapter per book (*Portrait*: Chapter 36; *Age*: Chapter XIX), that is the chapters in which the marriages of the protagonists are revealed. James (1984b: 1110, 1155) had his own term for ellipsis ('foreshortening'), which Wharton (1997: 24, 42, 56) adopts. Discussing *The Wings of the Dove*, a late novel, Cross (1993: 127) notes that '[o]pening up and exploiting its gaps, the text deliberately makes room for various "versions"'. She goes on to exemplify the interrelatedness of semantic and syntactic ellipses. Through its linguistic gaps, the text becomes one in

<sup>2</sup> Average sentence structure is determined by dividing the overall number of words of the passage by the number of sentences included in it.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Matthiessen (1946), Short (1950) and Krook (1962).

which semantic 'indeterminacy becomes functional'. In *Portrait and Age*, this connectivity is not as pronounced as in James's late novels. Likewise, the texts only vaguely show the multiplicity of pronominal reference that Norrman (1977: 98-102) describes as characteristic of the late style. James, he argues, deliberately misuses pronouns to create ambiguity, so that, for example, 'we' could refer to 'I', or 'they' to 'she'. Discussing ellipsis in James's late fiction, Norrman (1977: 62) highlights the 'ambiguity-creating effect of the technique'; scenes left out become 'blanks', which James prefers 'because he trusts the reader will supply the missing material better than he could have done himself'.<sup>4</sup> Norrman may have one of James's (1984b: 1188) comments on *The Turn of the Screw* in mind: 'Make [the reader] *think* the evil'. James means to express that horrors are worst when they are of the nameless kind, when each reader has to supply their own worst conceivable explanation to fill the gap. James's novels gain in effect through the ambiguity created by ellipses, not because he lacked the skill to supply an explanation, but because an explanation would take away the mystery. The interplay of ellipsis and pronominal reference creates ambiguity deliberately employed to disrupt the texts' coherence. Contrasting the referential terms 'he and his wife' for Newland and May with 'them' for Isabel and Osmond, this section will read between the lines on the level of the plot to show that the interplay of ellipsis and pronominal reference reveals the characters' changed states of mind on the level of consciousness.

The fifth section, drawing on Krook (1962) and Hutchison (2006), analyses metaphors of seeing. I argue that stylistic choice on the levels of consciousness, of the plot and of syntax operate to create a spiritual level in both Wharton's text and James's early novel. The method employed to capture the extent to which this connectivity of style and spirituality is traced throughout the novels is corpus analysis, using the corpus analysis programme AntConc. I employ this programme solely to survey the corpus. Specifically, I employ the tool to identify metaphorical instances of 'seeing' and 'vision', as spirituality and sight are regarded to be interconnected (see Hutchison 2006). The overall objective is to demonstrate that 'another world of thought and feeling' which includes an acutely spiritual dimension is not limited to James's late style, on which the critics' texts whose methodology I adapt focus.

### 3. Analysis

#### 3.1 'Downward and earthward, into realms of restriction' – Syntax

Moving from the level of the syntax to that of the plot, the aim here is to outline the manner in which the syntactic constraints of the English language are mirrored in those of the fictional world. The difficulty noted about James's style is not conditioned by sentence length, rather by the sentences' syntactic

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<sup>4</sup> For further discussion of the technique, see Chatman (1978: 71), Genette (1980: 57) and Hardy (2005: 364).

complexity. The second sentence in *Portrait* is an example of this: 'There are circumstances in which, whether you partake of the tea or not – some people of course never do – the situation is in itself delightful' (3). The insertion marked off by dashes is an aside as per *OED* definition, and the conditional clause preceding it would generally be put at the beginning or end of the entire sentence. Standard sentence structure would make the sentence lose all its effect. The two parentheses ('whether [...] not' and 'some [...] do') would follow the subject and predicate phrase of the subordinate clause, which would render ineffective James's effect, that is, putting emphasis on the delight of the ceremony and teasing the reader's coming to that conclusion. Transforming the mundane into the extraordinary, as James does with his opening paragraph on afternoon tea, is central to *Portrait*. James (1984b: 1077) aims to differentiate Isabel from '[m]illions of presumptuous girls' lost in the whirls of the transatlantic marriage market by rendering her character extraordinary and her predicament worthy of the reader's empathy and critical engagement. Retaining one's individuality notwithstanding the constraints of society is the theme that connects *Portrait* and *Age* most overtly. This is foreshadowed by the sentence just discussed, particularly by the parentheses that over-emphasise the end focus.

The definition of end focus does not work entirely for James. His parentheses overturn the linearity of the information value: related to the main clause, it is naught. In terms of foreshadowing, the parentheses carry just as much meaning. The consecutive arrangement of two or more of these clauses necessitates a brief reading pause before and after each segment, emphasising each, as apparent in the penultimate sentence of James's opening paragraph: 'One of them, from time to time, as he passed, looked with a certain attention at the elder man, who, unconscious of observation, rested his eyes upon the rich red front of his dwelling' (3). The copulatives of the main and subordinate relative clauses underline the idea of looking at something in contemplation, as will be discussed further in section 5. The parentheses determine the manner of looking, and, if suspended from the context and conflated with the portraiture metaphor introduced by the novel's title, that of evaluating character in light of 'certain circumstances'. '[F]rom time to time' suggests an image recurring but fragmented; 'as he passed' highlights the fleetingness of glimpses; 'unconscious of observation' begs the questions of who is observing whom and to what end. The end focus, 'the rich red front of his dwelling', conjures up Gardencourt, Mr Touchett's house, which according to Harmon (2002: 313), symbolises 'the most distinguished, mystified, and charisma-generating milieu that [Isabel's] historical moment has to offer' – and also one of the most restrictive to free-spirited individuals who want to learn about the societal customs of their new surroundings '[s]o as to choose', as Isabel quips, whether or not to do 'the things one shouldn't' (63). In the New York Edition, Gardencourt constitutes the frontispiece. The photograph is entitled 'The English Home' (Alvin Langdon Coburn 1922). As such, the reference to Touchett's 'dwelling' goes hand in hand with the contemporary conception of the home and woman's role within it. This role is, of course, not conducive to Isabel's idea of life. For the reader of the New York Edition, the societal constraints that Isabel will find herself battling are not, as Weisbuch (1989: 286) argues, located in the novel's first three words,

'[u]nder certain circumstances', but already symbolised by Gardencourt, or 'The English Home', as the edition's frontispiece, which is again emphasised at the end of the opening paragraph. His argument is still applicable, of course: the beginning of the novel dramatises 'the reality of a world not created by the self but independent and sometimes governing'. Both *Portrait* and *Age*, the former more subtly than the latter, as we shall see, set the scene outlining 'certain circumstances', in other words, restrictions imposed by the system of Gilded Age society. Isabel's realisation that she is trapped within this system that does not look keenly on individuality, just as James is limited to the syntactic and semantic system of English, forms the drama of the novel.

Wharton also treats the theme of the individual within society, as is apparent in the second sentence of *Age*:

Though there was already talk of the erection, in remote metropolitan distances 'above the Forties,' of a new Opera House which should compete in costliness and splendour with those of the great European capitals, the world of fashion was still content to reassemble every winter in the shabby red and gold boxes of the sociable old Academy. (3)

The first parenthesis, 'in remote metropolitan distances "above the Forties"', does not only postpone the direct object of the suspended head of the prepositional phrase (its nominalisation allows the insertion of a parenthesis in the first place), but also the intangible subject ('the world of fashion') of the main clause. So do the subordinate clause, starting with the contrastive conjunction 'though', and the restrictive relative clause defining the 'new Opera House'. While one may expect splendid new opera houses to be in keeping with 'the world of fashion', the sentence structure sets up the paradoxical contrast between this world and the innovations of modernity. To resolve the paradox, the reader has to manoeuvre through the copulative, another parenthesis ('every winter' could alternatively be placed at the end of the sentence), and the adjunct culminating in the embedded prepositional phrase 'of the sociable old Academy'.<sup>5</sup> The lead-up to this prepositional phrase further develops the paradox: the world of fashion is expected to set the trend rather than 'still [be] content', to be innovative rather than 'reassemble every winter' to see the same opera, to settle for the latest and the best only rather than the 'shabby' and the 'old'. Once arrived at the word 'Academy', however, a historically informed reading suggests a satirical interpretation rather than a paradoxical one: the New York elites make it fashionable to adhere to tradition, be merciless towards newcomers and rule-breakers, as illustrated by Ellen's role. Like Isabel, Ellen grows to be very much aware of being restricted and trapped by the world of the social elites of New York. The novel thus dramatises, as Pizer (1992: 137) argues, 'the power of the socially constraining over the individual desire'.

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<sup>5</sup> As is customary in literary criticism, references to the reader, in fact, pertain to the implied reader, for whom the author envisions writing the text. For the concept, see Iser (1974).

The final sentence of this excerpt exemplifies this further:

But, in the first place, New York was a metropolis, and perfectly aware that in metropolises it was 'not the thing' to arrive early at the opera; and what was or was not 'the thing' played a part as important in Newland Archer's New York as the inscrutable totem terrors that had ruled the destinies of his forefathers thousands of years ago. (4)

Again, the subject is delayed by a parenthesis ('in the first place'), and Wharton mockingly employs a personification of New York to approach the reasoning of 'the world of fashion' – one does not arrive early at the opera because it is "not the thing". The second part of the main clause, introduced by the coordinating conjunction 'and', carries the previous subject with it, anthropomorphising New York, which is reminiscent of Jamesian intangibility. Chatman (1972: 4) defines tangibility as something that 'can be experienced through the senses'. New York, the metropolis, could indeed be experienced thus – in the 1870s. By the 1920s, the city had changed so drastically that 'Newland Archer's New York' is only accessible through memory. The strictly socially stratified New York of the Gilded Age was a phenomenon of the past. Evron (2012: 39) observes that, at the end of the novel, which is set in the post-war era, Newland is 'an anachronism'. The New York of the seventies is then, according to Wharton, no more tangible than the 'inscrutable totem terrors' of Newland's forefathers. When Chatman (1972: 5) states that James's 'intangibility results from a preoccupation with mental states and social relations', especially the latter is an adequate description of Wharton's style, too.

In order to communicate the bygone customs of 1870s New York, Wharton goes on to employ a cleft sentence followed by a pseudo-cleft sentence, devices that, respectively, front and postpone the end focus (Quirk et al. 1985: 1389). The former emphasises the phrase "not the thing", and the latter, including a nominalisation of that phrase as a subject, which further delays the following insight, goes on to explain that this intangible law masquerading as a guideline for taste will influence the story from cover to cover. The reader, at this point, has not quite made it to the end focus, though: a parallel structure ('as important [...] as') compares Gilded Age societal rules with the 'inscrutable totem terrors that had ruled the destinies of [Newland's] forefathers thousands of years ago.' The pathos generated by this portent comparative structure creates a mocking, sarcastic tone that is not part of James's late novels' agenda. The end focus, 'thousands of years ago', plays again with the retrospective position of Wharton's 1920s readers. To the post-war generation, a society that frowned upon arriving at the opera in time to see the first act, prioritising arbitrary rules to a 'world of thought and feeling', must have sounded like the world of a petty, bygone age – much like Newland's New York, in Wharton's mindset, must have viewed the Native Americans. The syntax of the passages mirrors what Jessee (2012: 50) observes is a thematic masquerade of characters and New York society.

In James, all syntactic elements that Wharton amalgamates in one sentence are present, and, added up, they show development towards his late style. Not all of

them contribute to the effort of foreshadowing, whereas in Wharton the interplay of stylistic features does. The combination of these strategies of delaying meaning makes abundantly clear that the writers tease the limits of syntax to convey complex meaning. This mirrors the characters' desire to test the limits of and break away from society's constraints. The writers' use of language hints that the workings of the characters' minds warrant a closer look. While writer and character are limited by the constraints of language and syntax, respectively, it is within the limitlessness of human consciousness that societal constraints, Isabel's 'realms of restriction', are transcended (372).

### 3.2 'Gaps in his picture' – Ellipsis and pronominal reference

The limitlessness of consciousness is dramatised by what the texts refuse to clarify, as apparent through features such as ellipses on the level of the plot and ambiguous pronominal reference. In both novels, there are ellipses in the discourse time around the protagonists' weddings. The two chapters which include these ellipses (*Portrait*: Chapter 36; *Age*: Chapter XIX) are analysed in detail here. In *Portrait*, three years elapse after Isabel announces her engagement. The fictional world has moved on; the reader has to catch up. In *Age*, a month elapses between May's telegram announcing the date of the wedding (detering Newland from breaking off his engagement) and the actual wedding. As in *Portrait*, the reader – but also Newland – is left to wonder what has become of Ellen, the female protagonist. Additionally, within the chapter the elided wedding ceremony involves a more psychological kind of catching up for Newland. The narrative situation in this scene is complex. There is both an extradiegetic narrator, that is, an omniscient voice commenting on the plot, and an intradiegetic focaliser, Newland. The narratee is immersed in Newland's consciousness. Consciousness, here, is used as a Jamesian term. James called focalisers (Genette's 1980 now regularly used term) centres of consciousness. While intradiegetic narrators are accompanied by intradiegetic narratees who are separate from implied and real readers, the narrative situation in *Age* is blurry because of the other extradiegetic narrative voice. Genette (1980: 260) theorises that the extradiegetic narrator 'can aim only at an extradiegetic narratee, who merges with the implied reader and with whom each real reader can identify'. Hence, the intra- and extradiegetic narratee may appear, at times, to overlap with the real reader of the novel, so that it seems that the reader is immersed in Newland's consciousness, too.

The narratee joins him in staring down the aisle as the guests arrive, trying to spot Ellen. When the 'family' – the first referent in this chapter that could technically include Ellen – is announced by a murmur through the church, the narratees, too, are 'craning their necks to see who was coming after' (111). The narratee is disappointed to realise that only they and Newland are complicit in trying to spot Ellen, while high society is more interested in Mrs Manson Mingott. With the explicit mention of Ellen further down, both Archer and the narratee are again 'straining to see who came behind' (112). The idea of Ellen's appearance is planted and anticipated. When the best man announces that '*she's here*', the last female referent is Ellen (113). The best man is referring to the bride for



whom everyone but Newland and the narratee was waiting to make her appearance. Throughout the remaining moments leading up to and following on from the foreshortened ceremony, Newland appears mentally absent, and the narratee is distracted by their disappointment at the non-appearance of Ellen. The ellipsis goes against Hardy's (2005: 364, my emphasis) definition of a gap as a 'piece of information [...] that is *noticeably* missing'. After the Rector addresses the wedding party with the familiar phrase, 'dearly beloved', three full stops imperceptibly to the narratee, whose attention has been guided through the focalisation to wonder about Ellen rather than wait for the bride's appearance, foreshorten the actual wedding ceremony. Newland's uncomprehending consciousness contrasts with the expectations of nineteenth-century masculinity, that is pride upon having secured a matrimonial prize. Meanwhile, the extradiegetic narrator reassures the reader that the ceremony has passed as if uninterrupted: '[t]he ring was on her hand, the Bishop's benediction had been given' (113). Only in the third paragraph after the ellipsis are Newland and May referred to as a married couple: 'he and his wife' (114).

The reader's catching up in *Portrait* is not as immediate as in *Age*. It is delayed by a new storyline taking over. For a few paragraphs, Isabel is not mentioned. Then, two references to the new protagonist's, Pansy Osmond's, 'family' may include Isabel (345, 347). Further, Isabel's family relations are defined: she is Pansy's '*belle-mère*', stepmother, and from then on Isabel is referred to as 'Mrs. Osmond', her new married name (347). Only in the next chapter is she referred to once as 'Miss Archer' and another eight times as 'Isabel' (356, 362-363). The disproportionate use of 'Mrs. Osmond', besides being the proper way of referring to Isabel as a married woman, reveals what has become of her individuality.<sup>6</sup> She is no longer the girl affronting her destiny. Instead, she has come to 'represent Gilbert Osmond', her husband (380). This effacement of Isabel's self is shown best by the ambiguity-creating effect of pronominal reference that Norrman (1977: 98-102) notes about James's late style: singular need not denote one; plural need not denote more than one.

So is Newland's effacement: the referential term 'he and his wife' is too inclusive for him. Still in a haze after the ellipsis, a 'black abyss yawned before him and he felt himself sinking into it, deeper and deeper', hinting at the effacement a woman may stereotypically experience upon marriage (114). In *Portrait*, references to Isabel and Osmond as a married couple are inclusive references too; for example, 'these people [i.e. Isabel and Osmond] were very strong in bibelots'. However, collecting is one of Osmond's pastimes, not Isabel's (353). When Madame Merle, who has a closer insight into their married life (but also, as Pansy's secret biological mother, a certain aversion against being told that Pansy sees Isabel 'as if she were her own mother'), refers to them, the reference is exclusive (348): 'Mr. Osmond is her father, certainly; but his wife can scarcely be termed a member of her family' (347). It does not take Madame Merle's hostility to subordinate pronominally Isabel to Osmond. At the end of the chapter, a character admires the Palace Roccanero's *bibelots*, and reflects that

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<sup>6</sup> 'Mrs. Osmond' is used 22 times throughout chapters 36 and 37, more than double the number of references to 'Isabel' and 'Miss Archer' added up.

this 'was a taste of Osmond's – not at all of hers' (353). While the couple is referred to in the plural ('these people'), really only Osmond is intended as the subject. The text's 'they' in fact means 'he'. All subsequent references to them and their things thus negate Isabel's active role in the third person plural pronoun.

While Isabel's self is effaced by pronominal exclusiveness, the inclusiveness of 'he and his wife' in *Age* stifles Newland. Fedorko (1995: 95-96) argues that Newland 'dies, and a more conflicted and complex man begins a new life', but the immediacy of Newland's 'black abyss' invites a more sinister interpretation of the wedding ceremony, akin to James's nameless horrors. Newland and his wife May are sitting in their carriage, face to face, hands clasped – the first moment of privacy since becoming husband and wife. Shortly afterwards, May envelops him in an embrace. The interplay of imagery and circumstance reminds of the ending of *The Golden Bowl*:

close to her, her face kept before him, his hands holding her shoulders, his whole act enclosing her, he presently echoed: '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. (James 1923: 325)

The inclusivity of the pronouns 'you' and 'he and his wife' give rise to a metaphor for marriage. Both Maggie and Newland are enveloped in both figurative and literal darkness. Despite some glaring differences, the comparison of the two scenes sheds light on the consciousness-absorbing effect of marriage. Sicker (1980: 167) argues that Maggie's and Amerigo's 'embrace ends in a kind of blackout.' This blackout – a metaphor for marriage as excluding all other kinds of love, and effacing the individuality of both spouses – is what Newland feels 'himself sinking into' (114).<sup>7</sup> Thus, Wharton effectively effeminates Newland, whose blackout upon marriage resembles the plight of countless nineteenth-century brides, who were regarded as prizes (like Isabel), not individuals.

The inclusivity and exclusivity of pronominal reference works towards revealing the altered states of the protagonists' consciousness. In *Portrait*, 'Osmond had landed his great prizes during his impecunious season' (353). He collected his bibelots before he came into Mr. Touchett's inheritance by marrying Isabel. The reader – with the negation of Isabel's agency in mind – is left to wonder whether Isabel is not also one of these 'great prizes', and has been reduced to her money and Osmond's taste. While in *Age* the reader catches up immersed in Newland's consciousness, in *Portrait* Isabel ceases to be the focaliser for some time. As Gorra (2012: 227) argues, Isabel's 'white light' is refracted 'through the different shaded impressions of other characters'. Thus reacquainting the reader with the changed Isabel narratologically anticipates the climactic forty-second chapter, in which the narratee experiences her 'world of thought and feeling'

<sup>7</sup> A more in-depth reading of the ending of *The Golden Bowl* is beyond the scope of this essay. For a challenge of Sicker's interpretation, see Hutchison (2006: 152).

most closely through her focalisation of which the reader could only enjoy sparse glimpses throughout chapters 36-41. Banta (1987: 290) states that '[w]hat concerns [James] is that a reader's ideas about [women whose stories culminate in marriage] may be limited to the ideas they are portrayed as thinking about'. James's shift of narratological priorities, that is his forty-second chapter in which Isabel is demonstrated to surpass any stereotypical girl whose story ends with the words 'I do', claims for his American *girl* a 'world of thought and feeling' other than the one that cultural expectations would require her to inhabit – it paints a portrait of a *lady*.

Similarly, in the world of the 1870s in Wharton's novel, a myriad of thoughts and feelings are inexpressible because of societal censorship of emotion. Within the focalisation of Newland, Wharton finds a way around what is socially inexpressible through the metaphors to which her style gives rise. The pronouns are indicators of a web of the intricacies of consciousness. The first reference to Newland and May as a married couple, 'he and his wife', draws attention to their separate physical entities, while simultaneously hinting at the self-effacing fusion that Isabel experiences. The dominance of the masculine pronouns in this turn of phrase points to a reading that would liken May to Isabel. May's personality is indeed effaced, as Newland never truly gets to know her. However, expressed by the claustrophobic blackout throughout the marriage ceremony, Newland feels that this is happening to him, which demonstrates Wharton's critical understanding of gender roles and corresponding tropes, and her originality in appropriating them, which will be discussed further in the following section.

To recapitulate, inclusive and exclusive pronominal reference critically challenges conceptions of gender roles upon marriage. Wharton's viewpoint through Newland's consciousness allows drawing attention to his distorted vision, while James's teasing out the revelation of what has become of Isabel and her marriage gives his 'Americana' unprecedented depth (James 1974: 137). The ellipses may not equal the nameless horrors encountered in tales such as *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), but in either novel it is impossible to pinpoint an event that has led to a figurative turn of the screw in the protagonists' perceptions of their marriages. Rather, the effect of marriage on their consciousness is dramatised. Banta (1987: 314) writes that living a meaningful life 'requires that the woman possess the type of the mean that can be looked at, as well as the type of the original that exists only "under water."' Isabel's heightened consciousness during the midnight vigil and on the final pages of the novel symbolises this "'under water'" existence without having to resort the act of self-annihilation that Banta implies with the image. James's techniques of drawing her portrait make it self-expressive of her 'bottom-nature'. Newland's 'type of the original', manifested in the wedding scene, is juxtaposed with an "'under water'" existence closer to the one that Banta has in mind: his recourse to the realm of imagination, as I will demonstrate below, is less lucid than Isabel's state of 'motionlessly *seeing*' (James 1984b: 1084).

### 3.3 'A world of things that had no substance' – Metaphor and the unseen

The tension and uncertainty between the states of heightened consciousness and Banta's (1987: 314) "under water" existence are best explored via images around the concept of the unseen, which highlight the connectivity between the level of consciousness and that of spirituality. James's claim to what some would call 'modernism' is tantamount to the late novels' manifestations of consciousness.<sup>8</sup> Kress (2002: 31) notes 'the inadequacies of language to express the fullness of a thought or feeling'. The manipulation of language to approximate a multi-faceted interiority is an aim often attributed to 'modernism'.<sup>9</sup> For Wharton, the post-war context is more pertinent. One of the wartime 'losses' that Wharton (1972: 368, 362) writes about putting 'into words' is the shattered illusion of the idea of 'returning to the world we had so abruptly passed out of four years earlier'. *Age* explores this rift between nostalgia and embracing innovation, appropriating tropes of *fin-de-siècle* writing, such as the perennial bachelor, to highlight their inadequacy to the post-war era. But the other 'world of thought and feeling' that is so pronounced in the depiction of Isabel's consciousness does not remain uncriticised.<sup>10</sup> However vain and trivial Newland's search for selfhood may appear from a post-war perspective, it is clear that he cannot successfully understand this search or translate it onto the page, because, as Kress (2002: 184) argues, 'there is no language equivalent to the varied manifestations of consciousness', which ties back in with Hutchison's (2006: 6) assertion that James came to realise that 'large areas of human experience are essentially beyond expression'. Wharton appropriates this aspect of James's writing, not merely to reiterate the point that experience is beyond expression, but to demonstrate the triviality of Newland's experience.

Expression and the inexpressible are closely linked to perception. Hutchison (2006: xiv) notes that in James being able to see opens up the fictional characters' world to another spiritual plane: 'the problem of believing is inextricably linked for James to the process of seeing – and the more one explores it, the more this term "seeing" expands to include all modes of perception.' Accordingly, I have surveyed the corpus of the two novels for instances of 'seeing' and 'vision'. Indeed, these words are used disproportionately often in a figurative, experienced or metaphysical sense.<sup>11</sup> Figure 1 shows the concordance search conducted for the term 'seeing'.

<sup>8</sup> See Hutchison (2015: 5) for a challenge of the term; Tintner (2000), Gutorow (2014) and Hutchison (2006: 4) for a reading of James 'through the lens of Modernism'.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Fernihough (2007), Lewis (2007), Wilson (2007).

<sup>10</sup> See Kress (2002: 168) for an elaborate argumentation for this claim.

<sup>11</sup> Vision: 85.7% (n=14) in *Portrait*; 88.2% (n=17) in *Age*.

Seeing: 54.3% (n=35) in *Portrait*; 50.0% (n=16) in *Age*.

Absolute numbers are given to determine the meaning of disproportionate. While 'vision' is a word that invites figurative usage, 'seeing' is not. Hence the lower percentages of figurative uses of 'seeing' are deemed disproportionate too.

1	should elicit by letter; she believed, always, in seeing for one s self. Isabel found, however,	Macmillan 1882.txt
2	wide awake, and wished to check the sense of seeing too many things at once. Her imagination w	Macmillan 1882.txt
3	aving given undue encouragement to the faculty of seeing without judging. At present, with her sens	Macmillan 1882.txt
4	the world. For this reason she was fond of seeing great crowds and large stretches of country	Macmillan 1882.txt
5	who lied and who tried to hurt each other. Seeing such things had quickened her high spirit;	Macmillan 1882.txt
6	to do, for a dinner and a lodging. Isabel, seeing him for half an hour on the day of	Macmillan 1882.txt
7	n! Isabel exclaimed. I should delight in seeing a revolution.	Macmillan 1882.txt
8	all, you won t have the pleasure of seeing a revolution here just now, Mr. To	Macmillan 1882.txt
9	in which I offer myself to you--seeing that I care so much more about it. Ask	Macmillan 1882.txt
10	the truth, she said, I am not seeing much at this place, and I shouldn t	Macmillan 1882.txt
11	You have escaped seeing some very ugly men, Lord Warburton ans w	Macmillan 1882.txt
12	I mean is, I shall have the entertainment of seeing what a young lady does who won t	Macmillan 1882.txt
13	parted, to meet again at dinner. The idea of seeing more of this interesting woman did much to	Macmillan 1882.txt
14	perhaps disappointed, but Henrietta was at least seeing Europe. Her present purpose was to get dow	Macmillan 1882.txt
15	in a kind of repressed ecstasy of contemplation, seeing often in the things she looked at a great	Macmillan 1882.txt
16	great deal more than was there, and yet not seeing many of the items enumerated in Murray.	Macmillan 1882.txt
17	you a moment since, without the smallest idea of seeing you, I was in the very act of wishing	Macmillan 1882.txt
18	time, under the charm of their motionless grace, seeing life between their gazing eyelids and purpo	Macmillan 1882.txt
19	girl had pleased him from the first of his seeing her. We have seen that she thought him	Macmillan 1882.txt
20	year has been spent. Isabel had spent hers in seeing the world; she had moved about; she had tra	Macmillan 1882.txt
21	s of small velvet screens. But he looked without seeing; his cheek burned; he was too full of his	Macmillan 1882.txt
22	you as a great statesman, and I am perpetually seeing your name in the Times, which, by the way,	Macmillan 1882.txt
23	me. In coming to see me, they see Pansy. Seeing her, it is natural that they should fall in	Macmillan 1882.txt
24	her name, she would know her well enough on seeing her. By the time she appeared before her v	Macmillan 1882.txt
25	y Lord Warburton, who received a visible check on seeing Osmond. He looked rapidly from the master	Macmillan 1882.txt
26	with [417] Touchett and a month with himself, and seeing all the rest of the people they must know	Macmillan 1882.txt
27	in the street, but he had no appearance of seeing them; they were driving, and he had a habit	Macmillan 1882.txt
28	resign yourself to not being pleased to simply seeing your step-daughter married. Let him off	Macmillan 1882.txt
29	leaving him. She went straight to Pansy, who, on seeing Edward Rosier, had stopped short, with lowe	Macmillan 1882.txt
30	wouldn t marry Osmond; the fear that on seeing her with Pansy people would put things toge	Macmillan 1882.txt
31	. And how the poor woman must have suffered at seeing me! Isabel exclaimed, flushing	Macmillan 1882.txt
32	That is the pleasure of seeing you. She is very happy.	Macmillan 1882.txt
33	Isabel looked about, without seeing her maid. Her eyes rested on another figur	Macmillan 1882.txt
34	Only for a little. But he had been seeing people; Warburton was there the day before.	Macmillan 1882.txt
35	ion, and the desire to prevent her companion from seeing anything of this kind enabled her to speak	Macmillan 1882.txt
36	houlder and bosom than New York was accustomed to seeing, at least in ladies who had reasons for wis	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
37	-green, the crimson and the bouton d or, seeing from afar the many-candled lustres reflecte	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
38	, with the sweetest look: Henry always enjoys seeing you, dear Adeline; and he will wish to cong	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
39	she entered the room she showed no surprise at seeing Archer there; surprise seemed the emotion t	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
40	r. Archer remembered, on his last visit to Paris, seeing a portrait by the new painter, Carolus Dura	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
41	We might be seeing it all this spring--even the Easter cerem	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
42	Archers left Botzen they had no idea of ever seeing Mrs. Carfry and Miss Harle again. Nothing,	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
43	g why, he suddenly began to feign astonishment at seeing her. But what on earth are you doing	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
44	Before seeing her, I saw--at Count Olenski s	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
45	Simply seeing the change in her, M. Riviere	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
46	at any rate he could no longer put off seeing Madame Olenska. There were too many things	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
47	, since, if Mr. Welland were upset by seeing his mother-in-law for the first time after	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
48	been apart, and I m looking forward to seeing you, every thought is burnt up in a great	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
49	beside his table, under his lamp, the fact of seeing other houses, roofs, chimneys, of getting t	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
50	At the Tuileries, he repeated, seeing the eyes of the company expectantly turned	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
51	seldom worn her bridal satin, and the surprise of seeing her in it made him compare her appearance w	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt

Fig. 1: Concordance search for 'seeing'. 'Macmillan 1882.txt' refers to James (2016b) ; 'THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt' to Wharton (2000). These edition use the same copy-texts as James (2016a) and Wharton (2003), respectively.

I have further excluded from the above list hits containing the everyday conceptual metaphor 'seeing is believing/understanding'. This conceptual metaphor produces common figures of speech, and these can be assumed not to have been employed consciously by the authors with the purpose of creating a metaphor concerning the spiritual (cf. Dancygier 2017). Analysing each hit manually and separately, intransitive instances of 'seeing' that operate along the lines of this conceptual metaphor as well as transitive instances with tangible objects have been excluded. The remaining hits are transitive instances of 'seeing' with intangible objects. These are spread throughout the texts, demonstrating the authors' conscious and intentional deployment of the metaphor. For example, Isabel is prone to 'seeing [...] more than was there' or 'too many things at once', and Newland '[sees] other houses [...], a world beyond his world' (James 2016a: 276, 29; Wharton 2003: 178). According to

Halliday's (1985: 101-157) classification system, Isabel and Newland perform 'mental processes', further subcategorised as 'processes of perception'; what they perceive is termed, according to Halliday's framework, a phenomenon. However, if we accept that 'seeing' comprises 'all modes of perception', including knowing and believing, the verb 'seeing' may well be subcategorised as a process of cognition. Newland and Isabel know and believe that there are 'houses' or 'too many things'. This is as much interpretation as the grammatical function of the verb allows within Halliday's framework; however, the multiplicity of meaning that these images convey proves the framework insufficient. In its metaphorical function, the verb 'seeing' performs what Halliday would call a relational process (usually reserved for the verb 'to be'), which turns the phenomena into attributes. Both authors use the metaphor to describe the characters' intangible worlds. Connecting something concrete, such as 'things' and 'houses', with the world of imagination operates to concretise this world, establishing a sense of duplicity of the abstract and the concrete.

By contrast, the literal instances of 'vision' operate to de-concretise the material world. All examples shown in Figure 2 occur in contexts in which the characters are actively looking at something material. When 'a shadow was thrown across the line of [Isabel's] vision', Warburton, the shadow, is turned into a part of Isabel's immaterial world before the author allows him to become concrete for her (277). Likewise, at his wedding, Newland perceives May as the 'vision of the cloud of tulle [...] floating nearer' (113). Even though Newland literally sees this vision, May is reduced to an image in his abstracted world, and, as demonstrated in the previous section, it takes him much longer than Isabel to return to the concrete world. Seeing the concrete in the abstract and the abstract in the concrete is tantamount to James's late style: Krook (1962: 397) notes his 'mixed metaphors', which Hutchison (2006: 15) further specifies as 'tangible metaphors in his intangible discourse'. Matthiessen (1946: 157) controversially calls 'the late James [...] more concrete', which (even though Chatman 1972, Krook 1962 and Horne 1990 convincingly refute the claim) is not all that contrived. Aiming to approximate the characters' 'world of thought and feeling', the metaphors serve simultaneously to concretise and de-concretise this world by fusing the concrete and the abstract. Here, the examples are part of an overall metaphor: 'seeing', and the eyes open or close one's perception to its tenor: a spiritual realm of things invisible to the physical organ.

1	former lasted he was sometimes the sport of a vision of virtual recovery. But this vision was d	Macmillan 1882.txt
2	sport of a vision of virtual recovery. But this vision was dispelled some three years before the o	Macmillan 1882.txt
3	curiosity regarding it. It had flashed upon her vision once before, and it had given her on that	Macmillan 1882.txt
4	d Warburton; the idea failed to correspond to any vision of happiness that she had hitherto entertai	Macmillan 1882.txt
5	duly considered, offered to Isabel s startled vision the name of Mr. Caspar Goodwood. She let t	Macmillan 1882.txt
6	a shadow was thrown across the line of her vision. She looked up and [252] saw a gentleman	Macmillan 1882.txt
7	I had a sort of vision of your future, Ralph said, without ans	Macmillan 1882.txt
8	ambiguities were simply her own grossness of vision. She had been unable to believe that any o	Macmillan 1882.txt
9	of things that had no substance. She had a vision of him--she had not read him right.	Macmillan 1882.txt
10	the room, and stood there gazing at a remembered vision--that of her husband and Madame Merle, gr	Macmillan 1882.txt
11	a pain. He was going down--down; the vision of such a fall made her almost giddy; that	Macmillan 1882.txt
12	, for Madame Merle was already so present to her vision that her appearance in the flesh was a sort	Macmillan 1882.txt
13	. But she closed her eyes, and then the hideous vision died away. What remained was the cleverest	Macmillan 1882.txt
14	this idea was as sweet as the vision of a cool bath in a marble tank, in	Macmillan 1882.txt
15	distant and serious, as if bent on some ineffable vision. Dear, Archer whispered, pressing h	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
16	ight he pursued through those enchanted pages the vision of a woman who had the face of Ellen	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
17	To Archer s strained nerves the vision was as soothing as the sight of the blue	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
18	, the scent of the lilies on the altar, the vision of the cloud of tulle and orange-blossoms f	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
19	Marchioness s foolish lisp had called up a vision of the little fire-lit drawing-room and the	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
20	sight as if he had waked from sleep. That vision of the past was a dream, and the reality	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
21	did not care for whist or solitaire) was a vision that haunted her as the spectre of the unem	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
22	simply felt that if he could carry away the vision of the spot of earth she walked on, and	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
23	: he could never hear the name without the sharp vision of Beaufort s heavy figure, opulently fu	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
24	ctly still beside you, like this, with that other vision in my mind, just quietly trusting to it to	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
25	Your vision of you and me together? She burst into	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
26	ut toward something beyond the usual range of her vision. She hates Ellen, he thou	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
27	ely-fitted vista of the old Museum. The vision had roused a host of other associations, an	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
28	of money-making, sport and society to which their vision had been limited--even his small contribu	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
29	book or a picture: she had become the composite vision of all that he had missed. That vision, fai	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
30	composite vision of all that he had missed. That vision, faint and tenuous as it was, had kept him	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
31	scene of his return to Paris; then the personal vision had faded, and he had simply tried to see	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt

Fig. 2: Concordance search for 'vision'.

With this plenitude of 'seeing' it is worth taking a look at instances when the characters are not doing so. To determine the significance of a metaphor concerning the lack of seeing, I have conducted a concordance search for the words 'unsee\*' and 'sightless', which is shown in Figure 3. Throughout *Age*, Newland's 'unseeing eyes' stare or are fixed on things or persons of secondary importance. Occurring four times throughout the novel, this metaphor can be deemed relevant, as it is used exclusively for Newland, and operates to highlight an effeminate characteristic. The first time, this metaphor is a sign of his happiness, when he is sitting next to Ellen on a park bench in Boston, but afterwards, on finding out that Ellen is going back to Europe or that May had known all along of his feelings for Ellen, the phrase suggests disillusionment with reality. In *Portrait*, Isabel performs her journey to Gardencourt to see her dying cousin one last time 'with sightless eyes' (539). In the notes on the text, Anesko stresses a link to Shakespeare's (2010: 197) 43th sonnet (632). Not only the image of 'sightless eyes' plays a major role in this sonnet, but also that of 'unseeing' ones. Sharpe (2013: 7), in a study that traces shadows through English literature in connection to Plato's cave allegory, notes that this sonnet 'plays on [the shadow's] tangible aspect', and 'reverses the worlds of shadow and light'. Indeed, the only thing of substance in this sonnet is the shadow. The poem is seen entirely through the lyric I's 'unseeing eyes': through them, the personified shadow is perceived as having a substantial 'form', not just as an ephemeral 'shade' (ls. 8, 5, 11). Thus, Shakespeare transforms the abstract into something concrete. In *Age*, Newland's 'shadow of reality' is 'more real to' him, has more substance, suggesting that Newland spends a considerable amount of time in an immaterial, imaginary world, another ostensibly feminine characteristic with which Wharton portrays Newland's failed masculinity.

1	erfered with her theory that there was a strange, unseen place on the other side--a place which	Macmillan 1882.txt
2	everberations; she had a sense of the hovering of unseen figures, of the flitting of ghosts. Often	Macmillan 1882.txt
3	tt had not the imagination that communes with the unseen, and she now pretended to no intimacy with	Macmillan 1882.txt
4	tion the future. She performed this journey with sightless eyes, and took little pleasure in the co	Macmillan 1882.txt
5	her walked away a few steps, staring with radiant unseeing eyes at the passers-by, who, in their tur	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
6	bell rang Mrs. Beaufort had already slipped away unseen, and the old lady, white and vast and terri	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
7	, i believe. She lowered her eyes under his unseeing stare, and another fugitive flush passed	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
8	Oh, all right, he said, staring with unseeing eyes at the list of guests that she had	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt
9	range communication in silence. His eyes remained unseeingly fixed on the thronged sunlit square bel	THE AGE OF INNOCENCE.txt

Fig. 3: Concordance search for 'unsee\*' and 'sightless'.

The conflation of the concrete and the abstract also invites a comparison to a *fin-de-siècle* trope. A difference between *Portrait* and *Age* is that, in the former novel, everything revolves around Isabel, while in the latter, Newland believes that everything revolves around him. Especially in the novel's final chapter, Newland – middle-aged, emotionally naïve and indecisive – mirrors the epitomical bachelor type: James's Lambert Strether.<sup>12</sup> Writing on *The Children*, Sensibar (1992: 159) notes Wharton's revision of one of the era's 'central and most compelling tropes: its romanticization [...] of the perennial bachelor'. Wharton revises this trope cynically by having Newland, the novel's reflector, be undercut and ridiculed by the extradiegetic narrative voice. Newland is demystified. However, only the reader experiences Newland thus. Rejecting the material world, Newland himself never achieves this kind of lucidity. As the reflecting centre of consciousness, he is not very aware of his consciousness, unlike Isabel during her midnight vigil. He prefers not to see: he thinks of Ellen as of 'some imaginary beloved in a book or a picture: she had become the composite vision of all he had missed' (208). This vision and the desire for the version of May that he never truly knew suggests not an objectification of the two women but a quasi-religious idolisation or reverence. The mention of books and pictures also hints at the term 'seeing', but with the weight Hutchison attaches to it. Newland does not literally see these visions – he equates seeing with imagining, but his immaterial world is more naïve and less stereotypically masculine than Isabel's state of 'motionlessly seeing'.

Imagining the immaterial world in connection with the cave allegory but also Genesis 3 is central to the reading of the ending of *Portrait*, too. Continuing the metaphor of Isabel's 'sightless eyes', '[h]er thoughts followed their course through other countries – strange-looking, dimly-lighted, pathless lands, in which there was no change of seasons, but only, as it seemed, a perpetual dreariness of winter' (539). She can only perceive the fallen world despite traversing an Edenic scene. Plato's cave allegory is inversed: her pessimistic outlook makes the outside world appear in the guise of the subterranean shadows. However, she perceives this reality while literally or metaphorically unconscious, which again is in line with the allegory. As Underwood (2006: 48) argues, paradoxically experience makes Isabel feel more and more 'embedded deeply within the cave'. This contrasts starkly with the image of the outside world before her fall. While growing up in her grandmother's mansion, beyond the door, 'there was a strange unseen place [...] – a place which became, to the child's imagination,

<sup>12</sup> Even though Strether and Archer are married, and thus do not fit the literal meaning of 'bachelor', they embody the epitome of the trope in their erotic naïveté.



according to its different moods, a region of delight or of terror' (22). This suggests a straightforward analogy of Genesis (knowledge of the outside world can only be attained through the Fall), but an inverse one of the cave allegory: the outside world is fraught with darkness – like Newland, young Isabel cannot yet see beyond.

The prevalence of darkness in the second half of the novel is never reversed: rejecting Goodwood's offer to elope, '[Isabel] had moved through the darkness (for she saw nothing)' out of the reader's reach (568). Given all these contradictory hints, the reader may wonder whether if she were to grow young again, would she reverse her fall? If she 'saw nothing', does she now see? Whether Isabel climbs back into the cave, or finally rises out of it in spite of the darkness, or whether, as Underwood (2006: 49) argues, she only performs her Socratic duty by returning to Osmond to liberate Pansy, are questions that the text does not answer.<sup>13</sup> The wealth of sensory terms in the reader's last encounter with Isabel suggests a reading akin to Hutchison's. Reaching the door, Isabel 'paused. She *looked* all about her; she *listened* a little; then she *put her hand* on the latch. She had not known where to turn; but she *knew* now' (568, my emphases). She has discovered that for all the darkness, for all the shadows, for all the light, there are some things that she cannot see or hear or feel or know. These things can only be seen *and* heard *and* felt *and* known. Seeing, then, as Hutchison (2006: xiv) notes, incorporates 'all modes of perception', and so do hearing and feeling and knowing. The combination of these amounts to a sense that is beyond description, just as the ending of *Portrait* is beyond correct analysis. Unlike *Age*, which ends with Newland's metaphorical subduction, *Portrait*, Taylor (2002: 139) argues, 'ends with a tentative beginning, for Isabel is on the threshold of a decision which the reader does not actually witness being taken' – much like that of her marrying Osmond. The reader has to let Isabel and her story go, seeing, hearing, feeling, and knowing that the 'very straight path' is a decision that despite precluding personal happiness will entail spiritual freedom (568).

Overall, while Isabel may be 'motionlessly *seeing*', seeing lucidly, as James (1984b: 1084) puts it, during her midnight vigil, it is the ending that shows her realisation that she cannot merely *see* lucidly. She has to trust a sense of spirituality that incorporates a variety of modes of perceptions in order to feel and to believe. That there is no point in trying is the conclusion that Newland reaches. As Wharton's revision of the bachelor type, he ensconces himself in self-mystification. If James's late style, as Hutchison (2006: 3) argues, 'track[s] the transformation of experience into apprehension', Newland cannot fully attain

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<sup>13</sup> This does not deter critics from trying. Krook (1962), Galloway (1967) and Taylor (2002) read the ending pessimistically, viewing Isabel's return to Osmond as inevitable. Allen (1984) and Tanner (1968) add the layer of Isabel's frigidity. By contrast, a more positive interpretation, construing the 'straight path' (568) as an assertion of free will, is found in Poirier (1960), Banta (1987), Hodges (1999) and Underwood (2006). More recent criticism tends to underpin interpretations of the ending with the meta-level of narration: Horne (1990), Cross (1993), Mitchell (1998), Kress (2002), Machlan (2005) and Gorra (2012). A more extensive overview of the criticism up to 1991 can be found in Kirby (1991).

apprehension, while Isabel reaches this state, even though neither she nor the reader can pinpoint how this transformation has come about.

#### 4. Conclusion: 'Another world of thought and feeling'

The plethora of criticism on *Portrait*, in which agreement on Isabel's motivation for her return to Osmond cannot be found, manifests the interest James has generated in this psychological portrait of a lady: as James (1984b: 1084) states in the novel's preface, it is 'as 'interesting' as the surprise of a caravan or the identification of a pirate' – a piece of feminist literature that leaves the reader wondering about Isabel's 'world of thought and feeling'.<sup>14</sup> James's style, on all three levels analysed here, keeps emphasising this by anticipating his late style. Not only is the psychological novel equal to the novel of incident, but Isabel, James's (1974: 137) 'Americana', is the literary equal, perhaps even superior, of his *American* (1877). Gorra (2012: 229) calls Isabel's midnight vigil, which exemplifies James's (1984a: 61) 'psychological reason', a 'turning point in the history of the novel'. Her character's interior world anticipates those of Milly Theale, Lambert Strether and Maggie Verver, anticipates a fictional world in which both genders' other worlds 'of thought and feeling' are equally intriguing.

Wharton's societal critique emphasises particularly the subversion of contemporary conceptions of gender. The level of the syntax undercuts her subject – not allowing for 'another world of thought and feeling', the society of the Gilded Age is an antithesis to the portentous, Jamesian style of expression that Wharton deploys pointedly. From its opening paragraphs onwards, *Age* is not a novel imbued with nostalgia, as Wolff (1977: 333-4) claims, but a societal critique embracing innovation and spiritual growth. The level of consciousness and that of a spiritual world subtly subvert gender roles. Newland, her 'Portrait of a Gentleman', is stuck between the Gilded Age's world of two-dimensional portraits and the aspiration to one without boundaries and categories (79). Ultimately, he feels safer living in the realm of his imagination, a world perhaps most closely comparable to that of the naïve Isabel at the beginning of *Portrait*, thus demonstrating Newland's failed masculinity. In sketching and critiquing this world, Wharton's novel is in several ways reminiscent of James's late style, but what Tintner (1987: xxii) notes about James's borrowing from earlier novelists – 'He had none of the fears nor qualms of a plagiarist because his adaptation turned the original into his own thing' – rings true for Wharton, too. Her partly farcical deployment of James's style as a tool for satire and social commentary is a way of subverting it to suit her own agenda – to make it Whartonian.

Overall, T. S. Eliot's notion of 'another world of thought and feeling' in the novels of Henry James is relevant both to *Portrait* and *Age*. On the level of the syntax, conspicuous constructions inconspicuously offer glimpses at the level of the plot and the dramatisation of this world. On the level of the plot, what is elided or obscured intensifies this world and that of the characters' consciousness. On the level of the dramatisation of consciousness, the multiplicity of imagery and

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<sup>14</sup> See N13.

metaphor tantalisingly suggests *something* beyond – an elusive spiritual world that can only be approximated through one's thoughts and feelings. When Hutchison (2006: 156), writing about James's spiritual economy, asserts that 'James's vision affirms the individual and the particular, within the mesh of the universal', she might as well be writing about the level of syntax of both *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Age of Innocence*. The spiritual level comes full circle with the bottom-most one. This goes to show that language and style are indeed inextricably linked to the highest level of consciousness imaginable.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: (James 2016: 3-4)

Under certain circumstances there are few hours in life more agreeable than the hour dedicated to the ceremony known as afternoon tea. There are circumstances in which, whether you partake of the tea or not – some people of course never do – the situation is in itself delightful. Those that I have in mind in beginning to unfold this simple history offered an admirable setting to an innocent pastime. The implements of the little feast had been disposed upon the lawn of an old English country-house, in what I should call the perfect middle of a splendid summer afternoon. Part of the afternoon had waned, but much of it was left, and what was left was of the finest and rarest quality. Real dusk would not arrive for many hours; but the flood of summer light had begun to ebb, the air had grown mellow, the shadows were long upon the smooth, dense turf. They lengthened slowly, however, and the scene expressed that sense of leisure still to come which is perhaps the chief source of one's enjoyment of such a scene at such an hour. 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. The persons concerned in it were taking their pleasure quietly, and they were not of the sex which is supposed to furnish the regular votaries of the ceremony I have mentioned. The shadows on the perfect lawn were straight and angular; they were the shadows of an old man sitting in a deep wicker-chair near the low table on which the tea had been served, and of

two younger men strolling to and fro, in desultory talk, in front of him. The old man had his cup in his hand; it was an unusually large cup, of a different pattern from the rest of the set, and painted in brilliant colours. He disposed of its contents with much circumspection, holding it for a long time close to his chin, with his face turned to the house. His companions had either finished their tea or were indifferent to their privilege; they smoked cigarettes as they continued to stroll. One of them, from time to time, as he passed, looked with a certain attention at the elder man, who, unconscious of observation, rested his eyes upon the rich red front of his dwelling. The house that rose beyond the lawn was a structure to repay such consideration, and was the most characteristic object in the peculiarly English picture I have attempted to sketch.

## 7.2 Appendix B: (Wharton 2003: 3-4)

ON a January evening of the early seventies, Christine Nilsson was singing in *Faust* at the Academy of Music in New York.

Though there was already talk of the erection, in remote metropolitan distances 'above the Forties,' of a new Opera House which should compete in costliness and splendour with those of the great European capitals, the world of fashion was still content to reassemble every winter in the shabby red and gold boxes of the sociable old Academy. Conservatives cherished it for being small and inconvenient, and thus keeping out the 'new people' whom New York was beginning to dread and yet be drawn to; and the sentimental clung to it for its historic associations, and the musical for its excellent acoustics, always so problematic a quality in halls built for the hearing of music.

It was Madame Nilsson's first appearance that winter, and what the daily press had already learned to describe as 'an exceptionally brilliant audience' had gathered to hear her, transported through the slippery, snowy streets in private broughams, in the spacious family landau, or in the humbler but more convenient 'Brown *coupé*.' To come to the Opera in a Brown *coupé* was almost as honourable a way of arriving as in one's own carriage; and departure by the same means had the immense advantage of enabling one (with a playful allusion to democratic principles) to scramble into the first Brown conveyance in the line, instead of waiting till the cold-and-gin congested nose of one's own coachman gleamed under the portico of the Academy. It was one of the great livery-stableman's most masterly intuitions to have discovered that Americans want to get away from amusement even more quickly than they want to get to it.

When Newland Archer opened the door at the back of the club box the curtain had just gone up on the garden scene. There was no reason why the young man should not have come earlier, for he had dined at seven, alone with his mother and sister, and had lingered afterward over a cigar in the Gothic library with glazed black-walnut bookcases and finial-topped chairs which was the only room in the house where Mrs. Archer allowed smoking. But, in the first place, New York was a metropolis, and perfectly aware that in metropolises it was 'not the thing' to arrive early at the opera; and what was or was not 'the thing' played



a part as important in Newland Archer's New York as the inscrutable totem  
terrors that had ruled the destinies of his forefathers thousands of years ago.