

# **Masculine Domination in the Works of Henry James**

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## CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Reading James Sociologically?.....	7
Relational Literary Criticism .....	8
Relational Sociology in Narratological Analysis .....	15
Masculine Domination: “Symbolic Domination <i>par excellence</i> ” .....	22
Symbolic Punishment and Social Death in <i>Daisy Miller: A Study</i> .....	30
The Vacated <i>Portrait of a Lady</i> .....	67
The Grip of Inheritance: Capital Resources in <i>The Wings of the Dove</i> .....	106
How to Survive a James Novel: <i>The Golden Bowl</i> .....	140
Epilogue: James’s “Culture Vultures” .....	163
Conclusion .....	198
Bibliography .....	207

INTRODUCTION

This study investigates symbolic domination in Henry James's fiction.<sup>1</sup> It specifically looks at female protagonists' attempts to break out of gendered domination and the ways in which James's narratives reflect both the social constraints and the personal strategies to escape them. The readings are informed by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic violence and symbolic domination. With their focus on the interdependencies between objective structures, personal perception, and bodily responses Bourdieu's models lend themselves to the narrative analyses of texts aiming to locate protagonists within intricate social worlds and fragile power structures. At the core of Bourdieu's analysis of social power—which always relies on symbolic violence—is the imperative of a double concealment that is built into any social hierarchy. Symbolic power needs to conceal its true source and the ways in which it works on minds and bodies from both those who exert it and those who are subjected to it. Few writers find more effective ways of reflecting this necessity of obfuscation through their narrative structures, styles, and techniques than James. He mastered the art of concealment.

Henry James was one of the keenest observers of the power relations of his time. Research on James has from its beginnings examined the narrative implementation of his accurate understanding of socio-cultural oppression in his character constellations, the representation of consciousness, and the meticulous depiction of, on the one hand, the material world—in architectural design of his fictional realities, in attire, interior decoration, etc.—and, on the other hand, in the verbose, inuendo-filled dialogues and the rich imagery of his novels and tales. James's fictional worlds, from trimmed lawn to upholstery, from open parasol to oiled mustache, and from silent gaze to eloquent speech are imbued with the author's awareness that each knickknack, each gesture, and every spoken or unspoken word can serve as indicator or even instrument of social power.

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<sup>1</sup> The research for this study has been funded with a post-graduate stipend by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) between 2009 and 2012.

One aspect of this wide area within James's oeuvre, however, remains at times underexposed within the extensive criticism written about his works, namely in how far and with which narrative means James does not only *depict* social power and its problematic implications, but how his depictions also account for this power's social *conditionality*. This blind spot cannot be blamed on a dearth of critical perspectives, and certainly not on the assumption the author had missed the conditions that enable social power constellations to emerge. And yet, James criticism sometimes hits the proverbial brick wall when it comes to certain conflicts that traditional methods of literary analysis cannot seem to resolve. One example are the many questions around the controversial ending of *The Portrait of a Lady*—a frustrating experience for many readers. The ongoing controversy concerning the character of Maggie Verver and her morally questionable behavior in *The Golden Bowl* is another case in point. In both cases, this book's method of merging relational sociology's concepts with narratological instruments can overcome certain limitations of former approaches.

Henry James criticism has long been rife with questions of power, domination, violence, and sexuality. The author himself is an object of similar interest and James's private as well as public image is the product of much shaping on the part of biographers and cultural critics. By the time Leon Edel produced his five-volume biography, F.O. Matthiessen had already published *The James Family*, and in *The Art of the Novel* R.P. Blackmur has laid down the foundation for the iconic figure of "the Master" that other critics would build upon in the following decades. While both structuralism and post-structuralism have made forays into James's work (cf. McGuirk; Landau), queer theory has claimed James as one of its figureheads (Sedgwick; Haralson), and feminist criticism has condemned both the author and his works as borderline misogynist,<sup>2</sup> readings of James have consistently foregrounded socio-psychological issues in the past two decades.

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<sup>2</sup> In her reading of *The Bostonians*, Nan Bauer Maglin is convinced of James's "disgust and mockery" towards "women in general" (219). Judith Fryer accuses James of merely reflecting and therefore endorsing "the prevailing images of women in the nineteenth century" (23). In his controversial *Henry James and the Woman Business*, Alfred Habegger calls attention to "James's condescending view of women" (5) and "his antifeminism" (7). In *Imagination and Desire*, Carren Kaston in turn wishes to "reclaim James from currently hostile feminist criticism" (40).

In *The Other Henry James*, John Carlos Rowe helped discover the self-conscious, sometimes awkward and often lonely author whose fiction testifies to a deep and nuanced understanding of the workings of oppression on the human subject. Even those cultural critics who “identified his limitations,” Rowe notes in his foreword to David McWhirter’s *Henry James’s New York Edition*, give James credit for “the subtlety of his understanding of how social power works” (xxiii). The intricate relations of domination that unfold and grow among his characters disclose myriad shades of complication, the confusion that seems inevitable when trying to determine the source of psychological and symbolic violence, and the immense difficulty of breaking free from such relations. A profound insight into the workings of the dominated mind speaks from the Jamesian consciousnesses.

At the same time, we cannot do away with the overarching notion of “the Master” whose groundbreaking theoretical works are still considered the undisputed origin of novel theory. The self-monumentalizing prefaces to his *New York Edition* especially bear witness to a writer who confidently claimed an elevated status within the literary world, and who strategically worked to augment it. Ross Posnock, along with other contributors to *Henry James’s New York Edition*, however, has drawn attention to the “pre-canonical James,” a “provocative figure” and “disquieting curiosity to the reading public” who arouses “unease,” and whose “unpopularity among his contemporaries” is partly caused by “his ungentle excess of curiosity” (Posnock 27). This picture does not correspond with Blackmur’s canonical image of a genteel bachelor. Posnock shows how the author, despite participating more than a little in creating his own monolithic position in the history of Western literature, also documents his constant self-questioning. Artistic work is characterized in James’s prefaces, first and foremost, as suffering, doubting, and insecurity.

This ambiguous James is an author whose untiring concern for underrepresented, exploited, and violated groups gains in clarity when the sometimes bloodless, exclusively upper-class scenery of some of the major novels is allowed to fade into the background.<sup>3</sup> The literary scholar is well advised, for instance by Donatella Izzo, not

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<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to see how James himself valued a writer such as George Robert Gissing (although he deplored him for aesthetic reasons) because Gissing became “the authority” on the lower, in fact the lowest, social classes of London in the late nineteenth century (*Literary Criticism* 1402).

to turn this newly discovered ambiguity into the next “critically reified” attachment to the image of the Master that is “perhaps as unwilling to question its own premises” as its predecessors (5). As frustrated as James often was with the social problems of his time, and as deep as his sympathy might have been for the individual struggling for a certain degree of freedom, some personal reservations persisted without change. James comments condescendingly on women’s suffrage and feminist movements (cf. Habegger 6-10), and his arrogance towards his fellow woman writers, some of which he considered friends despite his scathing criticism, remains undeniable. As does the anti-Semitism of certain remarks on Jews in his fiction.

The shift in perspective nevertheless sheds a new light on James’s perceptiveness with regard to concealed or otherwise overlooked matters of coercion. “Of all nineteenth-century writers,” Winfried Fluck observes, “James is probably the one who is most aware of the permanent presence of manipulation and the constant re-emergence of social asymmetries in relations” (22-23). Going a step further, Fluck claims that “the work of James ... offers the most comprehensive study of social relations of any American writer of the nineteenth century (if not the twentieth century as well)” (23). In her more recent study *Henry James’s Narrative Technique*, Kristin Boudreau emphasizes how Henry James, “shar[ing] his brother’s resistance to ideology,” insisted on prioritizing human experience and, above all, perception over any rationalist logic (4).<sup>4</sup> As an integral part of James’s narrative technique, his representation of perception professes “the relative superiority of thought and feeling to ideas” (Boudreau 4).

In his beautiful study *Henry James and Sexuality*, Hugh Stevens cautions the reader against “characters’ attempts to put forward watertight narratives [which], when done to perfection, represents an art of concealment so finished that one is not even aware that something is being concealed” (22). In this passage, from which this book takes its title, Stevens highlights how James pays tribute to the conditionality of both perception and its representation through his specific narrative style: “James’s insistence on ... a ‘recording consciousness’ entails a recognition of the distance between

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<sup>4</sup> Boudreau’s claim that both William and Henry James rejected ideology wholesale contradicts, for instance, Terry Eagleton’s observation about developments in the literary production of the late nineteenth century whose “serious aesthetics of fiction ... discover[s] its major ideologue at the end of the century in Henry James” (*Ideology* 103).

signification and signified, the difficulty of getting to the ‘signified’ beyond the particular modes of representation used” (22). *The Art of Concealment* traces in detail and over time James’s implementation of narrative techniques that acknowledge the social obligation to obfuscate this relation between signification and signified and to do so in a manner that “one is not even aware” of the concealment. As a result, the structures of symbolic domination are often as effectively concealed in James’s narratives as they are in the empirical world.

Elsie B. Michie invites critics in *The Vulgar Question of Money* to “refuse the critical gesture that establishes our distance” from dismissed or omitted matters in order to bring to the fore how much James’s and other nineteenth-century novels rely on tacitly representing that which they claim to resist (2). With reference to Bourdieu’s *Outline of a Theory of Practice* and his more famous *Distinction*, Michie proposes to shift critical attention towards concealed issues, such as (gendered) vulgarity, and their representatives in James’s and other writers’ fictions.

These examples of James criticism testify to an ongoing interest in the particular Jamesian narrative representation of social as well as gendered inequality (with the latter being one manifestation of the former). Recent approaches in James studies, such as Boudreau’s and Stevens’, find new ways of making sense specifically of the concealed, repressed, and rejected aspects of his fictional social worlds. The processes of obfuscation and repression these readings uncover can only be fully revealed and understood in view of their infiltration of both the external social realities – those James was confronted with himself as well as those he depicts in his fiction – and the psychological responses of the Jamesian characters. It is in these responses, first and foremost, that this study aims to show the otherwise invisible forces of symbolic violence and in particular the structures of masculine domination in James’s works.

The concepts of symbolic violence and symbolic domination, which includes gender-specific domination, were formulated by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and are an integral part of his wide-ranging relational theory. “Relational sociology,” as Christa Buschendorf and Astrid Franke point out in a study that examines the potential of this approach for literary criticism, “is a well-established approach in the social sciences [but] has rarely served as an arsenal of tools for the interpretation of literary texts”

(75). Bourdieu himself is aware of fictional literature's peculiar ability to say things about the social realm "in a mode such that it does not truly say it" (*Rules* 32). He demonstrates this special mode of intrinsically saying something without "truly" saying it in an extensive literary analysis of Virginia Woolf's novel *To the Lighthouse*. In this reading, which is included in *Masculine Domination*, Bourdieu focuses on how Woolf's narrative style represents the gendered power relations among the novel's characters with special regard to the female protagonist's perception of the symbolic violence exercised by her husband.

Such violence, according to Bourdieu, is that which needs to conceal its existence not only from the one who exerts it, but also from the one who suffers it. In educational and familial institutions, where "the primary habitus" – the foundation for all dispositions and the basic principles of a person's perception and assessment of the world – is acquired, violence in its hidden form proves especially influential (*Meditations* 164). Coming from a family background with notoriously difficult power relations (cf. Matthiesen, *Family*; Lewis, *The Jameses*), James was particularly sensitive to this invisible force and proved a keen observer of the social and psychological processes that (re)produce it. It is not surprising then that among his most touching, if also most controversial, tales of violent social forces are those featuring children caught (and often crushed) by oppressive family relations, left in the hands of teachers and governesses as prone to the ill effects of abusive environments as their disciples, as is the case in "The Pupil" (1891), *What Maisie Knew* (1897), and *The Turn of the Screw* (1898).<sup>5</sup>

Rather than examining such tales of childhood exposure to symbolic violence, this study addresses gender-specific forms of symbolic violence in James's work, combining issues of power, sexuality, and social as well as spatial and moral transgression that have long claimed center stage in James studies. A huge and at times intimidating challenge throughout such a project lies in the selection the critic is forced to make. Joseph Hillis Miller in *Literature as Conduct* poses the rhetorical question: "Can any group [of works] be said to be representative of such abundant and diverse an oeuvre?" (2), the implied answer being that it cannot. In order to do justice to this

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<sup>5</sup> In *The Fictional Children of Henry James*, Muriel G. Shine claims that James thought of "childhood [as] a time of unhappiness" in general (22).

notoriously prolific author's long career, and because this book is interested in tracing how his representation of the dominated female consciousness changes over time, the selection of primary works includes four texts whose heroines reflect the development that the "American girl"—this most Jamesian of all types—undergoes between his first popular success, *Daisy Miller* (1878), and his last finished novel, *The Golden Bowl* (1904). Between the careless "flirt" Daisy Miller and the ambitious, distinctly more complex Maggie Verver James's orphaned American heiresses, Isabel Archer and Milly Theale will be placed. While the publication dates of *Daisy Miller* and *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881) on the one hand, and *The Wings of the Dove* (1902) and *The Golden Bowl* on the other are rather close together, James's representation of his heroines varies remarkably, especially in terms of their responses to symbolic domination. And so, while a lot of other novels, novellas, and tales could have made the short list for this study, and many a compelling heroine had to settle for a brief reference instead of the close reading she deserves, the final selection includes four heroines representative of an evolution in James's treatment of the dominated female protagonist.

### Reading James Sociologically?

When sociological theories and concepts are applied to literary analyses, literature usually serves as an object of sociological investigation that ultimately targets the facts of social life. Bourdieu's approach to literature in *The Rules of Art*, as Stefanie Müller points out in her study of Toni Morrison's work, "use[s] fiction as an initial design from which to analyze the author's field" (14). In *The Rules of Art* Bourdieu undertakes an extensive analysis of the literary field, focusing on the particular historical moment when it emerged as an autonomous social field. Founding his analysis almost exclusively on Gustave Flaubert's 1869 novel *L'Education Sentimentale*, which portrays characters covering the entire spectrum of social positions evolving within the field in mid-nineteenth century France, Bourdieu examines Flaubert's social reality through his close reading of the novel. Bourdieu's main interest in this study are the social conditions that led to the historical developments depicted in the book, and the socially determined personal conditions that enabled Flaubert to capture it as he did.

While Bourdieu's relational concepts serve as tools for this study with which to dig deeper into the hidden structures of symbolic violence in James's fiction, the readings produced with this method also contribute to the widening field of relational literary analyses. These approaches extend the critical and analytic reach of familiar alliances between social theory and literary criticism. "If the sociology of literature sometimes appears to us as a dismal science," Günter Leypoldt writes in his response to Buschendorf and Franke, "it might be because the current textbook definitions ... still tend to be shaped by the scientific premises of a traditional sociology of culture, which typically assumes that the key to symbolic meanings or aesthetic structures lies in the study of their non-symbolic, material foundations" (105). At the basis of this dichotomy, as Leypoldt notes with reference to Jeffrey Alexander, lies the still active connotation of the cultural and the symbolic as "unreal," "soft," and "dependent" as opposed to the "hard" facts of "real things" (Alexander, quoted in Leypoldt 105). Few literary scholars will be more inclined to instantly debunk the idea of the fictional, the symbolic, and the cultural as something not only removed from but diametrically opposed to 'the real thing' than Jamesians. Not least James's famous tale "The Real Thing" (1892), and basically his entire fictional oeuvre, testify to the author's ongoing engagement with his personal exercise of the "non-reductionist views of symbolic-aesthetic practice" that Leypoldt proposes (105).

*The Art of Concealment* presents analyses of James novels and novellas with narratological instruments, wielding these instruments in a fashion guided by Bourdieu's concepts. The aim is to provide new insight into James's literary oeuvre and his narrative technique, and to contribute to the development of the relational sociology approach for literary criticism. In addition to opening new areas of interdisciplinarity between the social sciences and literary studies, relational sociology as an instrument for the interpretation of literature also taps into analytic potential not yet fully exploited by established relational methods, such as those derived from Marxist theory, psychoanalysis, and Foucauldian interpretations.

### Relational Literary Criticism

While the analytic utilization of relational sociology as a tool for literary criticism is an emerging field in literary studies, some of the strongest influences on the theories

of literature, and critical theory in general, stem from distinctly relational approaches like Marxism or psychoanalysis. Without raising any claims to sufficiency, let alone completeness, the following examples are intended to shine a few spotlights on relational traditions and currents in literary theory, and their significance as reference points for Bourdieu's concepts. As it is neither my intention nor in my ability to present a concise overview of this widespread area—too dispersed, in fact, to be reasonably called a “field”—only a handful of representatives for the different approaches can be cited here. Incomplete as the selection may be, I invoke James himself to justify the blanks it necessarily leaves. Shortly before the publication of *The Portrait of a Lady*, James wrote in his notebook: “The whole of anything is never told; you can only take what groups together. What I have done has that unity” (*Notebooks* 15). The same, I hope, can be said for these very brief highlights of relational literary criticism.

The relational theories addressed here, be they psychological, political, or sociological, have in common their materialistic foundation, their aim to de-naturalize, and a genuinely anti-essentialist perspective. The largest significance for this study lies in their similarity in foregrounding, detecting, and decoding processes of concealment whose purpose it is to disguise power, domination, and violence. The following remarks will therefore focus on aspects of concealment and repression in different disciplines of relational thought.

### Marxist Criticism

As one of the most influential theories for political and cultural relationalism of roughly the last one and a half centuries, Karl Marx's groundbreaking observations continue to inspire approaches within literary as well as cultural studies to date. Marx's critique of capitalism hinges on the disguise of oppression as a critical factor for capitalist systems to function at all. Only when employer and employee, capitalist and worker, share a nominal equality as owners of commodities which they exchange on the labor market can this illusory equality—illusory because it only exists according to the logic of the market, which, in capitalism is the dominant logic—render unrecognizable the systematic (and systemic) oppression and inhuman exploitation of laborers (cf. Marx, *Kapital* 181-91; “entfremdete Arbeit”). Marx's own writings, as Terry Eagleton points out, “are laced with literary concepts and allusions” and he had

plans to publish “a full-length study of Balzac and a treatise on aesthetics” (*Marxism* 1). These plans, however, were never implemented and the references to literature and art in his work remain “scattered and fragmented” (2). In this, Eagleton sees one reason why Marxist literary criticism was able to transcend a mere restating of Marx’s positions and encompasses far more than ‘the sociology of literature,’ which is chiefly concerned with “the means of literary production, distribution, and exchange in a particular society” (2). Instead, Marxist criticism pays “sensitive attention to [literature’s] forms, styles and meanings ... grasping those forms, styles and meanings as the products of a particular history” (3).

That said, Marxist literary criticism has a long tradition of reservations against any prioritization of ‘form’ over ‘content’ and against formalist readings of literature. “Form” in Frederic Jameson’s words, “is but the working out of content in the realm of the superstructure” (329). However, as Eagleton reminds us, Marxist critic Georg Lukács claims that “the truly social element in literature is form” (Lukács, quoted in Eagleton, *Marxism* 20). When Eagleton argues that Lukács’ remark is directed against a “limited view of the form-content relationship” and the risk of “the ‘vulgar Marxist’ mistake of raiding literary works for their ideological content and relating this directly to the class-struggle or the economy,” he promotes analyses that factor in the ideological charge of certain literary forms at certain historic moments (Lukács’ “social element”).<sup>6</sup> Such a position seems to pave the way for, rather than condemn, literary criticism such as Bourdieu’s *Lighthouse* reading, which investigates form, in the sense of technique, as a creative element capable of producing content critical of ideologies.

Bourdieu’s position on the relationship between form and content in narrative can be extrapolated from an interview with Loïc Wacquant. A question in this interview refers to Bourdieu’s suggestion that literature can provide an opportunity to “learn” for sociologists and that there is no “necessary opposition between literature and sociology” (*Reflexive* 206). In the form of an anecdote, Bourdieu illustrates his belief “that literature ... is on many points more advanced than social science, and

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<sup>6</sup> A footnote in Eagleton’s *Criticism and Ideology* confirms this notion. On the “material mode of literary production” in the late nineteenth century and its shift towards the single-volume novel he writes: “We have here, indeed, a singularly complex instance of the conjuncture between the capitalist mode of production in general, the literary mode of production, ‘aesthetic’ ideology, and the demands of the dominant ideology” (104).

contains a whole trove of fundamental problems – those concerning the theory of narrative for instance – that sociologists should make their own” (208). His anecdote, however, suggests a much more specific advantage of narrative. Bourdieu tells about meeting with a childhood friend who speaks to him about a personal crisis that involves several members of his family. The style of that account appears “Faulknerian” to Bourdieu; “I could not make sense [of it], although I had nearly all the relevant factual information at my disposal,” he recalls (207).

After several hours of discussion, I began to understand: what he was telling me at one and the same time, was three or four homologous and intertwined stories ... I could not tell which main life-story was the most painful to him, his own or that of his son ... and which one served to mask the other or allowed the other to be told in a veiled form, by dint of homology. What is sure is that the logic of his account rested on the permanent ambiguity of anaphors, of the ‘him,’ ‘his,’ or ‘her,’ ‘hers’ in particular: I could not tell whether he referred to himself, to his son, to his son’s fiancée, or to his mother, who functioned as interchangeable subjects whose very substitutability was the spring of the drama he was living. (207)

The mutual contingencies between style and story, between form and content require deciphering before the narrative can “make sense,” i.e. before it can produce its own meaning through the interdependence of experience and its representation. The muddled mode of constantly shifting reference points and the fuzzy fluctuations of “permanent ambiguity” – so unfamiliar to someone used to “the linear life-stories with which ethnographers and sociologists are content” (207) – do in fact produce a meaning that any linear, straightforward account would have missed. Bourdieu concludes that such linear narratives, cleared of any confusion, are “artificial” compared to those “apparently exceedingly formal researches of Virginia Woolf, Faulkner, or Claude Simon [which] would appear today to me to be more ‘realistic’ (if the word has any meaning), anthropologically more truthful, closer to the truth of temporal experience” (207). Bourdieu’s interpretation of his friend’s tale is a close reading that would not be misplaced if it were to serve as the introduction to a psychoanalytic take on the narrative.

### Psychoanalytic Criticism

When Sigmund Freud invented the concept of repression to account for the inner concealment of unwanted id-strives by the superego and for the process by which traumatic, hence unbearable, memory is wiped from consciousness, he changed analytic thought and cultural perception for good, to paraphrase a truism of twentieth-century culture and philosophy. Among many other achievements, psychoanalysis has brought to general awareness how human consciousness and social conditions are both shaped by precisely that which they wish to hide and repress, as Inge Suchsland points out in her introduction to the work of Julia Kristeva (8). Psychoanalytic literary criticism incorporates not only such repressive mechanisms but also the significance of narrative for psychoanalytic methods into its interpretation of literature. Julia Kristeva, for instance, praises Bakhtin for his dialogical approach, which dissolves dualities in “nonexclusive opposition” by offering “a logic *other* than scientific” that is not monological but acknowledges the relational and dynamic truth of constant fluctuations within a “logic of distance and relationship” in the process of writing (“Word, Dialogue and Novel” 65, 71-72). When she stresses how storytelling is a relational activity, Kristeva draws on the importance of active relationality for the therapeutic storytelling that is necessary to overcome trauma. She thereby also refers to the challenges this means for the practice of storytelling in general (cf. *Hannah Arendt*). When the violence of traumatization renders storytelling impossible by oppressing memory, when the relationship between storyteller and listener, author and reader, patient and therapist is thus interrupted, the construction of meaningful narratives stops altogether. By way of semiotics and (post)structuralist methodologies, Kristeva approaches issues such as the significance of femininity for structuring subjectivity, and central epistemological questions that target the construction of symbolic meanings, such as the association of the feminine with the subconscious (cf. Suchsland 9).

In her introduction to *Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism*, Maud Ellmann describes how those who imported psychoanalysis into American liberal culture “tended to ignore Freud’s searing criticism of society” (1). A neglect of the psyche’s relation to and interdependence with social processes also led some psychoanalytic readings to “disregard[...] the textuality of texts ... in favour of the Freudian motifs

supposedly encrypted in their depths” (2). With reference to Jacques Lacan’s notion of the structural homology between the subconscious and language Ellmann writes: “If the unconscious operates according to the strategems of rhetoric, this means that psychoanalysis and literary criticism are united by a common object of investigation: the boundless creativity of tropes” (5).

Despite what has been interpreted as a general hostility towards psychoanalysis (cf. Emery and Fourny; Witz), Bourdieu draws on just this creative potential of poetic language, for instance in his praise for Virginia Woolf’s style. He frequently utilizes Freudian concepts – first and foremost that of *Verneinung* – and his terminology is rife with distinctly Freudian vocabulary, such as “projection, reality principle, libido, ego-splitting, negation (*dénégation*), compromise formation, anamnesis, return of the repressed, and collective phantasy,” as George Steinmetz points out (445). When Freud, in his 1925 essay “Negation” (“*Verneinung*”), writes “the content of the repressed image or idea can make its way into consciousness, on the condition that it is negated” (236), he describes a process in close similarity to Bourdieu’s notion of *misrecognition* (*méconnaissance*), which in turn is a concept mostly associated with Lacan.

While Bourdieu rejects psychoanalysis outright in his earlier writings and seems to establish an ambivalent, sometimes paradox relationship with it later on (cf. Steinmetz 446-47), he does not hesitate to announce, more or less directly, his indebtedness to Freud by resorting to Freudian terminology at the beginning of *Masculine Domination* (6). “Striking an explicitly psychoanalytic tone,” Steinmetz observes, “Bourdieu interprets masculine domination as being rooted in unconscious structures that are centered on ‘phallnarcissism’” (447). Yet, while some passages in *Masculine Domination* read very much like psychoanalytic writing – so much so that Steinmetz sees “the difference vanish[...] altogether” at times (447) – Bourdieu continues to distance himself from the “essentialist” and “dehistoriciz[ing]” side of psychoanalytic concepts and practices (*Domination* viii). Such hostile remarks are usually directed at tendencies towards biologized determinism in psychoanalytic thought.

### Foucauldian Criticism

In *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault famously insists that “power is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to

its ability to hide its own mechanisms” (86). In his intellectual career he was, for one thing, “concerned with a critique of the social sciences” and, for another, “with questions regarding the formation of the subject and the relations between power and knowledge” (Freundlieb 303, 305). Literary criticism interested in literature’s ability to depict these latter two issues has adopted Foucault’s ideas quickly. The school of New Historicism that has emerged on the basis of Foucault’s theories is primarily founded on the idea that discourse as a socially constructed practice is object as well as venue of struggles over power (cf. Lentricchia).

In an article showing the utilization of different aspects in Foucault’s work for literary criticism, Dieter Freundlieb shows how Foucault went from viewing literature as a “counter-discourse” and “an ‘Other’ of Reason” to regarding literature, “together with the associated discipline of literary criticism, as one of the many discourses governed by anonymous sets of rules” (305). The transition between these two early phases happens during the time Foucault presented his lecture “What is an Author?” in which he refers to Marx and Freud as authors whose texts have a discourse-altering and subversive impact. Freundlieb cautions against any spontaneous adoption of early Foucauldian concepts into literary criticism as “Foucault’s attack on the idea of a hidden meaning in the text ... was misguided” and “much of the widespread talk about discourse analysis must therefore be regarded with a good deal of suspicion” (329).

A problem that remains, according to Freundlieb, for the use of Foucauldian concepts in literary criticism lies in the relationship Foucault assumes between power and knowledge/truth since he does not specify in what way precisely the two are interrelated (331). Part of this problem might be his conceptualization of the human subject since “Foucault’s notion of the body and its role in the processes by which subjects are formed was rather vague” (333). It is at this point, precisely, that Bourdieu’s theory offers an alternative in the reading of representations of power and oppression since Bourdieu assigns the utmost importance to the active agent’s body and describes its socialized as well as socializing functions meticulously.

Müller points out another significant distinction between Bourdieu’s and Foucault’s theories with regard to their usefulness for literary analysis. With reference to Paul Rabinow and Hubert L. Dreyfus, she foregrounds Foucault’s reservations against including the social agent’s perspective into his analyses as it “always runs the danger

of falling prey to doxological illusion” (24). Bourdieu, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of “the acting agent’s interpretations and actions,” their perception of the personal and the mundane. “[I]t is the fact that Bourdieu is interested in these everyday self-interpretations that makes his work particularly useful for an analysis of literature,” in Müller’s words (25).

Freundlieb’s rather adverse attitude that the potential in Foucault’s work for literary criticism gives “few grounds for enthusiasm” (339) notwithstanding, literary criticism has widely drawn on Foucault’s concepts. Among the most prominent critical approaches in literary theory utilizing psychoanalyses as well as Foucault’s theories are Eve Sedgwick’s path-breaking contributions not only to Queer Theory, which she helped found in the 1970s, but also to James criticism specifically. In her critical writings, she combines her psychoanalytic methodology with a Foucault-inspired approach, amongst many other publications in “Queer Performativity: Henry James’s *The Art of the Novel*” and “The Beast in the Closet: Henry James and the Writing of Homosexual Panic.” Sedgwick sets out to uncover the hidden homoerotic, homosexual, and homophobic subtexts in literature, and her readings of James have drawn such attention to the homosexual undercurrents in his narratives that a reading of “The Beast in the Jungle” is rendered virtually impossible without factoring in her interpretation of John Marcher’s “secret” as a repressed fear of homosexual desire.

### Relational Sociology in Narratological Analysis: Key Concepts

In order to illustrate how Bourdieu’s models can be used as tools for the interpretation of narrative literature, the remainder of these introductory remarks will outline some of his most influential concepts and demonstrate their application in literary analysis, specifically in James criticism.

One of the main objectives of Bourdieu’s relational approach is to overcome what he calls “the most ruinous” dualisms in the social sciences: the opposition between subjectivism and objectivism (*Logic* 25). The subjectivist approach starts out from the naturalizing relationship that the individual maintains with the social world. Subjectivism assumes the social reality as a given fact that results from every subject’s conscious choices. It therefore focuses on subjects’ agency and their practical active involvement in producing and reproducing society. What it tends to eclipse, though,

are the *conditions that make possible* the subjects' experience when it takes the existing reality as self-evident. Such an approach hence often fails to question its own foregone conclusion by taking as a fact what it set out to explain in the first place. Those aspects of social reality that are not immediately accessible to subjects remain unexamined.

While Bourdieu emphasizes the merits of a subjectivist perspective – ascribing agency to subjects and foregrounding the social significance of practice and of what Loïc Wacquant calls “mundane knowledge” (*Reflexive* 9) – he grants “epistemological priority ... to objectivist rupture” (11). This rupture occurs when an objectifying distance is applied to the investigation and analysis of the facts of social reality. In *The Rules of Sociological Method*, Emile Durkheim demands “that social facts must be treated as things” (35), meaning that they are created by or the results of human practice, but they are not intended. Particularly in his later works, Bourdieu repeatedly and relentlessly prompts scholars and intellectuals to apply the same objectifying instruments to themselves and their own perspective (e.g. *Interventions; Science of Science*).

### *Habitus*

The concept of habitus functions as an interface between objective and subjective structures, between collective processes and personal experience. As a set of dispositions, inscribed in socialized bodies, it is the result and at the same time the generative source of social structures. Instead of regarding the individual as an entity opposed to and separate from society, habitus as a generative principle allows us to grasp in one concept the interrelation between the construction of the social world, its constant reproduction, social agents' perception of it, and the contingency of their actions that (re)produce it. As Bourdieu writes:

The conditioning associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produces habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. (*Logic* 53)

The habitus concept aims at revealing that individuality, which is often perceived as innate and therefore naturalized, is not an ‘other’ to society, but one of its manifestations, reflecting collective history as a constituent of every personal history. “The habitus, a product of history, produces individual and collective practices – more history – in accordance with the schemes generated by history” (Bourdieu, *Logic* 54).

Countering one of the most resilient burdens of Western thought – the separation of body and mind, and with it of practice and theory – Bourdieu reminds us that “cognitive structures are not forms of consciousness but dispositions of the body, practical schemes” (*Meditations* 176). Working towards overcoming the Cartesian mind-body split, the concept of habitus also aims to annihilate “the usual antinomies ... of determinism and freedom, conditioning and creativity, consciousness and the unconscious” in that it ascribes an “infinite yet strictly limited generative capacity” to habitually structured human practice (Bourdieu, *Logic* 55). To refute the impression that this notion of habitus as *modus operandi* – a structuring structure – and at the same time a *modus operatum* – a structured structure – is inherently deterministic, Bourdieu employs the example of artistic and other creative work that is at once ‘free’ and unlimited in its creative potential while always being subject to certain limitations:

Artist, writer or scientist, each one, when she sets about her work, is like a composer at her piano, which offers apparently unlimited possibilities to invention and writing – and in performance – but at the same time imposes the constraints and limits inherent in its structure (for example the range of the keyboard), itself determined by its manufacture – constraints and limits which are also present in the dispositions of the artist, themselves dependent on the possibilities of the instrument, even if those dispositions are what reveals them and brings them to more or less complete existence. (*Meditations* 116)

The limits imposed upon any chance to generate and perform – to play the piano or, in analogy, to act as a social agent – are thus defined as beyond the immediate control of the single agent yet contingent on collective historical developments that are entirely liable to human choice and therefore not nearly as fixed as they appear.

Habitus are subject to change, as Bourdieu points out, but their inertia usually allows only for slow, gradual modifications. Since social practice is always the practice of bodies, and dispositions are inscribed into these bodies – incorporated in the literal sense – a transformation of habitus must take place on a bodily level, and over time.

An exception are sudden and deep crises that are able to trigger spontaneous adaptation via the physical as well as psychic reaction to shock or trauma (cf. *Logic* 109, 118). This is also why a mere cognitive resistance to the effects of habitual dispositions cannot impact their bodily entrenchment. To intellectually understand how one's practice is predisposed to reflect and reproduce the conditions that made it does not mean one can change that practice at will. "While making things explicit can help, only a thoroughgoing process of counter-training, involving repeated exercises, can, like an athlete's training, durably transform habitus," as Bourdieu puts it (*Meditations* 172). In his autobiographical *Self-analysis*, he describes, for instance, the long and painful process of training himself to speak standard French instead of the Pyrenean dialect he grew up with.

### *Field*

Bourdieu divides the social world and its order into units of social space – fields – which are specific systems of hierarchically organized social positions and the conditions of entry into which require a habitus compatible with the respective field's purpose or goal: "Each field is characterized by the pursuit of a specific goal, tending to favour no less absolute investments by all (and only) those who possess the required disposition" (*Meditations* 11). Habitus hence predisposes each agent for participation in certain fields. When describing the processes through which social agents take their positions within social fields, Bourdieu draws on the vocabulary of a game being played by differently equipped players. In order to enter the game being played in a field, the potential players must have an interest in that game in so far that they need to believe that the game is worth playing. Only a person convinced that scholastic knowledge is worth pursuing will endeavor to enter a scholastic field and expend time and money towards research, books and other materials, and eventually a degree.

The language of endeavor and ambition is slightly deceptive, though, as participation in these games is not usually the result of a conscious, let alone informed, choice since "in the social fields, which are the products of a long, slow process of automatization ... one does not embark on the game by a conscious act, one is born into the game, with the game" (Bourdieu, *Logic* 67). Any investment in the game – conviction, practice or money, for instance – "is unaware of what it is" (67). "Belief,"

Bourdieu continues, “is thus an inherent part of belonging to a field” (67). The form of belief referred to needs to be distinguished from other notions of faith in that it bypasses cognition and is expressed in practice: “Practical faith is the condition of entry that every field tacitly imposes” (68). I will return to the conditions of membership in a field in my reading of *Daisy Miller*.

### *Capital*

Each field has its own hierarchy, its dominant as well as dominated positions, with which come constant power struggles over the positions available in the field. Position taking in a field depends on and is regulated by the distribution of certain resources which Bourdieu categorizes as different forms of capital. Falling into three basic species and an additional symbolic one, Bourdieu first distinguishes between economic capital (money and financial means), social capital (social contacts – private and professional – acquaintances, social obligations such as invitations, calls, etc.), and cultural capital, which he subdivides into an objectified form (musical instruments, books, art objects, crafting tools, etc.), an incorporated form (skills like painting, playing music, languages), and an institutionalized form (degrees and certificates). While the term “capital” can be misleading for those accustomed to a Marxist understanding of capital, Bourdieu’s employment of the term and of the three main types he defines is straightforward enough, and has by now come into sufficiently general use, that no detailed explication is needed in advance.<sup>7</sup>

The one species of capital that may warrant a brief explanation, however, is symbolic capital. “Symbolic capital is any property (any form of capital whether physical, economic, cultural or social) when it is perceived by social agents endowed with categories of perception which cause them to know it and to recognize it, to give it value,” as Bourdieu defines it (*Reason* 47). Its existence is therefore “a being-perceived” (103), made real only through the recognizing perception of those who believe in – and thereby create and recreate – its value. As symbolic capital depends on being granted by a group of people whose perception has been calibrated towards recognizing it, Bourdieu describes “symbolic capital [as] credit, but in the broadest sense, a kind of advance, a credence, that only the group’s belief can grant those who

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<sup>7</sup> For a detailed comparison of the term in Marx’s and Bourdieu’s work respectively, see Mohseni.

give it the best symbolic and material guarantees” (*Logic* 120). Symbolic capital defines a person’s “social importance and reason for being” in that it gives meaning to life through recognition (Bourdieu, *Meditations* 241). The consecration of being known and recognized, esteemed and respected – what is perceived as a person’s honor or prestige – implies a misrecognition of the true source of such esteem. Symbolic capital is thus “not a particular kind of capital but what every kind of capital becomes when it is misrecognized as capital, that is, as force, a power or capacity for (actual or potential) exploitation, and therefore recognized as legitimate. More precisely, capital exists and acts as symbolic capital ... in its relationship with a habitus predisposed to perceive it as a sign” (242).

The greater one’s prestige – in other words, one’s symbolic capital – the easier it becomes to acquire more capital. Someone considered an honorable tradesperson will have less trouble finding business partners; a highly respected member of a group will be a welcome guest and find social capital accumulating itself, as it were, at her feet. Reputation – another way of measuring symbolic capital – is the most valuable asset of the dominant (a ‘good’ reputation) and the most detrimental feature of the dominated (a ‘bad’ reputation, or none at all). “When one knows that symbolic capital is credit, but in the broadest sense, a kind of advance, a credence, that only the group’s belief can grant those who give it the best symbolic and material guarantees, it can be seen that the exhibition of symbolic capital (which is always very expensive in material terms) is one of the mechanisms which (no doubt universally) make capital go to capital” (Bourdieu, *Logic* 120).

### *Symbolic Domination*

Symbolic capital constitutes the prerequisite for the exercise of symbolic power. As this is “a power which the person submitted to grants to the person who exercises it, a credit with which he credits him” (Bourdieu, *Language* 192), it only exists – like symbolic capital – because someone believes in it and thereby helps to create it. This “production of belief” (Bourdieu, *Reason* 103), however, happens tacitly and beyond the conscious knowledge of a reflecting mind; it is “not an explicit belief,” which would imply “a possibility for nonbelief, but rather an immediate adherence ... to the injunctions of the world” (103). With this spontaneous submission, expression of a

“practical recognition” that is triggered by the dispositions inscribed in the habitus, Bourdieu explains the curious tendency of even the least privileged to accept their fate as self-evident – “the consent that the dominated cannot fail to give to the dominator” – and to thus contribute to their own domination because “their understanding of the situation and relation can only use instruments of knowledge that they have in common with the dominator, which ... make this relation appear as natural” (*Meditations* 169-70).

Dominated and dominant collaborate in the construction of symbolic power, which relies on the condition that neither group is aware of their contribution to the system of domination. Symbolic power is therefore described as an “invisible power which can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it” (Bourdieu, *Language* 164).

The effect of symbolic domination (sexual, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, etc.) is exerted not in the pure logic of knowing consciousnesses but in the obscurity of the dispositions of habitus, in which are embedded the schemes of perception and appreciation which, below the level of the decisions of the conscious mind and the controls of the will, are the basis of a relationship of practical knowledge and recognition that is profoundly obscure to itself. (Bourdieu, *Meditations* 170-71)

Symbolic violence happens through acts of recognition that are also acts of misrecognition. That is why shared dispositions of perception – compatible habitus – are so fundamental for the retention of symbolic power. Furthermore, those acts of recognition are also inherently acts of misrecognition. Symbolic power can only take full effect when misrecognized in its actual form. Bourdieu describes it as “gentle, invisible violence, unrecognized as such, chosen as much as undergone, that of trust, obligation, personal loyalty, hospitality, gifts, debts, piety, in a word, all of the virtues honoured by the ethic of honour” (Bourdieu, *Logic* 127).

Symbolic violence might be invisible as such, but its effects are visible, palpable, and real. It has been described as a “gentle” force, a term that might confuse more than it clarifies, as it fuels the illusion that symbolic violence is harmless and ineffective. In fact, it is a highly efficient mode of domination, including in its very structure a guarantee for its own affirmation and reproduction. It “presents itself,” in Bourdieu’s words, “as the most economical mode of domination because it best corresponds to

the economy of the system” (*Logic* 127). Since it can only be exercised with the complicity of those who are subject to it, it is easily the most efficient instrument of domination in societies that have institutionalized the right to physical violence and delegated its execution to the state power as a final means to enforce its laws. Therefore, in order to achieve the “paradoxical submission” on the part of its victims, it needs to be denied and misrecognized both by those who exercise it as well as those who suffer it. As it is exerted mainly “through the purely symbolic channels of communication ... or even feeling,” its structures are eventually inscribed in linguistic and symbolic systems, mental structures, individual modes of perception, and above all physically, in the body, through everyday practice of dominant and submissive behavior (Bourdieu, *Domination* 1-2).

For one thing, the categories provided by the dominant social order arrange human perception so that social reality appears as natural and self-evident, and the logic implied by the resulting perceptive patterns provides constant affirmation of its own precedence. Additionally, through inscribing themselves into the deepest level of human experience – bodily structures – dominant social structures can even turn social agents’ most intimate realm, their own bodies, against them. Beyond the control of volition and intention, socialized bodies tend to betray the structures that organize them, exemplified by such ordinary irrepressible reactions as blushing when embarrassed or sweating when nervous.

Masculine Domination: “Symbolic Domination *par excellence*”

Bourdieu categorizes masculine domination as one form of symbolic domination. Instead of “separating one object from a whole class of objects and treating it as if it did not, theoretically speaking, belong to the same category” (“Gewalt” 219; my translation),<sup>8</sup> Bourdieu treats gender-specific domination as a special case of a general model of (symbolic) domination:

The division of (sexual and other) things according to the opposition between the male and the female, while arbitrary when taken in isolation, receives its objective and subjective necessity from its insertion into a system of homologous oppositions ... Being similar in difference, these oppositions are

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<sup>8</sup> “Man löst einen besonderen Gegenstand heraus und trennt ihn von einer ganzen Klasse von Gegenständen ab, die theoretisch gesehen zur selben Kategorie gehören.”

sufficiently concordant to support one another, in and through the inexhaustible play of practical transfers and metaphors, and sufficiently divergent to give each of them a semantic thickness, resulting from overdetermination by harmonics, connotations, and correspondences. (*Domination* 7-8)

With this shift towards the structuring effects of recognition and perception, Bourdieu extends the mostly linguistic focus of post-structuralist feminism—among its most prominent representatives Hélène Cixous, Catherine Clément, and Alice Jardine—to a practical level of the ways in which the body as embodied (social) history takes part in the (re)production of systems of inequality. As this approach prioritizes in its assessment of the social world to account for *practices as acts of structuring* rather than disclose those structures from a distanced theoretical standpoint, it again allows for a more character-centered close reading of narrative texts.

Presupposing that in most socializing processes the human mind is trained to perceive the world with the help of a vast set of binary oppositions such as high/low, large/small, light/dark, outside/inside, dry/wet, open/closed, solid/fluid, strong/weak, etc Cixous speaks of the “double braid [that] is leading us throughout literature, philosophy, criticism, centuries of representation and reflection.” But her focus remains with purely mental processes that are not attached to or connected with any form of practice. “*Thought* has always worked through ... dual, hierarchical opposition,” she argues (63; emphasis added). Bourdieu brings the practical side (*making* reality instead of reflecting reality) into play when he considers the structuring effects of perception as well as the tangible construction of reality that symbolic power achieves.

Each experience is automatically classified according to these dual categories that, in an ongoing effort of symbolic work, give the social world a hierarchical structure that seems to be self-evident, natural, and inevitable. Even more fundamentally, by appearing to be the inevitable order of the world, this principle of dualities is inscribed into all practices, which in turn reproduce the principle and with it the social and individual structures it organizes. As one of these binary sets, the opposition of masculine and feminine gains a particularly tough “semantic thickness” that does not merely serve as justification for the naturalized social difference between the sexes. It also ensures that this “fundamental division [that] runs through the social

world from end to end” (Bourdieu, *Logic* 216) is in harmony with the general principle of ordering the world in accordance with oppositional pairs, all of which are connoted with the taxonomy of male and female.

The divisions constitutive of the social order and, more precisely, the social relations of domination and exploitation that are instituted between the sexes thus progressively embed themselves in two different classes of habitus, in the form of ... principles of vision and division which lead to the classifying of all the things of the world and all practices according to distinctions that are *reducible to the male/female opposition*. (*Domination* 30; emphasis added)

Hence Bourdieu sees masculine domination as “the form *par excellence* of symbolic domination” (*Meditations* 171). This is not to say that the unbalanced power relation between the sexes is ‘nothing more than’ or ‘merely’ an example of the everyday personal struggle for acknowledgment within the economics of power. Instead, the structural homologies between different forms of social oppression can help understand exactly how entangled the individual’s modes of thinking and acting are with the structures of the social world. Especially in the “experiential realism” of James’s era and the generation that followed him, one can see how characters’ consciousnesses struggle with the uncertainties of a fragmented reality that leads them to question the ‘natural’ order (cf. Alter x).

Narrative perspectives that privilege the male gaze of James’s observer characters – in *Daisy Miller* or *The Portrait of a Lady*, for instance – often serve the purpose of exposing the persistent androcentric structures, internal as well as external ones, that impede insurgent tendencies by confronting the masculine perception with a subversive feminine opponent. The reading of *Daisy Miller* in Chapter 2 therefore zooms in on how big of a threat the character of Daisy Miller actually poses to the American expatriate community portrayed in the tale. The hierarchy of that group is of particular interest as it has two women, the characters of Mrs. Walker and Mrs. Costello, presiding over it while the tale’s main male character, Frederick Winterbourne, plays a minor part among the American expatriates. He is mocked and ordered about, has considerably less money than most of his acquaintances, and therefore develops a particular interest in Daisy as someone who might help elevate his social position in relation to the other characters. Winterbourne’s perspective, by

contrast, is the most privileged one in the novella since the role of focalizer falls to him for large parts of the narration, which is never filtered through any other character's perspective. More importantly, his (female) superiors pick Winterbourne as the 'soldier' who implements Daisy's expulsion from the group.<sup>9</sup> To understand the full extent to which Winterbourne carries out this task, and what resources he activates to do so, means to uncover the symbolic dimension of Daisy's death. By drawing on Ernst Cassirer's concept of mythical space and complementing it with Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital, my reading illustrates how James's tale equates Daisy's social exclusion with her physical death.

In *The Portrait of a Lady* James's treatment of a female character's inner struggles with socially sanctioned oppression is a more matured one than in his early phase. His representation of Isabel Archer depicts a long process of raising cognitive as well as emotional awareness in the character about her predicament and, more importantly maybe, of her own contribution to creating it. From the ostentatious play with feminized absence in the novel's initial scene, and the narrator's patronizing tone during the first chapters, to the gradual yet constant shift of perspective towards the heroine's view, and finally to her self-chosen absence at the end of the novel, *Portrait* provides one of the widest spectrums among James's works with regard to narrative representations of a dominated female character fighting back. Despite many critics' complaint that the novel does not live up to its title, the text does indeed deliver a portrait of its heroine in that it portrays her inner battle against domination as one of the character's crucial aspects. Isabel's famous vigil in chapter 42 marks the climax of her development and it therefore deserves particular analytic scrutiny. It is during those hours that she acknowledges the fundamental enmity between herself and her husband, assesses her emplacement, and begins 'mustering her troops,' to remain with the military imagery. Isabel's nightly self-analysis prepares her final act of vanishing from the novel. In its closing chapters, *Portrait* emphasizes how becoming aware of oppression, challenging its presuppositions, and understanding one's limitations as well as one's complicity in setting them up are indispensable steps towards revolt with

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<sup>9</sup> The term "soldier" might appear inappropriate at first. As my reading shows, however, Winterbourne's dedication to the social hierarchy in which he operates requires precisely the unquestioned subordination that a military context overtly demands. Even without any explicit call to order, his mandate is not that of a mere delegate but one that presupposes blind obedience.

any prospect of success. Whereas Daisy Miller lacks the disposition for understanding her own subversiveness and can therefore only unwittingly and temporarily unsettle the American expatriates' belief in their social hierarchy, Isabel has the cognitive means and critical disposition to act with subversive intention.

These moments of rupture, however, while having the potential to debunk some of the power games in James's fictional worlds for the reader's sake, do not help his predominantly female central characters to really escape their predicaments. As Rowe points out, "James's narratives lead these intelligent young women relentlessly towards sacrifice, exile, or death" (*Other* 11). From a relational sociology standpoint, this 'failure' of resistance gains a significance that many readers' frustration is unwilling to grant James's fictional resolutions. Far from offering a deterministic model of socio-psychological processes, Bourdieu's conceptualizations explain the inertia of socially determined cognitive as well as bodily dispositions by laying bare the self-reproducing automatisms inscribed into both social structures and internal (mental and physical) structures produced by external influences. From this perspective, letting his heroines fail does not necessarily mean that James subjects them to the sadistic caprices of his authority. Those characters' destinies rather abide by the practical logic explicated by Bourdieu's relational concepts of habitus and symbolic domination in that they account for not only the characters' inner resistance to recognizing their compliance with oppression, but also the disguised truth of those resistive mechanisms' external social contingency. Chapter 3 therefore looks into James's narrative strategies that afford insight into these structures while at the same time allowing for their hard-to-detect concealment.

*The Wings of the Dove* provides a scene in which this resistance within the heroine's consciousness is threatened to the verge of giving way to a new self-image that would acknowledge formerly hidden factors of her social privileges as well as her entrapment in a dominated identity. In this scene Milly Theale gets lost in an area of London unknown to her after she has been diagnosed with a terminal illness. Sadly – yet, as pointed out, comprehensibly – Milly is not allowed to step out of her limited self-perception. The narrative representation of her mind, however, besieged by conflicting thoughts and images contradictory to the very foundation of her world-view as she struggles to make sense of her personal crisis, reveals how the

protagonist's cognitive limitations in coping with her situation are directly determined by a social structure that is so irrevocably a part of herself that it reverberates even in her body. The reading of *Wings* in Chapter 4 addresses the unequal distribution of social, economic, and symbolic resources – different species of capital in Bourdieu's sense – in the novel. The conditions for Milly's social ascent, and the implications of her eventual death in particular, take on a new significance through this approach.

“Those [Jamesian heroines] who ‘succeed’,” Rowe contends, “do so in the most problematic of ways, often by accepting the patriarchal terms of their societies and learning to ‘play the game’” (*Other* 11). As the inverted commas suggest, “succeeding” is a relative term when it comes to James's female protagonists. If they survive the ending of the novel without having to commit a form of bitter self-sacrifice or self-effacement, this might, statistically speaking, count as a success in itself. Olive Chancellor from *The Bostonians* (1886) is James's most obvious example for this category of a female ‘player’ who succumbs to the rules that govern the game of power. Yet precisely because Olive's submission is so evident, her fate does not reveal as much about the effectiveness of the self-concealment inherent to androcentric structures as another James heroine whose ‘success’ frequently engages critics: Maggie Verver in *The Golden Bowl*.

As the central female figure of James's last finished novel, Maggie stands at the end of a four-decade development in his treatment of protagonists searching their way through power relations that often seem inscrutable and that always require careful maneuvering. As one of the few Jamesian heroines who is not led to despair or death, Maggie stands out as the only one who achieves exactly what she aims at. The scrupulous strategizing this requires has been pointed out before, most compellingly by Jonathan Freedman in “What Maggie Knew.” Chapter 5 ties on to Freedman's reading in many respects, not only because he uses game theory in his essay and is therefore very close to Bourdieu's preferred vocabulary, but more so for the attention he awards to the significance of Adam Verver's involvement in the art world for his daughter Maggie's perception of her father as well as her social reality in general. It is in Maggie's judgments and decision, and the actions based on them, that this novel illustrates most convincingly the effects of a ‘successful’ system of masculine domination. And it is Bourdieu's relational concepts that, by resolving the paradox of a

success that relies on being nearly undetectable, reconciles the ambivalences of a novel whose depiction of the effects of symbolic domination is most convincing precisely because it disguises the processes producing those effects more than any other James text. In his depiction of the relationship between Maggie and Adam Verver, James presents himself as a master of the “art of concealment so finished that one is not even aware that something is being concealed” (Stevens 22).

The final chapter continues this reading of *Golden Bowl* by providing a direct comparison of two male characters, Gilbert Osmond from *Portrait* and Adam Verver from *Golden Bowl*. By turning the attention towards male characters, I mean to elaborate on an aspect constitutive for masculine domination particularly in James’s fiction. Cultural capital, which Bourdieu subdivides into three basic types, functions in James’s works as one of the most abundant sources of power and hence of the specific recognition necessary to exert symbolic domination. This concluding chapter zooms in on the ways in which James translates into his narration of male and female characters the different opportunities for men and women to convert one form of capital into another. Cultural capital is more valuable to Jamesian men, mainly because it is so much easier to change form and yield symbolic capital. Cultural capital and its potential as a power source crystalizes in particular in the characters of Osmond and Adam Verver. The former generates a disproportionate revenue of economic and symbolic capital – he becomes rich and relatively powerful – with only a meagre amount of cultural capital as his initial investment, whereas the latter figures as James’s most perfected patriarch. Adam is extremely rich and within his field, the art world, very powerful to begin with. He does not attain disproportionate profits but succeeds instead in maintaining a system of symbolic power that utilizes a maximum of this particular power’s ability to ensure its perpetuation by producing in the dominant as well as the dominated the dispositions and perceptive patterns for its own concealment. His cultural capital is crucial for this success, and since his power is so efficient in hiding its own efficacy, the reading will turn once again to its visible effects in the character most exposed to Adam’s influence, his daughter Maggie. Reading Maggie as a character subjected to her father’s near-perfect exercise of masculine domination reveals the full extent to which James in his late fiction is able to depict the many interrelated factors of symbolic domination without eschewing to also

represent, indirectly yet detectably, the built-in disguise and the constraints that make these oppressive structures so resilient.

SYMBOLIC PUNISHMENT AND SOCIAL DEATH IN  
*DAISY MILLER: A STUDY*

Throughout the nineteenth century, literature usually portrays the female body as a frail one, often stricken with sickness and various maladies, tormented by physical and mental weakness (cf. Bailin; Gilbert and Gubar). It is a body that is deemed unfit to take sufficient care of itself and therefore demands protection even against its own will. Such protection of course follows a perfidious reasoning that almost inevitably proves its own imperative. To force the female body and mind into protective confinement on the ground of ever lurking dangers with which it assumedly cannot cope functions as the proverbial self-fulfilling prophecy, as Victorian heroines from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* to Monica Madden in George Robert Gissing's *The Odd Women*, and American examples such as the homodiegetic narrator of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* prove.

The heroine of James's *Daisy Miller* is not in accord with this epitome of ailing Victorian women.<sup>10</sup> Even though she dies of an illness that is presented as the direct result of her disregard of permissible female behavior, Daisy never aligns herself nor her body with expectations of willing obedience and a feeble corporeality that readily subjects itself to an imposed shelter from assumed harms. James has created a heroine whose self-image remains unshaken by her fellow country men's and women's attempts to coerce her into submission to their own ideal of femininity. Her character is equipped with resistive traits that render her capable, to a certain degree, of repudiating the reality of such harms, most of which are believed to stem from

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<sup>10</sup> To classify James's works as "Victorian" is disputable in two regards. As an American by birth, James is sometimes not considered a Victorian author. I agree with Louis James and others that the large influence of European authors and Europe's intellectual movements of the time, James's own influence on English prose fiction, and the many years he lived in Britain – even becoming a citizen of his adopted country towards the end of his life – qualify him as a Victorian author (James, *Victorian Novel* 123-24). The other problem with the term "Victorian" has less to do with James but with the category itself. Queen Victoria's reign from 1837 until 1901 seems far too long as to include a homogenous body of literary works. Since James's oeuvre extends into the twentieth century, it might be more precise to categorize his early works as "late Victorian" ones that also foreshadow modernist writings: "Although ... his concern with structure and psychological nuances looks forward to the practices of Modernism, in his concern with morality and the problems of realism he remains rooted in the nineteenth century" (James, *Victorian Novel* 124). *Daisy Miller*, however, was published in 1878 and therefore does not resist the term "Victorian" as much as James's late works might do.

publicity and visibility. When Daisy is finally forced by her illness to remove herself from public view, however, she also vanishes from the reader's view as the narrator does not approach her sick-bed.

As opposed to later Jamesian heroines like May Bartram in "The Beast in the Jungle" or Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove*, the narration does not represent Daisy's sick body nor does it give an account of how she suffers. May Bartram's as well as Milly Theale's illnesses remain unnamed and an inducement for speculations whereas Daisy Miller's malaria infection is given as a medical reality and the undoubtable cause of her death. It carries, however, a symbolic meaning that transcends its purely scientific factuality. As a form of symbolic punishment, Daisy's illness and death function as a means as well as a result of what Bourdieu has conceptualized as symbolic violence (*Domination* 33-42). In order to comprehend how James's narrative establishes this symbolic dimension of Daisy Miller's malaria, I want to read her nightly visit to the Colosseum, where she contracts the fatal fever, in light of the three perceptual modes that Ernst Cassirer explores in his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*.

As I will explicate in detail below, Cassirer establishes a mythical consciousness as the basis of any knowledge or cognition, even scientific reflection and insight. To that end he broadens Durkheim's distinction of the sacred and the profane as the central dichotomy of any religious worldview. By uncovering how this duality affects all categories of perception even outside the religious episteme, Cassirer traces the processes in which all modes of thinking allot a mythic-symbolic dimension to objects, actions, and places that might, superficially considered, not be related to a religious or mythical perspective. Cassirer's concepts are a main reference point for Bourdieu, who bases large parts of his theory on Cassirer's further development of Durkheim's thoughts.

*Daisy Miller* has a traditionally omniscient narrator who comments judgmentally, bands together with the reader, and repeatedly makes his<sup>11</sup> presence as well as his superior position in relation to the diegetic world known to the reader, especially at the beginning of the novella. The narrator seems to privilege one of the characters, Frederic Winterbourne, by foregrounding Winterbourne's perspective and making him

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<sup>11</sup> Following Susan Lanser's deliberations in *Fictions of Authority*, I will speak of James's narrators as male voices.

the sole focalizer. This straightforward narrative situation – an implicitly male omniscient narrator relying strongly on the filter of a male character’s focalization – does not prevent the narrator from strategically dispensing information that allows the reader to comprehend the subversion of a complex social hierarchy by the eponymous character Daisy Miller. Precisely because the filter of Winterbourne’s perspective is characterized by misogynist tendencies and his anxious efforts to retain his marginal authority can the narrator signal his distancing from his supposed protégé. He introduces Winterbourne by way of telling the reader what other people say about the character – a pointer to the immense importance such remarks have for the character himself. “When his friends spoke of him, they usually said that he was in Geneva, ‘studying.’” This vague and hardly benevolent statement, additionally ironized by the quotation marks, is followed by an even more suggestive sentence: “When his enemies spoke of him, they said – but, after all, he had no enemies” (James, *Daisy* 4). Why mention the enemies and then take it back? The narrator pretends to protect Winterbourne when in fact he suggests that there are indeed negative things to be said about a character who is, however, too insignificant to be talked about. From the beginning, Winterbourne’s actions and his perception are thus marked by his relatively low social status within the expatriate community in Rome, his masculine anxiety, and his helpless struggle for self-assertion that results from this anxiety.

In his position as focal character, Winterbourne switches between the different modes of thought defined by Cassirer in the crucial moment when Daisy contracts malaria while visiting the Colosseum at night. In this scene, the narrative counterposes all three modes of perception that Cassirer describes to the effect of adding a mythic-symbolic meaning to Daisy’s illness and death. The character of Winterbourne can perform this fusion of perceptual opposites solely in his mind, which is then reflected in the narration. As the story’s main focalizer, Winterbourne constructs large parts of the fictional reality, including the character of Daisy Miller, for the reader; and when Daisy attempts, with her very limited means, to defy this construction of herself, she is done away with as completely as Victorian narrative tradition requires of unruly women.

However, Daisy puts up a lot more resistance than some critics have given her credit for in the past (cf. Johnson 41-43). She poses a serious threat to Winterbourne

and to nineteenth-century patriarchal society, which is why her malaria infection transcends its purely medical significance. Only through a “reversal of perspectives” (Cassirer, *Forms* 83) can Winterbourne amalgamate Daisy’s final social exclusion with her medical condition. As a result, Daisy’s social death coincides with the moment she contracts the disease that will bring about her actual physical death. Reading Daisy’s illness and death in the context of Cassirer’s categories in combination with Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence reveals the full extent to which Daisy is a danger to the other American characters’ social reality and helps to see why her death is not only medically conclusive but at the same time enforces a previously abortive social death sentence that the victim, Daisy herself, had rendered ineffective.

Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic violence and domination draws in part on Cassirer’s different modes of thought and perception, particularly where Bourdieu is concerned with matters of (re)cognition and the categories that structure our perception. Cassirer claims that all objects of the perceived world – material things, actions, places, and thoughts – are charged with an implicit symbolic meaning which originates from Durkheim’s fundamental division of the sacred and the profane. Whereas Durkheim established this distinction as the foundation for the emergence of religion and religious thought, Cassirer as well as Bourdieu regard the elementary dichotomy as a dividing force in all acts of consciousness and perception, in all “different kinds of ‘world-making’” (Bourdieu, *Meditations* 16).<sup>12</sup> Instead of merely observing and documenting the hidden symbolic significance of objects, actions, and places, Bourdieu endeavors to reveal the social contingency behind such acts of division.

Since symbolic violence is that form of violence which depends on the complicity of those who suffer it, a particular form of recognition of the power relation enabling the deployment of such invisible force is of central importance. In his conceptualization of domination Bourdieu emphasizes the peculiar symbolic work that aims at disguising the actual power relations in order to ensure their recognition through misrecognition of the mechanisms upon which they depend. The chance to exert symbolic violence depends on accumulated symbolic capital, which is expressed in the prestige, esteem, honor, and respect that is paid those who are deemed to deserve

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<sup>12</sup> For the distinction between the sacred and the profane see Durkheim, *Religious Life*, especially 38-45.

it. Therefore, “capital cannot act unless it succeeds in being recognized through a conversion that can render unrecognizable the true principle of its efficacy. Symbolic capital is this denied capital, recognized as legitimate, that is, misrecognized as capital” (Bourdieu, *Logic* 118). Due to this process of acknowledging the legitimacy of honor and respect while denying the arbitrary power relation that founds it, a pre-reflexive submission to this power relation is guaranteed. As Olivier Voirol puts it, “[s]ymbolic violence is a violence that relies on the misrecognition of its principles and whose effectiveness is based on the recognition that the dominated grant the dominant” (Voirol 414; my translation).<sup>13</sup> Both the dominated as well as the dominant thus need to misrecognize the power structure as such in order to recognize and accept their own position in it as self-evident.

In *Daisy Miller*, the eponymous heroine’s attempts to withhold precisely this recognition result in her death. Daisy’s is a death on at least two levels, a social one and a factual one, the latter characterized by medical explicability. Both these deaths are closely related; an effect achieved by virtue of a symbolic entanglement of the two spheres, the social and the medical one. Even though Daisy is not capable of actualizing the subversive power invested in her by her author, she deals a number of severe blows to the power structure that governs the group of American expatriates who wish to control and delimit her. From Daisy’s first visit with Winterbourne’s friends in Rome to her appearance at Mrs. Walker’s party, her presence never fails to deeply unsettle her fellow Americans.

Initially, Winterbourne is so smitten with Daisy that he gravely underrates the effect of her disregard for etiquette and what he sees as civilized behavior. On their outing to the Castle of Chillon, he is “a little afraid that she would talk loud” and embarrass herself (James, *Daisy* 22). At Chillon, he boasts his cultivated knowledge of the castle’s history, tells Daisy about Lord Byron’s poem “The Prisoner of Chillon,” and notices that Daisy listens to everything he says (23-24). It is of no considerable consequence to him that Daisy “cared very little” for his display of his cultural education as long as he can spend time with her alone (23). Yet, he is “bewildered”

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<sup>13</sup> “La violence symbolique est une violence qui fait l’objet d’une méconnaissance de ses principes et dont l’efficacité repose sur la reconnaissance que le dominé accorde au dominant.”

when she ceases to pay attention to the cultural information he provides because he utterly disregards her interpersonal interest in him (24).

Winterbourne's knowledge of Chillon's history, of Byron's poem and the historic prisoner's fate, and also the way in which he prefers to lecture and educate Daisy on these topics instead of being more responsive to Daisy's interpersonal interest demonstrates how he deems his cultural capital superior to anything Daisy has to offer. He positions himself as her mentor and assumes her not only to accept his superiority as a matter of fact but also to express her veneration. He is "disappointed" when Daisy is "apparently not at all excited" and shows no signs of being "fluttered" (22). How much he regards Daisy as a decorative object that is supposed to enhance his esteem instead of a person in her own right becomes apparent when Winterbourne enjoys "that people were looking at her" but, at the same time, he expects Daisy to show embarrassment or intimidation by avoiding his and other people's eyes or by blushing when she looks at him or others look at her (22).

Daisy does not disregard Winterbourne's expectations intentionally, which leads him and the other expatriates to believe she can be subjected to their well-meaning corrections. With a close reading of the dialogue that takes place between Daisy and Mrs. Walker in the Pincian Gardens I want to untangle some of the rhetorical and symbolic strategies with which both characters as well as the narrator disclose, willingly and unwillingly, the conditionality behind Mrs. Walker's animus to control Daisy on the one hand, and Daisy's own defiance of this claim on the other. Her refusal is not a conscious one that is based on an informed decision against the dominant social order she is exposed to, but an intuitive shunning away from forces that she feels aim at ascribing a role to her she does not want to accept.

In so far as Daisy's revolt is unconscious of what it is up against, namely the social hierarchy of the group around Mrs. Walker and Mrs. Costello, her naïve view denies recognition of the established power relations unintentionally, which makes it all the more threatening for her fellow Americans. An overt, intentional rebellion always presupposes the acknowledgement of the power that it attacks, otherwise there would be nothing to attack in the first place. To fight over position-takings in a social hierarchy means to fight over normative power and evaluative categories, such as the basic distinction between sacred and profane objects or actions. In Bourdieu's words,

the rebels and those in power “have to share a common acceptance of [these categories] to be able to fight over them” (*Meditations* 100). If this basic form of appreciation is absent and the opponents do not even agree on the fact of the existing power relation, then this power finds itself at risk to lose the unequivocal recognition that is absolutely necessary for it to exist and reproduce itself.

As a newcomer to the group, Daisy’s disposition to recognize its power structure as indisputable needs to be tested to hedge against precisely this risk. Acceptance into the group depends on the entrant’s pre-attentive, quasi-religious compliance with its established hierarchy. Bourdieu introduces the concept of *doxa* to explain this pre-cognitive conformity that believes beyond any logical deliberations in the axiomatic infrastructure of a social group or field.

Practical faith is the condition of entry that every field tacitly imposes, not only sanctioning and debarring those who would destroy the game, but by so arranging things, in practice, that the operations of selecting and shaping new entrants (rites of passage, examinations, etc.) are such as to obtain from them that undisputed, pre-reflexive, naïve, native compliance with the fundamental presuppositions of the field which is the very definition of *doxa*. (*Logic* 68)

Daisy’s denial of the required faith, which is as pre-conscious as the demand to accept this “set of fundamental beliefs [that do] not even need to be asserted in the form of an explicit, self-conscious dogma,” must therefore be sanctioned (Bourdieu, *Meditations* 15). When the social sanctions do not bring the desired result, i.e. submission, Winterbourne transforms Daisy’s malaria infection into a symbolic punishment. This transformation takes place first and foremost in Winterbourne’s mind and is brought about by a shift in perception. My reading aims to reveal how the story enables such an amalgamation of perceived reality, scientific interpretation, and symbolic meaning.

During the Colosseum scene, Winterbourne executes the final act of merging all three levels into an effective punishment for Daisy’s breach through a mental act of “world-making,” which, in this case, also means an act of “making” Daisy in that he corrects his construction of her until it matches and affirms his convictions about his reality. I therefore read this scene as the pivotal moment in the narration that seals Daisy’s fate. Winterbourne does not walk into the Colosseum unprepared or unarmed. His recantation of his earlier judgment of Daisy requires him to draw on a reservoir of cultural capital that Daisy cannot match. Only when he unleashes both the sociocultural

as well as the scientific-medical discourse of the time does the attack on Daisy achieve its goal. The significance of the pivotal moment in the Colosseum by night and Winterbourne's mental reversal of his gaze becomes apparent in the context of an earlier scene in which Mrs. Walker rescinds her aspiration to assimilate Daisy. A contrasting of both scenes will reveal the strategies of positioning Daisy and themselves in relation to her that the other Americans employ throughout the story's middle section.

### Caught Up in the Expatriates' Games

Being excluded from her fellow expatriates' games of honor and reputation, which are ultimately always games of power, gives Daisy the ambiguous privilege of being able to expose the arbitrariness of that game's rules and accepted strategies. Only from the sidelines can one see through this because participation in the game requires to accept its *doxa* and share its underlying *illusio*, i.e. the undisputed belief that the game is worth playing, that what is at stake is worth the effort. (Bourdieu, *Logic* 66-67). Daisy positions herself unintentionally, and most effectively precisely for that lack of intention, outside of Mrs. Walker's expatriate game, which revolves around the power structure within the group of expatriate Americans in Rome but also around the socio-cultural position of that group within the Roman society. The characters of Mrs. Walker and Mrs. Costello make abundantly clear that when it comes to games of power, women can only play as agents of androcentrism.

When the Millers arrive in Rome, Winterbourne and Mrs. Walker feel a sense of ownership from which stems a feeling of responsibility for Daisy's behavior. Both characters admit, if not to themselves then at least through their actions and statements, how strong an influence they wish to exert on Daisy's social fate. Winterbourne endeavors to introduce Daisy to his aunt, Mrs. Costello, whose judgment over the Millers is unrelenting: "They are hopelessly vulgar" (James, *Daisy* 26). When pressed by her nephew to "accept" the Millers, she replies: "I can't, my dear Frederick. I would if I could, but I can't" (14). Mrs. Walker is not so inexorable in the beginning. She invites the Millers to her house and then openly tells Daisy how she wishes her to behave: "'My dear young friend,' said Mrs. Walker, taking her hand, pleadingly, 'don't walk off to the Pincino at this hour to meet a beautiful Italian'" (30).

Being a rich American in Europe suffices to count as ‘one of them,’ but Daisy’s particular position is defined by more than her cultural background and her nationality. Her mother, Mrs. Miller, does not receive the same amount of attention and concern from the other expatriates even though she certainly is a rich American in Europe, too. However, Mrs. Miller is socially harmless compared to her daughter. Those of her actions that the other American women condemn all relate to her clothes, her lack of intelligence or the way she raises her children. She does not commit any serious breach of conduct herself nor does she disregard any advice given her by others. She acts so submissively and clumsily that she virtually demotes herself to the margins.

Mrs. Miller does not show any potential for social success. Her financial capital has been transformed into a certain amount of cultural capital through her travels, and this yields enough symbolic profit, i.e. esteem, to grant her a marginal position within the group around Mrs. Walker. However, Mrs. Miller has no further resources to change that position significantly. Daisy, in contrast to her mother, is young, pretty, and outgoing. As Winterbourne assesses, “Daisy and her mamma have not yet risen to the stage of ... culture” (43) that he claims for himself and his friends. Daisy’s youth, however, affords an opportunity for her to be molded – or so Mrs. Walker speculates – into a woman after Mrs. Walker’s own taste. To adjust Daisy’s habitus in such a way is an undertaking which depends not only on an essentially compatible habitus on Daisy’s part, but also requires proper training of perceptual categories with which to assess oneself and one’s world as well as accepted manners of use of the body. For Mrs. Walker, the profit of re-shaping Daisy in such a way would be a valuable addition to her entourage. Not only would it enlarge this group, which means an increase of social relevance and therefore of symbolic capital, and secure the reproduction of its value system, Daisy is also of particular interest because of her eroticized feminine capital that accrues from her good looks. She has the potential to attract much more powerful players than Winterbourne or Giovanelli to Mrs. Walker’s circle.

Daisy therefore shows the potential of a very lucrative asset. To have her at one’s disposal promises additional symbolic profit for Mrs. Walker as winning another acolyte would, for one thing, directly enhance her reputation, i.e. her symbolic capital, and for another it would even yield symbolic interest in the form of Daisy’s male, hence symbolically profitable, admirers. Winterbourne expects this asset to come cheap, an

assumption based on his unshakable belief that the value of his cultural capital must be recognized by Daisy as an unmistakable sign of his superiority. Daisy's failure to show the appropriate admiration on their visit to the Castle of Chillon has merely aroused his ambitions. Mrs. Walker's sense of ownership does not stem from a masculine wish to successfully win or conquer Daisy but is rather assumed as an undeniable fact. As soon as Daisy's behavior disproves her assumption, Mrs. Walker reacts like someone who rightfully tries to protect her possession.

When Mrs. Walker follows Daisy to the Pincian Gardens she does so with the best intentions, as the saying goes, which means that she sets out on a mission to 'rescue' Daisy from her own misguided intentions; misguided i.e., in Mrs. Walker's eyes and those of the social group she presides over. She finds it "a pity to let the girl ruin herself," whereby she refers to a form of "ruin" that would be brought about by her very own evaluation of Daisy's behavior (James, *Daisy* 33). At this point, Mrs. Walker still regards Daisy as part of her social circle, hence the "pity" would be that any blow to Daisy's reputation also means a blow to Mrs. Walker herself. Her good intentions thus aim at protecting her own reputation by saving Daisy's. In other words, to protect Daisy's meagre symbolic capital that stems mainly from her feminine capital means for Mrs. Walker to protect her own symbolic wealth from Daisy's attack.

Daisy is clearly a mere object, a means to Mrs. Walker's ends just as Winterbourne is. He understands and accepts this as his question "What do you propose *to do with us?*" proves (34; emphasis added). Mrs. Walker's answer leaves no doubt that her motives do not concern Daisy as a person but as a mere deputy commandeered to represent her own values. She wants "... to drive her about for half-an-hour, *so that the world may see* she is not running absolutely wild, and then to take her safely home" (34; emphasis added). Like a commodity that she has acquired and now wants to show off to "the world" Daisy would be displayed in the quasi-private yet publicly visible interspace of the carriage, being driven around, observed, and then stashed away at home in absolute passivity and in compliance with the Victorian ideal of femininity.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> When Mrs. Walker wants to demonstrate to "the world" that she is in control of Daisy, that "world" does not only include other Americans but also the European high society of Rome, as Winterbourne notes a little later: "They ceased to invite [Daisy], and they intimated that they desired to express to observant Europeans the great truth that, though Miss Miller was a young American lady, her behaviour was not representative – was regarded by her compatriots as abnormal" (James, *Daisy* 44). With its interesting choice of words this passage discloses another important hierarchical layer of the

In what I read as a half-conscious insight, Daisy shows that she is partly aware of her object status without grasping its severe consequences. When Winterbourne attempts one last time to caution her against a bad reputation by telling her that “[e]very one thinks ...” she spends too much time in public with her Italian boyfriend, Daisy informs him: “They are only pretending to be shocked. They don’t really care a straw what I do” (46). There is more than just a grain of truth in this simple statement; they *are* pretending in a way and they *do* not care. The pretense Daisy detects is an unconscious one, though, and could therefore be described as an automatic, pre-reflexive categorization. None of the other characters feign shock as a conscious act of disguise since their sense of distress and consternation itself is real. They do not know that they are pretending to be shocked by Daisy since they do not grant her the status of a person in her own right but merely recognize her in relation to themselves. Hence, they only care what Daisy does or does not do with regard to the effect these actions have on their own worldview, which evidently includes their self-image.

As the story’s central consciousness Winterbourne’s confusion about the effects of Daisy’s behavior is most directly accessible. When Daisy leaves Mrs. Walker to meet Giovanelli in the Pincian Gardens, he asks himself: “Would a nice girl ... make a rendezvous with a presumably low-lived foreigner? ... [W]as it not impossible to regard the choice of these circumstances as a proof of extreme cynicism?” (33). Right after assuming that Daisy’s friend, a person he has never met, is “a low-lived foreigner” – notwithstanding the fact that Winterbourne is actually a foreigner in Giovanelli’s home country – he accuses Daisy of being cynical. She cannot be a “nice girl” in his eyes but she must, moreover, be an extremist if she meets up with an Italian man, even if she does so “in broad daylight, and in the most crowded corner of Rome” (33). In this scene as well as others, Winterbourne’s reaction to Daisy is conspicuously often described as one of irritation and anger. He is “vexed” about Daisy as well as “vexed because of his inclination” (33). A few weeks later, just thinking of Daisy makes him “annoyed” and he is “angry at finding himself reduced to chopping logic about this young lady” (44-45). Again, he is “vexed,” this time “at his want of instinctive certitude” (45). Tellingly enough, he is more irritated by himself than by

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expatriates’ social world. They have accepted a subordinate role to certain “observant Europeans” on whose judgment they depend and to whose observation they have subjected themselves.

Daisy. His self-image suffers considerably from his attempts to form an image of Daisy that would fit into his worldview.

Daisy herself intuits how little her intentions and motivations matter to “them.” What “they,” the other Americans, care about are Daisy’s actions solely with regard to their *doxic* beliefs about their social reality. When Daisy leaves Mrs. Walker’s house in order to go for a walk and meet up with Giovanelli, only her mother is really worried about the actual person Daisy Miller when she mentions physical hazards such as malaria. I will return to Mrs. Miller’s warning below. At this point, let it suffice to say that Mrs. Walker’s other guests do not worry about Daisy but about the consequences that her disregard of behavioral codes might have for their own social persuasion. That is what Winterbourne and Mrs. Walker set out to protect when they follow Daisy to the Pincino.

At the Pincino, Winterbourne obediently runs off to fetch Daisy for Mrs. Walker as she requests; god forbid she step out of her carriage and actually walk ten steps to do justice to her name. When asked to get into Mrs. Walker’s carriage and have the “lovely ... carriage rug” put over her, Daisy responds: “I shall admire it much more as I see you driving round with it” (James, *Daisy* 34). Mrs. Walker’s wish to put the rug over Daisy seems an almost clumsy way of metaphorically disguising her aim to wrap Daisy in a tight blanket of behavioral conventions. Daisy’s answer in turn evinces the particular value of her outsider’s perspective. As long as she remains outside the carriage and does not allow the rug of conventionality to block her view she is in a position that allows her to disclose precisely how erratic this code of conduct is. She establishes a position on the sidelines of the other expatriates’ game of struggling for symbolic capital by dismissing the *doxic* beliefs that are at the heart of this game.

Daisy does not want to participate and refuses to play. She prefers to keep a distance wherefrom she can look at and “admire it much more” when Mrs. Walker parades her claim to power over Daisy around the Pincino. The repeated invitation to step into the carriage sounds like a command rather than a request: “Do get in and drive with me” (34). Mrs. Walker is slowly losing her composure and informs Daisy that her behavior is not in accordance with the “custom here” (34). Daisy’s reply encapsulates just how essentially different the two women regard the issue of “custom.” ““Well, it ought to be, then!’ said Daisy. ‘If I didn’t walk I should expire”

(34).<sup>15</sup> Her naïveté in this case is more than just a charming attribute that serves a comic purpose. Rather, it works as a rhetorical device that dismantles Mrs. Walker's well-hidden agenda. Customs, Daisy's pragmatic response apprehends, are social constructions and can therefore be made subject to change.

Mrs. Walker on the other hand believes strongly, and beyond the capacity for doubt, in the dogmatic rightness of the custom itself as it determines the limits within which the accepted strategies of the game may be employed. If the game follows any rules, they are defined by such limits of conduct; and even though a shift in power means that these rules of conduct could easily change and a breach might be justified *a posteriori* whenever delinquents gain power and succeed in advancing their position, the established rules at any given moment give the impression of being unchallengeably right. To apply Daisy's pragmatism and ask for the rules to be adjusted to the reality of people's lives is a form of social heresy as it attacks a basic belief about the social world that functions similar to a religious persuasion.

Mrs. Walker still sees in Daisy a member of her social circle, a group of people over whom she has considerable control. To have Daisy question her customs and in this light-hearted way moreover, means that the unthinkable is in fact possible: to not take the game serious and ask for its rules to be changed. Daisy's defiance amounts to usurpation in Mrs. Walker's view. Consequently, Mrs. Walker needs to step up her game in the form of a direct threat: "You are old enough, dear Miss Miller, to be talked about" (34). This actually is a counter-threat to Daisy's disregard and it proves just how exposed Daisy's attack has left her. Threatening Daisy this overtly with social exclusion can only be a measure of last resort for someone whose code of conduct usually requires implicitness and disguise. Yet, the strategy remains ineffective since it is addressed to a person whose dispositions make her unresponsive. Bourdieu points out that "intimidation, a symbolic violence which is not aware of what it is ... can only be exerted on a person predisposed ... to feel it, whereas others will ignore it" (*Language* 51).

When her intimidation does not bring the desired result Mrs. Walker makes one last foray and tries to lure Daisy. Asked what she means by her threat, she responds

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<sup>15</sup> Ironically enough, "expire" is just what Daisy will do after she does not walk but drives home from the Colosseum with Giovanelli.

enticingly: “Come into my carriage and I will tell you” (James, *Daisy* 34). Only after accepting the “custom” that Mrs. Walker talks about, only after blindly submitting to her authority, would Daisy be entitled to know all the secrets of Mrs. Walker’s “meaning.” Daisy withdraws intuitively: “‘I don’t think I want to know what you mean,’ said Daisy presently. ‘I don’t think I should like it’” (35). The risk for her lies in knowledge, not in the social consequences with which Mrs. Walker tries to threaten her. To know what Mrs. Walker means is to understand her, and to understand her meaning would take Daisy close to accepting as a matter of fact Mrs. Walker’s authority not only to try and intimidate her but also to implement her threat.

Her careful reaction is an intuitive self-protection from Mrs. Walker’s customs and meanings. Daisy senses that she would not “like” what she might learn, in other words that it would not benefit her mental well-being. Mrs. Walker has reached a point at which she would go so far as to make explicit what her customs are, the rules of her game that Daisy has violated. As a consequence, Daisy would have to make her opposition explicit, too; her situation would change from one in which she makes a mere individual decision based on a personal preference for walking instead of driving, to one that undeniably displays her contraposition against a whole group of people and their belief in what is right and what is wrong. Her action would be transported from the personal onto the social level and the conflict would become obvious.

Daisy’s response to Mrs. Walker compares to her behavior in the Colosseum. To Giovanelli’s rhetorical question “... when was the Signorina ever prudent?” Daisy replies “I was never sick, and I don’t mean to be!” (48). She refuses to allow illness into her body the same way she denies Mrs. Walker’s ‘knowledge’ access to her mind. Reading the two scenes back to back shows that both, sickness as a result of her lack of ‘prudence’ as well as acceptance of Mrs. Walker’s customs, is treated by Daisy as a matter of her own choice. Just as Daisy set at naught Mrs. Walker’s warnings, she rebuffs both her companions by refusing to care about the consequences of her actions. Since falling sick is beyond her control, the second refusal makes a lot more sense when read as another reference to the social consequences of her misdemeanor.

Whereas Daisy can avoid having her mind infected with Mrs. Walker’s beliefs, she is unable to repel the physical infection with malaria. Both Winterbourne and Mrs. Walker feel antagonized by Daisy. Whereas Mrs. Walker tries – unsuccessfully – to

influence Daisy's mind, Winterbourne eventually abandons his efforts of talking sense into Daisy and appealing to her rationality. Mrs. Walker's attempts to train Daisy's habitus aim at making Daisy realize her wrongdoing and accept on a cognitive level what appears as self-evident and natural to Mrs. Walker, who therefore does not see the need to go beyond allusions and threats. When Daisy does not see the logic of Mrs. Walker's argumentation, the older lady writes her off as fundamentally inept. Fittingly for an effeminate male character with the resulting symptoms of a threatened masculinity, Winterbourne, in contrast to Mrs. Walker, refuses to acknowledge defeat and, instead of her mind, targets Daisy's body.

The moment when Daisy, Giovanelli, and Winterbourne meet in the Colosseum amounts to the story's pivotal scene in which Winterbourne finally finds a way to accomplish the punishment he and the other Americans deem fit for Daisy. If he cannot poison her mind, he'll invest the infection of her body with a meaning that suits his purpose. Daisy's malaria infection and her consequential death do not only arrive opportunely for the American expatriates; Winterbourne instrumentalizes the infection by creating an additional reality to the medical one that alters the meaning of the illness. The transformation of reality that he performs works through a combination of the perceptual modes defined by Cassirer as I want to demonstrate in the following.

### Setting the Stage

On the night he encounters Daisy and her cicerone Giovanelli in the Colosseum, Winterbourne indulges in the particular atmosphere of ancient Roman ruins in the moonlight. He has dined on the Caelian Hill, which not only places him in sight distance of the Colosseum but also within an area that used to be a fashionable residential neighborhood for wealthy Romans during the city's republican era, and that marks the part of the city where the Alban immigrants were forcefully resettled after Rome's victory over Alba Longa in the seventh century BC. Winterbourne, a wealthy expatriate of a nation whose dominant section of population descends from the European countries he now lives in, spends an evening among other rich Americans in a neighborhood that used to be the imposed new home of the people from which, according to Roman founding myths, the city's population descends. His evening,

therefore, is put into a context of social inequality and displacement as well as Rome's early history, which is irreversibly intertwined with its mythical origins.

The symbolic, mental, and practical steps it takes for Winterbourne to capitalize on the mythical atmosphere his mind evokes can be traced and understood in the light of Cassirer's categories of mythical space. Cassirer distinguishes between the "space of sense perception," the "space of pure cognition," and the "mythical intuition of space." With the term "space" Cassirer mainly refers to different modes of thought and recognition, to 'thought spaces' if you will. The space of perception denotes the material reality as it presents itself to our senses, including the interpretations and deductions we make on the basis of sensual information. The space of perception, in other words, is the "space of vision and touch" (Cassirer, *Forms* 83).

The scientific mode of thought, the space of pure cognition, stands in stark opposition to sensual perception.<sup>16</sup> The abstract knowledge that results from scientific observations and deliberations often contradicts what our senses tell us about the world. To switch from one mode of thought to the other Cassirer therefore assumes a "reversal of perspective" that cancels out what seems evident to sensual perception. Cassirer refers directly to Euclid's geometrical space here in order to exemplify the divergence between sensual perception and mathematic deductions. It takes a certain degree of abstraction to imagine a point as that which cannot be divided or a line as an endless number of combined points. This process of abstraction is necessary in order to allow one's mind to grasp mathematical or scientific facts, but it is useless when processing sensual information about one's immediate surroundings. "What is established in the one [mode of perception] seems negated and reversed in the other" (Cassirer, *Forms* 83).

When it comes to mythical space, the third recognitional mode in Cassirer's classification, there is no such opposition that requires a reversed gaze. Mythical space can sometimes serve as median between sensual perception and scientific space. The scientific and the mythical worldview even function similarly, which Cassirer ascribes to an analogy between the ways in which the two modes deduct from and connect their

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<sup>16</sup> Cassirer also speaks of "mathematical," "geometrical" or "Euclidian" space (83-84). I will refer to this mode of thinking as "scientific" since this term seems to include most other terms used in *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*.

respective categories: “The modes of synthesis which they employ to give the form of unity to the sensuous manifold, to imprint a shape on disparate contents, disclose a thoroughgoing analogy and correspondence” (*Forms* 60).

A comparison of the empiric-scientific episteme with the mythical one reveals, according to Cassirer, that the opposition between the two does not rest on a dissimilar quality of categories used for the contemplation and construction of reality, but instead on a different modality of the applied categories. The “universal forms of intuition and thought” are the same in both epistemes. Cassirer places a form of mythical consciousness at the foundation of any scientific reflection since “each of [the scientific categories], before taking on its specific logical form and character, must pass through a preliminary mythical stage” (Cassirer, *Forms* 60). In this, Cassirer reveals the relevance of Durkheim’s distinction between the sacred and the profane for all acts of cognition and recognition, regardless of a connection with the religious episteme.

On his walk “past the vaguely-lighted monuments” beneath a “waning moon in the sky” whose “radiance” seems “veiled” to him, the appeal of the Colosseum’s “dusky circle ... in the pale moonshine” urges Winterbourne to enter “the great structure” (James, *Daisy* 47). The Colosseum is not a dark night; rather, it seems marked by a reduction of light. Light is merely partially absent and takes on a new quality that alters Winterbourne’s perception of the things around him. This effect is brought about by the subdued moonlight behind “a thin cloud-curtain which seemed to diffuse and equalise” (47). Light, in this scenery, reduces contrast, blends and even confounds the elements Winterbourne perceives. A strong connotation of femininity in this reduced and confusing yet permeating light is confirmed when Winterbourne refers to the moon with feminine pronouns: “her radiance was not brilliant, but she was veiled ...” (47). Not light itself takes on feminine attributes, but the in-between of twilight, in which a secondary reality of diffused meanings emerges. The moon, after all, is not a light source itself, but merely a reflector of “real” (masculine) sunlight, and she spreads her secondary light over an otherwise familiar reality, revealing hidden connections by diffusing and equalizing its objects.

These objects are the ruins of Rome’s imperialist history; man-made architectural structures and representations of an archaically patriarchic culture. The masculine objects hence change their appearance and the effect they have on Winterbourne only

when bathed in feminine light, light of a lower degree as it were. From the evenly if dimly lit Forum he crosses “the cavernous shadows” of an empty arch into the Colosseum that presents itself as split in halves. “One half of the gigantic circus was in deep shade; the other was sleeping in the luminous dusk,” suggesting that the shaded half is not asleep but rather awake and active (47). The opposition of an oxymoronic “luminous dusk,” where sleep and quiet are possible, and the implicit activeness within “deep shade” opens another facet of this scene’s twilight. Moonlight, in all its feminine inconsistency, still remains harmless for the observer as it is richer in the originally masculine sunlight that is reflected by the moon. More light, or rather a smaller lack of light, allows for the precarious and utterly feminine passivity of sleep in the moonlit half of the Colosseum. It is precarious because the potential danger of unknown activity in the dark looms right next to it in the adjacent other half.

Winterbourne feels drawn to this obscure atmosphere of indefinite duality. He submits to its influence by staging himself as an aesthete, an artist even, and begins to recite Lord Byron’s dramatic poem “Manfred.” The passage referred to is part of Manfred’s monologue when he is alone in his tower at the beginning of Act III, Scene IV. Manfred finds himself on the brink of discovering some unknown truth in this scene at a moment when he decides to “linger yet with Nature, for the night / Hath been to me a more familiar face / Than that of man” (97). The following “her” refers to both nature and night as the two seem to be identical in Manfred’s mind. Being exposed to nature evokes Manfred’s memory of the Colosseum where he “learn’d the language of another world” that allows for an expression of the mythic truths attached to and hidden within the historic site he is revisiting in his memory (97). Winterbourne, too, seeks to uncover a knowledge hidden behind his sensual perception of reality with the help of language. He does not learn a new language though; instead, he recites and in some way ‘re-uses’ a poetic character’s experience.

Like Manfred, he finds himself surrounded by an interplay of masculinized History and feminized Nature when he walks among the ruins. The moonlight has a similar effect on Winterbourne’s perception as it does on Manfred’s; just like the Roman ruins on Winterbourne’s walk down the hill, the “other world” Manfred encounters is nothing but quite familiar surroundings altered by the “dim” light of the moon and stars by night. Winterbourne tries to create for himself a comparable fami-

liarity with night and twilight when he identifies with Manfred's poetic experience. An important aspect of Manfred's memory in this context is that Byron's text presents the "tender light" as a unifying force that completes and perfects his experience in that it "fill[s] up ... the gaps of centuries" so as to unite historic facts with immediate emotional reaction and thus giving meaning and purpose to that reaction:

And thou didst shine, thou rolling moon, upon  
All this, and cast a wide and tender light,  
Which soften'd down the hoar austerity  
Of rugged desolation, and fill'd up,  
As 'twere anew, the gaps of centuries;  
Leaving that beautiful which still was so,  
And making that which was not, till the place  
Became religion, and the heart ran o'er  
With silent worship of the great of old,--  
The dead, but scepter'd sovereigns, who still rule  
Our spirits from their urns. (98)

Winterbourne's recital of "Manfred" is an attempt at achieving the same effect, namely turning the place where he walks into "religion" and therefore into a locus of pure myth. Just as in Manfred's memory it is the light of the "rolling moon" that enables this transformation. Nature invades culture in this scene just as mythical thought tinges the familiar perceptual reality. The ruins as elements of the perceptual space give way to observations of their place in mythical space in this twilight scenario. Both spaces, both modes of thought, overlap and even merge in Winterbourne's quoting of Byron to the effect of blurring the lines between the sacred elements like culture, history, man-made artifacts, and the profane ones that include the darkness of night and the moon, which have been explicitly marked as feminine, as well as time, whose destructive natural force works so slowly on the ancient ruins that its effects are only visible after centuries. When "the place [becomes] religion," the sacred overrules the profane, and masculine History triumphs over feminine Nature when "the dead, but scepter'd sovereigns, who still rule / Our spirits from their urns" induce "worship" in spite of the decayed state of those urns.

The passage Winterbourne quotes has Manfred start with a tribute to Rome's overbearing power which is then qualified by the impression of decay. Nature both cradles and crowds the remnants of Roman culture in this image:

I do remember me, that in my youth,  
When I was wandering, – upon such a night  
I stood within the Colosseum's wall,  
'Midst the chief relics of almighty Rome;  
The trees which grew along the broken arches  
Waved dark in the blue midnight, and the stars  
Shone through the rents of ruin; from afar  
The watchdog bay'd beyond the Tiber; and  
More near from out the Caesars' palace came  
The owl's long cry, and, interruptedly,  
Of distant sentinels the fitful song  
Begun and died upon the gentle wind. (Byron 97-98)

At the beginning, nature frames architecture (“trees which grew along the broken arches”), but later invades it: “A grove which springs through levell'd battlements, / And twines its roots with the imperial hearths.” Nature and culture merge in this image, and they do so at their respective origins, “roots” and “hearths” (Byron 98). Yet, those “hearths” are “imperial” ones, which infiltrates a feminine place with distinctly masculine pursuits of power. The next line, “Ivy usurps the laurel's place of growth” (98), introduces an image that is glugged with mythic-symbolic meaning. A negatively connoted plant that carries many threatening attributes of femininity – such as poisonous, capricious, intrusive, equipped with a devious, sneaky aggressiveness – engages in a sly act of power play in order to dethrone the Roman symbol for utterly masculine victory.

The mention of laurel opens a secondary intertextual layer that merits consideration. In the mythical story of Daphne and Apollo, the god of sun and music falls in love with the nymph Daphne, who refuses him due to a trick played on Apollo by young Eros/Cupid. Apollo cannot control his desire for Daphne and chases her. She flees him but is not fast enough. When she feels her strength weaken and Apollo gains on her she asks her father, the river god Peneus, for help. Instead of granting her actual help, Peneus turns his daughter into a laurel bush right where she is standing on the riverbank. On seeing this, Apollo kisses the laurel's bark and declares that, since he cannot have her as a woman, he will wear her as a crown and decorate his lyre with evergreen laurel.

Daphne's escape is of course a highly ambivalent one. She does not really elude Apollo but instead finds herself captured within the bark of a laurel bush. As a woman she did evade Apollo who then claims the laurel as his very own tree and turns it into

a symbol for masculine triumph. Bulfinch's *Age of Fable* and other texts on mythology in James's time point out that even "the word *Daphne* [came to mean] a laurel that burned easily, hence might readily be devoted to the god of the sun" (Gayley 10). Only after becoming a vessel for femininity is the laurel deemed fit to decorate the heads of conquerors or be consumed in a ceremony of worship for Apollo. The myth lingers behind Manfred's observations, which makes Winterbourne's musings in the Colosseum resonate with a sense of his own unsuccessful hunt for Daisy.

He also chases a young woman who refuses to be captured and who constantly eludes him. He is equally enamored by Daisy's good looks as Apollo is by Daphne's beauty; every time he sees Daisy she seems to him prettier than ever before.<sup>17</sup> Like a number of maidens in Greek mythology, among them Daphne, Kallisto, and Iphigeneia, Daisy will not reach the stage of a mature woman but remain a girl in the memory of those who met her.<sup>18</sup> Unlike Daphne, though, Daisy does not have a father figure upon whom to call for help. Instead, it is Winterbourne, the chaser, who decides to end his hunt and give her up. But in doing so he does turn her into a trophy of sorts with which to decorate his own narrative. He flatters himself after Daisy's death that she must have been in love with him after all (James, *Daisy* 51). Like Apollo, he makes a fool of himself and uses what little normative power he has to turn the tables and subsequently re-define reality in his favor.<sup>19</sup>

Winterbourne stops short in his recital of Byron's gothic poem when he remembers the quite real medical risk of malaria looming in the Colosseum: "before he had finished his quotation he remembered that if nocturnal meditations in the Colosseum were recommended by the poets, they are deprecated by the doctors" (James, *Daisy* 47). The poets' approval is relegated to the past whereas the doctors' advice is rendered in present tense like a direct quote of Winterbourne's thoughts. Doctors are replacing poets in Winterbourne's mind, a process of supersession that mirrors a

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. James, *Daisy* 45: "Daisy had never looked so pretty; but this had been an observation of his whenever he had met her."

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Dowden and Livingstone 489.

<sup>19</sup> Ovid's version of the myth ridicules Apollo's futile chase, a notion continued, among others, by James Russel Lowell: "Just conceive such a change taking place in one's mistress! / What romance would be left? - who can flatter or kiss trees? / And, for mercy's sake, how could one keep up a dialogue / With a dull wooden thing that will live and will die a log, - / Not to say that the thought would forever intrude / That you've less chance to win her the more she is wood?" (*The Poetic Works* 335.)

prominent shift in nineteenth-century discourse.<sup>20</sup> The opposition of “poets” and “doctors” names two representatives of the two different modes of thought that Cassirer defines, the mythical space and the scientific one. After letting himself be absorbed by the mythic-romantic side of historic contemplation, scientific factuality reclaims its place as the only reliable source of ‘real’ knowledge: “The historic atmosphere was there, certainly; but the historic atmosphere, *scientifically considered*, was no better than a villainous miasma” (James, *Daisy* 47; emphasis added).

Considered on the grounds of what is perceptible to his senses, as he did before, Winterbourne finds an aesthetic pleasure in the ancient ruins. He dedicates himself to this pleasure by evoking Manfred’s romantic musing on nature and history. At the same time, he stages himself, in his mind and inside the ancient monument, as an aesthete whose pleasure remains aware of the place’s history. He displays his cultural capital in the form of a memorized poem. His performance merely aims at himself, but outside the fictional reality it also proves to the reader that Winterbourne knows Byron’s lines by heart and is thus distinguished from the “American flirt” he is about to encounter (James, *Daisy* 11). Whereas Byron’s hero relives his visit to the Colosseum in his memory, Winterbourne is actually on site and finds himself recalling instead facts that cut short his poetic reverie. The “distant sentinels” that interrupt Manfred’s contemplation in the Colosseum are not so distant to Winterbourne. Scientific facts and reason put an abrupt ending to his self-dramatization as a poet.

Winterbourne’s knowledge about the risk of malaria is another form of cultural capital inaccessible to Daisy. His education ensures that he knows about malaria mosquitoes’ favored breeding spots and their heightened activity after dusk. Daisy is unaware of those details, she has been warned but vaguely of a nondescript “fever” (James, *Daisy* 30); and Giovanelli, who knows about the danger of a malaria infection, merely warns her of committing an “indiscretion” without giving any details (48). Her motivation to go into the Colosseum by night is akin to Winterbourne’s since they both hope for an aesthetic experience. He believes it to be “picturesque” and “well worth a

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Laura Otis’ introduction to *Literature and Science in the Nineteenth Century* (xvii-xxvi). Patricia Murphy explores in detail the gender gap created and reproduced in nineteenth-century scientific discourse: “Despite Victorian presumptions that science was an objective field, proceeding disinterestedly from hypotheses to conclusions, in actuality the process was infused with cultural prejudices and subjective preconceptions” (10).

glance” whereas Daisy, in less suave moderation, lionizes “I never saw anything so pretty” (47-48). Yet, her lack of knowledge and information, which is a lack of cultural capital, devalues her experience in comparison with Winterbourne’s sophisticated musings and makes her vulnerable where Winterbourne can check himself thanks to his advanced knowledge.

Daisy is left in the dark by Giovanelli, too; his feeble warning might even have the effect of an additional incentive as he himself suspects. “I told the Signorina it was a grave indiscretion; but when was the Signorina ever prudent?” (48). The rhetorical question implies not only that Daisy is far from being prudent but that Giovanelli encourages imprudence as an appealing feminine attribute. In a curious parenthesis, set apart from the rest of the sentence by brackets, the narrator informs us earlier that “it was eleven o’clock” when Winterbourne leaves his hosts and begins his walk to the Colosseum (47). This unusual exactitude only proves significant later when Giovanelli tells Daisy she would be “quite safe” if they “get in by midnight” (49). The statement is naïve at best and reveals, moreover, Giovanelli’s patronizing attitude towards Daisy. He lulls her with an assurance that is in no way founded in fact but evokes a fairy-tale scene instead. In the brother Grimm’s *Aschenputtel* (*Cinderella*), the heroine has to make sure she gets into her carriage before midnight in order to be safe from being found out. The Cinderella motif not only serves to further downplay the risk at which Giovanelli has put Daisy and to highlight the dependency and passivity that characterize her position. In light of his previous rhetorical question, Giovanelli even passes all responsibility to Daisy, ridding himself of any blame. Mrs. Miller’s warning that her “friend won’t keep [Daisy] from getting the fever” has proven to be true (30).

Both men find Daisy’s ignorance charming and have little interest in adjusting the imbalance. When Winterbourne informs her to what risk she is exposing herself, he speaks mostly to Giovanelli, and it is the Italian whom he convinces to leave the Colosseum at once. The two men decide it is time for Daisy to go home; Daisy remains passive and her protests unheard. Her vulnerability, therefore, seems curiously linked to a lack of cultural capital since all three of them spend their evening in the Colosseum but the only one contracting a fatal disease is the ignorant defiant girl. This circumstance also highlights how much more exposed Daisy’s female body is in opposition to the two male bodies that go unharmed. She can protect her mind against

Mrs. Walker's attack, but she has considerably less command when her body is under threat.

After her mind proved capable of resisting Mrs. Walker's correctional influence, her body, which is of much larger interest to Winterbourne than to Mrs. Walker, has lost its value as well. Hence, in spite of his allegedly good intentions, Winterbourne does not rescue Daisy. Not only is he too late to prevent the tragedy, he even induces it. Two aspects of this scene lead me to read Winterbourne's role here as going far beyond the unsuccessful tragic savior he sees in himself but as that of executioner instead. For one thing, he has already given up on Daisy socially at this point, as I will discuss below, and is therefore not interested in rescuing her anymore. More important with regard to his responsibility in Daisy's death seems that he engenders the danger of malaria on a symbolic but nonetheless effective level in the first place.

As a medical fact the disease kills Daisy's body, but only in combination with its superimposed significance can it function as the symbolic punishment that Winterbourne renders possible after all other attempts to tame Daisy have failed. Precisely by reversing his attention from poetic mythicism to scientific reasoning he brings malaria back into the story under a new sign. Single-handedly and single-mindedly, he blends the different perceptual modes described by Cassirer to the effect of creating a reality that imbues scientific space with mythic-symbolic meaning and vice versa.

This operation can only work because the narration is focalized through Winterbourne for most of the text and during the entire Colosseum scene. The fictional reality filters through his consciousness and hence prioritizes not only his interpretation of Daisy's behavior but also grants plenty of space to his infusion of the perceived reality with a blend of poetic, symbolic, and mythic connotations. Only because the narrator favors Winterbourne's perspective can he reveal how the character entangles all three modes of recognition and thereby builds the prerequisite for turning Daisy's physical death into a symbolic punishment.

The reversal of his perspective happens right in the middle of Winterbourne's recital, cutting it in half just as the deeper shadow cuts half of the "luminous dusk" of the Colosseum's interior. The imagery suggests a split reality that consists of two separate spheres which join up in Winterbourne's mind to constitute a whole. Daisy is located at the very center of the Colosseum's circle on the steps of a cross lowered into

the ground (James, *Daisy* 47). She occupies a place that covers a bit of both halves, interlocking and thus combining them to complete the circle. Her position at the bottom of a lowered structure is reminiscent of how the moonlight in Byron's poem "fill'd up ... the gaps of centuries" that time has left in the ruins, and by filling those gaps complements the perceived reality.

As soon as Winterbourne's perception switches from sensual to scientific, i.e. he performs what Cassirer calls the "reversal of perspectives" necessary to break through to the abstract space of pure cognition, and no sooner than that, does the place reveal to his mind, and simultaneously to the reader's, its entire reality which now includes the acute danger of a malaria infection. (*Forms* 83). Winterbourne is quite literally "do[ing] things with words," to borrow Austin's phrase,<sup>21</sup> and in that he wields symbolic power. As soon as one is invested with symbolic power, one is capable (or, rather, *rendered* capable by the power invested in him/her) to use the symbolic systems at one's disposal, such as language, to make reality. Like a magic spell, what is said becomes reality in and through the speech act.<sup>22</sup>

The narrative has made this process 'literal' and reveals the mechanism that is at the heart of symbolic power. In this sense, the narrator entrusts Winterbourne with the task of creating the danger of malaria as a socio-symbolic one when he foregrounds Winterbourne's perspective. As a result, the beginning of the Colosseum scene implies that Winterbourne's thoughts and his perception merely complete the image of a reality whose symbolic meaning was hidden in the shadows before. In the form of narrative literature this process of creation takes place on three different levels. The character Winterbourne creates a reality within the fictional reality, which requires for him to be the focalizer; the words on the page are material proof of his creation; and in the reader's mind the danger only emerges in the moment she reads Winterbourne's thoughts.

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<sup>21</sup> *How to Do Things With Words* is the title of John Langshaw Austin's standard work on speech-act theory.

<sup>22</sup> The Copenhagen School's concept of *securitization*, for instance, assumes security as a speech act which can be deployed to de-politicize a political situation by shifting the perceptual focus towards issues of security (Cf. Wæver 44-86). Analogously, Winterbourne "de-socializes" Daisy's situation by shifting his and thereby the reader's perceptual focus from mythic-symbolic overdetermination towards matters of health and hygiene.

Before Winterbourne combines the socio-symbolic significance of malaria with its scientific factuality, the disease only exists in the text as a minor prophecy. Tellingly, it is Mrs. Miller who first warns Daisy of the health risk. Yet, she does so without any scientific knowledge of her own to back up her warning; she merely refers to her doctor's remarks, which she either did not fully understand or which must have been sketchy to begin with (James, *Daisy* 30). The gap in knowledge between Mrs. Miller and her male physician also refers to a clearly gendered difference in the respective chances to access cultural capital. Scientific discourse in the nineteenth century is for the most part exclusively accessible to men. As Patricia Murphy points out, "scientific discourse [in Victorian writings] indeed establishes itself as a gendered space providing little play for female agency" (8).

Yet, the extent of Mrs. Miller's information barely matters as none of the other characters pay attention to her anyway. The first time Daisy announces she is going for a walk on her own Mrs. Walker tells her it is not "safe" to which Mrs. Miller subjoins: "You'll get the fever as sure as you live" (James, *Daisy* 30). The lack of safety Mrs. Walker hints at is not a health-related one, though, but the risk of a scandal. Mrs. Miller hence shows an even more pronounced ignorance than her daughter when it comes to Mrs. Walker's encoded messages.<sup>23</sup> She moreover ensures, if inadvertently so, that "the fever" is from its first mention interlocked with social exposure and defined as a consequence of disobedience.

Mrs. Miller repeats her warning to which, again, nobody even responds. Both her remarks are completely ignored by the others, who keep on talking as though she had not spoken. The mother's intuitive prowess as a particular form of the feminine view is being disregarded here. Mrs. Miller's warning will later prove completely justified, especially her second interjection "Your friend won't keep you from getting the fever" (30). Since this is not Mrs. Walker's or Winterbourne's concern at this point – they only care about a breach of the feminine code of conduct – the problem can be solved by a chaperone. Winterbourne walks with Daisy, which satisfies the social codices but leaves the mother's augury as valid as before and at the same time socially

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<sup>23</sup> At Mrs. Walker's party, Daisy understands her hostess's gesture who "turned her back straight upon Miss Miller" whereas her mother "was humbly unconscious of any violation of the usual social forms" (*Daisy* 40).

invalidated. Her premonition is turned into a Cassandra prophecy that goes unheard and disregarded since prophecies are for witches and unreasonable minds.<sup>24</sup> They are not granted the same faith as science; their power is a sneaky, suspicious one and thus quite feminine as opposed to the masculine, reliable scientific facts to which Winterbourne later resorts.

Winterbourne justifies his moral judgment of Daisy through a medical verdict. When he pretends, to himself just as much as to Daisy and Giovanelli, to speak of a medical risk and nothing else he legitimizes the symbolic penalization of Daisy's trespassing by disguising it as a reasonable, thus logical and unavoidable, outcome of her unreasonable behavior. Hence, the dialogue as well as Winterbourne's observations during the rest of the scene are full of incoherencies that only make sense because the reader has been made aware of the social meaning referred to. Both men call Daisy's presence in the Colosseum an "indiscretion," a word that hints at least as much at improper behavior as it does at incautiousness. Winterbourne's accusation against Giovanelli affirms the moral violation behind his allegedly sanitary warning: "I wonder ... that you, a native Roman, should countenance such a terrible indiscretion" (James, *Daisy* 48).

When the trio leaves the Colosseum, Winterbourne discerns in bewilderment that Daisy "seemed not in the least embarrassed" (49). But why would she seem or actually be embarrassed? He has only spoken of a health risk that she knew nothing about, which would hardly be a reason to feel embarrassment. Daisy does not know that he refers to her behavior, and neither is he admitting this barely concealed meaning to himself. For his verdict to be valid, Winterbourne needs to deny what it is that he means. Without making any conscious decision about this denial, without it crossing the barrier from an unconscious, automatically accepted fact to becoming the result of an active thought process, he conceals the double strategy of his attack. The foundation of his symbolic power in this moment rests solely on the employed force being misrecognized as such in order for its effect to be recognized and accepted as self-evident.

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<sup>24</sup> "The symbolic strategies that women use against men, such as magic, remain dominated, because the apparatus of symbols and mythic operators that they implement and the ends they pursue ... are rooted in the androcentric view in the name of which they are dominated" (Bourdieu, *Domination* 32).

Winterbourne believes himself to think and act within the rules of science when in fact he merely disguises his judgment with scientific facts. Mrs. Walker's attempts to wield influence over Daisy's mind in order to adjust her habitus have failed. Winterbourne now resorts to taking control over Daisy's body, but without exerting any physical violence since that requires a display of force which cannot be concealed and would hence be unacceptable and therefore ineffective in so far as Winterbourne could not justify it before himself. The symbolic violence he wields needs to remain undetectable for himself just as much as for anyone else. Daisy's misconduct has to appear as unquestionably wrong yet rectifiable within the framework of reliable, non-arbitrary scientific certainty while at the same time, on the mythic-symbolic parallel level Winterbourne has established, it receives its actual condemnation as irredeemably morally wrong and therefore socially inadmissible.

The entire interaction between Winterbourne, Daisy, and Giovanelli could only yield the result that Winterbourne aims at if the disguised meaning was accessible to all interlocutors on a pre-reflexive level while at the same time nobody referred to it explicitly.<sup>25</sup> Winterbourne cannot but assume, in the same automatized and unaware manner in which he denies the true aim of his attempt to 'rescue' Daisy, that he draws upon generally valid agreements of what to him must seem like common sense. That Daisy does not share the *illusio* of his social group and therefore applies different categories to evaluate herself and the reality around her is unthinkable to Winterbourne.

Winterbourne already knows that it does not lead to the desired result to inform Daisy of the impropriety of her actions since being judged as improper does not bother her anymore. The symbolic value of the term has shifted when Daisy appropriated it and accepted the exclusion with which Mrs. Walker threatened her. Daisy is truly ignorant of the social breach she has committed in the Colosseum and she is ill-informed about the medical risk of malaria. Hence, she cannot take part in this dialogue on either of the two levels that Winterbourne has created. He draws on a reservoir of cultural capital that Daisy cannot match.

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<sup>25</sup> I am assuming here that Winterbourne would rather see Daisy submit to his idea of a decent young woman than see her get sick and die.

### Enforcement of the Symbolic Sentence

Daisy spends her evening at the foot of the very hill on top of which Winterbourne dines. She sits in the middle of the arena of a monument that served as a hub of entertainment for the masses. To Winterbourne's question inquiring how long she has been in the Colosseum she replies "All the evening," (James, *Daisy* 48). While he is having dinner with his well-respected, self-righteous peers on the hill, Daisy displays herself, in the eyes of Winterbourne and his friends, at an historic sight of spectacular violence and barbaric vulgarities. Winterbourne finds her not on the stands or any other part of the auditorium or the surrounding structure, but right in the center of the vast arena to where the audience's attention would have been directed. She could hardly have chosen a place imbued with a stronger sense of unbecoming publicity. In Manfred's description of the Colosseum the arena alone remains unharmed by the "indistinct decay" of other ruins. It is to Byron's hero "a noble wreck in ruinous perfection!" which he seems to attribute to its gruesome function: "But the gladiators' bloody circus stands" (Byron 98).

Lounging in the middle of this "bloody circus" Daisy cares not a straw (as she herself might put it) for such overemphasis of the place's martial history. In a jocular remark to Giovanelli she even refers to the gruesome games that took place where she now enjoys her evening: "Well, he looks at us as one of the old lions or tigers may have looked at the Christian martyrs!" (James, *Daisy* 47). Not yet knowing who is looking at her and Giovanelli, Daisy still shows an intuitive understanding of her situation, not only foreshadowing how she will be sacrificed to Victorian prudery but also correctly assigning the role of executioner in this game to Winterbourne. The lions or tigers were not the ones, after all, who sent anyone into the arena in order to be ripped apart; they merely killed. So does Winterbourne, on a symbolic level with the symbolic means he has at his disposal when he first creates the danger that will then kill Daisy.

Only on hearing himself be compared to a hungry predator does Winterbourne recognize Daisy, and with that recognition he arrives at another insight that puts an end to the confusion he has felt since he first met Daisy. "Winterbourne stopped, with a sort of horror; and, it must be added, with a sort of relief. It was as if a sudden illumination had been flashed upon the ambiguity of Daisy's behaviour and the riddle

had become easy to read.” (48). While Daisy’s statement unwittingly yet trenchantly summarizes her relation to Winterbourne, he is far from any true revelation. He merely feels *a sort* of horror and *a sort* of relief, remaining himself vague and ambiguous in his assessment of their relation. Daisy’s behavior, on the other hand, has never been ambiguous. On the contrary, she is the only character in this story, except for her brother Randolph, who never acts equivocally. The “ambiguity” Winterbourne senses in Daisy is in fact his own inability to “read” her.

The “relief” that comes with this acknowledgement is that of a man whose worldview has been restored. The narrator feels compelled to inform the reader about this other sensation beside Winterbourne’s “horror,” and one might detect a certain apologetic indignation in the parenthetical “it must be added.” Reassurance falls upon Winterbourne like a much longed for “illumination” in the twilight of his Roman night, and he is finally able to pronounce the ultimate sentence over Daisy Miller: “She was a young lady whom a gentleman need no longer be at pains to respect” (48). He has done his utmost, this statement suggests, to find a way of respecting Daisy. It cost him great effort but now, with Daisy putting her finger on the true aim of his pursuit, he withdraws to the well-lit realm of his familiar categories where he can make sense of Daisy without querying his fundamental convictions.

Since her recognition remains a non-cognition, is not analytically processed and understood, Daisy’s insight is presented as purely intuitive and therefore in accord with an assumedly natural femininity. Nonetheless, or maybe precisely because of this feminized form of acumen, her divination is dangerous for Winterbourne. She has crossed the line from questioning the general *doxa* of his social world to accusing him of precisely the predatory motivation that is behind what he believes to be painful and well-meaning attempts to respect Daisy.

Winterbourne solves a problem he has had with Daisy for a while. When he walks her to the Pincian Gardens where Daisy meets up with Giovanelli he is already “vexed” that Daisy does not give him enough reason to dismiss her as unsuitable for his company and he wishes for a sure sign of her inaptitude. “It would therefore simplify matters greatly to be able to treat her as the object of one of those sentiments which are called by romancers ‘lawless passions.’ ... to be able to think more lightly of her would make her much less perplexing” (33). If she were an object of a “lawless

passion” he would not be required to treat Daisy with the respect that a peer deserves; the social and cultural laws of his upbringing would not apply. Daisy herself breaks some of these laws by enjoying herself and going wherever she pleases; and in doing so she cannot but confirm the image that the other expatriates have formed of her. Winterbourne fulfills his own desire in the end when he allows himself to “think more lightly” of Daisy after her visionary comment in the Colosseum.

Daisy’s carefree way of dealing with others’ expectations and demands on her behavior have an agitating effect on the other Americans, and no other character is more at risk of being unsettled by Daisy than Winterbourne. In her he has found someone to dominate instead of being constantly dominated by other women. Yet, he fails; Daisy eludes him whereupon she has to die. Throughout the story, the character of Winterbourne constructs Daisy not just for himself but for the reader as well. His symbolic power can only be made visible because he is the story’s main focalizer, and revealing the mechanism that defines Daisy’s death as a consequence of her resistance depends on the insight into Winterbourne’s mind that the narrator provides. Winterbourne has to be the perceiving consciousness whose perspective the reader shares in order to grant access to an understanding of the symbolic violence he employs.

Daisy defies Winterbourne’s construction of herself even from her extremely marginalized position. She is never the focal figure of the text, her perspective can only be discerned from direct quotations and from her behavior. Every information comes from Winterbourne or the narrator and yet Daisy, in her few lines of direct speech, disarms their patronizing attitude. In her naïveté, *through* her naïveté in fact, she can tear down the curtain of sophistication and cultivated snobbishness that decorates and hides Winterbourne’s and Mrs. Walker’s wish to limit her. Her naïveté is Daisy’s only tool, and a sharp one at that.

Yet, this merely serves the reader’s awareness and not Daisy’s own. She lacks the cognitive means to understand what it is she unmasks. As Bourdieu states, any “symbolic work needed in order to break out of the silent self-evidence of *doxa* and to state and denounce the arbitrariness that it conceals presupposes instruments of expression and criticism which, like the other forms of capital, are unequally distributed” (*Meditations* 188). Daisy has the means of expression as well as the

genuine indifference of one who does not share the respective *doxa*, but she lacks the critical means to fully grasp the extent of irritation that her responses unleash. The symbolic work that Daisy's rebellion against Mrs. Walker accomplishes cannot serve her own purpose in the end.

In so far as her refusal to bow to Mrs. Walker's social rules dismantles that lady's attacks and threats, Daisy truly is a feminist spirit. When Mrs. Walker threatens her with social exclusion, Daisy draws a line and says she does not want to know. The threat is particularly perfidious since the ones to carry out the sentence and talk about Daisy are no one else but Mrs. Walker herself and the rest of her friends. She proves to be true to her word. Winterbourne's aunt, Mrs. Costello, intimates that Daisy's public contact with Giovanelli is regarded as an "intrigue" of which she "heard a dozen people speak." Winterbourne then "gathered ... sufficient evidence" when he observes that "[a] dozen of the American colonists in Rome came to talk with Mrs. Costello" (James, *Daisy* 42-43).

As prosecutor, judge, and enforcer at once, Mrs. Walker delivers an impressive demonstration of her power. And yet, it is a desperate power as well since she can sense how her authority hits a brick wall when it comes to Daisy Miller, who shows Mrs. Walker the limits of that authority. Daisy simply, and completely unwittingly, denies the indispensable recognition that every form of power needs when she prefers not to know. Her refusal bespeaks more than a mere shunning away from an expected unpleasantness. Her rebuff aims at Mrs. Walker's attempts to gain control over her.

She shows a similar reaction to Winterbourne's warnings in the Colosseum: "'I don't care,' said Daisy, in a little strange tone, 'whether I have Roman fever or not!'" (49). Her "little strange tone" seems as peculiar as the "violent laugh" she sounds when Winterbourne agrees with Mrs. Walker that Daisy should get into her carriage. "If this is improper, Mrs. Walker," she informs her interlocutrix, "then I am all improper and you must give me up. Good-bye; I hope you'll have a lovely ride!" (35). She pronounces absolution to Mrs. Walker and accepts her exclusion. At the same time, she accepts being judged "improper" and even demands the derogatory term for herself, redefining it with an altered meaning. Thereby she claims the normative power to define the evaluative categories used by Mrs. Walker. "Symbolic domination truly begins when misrecognition, which is implied by recognition, prompts the dominated

to apply to their own practices the dominant evaluating criteria,” as Bourdieu and Boltanski put it (8; my translation).<sup>26</sup> Daisy refuses precisely this unconscious acceptance of the dominant categories when she devalues the negative judgment of “improper” by not recognizing the threat that comes with such an appraisal.

Mrs. Walker, however, has many criteria and categories at her disposal and she uses them skillfully. At the beginning of the scene in the Pincian Gardens, she counters Winterbourne’s description of Daisy as “very innocent” with her own assessment: “she’s very crazy” (33). After the discussion with Daisy has led to Mrs. Walker’s defeat, Winterbourne tries again to defend Daisy and attenuate Mrs. Walker’s judgment: “the poor girl’s only fault ... is that she is very uncultivated,” to which Mrs. Walker replies: “she is naturally indelicate” (36). During Mrs. Walker’s talk with Daisy “innocent” morphs into “uncultivated” in Winterbourne’s mind whereas “crazy” escalates into “naturally indelicate.”

Both “innocent” and “uncultivated” refer to a lack of education or experience, something Daisy cannot be blamed for but which leaves room for corrections. Winterbourne therefore takes into account the role Daisy’s upbringing plays in what is perceived as her social inaptness while, at the same time, he retains the patronizing notion that he can ‘improve’ her, which would turn Daisy into a product of his endeavors. As her ‘producer’ Winterbourne could assume a certain right of ownership over Daisy; the same right he automatically grants to Mrs. Walker, expressed in his question “What do you propose to do with us?” (34). Given his lower position in the social hierarchy it is hardly surprising that he shows more persistence to subject Daisy to his will. In order to elevate his own status he needs to establish for Daisy a position subordinate to his own and “to do [things] with” her that demonstrate this relation. As long as Daisy refuses to even recognize that hierarchy, his efforts remain futile.

Whereas Winterbourne tries to hold on to his authority over Daisy, Mrs. Walker has given up on her at this point. She has an understandably lower motivation to force Daisy into submission since her power of control over her social subordinates remains unquestioned. Her appraising terms, “crazy” and “indelicate”, both place Daisy’s

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<sup>26</sup> “La domination symbolique commence réellement lorsque la méconnaissance de l’arbitraire qu’implique la reconnaissance conduit les dominés à appliquer à leurs propres pratiques les critères d’évaluation dominants.”

offenses beyond the reach of reason, but it is the additional adverb “naturally” that contains the full force of her terminal verdict. By naturalizing Daisy’s shortcomings Mrs. Walker rids herself of her henceforth assumed duty to look after Daisy’s reputation. With this one word, she accuses Daisy of being unchangeably defective. Winterbourne reaches this point in his appraisal of Daisy in the Colosseum when he divests her of the right to his respect.

#### Winterbourne’s (Feminized and Feminizing) Weakness

In the Colosseum scene, the mythical foundation behind the perceived reality is activated when the visual space changes at night. Mythical thought is confirmed here as a feminine mode marked by vagueness and incoherence whereas scientific deliberations belong to the masculine realm of reason and precision. Yet, the text also blurs those clear traditional attributions, as discussed above. The established dualities of feminine-masculine, mythical-scientific, emotional-rational, and dark-light oscillate in the text, which creates an air of uncertainty that affects the character of Winterbourne in his attempts to come to terms with his own position in the social hierarchy of his fellow American expatriates and with Daisy’s influence on him.

The narration never shows Winterbourne’s weakness more pronouncedly than in this scene. His weakness stems from precisely his contradictory social position as, on the one hand, a part of a secluded dominant group of wealthy Americans in Europe and, on the other hand, the low rank he occupies within that hierarchy. When he descends the Caelian Hill towards the Colosseum, he does not only take the liberty to do what he has denied Daisy from the beginning, namely to allow himself “the satisfaction of walking” on his own, but he also abandons the rest of his group who never walk but always drive around (47). The most powerful players on the scene, Mrs. Walker and his aunt, Mrs. Costello, look down on him and ridicule him for his infatuation with Daisy. He is not taken seriously by them, a circumstance made even more precarious as both these social superiors are women.

The tale’s final sentence confirms that Winterbourne is subject to the same treatment with which Mrs. Walker threatens Daisy. There are “contradictory accounts,” “reports,” and “intimations” about his private life and his “motives of sojourn” (51). Winterbourne is “being talked about” just as Daisy is (34). And just like Daisy, he

functions as a source of entertainment. His gender, however, grants him a considerable advantage over Daisy. Abusive gossip is a lot less detrimental for a man's reputation than it is for a woman. Hence, he has a social interest in Daisy that goes beyond any romantic or sexual motive. Daisy seems potentially eligible to be accepted into Mrs. Walker's and Mrs. Costello's circle. Initially, they treat her as a lost child that needs to be directed to her rightful place. If Daisy could be made to join their group, she would enter at the lowest level, which would elevate Winterbourne's relative position; he would not be at the end of the social food-chain anymore.

Another aspect that factors into Winterbourne's vulnerability in this scene is how he underestimates Daisy's subversive force and her potential to disrupt the very basis of his social existence. Daisy poses a threat to Winterbourne's most primary beliefs about social conventions and the way in which respectable Americans, particularly young, unmarried American women, are supposed to behave. Her disregard of the dominant code of conduct cannot in itself undermine Winterbourne's *doxic* relation to his social reality, but her sheer ignorance coupled with a disarming naïveté – what Winterbourne interprets as “audacity and innocence” – does in fact take on a corrosive quality (33).<sup>27</sup>

Winterbourne's reaction to this growing threat culminates in his ultimate refusal of Daisy in the Colosseum, which, at once, marks her social as well as her actual death sentence. When he finally gives up his attempts to see Daisy as a socially acceptable woman he rids himself of a subversive element whose ramifications for his social identity he cannot admit. At a time when Winterbourne has given in to an aestheticizing as well as feminized mode of perception that seems charged with the potential to render a heretofore inaccessible depth of insight, his mind applies the emergency break at the crucial moment and forces his perception back into the safe and familiar sphere of habitual thought patterns. When he finds Daisy in the Colosseum he makes “a hasty retreat” in the literal as well as figurative sense; he means to physically back away from the rediscovered danger of an infectious disease and at the same time protect his mind, his self-image, and his entire worldview from being

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<sup>27</sup> Jeremy Lane explains in detail the significance of this “doxic relation” in Bourdieu's theory (194-96).

destabilized (47).<sup>28</sup> In an act of urgent self-consolidation, Winterbourne re-evaluates Daisy's behavior until it confirms the set of values to which he is accustomed.

The tragedy of Daisy Miller's fate lies not in the medical reality of her death. She contracts malaria after all, a potentially fatal disease. The real tragedy is that Daisy is being punished not just for violating the rules and disregarding conventions, but because she does in fact have the means necessary to dismantle some of the relations of domination around her. When social punishment does not work she has to be punished symbolically, which means factually at the same time. Her factual sickness is allotted a symbolic dimension that ties it to the intended social meaning. Daisy carries subversive potential and even though she lacks the cultural as well as the symbolic capital to put those means to proper use she is executed merely for refusing to recognize the established power relations.

As soon as Daisy Miller gets sick she is removed from the story. The reader does not get to witness her suffer and die; she does not make another appearance after she steps into the carriage with Giovanelli in front of the Colosseum. In the text she is only present as a strong and healthy person, never as a weak or ill one. She is completely absent from the last paragraph that only deals with Winterbourne's future in which Daisy is not even mentioned as an occasional memory (James, *Daisy* 51). She vanishes, and the text represents her fading away by not mentioning her again in those last sentences. With her, the rest of her family disappears. The Millers are thus marked as a mere episode in Winterbourne's life; the story begins and ends centered on him. It is not so much a "study" of Daisy, as the story's title suggests, but rather a study of the character of Winterbourne who in turn studies, i.e. observes and misreads, Daisy. Male perception, male thought, a male mind are the pivot of this tale. Daisy enters that mind's focus only to disappear again. She is absent at the story's beginning that begins with Winterbourne sitting by himself (3-5), and she returns into absence at the end.

James's later works frequently hint at the androcentric basis on which the notion of absence as a principally feminine mode rests. In "The Aspern Papers" another male focalizer causes the covertly violent death of a strong female character. In this case, the character suffers from a pathological misogyny that borders on the psychotic.

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<sup>28</sup> It adds a particular ironic undertone to this metaphorical parallel between an infection of the body and one of the mind to recall that malaria is exclusively transmitted by female mosquitoes.

Absence saliently figures as a negative aspect of femininity in this story, as William Veeder points out (“Aspern Portrait” 24-26). One of James’s feminized men in his passivity and his devotion to domestic activities such as gardening and interior decorating, the “publishing scoundrel” (James, *Daisy* 117) nonetheless reveals his self-conception of one who is unquestionably justified in his actions by his consecrated task. This results in a distinctly masculine pursuit of dominance. The following chapter investigates the significance of absence for the elaborate negotiation of feminized vacancy, visibility, and observation in *The Portrait of a Lady*.

THE VACATED *PORTRAIT OF A LADY*

Since *The Portrait of a Lady* was first published in 1881, readers have been baffled, frustrated, and irritated by the novel's ending. Why does Isabel Archer go back to Gilbert Osmond at the end of the novel? The question asks for a perspicuous motive for her final decision to return to Rome and thus to the martyrdom of a fraudulent marriage after she just seemed to have managed to flee her husband's influence by leaving for England against his express wish. The heroine's disappearance at the end of the novel is not easy to accept. Isabel's motives to return to Rome appear, in the words of Jonathan Freedman, as nothing less than "one of the most famous cruxes of American literature" (*Professions* 166) and have given rise to a great deal of speculations that often include the question for James's motivation to thus remove his heroine from the scene. Some critics conjecture that the reasons behind it will have to remain "a mystery" forever (Miller 79). Considering theories of symbolic domination, however, permits a perspective on this conundrum that, instead of searching for Isabel's possible motivations and speculating about her future, focuses on the significance of her departure as an act of rebellion.

When Isabel leaves Gardencourt she also leaves the text of the novel at the same time, thereby completing her partial absence that is a recurring theme in *Portrait*. What might look from one point of view like her ultimate submission to dominant notions of femininity and a woman's 'proper' place, appears in a different light when seen through the lens of a narrative stance that shifts from ostentatious omniscience towards a form of gentle reserve. Isabel belies many of the narrator's early judgments of her in her thoughts and actions, which the novel's narrator nonetheless shares with the reader. After being kept under observation by other characters as well as the narrator and the reader, Isabel absconds from that surveillance, which constitutes an act of deviance just as much as an escape.

*Portrait's* fictional social reality is modeled after a social field and shaped by the unavoidably competitive relations between its characters. Isabel Archer cannot leave that fictional world, but she can leave the text that provides insight for the novel's reader and therefore escape not only further observation but also refuse to take part in the competition from which arise "constraints [that are] often experienced as

unbearable,” as Bourdieu describes the effects of power struggles within social fields (*Meditations* 153). To avoid bearing the weight of such unbearable force can be almost impossible for those caught up in a social game of power “unless, of course, *they exclude themselves from the game, in a heroic renunciation* which, from the point of view of the *illusio*, is social death and therefore an unthinkable option” (153; emphasis added). In allowing his heroine to disappear from her own portrait the narrator finally releases her from his and our scrutiny and lets her take the “unthinkable option” of self-exclusion.

*Portrait* offers a number of probable explanations for Isabel’s decision, such as an optimistic interpretation of the reversed power relation between her and Osmond now that she has not only realized his malice but also learned the secret of his and Madame Merle’s love affair. Other explanations center on Isabel’s idealistic strive towards moral self-enhancement, and her affection for her stepdaughter because of which she urges herself to look after Pansy (cf. Freedman, *Professions* 165-66; Miller 77-79; Weisbuch 290-91). Isabel promises Pansy that she will return. “I won’t desert you,” she tells her stepdaughter right before her departure for England, and declares “Yes – I’ll come back” in response to Pansy’s anxious request that she return (James, *Portrait* 462-63).

In Isabel’s ideal of the refined self, renunciation also plays an important part, disturbingly important as Kaston points out (ix, 39). And the reader remembers how the young, naïve Isabel finds pleasure in imagining the – purely hypothetical – valor she flatters herself to be capable of: “Sometimes she went so far as to wish that she might find herself some day in a difficult position, so that she should have the pleasure of being as heroic as the occasion demanded” (James, *Portrait* 54). At the end of the book, ironically, she does find herself in such a “difficult position,” and some critics value her return to Rome as a triumphant act in which Isabel takes her only chance to gradually, and paradoxically, retain her autonomy and her integrity (cf. Holland 15; Poirier 246). Narrow as her latitude may be, now that she sees its dimensions clearly she can adapt her strategies, some critics hope, and act within that margin in order to help Pansy and at the same time “torment Osmond [by] silently judging him all the time” (Miller 78-79). If “power in this marriage has shifted completely,” Isabel might be in a position to “ruin Osmond” in the end, as Robert Weisbuch speculates (290).

If we take a look at the early passage in chapter 4, however – a judgmental characterization rendered by an ostentatiously omniscient narrator – we find an ironic and yet severe warning as to where Isabel’s idealism may lead: “Of course the danger of a high spirit was the danger of inconsistency – of keeping up the flag after the place has surrendered.” Isabel herself is not aware of this risk as she “knew little of the sorts of artillery to which young women are exposed” (James, *Portrait* 54). The narrator embeds the admonition in an image that applies very well to the idea of Isabel going back to Rome out of a sense of duty, loyalty, and convention. She keeps up the flag with her ideals, stubbornly holding on to her idea of freedom and self-determination, long after the battle is lost and she has been taken prisoner by Osmond’s authority over her.

In the end, Isabel comes to a decision by herself and of her own free will. This does not mean, however, that there is neither force nor violent constraint involved. Above all in the rigorous assessment of her situation in chapter 42, where she takes stock of her marriage and the choices she has made, the narration uncovers a complex interleaving of her self-image with the outside influences that have shaped it and an internal resistance against the domination to which she cannot help in part but subject herself. “To understand this particular form of domination one has to move beyond the false choice between constraint through *forces* and consent to *reasons*” as Bourdieu puts it (*Meditations* 170). Isabel consents to a reason that is the direct result of the invisible force of symbolic domination. Her deliberations and the way she judges her situation and her course of action have been shaped by dominant ideas of feminine integrity and a woman’s willingness to sacrifice herself.

The lack of an explanation, in so many words, for Isabel’s return to Rome is certainly not a lapse on account of the author. Alienating as the ending may be for the reader, it is a calculated affront. Before *Portrait* was published James in fact anticipated parts of the confusion and irritation mentioned above: “The obvious criticism of course will be that it is not finished – that I have not seen the heroine to the end of her situation – that I have left her *en l’air*,” he notes (*Notebooks* 15). Maybe it is not so much the heroine whom he leaves in the air, but the reader.

To solve the crux of the novel’s ending does not mean to reconcile once and for all the contradictory impressions given of Isabel Archer throughout the text but to

accept as one's starting point what Priscilla Walton calls "the absence of referential knowability" that pervades the text (13). It develops around "the 'presence' of femininity and absence" (Walton 13), which provokes a range of strategies in the struggle for meaning that springs from this paradoxical presence. Already the opening scene centers on precisely this issue when it addresses the unreadability of a telegram that provides the other characters with a written portrait of Isabel Archer and also of that telegram's author, Lydia Touchett (James, *Portrait* 24-25).

In my reading I will show how *Portrait*, in referencing both the fundamental conditionality of representation and of perspective, begins by questioning its own implication that Woman is undecipherable. In the first chapter, three male characters, who figure as readers of the diegetic text of Lydia's telegram, find themselves incapable, and to a certain degree unwilling, to decipher the meaning of her text. The novel addresses, in Walton's words, "the inherent instability of language" (13) that reveals, among many other things, a gendered hierarchy when it comes to the aims and strategies of the desire to find meaning.

It would be inapt, though, to reduce the symbolic struggles for normative power within the fictional world of the novel to purely semiotic games. The characters' struggles over social positions, which are at the same time attempts to secure one's personal yet socially determined concept of oneself in relation to the world, require a constant effort to impact the symbolic value of accumulated capital.

The principle of perpetual movement which stirs the field does not lie on some motionless prime mover ... It is in the actions and reactions of the agents: they have no choice but to struggle to maintain or improve their position, that is to conserve or increase the specific capital which is only generated in this field. (Bourdieu, *Meditations* 153)

Like all other characters in the novel, Isabel has "no choice but to struggle." Yet, in the end she chooses not to struggle under scrutiny anymore. Her movement is a move away from the text when she escapes the burden of observation by returning to a state of being absent from her own portrait.

Her act of revolt, as I read her final disappearance, is therefore in accordance with the paradox of any fight against symbolic domination, particularly masculine domination. Submission sometimes proves to be much more subversive than open

rebellion, which in turn might be a barely disguised confirmation of the dominant power structure since it presupposes recognition of that structure.

Being symbolically condemned to resignation and discretion, women can exercise some degree of power only by turning the strength of the strong against them or *by accepting the need to efface themselves* and, in any case, to deny a power that they can only exercise vicariously. (Bourdieu, *Domination* 32; emphasis added)

Isabel's final absence overdraws this need of self-effacement and ironically turns Osmond's strength against him in that she complies, on the surface, with his wish to dissolve into a mere attachment of her husband. "Her mind was to be his," as Isabel discerns (James, *Portrait* 362), but her physical absence from the last scenes of the novel does not imply the submission Osmond expects. Because her mind has conceived to some extent what Osmond's power over her relies on, Isabel is indeed in a position to deny that power.

#### The (In)famous Crux

Along with second-wave feminist critique,<sup>29</sup> Bourdieu contends that "woman is constituted as a negative entity, defined only by default" (*Domination* 27). In her criticism of the metaphysical binary oppositions that shape our perception of reality, Hélène Cixous shows in detail how femininity is connoted with – and ultimately defined as – lack, deficiency, absence (of meaning), and negativity. She speaks of the "double braid [that] is leading us throughout literature, philosophy, criticism, centuries of representation and reflection" (Cixous and Clément 63).

Among James's fictional works few texts combine issues of absence and femininity as elaborately as *The Portrait of a Lady*. From the recurring trope of the absent mother (cf. Sanner)<sup>30</sup> to the curious diegetic omissions when the narration skips over crucial years in the heroine's life, from the frequently voiced complaint that Isabel Archer seems strangely absent from what is after all supposed to be a novel about her character (Veeder, "Lack") to her ultimate absence when she vanishes from her own

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Jardine; Cixous; Irigaray.

<sup>30</sup> Also consider Colm Tóibín's deliberations on the figure of the aunt as a replacement for absent mothers in nineteenth-century literature (1-29).

portrait before the story is over, *Portrait* addresses questions of female absence and vacancy on various levels. The novel grants its heroine the ambivalent merit of trying to escape the power structure that binds her, and it equips her with some characteristics that aid this ambition, such as her “strong will and [her] high temper” that Lydia recognizes (James, *Portrait* 47). Isabel herself insists on her freedom “to choose” whether or not to submit to conventions or rather follow “[her] own ways” of which she admits to be “very fond” (67).

The very first chapter places two absent women at the center of attention. Consequently, the novel’s introductory scene is contingent on the absence of both female characters that it features. Isabel Archer and Lydia Touchett are present only in the conversation of the three men who try to make sense of Lydia’s message. Their conversation establishes a situation in which the physically absent women become mere points of reference in a male discourse to which they cannot contribute. The unequal power relation is consequently played out in a form of discursive male domination which depends on the already feminized absence of the dominated female characters. In the way they speak about women who are not present, which denies those women any form of agency, the men claim an authority that mimics the position that the narrator assumes at the beginning of the novel.

The narrator’s stance, however, changes slowly in favor of the heroine’s own perspective. I read those fluctuations in the novel’s narrative stance as a process in which the character of Isabel Archer is gradually released from the hold of a dominant narrator that controls the image we receive of her in the early chapters. After the following analysis of strategically employed fluctuations in character presence through shifts in narrator position and focalization during the novel’s first half, I will explore the textual links between issues of female vacancy, symbolic violence, and character presence and absence respectively by focusing on the first chapter and how it introduces the various connections between femininity and absence in the novel.

In her struggle for a form of personal autonomy that does not rely on her rather juvenile idealism but is more consistent with her entanglement in the complicated power structure of her life, Isabel’s character pursues different angles seeking to reconcile her quest for self-improvement with the reality of her situation. Following her

on this quest, this chapter maps out how the narration either undermines or supports Isabel's pursuit.

#### Narrative Situation

The narrator's stance during the novel's first chapters mirrors the rather patronizing tone of James's preface to *Portrait* in the *New York Edition*. In this preface, James describes how the germ of this novel did not, as was usually the case, consist "in any conceit of a 'plot' [...], of a set of relations [...]" but altogether in the sense of a single character" (*Portrait* 4). At the starting point there was a nearly complete vision "of the young feminine nature that I had had for so considerable a time all curiously at my disposal" (8).

Not only did he have Isabel "at [his] disposal" for a length of time, but already the first idea of her character is "an acquisition" that puts him in "complete possession of it." James also speaks of his "pious desire to place [his] treasure right" and compares himself to a "dealer [...] resigned to keeping the precious object locked up indefinitely." Only the author's efforts can turn this object into a subject and prevent the portrait from being reduced to "the mere slim shade of an intelligent but presumptuous girl" that the character by herself would be (*Portrait* 7-8). His objectifying choice of words underlines how great an emphasis James puts on his authority over his heroine.

I disagree with post-structuralist feminist criticism, however, that the novel expresses the nineteenth-century attitude that "women must be subdued, and are pushed to the margins of the text" since they are basically vulgar, irrational, and "uncontrollable" (Walton 70-71). An analysis of the narrator's treatment of Isabel at different stages of the novel shows, I believe, an emancipation of her character from (masculine) narrative guidance that culminates not in her being "pushed to the margins" but instead of her leaving the text that frames and controls her on her own account. Her choice is presented as the result of an ambiguous and paradoxical personal development that is in accord with her personality, if inconsistent with many readers' expectations.

Part of this disparity results from the fluctuations in the narrator's treatment of his heroine. On one hand, the early chapters of *Portrait* still cling to the nineteenth-century fashion of domineering narrators that, if they are interested in their characters'

inner life at all, demonstrate their temporal and psychological omniscience by flexibly jumping in and out of the diegetic time and freely penetrating a character's emotional depths beyond the reach of that character's own consciousness.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, *Portrait's* narrator retires progressively from this superior position – or rather indulges less and less in demonstrations of his superiority – until he only zooms in on Isabel's un verbalized and pre-conscious affects as they approach her consciousness in chapter 42. At this point in the novel, the narrative situation has changed from a markedly authorial one towards a more figural narration in which the narrator's prominence is reduced in favor of the fictional mind.<sup>32</sup>

This shift from dissonant to a more consonant figural narration takes place throughout late-nineteenth century narratives. Dorrit Cohn notes that “with the growing interest in the problems of individual psychology, the audible narrator disappears from the fictional world” (25). Far from being rendered inaudible, the narrator of *Portrait* nonetheless follows this transition towards “figure-oriented narration” (Cohn 26) and a representation of individual psyches that begins to focus on the self and how it is constituted. Stanzel detects an “intensification of the tendency towards a figural narrative situation in [James's] later works or in the later revision of earlier works” (190). The narrative situation of *Portrait* therefore mirrors the historical development of its time and foreshadows narratives of classical modernism in which character psychology upstages traditional plot oriented narrative.

### “Doing” Isabel Archer

In his preface for the revised text of *Portrait* for the *New York Edition*, James pontificates about the elementary importance of a female protagonist's consciousness if that protagonist is to be the sole central character of a narrative. He calls his intention of “positively organising an ado about Isabel Archer” in a manner that singles her out

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<sup>31</sup> Compared for instance to the narrator of Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* or to William Makepeace Thackeray's narrator in *Vanity Fair*, James's narrator of *Portrait* undergoes a change from pointedly authorial towards a more figural mode (cf. Collins).

<sup>32</sup> My use of the terms “authorial” and “figural” relies on Stanzel's conceptualization of different narrative situations. As opposed to the authorial narrative situation, in which the narrator's “external perspective” foregrounds the mediacy of narration, “in the *figural narrative situation*, the mediating narrator is replaced by a reflector: a character in the novel who thinks, feels, and perceives, but does not speak to the reader like a narrator” (Stanzel 5).

among all other characters an “extravagance” that has been attempted by few of his predecessors while many have “preferred to leave the task unattempted (James, *Portrait* 9).

The Jamesian tendency to self-monumentalize his position as an author pervades this passage in which he points out how his work was supposed to – and in fact achieves to – exceed and outvalue those of other renowned writers in one particular respect (9-10). He sees other famous heroines, from William Shakespeare to George Elliot, as rendered impotent in so far as they cannot generate a valuable presence or really carry the weight of a subject by and through themselves, but only through the way they relate to their surroundings and how other characters relate to them. “If they are shown as ‘mattering’ as much as they could possibly pretend to, the proof of it is in a hundred other persons, made of much stouter stuff.” James, in contrast, wants to “[p]lace the center of the subject in the young woman’s own consciousness” and, moreover, in “her relation to herself” (10-11). Yet, Isabel Archer’s “relation to herself” appears to be a much more complex matter to the novel’s readers than to its author, who discounts his central consciousness’ interests as “her little concerns.” If he only sets his focus on those, James claims, he will succeed in “really ‘doing’ her” (11).

What shapes Isabel’s perception of the world and of herself is the result not just of a personal, seemingly individual, process but of a social construction. The narrative appreciates this social dimension of its character’s “relation to herself” when the narrator provides extensive extradiegetic information about Isabel’s childhood, her upbringing, and the early experiences of exclusion to which she partly subjected herself (32-33, 54-56). In order to trace how the novel reveals the symbolic domination of its heroine and her struggle against it, this conditionality of her self-image is of utmost importance since it shows the limitations that symbolic domination imposes upon the cognitive instruments of those subjected to it. The categories Isabel adopts to think about herself are a direct result of the relations of domination she is entangled in, or, as Bourdieu describes it, “the schemes she applies in order to perceive and appreciate herself, or to perceive and appreciate the dominant, ... are the product of the embodiment of the – thereby naturalized – classifications of which her social being is the product” (*Domination* 35).

The very dominant narrator of *Portrait*'s early chapters provides his own interpretation of the emergence of the characters' perceptual categories and how their biographies shape their perception of the world and of themselves. When the narrator ceases to demonstrate his omniscience and gives more room to rendering character consciousness, the reader often experiences the same difficulties as the men in the first chapter when they find themselves unable to decipher the meaning of Lydia's telegram. Passages that center on Isabel's thoughts while abstaining from the abundant commentary of the early chapters present a matured mind that often seems to contradict the impression given earlier by a rather evaluative narrator.

Isabel Archer's self-image is increasingly difficult to grasp over the course of the novel as a result of strategic shifts in narrator position and focalization. Her actions and often inexplicable decisions subvert and call into question the certainty with which the narrator first portrays her. These contradictions are more than a demonstration of how an innocent mind falters before the calculated deception of others; they reflect on the many contingencies of Isabel's perception while at the same time pointing out the narrator's limited capacity for a 'truthful' representation.<sup>33</sup> Since the reader relies entirely on the perspective provided by the narrator, who is as much the author's creation as the fictional reality he conveys, an analysis of the character must consider and uncover the limitations of that perspective.

After the initial encounter at Gardencourt, chapters 3 and 4 of *Portrait* give more extensive accounts of Isabel's personality and her past. Chapter 3 begins with a characterization of Lydia Touchett and then shifts towards Isabel on the day she meets her aunt in Albany. The narrator demonstrates his omniscience in this passage when he refers in detail to the history of the Archers' Albany house even beyond Isabel's lifetime. He knows about renovations and the building's earlier stages, including its hidden and unused entrances (31-32). The perspective of large parts of this chapter highlights what Cohn describes as the narrator's "cognitive privilege" over his character (29).

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<sup>33</sup> This is not to say that *Portrait* has an unreliable narrator during its early chapters. There is no hint that the description of Isabel is untrue as such or that the narrator would tend to retract his words later on; it is merely strongly tinged by the narrator's interpretation of the character. Rather than calling into question the narrator's reliability, Isabel's behavior towards the end of the novel subverts the masculine assertiveness of the early characterizations.

We learn about Isabel's childhood pastimes, a bit of her family history and how it intertwines with the house's history. The description evokes elements of the gothic novel with its "mysterious melancholy," its "unused" and "condemned" entrances that lead to "a strange unseen place" (31, 33). Isabel herself appears as a gothic character who is not merely placed onto the eerie stage but is capable, the text suggests, of creating some of the ghostly effect herself. We are informed early on that "her imagination was strong" and that to her the passage connecting both parts of the house seems "strange and lonely" despite being "well-lighted" (31, 32).

Isabel's childhood fantasies seem to seep into her adult years as she still prefers a lonely room in the house where she spent most of her days as a child. It remains unclear what time the narrator refers to when he intimates that, "in the manner of children, ... she had confined a hundred childish sorrows" to the discarded furniture in the room (33). This might describe Isabel's actual childhood days but could just as well refer to a childlike habit she still hangs on to as a grown woman. Isabel's imagination as a child has invested the room and its bolted door with a supernatural atmosphere:

She knew that this silent, motionless portal [the unused entrance door] opened into the street; if the sidelights had not been filled 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. (James, *Portrait* 33)

By introducing the sentence with "she knew," the narration suggests that referring to the door as a "silent, motionless portal" echoes Isabel's own words. She still sits in that "most depressed" room as an adult and "had never opened the bolted door ...; she had never assured herself that the vulgar street lay beyond" (33). In her early twenties Isabel still does not want the outside world to interfere with her mental pictures any more than during her childhood.

Even as an adult, the narrator insinuates, Isabel prefers her imagination and her own "theories" over a "vulgar" reality. In formulations such as this, the narrator suggests that her perception cannot be trusted but requires qualification through his factual descriptions. Hence the extended commentary with which he explains Isabel's adult personality in chapter 6. "Isabel Archer was a young person of many theories, her imagination was remarkably active," the chapter begins (52). Readers know by

now what to think of the heroine's "theories" due to the narrator's frequent interventions that "inform readers of Isabel's faults, and ... advise them of Isabel's overactive imagination" (Walton 54). As is common for authorial narration, in these early chapters the narrator "fixes [the reader's attention] on his own articulate self," instead of the character's (Cohn 25). Cohn's conceptualization of this narrative stance describes the impression of the narrator of *Portrait*'s beginning:

It almost seems as though the authorial narrator jealously guards his prerogative as the sole thinking agent within his novel, sensing that his equipoise would be endangered by approaching another mind too closely and staying with it for too long; for this other mind, contrary to his own disincarnated mental existence, belongs to an incarnated and therefore distinctly limited being. (James, *Portrait* 25)

A representation of Isabel Archer, we are made to believe, calls for an authoritative (masculine) validation. The narrator frequently "speaks directly to his readers [and] subjects to alert them to specific social norms and codes. It is particularly important to him that he successfully condition them to accept his assessment of Isabel's character" (Walton 54). At the beginning of the novel this assessment is one that prioritizes masculine views and invalidates the heroine's own perspectives as well as that of other female characters. As my reading of the introductory scene will show, Lydia's text is partly eclipsed by the three men's speculations in the very beginning of the novel. Subsequently, Isabel's own perception is presented as unreliable, overly imaginative, and slightly childish.

In chapter 4, the narrator withdraws from his very dominating position and makes room for another conversation about Isabel, this time between her sister and her brother-in-law. Lilian and Edmund Ludlow discuss Isabel's unexpected luck of being invited to Europe by her aunt. Again, others speak *about* Isabel and even though the narrative voice is subdued and limited more or less to stage directions, Edmund Ludlow now steps into the role of commentator and judge of Isabel's character. When Lilian expresses the hope that going to Europe will benefit Isabel's personal development, Edmund responds: "Oh, Moses! ... I hope she isn't going to develop any more!" (38). He submits that he cannot comprehend his sister-in-law since "Isabel is written in a foreign tongue" (38), echoing the failed attempts to make sense of Lydia's description and hence perpetuates the notion that Woman is simply incomprehensible.

This is followed by another long passage of *Erzählertext* that opens with an account of Isabel's feelings, tells of her desires and her affections. During her conversation with Lydia, the narrator only once mentions that Isabel feels "some emotion" without informing the reader what emotion that might be (36). After only vaguely alluding to her moods and her thoughts before, the text now focuses on how Isabel feels and what she thinks. The narration in these early chapters makes a point of showcasing how Isabel is *being talked about* and *being narrated* without a chance to contradict or contribute to the accounts given of her, no matter if the text deals with her factual circumstances or her feelings. As Linda Westervelt points out, "the narrator not only brings information about [Isabel] before the reader, but also characterizes and draws attention to himself" (77).

The narrator stays firmly in control of his narration and makes sure the reader knows who is holding the reins. He boasts his omniscience and presents Isabel sometimes from that side, sometimes from another at his will. Speculation and jocose remarks made by male characters about her receive more acknowledgement than her own view or that of her aunt or her sister. Even though the narration mocks Edmund Ludlow by presenting him as some kind of a philistine, his lines of direct speech not only take up more room than his wife's but also exceed Isabel's share in the conversation. The only times Isabel gets a chance to challenge the image others have formed of her – when Ralph suggests she has been adopted (29-30) and when her sister assumes she feels "so grand" due to Lydia's visit (38) – her objections are limited to only one or two sentences each.

### The Presence of Absence

The first mention of both Isabel Archer and her aunt, Lydia Touchett, in *Portrait* is significantly marked by their absence. Similar to the governess in *The Turn of the Screw*, Isabel and Lydia also assume "an absent presence" in this chapter (Walton 4). Whereas the governess' paradoxical presence is limited to the story's prologue, *Portrait* does not prefix its diegesis with a frame narrative and introduces its 'presently absent' female characters through the perspective of its omniscient narrator and the three similarly authorial male characters.

In the novel's opening scene Ralph quotes to his friend Warburton two telegrams he and his father have recently received from his mother, who has spent the winter in America. The first telegram reads: "Changed hotel, very bad, impudent clerk, address here. Taken sister's girl, died last year, go to Europe, two sisters, quite independent" (24). We are left as puzzled by Mrs. Touchett's cryptic message as Ralph and his father are. In Lydia's written communication very few words are webbed around a vast cavity of potential meanings; "it seems," in Ralph's words, "to admit of so many interpretation," that it becomes nearly useless as information (24).

The writer of these lines somehow creates another level of absence when her words – after all the text of a telegram whose primary function is to inform the recipients about certain facts – are not conducive to any form of understanding, let alone an increase of information, but leave a void instead. Ralph follows his mother's invitation to interpret her text and takes up the word she assumedly used to characterize her niece: "independent." Instead of attributing this predicate to his unknown cousin, Ralph sees an adequate description of Lydia herself; a woman who "likes to do everything for herself and has no belief in anyone's power to help her" (James, *Portrait* 25). In Ralph's reading, Lydia's independence becomes sign, manifestation, and result of her absence.

After the initial scenes, including Isabel's arrival at Gardencourt, the narration attends to Lydia Touchett in chapter 3 to supply a characterization at length. We learn that she "never pleased" and "rarely succeeded in giving an impression of suavity" (31). As soon as she realizes that she and her husband "should never desire the same thing at the same moment," she leaves him without hesitation and moves to Italy (31). When back in England, she deliberately keeps away from her neighbors, does not call on anybody, and rarely receives guests. For the entire passage, the narrator keeps control over his narration and over the impression he renders of Lydia.

Character consciousness, direct speech, and other forms of text interference are absent and in the resulting *Erzählertext*, the reader is presented with the narrator's slightly caricatured interpretation of Lydia as a woman who appears amusing in her roughness. However, readers might get the impression that there is something pitiable in Lydia's constant repulse of others. We are led to believe that through her wish to be independent Lydia has become unfriendly and even antisocial. When Ralph's poor

health takes a turn to the worse and he remains, bedfast, at Gardencourt, she nevertheless sticks to her schedules and leaves for America, leaving her terminally ill son behind. Lord Warburton carefully utters his disapproval to Isabel, who suspects that Lydia would never have changed her plans even if Ralph were literally dying (322).

Lydia's absence has a unifying effect on her husband and son, they "exist independently of Mrs. Touchett," as Kristin Sanner puts it (155). Another result of her aim for autonomy is therefore the independence of others from her. Lydia goes too far, the narrator seems to suggest, and thereby mistakes solitude for independence. Slightly overstated though it may be that "Mrs. Touchett's independence leads, in a sense, to the loss of her life" (Long 117), her efforts to obtain and to demonstrate her autonomy certainly isolate her socially. She is so utterly isolated that absence has become part of her personality. At the same time, it de-feminizes her in so far as her motherly qualities are transferred to her husband. Daniel is the more domestic character by far; he spends most of his time at home, takes care of his son and his estate. Ralph describes his father as the more "motherly" parent (James, *Portrait* 43).

More striking still than Lydia's peculiar quasi-presence in the first chapter – a presence that is limited to a purely male discourse and is contingent on her physical absence – is how the novel introduces its main character in and through her absence. The portrait of Isabel Archer begins with a void that the three men at Gardencourt try to fill with identifiers. They do so playfully, which diverts the readers' attention from how their own image of Isabel begins to shape along with these masculine speculations and evaluations before she has had a chance to identify herself. They wonder if "the young lady [is] interesting," whether or not she is "fond of [her] own way," speculate that "she hasn't come here to look for a husband" and is "probably engaged," and, finally, dismiss her for the time being since "perhaps, after all, she's not worth trying on" (James, *Portrait* 24-25).

Within only two pages, and before we even know her name, Isabel has been introduced by the male characters as an agreeable and perfectly inconsequential pastime for gentlemen who greet the many riddles with which they expect women to present them and which they have no inclination to solve. The absence of both women puzzled over in this first chapter emphasizes not simply the futility of any attempt to

make sense of them, but the core male pleasure in trying anyhow. To enjoy as a diversion what does not make sense beyond its being amusing is to give meaning and purpose to that activity for its own sake, in other words, to turn it into a game. Isabel and Lydia are being toyed with as the objects of a men's game before they have even entered the scene.

As toys, they are also constructed as something to be appropriated by the players. When Daniel Touchett mentions Isabel for the first time, he instantly applies a possessive pronoun, marking her as "my niece." He then corrects himself and explains "she's a niece of my wife's." Ralph merely refers to her as "a niece" whereas Lydia's telegram mentions Isabel as "sister's girl," which, due to the elliptic text of the telegram, Ralph and Daniel facetiously interpret as "the sister of the [hotel] clerk" (23-24). After sketching a background for her first appearance in Gardencourt, this chapter thus begins to portray Isabel by pointing out the different ways in which she is and might be related to others.

The question to whom she belongs as a niece and as a girl appears to be of utmost interest to the men. Isabel herself, however, dislikes to be defined through her relatedness. When Ralph suggests that Lydia "has adopted [her]," Isabel's reaction is described as an intense one that gives her a "look of pain" (29). "I'm not a candidate for adoption," she declares and explains: "I'm very fond of my liberty," as though becoming someone's adopted daughter were incompatible with one's "liberty" (30). Ironically, it is of course precisely with this statement that Isabel positions herself as close in spirit to her aunt as she can get at this point of the novel where all we know about Lydia adds up to a woman who is very fond of her own ways.

The keywords in these early passages that characterize the two women – "independent" and "liberty" – are both self-applied by Lydia and Isabel. However, the men in this scene determine what these words signify. Ralph reads Lydia's description of somebody else as a characterization of herself and therefore appropriates the signifier in order to change the signified. He usurps his mother's authorship and, in her absence, overwrites her telegram with his own text. Isabel's claim of her "liberty" has already been dismantled beforehand, and also in her absence, when the men make sure to point out in how many ways her status depends on belonging to others as a family

member and as a young woman. Isabel herself equates liberty with non-relatedness or at least with the absence of imposed familial bonds.

Before Isabel appears in person, the men have already constructed her as somebody to be possessed through marriage and have entangled her in a net of probable as well as jocularly invented relations that she cannot easily escape. A crucial effect of their attempts to define Isabel's relatedness is that it instantly contests Lydia's assessment of her niece as "independent" by naming all the probable and improbable possessive connections she has as "niece" and "girl." Lydia's written account of her niece is therefore invalidated when the three men treat her cryptic text as an invitation to speculate about the unknown girl. They overwrite Lydia's text with their own main interest that foremost concerns to whom Isabel belongs and as whose possession she can be defined. In place of Lydia's open phrasing, which does in fact "admit of so many interpretations" that it leaves Isabel free-floating as it were, Ralph, Daniel, and Warburton express the urge to fix her in a reliable and rigid framework of possessive relations before meeting the person herself (James, *Portrait* 24).

Isabel's encounter with Ralph seems to mock the obsession with possession that the men demonstrate in their conversation about her. Ralph's dog notices her arrival before the men do, and greets her enthusiastically. When Ralph follows the dog, the two cousins begin their acquaintance with another question of ownership, this time regarding the terrier. "Is this your little dog, sir?" Isabel asks Ralph who replies: "He was mine a moment ago; but you've suddenly acquired a remarkable air of property in him" (26).

Isabel's interaction with the dog allows her to claim ownership in Ralph's eyes. Possession is granted on the basis of a performative appropriation. In their conversation before Isabel's arrival, however, the three men assume a property situation when applying the possessive pronouns to Isabel in speech acts informed not by interaction with the respective person but by that person's absence. When Isabel's first line of direct speech in the novel inquires of another property situation ("Is this your little dog, sir?"), she continues the men's line of thought and then demonstrates her preference of more vague associations of possessiveness. She shuns away from definitive property over herself as well as over Bunchy the dog. Isabel prefers to "share" the dog with Ralph instead of accepting the suggested ownership (James, *Portrait* 26). To own the

terrier seems as uncomfortable to her as being owned as an adopted child by another person.

Lydia's telegram provides the first part of Isabel Archer's portrait. Except for the author's preface, the reader's image of the novel's heroine begins to take shape with the aid of an intradiegetic written portrait. It presents its fictional as well as its actual readers with a riddle that cannot be solved but asks to be interpreted instead. Within James's written portrait of Isabel the readers' first glance of her comes in the form of another written portrait which causes some confusion, some jocular speculation, and also a hint of irritation. The novel's first scene therefore serves as a warning to its readers that this form of portraiture, if executed poorly, will be potentially frustrating depending on the author's use of language and his or her consideration of the readership.

James undoubtedly thought himself much more capable of portraying Isabel than his character Lydia Touchett. He assigns to her the role of a portrait's author and to his male characters that of its recipients. The male gaze, however, oversimplifies matters in that scene, as does the narrator's during the following chapters. When Isabel is eventually granted a voice of her own, the incongruence of the early representation of her character comes to the fore. The first chapter can be read as blaming this in part on the character, since it suggests that male characters are easier to portray than female ones.

### Masculinized Presence

Besides the two absent women of the first pages, the book's beginning also introduces Daniel and Ralph Touchett and Lord Warburton. In the picture the narrator forms as the initial scene's setting, the first we see of the three men are their shadows on the lawn: "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" (17). Whereas Isabel is present only in the text of Lydia's telegram and the men's conversation, and Lydia speaks by proxy through her telegram whose meaning is unclear, the shadows of the three male figures on the grass make them reliably locatable and double their presence.

In its first scene, *Portrait* presents its readers with a likeness of the male characters before showing the actual persons and thereby genders the differences between this elementary form of visual representation and the complicated business of verbal representations of a person as it unfolds in the men's reading of Lydia's telegram. The "straight and angular" masculine shadows form an obvious contrast to the confusing and unclear text of Lydia's message. The men's likenesses emerge naturally and without effort simply because daylight casts their shadows on the lawn. It is an image that confirms their presence and connects their 'natural' portrait dependably with its models. Their bodies are the positive image of the negative that represents them.<sup>34</sup>

A portrait made of language, however, proves less reliable and straightforward. Of course the male bodies and their shadows are represented solely through language too, but the diegetic text of the telegrams as well as the men's speculations over Isabel consist of nothing but words that are disconnected from a physical presence within the fictional reality. Whereas the men create their own likenesses merely by standing on the "perfect lawn" that serves as a canvas, Isabel and Lydia have only Lydia's words to represent them. The canvas on which their portraits emerge, to stay with the analogy, is the male imagination. It creates an image on the grounds of an interpretation of Lydia's words. The men in this scene claim an agency that relies on the absence of the women they talk about.

This compares to a similar claim that the narrator makes in his highly authoritative way of characterizing Isabel, particularly during the first chapters of the novel. Marked in this first scene as the result of a distinctly masculine view, it merits closer inspection in how far the narrator keeps up or changes his dominating position in the course of the text. My focus will be especially on his treatment of character consciousness and the techniques employed to render a character's sub- or pre-conscious processes.

### Gradual Emancipation

Over the course of the novel, the narrator of *Portrait* gradually releases Isabel's mind from his authoritative grip to the effect of revealing how her self-perception eventually

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<sup>34</sup> The image of men casting their shadows refers back to the mythical origins of portraiture. In his *Natural History*, Pliny mentions the myth of Dibutade, a shepherdess who traces the outline of her lover's shadow onto a wall before he has to leave her (270-71).

starts to include the undetected confining structures that dominate her mind and her actions. The narration begins to trace this process by introducing more consonant forms of psycho-narration that acknowledge the value of the character's pre-conscious impressions and feelings.

When Lord Warburton proposes to marry Isabel, the narrator at first treats her thoughts and emotions as disdainfully as a few chapters earlier. "Smile not," he warns his readers, "at this simple young woman from Albany" and reminds us that "she was a person of great good faith, [even though] there was a great deal of folly in her wisdom" (95). In this instant, the narrator presents himself as a perfect example of what Dorrit Cohn describes as "a discursive intelligence who communicates with the reader about his character – behind his character's back" (25). The subjectivity of the narrator's statement traces back to himself.

During her decision to reject Warburton's proposal, however, the narrator reduces his patronizing commentary of Isabel's thoughts and actions for a longer passage. Before he chips in again with one of his condescending remarks, Isabel's mind is allowed to express itself in a less mediated manner. The particular subjectivity of the narrator's discourse in such passages results not from the subjectivity of the narrator but from an increase in text interference in which the enhanced subjectivity is "traced back ... to the character," in Wolf Schmid's words (137). Through frequent use of narrated monologue while rendering Isabel's inner life, the narrator foregrounds her internal perspective.

After Warburton has left, Isabel is "upset" and "disturbed" (James, *Portrait* 101). The narrator informs us quite plainly what Isabel feels and that "it appeared to her there had been no choice in the question" (101). The resolution she arrives at, without even a decision-making process but spontaneously as it were, is rendered in narrated monologue: "She couldn't marry Lord Warburton ... She must write this to him, she must convince him, and that duty was comparatively simple." Less simple, however, prove her self-doubts following the realization that she will not take this "magnificent" opportunity (James, *Portrait* 101). Again, these doubts echo her thoughts in narrated monologue: "Who was she, what was she, that she should hold herself superior?" (102).

Only after giving some room to Isabel's own voice during an undoubtedly difficult moment, the narrator cannot help himself, it seems, and resumes control of the narration's attitude. "Poor Isabel," the next sentence begins, signaling a return to the patronizing stance of earlier passages. The indirect quotation "she must not be too proud" already sounds like a priestly correction and the narrator enhances the Sunday-school tone by referring to Isabel's "prayer to be delivered from such a danger" (102). Much as this suggests a tendency to overly dramatize her predicament on Isabel's part, the narrated monologue of the preceding paragraph does indeed grant some authority to the character's view.<sup>35</sup>

There is a slow increase of instances in which the narrator reduces his prerogative of interpretation when it comes to Isabel's inner life during the second half of book I. When Isabel visits Osmond in Florence together with Serena Merle, the narrator uses his omniscience more subtly to allude to the gulf between Isabel's impression of the situation and her pre-conscious yet apt intuition of the danger that emanates from the house and its owner. "It would certainly have been hard to see what injury could arise to her from the visit she presently paid to Mr. Osmond's hill-top. Nothing could have been more charming than this occasion" (James, *Portrait* 217).

In this sentence, the narrator uses his own subjectivity to absolve the character in part from the formerly stressed shortcomings. The narrative structure now makes Isabel's failure to anticipate what Osmond's impact on her life is going to be appear as perfectly understandable and not at all the result of the naïve mind that has so far been represented as one of the heroine's core characteristics. The indiscernible injury "would certainly have been hard to see" for anyone, the phrasing implies. Yet, the narrator leaves no doubt that there is potential for "injury" awaiting Isabel.

The following paragraph, focalized through Isabel, juxtaposes her impression of the perceived moment with an underlying air of risk and imprisonment that, even

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<sup>35</sup> There is no actual consensus within narratological research regarding the question to what degree the narrator's stance may show through in free indirect style and therefore in how far this technique impedes or even prohibits the narrator's influence in favor of an increase in character authority (cf. Cohn, *Distinction*; Miller; Stanzel; Vogt; Waste). I follow Manfred von Roncador's suggestion to differentiate between "degrees of authorial intervention" ("Graden von Auktorialität," 239) in free indirect style. My following readings show that this degree of authorial intervention does indeed decrease while the narrator of *Portrait* slowly but perceptibly brings the character's perspective to the foreground while withdrawing his own.

though she is not consciously aware of it, nonetheless lingers beneath her interpretation of the perceived moment. When the two women pass the Roman Gate that “enormous blank superstructure” seems “nakedly impressive,” which does not sound particularly “charming” but is rather reminiscent of a deserted castle or a prison (James, *Portrait* 217). The “high-walled lanes” correspond to this image of confinement. Isabel notes “the wealth of the blossoming orchards” that might add to the idyllic atmosphere she consciously experiences. However, the blossoms do not simply smell sweet, they quite aggressively “flung a fragrance,” which evokes images of an attack against the approaching visitors (217).

As soon as they reach the “crooked” piazza in front of Osmond’s house, the description highlights the oppressive elements of the scenery even more (217). The “very imposing” house has a “long brown wall” and a court that, despite its being “high” and “wide,” is deeply in the shadow. The “flowering plants” Isabel sees can only exist in the “upper sunshine” on the very top of the columns crowning the galleries above her head. “There was something grave and strong in the place,” which sounds like something of an understatement when compared to the prophetic specification that follows. The house looks to Isabel, who is still the focalizer, “somehow as if, once you were in, you would need an act of energy to get out” (217).

The narrator picks up this foreboding note that, even though it stems from Isabel’s conscious perception, remains unregarded by the character. “For Isabel, however, there was of course *as yet no thought* of getting out, but only of advancing” (217-18; emphasis added). For one thing, this phrase announces that Isabel will, in the future, have reason to strive to get out. For another, the narrator exclusively mentions thoughts, indicating that her intuition and her feelings are indeed trustworthy, and will later prove justified. A brief comparison to similarly prophetic statements in an earlier passage reveals how the attitude towards Isabel’s inner life has changed, if only gradually so.

In the middle of his particularly condescending characterization of Isabel in chapter 6, the narrator has analyzed her self-perception in a mercilessly judgmental tone. According to this account, “she was in the habit of taking for granted, on scanty evidence, that she was right.” On top of that, “her errors and delusions were frequently such as a biographer interested in preserving the dignity of his subject must shrink

from specifying” (53). A list of these “errors and delusions” follows that goes on for almost an entire page before the narrator suggests how Isabel’s erroneous assessments will have a part in her misfortune: “Sometimes she went so far as to wish that she might find herself some day in a difficult position, so that she should have the pleasure of being as heroic as the occasion demanded” (54).

This earlier premonition blames Isabel for “her meagre knowledge, her inflated ideals, ... her mixture of curiosity and fastidiousness,” and many more shortcomings (James, *Portrait* 54). On her visit to Osmond, however, it takes more than two pages before the narrator steps forward again with one of his familiar exclamations. And even the patronizing interjection is more restrained in this case: “Poor Isabel was doubtless not aware ...” (219). The term “doubtless” signals a slight restraint on the narrator’s part. Despite his often stressed omniscience, he does not probe the character’s mind at this point but merely assumes what the heroine is or is not aware of, which leaves Isabel’s mind inviolate as it were. Her thoughts and feelings in this moment are allowed to stand for themselves, considerably more so than before.

During her visit, Isabel’s intention “of advancing” that she had on the way towards the house turns into a feeling that “there was something in the air, in her general impression of things – she could hardly have said what it was – that deprived her of all disposition to put herself forward. The place, the occasion, the combination of people signified more than lay on the surface” (219). Since the reader knows about Madam Merle’s plans to marry Isabel off to Osmond, Isabel’s vague apprehension seems justified even without an awareness of the full magnitude of Merle’s motives. Thus, instead of foregrounding her intellectual and personal deficiencies, this passage appreciates Isabel’s intuitiveness. In this, the text adheres to conventional male and female stereotypes but esteems the part connoted as female stronger than it has before, even though her barely recognized intuition does not keep Isabel from becoming Osmond’s wife in the end.

To confirm intuitiveness as a feminine feature also expresses the ambiguous capacity of Isabel’s dominated position to perceive without reflecting the risks resulting from that domination. “What is called ‘female intuition,’ a particular form of the special lucidity of the dominated,” Bourdieu points out, “is ... inseparable from the objective and subjective submissiveness which encourages or constrains the

attentiveness and vigilance needed to anticipate desires or avoid unpleasantness” (*Domination* 31). Isabel learns the value of learning to avoid unpleasantness only a few years into her marriage.

#### To Espouse One’s Role

After Isabel marries Osmond, the narrative techniques presenting her change. She is introduced anew, as it were, with several references to her first appearance. The narration leaves Isabel at the end of chapter 35 engaged to Osmond but not yet married. A large ellipsis of three years separates it from the beginning of chapter 36. Edward Rosier, a minor character up to this point, becomes the focalizer of this and most of the following chapter. The narrative follows him as he pays a visit to Serena Merle to ask for her help regarding his wish to marry Pansy Osmond. It is exclusively through their conversation that we can gather shreds of information about Isabel’s marriage and her present situation.

Everything that is said about Isabel and her relationship to Osmond comes from Serena, whom the reader knows as an intelligent and keen observer but also as a careful schemer who skillfully conducts her statements so that they will serve her own interests first and foremost. Readers are therefore attributed a lot more responsibility of interpreting and assessing the information they receive than they were at the beginning of the novel. In a sense, the narrator’s gradual release of his domination over the novel’s protagonist is mirrored on another level by his release of his readers.

In her conversation with Rosier, Serena alludes to conflicts between Isabel and Osmond (James, *Portrait* 303); she tells Rosier that Isabel has had a son who died after only six months (305), and insinuates a certain unhappiness in Isabel’s social life:

Be an old friend as much as you like; the more old friends she has the better, for she doesn’t get on very well with some of her new. But don’t for the present try to make her take up the cudgels for you. Her husband may have other views, and, as a person who wishes her well, I advise you not to multiply the points of difference between them. (306)

This is a variation of the method well-established in the previous chapters of having other characters speak about Isabel in her absence. There is no direct judgment of her personality or her flaws. Serena leaves it at these suggestive remarks, and the narration follows Rosier on his next visit to one of Isabel’s soirees.

Her Roman house is shown through Rosier's point of view, who has to endure Osmond's condescendence as soon as he walks in. His perspective is a marginalized one in more than one regard. He has never been a focal figure before, acts as a suppliant to Madam Merle as well as to Osmond, and will be rejected as a possible husband for Pansy. Instead of the pronouncedly authorial manner in which Isabel has been introduced to the first part of the novel, she is now removed from the center of attention. Instead, the narrator domineers over Rosier now, refers to him as "[p]oor Rosier" and as "our young man" (309, 310).

Even though the narrator remains true to his tendency to condescendingly comment on a character's inferior position, he abstains from aligning with the patronizing stance other characters have adopted towards Isabel. The male characters whose commentary about the heroine was granted extensive space in the text before, mostly through direct speech, were all comparably rich in symbolic capital, which foregrounded their masculinized normative power to define and construct Isabel. Rosier in contrast is a rather effeminate male character with very little symbolic capital, especially in his situation as an unpromising suitor of Pansy. Isabel is hence shown through the perspective of a character who is socially inferior to herself. The aerial perspective of the novel's beginning has been replaced by an upward angle and the downward male gaze has yielded to an epicene dominated view.

At the same time, this scene's setting and imagery show striking parallels to Isabel's first appearance in chapter 2. After wandering around the house in search of Pansy, Rosier "met Mrs. Osmond coming out of the deep doorway" (James, *Portrait* 309). At the beginning of chapter 2, the reader's first view of Isabel is focalized through Ralph who also meets her standing in "the ample doorway" of Gardencourt (25). The spacious portal that leads out of the house and into the garden has been replaced with a gilded inside door whose deepness makes it sound rather heavy and confining and that only leads to another room within the Osmonds' "black fortress."<sup>36</sup> Isabel wears black in both instances and remains standing in the doorway for a moment, long enough to pose as a portrait in a (door)frame. Focalized through the perception of the art enthusiast Rosier, the analogy is even spelled out when Isabel,

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<sup>36</sup> The name of their Roman house, Palazzo Roccanera, translates roughly to "black fortress."

“*framed* in the gilded doorway, ... struck our young man as the *picture* of a gracious lady” (310; emphasis added).

Through these similarities, the text indicates a correlation between both scenes. In imitating the *mise-en-scène*, the narrator makes the shift in narrative tone stand out even more markedly. Isabel’s particular charm during her first appearance derives from her vivacity and the animated conversation between her and the other characters. Through Rosier’s perspective, she is now presented as rather remote and even subdued: “She had lost something of that quick eagerness to which her husband had privately taken exception” (James, *Portrait* 310). This sentence exemplifies the interesting conflation of perspectives in the scene. Rosier does not know to what Osmond privately objects; the confidential information can only come from the narrator. Yet, Rosier’s sensitive observation of Isabel anticipates this intimate knowledge when he senses Isabel’s “uncatalogued values” and the “‘lustre’ beyond any recorded losing” of his hostess (310).

The authorial narrator’s text merely provides the explication of Rosier’s vague impression that Isabel is somehow reduced and has “more the air of being able to wait” than before (310). Much as the narrator treats his focalizer with the familiar condescension, he also acknowledges the truth of Rosier’s insight when he confirms it through facts Rosier is unaware of. A figure as subjected to domination as Rosier, with regard to the way the narration presents him as well as his position within the fictional society, is shown here to have a quasi-intuitive capacity to discern Isabel’s domination and her as yet unrecorded “losing” since she became Mrs. Osmond.

The heroine is introduced anew in this scene. Again, she stands framed in a doorway, but she is changed and so are the narrative techniques of representing her. Not the disparaging voice of the omniscient narrator or the somewhat disrespectful judgments of Ralph, Warburton, and Edmund Ludlow direct the first glimpse of Isabel’s new life, but the anxious and hopeful perception of a man who seems to have intuitive access to Isabel’s inner life but whose attention and interest are focused on another character.

The narrator calls attention to his presence throughout the scene, for instance by deviating from his focalizer’s use of the name “Mrs. Osmond” to refer to Isabel. Rosier has just expressed his wish to speak to Pansy when the narrator makes his presence

known: “‘Ah,’ said Isabel, turning away, ‘I can’t help you there!’” (310). Since Rosier would never dream of using his hostess’s first name, it must be the narrator informing us of Isabel’s dismissive gesture. To foreground not only his own presence but moreover to return briefly to the character’s familiar name suggests that her gesture is characteristic not so much of Isabel’s new self as Mrs. Osmond, but rather of the person the reader has come to know so far, and that there is reason to view Isabel and Mrs. Osmond as separate entities.

In his discussion of Sartre’s misconception of a café waiter’s “role,” Bourdieu exemplifies the difference between assuming a role by imitating its visible practices and taking up a position beyond intellectual reflections of it: “His [the waiter’s] body, which contains a history, *espouses* his job, in other words a history, a tradition, which he has never seen except incarnated in bodies” (*Meditations* 154). Isabel is presented as a woman who has espoused Osmond, but not the “job” of being his wife. She imitates effectively the appearance and practices of what she knows is expected of a wife in her position and therefore appears as Mrs. Osmond to an observer like Rosier. But in the little moment of dismissal, the text gives a first hint that there is a part of her that has not committed to that position. According to the arrangement between her and her husband, it would have been her duty as Osmond’s wife to discourage Rosier. Isabel however turns away from Mrs. Osmond’s duty.

Her turning away is not just a gesture Rosier over-interprets in his anxious hope to meet Pansy, which might have been a legitimate reading if the scene remained focalized through him. Isabel abandons her visitor just as she demonstrates what her role as wife and step-mother involves and what it excludes. Mrs. Osmond, as Rosier has perceived her for the larger part of this chapter, is a representative figure and a hostess. Isabel by contrast is not identical with that figure; she is already in the process of separating herself from her position as Mrs. Osmond even though the separation so far takes place beyond the grasp of her consciousness and is expressed merely – but not in the least less meaningfully – in bodily actions and reactions.

As Bourdieu remarks, “[i]t is because agents never know completely what they are doing that what they do has more sense than they know” (*Logic* 69). Isabel is unaware of the significance of her body language whereas the narrator understands that there is “more sense” in what his character does in this moment than she herself can

grasp, and more than the focalizer of the rest of this scene could plausibly be expected to guess. The brief shift to zero focalization indicates that the reader still relies on the narrator's guidance when it comes to interpreting the character's actions; that he still knows more about her than she herself does. Instead of explanatory comments, however, he merely gives a hint, rendered more salient through the stark contrast to Rosier's formal appellation, that in this small gesture he is showing us a side of the heroine that is indicative of Isabel and not of Mrs. Osmond.

Isabel actualizes in her actions, and without yet reflecting upon it, the limits of her role as Osmond's wife. In her practices she acknowledges and at the same time creates these limits up to which she identifies with her position and its historic as well as personal dimension. As Bourdieu puts it,

objectified history becomes activated and active only if the more or less institutionalized position [such as the role of a wife], with the more or less codified programme of action that it contains, finds – like a garment, a tool, a book or a house – someone who sees in it enough of themselves to take it up and make it their own, and by the same token to be taken up by it. (*Meditations* 153)

In this first scene after her marriage, Isabel's turning away from Rosier and his request signals on one hand that she has taken up her new position and accepts in practice the boundaries her husband sets for her, for instance that he insists on picking out a husband for Pansy himself. On the other hand, however, she does not fill out that position the way Osmond hoped she would, i.e. by submitting without reservations and with her whole being to his will. She has not allowed herself "to be taken up by it" completely as the use of her first name and her actions in the quoted passage show; by calling her "Isabel," the narrator signifies a position in which she remains separate from her husband as well as her role as a wife, as her actions underline.

#### Under the Charm

Isabel's inner struggle with her situation culminates in chapter 42 when the narrator gives his heroine the chance to spell out the degree to which she has distanced herself from her husband's and her own expectations. In a process in which her awareness of the limitations that narrow her scope of action grows, she recounts the mental, emotional, and practical steps she herself took to bring about her current predicament.

Rendered in narrated monologue, as most of this chapter, the narrator follows the character's thoughts as they occur in her mind without rushing them. "She had taken all the first steps in the purest confidence," Isabel remembers and admits that "she went with him freely" in the beginning (James, *Portrait* 356, 358).

The authorial narrator's voice is almost entirely removed in favor of the character's discourse in this chapter. The narrator steps back behind his heroine's consciousness more than ever before by frequently employing narrated monologue that is virtually indistinguishable from interior monologue at times. Yet, the narrator's mediacy needs to remain perceivable in third-person pronouns and psycho-narration in order to render insights that are inaccessible to the character.

Isabel takes responsibility without giving in to the easy resolution of blaming the victim, i.e. herself, because she does to a certain degree acknowledge the well-disguised force that Osmond exerted when they first met. "He was not changed," she concedes, but he has somehow managed to make her see "only half his nature ... as one saw the disk of the moon when it was partly masked by the shadow of the earth." Isabel recognizes the mask Osmond put on in order to conceal the other half of his character when she gives his "extraordinary charm" as a reason for her own reaction (James, *Portrait* 357). This charm lies in Osmond's mind that, to her, seems "more ingenious, more pliant, more cultivated, more trained to admirable exercises" than any other (358-59). In other words, Osmond's incorporated cultural capital made such an impression on her that she willingly submitted herself to his influence.

Isabel is well aware that the charm has not entirely worn off. "It had not passed away; it was there still" and it prevents a deeper insight into the conditions that have made her so susceptible to it. Not simply his cultivated mind has made Osmond so attractive, but his convincing self-representation as a powerless man. He did not have to debase himself by referring to it explicitly, he merely gave Isabel a "feeling" of his unrealized potential: "She felt ... that he was helpless and ineffectual, but the feeling had taken the form of a tenderness which was the very flower of respect" (357).

During her lonely meditation Isabel remembers how she has awarded symbolic capital, i.e. respect, even to Osmond's social impotence. She perceived his lack of social as well as economic capital as a characteristic in his favor that somehow convinced her "to think of him as he thought of himself – as the first gentleman in Europe"

(James, *Portrait* 360). Precisely because “he was poor and lonely” does it seem to her “that somehow he was noble” (357). This assumed nobleness, as Isabel’s merciless self-assessment shows, rests solely on her misconception of her husband’s social deficiencies. In his want of money and power lies Osmond’s appeal, his “indefinable beauty,” when they first met; a beauty that was neither exclusive, as Isabel recalls, to physical appearance nor to external circumstances or expressions of his cultivated intelligence but that was rather manifest in a combination of all three spheres, “in his situation, in his mind, in his face” (357).

Through the use of imagery, the narrative draws parallels between this scene and earlier passages that highlight connections recognizable only for the reader. Most strikingly, Isabel uses a similarity to describe the charm she saw (and still sees) in Osmond’s situation that echoes a metaphor Ralph Touchett applies when he convinces his father to leave a fortune to Isabel. Ralph wants “to put a little wind in her sails” by making her rich so that “she’ll never have to marry for support” (James, *Portrait* 160). Isabel in turn finds herself married to a man who seems to her “like a sceptical voyager strolling on the beach while he waited for the tide, looking seaward yet not putting to sea” (357). For one thing, the parallel of sailing imagery highlights how strongly both passages are related.

Even though the image stems from Isabel’s mind, it is only because Ralph used one from the same context before that this relatedness can be expressed. Ironically, her monetary wealth is precisely what leads Isabel to “marry for support” in the end, just a different kind of support than the financial dependency Ralph refers to. The economic principle behind Isabel’s marriage aims at a form of “gain” that Ralph does not consider (James, *Portrait* 361). Isabel thinks of her husband as her “property” and admits that she used to believe it would enhance her own cultural and in consequence also her symbolic capital to possess “the beauty of his mind” (358). Osmond’s “personal qualities” make him, in Isabel’s eyes “better than any one else” and therefore a valuable acquisition. To draw symbolic profit from his cultural capital requires a feminization of the power that comes with such profits. To actualize her “property” of the “finest ... manly organism she had ever known” constituted for Isabel “a sort of act of devotion” (358). To phrase it in Bourdieu’s terms, Isabel needs “to transfer the weight of [her money],” and therefore the “naked force” of economic capital, to

someone who grants her the vicarious power deemed appropriate, for women (*Meditations* 172).

Isabel has told Ralph that she is “afraid of” her money because “one should make such a good use of it” (James, *Portrait* 193). Osmond’s passive skepticism and his ineffectuality offer her a chance to put her money to what seems to her “good use.” “She would launch his boat for him,” Isabel recalls her decision (357). Therein she wishes to do just what Ralph wanted to do for her. Yet, they both misjudge the respective situation by disregarding an important aspect: Ralph assumes that money is all it takes to prevent Isabel from making herself dependent on another person. He does not consider that there are many other forms of dependence besides the financial kind.

Isabel also disregards the conditionality of her wish to support Osmond financially. Her process of awareness comes to a halt when she continues to believe it a beautiful idea to “launch his boat.” She does not question that intention the way she questions “the deep mistrust” between herself and Osmond or her feelings for him. Instead, Isabel is still convinced beyond doubt that her best option, short of a charitable cause to donate her money to, was “to make it over to the man with the best taste in the world” (James, *Portrait* 358). In her view, the mistake lies solely in her seeing “only half his nature” at first (357). Her opinion of that visible half is as high as it was before, the only difference to her seems that she now understands “what it implie[s]” (360).

Whereas Ralph wields his power over Isabel by anonymously making her rich and at the same time turning her into an object for his personal entertainment, the money fails to empower her in the way he meant it to. Because Isabel never really takes possession of it and searches for a way to get rid of it in a “delicate” way, she refuses to take up the role of a recipient, of the boat whose sails Ralph wants to provide with “wind” (James, *Portrait* 358, 160). Instead, she prefers to be in a similar position as Ralph and passes the money on to somebody else. Yet, in her case the generosity turns out to be not an act of domination but one of “devotion” and hence of submission (358).

Isabel’s unconscious imitation of Ralph’s deed reveals the fundamentally different conditions under which the two cousins give away a part of their respective fortune. They both believe themselves to act as benefactors who enable and thus

empower the recipient, and both misjudge their beneficiaries' dispositions. Whereas Ralph acts as an agent who wishes to upgrade Isabel's scope of action, i.e. her agency, through money, Isabel chooses to be a mere instrument to another man's – Osmond's – enhanced agency that is the result of an increase in symbolic capital. "The principle of the inferiority and exclusion of women," Bourdieu writes,

is nothing other than the fundamental dissymmetry, that of *subject and object, agent and instrument*, which is set up between men and women in the domain of symbolic exchanges, the relations of production and reproduction of symbolic capital, the central device of which is the matrimonial market. (*Domination* 42)

Ralph, on the one hand, cannot anticipate what an unexpected inheritance means for someone like Isabel who, by her own account, "[does not] know anything about money" (James, *Portrait* 35). She knows enough, though, to deem herself ineligible in so far as she feels unable to carry its "weight" on her "conscience" (358). Ralph grew up with his father's wealth, which means that being rich is part of who he is, it is ingrained in his habitus. The alleviation he speaks of when he makes his proposal to his father is merely to "relieve [him] of [his] superfluity" (160).

For Isabel, on the other hand, her inheritance is "a burden" (358). The money disproves her earlier conviction that "nothing else expresses" her. "Nothing that belongs to me is any measure of me," she tells Serena Merle (175). With a fortune on her hands, Isabel is forced to acknowledge the truth of Serena's speech that provoked her dissent.

When you've lived as long as I you'll see that every human being has his shell and that you must take the shell into account. By the shell I mean *the whole envelope of circumstances*. There's no such thing as an isolated man or woman; we're each of us made up of *some cluster of appurtenances*. What shall we call our 'self'? Where does it begin? where does it end? It overflows into everything that belongs to us – *and then it flows back again*. (175; emphasis added)

In the few years between this conversation and her nightly vigil, Isabel has lived enough to find herself face to face with circumstances that envelop her so completely that she cannot but regard them as an expression and a part of herself. Her money did "overflow into everything that belongs to [her]," it determines every part of her life now. Isabel apprehends that not only Osmond has married her for her money, but that

*she* also married *him* for her money: “But for her money, as she saw to-day, she would never have done it” (358).

#### No Redress, No Remedy

Isabel begins her vigil after a discussion with Osmond about the chances of Lord Warburton proposing to marry Pansy. Osmond’s allegation that Isabel can influence Warburton’s decision is only the spark that ignites the nightly meditation. Isabel obeys her husband’s request to think about her role in his scheme and, more importantly than admitting to herself that there is another interest behind Warburton’s affection for Pansy, she realizes how “repulsive” a service Osmond is asking of her (James, *Portrait* 354-55). Osmond’s words have made “vibrations deep” in her and they have stirred up much more than he intended (354).

Isabel sits by the fire “far into the night and still further” but she wastes little time on what Osmond has asked her to think about. When she has reached her conclusion and goes on to deal with more pressing things, the narrator mentions “her short interview with Osmond half an hour ago” (355). Within only 30 minutes, the business with Warburton and Pansy is quickly and easily settled – she does not need to do anything or accuse Warburton of anything until an ambiguity on his part should be proven. For the rest of the night, Isabel deals with her own affairs. The image of Osmond and Serena Merle in a situation that betrayed the actual secret extent of their intimacy sets her thoughts in motion and makes room for an honest account of her marriage.

If the possibilities she was turning over in her head were merely “ugly” and “repulsive” before, Isabel now feels “her soul ... haunted with terrors.” She has little control over her conscious thoughts at this point, as the psycho narration makes clear; the terrors “crowded to the foreground of thought as soon as a place was made for them.” The image of an invasion of her consciousness suggests that what has previously been confined to her soul can now come forward because her thoughts are “in livelier motion” and thus make place for the emergence of hitherto unconscious things (355).

The “unexpected recognition” (354) announced at the beginning of the chapter is neither that Warburton might still be in love with her nor that there is a connection

between Merle and Osmond that affects her. The former is a pragmatic assertion that has no immediate consequences for her, the latter an unconscious 'knowledge' that triggers a thought process during which she will arrive at a new state of awareness. Isabel begins to realize the limitations she has allowed Osmond to set for her and becomes aware of how little space she has left to maneuver. However, some of her realizations only approach an actual understanding and remain on the metaphoric level.

Isabel recalls that after the first year of their marriage

the shadows had begun to gather; it was as if Osmond deliberately, almost malignantly, had put the lights out one by one. The dusk at first was vague and thin, and she could still see her way in it. But it steadily deepened, and if now and again it had occasionally lifted there were certain corners of her prospect that were impenetrably black. (356)

Isabel's bleak summary is the only information about the first years of her marriage apart from Madam Merle's allusions in her talk with Rosier. The real horror that Isabel feels invading her consciousness is not due to the extent of "the deception suffered" between her and Osmond or the cruelty with which he "deliberately ... put the lights out," but a result of the perfection with which he first masks his real intentions until there is no need for concealment any more. Isabel's mind in this chapter struggles to uncover the hidden constraints that keep her from seeing through Osmond's violence. In metaphors that render her own mental imagery the narrative grants its readers access to the revelation that eludes Isabel in the end.

"These shadows were not an emanation from her own mind: she was very sure of that ... They were part, they were a kind of creation and consequence, of her husband's very presence" (James, *Portrait* 356). Isabel is aware that what limits her scope of action and thought – the shadows that darken her view – originates with Osmond, but she cannot put her finger on what exactly those shadows consist of and how Osmond creates them. "They were not his misdeeds, his turpitudes; she accused him of nothing" (356). With this, Isabel has advanced to the crux of her situation. Even though she can identify Osmond without a doubt as the source of the "darkness" and "suffocation" that confine her, he remains free of blame (360).

"She knew of no wrong he had done," Isabel concedes (356). Again, the pictorial language of her thoughts can only approach the fact of Osmond's perfect disguise without grasping the mechanism he employs to achieve it: "Under all his culture, his

cleverness, his amenity, under his good-nature, his facility, his knowledge of life, his egotism lay hidden like a serpent in a bank of flowers” (360). Civility and cultivated manners veil Osmond’s selfishness effectively but only so far as necessary. His egotism is not completely invisible but rather camouflaged and decorated with the “flowers” of his cultural capital that makes such an impression on Isabel.

Isabel does not see how his egotism entails violence, and expresses itself in violence, because her conception of violence only includes physical brutality; “he was not violent, he was not cruel,” she states (356). The imagery of the consonant figural narration, however, contradicts this assessment. She remembers how “she had followed him further ... into the mansion of his own habitation” and relives “the incredulous terror with which she had taken the measure of her dwelling. ... It was the house of darkness, the house of dumbness, the house of suffocation” (360). Her sense of entrapment is expressed here as a result of an undeniably violent image in which Osmond appears as her prison guard. The image also implies her own contribution to her current situation because Isabel has followed him without any detectable force.

The fact remains, though, that Osmond has never and will “never put himself in the wrong” in any prosecutable way (James, *Portrait* 357). Her only accusation against him is that “he hated her” (356). Isabel unerringly identifies the paradox at the heart of her dilemma when she realizes that “the miserable part of it was precisely that it was not a crime, for against a crime she might have found redress” (356). She substantiates this idea a few pages later when she confirms that there “had not been physical suffering; for physical suffering there might have been a remedy” (360). Not only the striking repetition of the term “physical suffering,” but also the image of being Osmond’s prisoner that directly precedes this thought, urges the reader to conclude that Isabel’s suffering does indeed have a physical component.

Nonetheless, she sees no chance for either redress or remedy. If Osmond were to commit a crime against her, even if it was not punishable by law but merely in violation of social etiquette, Isabel would be in a position to defend herself. But she knows that Osmond will “never give her a pretext” whereas she “would give him many pretexts” in the future (James, *Portrait* 357). This puts in a nutshell the privilege of the dominant who have normative (symbolic) power on their side – to never give a pretext but to find a pretext in everything. Since Osmond takes “personal offence” at her “way

of looking at life,” he will of course find Isabel’s habitual pattern of perception manifest in everything she does or says, and she has no chance of doing anything that does not express a habitus that offends Osmond.

Isabel herself bethinks how she tried to adjust herself in order to please Osmond. “He had thought at first he could change her, and she had done her best to be what he would like” (357). Her “opinions,” for instance mean nothing to her. “She had no opinions – none that she would not have been eager to sacrifice in the satisfaction of feeling herself loved for it” (359). Yet, not even the attempt to change who she is offers much prospect of success since Osmond’s disdain aims at virtually everything that constitutes her. “What he had meant had been the whole thing – her character, the way she felt, the way she judged” (359). Since she was unable to change her habitus any more than the color of her eyes, Isabel looks back on the first months with Osmond as a time when she felt the need to pretend, which never took the form of deliberate deception. Even though “she had not deceived him in intention she understood how completely she must have done so in fact” (357).

Isabel is still so “immensely under the charm” that she has come close to allowing Osmond to “attach [her mind] to his own like a small garden-plot to a deer-park” (James, *Portrait* 357, 362). “She had lived with [his mind], she had lived *in it* almost,” Isabel realizes (358). As a result, he has shaped and defined her reality for her, including herself and the woman she believes she is supposed to be. “She had effaced herself when he first knew her; she had made herself small, pretending there was less of her than there really was” (357). Osmond never had to ask for her to change; his demands do not need to be made explicit. It suffices for him to remark that Isabel has “too many ideas” (James, *Portrait* 359) to bring about her submission to his normative power, a submission which, as Bourdieu points out, is “both *spontaneous and extorted*” (*Domination* 38).

Isabel agrees that she has “too many ideas” and is careful to “suppress them” (James, *Portrait* 359). She then recalls her strange misapprehension of Osmond’s account of himself. “He had told her he loved the conventional, but there was *a sense* in which this seemed a noble declaration” (359; emphasize added). This “sense” is entirely Osmond’s. He thinks of himself as “noble” and of his life as “aristocratic” (361). Isabel has adopted his “sense” and has allowed him to dictate the meaning and

value of things and categories. “Symbolic power,” like that to which Isabel bows, is, in Bourdieu’s words, “a power of constructing reality, and one which tends to establish a *gnoseological* order” (*Language* 166). Because she now disagrees with Osmond, Isabel’s desperate account of her relationship with him can lift the cover under which, “as if by magic, without any physical constraints,” she has been forced and all the same let herself be forced into her current dominated position (Bourdieu, *Domination* 38).

### The Critical Moment

Only after Isabel learns from her sister-in-law that Osmond has in fact “put himself in the wrong” when he withheld the information that Pansy is his and Serena Merle’s illegitimate daughter does she openly disobey him and goes to England to see Ralph before his death.

After her last confrontation with Caspar Goodwood, during which he forcefully kisses her, Isabel flees him and runs towards the doors of Gardencourt. “She had not known where to turn; but she knew now. There was a very straight path” (James, *Portrait* 490). Not another word is said about her decision, about the process that led to it, or about her further intentions. All we know is that a choice has been made, and just as the narrator silently skipped Isabel’s decision to marry Osmond sometime in the year that lies between chapters 30 and 31, the moment in which she chooses here is omitted, too. In contrast to the two other important gaps – Isabel accepting Osmond’s proposal, their wedding, and the first years of their marriage between chapters 35 and 36 – this final leap in time merely covers the few seconds it takes for Isabel to reach the house:

She never looked about her; she only darted from the spot. There were lights in the windows of the house; they shone far across the lawn. In an extraordinarily short time – for the distance was considerable – she *had moved* through the darkness (for she saw nothing) and reached the door. Here only she paused. (James, *Portrait* 489-90; emphasis added)

Isabel might move fast in this moment, but the narrator is faster. When she reaches the door, he is already there, telling about her moving through the darkness in pluperfect. Only when she pauses does the narration switch back to simple past. Again, the narration leaves Isabel, even if only for a split second, and when it returns to the heroine, another

momentous decision has been made; she has indeed covered a considerable distance in more than one regard, from not knowing “where to turn” to “a very straight path.”

The “straight path” contrasts the labyrinths and narrow dead-end streets she felt herself trapped in before (James, *Portrait* 355-56). It is the last scene in which the heroine is present. A short conversation between Henrietta and Caspar, which covers the two final paragraphs of the novel, renders the information about the practical steps to implement Isabel’s choice. She loses no time: Only hours later, she leaves for London, meets with Henrietta, and starts for Rome the next morning. It seems that the heroine’s mind is made up, that she is determined to follow that “straight path” she sees before her. The reader, however, is left in wonder at the implications, the consequences, the very substance of her choice.

With Ralph dead and Warburton engaged, James leaves his heroine with the choice between her vampiristic husband and the “rapist-lover” Goodwood (Kaston 54). Goodwood and Osmond remain as the representatives of physical violence and symbolic violence, and while it is comparably easy to escape the former, to reject and then to flee it, it is impossible for Isabel to ultimately escape the latter. Although she does not fully understand her husband’s violence, she knows what she is going back to.

“The whole of anything,” James notes about the ending of *Portrait*, “is never told; you can only take what groups together. What I have done has that unity – it groups together. It is complete in itself” (*Notebooks* 15). Isabel’s decision would, accordingly, mark “the end of her situation,” at least it does in the eyes of her author (James, *Notebooks* 15). How one construes this ending depends almost entirely on how one rates Isabel’s disposition (her capability as well as her willingness) to effectively undermine Osmond’s authority.

Symbolic power, which can manipulate hopes and expectations ... can introduce a degree of play into the correspondence between expectations and chances and open up a space of freedom through the more or less voluntarist positing of more or less improbable possibles ... which the pure logic of probabilities would lead one to regard as practically excluded. (Bourdieu, *Meditations* 234)

Within her limited scope, Isabel has a chance of turning the tables, but that is not part of her portrait. Her author has decided to let her decide to evade the observation of an audience.

THE GRIP OF INHERITANCE:  
CAPITAL RESOURCES IN *THE WINGS OF THE DOVE*

What *is* living in this deadness called life is the struggle of the creature in the grip of its inheritance ... How in emancipating ourselves we forge our chains.

(Alice James)

In this entry from 1889 (*Diary* 38) Alice James seems to sum up one of the leitmotifs of her brother's novels in which female characters find themselves incapable of escaping the "grip" of their literal, i.e. financial, inheritance.<sup>37</sup> The metaphorical as well as factual links between material and psycho-social inheritance are of course not far to seek in those novels. James's heiresses like Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove* and Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady* strive for an independence that is closely connected to but at the same time transcends the mere economic consequences of their wealth. Their emancipatory struggles entail, more often than not, harsh social and personal consequences. Both Milly and Isabel seem to jump out of the frying pan into the fire precisely by attempting to free themselves from a burden that comes with being rich but that weighs mainly on their feminine identity and self-image.

Yet, money has very different meanings for the two heroines. Isabel identifies as "poor" with which she associates a dignified attitude and an affinity to "the independent class" (James, *Portrait* 143). When Isabel sheds the responsibility for her sudden wealth by getting married to Osmond, she gives up something that she cannot integrate into her concept of herself. Milly by contrast grew up an heiress-to-be so that economic wealth is an integral part of her identity. Both novels can be read as the story of a heroine who tries to buy her way out of an oppressive situation, and both characters founder on their own particular obstacles to whose perpetuation they contribute not a little. Whereas both novels have their main character realize too late, as it were, the extent to which they have been duped because of their money, *Wings* shifts the focus away from the process of self-realization and centers instead on the struggle of a

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<sup>37</sup> Henry James's younger sister concealed from her family that she kept a journal. Henry never got a chance to read his sister's diary until after her death in 1892.

habitus that is forced to renegotiate its being defined by an abundance in economic capital.

This chapter focuses on distribution and different functions of capital, in Bourdieu's sense of the term, in *The Wings of the Dove*. For Milly in particular, the social value of her capital shifts when she finds out that she is terminally ill. Before the momentous diagnosis, her economic wealth first and foremost determines her social self, so much so that it works as a stigmatizer. Stigmatization as a form of symbolic violence, as I will outline below, often has strong gender-sensitive aspects, especially when a stigmatizer is usually considered a rather masculine attribute, such as possession of large sums of money. In Milly's case, not only her self and her body suffer stigmatization, but the positive consequences of being rich become "tainted" and "polluted" as well, to borrow Goffman's words with which he describes the effects of stigmatization (3, 1). Therefore, Milly's personal freedom, which others and she herself expect to come automatically with money, is a masculinized one that stands in opposition to the hyper-femininity of her fatal illness. A brief parenthesis back to *The Portrait of a Lady* will permit me to expound how James's fiction conceptualizes different notions of freedom, namely the (gendered) difference between negative and positive freedom.

Many of the subjects that negotiate matters of capital accumulation and masculine domination in *Wings* can be read as a further development and a complication of issues that are already present in *Portrait* and in *Daisy Miller*. The peculiar notion of feminine freedom in all three works is embedded in a context of solitude, financial independency, and spatial autonomy that develops into a widespread net of connections between different aspects of symbolic power structures. James's later novels, like *Wings*, display a wide range of links and junctions of this connective cluster, some of which have already been introduced in the earlier novel and the novella respectively. This chapter will therefore briefly go back to *Portrait* and *Daisy Miller* in order to explicate how particularly notions of feminine freedom and independence have been introduced and prepared for in the older texts.

### Money as Stigmatizer

Isabel Archer in *Portrait* rejects the implications of her inheritance; she wants to restore and preserve a former state of being by making over the authority over her wealth to her husband. Milly's case, however, is more complicated when it comes to the significance and the function of her economic capital. She cannot get rid of it without revoking herself since being rich makes up such an immense part of who she is and how she is perceived. Susan Stringham's characterization of Milly as essentially defined by her money shows how deeply her wealth is ingrained in her personality and even her body:

[I]t prevailed even as the truth of truths that the girl couldn't get away from her wealth. ... She couldn't dress it away, nor walk it away, nor read it away, nor think it away; she could neither smile it away in any dreamy absence nor blow it away in any softened sigh. She couldn't have lost it if she had tried – that was what it was to be really rich. It had to be *the* thing you were. (James, *Wings* 86)

In this list of incapacities Susan condenses the limits that habitual dispositions impose on a person. Milly's identity as a wealthy person, present in her self-image as much as the definitions imparted by those who perceive her, is manifest in every movement of her body. Every step she takes and every garment she chooses to wear represent and recreate it, just as any additional information she acquires can only be integrated into the existing mental structure of a rich girl's habitus. Yet, the "practical belief" that accepts and appropriates the social position assigned by Milly's wealth is not just a matter of mental structures and of thinking. Bourdieu writes about this process of acceptance beyond logic and reasoning: "Practical belief is not a 'state of mind' ... but rather a state of the body" (*Logic* 68). Susan understands how Milly's wealth is "given body, *made* body," as Bourdieu describes the effect of this form of incorporation (*Logic* 69).

The passage also illustrates how being rich functions as a stigmatizer for Milly. Her money constitutes "an attribute that makes [her] different from others," like the "stranger" Goffman speaks of in his conceptualization of stigma (3). Susan's perspective in this passage demonstrates how, in Susan's mind, Milly is indeed "reduced ... from a whole and usual person to a tainted ... one" (Goffman 3). In the case of an overall favorable attribute, such as financial wealth, the positive stigma, according to

Goffman, prevents the stigmatized from being “discounted” (3), but it nonetheless creates a “polluted” (1) body that is incapable of escaping the limitations dictated by the stigma. Since stigma also relies on standardized expectations regarding a person’s social position and behavior, it dominates each interpersonal relation. Whenever Susan relates to Milly, she will treat her and at the same time expect her to act like Susan’s idea of a rich girl, an idea which is as socially determined as Milly’s own definition of it.

Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic domination extends the concept of stigma beyond the idea of a passive stigmatized. Goffman already emphasizes that stigma and stigmatization are relational concepts (3), an aspect that Bourdieu enhances when he includes in his observations the imposed yet active participation of the dominated (comparable to Goffman’s stigmatized in many regards) in their own domination.

This extraordinary social relation thus offers an opportunity to grasp the logic of the domination exerted in the name of a symbolic principle known and recognised by the dominant and the dominated – a language (or a pronunciation), a lifestyle (or a way of thinking, speaking and acting) – and, more generally, a distinctive property, whether emblem or stigma. (Bourdieu, *Domination* 1-2)

Stigmatization cancels out other characteristics and subordinates them under one dominant mark. The less authority a person has over the way she is perceived and perceives herself, the more will her stigmatization lean towards this extreme. As a “being-perceived,” the female body is “socially doubly determined,” which means that women have to grapple with the double-bind of, on one hand, being expected by others as much as expecting of themselves to control the image others form of them and, on the other hand, only having at their disposal a limited number of accepted and acceptable feminine images all of which are the product of an androcentric system that aims at forcing women to prove and ultimately embrace their own assumed defectiveness (Bourdieu, *Domination* 63).<sup>38</sup>

Milly is subsumed under “rich girl” and cannot be anything else until she is diagnosed with a fatal disease, which merely replaces one stigma with another and turns her into ‘the dying girl.’ Unlike Ralph Touchett, another extremely rich James

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<sup>38</sup> When “positive stigmatization” takes place, an otherwise positive mark is perceived as exaggerated, as in judgments like “she’s too tall for a girl” (Bourdieu, *Domination* 64). By the same token, women might be judged as ‘too slender,’ ‘too autonomous,’ and also ‘too rich.’

character who suffers from a mortal illness, Milly is not allowed to display any character trait that outshines “rich” or “sick.” James himself compares those two moribund characters in his preface to *Wings*. Women, according to James, suffer ‘better’ than men, who, “among the mortally afflicted, suffer on the whole more overtly and more grossly than women, and resist with a ruder, an inferior strategy” (*Wings* 4). The gender characteristic that makes Ralph a “secondary” character and a “weakling” in James’s eyes (*Wings* 4) is the reverse of what qualifies Milly for embodying the epitome of elegant and melodramatic feminine suffering (cf. Person 89). Whereas Ralph is sometimes the loving cousin, sometimes the witty melancholic, and sometimes the participant observer, Milly cannot escape her identity as the rich girl at first, and when she does, she finds herself equally restrained by her illness. Susan’s observations allude to a wish, on Milly’s part, to “get away from her wealth” (James, *Wings* 86), which Milly achieves eventually, but only in exchange for an equally delimiting attribute. Only through her death does she eventually ‘get away’ from both her economic capital and her stigmatized sick body.

*Wings* emphasizes the interconnection between money as stigmatizer and the bodily effects of stigmatization through its characters’ similar treatment of both economic capital and illness as unspeakable matters. Milly’s illness is rarely talked about, let alone named. We never learn of her diagnosis and even her passing is conveyed as obliquely as her illness has been throughout the novel. The characters as well as the narrator endeavor to circumvent any direct mention of her sickness or her death. Money and financial matters are treated with similar reticence. To speak of money is considered a characteristic of the lower classes, as Lionel Croy blatantly demonstrates during Kate’s visit in the first chapter when he repeatedly explicates financial matters. Kate only speaks openly of Milly’s money with Merton, for instance when she calls Milly an “angle with a thumping bank account” and professes that “[h]er fortune is absolutely huge” and “a real fortune” (James, *Wings* 214, 223). Kate’s remark also suggests that not Milly herself is alive, but her money. Her bank account is the source of her vitality in this image, and she will eventually pass that on to Merton. When Kate describes Milly as an ethereal being (an angel) and therefore as not alive in the sense that others are bound by gravity and organ functions, she replaces Milly’s physical vitality with money, which is where most of her social relevance derives from.

Among the other characters, money and disease are regarded as equally inappropriate conversation topics, but to *have* both an immense fortune and a fatal disease makes Milly an ideal subject of conversation, which, as the following close reading shows, constitutes part of her symbolic capital.

One of the few dialogues that reaches a certain degree of explicitness takes place between Merton and Kate towards the end of Milly's life. In this conversation, Merton, apparently the only character within Milly's circle of friends who urges to know precise details of her illness, insists on an unequivocal assertion from Kate who eventually gives in and commits herself to a clear statement that merely phrases what everybody seems to know already. "And he had just to insist – she would say as little as she could. 'She *is* dying?' 'She's dying.'" (James, *Wings* 356). It is in this single moment between the former conspirators, Kate and Merton, that Milly's imminent death is straightforwardly enunciated without any euphemisms or elusions on either side. With the utmost brevity ("She *is* dying?' 'She's dying.'") the narration hurries through this simple avowal that condenses into three words what throughout the rest of the novel is mostly treated like the elephant in the room. Milly is dying and she has, in a way, been dying for a long time, but the text works its way around any such explicitness with remarkable effort. From Luke Strett's evasive statements that "duly ke[ep] up the vagueness," to Milly's avowal that she has "absolutely nothing to tell" about her visit to the doctor, to Lord Mark's visit at Palazzo Leporelli, passages that render characters' speech or thoughts about Milly's state of health avoid any form of ascertainment, but they do so verbosely (149-51, 158-59, 267-68).

Yet, the effect this inarticulateness aims at is not so much to keep the reader in suspense regarding Milly's health. Rather than sparking investigative curiosity, it highlights a gap between Merton's linguistic habits and those of most other characters. His repeated request for clarity is characteristic of his journalistic profession, and it moreover signifies a potentially frustrating relation to the typically upper-class way in which Milly's other acquaintances tip-toe around uncomfortable or ungentle issues of illness, death, and also of money. The wish to protect their frail "princess" (James, *Wings* 85) from such troubling information, which also guides Sir Luke's patronizing treatment of Milly, only conceals how much this strategy of non-overtness at once protects everyone else from being too directly exposed to the unbecoming matter while

allowing them at the same time to treat Milly as the current spectacle of interest that occupies everyone's attention.

#### The Feature of the Season: Milly's Symbolic Capital

Whereas Isabel's sudden financial wealth is passed on to her explicitly by men whose masculine perspective naïvely assumes an undiluted benevolence behind their actions,<sup>39</sup> Milly's money is an established part of her character from the very beginning. Isabel has been outfitted by the same men with so many speculative characterizations before appearing in person; Milly by contrast is a blank sheet when she steps on the scene. Merely one of "two ladies," she remains in the background while the narrator passes on information about her character by way of her friend and travel companion, Susan Stringham (James, *Wings* 75). The first thing the reader learns about Milly is Susan's assessment of Milly's economic and psychological situation.

At the same time, Milly Theale is no less the product of an androcentric view than Isabel Archer. In Milly's case, however, the process of that formation is more concealed and not as explicit as it is in the text of *Portrait*. In a scene that shows some striking parallels to the one that introduces the character of Isabel in *Portrait*, Milly Theale's new London friends evaluate and interpret the heroine in her absence. Again, as in *Portrait*, absence and visibility play an important role, and Kate's impression of Milly might just as well be one given of Isabel: "One sees her with intensity – sees her more than one sees almost any one; but then one discovers that that isn't knowing her and that one may know better a person whom one doesn't 'see,' as I say, half so much" (James, *Wings* 208). Like Isabel, who cannot help being the subject of her own portrait, Milly is made into the subject of conversation at Maud's dinner. She is described by Kate as overly visible, yet that particular visibility obscures her and renders her less knowable.

Bourdieu notes how a person's social visibility is one way to measure the effect of symbolic capital (*Meditations* 241). What is visible to Kate when she describes how

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<sup>39</sup> Ralph and Daniel Touchett's conspiratorial meeting during which they decide to make Isabel rich reveals the naïveté behind Ralph's generosity while at the same time exposing his interestedness. He is motivated by a wish to indulge in a particular form of the male gaze that takes possession by passively observing. Towards the end of his life Ralph understands in part his responsibility for Isabel's misfortune (cf. Porter 127-29).

intensely one “sees” Milly is in fact Milly’s capital, which is not perceived as capital but as her social worthiness. Ironically, Kate and the other guests can only speak about Milly so freely precisely because Milly is not actually visible that evening. She does not make an appearance due to her poor health. To “see” Milly the way Kate claims to do means to express one’s view of her and to defend it against contesting views. Milly needs to be defined, her social position to be agreed upon, and a small battle of normative power ensues at Maud’s dinner table. As in the first scene of *Portrait*, this is possible only in the main character’s absence. As the narrator notes Merton’s observation, “[t]here was of course more said about the heroine than if she hadn’t been absent” (206).

Susan Stringham, whose perspective introduces Milly during the scene in the Swiss Alps, and who sees herself as an expert and protector of Milly, attempts to defend her authority when she rebukes Merton for answering questions about his acquaintance with Milly in New York: “You know nothing, sir – but not the least little bit – about my friend,” she tells him (207). Maud Lowder reminds her in turn that she cannot “know ... how far things may have gone” between Milly and Merton (207). This makes Susan “really lose her head,” which is not surprising since she has been accepted as Milly’s “representative” up to this moment (207, 206). Now that Kate, Lord Marc, Maud, and to a certain degree also Merton all claim Milly for their social circle, which means taking possession of her in a way by defining her role, Susan sees her position endangered.

In *Wings*, as in many other works, James proves his remarkable sensitivity for creating an outsider perspective with its particular ability to detect the ways in which power reveals its hidden functional principles. *Daisy Miller* is an early example of this understanding for the potential to unsettle a power that finds itself incapable to extort from an individual the misrecognized recognition it relies on. Daisy’s own perspective demonstrates her ability to undermine the dominant view by not succumbing to the unreflected *doxic* beliefs this view relies on. The character of Merton Densher in *Wings* also represents the perspective of those who are excluded from certain struggles for power. His observations can therefore reveal the process of unconsciously self-imposed ignorance, as Bourdieu explains so lucidly in his reading of Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* (*Domination* 69-80).

During the dinner at Lancaster Gate, Merton observes the other guests from his particular position as a social outsider to Maud's prestigious circle. He perceives himself as "relegated to mere spectatorship, a paying seat in the front, and one of the most expensive" (James, *Wings* 205). From this passive position he sees through the evaluative process on which Milly's "success" is founded (James, *Wings* 209). His insight does not go as far as that of Woolf's Mrs. Ramsay a quarter of a century later but, like Woolf's protagonist, Merton also "seem[s] to go round the table unveiling ... these people" (Woolf 125). He easily understands the arbitrariness behind the social laws that determine who is regarded as a success and who will be deemed a failure:

The little American's sudden social adventure, her happy and, no doubt harmless flourish, had probably been favoured by several accidents, but it had been favoured above all by *the simple spring-board of the scene*, by one of those common caprices of the numberless foolish flock, gregarious movements as inscrutable as ocean-currents. *The huddled herd had drifted to her blindly – it might as blindly have drifted away.* (James, *Wings* 209; emphasis added)

Kate might think she "sees" Milly with "intensity," but Merton's observation reveals how the whole group, the "huddled herd" of Maud's entourage, is blind to the cause of their American friend's "triumph." They have provided the "spring-board" from which Milly leaps to her sweeping success. That they "might as blindly have drifted away" and chosen another subject to keep them occupied only occurs to the outsider Merton Densher.

When he notices how Milly's absence leads to an increase of talk about her, Merton instantly "found himself stupefied at the range of Milly's triumph" (James, *Wings* 209). Being talked about approvingly or even with admiration is a sure sign of social success and therefore of a large amount of symbolic capital. The source of such a triumph, however, remains invisible and "inscrutable." It appears as a succession of "accidents" and "common caprices" that make the "foolish flock" pick out Milly at random as a candidate for "social adventure." That their vote hinges on a common, previously agreed upon system of measuring Milly's potential, and that this measurement is what creates her potential in the first place, must not be known. Hence, what Merton perceives as accidental and enigmatic lets Milly's social ascend appear as a magic trick: "Symbolic capital," in Bourdieu's words, "is an ordinary property ... which, perceived by social agents endowed with the categories of perception and

appreciation permitting them to perceive, know and recognize it, becomes symbolically efficient, like a veritable *magical power*" (*Reason* 102).

Milly's wealth constitutes such an "ordinary property," as do her cultural identity and her sexual allure. And Milly herself is not entirely unaware of this. She knows about her status as a 'novelty' among her European friends. "How could I help," she asks Densher "being the feature of the season ...?" (James, *Wings* 229). Her general capital – economic, social, cultural, sexual, and also the peculiar value attributed to her illness – happens to be such that a part of London's dominant social players decide qua their normative power that Milly Theale is a "success," in other words that her symbolic capital and with it her symbolic power is to be rated very high indeed, but without any awareness of the process of rating that creates as a reality what it evaluates. For this decision to take place, no vote is needed; it does not even require any conscious decision in the narrow sense. On the contrary, Milly's success appears as the inevitable result of her personality instead of the unreflected collective assessment of her as eligible for social ascent. For this "symbolic alchemy" (Bourdieu, *Reason* 102) to work, the powerful Londoners must not realize that their evaluation of Milly follows an economic principle of profit and loss. The seemingly magical process that transforms capital into power relies on its own concealment.

#### The Gendered Scope of Capital: Negative and Positive Freedom

In all three works discussed here so far, *Daisy Miller*, *Portrait*, and *Wings*, James shows with precision how the social assessment of one character by other characters happens beyond any awareness of an evaluation taking place. When the members of a social scene decide over a person's acceptance, hence over the distribution of symbolic capital, only glimpses of this decision-making process are provided by lucid outsider perspectives. The process follows a distinctly androcentric system and its gendered structure is obvious in the different requirements for male and female characters. Sexual appeal, e.g., is an immense generator of symbolic capital for both Isabel and Milly. Daisy does not draw much symbolic profit from her sexual capital, but it ensures

Winterbourne's attention. The male characters in those works rarely if ever rely on their sexual allure when it comes to gaining or preserving power.<sup>40</sup>

Both novels, *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Wings of the Dove*, emphasize their respective protagonist's sense of freedom of movement, which may, on one hand, be imparted by economic independence, but which, on the other hand, always relies on a lack of affiliation. "I haven't a creature to ask – there's not a finger to stop me," Milly Theale once tells her physician (James, *Wings* 150). This statement alludes to both a notion of loneliness as well as a certain idea of personal liberty. The absence of restraint at the hand of another person at the same time expresses a dearth of interpersonal relations. Moreover, Milly's assessment of her situation refers not only to her status as an orphan. Having lost all her close relatives alone does not give Milly the freedom to go wherever she wants without "a creature to ask." Her particular liberty is also based upon her economic wealth without which she could hardly claim to be as unstoppable as she wants to make the doctor believe she is.

Whereas the interrelationship of money, solitude, and personal freedom remains an ever-changing and very complex matter throughout *Wings*, *Portrait* presents the correlation in a more obvious manner. The narrator baldly equates Isabel Archer's sense of personal freedom with solitude: "It was one of her theories that Isabel Archer was very fortunate in being independent, and that she ought to make some very enlightened use of that state. She never called it the state of solitude," which is of course precisely what the narrator calls it here (James, *Portrait* 55). In fact, he uses just that word to describe Isabel's state before when he ascertains that "her solitude did not press upon her" (James, *Portrait* 31). After she learns about her inheritance, Isabel repeats her sense of obligation almost word-for-word: "A large fortune means freedom, and I'm afraid of that. It's such a fine thing, and one should make such a

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<sup>40</sup> Gilbert Osmond in *Portrait* could be seen as an exception in so far as he has little else to go on when he wants to spark Isabel's passion for him. John Malkovich's performance as Osmond in Jane Campion's movie adaptation *The Portrait of a Lady* suggests such a reading. Campion's film equips Osmond with a seductive, dangerous sexuality and insinuates that the affair between him and Serena might have continued or at least retained a strong physical aspect. However, masculine sexual capital is much more obfuscated than its feminine counterpart. In Osmond's case, it accrues from his cultural capital and not, as is the case with much of Isabel's, Milly's, and Daisy's, from physical beauty. Adam Isaiah Green speaks of "erotic capital" to describe, based on Bourdieu's as well as Goffman's socio-psychological theories, "the quality and quantity of attributes that an individual possesses, which elicit an erotic response in another" (29).

good use of it,” she tells Ralph (James, *Portrait* 193). Her statement leaves open if she is afraid and wishes to make good use of her money or the freedom that comes with it. The parallels between both passages – one narrating Isabel’s thoughts, the other in direct speech – highlight how *Portrait* amalgamates independence, in the sense of personal freedom, with aloneness on one hand and financial independence on the other.

When Isabel makes this connection in her own words, however, her view seems more complex than the narrator’s earlier representation of it. She feels “afraid” instead of “fortunate” and the latter word has morphed, as it were, into the polysemous “fortune,” adding a certain gravity of destiny to both her money and the newly gained freedom. Isabel congruously speaks of “freedom” instead of “independence” when it comes to the responsibilities of her unexpected new situation. In her anxious deliberations she distinguishes between negative and positive freedom or, as Heidegger puts it, between “freedom from” and “freedom to.”<sup>41</sup> She embraces negative freedom, as expressed in her sense of “liberty” when she prefers to see herself as free from family ties (James, *Portrait* 30) or from marriage (142), but shuns away from positive freedom.

The *freedom to* that results from being rich, and also the freedom to refuse an English nobleman’s proposal, grants a power that makes the one who holds it accountable. “If she wouldn’t [marry Warburton],” Isabel thinks after his proposal, “then she must do great things, she must do something greater” (James, *Portrait* 102). About her inheritance she says: “If one shouldn’t [make good use of it] one would be ashamed. And one must keep thinking; it’s a constant effort” (193). This idea corresponds to Kant’s notion “that there is accountability where, and only where, there is freedom” (Bennett 201). In her choice of words, Isabel distinguishes between “freedom” in the sense of *freedom to* on one hand, and “independence” which, to her, means negatively defined freedom or *freedom from* on the other.

Caspar Goodwood, her American suitor, does not understand Isabel’s distinction when he claims that he wants to marry her in order “to make [her] independent.” “An unmarried woman,” he declares, “isn’t independent. . . . She’s hampered at every step.”

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<sup>41</sup> Stambaugh’s translation of Heidegger’s lecture on Schelling’s treatise gives his category “Freiheit zu” as “freedom for” instead of “freedom to” (*Abhandlung* 106; *Treatise* 88). Since “freedom to” seems to be the more common phrasing to refer to concepts of positive freedom, and since the two translations do not imply any difference relevant to my limited purpose here, I will use the latter term.

Caspar accepts as a matter of fact that positive freedom for women can only exist in so far as it is granted by men. Isabel debunks this as “a beautiful sophism” and goes on to explain why she considers herself part of “the independent class:” “I can do what I choose ... I’ve neither father nor mother” (James, *Portrait* 142-43). The form of independence Caspar speaks of might be a freedom from “nötigender Willkür” in a Kantian sense (*Metaphysik* 237). For Isabel, however, her freedom of the power of choice depends on precisely an independence from the kind of relations that marriage and family ties would impose upon her. This compares to Milly’s claim that “there’s not a finger to stop [her]” with which she refers to a lack of family relations.

Lydia Touchett by contrast separates the negative freedom of what Isabel calls being “independent” and “fond of [one’s] own ways” (James, *Portrait* 67) from a practical positive freedom that acts within the limits of an androcentric order to which she does not wish to succumb but which she cannot reject either. Even though she expects Isabel to “do everything she chooses,” Lydia knows that her niece’s inclination towards practical freedom is just as limited (James, *Portrait* 49). After Lydia corrects her for her wish to sit with Ralph and Warburton alone after dinner, Isabel approves of the rebuke. “I shall always tell you ... when I see you taking what seems to me too much liberty,” Lydia answers (67).<sup>42</sup>

Following Kant’s discrimination, there is also a hierarchical difference between the two kinds of freedom that makes negative freedom one of the most basic human rights and the prerequisite for a more enlightened positive freedom.<sup>43</sup> “Freedom of the power of choice is the independence of that power from determination by sensible impulses; [positive] freedom is that same power’s dependence on ... the moral law, and hence its determinability by pure practical reason, or the pure will” (Engstrom 294-95). The distinction between feminine and masculine freedom in *Portrait* mirrors not only the dominant Victorian division of the sexes but also the hierarchical

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<sup>42</sup> In Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, published about a century after *Portrait*, there is another aunt named Lydia who refers to the difference between negative and positive freedom: “There is more than one kind of freedom, said Aunt Lydia. Freedom to and freedom from. In the days of anarchy, it was freedom to. Now you are being given freedom from. Don’t underrate it” (34).

<sup>43</sup> In his deliberations on freedom of the will Kant distinguishes between transcendental freedom and a predetermined practical freedom. The distinction is not entirely conclusive, however, and requires many exceptions to his deterministic position in order to allow for the supposition that free will is possible and does in fact exist (cf. Held).

differentiation between negative freedom (freedom of choice) and a superior positive freedom (self-realization).<sup>44</sup> Feminine freedom is a form of negative freedom whereas positive freedom is a masculine monopoly that can only be *given to* women *by* men. The weight of this distinction does not encumber masculine views such as Caspar's or the narrator's whereas Isabel and Lydia, far from being aware of their own predetermination to submit to it, intuit its risks. They can wish to be independent in the sense of negative freedom, but they have to bear the consequences.

*Wings* also emphasize how positive freedom requires money. Economic capital can invest even women with the symbolic power of *freedom to*. For female characters it is, however, inseparably linked to the absence of and from other people. The freedom to decide on one's own abode, to change one's place of residence or to travel is a move away from home, family, and security for Jamesian women whereas his male characters are shown to strive towards a certain place and state. Many of the women in James's fiction leave their homes and lead more or less nomadic lives with comparably little that ties them to a certain place or to their family. Some of them seem to virtually shun any such bonds.

Milly depicts her solitude as freedom, a freedom that equally rests upon the sheer absence of family ties and on her financial means. In *Wings* as well as *Portrait*, aloneness, independence, and isolation rank among the ambiguous outcomes of a feminine agency that struggles to rid itself of imposed limitations. The intratextual discourses of independence and liberty in *Portrait* show how different notions of personal freedom in the novel succumb to the common gendered hierarchy in which women can only strive for negative freedom in Heidegger's sense of 'freedom from' – and only if they are willing to accept the social exclusion with which such efforts are sanctioned – whereas positive freedom for women is subject to conditions that effectively nullify personal independence since it needs to be granted by other people, mostly men.

For Isabel Archer as well as for Lydia Touchett, freedom entails the absence of other people. Isabel withdraws from the society of others quite purposefully some-

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<sup>44</sup> The most extensive treatise on negative and positive freedom was written by Isaiah Berlin. For Berlin, both kinds of freedom can be seen not only as distinct but even as incompatible. He associates positive freedom rather with groups or collectives of people than with individuals (121-22).

times, and she has done so even as a small child when she refuses to return to primary school after just one day. An extended analepsis describes in detail how the other children and the teacher remain perceptibly present as little Isabel can sometimes hear them through the open window of her grandmother's house. This image of Isabel as a child that is separated from her peers illustrates the relation she establishes early on in her life between herself and others (James, *Portrait* 33).

The experience of freedom from such constraints as a regular school attendance, which she can only achieve through an act of social isolation, bears a profoundly ambivalent quality for the child Isabel Archer. She feels "the elation of liberty and the pain of exclusion" as being "indistinguishably intermingled" (James, *Portrait* 33). The two emotions merge within her so that, without perceiving them as one and the same, Isabel cannot tell one from the other. Thus she learns in her childhood days that "the elation of liberty," more than merely resulting from a painful experience of exclusion, is inseparably linked with it like the heads of a coin with its tails. She will keep up this conviction – which is even stronger precisely because it does not spring from reasoning but has been laid down in the foundation of her world-view before reason and 'logical logic' could kick in – for the entire novel.

Solitude appears as a prerequisite for feminine freedom and at the same time as a deficiency, something to be denied or concealed in order to obscure it.<sup>45</sup> Milly relishes the "sweet taste of solitude" when she has finally settled into Palazzo Leporelli, her Venetian house (James, *Wings* 260). Yet, the opportunity to "cherish" her aloneness depends on an audacious act of appropriation that, in Milly's mind, takes advantage of the house's owner's absence in an implicitly immoral way: "Charming people, conscious Venice-lovers, evidently, had given up their house to her, and had fled to a distance, to other countries, to hide their blushes alike over what they had, however briefly, alienated ... They had preserved and consecrated, and she now – her part of it was shameless – appropriated and enjoyed" (James, *Wings* 259). Phrases suggestive of flight and expulsion mingle with those that imply misconduct of those who escaped and abandoned. The "sweet taste of solitude" therefore seems imbued

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<sup>45</sup> Solitude as a result of freedom is accepted in *Portrait*, but "the isolation and loneliness of pride had for [Isabel's] mind the horror of a desert place" (102).

with the taste of a forbidden fruit, which incriminates even those whose absence helped facilitate Milly's enjoyment.

Absence of and from other people is unquestionably linked to an assumed independence. In some female characters the correlation of absence, aloneness, and independence condenses into a personality almost entirely defined by it. Milly Theale's family ties are all but wiped out before she begins her travels. An orphan like Isabel Archer, Milly has not a single family member left. Her travel companion Susan Stringham is an American who partly grew up in Europe and is equally connected with both continents. As a widow without children Susan does not have many personal ties left in her native country "so that now, childless, she was but more sharply single than before" (James, *Wings* 77).

Kate Croy's wealthy aunt has offered to support Kate financially and socially under the condition that Kate break all contact with her father. In the novel's first scene, Kate visits her father to suggest she live with him and take care of him instead of staying with her aunt. Lionel Croy declines; he agrees to discontinue their relationship and dismisses his daughter. There is no sign he could have done so in spite of himself in order to ensure Kate's well-being. Narcissistic pride motivates his refusal. When Kate offers to share her meager allowance from her mother's bequest with her father, he terms her proposition "your throwing yourself upon me" and seems insulted by the idea: "Ah how you've always hated me!" (James, *Wings* 27, 28). A few paragraphs later, he claims gratitude from Kate for abandoning her when he calls her "admirable opportunity ... one for which, after all, damn you, you've really to thank me" (29).

As the scene that introduces Kate as well as the entire book, it signals a significance of Lionel's rejection and Kate's frustration for the rest of the plot. The novel deals at length with a daughter being spurned by her father and practically banned from her home before it even mentions its heroine Milly Theale. The novel's first scene accentuates the sense of not belonging or not being where one belongs as a particularly painful aspect of female mobility. The text does not mention Lionel Croy again after the first chapter, yet his presence on the first pages determines the significance of his absence on the following 350.

Lionel's spirit resurfaces, for instance, during Milly's consultation with her physician. The "great chance" Sir Luke speaks of emphasizes Milly's relative personal freedom, provided on the one hand by her financial means, but on the other hand by her solitude. "I can do exactly what I like – anything in all the wide world. I haven't a creature to ask – there's not a finger to stop me," as Milly words her sense of liberty (James, *Wings* 150). It does not take a fatal condition to make this boasting statement sound ambiguous. An authority figure speaking to a young woman of her "rare chance" furthermore mirrors the moment during Kate's encounter with her father when Lionel speaks of Kate's "admirable opportunity" (James, *Wings* 29).

The two scenes are strikingly parallel in terms of composition. Both involve a relationship of psychological dependency between a young woman and an older man whom she consults in an emotionally stressful situation. Kate visits her father to convince him not to abandon her whereas Milly sees her physician who might have a devastating diagnosis for her. Both women meet their male interlocutor alone on his territory as it were, in Lionel Croy's house and the doctor's office respectively. In both scenes, the male character voices an assessment of the female character's tragic situation – abandonment on the one hand, a mortal condition on the other – that suggests a vague idea of favorable circumstances and great liberty while blocking out her desperation.

In both cases, money and solitude are two core issues that dominate the scene. Kate's loneliness is brought about by her and her close family's want of money, which coerces her into accepting her aunt's offer. At the same time it is enhanced when Lionel declines her sacrifice and sends her away. From Lionel Kate returns to her aunt, whose house she perceives as "the cage of the lioness," an expression repeated verbatim by Merton when he visits Maud's house (James, *Wings* 37, 62). "Lionel" and "lioness" suggest a kinship that gives away the similar effect both protagonists have on Kate, especially when considering the well-nigh anagram of "lioness" and "loneliness."

Being alone in the sense of being with and by oneself, however, carries also a positive meaning for many Jamesian women. Not least Isabel Archer's lonely vigil in *Portrait's* famous chapter 42 exemplifies the specific mental mode of a meditative solitude in which deeper insights and revelations are rendered possible. Milly experiences something similar when she finds herself alone in Palazzo Leporelli after a

phase of constant human contact: “It was mostly in stillness [that things] spoke to her best; amid voices she lost the sense. Voices had surrounded her for weeks, and she had tried to listen; ... these had been weeks in which there were other things they might have prevented her from hearing” (James, *Wings* 260).

Other passages in *Portrait* already anticipate the particular epistemological potential of situations that combine aloneness with an unfamiliar spatial experiences. When Isabel “take[s] old Rome into her confidence and “rest[s] her weariness upon things that had crumbled for centuries,” she connects with her surroundings in a way that permits her to source a form of solace from her reinterpretation of the historic context of those ruins. When she “dropped her secret sadness into the silence of lonely places” it means to “become deeply, tenderly acquainted with Rome” (James, *Portrait* 430). In *Wings*, the narration of urban space extends into something created not just for but by the character’s experiences so that inner conflicts are directly reflected in the represented spaces.

#### Placelessness and Spatial Authority

When Daisy Miller insists on going for a walk on her own in Rome, she paves the way for other *flâneuses* in James.<sup>46</sup> Women like Milly Theale and the nameless telegrapher from the novella “In the Cage” also take the liberty to walk through unknown urban spaces. Roughly twenty years later, though, and in the streets of London instead of Rome, women walking unaccompanied in the city, if not yet a commonplace sight, certainly did not cause a scandal anymore. The narrative focus can thus shift away from the more explicit social constraints at work in *Daisy Miller*, away from other character’s thoughts and concerns, and close in on the protagonists’ own perspectives. Interdependencies between character consciousness and the creation of fictional space resulting from this shift help to redeploy the responsibility for that creative process from the narrator towards the focal character. This helps to forge a link between the

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<sup>46</sup> Sally Ledger discusses the feminization of Walter Benjamin’s *flâneur* in *The New Woman* (150-57). To call Daisy Miller a *flâneuse* is a bit of a stretch on the grounds of Ledger’s typology. Milly, however, on her lonely stroll through London acts much like the *flâneur* Janet Wolff describes as a figure that is “observing and being observed, but never interacting with others” (40).

spaces that function as structures of oppression and the creative power of the perceiving consciousness.

Whereas Daisy is solely portrayed from another character's outside view, James's later style gives more room to his heroines' intimate mental processes allowing the reader to witness directly, and often in the characters' own words, their experience of unknown places. The more room the character's thoughts take up on the page in these passages, the more does the narration give its characters permission to be involved in the creation of the very fictional space they occupy. When a scene's referential center is the character's perspective, the perceived space comes into being as a structure of positions in relation to that consciousness's locus. Putting characters in charge, as it were, of representing fictional spaces by focalizing the narration through them vests in those characters a spatial authority that turns them into creators of the perceived space. Instead of merely entering a stage that has been set for them by a narrating instance, their perspective serves as the lens through which the space is projected.

With this shift of focalization comes a change in the representation of urban spaces. Or, to put it another way, the constitution of these spaces, represented in and through narrative, relies on a different mode of perception in order to facilitate a narrative mode of increased focalization. The Roman cityscape of *Daisy Miller* unfolds as it is viewed by Fredrick Winterbourne and other characters that share his perspective. Daisy's view during her personal experience of Rome is only present in direct speech; it does not play a part in the passages that give an account of the places she visits and the ones where she is not supposed to go. Rome, and particularly the Colosseum, are being created in this novella for Daisy, not by her or through her consciousness; any creative authority of such kind lies entirely with the narrator and, on the plane of fictional reality, with those characters that claim unquestionable normative power over said reality.

The Colosseum Daisy visits is therefore a place whose meaning has been generated entirely by others. In warning her of its dangers, Winterbourne creates a vicious locus haunted by quasi-magical forces that come out at night to prey on innocent girls. The physical location of the Colosseum in the novella hosts a mythical place where death is awaiting female visitors who dare to breach the borders of socially accepted

behavior. To perform such a trick it takes an authorized instant, a narrator or character, that has been given the authority to make reality by naming it. Daisy herself has no word in this creative process; her character can only make use of the places provided for her by others.

Milly Theale by contrast is in a way actively involved in creating the space she enters when she purposefully gets lost in London after a visit to her doctor. Her lonely walk through an unfamiliar London takes place towards the end of volume I, about one third into the book. It features Milly as the sole center of perspective, and a considerable part of the narration deals with what is going on in her mind while she walks into and through one of London's working-class neighborhoods. She has just left her doctor's office where he presumably informed her that her condition is incurable and fatal. We learn earlier that Milly's motivation to go see the doctor alone for this appointment is not about being alone at the doctor's, but stems from a wish to be "for once in the streets by herself" (James, *Wings* 147). Since only little is conveyed about her actual appointment with Sir Luke, the text suggests that not seeing the physician but her experience afterwards is the true purpose of her little trip.<sup>47</sup>

Milly reminds herself and the reader repeatedly how extraordinary it is for her to be "in the streets by herself" (147). She mentions three constituents that make this experience stand out from her former ones, and all three are related to, or rely on, the space and place of Milly Theale. Firstly, she has chosen to walk "by herself", something she has never consciously done before: "The streets by herself were new to her – she had always had in them a companion or a maid" (147). We see in this expression how the quality of the surrounding space shifts according to the presence or absence of company. Not the fact that she has never been to some of those neighborhoods before makes them "new to her," but her temporary solitude. Even those streets that she already knows, the ones right around her physician's office, are "new" and different now that she is alone.

Secondly, she has not told anybody where she is, which she also believes to be a novelty since "nobody in the world knew where she was. It was the first time in her life that this had happened; somebody, everybody appeared to have known before, at

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<sup>47</sup> I have elsewhere read this scene in the context of Milly's illness and its function as a source of capital within the novel.

every instant of it, where she was” (154). It is important to note here that the third-person narration is indirectly quoting Milly’s own thoughts. In an earlier scene when Milly and her travel companion Susan take a walk in the Swiss Alps, Susan leaves Milly alone for a considerable length of time with only a very vague idea of where Milly probably is. Milly, however, is not aware of Susan’s worries concerning Milly’s prolonged absence (87-89). It must therefore be Milly herself who believes this was the first time nobody knows where exactly she is.

The third aspect that makes this experience stand out for Milly is that she herself intends to get lost, to walk off any knowledge of her own whereabouts. “[S]he felt good for miles and only wanted to get lost” (James, *Wings* 153). She wishes to be with nobody, her location known to nobody, not even to herself. After the devastating diagnosis, Milly seems to wish to eliminate altogether any idea of location in the sense of a place that can be known and found by anybody who matters in her world. Accordingly, after leaving the doctor’s office Milly “went forward into space” (152). In this context, the rather open and undefined term “space” suggests an expansion of unknown scale and a lack of direction. It has an air of exploring, of freedom, and adventure. That, however, is the character’s take on her experience. A closer look at the scene shows how Milly’s adventure depends on a simulation in which she is being masculinized. Milly ‘mans up’ before she takes her unchaperoned walk. Her imaginary transformation nevertheless fulfills a quite practical purpose. After the shocking news about her state of health, Milly puts on a pseudo-ritual in her mind that aims at self-consolidation and leaves her changed at the end.

In a passage whose psycho-narration is highly charged with imagery, Milly feels that her “old sense of safety” has been taken away from her like the “friendly ornament” of a piece of jewelry that she is forced “to pluck off her breast,” which implies a feminine gem such as a brooch. In the spirit of “the idea of a great adventure” that she senses, the trinket has been replaced with “some queer defensive weapon, a musket, a spear, a battle-axe.” The adventure, while promising to be “great,” might also turn out to be “a big dim experiment or struggle.” Accordingly, Milly feels how this new metaphorical attire of hers is “demanding all the effort of the military posture ... so that she proceeded now in very truth after the fashion of a soldier on a march,” demonstrating how the change in perception and spatial experience trickles down to

even the basic physical level of posture. Armed and posing as a soldier, Milly is prepared to enter the unknown space by herself in her masculine costume. Yet, as the many subjunctives during this passage confirm, her experience remains on the level of an “experiment” as the transformation is only an imagined one characterized by the perspective of “quite as if” (James, *Wings* 152-53).

A “fear of overdoing the character” keeps Milly from getting into actual contact with anyone she meets (153). Instead, she continues to stage herself as a conqueror by “taking ... personal possession of what surrounded her” and relegating the people she sees to mutes in her play to whom “she might ... have announced herself as freshly on the war-path” (153). Milly decouples the reality of her sensual experiences from the experience in her mind and thus ensures that the “dim experiment” remains purely conceptual. As a *Gedankenexperiment* in Ernst Mach’s sense of the term, a thought experiment that is conducted purely by imagination, it can include counterfactual circumstances in order to test the fictions that Milly creates in her mind (*Erkenntnis* 185-87).

As Rheinberger explains, experimental systems are not mere verification procedures for assumptions and hypotheses, but can also be set up in order to answer questions that one is not yet able to ask with clarity (quoted in Griesecke and Kogge 46). Such is the case with Milly in this scene. The visit to Sir Luke has left her confused, but instead of resisting the confusion, she mirrors and thereby confirms it by getting lost geographically. She does not actually ask any questions that might result from her diagnosis, and yet her experiment provides her with answers. In the spirit of ‘offense is the best defense,’ one of those answers suggests an aggressive approach that requires the substitution of decorative, feminine attributes with weapons that foster a belligerent attitude. Since a fatal disease provides Milly with one of the most feminine and most passive attributes Victorian culture has in stock, an offensive reaction naturally includes a form of masculinization.

The shift from feminine to masculine attributes takes place metaphorically, which in this case means in the verbalized thoughts of the protagonist. Narrated monologue and quoted thoughts demonstrate that most of the imagery stems from Milly’s mind and that the psycho-narration of this passage merely takes its cue from that imagery. Since a thought experiment is a system that only exists in the mind, it is

an exclusively verbal experience. Mach points out that the intellectual level of thought experiments is therefore higher than that of practical ones since it includes into an experimental arrangement the “treasures of experience preserved in language” (*Erkenntnis* 187; my translation).<sup>48</sup> Milly’s thought language provides the means for the experiment that hence draws on the wealth of experiences preserved in her words.

At the same time, the thought experiment overrides Milly’s sensual experiences. Her disconnection from the reality and the people around her have an alienating effect and it remains unclear what her aggressive potential aims at. Instead of setting out to fight her disease, Milly seems to toy with the idea of metaphorically attacking the strangers around her. As a result, her newly found strength that accrues from her weapons merges with her financial wealth in the imagery of this scene. “She found herself moving at times in regions visibly not haunted by odd-looking girls from New York, duskily draped, sable-plumed, all but incongruously shod and gazing about them with extravagance” (James, *Wings* 153). The musket on her “sable-plumed” shoulder connects her wealth to the threat of the warrior. Milly has never been in a situation where her money could have been perceived by herself as something that is connected to violence; but in this scene she gets remarkably close to making that connection, to understanding the symbolic violence she could – and will – exert with the help of her money.

As a symbolic practice, her walk is not oriented towards material interests but guided by a logic that aims at a form of authority.<sup>49</sup> Milly grapples with a new identity over which she needs to win some control. Yet, the insight she approaches here is frightening and strengthening at the same time. The indicators of her wealth morph into objects that can be perceived as both bellicose and protective. They clearly isolate her from her poor surroundings and even pose a threat to the people she is at once confronted with and cut off from. In the following paragraphs, the narration is interspersed with subjunctives, highlighting the as-if mode Milly’s consciousness escapes to. “But for the fear of overdoing the character she *would* here and there have begun conversation, have asked her way; in spite of the fact that, as this *would* help

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<sup>48</sup> “So sind ja die physikalischen Untersuchungen des Aristoteles größtenteils Gedankenexperimente, in welchen die in der Erinnerung und namentlich in der Sprache, aufbewahrten Erfahrungsschätze verwertet werden.”

<sup>49</sup> On the inherent economic logic and the aims of symbolic practices, cf. Voirol 405-06.

the requirements of adventure, her way was exactly what she wanted not to know” (James, *Wings* 153; emphasis added).

In this mode, the working-class neighborhoods, “which she hoped were slums,” are nothing but décor. As the star on stage that is afraid “of overdoing the character” Milly remains completely self-involved. In the following paragraph, the use of subjunctive marks a climax of her detachment in which the potential for a broader understanding of her own social position cannot be realized: “They [the poor people in the park] could live if they would; that is, like herself, they had been told so: she saw them all about her, on seats, digesting the information, recognising it again as something in a slightly different shape familiar enough, the blessed old truth that they would live if they could” (James, *Wings* 153).

What is described here as nothing but a slight difference in “shape” does indeed make all the difference. The line between those who could live if they would, and those who would if they could is precisely what separates Milly socially and culturally from the people she observes. Her doctor has recommended she live all she can before her disease will kill her, and she could do so if she would – in fact, she will. But the idea that the poor she sees about her have the same opportunity, which Milly believes they have been told, is either ideological misbelief or a form of projection.<sup>50</sup> Milly has been told by Sir Luke not only what to do but also what to be – a sick woman. She accepts his definition of her just as she expects those who do not have her economic means to accept what they have been told.

Milly does not use the opportunity to reach a deeper understanding of how her money and now also her illness determine her social position. She misrecognizes both as self-evident aspects of her personality, which prevents her from grasping the “invisible force” they exert as sources of symbolic power (Bourdieu, *Language* 164). To let her come to the conclusion quoted above in a moment when she sees, probably for the first time in her life, a part of society blessed with considerably less capital than herself reinforces the classist stereotype of nineteenth-century feminine illness that Ehrenreich and English point out. According to that rationale, upper-class women are

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<sup>50</sup> In this regard, Milly disqualifies herself as a *flâneuse* in the Baudelairean sense since Baudelaire himself “always aligned himself with the marginals of society,” as Ledger paraphrases Elizabeth Wilson’s argument (152).

the sick and frail ones in an elegant and symbolically precious way whereas working-class women are seen as “sickening” (Ehrenreich and English 45). Because of her money, Milly has the opportunity to draw symbolic profits from her illness; if she lived among the “grimy children” and “idle lads” (James, *Wings* 153) she observes, her disease would likely be considered infectious and impure.

In this self-prescribed rite of passage Milly enters Sir Luke’s office as a person entirely defined by her cultural origin and her economic wealth, and leaves Regent’s Park a different person. Rich ceases to be “*the thing*” she is; instead she has acquired a new stigma, that of the sick woman. Gilbert and Gubar point out how “nineteenth-century culture seems to have actually admonished women to *be ill*” (54). Just as being the heiress of a family fortune makes money “*the thing*” Milly is, her sociocultural reality constructs the rich woman as “ill” per definition. “[T]he ‘female diseases’ from which Victorian women suffered were not always byproducts of their training in femininity; they were the goals of such training” (54). By accepting all pre-defined implications of her illness and at the same time, while sitting among working-class Londoners, confirming as self-evident and unchallengeable her elevated social position, Milly expresses what Bourdieu terms “*amor fati*, love of one’s social destiny” (*Domination* 37). That this “destiny” is nothing but the consecrated disguise of a predetermined path towards a social fate that, following the same logic as the curse, proves itself legitimate with perfect circular reasoning through its own end, must remain obscure as it does to Milly in this scene.

After her lone walk through London, Milly begins to stage herself as the dove-like princess others see in her. She surrenders to the image of the rich sick woman when she moves to Venice, purchases a palazzo, and decorates it with luxurious objects and with herself. Her self-image begins to align with the general view of her and confirms her elevated social position. The fatal illness becomes an open secret among her friends, everyone knows but no-one speaks about it directly. At the same time, Milly’s consciousness seems to withdraw from the text that adopts her perspective less and less; it resurfaces as infrequently as her state of health allows her to receive her friends (cf. Miller 160).

Milly’s ‘march’ through a poor part of London takes its touch of aberration in part from the ambiguous image of a transforming body that is clad in pieces of at least

two contradictory costumes. The reader has so far received a very different impression of the heroine who seemed anything but martial up to this point. With the introduction of military elements into Milly's self-perception, the scene challenges characterizations of Milly as "princess"<sup>51</sup> or, of course, as the eponymous dove (James, *Wings* 85). At the same time, there is a rather disturbing undercurrent rippling the merely incongruent surface of conflicting images. Read through the lens of a gendered habitus, Milly's fight – and the bellicose metaphors strongly suggest she is caught up in a battle – is that of a deeply disrupted selfhood that struggles to reconcile its feminized aspects with its masculinized ones.

The hyper-feminine attribute of a mortal illness brings to the fore a masculine charge that is inherent in Milly's wealth. The contradiction certainly never solidifies into conscious reflection, but instead remains on a metaphoric level on which Milly plays out her adventurous drama. By staging herself as a soldier Milly gives in to a distinctly masculine pleasure, that of war games. The emphasis on figurative elements and on the experimental nature of her mere 'mind game' devalues her performance as a feminine daydream, which cannot obtain the same status as a masculine play. Bourdieu addresses the significance of masculine playing in his reading of *To the Lighthouse*. He attributes it to the social role of men who, as opposed to women, are "socially instituted and instructed in such a way that they let themselves be caught up, like children, in all the games that are socially assigned to them, of which the form par excellence is war" (*Domination* 75). All games entrusted to men are considered serious and therefore ask to be played seriously. Hence, if Milly gives herself to a military daydream, she trespasses into masculine territory. Getting lost in the street without a male companion is extraordinary and considered dangerous in itself, but losing herself in a playful state of mind and permitting herself to play at being a soldier, Milly usurps a role that is not due to her within the logic of an androcentric order. In accordance with these gender roles, her experiment has to fail whereas a male character, namely Merton Densher, is permitted just a few pages later to freely indulge in his.

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<sup>51</sup> Susan thinks of Milly as a princess and anticipates, much in the manner of her insightful comments on the significance of Milly's money, that "a princess could only be a princess" and nothing else. Susan understands how this is "a perfectly definite doom for the wearer" that "involve[s] loneliness" which constitutes "the weight under which she fancied her companion's admirable head occasionally, and ever so submissively, bowed" (*Wings* 85).

### Valorization of Masculine Perception

On her lonely walk, Milly also paves the way for Merton Densher who passes through the same part of town a few days later on “a long and rather aimless walk.” He too is “without a plan” when he enters the park. The narrator highlights the parallels between his and Milly’s route. Densher walks “quite in the direction his little New York friend ... had taken a day or two before. He reached, like Milly, the Regent’s Park; ... he finally sat down, like Milly.” At the same time, we learn that Merton “walked northward” and therefore has a very certain direction. He is reliably locatable and knows precisely where he is in contrast to Milly, who is not even mentioned by name at first but with the condescending expression “his little New York friend” (James, *Wings* 191-92).

Merton, who slides in and out of focalization in this chapter, has used these same words just a page earlier when he refers to Milly. Kate and he “stumbled upon his little New York friend” in the National Gallery. The diminutive description seems to ask for an explanation or at least for recognition of its unusual tone: “He thought of her for some reason as little, though she was of about Kate’s height, to which ... he had never applied the diminutive” (James, *Wings* 191). If it is not Milly’s physical height that makes her seem “little” to Merton, something else must elicit this impression. The phrasing, particularly when it is repeated on the very next page and without any additional qualification, lets us know that to Merton Milly is rather infantile or immature. She is not to be taken as serious as Kate, maybe needs protection, and can easily get lost in an unfamiliar city.

Not only does this description de-feminize Milly by turning her into a child, it also highlights that she does not belong there, that London is not ‘her’ city. Belittling phrasing and an emphasis on Milly’s affinity with another city make this passage call into question Milly’s “taking ... possession of what surrounded her” just “a day or two before” Merton follows in her steps (James, *Wings* 153; 192). It thus confirms the fictive quality of Milly’s experience. Even though Merton walks through London “somewhat sightlessly” at this point, he is well aware of being back in ‘his’ city of which he is taking “renewed possession” (192). Since Milly is originally from Boston and merely met Merton in New York, calling her a “New York friend” moreover robs

her of her actual home town and leaves Milly without a home and without a name. To take the de-placement even further, Merton “might positively have occupied the same bench” that Milly sat on just days before (192). He replaces her by putting himself ‘in Milly’s place’ as it were.

With such explicit parallels between the two characters’ route and location, the scene invites a comparison of their experiences. Merton “move[s] further and faster” than Milly did (James, *Wings* 192). He takes “renewed possession” as a matter of course of a space that Milly’s experience has previously defined as a very “personal” one (James, *Wings* 153). His state of mind is also compared to Milly’s when he settles on a bench “like Milly, from the force of thought.” The park bench becomes a place of quiet contemplation where “various troubled fancies folded their wings” (James, *Wings* 192).<sup>52</sup> Unlike Milly’s, though, Merton’s thoughts do not depend on the backdrop of a social reality that provides a chance for detachment. It is precisely because he does not seem to pay attention to his surroundings that he is able to focus on actual interpersonal relationships instead of imagined ones with strangers.

Merton turns over in his mind questions about his relationship with Kate; he contemplates their last encounter and the conversations they had since his return from America. Being alone in the park is not an issue to him because it is nothing special. Solitude merely provides him with an opportunity to process what has passed between him and his lover. He can easily do this in public as opposed to Milly, whose thoughts cannot but be dominated by the fact that she is alone outside and who could not ignore it if she tried. To her, the space and the people around her factor into her thoughts yet she cannot create any actual contact. Whereas she is forced by her perceptive patterns and her habits – her habitus, in other words – to remain self-involved in an almost narcissistic state, Merton is not distracted, let alone troubled, by any unusual experience and can deal with ‘real’ interhuman relations that involve ‘real’ people in so far as he knows and is in contact with them.

London’s cityscape turns “grey” in both protagonists’ perception, but there is a crucial difference in quality between Milly’s and Merton’s view. Whereas Milly feels lost in the “grey immensity of London” – picturing the city as a large mass of indis-

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<sup>52</sup> In this expression, the text evokes a certain presence of the “dove” Milly under whose folding wings Merton’s mind finds calm.

tinguishable elements in which she does not know her way (James, *Wings* 152) – Merton grapples with his own feeling of insignificance as being “but a sentence” within a text on “a great grey page of print” (191-92). This text might not be “fine” and he might be relegated to constituting just a small part of it after the glamour of his “full parenthesis” abroad, but it is still a text and therefore much more decipherable, familiar, and manageable than the “immensity” with which Milly sees herself confronted.

Both characters turn over in their mind a conversation that happened right before their respective walk to the park; Milly spoke to Sir Luke about her health and Merton met with Kate to discuss the possible future of their relationship. While this constitutes an emotionally stressful situation for each character, the narration renders Merton’s meditations much more accessible than Milly’s. Quotations and summarizing paraphrases from his conversation with Kate provide orientation for the reader, which makes it easy to follow his line of thought and understand his reactions. From Milly’s colloquy with her physician we learn comparably little even though the account takes up six pages of text. Yet, much of it deals with Milly’s impressions of the inside of the house and the dialogue revolves around Milly’s travel plans and vague allusions to her “right to be happy” (James, *Wings* 149). Her reaction of figurative armament therefore remains somewhat elusive.

Milly’s attempt at metaphorical heroism is difficult to decipher and burdened with an air of the grotesque due to an overabundance of irreconcilable images of physical transformation, whereas Merton’s masculine tendency towards wounded vanity goes unmentioned. He feels insignificant after his trip to America, which did not bring the anticipated career boost. Still not in a position to marry Kate, he is understandably frustrated with returning to his menial social position as a mere “sentence” in the large text of London society (James, *Wings* 192). However, his lack of social advancement – after all just the continuance of his familiar situation – hardly constitutes a traumatic incident such as being diagnosed with a fatal disease. To narrate his experience in this accessible manner and at the same time suggesting a comparison with Milly’s significantly less comprehensible thoughts and actions might, on one hand, represent with narrative means the confusion following the radical change in Milly’s life. On the other hand, to leave the reader baffled by somewhat absurd imagery and a

lack of insight into the causes for the heroines emotional and mental turmoil while delivering a few pages later a perfectly understandable account of a male character's handling of an emotionally stressful situation – that takes place at the very same location no less – clearly valorizes masculine perception and reaction.

The parallel scenes illustrate in how far reality depends on being perceived by a consciousness. The represented reality is in no way always existent as such and ready to be described. Instead, the perceiving consciousness's perspective, which constitutes representation in the first place, creates each represented facet of reality. Milly's impressions of and reactions to her surroundings differ from Merton's not only because she is new to that particular part of town but also because of an unfamiliar social scene and her preoccupied mind that has to come to terms with her illness. By placing the scenes almost back to back, the text foregrounds this conditionality of perception. The strongly gendered images suggest a more reasonable, effective, and useful outcome of masculine perceptive patterns as opposed to a risk of needless complication and social isolation for a female mind that adopts a masculine attitude in order to brace itself for the feminized attack of a mortal illness. Milly seeks for this strength in masculine territory moreover since being alone in the street would certainly not be a new experience for a male adult.

By choosing the social outsider Merton for a direct comparison of feminine and masculine perception of space and the impact it has on the respective self-image, James suggests with these two scenes that even a dominated masculine habitus such as Merton's is limited by considerably less restrictions than that of his feminine social superior. Milly is shown as standing in her own way when she cannot actualize the power potential of her figurative resistance that turns into hollow classism instead. From this moment on, Milly succumbs to the passivity connected with her hyper-feminine illness, which wins her a considerable increase in symbolic capital that, in accordance with dominant gender roles, can only be exerted clandestinely or vicariously. In the end, Milly falls back upon her only reliable source of power, as her metaphorical combining of arms and money already foreshadows. The financial inheritance binds and frees her at the same time. It provides the illusion of freedom that can never be made reality. Milly rids herself of the burden eventually and passes it on to others, but since the "grip" of inheritance that Alice James so lucidly divined

is strong enough to bind every cell of Milly's body, her body has to go together with the money.

### The Grip of Inheritance

Milly Theale's inherited (American) money alone cannot ensure her social success and its immense accompanying influence over others. It is in and through her death, finally, that Milly's last gift to Merton and Kate, her money, which they believe to have inherited, turns into the curse of a gift that cannot be returned in any form whatsoever and thus becomes a debt that Merton is not willing to bring upon himself. Just how far Milly's symbolic power reaches by the end of the novel is expressed in one of the novel's haunting last scenes, wherein Kate and Merton burn the unopened letter that they only suspect to be a note informing them of the inheritance. The power of the gift, Bourdieu writes, lies in its "practical denial of interest" (*Logic* 125), comparable to the Freudian *Verneinung*, which creates the "moral obligations and emotional attachments" that turn it into "a lasting obligation." In this gift economy, "the only recognized power ... is the one that is obtained by giving" (Bourdieu, *Logic* 126). The catch, to put it a little crudely, is that Milly's influence and power rely completely on her iconic (and iconically feminine) death. She has to pay with her life, which makes her less of a martyr than a victim of her own symbolic power.

Within the logic of social exchange, be it an exchange of words, gifts, or socio-symbolically significant physical gestures, the initial action requires a response from the recipient or addressee. This response has to take on a socially determined form such as a return gift, a verbal rejoinder or other form of riposte and it needs to follow within a socially prescribed period, as Bourdieu shows in *Logic of Practice* (100). An invitation, for example, generates or carries with it the expectation for a response that is considered equal in form and/or value. In each culture, this potential value of the response – a return invitation or, when circumstances prevent this, a thank-you note or material gift, for instance – decreases over time until there is no socially acceptable way of responding any more. Social exchange, "in opposition to the unilateral violence of aggression, [implies] the possibility of a continuation ... inasmuch as it contains recognition of the partner" as equal within the scope of the exchange (Bourdieu, *Logic* 100). Failure to continue the exchange in accord with its unwritten rules means not

only to forfeit the credit accorded by the gift (the assumption of equality that the gift expresses), but also to dishonor the giver since the response confirms this equality while a refusal denies it. Consequently, honor is latently always at stake in social exchange.

Considering Milly's gift to Merton within this practical logic of social exchange reveals that it is categorically not distinguished in its basic function from an open challenge to Merton's honor, such as an insult. Merton therefore finds himself trapped in a dilemma. Since the gift is essentially non-repayable because Milly is dead, Merton has very few options of continuing the exchange. Common phrases referring to a deceased person make apparent how a socially accepted continuation of exchange is supposed to work. When the living are expected to 'honor' the legacy or the memory of the dead, the word makes explicit what this and most other forms of social and symbolic exchange are in essence about. Merton cannot 'honor' Milly by accepting the money unless he discontinues his engagement with Kate. He is willing to waive the inheritance, which would mean to deny the implied equality by declaring himself unworthy. The only way to prevent dishonoring himself, though, is to accept his inheritance. Kate affords him this opportunity when she rejects his offer to stay together "as [they] were" (James, *Wings* 403). Thanks to Kate's rebuff, Merton gets a chance to restore his honor.

When she leaves her fortune to Merton, Milly's gift to all appearances terminates the relationship between him and Kate. Through her ostensible generosity, Milly thus gains symbolic power over Merton, and consequently also over Kate. Paradoxically, it is a power she can only exert after her physical obliteration. The ambiguous force of the inheritance therefore depends on, and at the same time makes use of her death. The sick, dying woman with a paradoxical power is a stock character in Victorian literature (cf. Bailin; Byrne; Gilbert). In *Wings*, the obvious interdependence between Milly's illness and death, her money, and the curious power she draws from both highlights the economic principle that determines this feminized form of empowerment that needs to obscure its own efficacy. Not naming the illness and let characters go out of their way to avoid mentioning it mirrors this obfuscation that functions according to "the logic of an economy of denial" (Bourdieu, *Logic* 128).

Feminist readings of female characters' sickness and death point out how nineteenth-century culture defined the ailing and sick body as a feminine or feminized one (cf. Gilbert). A terminal illness – in stark contrast to an economic fortune, for instance – constitutes one of the most feminine attributes one could have at that time. In fact, the passivity that comes with physical weakness, which was often increased through doctors ordering female patients to remain alone and well-nigh motionless in bed, was seen as an ideal expression of feminine values whereas its culmination in the physical obliteration of death meant to realize the epitome of femininity and contributed to the “cult of female invalidism” that Ehrenreich and English describe (17).

Milly Theale's money and what she does with it after her death adds a twist to this Victorian tradition when the text opens a window of resistance in boosting Milly's symbolic power over Kate and Merton that, cynically, requires her to die. The vacuum left by her death is filled with symbolic power. Originally, Milly's money bears only little of the feminine charge of her other capital whereas the symbolic capital that derives from her illness is highly feminized. It can only be used for a feminine exertion of power, which means vicarious participation in the games of power. As Bourdieu explains,

[b]eing symbolically condemned to resignation and discretion, women can exercise some degree of power only by turning the strength of the strong against them or *by accepting the need to efface themselves* and, in any case, to deny a power that they can only exercise vicariously. (*Domination* 32; emphasis added)

Milly seems to accept the need for effacement when she aims for the vicarious exertion of power that makes it necessary to appoint Merton as her envoy by leaving her fortune to him.

As a form of revenge, intentional or unintentional, for the deception she suffered the inheritance works wonderfully. The letter in which Merton suspects Milly to have left him all her money is never opened, it does not have to be. The assumption alone is enough to burden Merton with guilt beyond his capacity. Milly rises to power in *The Wings of the Dove* with the help of her illness and her money. To actualize the potential of both, she has to give up her money together with her life, which brings us full circle to Susan's initial characterization of Milly: rich is “*the thing*” Milly is. She can act only through her money and to give it away runs parallel to her effacement. To return

to Bourdieu's terms: Milly converts her economic capital into symbolic capital with the help of her fatal illness. The esteem, honor, and respect – in other words the symbolic capital – that her generous gift earns her depend on her death, which turns it into a gift that cannot be reciprocated.

Only after her death can Milly exert the symbolic power that is represented in the unopened letter. The feminized martyrdom of selfless generosity that her gift to Merton represents brings an increase in symbolic capital that Merton cannot help but acknowledge. He refuses to accept the inheritance, refuses to play by Milly's rules and thereby acknowledges her power. Milly has interrupted the circle of reciprocity that forms the basic structure according to which gift-exchange works, which makes it impossible for Merton to receive the gift without reservations. In his essay "Gifts" Emerson puts in a nutshell the basis for Merton's conundrum: "We do not quite forgive a giver. The hand that feeds us is in some danger of being bitten" (162). In Merton's case, the hand that gives has withdrawn forever. He can neither bite it nor give anything in return. Milly's power lies in turning herself into such an unforgivable giver whereas the tragedy lies in her having to die in order to achieve this role. In his final refusal to put Milly's money to the use intended by Kate, it is Merton Densher who prevails in the end by securing not only the "thumping bank account" – Milly's symbolic life source – but also a large amount of symbolic capital through his morally justified renunciation.

HOW TO SURVIVE A JAMES NOVEL:  
*THE GOLDEN BOWL*

James's works negotiate issues of gender inequality and attempted revolts against symbolic domination with themes that run through his entire oeuvre. Self-effacement, lucid outsider perspectives, and gendered – as well as classed – appropriation of space reoccur in most of his narratives that feature female characters suffering in one way or another under oppressive structures. From “The Aspern Papers” to “In the Cage,” from “The Beast in the Jungle” to *The Spoils of Poynton*, Jamesian heroines unconsciously struggle to find a way to withhold acknowledgement of masculine power without giving in to the paradoxical submission inherent in the socio-cognitive process Bourdieu describes as misrecognition. They do so in many different ways, some more overtly, like Juliana Borderaux in “The Aspern Papers,” others within the very narrow margins of a stereotypically feminine passivity, like May Bartram in “The Beast in the Jungle.” United by the failure in one form or another of their struggles, many of these female characters either die – like Juliana, May, and also Daisy Miller and Milly Theale – or, like the nameless telegrapher in “In the Cage” or Fleda Vetch in *The Spoils of Poynton*, cannot but surrender to dominant oppressive structures that are as much self-imposed as dictated by outside forces.

James's last finished novel, *The Golden Bowl*, continues many of the themes that inform narratives of dominated female characters and their often futile attempts to resist – let alone overcome – the structures that bind them. The previous chapters have looked into various narrative strategies from imagery and narrative structure, to representations of consciousness, to construction and perception of space, which renders an equally intensive close reading of *The Golden Bowl* if not entirely superfluous then at least partly redundant. Instead, I want to take the opportunity to use the novel as a backdrop against which to sharpen some of the contours of my earlier readings. This contextual view will also bring to the fore the remarkable shift that takes place in this late work regarding its heroine who looks for – and unlike her predecessors seems to actually find – a way to circumvent masculine power without being punished for her foray.

In my reading of *The Golden Bowl*, Maggie Verver marks the endpoint of a development of Jamesian women as she achieves what none of James's heroines before her did: she reaches both her main goals – to continue her marriage despite her husband's adultery and to keep the information about the perfidy from her father – and survives, which is no small feat for a female character in James. As Maggie had strived for, her father, Adam Verver, decides to leave Europe and return to American City with his wife Charlotte, who had been in love with Maggie's husband even before the marriage. Maggie sees a chance for her marriage with Prince Amerigo to continue, and she has also kept the secret of Amerigo and Charlotte's love affair from Adam. "No Jamesian heroine accomplishes more," as Stephen Arata puts it (199). Questionable as her means to reach this goal may be, her accomplishment is remarkable for a female James protagonist since it does neither involve any form of self-abandonment nor physical obliteration by death. All three narratives discussed in detail in the previous chapters center around a heroine who disappears in the end in one way or the other. Isabel Archer takes matters into her own hands and escapes further observation whereas Daisy Miller and Milly Theale both die of illness.

Heroines being removed from tales to which they are central characters is not uncommon in James's works. May Bartram in "The Beast in the Jungle" dies of another unnamed hence mystified illness and her death works as a catalyst for John Marcher's quest for self-realization. The whereabouts and biography of the governess in *The Turn of the Screw* are a mystery much pondered in the tale's frame narrative as well as in the extensive criticism on James's famous ghost story. Even though she functions as intradiegetic narrator through her diary, the manuscript is read by someone else, which emphasizes her absence. Juliana Bordereaux, although not the protagonist of "The Aspern Papers," is yet another central female character whose removal by death propels the plot forward and reveals the extent to which her resistance threatens her antagonist. Her death is so explicitly linked to the homodiegetic narrator's misogynistic violence that the text basically blames him for her murder even though he does not lay a hand on her.

Contradicting and disparate as literary criticism has been when it comes to *The Golden Bowl*,<sup>53</sup> there is little dispute over the appraisal that, as Arata so aptly boils it down, “Maggie wins” (199). Maggie Verver is even granted the final scene of the novel – another novelty compared to the previously discussed texts. Neither of those heroines is present during the last moments of the novel or novella; Daisy and Milly have both died while Isabel has left for Rome, a decision that has caused much despair among James critics. Maggie is therefore the rare example of a female main character to hold her ground until the end. This metaphorical ground, however, just as the actual room she takes up and occupies, is not hers, but her father’s. While Maggie does indeed win, the conditions of her victory as well as the source of her intentions and strategies are entirely predetermined and controlled by Adam. Successful as her machinations in the second half of the book may be, she proves one of the staunchest accomplices of androcentric symbolic domination in James’s fiction when what she aims and plots for so ingeniously is the continuation of precisely the economistic domesticity her father has installed. Moreover, she goes to great length, risks even to have her project fail, only to protect Adam from having his uncontested – and to all appearances incontestable – position violated by the knowledge of his wife’s perfidy. When Maggie remains in Europe with her husband and son to continue Adam’s legacy, it thus does not entail any breaking free from her father’s hegemony. The Verver family’s European branch continues with Maggie instead of Adam, but otherwise unaltered.

### Parental Transgressions

While character biographies, family structures, and settings tend to resemble each other in James’s novels, the similarities often foreground how his handling of social matters changes over the course of his work. *Golden Bowl* is no exception, and many of the themes that prove to be most relevant to the representation of masculine domination undergo yet another development in this late novel. The rich American girl in James has matured since Daisy Miller and the young Isabel Archer while other features have grown more disturbing. The insufficient parenting that influences the

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<sup>53</sup> Readings of *Golden Bowl* usually position themselves somewhere between the poles established by F.O. Matthiessen on the one hand, who finds Maggie’s proceeding “obscene” (*Major Phase* 100) and Dorothea Krook’s appraisal of the ending’s “moral beauty” (323) on the other.

heroines' expectations and behavior so deeply in *Daisy Miller* and *Portrait* escalates into a father-daughter relationship that shows more and more signs of a dysfunctional intimacy. At times, Maggie and Adam Verver act more like a married couple with each other than they do with either of their spouses.

Not only does Adam compare his daughter to his late wife, he also comes to the conclusion that they are identical: "she [Maggie] was her mother" (James, *Bowl* 109). Maggie even goes so far as to speak of a marriage when she describes her relationship with Adam. She tries to convince him that, since Maggie is now married to someone else, Adam needs to find himself another wife: "It was as if you couldn't be in the market when you were married to *me*. Or rather as if I kept people off, innocently, by being married to you" (127). Maggie absolves herself of any guilt with the additional "innocently," a privilege she does not bestow upon Adam.

Earlier in this conversation, Adam himself points out how he does not feel any notable change in their relationship since Maggie's wedding. "You've only moved next door," he explains (127). Since he pays for Maggie's home, Adam has an active part in her not moving farther away. He has placed her and Amerigo like exhibits in a museum, to be admired whenever it pleases him. More than once does he quite plainly perceive Maggie as one of his collectibles: as "some slight, slim draped 'antique' of Vatican or Capitoline halls, ... rare as a note and immortal as a link, ... keeping still the quality ... of the statue ... passing as an image in worn relief round and round a precious vase" (138-39). Characterized first and foremost as "the great American collector" (157), Adam has managed to keep his most precious collector's item close by. An exchange between the two only a few lines later reveals just how far Maggie's devotion goes. "You mean," Adam asks about Maggie's idea that he get married, "that it will be you who'll take the consequences?" (128). Maggie's response to this foreshadows her personal sacrifices in the second half of the book and sums up her tendency towards co-dependent martyrdom: "I'll leave you all the good ones, but I'll take the bad" (128).

After she has found out just how close Charlotte and Amerigo had been before they each married a member of the Verver family, and how they renewed this intimacy afterwards, Maggie's first concern is Adam: "Ah, to thrust such things on *us*, to do them here between us and with us, day after day, and in return, in return —! To do it to

him – to him, to him!” (423). During the ensuing conversation with Fanny Assingham, Maggie repeatedly uses confusing pronouns that might refer to either Adam or Amerigo (424-26). Once, when “he” should refer to Amerigo but the reference makes no sense, Fanny enquires “The Prince made her think –?” to which Maggie only stares as “she had meant her father. But her vision seemed to spread” (426). She cannot or refuses to distinguish between husband and father.

Adam equally confounds Maggie’s mother, Maggie, and then later his second wife Charlotte. When left alone with Charlotte for a longer stretch of time, he continues his routines that he shared with Maggie and merely replaces her with Charlotte: “Mr Verver met his young friend ... in the day-nursery, very much as he had regularly met the child’s fond mother” (148). Not mentioning Maggie’s name but instead reducing her to the role of “fond mother” equates Maggie with her own mother, who is usually referred to in such terms. Adam himself remains largely ignorant of the problematic relationship to his daughter whereas Maggie, at the beginning of chapter 25 and after Amerigo and Charlotte have already resumed their love affair, becomes painfully aware of “a recent change in her life.” Even though she cannot, at this point, acknowledge the harm in having “been able to marry without breaking ... with her past,” Maggie does indeed identify her bond with her father as central to the vague feeling that “[s]omething *had* happened,” as she puts it in her as yet vague thoughts. “She had surrendered herself to her husband without the shadow of a reserve or a condition,” Maggie confirms – a claim she can quite easily make since Adam, in his role as purchaser, has set the conditions for acquiring Amerigo – but she admits in the same breath that “she had not, all the while, given up her father by the least little inch.” During this first contemplation of her marriage that is focalized through Maggie, she still views as a “success” how both she and her father kept up their rapport: “His having taken the same great step in the same free way had not in the least involved the relegation of his daughter” (James, *Bowl* 300-01). Amerigo and Charlotte are both abandoned to a degree by the Ververs, who even greet their joint absences as it gives father and daughter more time together. The sexual adultery committed by Charlotte and Amerigo is complemented by the emotional one of Maggie and Adam.

### Resistance and Submission

What makes the three heroines I have focused on in my previous chapters particularly interesting for the analysis of masculine domination are their different and very personal strategies of resistance. The young and prototypically naïve American Daisy Miller unwittingly refuses to recognize the hierarchies and resulting expectations of the group of expatriates she enters, whereas Isabel Archer strives for her own place within her new social circle but stumbles into the trap of first her cousin's and then her husband's controlling observation. Milly Theale's elevated social status is never challenged; she struggles against the conflicting forces of economic power on the one hand and the extremely feminized passivity of her illness on the other. Daisy Miller, the epitome of an 'American girl,'<sup>54</sup> has no chance of understanding the breaches she commits. When she challenges the dominant social order and those in power within the microcosm of American expatriates, Daisy demonstrates but the potential of subversion. Before she can do any real harm, she is discarded and barely ever spoken of again.

It takes a lot of self-deceit and suffering to bring Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady* to a burgeoning understanding of what her husband's control over her relies on. She does not fully decipher it and never sees the entire net of intricate relations and dependencies between her other friends and family. Still, her beginning grasp of how Merle and Osmond deceived her and how she had a part in the success of that deceit – a part, then again, which she had been prepared for by outer as well as inner antecedents and which to admit therefore means recognition of the relational nature of social processes and is not in any way a form of blaming the victim – provides her with the revolutionary spark she had before only flattered herself to possess.

Where Daisy Miller personifies the potential for subversion, Isabel Archer has the potential for revolt. And yet, there cannot be any certainty as to if and how she would kindle that spark. Her return to Rome might as well mean that she has smothered it out of fear of getting burned, to stretch the analogy a bit. During her famous vigil in chapter 42, Isabel becomes aware, on a level deeper and more bodily than mere consciousness – she really allows herself to know *and* feel – what she has to deal with

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<sup>54</sup> Virginia Fowler's *Henry James's American Girl* is still the most exhaustive work on James's use of his favorite type.

and finds more or less accurate words that probe into the psycho-social structure of her situation. Yet, as Bourdieu points out, “[w]hile making things explicit can help, only a thoroughgoing process of countertraining ... can, like an athlete’s training, durably transform habitus” (*Meditations* 172). The reader only gets to witness the beginning of this countertraining to which Isabel submits herself when she disregards her husband’s directive and travels to England to see her cousin before his death. We will never know if Isabel completes her training, which is one of the reasons the novel’s ending has so frustrated generations of readers.

When Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove* merely “turn[s] her face to the wall” and dies after learning about Merton and Kate’s plot, it seems like a regress in terms of responses to oppression. Her precursor Isabel Archer, James’s other orphaned American heiress, at least makes an informed decision and takes action, even though her motives may be unfathomable to many readers. To all appearances, Milly succumbs to her illness and carries out what can be read as a desperate and passive-aggressive form of revenge when she gives Kate what Kate had been plotting for by leaving her money to Merton. When Merton refuses to accept the inheritance, his and Kate’s relationship ends, which would be an effective way for Milly to take vengeance even if it were unintentional.

Like *Portrait*, *Wings* also puts a focus on the manifold constraints that prevent a dominated consciousness from awareness of its predetermination, e.g. on Milly’s walk through a working-class neighborhood. At the same time, and as the setting for this key scene emphasizes, *Wings* foregrounds the significance of class for the formation of Milly’s dominated habitus. The important difference between the two rich American orphans is that Milly has been rich all her life with money being “*the thing*” she is (or is perceived as), whereas Isabel has a lot of trouble accepting her unfamiliar wealth as a part of herself. Like Daisy Miller, Milly does not know a life without more money than she could spend. Unlike Daisy, who gets caught in the middle of a struggle between established (Europeanized) Americans and her outsider family within roughly the same social class, Milly shows some unreflected sort of class-awareness. When she wishes to see “slums” and finds herself confronted with a scenery of working-class life, she acknowledges the blatant gap between herself and those she observes, albeit

without drawing any conclusions that go beyond a confirmation of the dominant classist perspective.

Milly's resistance therefore is not as obvious as that of Daisy or Isabelle. Her wealth in economic as well as cultural and sexual capital is more than enough to ensure a lasting position of power within the limits of a feminine hence dominated habitus. Her illness undermines much of that secure foundation as it over-amplifies precisely those limitations. Not only does it rob her of physical strength, it also assigns her a role within late Victorian culture that is the epitome of a passive and dependent femininity. By accepting the gender-specific components of her physical ailment that are implicit in her doctor's words and in the way others treat her, Milly restricts herself to the illegitimate means of the powerless. She resorts to obscure forms of manipulation with her last will by offering both a "gift too great to be matched [and] a debt that can never be repaid," as Bourdieu describes the "soft violence" of the "Mediterranean mother" or "mothering wife" (*Domination* 32). This form of self-victimization and, ultimately, self-sacrifice, as the vast majority of strategies that the dominated have at their disposal against symbolic domination, confirms the original prejudice – in Milly's case that of weakness and incapacity. Due to this self-legitimizing structure, Bourdieu writes, "women are condemned to furnish the proof of their malign nature and to justify the taboos and prejudice that they incur by virtue of their essential maleficence" (*Domination* 32).

Unlike Daisy and Isabelle before her, Milly does not have to face a male villain made all the more dangerous by his challenged masculinity. Merton Densher may have an overabundance of masculinity issues to deal with, but his social position prevents his patronizing stance from taking on the same malevolent quality of a Frederick Winterbourne, and his personality, if equipped with questionable traits, is far from that of a vile, autocratic narcissist like Osmond. Masculine domination in *Wings* is not personified by a certain character but is present in the expectations, perceptions, and behavioral patterns of all the characters. At first glance, *Golden Bowl* seems to continue with this unpersonalized distribution of masculine violence all across its characters, yet it also complicates matters with the almost mythical and overpowering presence of Adam Verver or, rather, Adam's money. As I will illustrate below, James has created his proto-patriarch in the character of Adam Verver, who not only rears his

strongest ally by successfully implanting in his daughter the economic principles of his androcentric hegemony, but who also secures Maggie's unimpeachable dedication that – beyond any doubt and, more to the point, beyond any chance of circumventing her *doxic* beliefs without concurrently threatening the foundation of her very identity – makes her instate herself as her father's successor. An amalgamation of some of James's most controversial father figures, such as the late Mr. Archer, Lionel Croy, and of course the dilettante Gilbert Osmond, Adam outranks all male Jamesian villains in his seamless implementation of the principles of masculine domination.

Before attending in more detail to Adam, and in order to prevent him from seizing the mantle even within this critical discussion of the novel, a few more words about James's female accomplices of androcentric symbolic violence are in order. Like Mrs. Walker and Mrs. Costello in *Daisy Miller*, the 'grande dame' in *Wings*, Maud Lowder, is a functionary of an inherently misogynistic classism that forces its worldview on everyone who seeks acceptance to her established circle. Maud's influence is most overtly expressed when her condition for Kate to benefit from her aunt's social and financial care-giving demands that Kate brake off all contact with her impoverished father. Family ties mean less to Maud than social status, as her wish for Kate to marry Lord Marc, instead of the man Kate loves, proves. Kate also acts as an envoy for the perpetuation of this system when she – and not Merton – comes up with a plot that not only acknowledges as legitimate her aunt's demand for a rich husband, but moreover corroborates her femininely powerless position through the plan's illegitimate means.

Both Milly and Kate utilize the sanctioned strategies left for the dominated in order to assert themselves in one way or the other, and neither succeeds.<sup>55</sup> It would be cynical to view Milly's revenge, if one wants to read her leaving her money to Merton as an act of vengeance, as a success; she has to die in order to execute it after all. The female traitor Kate is left with the now useless result that she plotted for when Merton has in fact inherited Milly's fortune but is not willing to accept both the money and Kate. Like Serena Merle in *Portrait*, Kate is being punished for her deceit, yet not in

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<sup>55</sup> This means to assume that Milly intends to take revenge on Kate and Merton for their betrayal or at least approves of the possibility that her testament harms the relationship and renders obsolete the inheritance's purpose, which was to put Merton in the economic position to marry Kate.

the straightforward way in which Isabel sentences Serena. There is no face-off between deceiver and deceived; instead the former co-conspirator Merton cancels his agreement with Kate and leaves her without a fiancé, without a father, and without financial means of her own.

The plot of both *Portrait* and *Wings* is set in motion by a female character's scheme to obtain another woman's money. The male collaborators in both novels' schemes, Gilbert Osmond and Merton Densher, are not only the financial beneficiaries of their respective partners' plotting, at the end of each book it also remains open whether or not there will be any negative consequences for them. Merton does not get to marry Kate, but he is left with quite a large sum of money as compensation. Osmond is even better off, it seems. Isabel might return to him with the intention to bring about some serious changes in their marriage, but her money is Osmond's for good and with it the best chances to secure his elevated social status by marrying his daughter off to a man of wealth and possibly also of nobility.

Whereas Winterbourne continues his life as before he met Daisy, Osmond gets most of what he wanted, minus a servile wife, and Merton receives a huge consolation prize for losing his lover, the central female characters in all three texts pay for their deceit or for their attempts to subvert or escape their domination. The way in which Daisy Miller contracts malaria, the illness that will quickly kill her, is so strongly linked to her transgressions that the text well-nigh explicitly equates it with a death-sentence handed out by Winterbourne. Isabel Archer finds herself married to one of the vilest and cruelest egotists in the history of literature, a man who is offended even by the idea that she might have a personality of her own. Milly Theale, as mentioned above, has to give up her life together with her money when she learns of her friends' deceit.

*Bowl* alters this pattern significantly. While the novel acknowledges the limitations for Maggie to reach her goal and does not unambiguously legitimize her scheming either, Maggie is not punished for her somewhat wily manipulation of her family and friends. The narration uses a modified version of the strategy employed in *Portrait*. While Isabel Archer's self-awareness grows and she develops from an idealistic and somewhat naïve girl into a woman who deals with the loss of her only child, with the revelation that the man she married is a cruel egotist who is solely

interested in her money, and finally with the knowledge that her friend and her husband deceived her, the narrator's stance towards her gradually changes from the patronizing and belittling attitude of an omniscient instance to a less obtrusive approach that does not penetrate the characters' mind at all times, refrains from mocking commentary, and eventually steps back behind the character's own voice. With Maggie, the shift is not so much gradual as it rather happens suddenly at the beginning of the novel's second half.

James deliberately divided the novel into two parts, as he mentions in his preface to the revised text for the *New York Edition*. According to this preface, the novel "remains subject to the register, ever so closely kept, of the consciousness of but two of the characters" (xlii). The structure seems rather self-explanatory as the two books of *Golden Bowl* are entitled "The Prince" and "The Princess." And indeed, Maggie only becomes a focalizer for the first time at the beginning of the second book whereas the first half is focalized mostly through Amerigo, Adam, and, at times, through Fanny Assingham. During this first book, Maggie's perspective is only present in her direct speech, and the reader is first introduced to other characters' views of her.

Through the first half of the novel, Maggie seems to encompass a similar – and at times similarly disturbing – blend of fragility and omnipotent economic wealth as Milly Theale. "She's very nice," Bob Assingham tells his wife, "but she always seems to me, more than anything else, the young woman who has a million a year" (James, *Bowl* 58). This is supposed to confirm the assumption that Amerigo is interested first and foremost in Maggie's money. Even though Bob's assessment of Maggie is not quite as excluding as Susan Stringham's of Milly,<sup>56</sup> Maggie's most prominent feature is also her money "more than anything else," and it overshadows her being "very nice," which is about the vaguest possible way to describe a person in positive terms. A "very nice" girl for Bob Assingham, at any rate, is not easily compatible with "a million a year."

Due to this exclusively outside perspective of her character, Maggie also starts out as a girl whose friends and family view her as a rather frail, precious object that

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<sup>56</sup> Susan Stringham, Milly Theale's friend and travel companion in *The Wings of the Dove*, summarizes the significance of Milly's wealth as something that predetermines every step Milly takes and that is part of her every decision (James, *Wings* 86).

needs to be protected. “She wasn’t born to know evil,” Fanny Assingham tells her husband, and asserts that Maggie “must never know it” (59). The specific “evil” Fanny refers to is the fact that Maggie’s future husband, Prince Amerigo, and her close friend Charlotte Stant are in love with each other and have had a love affair that they pragmatically ended because neither had the financial means to marry. When Fanny feels responsible to protect Maggie from this knowledge, it is not because, as her husband speculates, Maggie would be “scandalised,” but because “[s]he’d be so frightened. She’d be, in her strange little way, so hurt” (58-59). Like Milly Theale, Maggie is deemed unfit for certain information and as a result is incapacitated by others who decide what to expose her to and what to hide from her.

Amerigo and Charlotte decide to keep their affair a secret in order to protect Maggie as they claim, not explicitly but verbosely circumscribed in their dialogue during their tour through Bloomsbury (James, *Bowl* 72-78). They are, of course, actually protecting Maggie’s money, or more precisely Adam’s money, which is to be Amerigo’s. The character that most enduringly incapacitates and objectifies Maggie is her father, however. In Adam’s view, Maggie is particularly precious among his collectibles, even more so than her mother. Adam notes a substantial accretion from mother to daughter: “Maggie herself, at this season, was, exquisitely, divinely, the maximum: ... such was the impression he daily received from her. She was her mother, oh yes – but her mother and *something more*” (109; emphasis added).

Another recurring theme in James, depicting women as pieces of art naturally relies on them being seen and observed, consumed and enjoyed from outside. In *Daisy Miller*, Winterbourne as the story’s only focalizer constantly emphasizes Daisy’s good looks, which constitutes the main reason for his continued fascination even after his social superiors have denounced Daisy as bad company. Isabel and Milly are both repeatedly compared to paintings and Isabel eventually understands how she has been added to Osmond’s collection like just another collector’s item. Both *Portrait* and *Wings*, like *Golden Bowl*, introduce their heroines through other characters’ perspectives. Ralph Touchett even explicitly expresses his wish to keep himself entertained by observing Isabel, and Milly seems very much aware of her status as a generally available object of observation when she speaks of herself as “the feature of the season” (James, *Wings* 229).

Confirming in so many ways the essence of femininity that Bourdieu describes as “a being as being perceived” (*Domination* 63), James’s heroines, in order to escape their gendered limitations, need to overcome first and foremost the heteronomous representation of their physical presence through male gazes. Daisy manages, against all odds, to debunk the image Winterbourne gives of her within the small margin of direct speech, but cannot avoid becoming but a footnote in his and his friends’ lives after her death. Isabel, as mentioned before, eventually defies observation by stepping outside the frame of her portrait, which is by leaving the story before the novel’s ending; and Milly, tragically, stylizes herself as an object of decoration before she dies.

The dichotomy of focalization that James constructs for *Golden Bowl* showcases the impact of narrative perspective for the narration of symbolic domination. The contrast between books one and two, made all the more stark by the sudden shift,<sup>57</sup> confronts the reader in chapter 25 with Maggie’s consciousness that discounts the familiarity expected after 24 chapters of reading *about* her. Not only does the novel’s second part illustrate how much Amerigo’s and also Adam’s perspectives failed to see of Maggie, it also, in its eloquent and lengthy renderings of Maggie’s consciousness, allows her to relieve the image given of her from the burden of masculine misrepresentation. Maggie’s mind crawls out from under the blankets of that outside vision and presents itself as an analytic and ambitiously determined one.<sup>58</sup>

Jonathan Freedman gives one of the most insightful readings of Maggie’s strategic “genius” (“What Maggie Knew” 102) when he applies game theory to trace the interplay of moves and countermoves that ensues in the second book where, in a single pivotal scene, “James is juxtaposing one set of ludic behaviours bounded by rules yet open to multiple strategising – bridge – with another, equally rule-ridden game, that of social propriety” (102-03). In order to ensure the intended outcome of her maneuvering – first to merely achieve confirmation of the suspected perfidy without exposing her weak position as the deceived party, and then to stir Amerigo and her father towards choosing the moves she wants them to make – Maggie must

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<sup>57</sup> For a detailed narratological analysis of the different modulations of focalization in *Portrait* and *Bowl*, e.g. the shift from multiple to single focalization in the latter, see André Marshall.

<sup>58</sup> Marshall points out how the enigmatic image of the pagoda that occupies Maggie’s mind right at the beginning of chapter 25 “is conjured up in the context of the protagonist’s own consciousness rather than by an authorial narrator commenting on her predicament” (23), as James’s narrators so freely do in many of the earlier texts.

largely act under the cover of secrecy and exploit all of her hidden deductive skills. From the first half of the novel the reader now knows that Maggie assesses correctly how others underestimate her competence: “They thought of everything but that I might think,” she tells Fanny (James, *Bowl* 541). The success of her strategy relies heavily on her thinking, which, as Freedman observes, is not “an Isabel-Archer like accession to an amplitude of consciousness,” but the ability to anticipate her competitors’ most likely deductions and their resulting actions (“What Maggie Knew” 102). When she first confronts Amerigo with the shards of the broken golden bowl, the narrator encapsulates Maggie’s talent in the most Jamesian of phrasings: “‘Yes, look, look,’ *she seemed to see him hear her say* even while her sounded words were other – ‘... at the ... remarkable appearance that I’m not such a fool as you supposed me’” (James, *Bowl* 436; emphasis added).

Howsoever one appraises Maggie’s methods and strategies to bring her family members to execute her plan – brilliant or cunning, beautiful or obscene – that plan’s success seems undisputed. But what about the conditions for the chance of such a plan to take shape? It is my suggestion that from its origin to its end, Maggie’s plan, its objective, and her strategies are but the product and confirmation of a system of oppressive structures of which Adam, and not Maggie, is at once the source and the foremost beneficiary. Maggie confines herself at first to the rules of social propriety, which requires for her to refrain from openly accusing either Charlotte or her husband. Within the seemingly paradoxical logic of honor and dignity, to play by these rules saves Maggie’s own dignity, and that of her father, more than that of the delinquents.

Since she has no proof, explicit accusations would mean to risk that the secret lovers simply deny all charges and thereby weaken Maggie’s position even further as, even if the manner and tone of their denial might inadvertently give them away, they would be warned and Maggie publicly embarrassed. An even greater risk for Maggie, and this is where Adam’s predominance plays itself out without him so much as being aware of what is going on, is to “find her suspicion publicly confirmed, in which case she might ... wound her father” (Freedman, *Professions* 106). Freedman puts his finger here not only on the intricate strategizing Maggie proves herself capable of, but in his phrasing also confirms that Maggie sees herself responsible and would consequently consider herself guilty should Adam be “wounded” in any way (a word choice that

strongly suggests the proverbial “wounded pride” of the cuckold). On top of the risk of her own shame – which, in Bourdieu’s words, is “the reverse side” of honor as, “in contrast to guilt, [it] is felt *before others* (*Domination* 52) – Maggie takes up the role of protector of her father’s honor. Should Adam’s honor be damaged as a consequence of her proceeding, Maggie would not only share his shame – felt before the public – but even shoulder the guilt – felt only before herself – for bringing about Adam’s humiliation.

Protecting her father at any cost is paramount for Maggie. She is eventually willing to even brake the social rules to which she has submitted herself and risks “to brake the charm,” as she herself puts it: “there was a card she could play, but there was only one, and to play it would be to end the game.” This, at first, is not an option to Maggie precisely because she fears to endanger Adam’s ignorance: “She felt herself ... her father’s playmate and partner.” Breaking the charm means to compromise Adam since that charm “kept her companion [her father, *not* her husband] so constantly engaged, so perpetually seated, and so contently occupied.” Adam’s seat at the head of the family table, his unchallenged and unchallengeable occupation as patriarch, must remain untouched and unsoiled by just the knowledge that would prove the unthinkable possible, that his power is vulnerable right at one of its sources, his virility. Maggie can at first “but stare long, with suffused eyes, at that impossibility” (*James, Bowl* 322-23). She does, however, eventually decide to play her one card when she shows Amerigo the shattered bowl. Her plan to “end the game” without “break[ing] the charm,” which is to say to make explicit her suspicion (which, at this point has solidified into actual knowledge) while keeping Adam clueless, is based on isolating Charlotte but including Amerigo and offering him a choice. In other words, Maggie’s success rests on the exclusion and punishment of the female cheater while it lets the male one get off exceedingly lightly, and above all conserves Adam’s hegemony without so much as the smudge of a doubt.

In the second half of *Golden Bowl*, Maggie partially frees herself from the cocooning and confining protection of the other characters, albeit only to seek protection in the familiarity of feminine martyrdom. She is determined to remain a loyal wife to Amerigo, despite his infidelity, by supporting and helping *him*, “seeing him through,” as she puts it, and all the while accepting as a matter of fact “that she

was seeing him on *his* terms, not all on hers” (James, *Bowl* 533). In the style of both a motivational speech and a military order, Maggie spurs herself on to be the good wife: “She must keep it up to the last, mustn’t absent herself for three minutes from her post: only on those lines, assuredly, would she show herself as with him and not against him” (533). Maggie feels obliged to “show herself” as suitable instead of exposing her husband; in her view there is no option to position herself beyond the dichotomy of “with him” and “against him.” Her strategy of exhibiting her own qualities acknowledges the relationality inherent in the process of position-taking while at the same time it not only blinds out how Amerigo has already made his move “against” her, but Maggie’s view furthermore denies the possibility for any move on her part that would lead to a third “post” outside the dualist options that emanate from and are geared towards Amerigo and, even more so, cater to Adam’s sacrosanctity.

The “post” Maggie pledges to keep turns out, a few lines later, to be just as contested and improvised as her military language suggests. Her moves in the social game and the resulting position can only be defined in relation to Amerigo’s; his “post” in contrast to hers is a foregone conclusion, the fact on which depends Maggie’s positioning. Even though just a figure of speech, it refers to a crucial gendered difference of the way in which James’s characters perceive, create, and take possession of their respective locations and places.

#### Spatialized History, Historicized Space

Men in James’s works have their fixed places; they belong somewhere and define the space they enter. Winterbourne demonstrated this vividly in the Colosseum where he sentences Daisy to social obliteration that will soon be followed by her physical death. Many of James’s male characters, including some of the feminized as well as deeply troubled ones, seem to be assigned a place that belongs to them just as they belong to it. Daniel Touchett belongs to Gardencourt in such a way that his presence is palpable long after his death. Caspar Goodwood is tied to his cotton mill as though he were spun from cotton himself.

Maggie gets to the heart of this matter when she sees Amerigo as “fixed in his place,” a place that seems to her to have “been made for him beforehand by innumerable facts, facts largely of the sort known as historical, made by ancestors, examples,

traditions, habits.” Her own place, by contrast, “had come to show simply as that improvised ‘post’” that does not offer the same sense of continuum (James, *Bowl* 533-34). Amerigo is not wealthy, he does not have a mansion or a thriving business. What he has instead to anchor him is lineage, a family tree, and a home country whose society is stereotypically connected with a very long imperialistic history. Maggie’s figurative way of describing her husband’s “place” points to the meaning of historic process in creating such a “fixed” position as opposed to an “improvised” one.

Even Merton Densher, after he has received Kate in his rented apartment in Venice for the one night together he wrested from her, succeeds for a moment to solidify his connection with his – by all means improvised – rooms by feebly ‘historicizing’ his conquest:

What had come to pass within his walls lingered there as an obsession importunate to all his senses; it lived again, as a cluster of pleasant memories ... It remained, in a word, a conscious watchful presence ... It had simply *worked*, his idea, the idea he had made her accept; and all erect before him, really covering the ground as far as he could see, was the fact of the gained success that this represented. (James, *Wings* 312)

The ambiguous “presence” seems to have stretched his room “as far as he could see” into a large space that contains the “historic truth” of his and Kate’s night together (James, *Wings* 312). Merton has taken possession of his previously detested hotel room in a new manner now that it has housed his “success,” the much-longed for confirmation of his virility. The memory of his sexual encounter is represented in the actual physical space of the frugal room, heretofore sign and symbol for his lack of social success. Hence, this memory is not so much one of sensual pleasures but rather one determined by the notion of conquest that now imbues the entire ground before him; not to mention the phallogentric phrasing that hints at renewed arousal triggered by just that idea of having coerced Kate into acceptance.

Like the “historic truth” Merton feels, connection with a place in James’s novels is materialized history. The time it takes to become entrenched is manifest either in material possessions, as in Daniel Touchett’s estate and Adam Verver’s art collection, or in a long lineage such as that of Prince Amerigo. Men’s ambition in James to conserve, sustain, or perpetuate lends a trajectory to their mobile as well as stationary phases that is contrary to that of the women discussed here. Hence the paradox cases

in which even those male characters that address themselves to domestic and traditionally feminine tasks achieve some consolidation.

The narrator of *Portrait* showcases how to merge one's own history with that of an adopted new home when, at the beginning of the novel, Daniel Touchett's biography is narrated as part of his estate's history, which of course leads right to him and his family living there. Combining character biography and a building's 'biography' is an example for the masculine privilege of writing oneself into the history of a place. From its origins and Elizabeth the First's overnight stop, to wounds, repairs, and disfigurements, the house is treated like a retroactively acquired ancestor whose history is factored into Daniel's family history. The passage conversationally, almost gossipy, imitates Daniel's own dictum as "he could have counted off most of the successive owners and occupants, several of whom were known to general fame; doing so, however, with an undemonstrative conviction that the latest phase of its destiny was not the least honourable" (James, *Portrait* 18). Through this narrative of Gardencourt's past, Daniel takes possession of it in a way that reveals his understanding of how to intertwine with a place instead of simply attaching oneself to it.

Origin as well as outcome of this interlocking resemble "the quasi-perfect coincidence between habitus and habitat" that Bourdieu describes as an "indisputable charm" of societies less differentiated than Victorian England (*Meditations* 147). Referring to the Hegelian idea of *bei sich sein* as an expression of "'being at home' ... in what is," Bourdieu points out that such a coincidence presupposes the application of "practical schemes" – such as those underlying a supposedly teleological narrative of personal success – that "are the product of the world to which they are applied, that is, in the ordinary experience of the familiar world (as opposed to foreign or exotic worlds)" (*Meditations* 147). Daniel's narrative account is proof of how he has become part of the history of a house he has purchased and thereby has made it part of his personal history.

And yet, merely having the economic means does not suffice. Milly Theale fails at her attempt of appropriating her palazzo's history. When she settles in Venice, her house is but a simulation of history that displays wealth to form a backdrop for her *mise-en-scène* of herself as just the princess others see in her. Palazzo Leporelli is Milly's self-generated stage, not a home that reflects her as part of its history. Her

habitat hence does not coincide with her habitus and remains a mere application, a decorative object filled with countless other trinkets. “Palazzo Leporelli held its history still in its great lap, even like a painted idol, a solemn puppet hung about with decorations. Hung about with pictures and relics, the rich revered and served” (James, *Wings* 259-60). The place appears lifeless in this description, a piece of decoration itself. Unlike in Daniel’s story of Gardencourt, there are no references to life having taken place in Palazzo Leporelli. By taking refuge in her new rented house, Milly becomes just one other “relic” within the Palazzo’s “great lap.”

When she sees herself as a “priestess of the worship” (260) in the next sentence, Milly opts for vagueness instead of the specific references Daniel draws upon. By taking “an unspecific position within an unspecific ritual,” she massively exaggerates her attempt at historicization by extending it to “a pre-Christian, pre-modern past that is, in a sense, pan-historical, encompassing all of history without providing a direct reference to it,” as Michael Meeuwis puts it (62). Without any concrete signified, her sense of history turns into a mere simulation that denies the historic factuality of the house.

*Golden Bowl* gives the link between physical space, history, and identity – a relation which to establish appears as a predominantly masculine privilege in James’s novels – a new twist. “There is scarcely a moment in *The Golden Bowl*,” Meeuwis notes, “that does not occur in a room [Adam] Verver owns or has paid for” (63). And even the scenes set on the streets of Bloomsbury are imbued by the presence of Adam’s money: Charlotte and Amerigo not only speak of Adam on their walk, they also need to keep their meeting a secret because Amerigo wishes to secure a part of Adam’s fortune for himself by marrying Maggie, which at the same time means that he is to be acquired as a new centerpiece of Adam’s collection. Moreover, their treasure hunt in Bloomsbury brings them to one antiquity shop after the other as a reminder of the overabundance of much more valuable objects in the Verver home. Nearly everything in this novel happens within Adam’s space or with him on everyone’s mind. He also takes up a lot of space on the page. The first book that, according to James’s preface, is supposed to focus on Amerigo’s consciousness, actually contains long passages – entire chapters, in fact – that are focalized through Adam. He is ever-present, it seems.

### The Primal Father

As “one of the great collectors of the world” (James, *Bowl* 75), Adam has made it his profession to dislocate historical objects and thereby wrenches them from their historical context. Compiling these objects within a new, fabricated context serves as a means of denying the past by creating his own private, quasi de-historicized form of abstracted history or, in Meeuwis’ words, “curated art-objects usurp historical chronology” (63). Like Gilbert Osmond, another of James’s ostentatiously disinterested collectors, Adam’s collecting habit over-amplifies the replacement of personal history by an accumulation of objectified cultural capital, which, for these characters, includes the purchase of spouses. Both the art-objects and the valuable spouses they acquire – valuable either because of their economic wealth, like Isabel or, in Amerigo’s case, because of nobility – need to be exhibited and kept in place inside walls that the curator-collector controls.

Adam constantly works to extend these walls, the space he controls. His houses in London are museums within domestic spaces where he exhibits all of his collectibles, including his daughter, the “precious vase” (James, *Bowl* 139), his wife who is “intently made for exhibition” (36), and the “representative precious object” that is his son-in-law (103). The plan to expand his influence across the Atlantic and “bless the land” of his upbringing with “the higher, the highest knowledge” of his art collection has already formed in Adam at the beginning of the novel (107). Adam’s self-imagination as a messianic figure whose “gift” will nurture the “grateful ... thirsty millions” and ensure their “release from the bondage of ugliness” (107) complements the imperialist note of comparing himself to “stout Cortez” just a few pages before (104). Adam’s museum, however, can only be realized when the line of succession in Europe is ensured by Maggie’s willing adoption of her father’s empire.

Stephen Arata illuminates the rapidly escalating number and cultural significance of fine-arts collections and subsequent museums during James’s career. Especially the new museums “testified ... to the immense surplus capital generated by a new industrial aristocracy” (201-02). Over this aristocracy the curator-collector reigns supreme. As “the one man ... likely to give the price” (James, *Bowl* 75), Adam’s verdict rules over the “thirsty millions” just as he does over his family by controlling

the one determining factor on which depend all questions of social, personal, and strategic value: the economic price and the capacity to pay it.

Adam's self-conceptualization as imperialist messiah reveals his love of art as an expression of his desire to dominate, his *libido dominandi* as Bourdieu calls it. This particular manifestation of an easily eroticized desire forms the generating principle of masculine habitus in Bourdieu's theory of domination (cf. Meuser 123-24). Maggie's devotion in this context must be read not so much as an incestuous impulse but rather as an expression of her *libido dominantis*, her desire, only subsequently eroticized, for the dominant father, which "implies renunciation of personal exercise of *libido dominandi*" (Bourdieu, *Domination* 80). When Maggie executes her plan by leaving her husband no choice but to stay with her and excluding Charlotte altogether from the decision-making process, she wields Adam's symbolic power, confirming that she herself can only exercise power vicariously and furthermore verifying the negative stereotype of renunciation as being "ascribe[d] to the female nature," as Bourdieu paraphrases Kant (*Domination* 79).

In the first passage in *Bowl* of which Adam is the focalizer, foregrounding his perspective for two consecutive chapters, he characterizes his relationship with his daughter in terms of perceptual alignment. Not only does he assume to know what Maggie sees, he also sees her see it, which means that the first impression the reader gets of Maggie – it is the first time her character appears in person – happens to be even more convoluted than those of given of Daisy, Isabel, and Milly. When Adam watches "the look in his daughter's eyes – the look with which he *saw* her take in" the situation at Fawns (James, *Bowl* 112-13), he returns to the theme of his earlier contemplation about his "freedom to see" (111). What Adam calls "freedom" here is in fact his privilege of being a "Patron of Art" and therefore of appropriating art by taking literal possession through purchase as well as by "taking in" through the privileged and educated gaze that constitutes his "faculty," as he calls it (110). "It came ... to stand to him for *all* freedom" which includes the freedom to "take in" his daughter and ascribing to her the sensual impressions he believes to divine (111).

Learning how to see in the sense of an act of perceiving reality and automatically creating it through cognitive evaluation (naming what one sees and thereby classifying it) is one the basic habitus-forming procedures and as such mainly exercised within

the family. By inculcating “a common principle of vision and division, a *nomos*” (Bourdieu, *Reason* 66), the classifications with which one assesses and reacts to the world, on which one bases one’s every action within this world and thus (re)produces it, a family habitus reproduces itself. The reader witnesses Adam doing the seeing *for* his daughter: “he saw, again, the difference lighted for her.” A few lines later, Adam completes his infiltration when he even claims, and qua his claim actualizes, that Maggie is now fully merged in his vision: “with the sense ... of what he saw her see, he had the sense of what she saw *him*” (James, *Bowl* 114). Since, as has been stated here before but deserves repeating, “acts of *cognition* are, inevitably, acts of *recognition*, submission” (Bourdieu, *Domination* 13), Maggie’s vision – no matter how foregrounded in the novel’s second half – is from the beginning defined by Adam. Tellingly, Maggie then passes on the gift of vision – of seeing the world the Verver way – to Amerigo whom she prompts to “look, look” (James, *Bowl* 436). She repeats the rhetorical “don’t you see?” (438) that, in the end, reappears in her last words of the book. “That’s our help, you see,” Maggie now rather states than asks and Amerigo, to confirm his submission one last time, responds: “‘See’? I see nothing but *you*” (567).

After having built his domestic museum in Europe, and with Maggie as his dignified successor, Adam ships his pseudo-historical wealth (including his wife) across the Atlantic to build a new museum for his uprooted and abstracted history. Abstracted, in this case means to substitute historicization for mythologization. “Within [Adam’s] rooms, mythological description reigns supreme, impacting everyone who enters them,” as Meeuwis observes (63). Adam has not only left his mark on almost every location in the diegetic world and virtually every page of the novel, he also includes everyone in his self-manufactured mythical non-history.

This impact “on everyone who enters” into Adams rooms is most prominent in the character of Maggie. The second half of the novel reveals how docile a disciple of her father’s she has been. As Leo Bersani famously puts it, “the fictions which Maggie ... imposes on everyone else in the novel ... create reality instead of hiding it” (147). Maggie has adopted from her father not only the tendency to mythologize reality but gains enough symbolic power to make her own reality – a mythical, abstract, and domesticated one – merely by naming it. Put another way, Maggie’s cultural capital,

inherited from Adam by proving to be a worthy heiress, “becomes symbolically efficient, like a veritable *magical power*” (Bourdieu, *Reason* 102).

The mythologization of space in *Daisy Miller* is Winterbourne’s prerogative. He symbolically – but no less effectively in terms of factual results – combines Daisy’s social exclusion with her physical death by turning the Colosseum where she contracts malaria into a mythical space qua his redefinition of it. Through this mythologization of the physical space, the fatal disease becomes an unavoidable and even self-inflicted punishment for social transgression, which has Daisy execute her own death-sentence. *Portrait* and *Wings* in turn present any successful personal entrenchment within a place’s history as an exclusively masculine practice,<sup>59</sup> while *Golden Bowl* provides a form of vicarious feminine agency in which Maggie is instated as her father’s deputy to uphold and continue his legacy of domestic mythology within the pre-built space of European houses that have all been paid for with Adam’s money. Where Milly Theale’s only chance to exert her power lies solely with her money and requires her to sacrifice her life, Maggie is given a symbolic power that actually serves her in the achievement of her objective (for Adam and Charlotte to leave Europe and for Amerigo to stay with her so that their domestic life remains intact). Her aspiration itself, however, is so saturated with her father’s values and expectations as to be virtually his own. Lucky as Maggie may consider herself to survive James’s last finished novel, her triumph is ultimately Adam’s – one of domesticity and denial. What good is a victory, James seems to ask his readers, when it grows on the soil, is watered by, and inevitably produces the fruit of that which it was meant to overcome? No good at all, one might feel compelled to answer, really no good at all.

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<sup>59</sup> It should be added that *Wings* also introduces the issue of classed spaces whose representation depends on class habitus as well as gendered perceptive schemes. Again, *Golden Bowl* continues the discourse of a classed as well as gendered perception in the first Bloomsbury scene. Charlotte observes Amerigo’s apparent blind spot when it comes to the lower classes: “Charlotte had more than once ... noted ... how, below a certain social plane, he never saw. One kind of shopman was just like another to him ... He took throughout, always, the meaner sort for granted ... Her own vision acted for every relation – this he had seen for himself: she remarked beggars, she remembered servants, she recognised cabmen; she had often distinguished beauty, when out with him, in dirty children” (James, *Wings* 79). As opposed to Milly, who merely lists “grimy children and costermonger’s carts” as the less decorative décor for her self-consolidation, Charlotte actually engages on a personal plane by establishing a relation, by remembering, recognizing, and finding beauty.

EPILOGUE: JAMES'S "CULTURE VULTURES"

An almost proverbial passivity characterizes many of James's male characters, particularly the ones with the largest oppressive influence on others (cf. Seltzer, Habegger). From Frederick Winterbourne's idle observation of Daisy Miller via Osmond's paradoxically effective indolence to Merton Densher's refusal to act through to Adam Verver's inertia due to his sheltered ignorance – dominant male characters in James's work rarely need to apply themselves in order to gain or maintain their dominant positions. Instead, their social success seems to accrue to them spontaneously and quasi-naturally. As opposed to physical activeness as a signature feature of traditional body-emphatic manliness, James's male characters – often practitioners of the male gaze that superficially appears as a passive receptacle – seem to act through passivity.

A dominant position in the text's narrative structure or the chance to bank on a female side-kick usually provide these characters with a distinct advantage. In his role as focalizer Winterbourne is in a position to create reality without lifting a finger while Osmond's passivity is rendered possible in part by Serena Merle. Like an assistant, she does the work for him while he profits from her plotting and her cunning preparations. After stalling Kate's plan and hesitating to pursue Milly Theale, Merton Densher's point of view is of high narrative value for the revelations only possible from his marginalized position. Densher's most momentous deed in *The Wings of the Dove* is a refusal to act when he rejects his inheritance and even abstains from opening the letter supposedly informing him of it. Adam Verver might believe that he does the seeing for his daughter (James, *Bowl* 114), but Maggie takes it upon herself to resolve the family crisis on the premise of protecting Adam from any harm. As the preceding chapters indicate, reading these narratives through the lens of a relational theory of symbolic power reveals that these attributes – a privileged narrative perspective, the aid of a female accomplice, or the devotion of a concerned daughter – are merely expressions of a shared and deeply gendered power source: cultural capital.

The previous chapters have already highlighted the significance of capital distribution for an analysis of gendered power structures in James's work. As noted, the underlying concept of different forms of capital follows Bourdieu's classification of

economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital with its respective additional and sub-categories such as sexual capital. This final overview aims to emphasize firstly the immense power-generating potential of cultural capital in James's fiction and, secondly, to reveal the substantial gender divide when it comes to the chances of transforming one species of capital into another, which is a precondition for any increase of autonomy, authority, and other manifestations of symbolic power. Jamesian women are, in a nutshell, gravely underprivileged in this regard. Put another way, these heroines' respective failures to ignore, defy, or escape their dominated positions originate from a distribution of capital that, apart from limiting women's chances to accumulate certain forms of capital, furthermore encumbers their capital resources with a gender-specific rigidity. Since processes of social position taking and the opportunity to control the factors determining that position depend mainly on the flexibility of one's capital – the possibility to exchange it into other species of capital when necessary – anything that makes somebody's capital more fixed and rigid places that person at a distinct social disadvantage. Put in economic terms, women are subject to a different 'exchange rate' than men when it comes to transforming one species of capital into another.

This gap in 'exchange rates' is nowhere as pertinent as in the potential of cultural capital within James's works. In accordance with the *zeitgeist* of late Victorian culture, James never fails to discern how much dominant notions of culture and sophistication imbue all social exchange and subordinate such exchange to economist logics (cf. Holland; Mull). In the second half of the nineteenth century, the newly autonomous field of cultural production hosts fierce battles over power and social authority whose outcomes have repercussions not just for position taking within the field itself but also in other fields, most importantly that of power (cf. Bourdieu, *Rules*). The relatively autonomous field of art and cultural production remains embedded in the field of power and "occupies a dominated position ... in this field .... It is thus the site of a double hierarchy" (Bourdieu, *Cultural Production* 38). As Bourdieu elucidates, the artistic field, "whatever its degree of independence, ... continues to be affected by the laws of the field which encompasses it, those of economic and political profit" (*Cultural Production* 39). The nineteenth century therefore witnesses "the progressive emergence of a relatively autonomous field of production providing itself with its own

market” (Bourdieu, *Rules* 288). Through its particular economization of culture, the artistic field gains a new relevance for the field of power, hence for masculine interests. Possession of and control over cultural capital thus turn into means of power beyond the mere display of economic wealth.

In *The Spoils of Poynton* the additional symbolic value that accrues to objectified cultural capital is hauntingly represented in the extensive collection of art objects at Poynton, which is entirely consumed by fire at the end of the novel. But it is in the improbable increment value of incorporated cultural capital – learned skills such as use of language, appreciation of the fine arts, painting, etc., and the bodily knowledge of how to act and react in certain situations, for instance table manners, comportment in public places, appropriate posture – that James reveals how essential this form of socio-cultural assets has become to masculine power and to what extent women are excluded from its dividends. For instance, Winterbourne taps into all his capital resources in his attempts to control Daisy Miller, but only by availing himself of his cultural supremacy – when he redefines the space of the Colosseum qua his symbolically effective speech acts – can he finally succeed. Merton Densher in *The Wings of the Dove* has little more in terms of capital than his journalistic abilities, which are represented in the novel as a somewhat uninhibited inquisitiveness and an aptitude for language. Even this little amount of skills benefits him as this form of incorporated cultural capital proves useful when he coerces Kate into sexual intercourse as a condition for him to follow through on her scheme to obtain Milly Theale’s money. And yet, neither Winterbourne nor Densher can hold a candle to James’s “culture vulture[s]” (Weisbuch 284), Gilbert Osmond and Adam Verver.

A comparative analysis of these two characters reveals the vast potential that cultural capital possesses in James’s fiction when it is coupled with money in a patriarchal context. Gilbert Osmond is a precursor to Adam’s flawless androcentrism in so far as Osmond’s pursuit of symbolic power is largely unconcealed; he is as aware of his ambitions as *Portrait*’s narrator. Even though every other character (except his daughter Pansy and, initially, Isabel) sees through his deceptive machinations, he still accomplishes a remarkable social advancement. As the following analysis will show, not Osmond’s actions by themselves are so extraordinarily abominable; what causes the sense of scandal among *Portrait*’s other characters and also its readers is that

Osmond never wastes any energy to making his pretenses credible while at the same time superficially following the social code that requires for interestedness to be denied.

### Gilbert Osmond: Economic Principles Hidden in Plain Sight

Of all the characters in *Portrait*, and probably even in James's entire oeuvre, none is as passionately despised as Gilbert Osmond. No other provokes such ubiquitous contempt among critics as this "incarnation of the devil" ("*un diavolo incarnato*," Maves 70) to whom Isabel Archer is bartered away by his former lover, Serena Merle. He has been labeled a "parasite" (Porte 15) and a "consummate villain[...], among the greatest in literature" (Miller 63). His "exorbitant egotism" (Ascari 39) as well as his "serpentine, heavy-lidded indolence, and parodic phallic aggressiveness" (O'Connor 28) have been pointed out. In a letter to James, Constance Fenimore Woolson describes Osmond as "finely detestable; and haunting; and suffocating [...] and without heart" (James, *Letters III* 532). Critics bashed him as "spectacularly pestiferous" (Freedman, *Professions* 145), "exceptionally awful" (Miller 63), "competitive, envious, small, and materialistic, self-proclaimed convention in its emptiest form and dishonest even in that" (Weisbuch 289). As the latter one sums it up: "There are few creepier beings in the history of literature" (284).

Entertaining as such an outpouring of undiluted loathing may be, it begs the question: What makes this particular character so excessively despicable as to have stirred up the blood of generations of usually even-tempered literary critics? It is true that he beguiles Isabel. He uses her as an instrument for his advancement, marries her only for her money and the symbolic profits that her wealth guarantees, and has no regard for her as a person whatsoever. It is precisely because of this audacity that Osmond causes an unprecedented outrage among *Portrait's* audiences. The utter lack of strategies that could bring him down reveals the flawed psycho-social structures – flawed, that is, if one means to criticize the perpetuation of an androcentric system – that protect his ascendancy and at the same time, or, rather, for just this reason, enrages readers. He is, however, neither the first nor the last deceitful, misogynistic liar in fiction. More outrageous than his personality is how almost inexplicably smoothly he can operate in plain sight, as it were, of those characters who are deeply suspicious of his

motives. Through the character of Gilbert Osmond James lifts the curtain that covers the ambition behind social power games even higher than in most other texts.

The narrator exposes Osmond's true intentions through strategically placed focalization. Only once, in chapter 29, does the narration adopt Osmond's perspective for more than a half-sentence or two. A notable transition combines it with the end of chapter 28 where Osmond is the focalizer for the first time. This first insight into his mind and his motivation leaves no doubt about the attitude with which he views Isabel:

We know that he was fond of originals, of rarities, of the superior and the exquisite; and now that he had seen Lord Warburton, whom he thought a very fine example of his race and order, he perceived a new attraction in the idea of taking to himself a young lady who had qualified herself to figure in his collection of choice objects by declining so noble a hand. (James, *Portrait* 258)

Before turning to Osmond's perspective, the narrator teams up with the reader against the character through the inclusive pronoun "we." As the narrator's ally, the reader then learns that Osmond not only considers Isabel a high-grade collector's item, he also factors each information about her into his calculation of her 'market value' – a value that increases when he learns that another collector/suitor has expressed his interest but has failed to 'purchase' the object at hand.

"[H]e could measure the unexpectedness of such conduct as Isabel's" (James, *Portrait* 258) and moreover, he can measure the symbolic-economic effects of it. In his calculating economic mindset, disguised as a dilettante's aestheticism, Osmond immediately understands how some of Warburton's value has rubbed off on Isabel when he proposed to her and how Isabel, by declining him, maintained the accretion that Osmond on his part wishes to transfer to himself. Warburton's marriage proposal constitutes a large amount of social capital for Isabel and she could have secured even more social capital for herself by accepting the proposal. By rejecting Warburton, though, Isabel keeps the social capital of being proposed to by an aristocrat, accumulates additional symbolic capital due to Warburton paying his tribute to her as well as the general recognition of the social value of such an offer while at the same time remaining on the matrimonial market, which makes her an object of interest for Osmond in the first place. "He had never forgiven his star for not appointing him to an English dukedom" (James, *Portrait* 258), but by marrying Isabel he might try and

partly compensate what he sees as an injustice of fate. He accurately, as though instinctively, understands the mechanisms through which symbolic capital can charge other sorts of capital with an additional value, which in turn leads, if one can financially afford to exhibit it, to higher assets of symbolic capital. Isabel's newly acquired financial as well as symbolic value could help, in Bourdieu's words, to "make capital go to capital" (*Logic* 120). This would allow Osmond to finally transform his meager stash of incorporated cultural capital into actual power, i.e. symbolic capital. He already thinks Isabel original, rare, superior, and exquisite; but only his recognition of the increase in symbolic value resulting from the marriage proposal reveals Osmond's aim: he seeks the symbolic but in no way imaginary profits that are granted by symbolic capital – recognition and the chance to power – and as the perfect economist he is, he wants to gain those benefits with the least effort possible.

His wish for effortless profits, which Osmond believes he deserves (James, *Portrait* 259-60), is put into words a few paragraphs later when the short passage of which he is the focalizer culminates in a statement that lays bare his intentions in round terms: "His 'style' was what the girl had discovered with a little help; and now, beside herself enjoying it, she should publish it to the world without his having any of the trouble. She should do the thing *for* him, and he would not have waited in vain" (260). The term "style" exhausts everything Osmond has to offer at first sight, a polished surface like that of his "chests and cabinets" (196) behind which he appears to be mysteriously empty. This void is precisely what draws Isabel in, as I will discuss below. In truth, Osmond's cultivated façade hides a "masked will to power," as Freedman points out (*Professions* 158), a will that would not settle for the flattery of being adored by another individual (Isabel "enjoying" his style) but strives for "the world" to take notice of his superiority "without his having any of the trouble." His cultural capital alone cannot guarantee such high profits as it "does not possess absolute value which is quantifiable. It only possesses value in exchange and the exchange is a social struggle as much as a struggle of cultural value judgment" (Robbins 23).

In order to be accepted as a competitor in this particular social and cultural struggle it is a precondition to deny one's interest in pecuniary goals or, more generally, in any aspirations that would be viewed as 'worldly' and 'materialistic.'

Bourdieu speaks of an only superficially paradoxical “interest in disinterestedness” (*Rules* 21) that guides those agents who strive for gains of power within the field of cultural production, such as artists, intellectuals, and dilettantes such as Osmond. Such interests need to be obscured, before others as well as before oneself, by the shared *illusio* that all players are striving for a ‘higher’ goal such as epistemological or aesthetic pleasure or ‘art for art’s sake’ (cf. Bourdieu, *Cultural Production* 74-76). By staging himself as an aesthete, and supported by a narrative that introduces him as a character who at first has nothing but his taste in art to define him, Osmond positions himself in a social context that makes it all but mandatory to keep up an appearance of this particular disinterestedness. The field of cultural production, to which Osmond’s meagre attempts at watercolor painting and even more so his ambitions as a collector belong, “appears as disinterested, as a haven for gratuitous activity that is ostentatiously opposed to the mundane worlds of commodity and power,” as John B. Thompson writes in his introduction to Bourdieu’s *Language and Symbolic Power* (16). This does not mean, however, “that it is interest-free: on the contrary, it means only that it is able more easily to conceal its interests beneath the veil of aesthetic purity” (Bourdieu, *Language* 16). Accordingly, Osmond abhors the idea of openly pursuing his goal with his intentions evident and visible:

The desire to have something or other to show for his ‘parts’ – to show somehow or other – had been the dream of his youth; but as the years went on the conditions attached to any marked proof of rarity had affected him more and more as gross and detestable; like the swallowing of mugs of beer to advertise what one could ‘stand’ (James, *Portrait* 260).

His comparison of the means necessary to achieve the recognition of his “rarity” with drinking beer signifies, on the one hand, how Osmond sees himself indisputably distinguished from those people who indulge in what was considered a working-class drink in most of Europe (cf. Dingle 608-09). On the other hand, the simile highlights a characteristic shared by both situations, namely the mode of a social competition for honor, which is imminent in a drinking contest as well as in Osmond’s pursuit of recognition. The important difference between the two is not so much based on the quality of the honor bestowed upon the winner – the highly masculinized title of ‘last man standing’ after a physical fight or, in this case, a drinking competition compared to the acquisition of a predominant social position through the general acceptance of

one's cultural eminence. There really is no essential conceptual difference between the two; we must not step into Osmond's trap here and be misguided by the blatant social distance between him and a pub-goer. Both enter into a social game seeking the appreciation of certain personal qualities or deeds by a social group and the resulting advantages within the group that are guaranteed by the group.

What distinguishes both scenarios is that a drinking contest does not and cannot pretend to be anything else but precisely that: A contest in which one participates with the purpose of succeeding. The struggle Osmond wants to enter, on the other hand, is organized in a different way. It is not simply due to his personal proclivities that he prefers to remain passive and let someone else "do the thing *for* him." Even the fact that he has a desire for society's acknowledgment at all is something he tries to hide, convinced that only "covertly aching for it" (James, *Portrait* 260; emphasis added) will earn him his success. In deeming it necessary to cover his true aim in order to realize it, Osmond shows once more his understanding of the economic organization of the social struggle for symbolic power. The brutal reality of the competition has to be denied in order for the symbolic exchange to function at all. Bourdieu calls this "the taboo of making things explicit" in an economy of symbolic goods (*Reason* 96). Although Osmond thinks of social advancement in terms of a competitive situation – "success" that he has "thoroughly ... earned" during his "career" (James, *Portrait* 259-60) – he simultaneously considers it below himself to partake in such a competition because it promises a reward which Osmond believes he quite naturally deserves.

Osmond desires not just any kind of proof of his superiority or, more precisely, of other people's recognition of this superiority. He needs a "marked proof," like "an anonymous drawing on a museum wall" that is "at last and all of a sudden identified" by a signature "from the hand of a great master" (260). When characters in *Portrait* are compared to works of art – and they quite frequently are – it is usually to the effect of either calling attention to their value as commodities in an economy of symbolic goods or of highlighting a supernatural, auratic vibrancy, sometimes both. In any case, the comparison objectifies the respective characters and thus dehumanizes them to a certain degree. In Osmond's image of himself as "an anonymous drawing," however, the reifying effect is somewhat suspended, at least strongly qualified, when he

anthropomorphizes that drawing and imagines it to be “conscious and watchful” so that it might be able to experience the “peculiar pleasure” (260) of identification.

The sentence in full reads: “If an anonymous drawing on a museum wall had been conscious and watchful it might have known this peculiar pleasure of being at last and all of a sudden identified – as from the hand of a great master – by the so high and so unnoticed fact of style.” Identity, in this image, is assigned through the generally recognized proof that marks the art object as a masterpiece, namely the artist’s signature. This consecrated person, the artist recognized as such, is qualified to consecrate his creations through the symbolic act of labeling it with the fetish that is his name.<sup>60</sup> As Bourdieu writes, “the professional ideology of the uncreated ‘creator’ which evolved throughout the nineteenth century [ignores] the economic and social conditions of the gradual constitution of an artistic field capable of grounding belief in the quasi-magical powers attributed to the artist” (*Rules* 291-92).

Osmond ascribes such mysterious powers to the imagined “master” in his allegory. The imagery is worth a closer look with regard to the distribution of cultural and symbolic capital. Osmond himself figures as the masterful work of art whose “style” – i.e. cultural capital – requires acknowledgment in order to be identified as a marker of value which turns the drawing into ‘true’ art. His cultural capital, in other words, needs to be recognized not by himself but by a legitimate party in order to create the value that makes it operational in the sense of becoming usable as currency in the social struggle for symbolic power. Isabel then provides this recognition when she “discover[s]” his “style” (James, *Portrait* 260). She has, however, only achieved the position of “great master” whose fetishized name quasi-magically turns unnoticed – and therefore worthless – features into capital because of her financial wealth. Without her money, Isabel’s recognition would be as useless to Osmond as that of any socially insignificant girl, no matter how charming or pretty she may be. Her money is what grants Isabel ‘mastery’ since none of her other qualities as a woman could provide it; money, therefore, is Osmond’s “great master.” The two words signaling Osmond’s sore point in the sentence quoted above are “anonymous” and “unnoticed.” Together with a remark of a few lines earlier that states how “he *might* indeed have

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<sup>60</sup> It seems safe to assume that Osmond’s notion of a “great master” refers to a male artist.

*suggested* to a spectator *here and there* that he was resting on *vague laurels*” (260; emphasis added), these buzzwords circumscribe a default in his life for which Osmond wishes to be compensated not by an actual person but by the institution that endows the master with the “power to create value” (Bourdieu, *Rules* 292).

Considering what the text conveys in this short passage, it might oversimplify the matter to conclude that Osmond’s is a “motiveless malignity” (Miller 63). Motives are certainly not what he is short of. As a rich heiress who also received the valuable gift of a proposal of marriage from an aristocrat, Isabel is now, without being aware of it, in the position to provide for Osmond the consecration he needs. James’s quite forthright imagery when it comes to rendering Osmond’s consciousness indicates, moreover, why not any rich girl would do for Osmond; the social visibility he longs for needs to be granted by more than plain money, but by money that brings with it the qualities of the “great master” who is invested with the “power to create value” (Bourdieu, *Rules* 292). Isabel proves a suitable candidate because she combines social and symbolic capital (from Warburton’s proposal) with an idealist disposition. Their marriage will invest Osmond with a legitimate claim to, in Bourdieu’s words, “social importance” (*Meditations* 241). Bourdieu writes at this point about “the delirious fiction of the imposter” who is justified through “acts of symbolic investiture” (242). His description of this process explains pointedly the consequences of Isabel and Osmond’s marriage: It installs Osmond in his new important position

by declaring publicly that he is indeed what he claims to be, that he is legitimated to be what he claims, that he is entitled to enter into the function, fiction or imposture which, being proclaimed before the eyes of all as deserving to be universally recognized, becomes ... *misrecognized*, denied as an imposture by all, not least the imposter himself. (Bourdieu, *Meditations* 242)

It makes no difference, in other words, that most of the other characters have the measure of Osmond’s intentions as long as he successfully hides those intentions from Isabel but never questions his own entitlement from which they arise, and thus secures for himself the additional profits her material wealth promises. In an exemplarily economic train of thoughts Osmond has appointed to Isabel the role of valuable matrimonial object and at the same time bursar of the symbolic resources that will legitimize his claim and turn his “vague laurels” into ‘real’ ones by having them accepted as such.

Precisely by keeping up a pretense that no one except Isabel believes, and by thus mocking the rules that supposedly govern and regulate social conduct, he proves that the alleged rules of the game are in fact nothing but a set of strategies justified retroactively by success. It is the same rationale as that used in contexts of war. Osmond's character hence uncovers the parallels between social games in which women are allowed to take part under strong restrictions, and the ultimate masculine game of power – war – from which women are mostly excluded. Even though everyone except Isabel suspects what he is up to or at least mistrusts his motives deeply, there is little to be done about it because Osmond operates within the logic of the system that he uses to his advantage. James dares to disclose the curious process of “recognition through misrecognition” on which so many of the previous readings have already focused when all other characters cannot but recognize Osmond's new social position after his marriage.

It is worth returning to the complicated matter of disinterestedness at this point in order to get to the bottom of the outrage that the character of Osmond causes. As an aesthete – one that “defined the lineament of the aesthete for the next 50 years,” according to Freedman (*Professions* 145) – Osmond submits to the dogma of disinterestedness. He therefore aligns with the artistic field and “conceal[s his] interests beneath the veil of aesthetic purity” (Bourdieu, *Language* 16). Thanks to the few brief glimpses into the character's mind, however, the reader knows for certain what other characters can only suspect: this “veil” is much more transparent for Osmond than for other aesthetes (such as Adam Verver, for instance). Osmond shares the *illusio* of pure aestheticism, but his character uncovers in his actions and his thoughts not only that there is an interest behind this disinterestedness, but also how the perceived disinterestedness functions and is used as a currency on the market of symbolic goods. The code of social conduct requires for this economic use to be veiled not just before others but also before oneself. Other characters (as well as presumably many readers) adhere to this code and therefore dearly try to conceal the interests behind their proclaimed aesthetic disinterestedness even from themselves. Osmond violates this regulation and his violation is the key to his outrageousness.

To understand how important this double-deception of denied denial is for an accepted form of domination, one only need look at the oft-mentioned parallels

between the characters of Gilbert Osmond and Ralph Touchett (cf. Person 86-87; Veeder, "Lack" 739-40).<sup>61</sup> Ralph denies the interestedness behind his allegedly disinterested act of bestowing half of his inheritance on Isabel; he denies not only before others but most importantly before himself that his generosity means tampering with another person's fate for his personal entertainment. This form of denial needs to remain a pre-conscious act of self-deception. Ralph 'means well' and is unaware of the domination he exerts. Denial is his excuse; a valid excuse that is accepted because it obeys the laws of symbolic exchange which establishes, in Bourdieu's words, "a relationship of practical knowledge and recognition that is profoundly obscure to itself" (*Meditations* 171). As has been pointed out in previous chapters, this is a "power which can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that *they themselves exercise it*" (Bourdieu, *Language* 164; emphasis added).

Osmond, by contrast, has no such excuse and does not want or need one either. His character reveals to the reader that there is denial in all social interactions that are guided by an interest in disinterestedness. By proving that he does not have to bother with denying his own denial – except of course for the most fundamental belief that he deserves the recognition he strives for – he intentionally uses deception with only minimal self-deception and thereby partly reveals what is supposed to remain unknown about the functioning of domination. Regardless of the respective social conditions, the need for obscurity of this collective self-deception persists. The character of Gilbert Osmond highlights an uncomfortable truth about social reality that is supposed to be denied by all at all times. Freedman's image of the "masked will to power" (*Professions* 158) proves helpful for this conundrum. Following Bourdieu's notion of capital-based position-takings within social fields, which always and independent of conscious intentionality involve power struggles, everyone who partakes in these power games wears a 'mask' that disguises their will to power as striving for whatever the respective field's *doxa* dictates ('art for art's sake' in case of the artist,

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<sup>61</sup> The textual links between Ralph and Osmond are in fact so strong that an unnamed critic in the *Spectator* suggests "The Portrait of Two Gentlemen" as a more fitting title for the novel. Isabel Archer, this review claims, "is the only lady of whom no portrait is given" whereas "the real power of the book consists in the wonderful pictures given of Ralph Touchett and Mr. Osmond, which have rarely been equaled in fiction" (Gard 93).

knowledge and intellectual insight for the scientist, economic progress detached from the realm of the personal, emotional, or ethical – ‘business is business’ – for economists or business people). The effect of disguise, however, affects not only onlookers, but the one wearing the mask as well, which is the effect of *doxa*. Because Osmond does not disguise his “will to power” from himself, the narrator can expose his motivations by way of direct insight into the character’s mind. And this, precisely, is where James lifts the curtain: Not the fact that Osmond wants power, and not even that he is willing to usurp his position through betrayal makes him stand out among Jamesian villains. Osmond’s ‘mask’ is made visible and thereby provides the opportunity of unmasking the *doxic* belief – the misrecognition of symbolic power’s concealed foundation – that is effective throughout the power structure in *Portrait* as well as in all systems of symbolic domination.

“The Portrait of a Lack”

Osmond is characterized, first and foremost, by deficits and his cultural capital is presented as the only compensation for a list of shortcomings that seem to constitute a mere void where one would expect a personality. To use William Veeder’s phrase from his essay “The Portrait of a Lack,” Osmond is “marked by ... lack” (738).<sup>62</sup> The few characterizations of Osmond that mention any attributes or qualities in a positive mode emphasize the markers of his non-material cultural capital. Nothing else constitutes and defines this character more than his taste. “Taste is the symbolic sum of the holdings of cultural capital,” in the words of Savage, Ward, and Devine (40). In the character of Osmond this sum of cultural capital constitutes his only characteristic that is not expressed through negation. With its repeated insistence on what Osmond is not and does not possess, the novel highlights once more how the gender-biased

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<sup>62</sup> Veeder notes how in *Portrait*’s very first scene, discussed in detail in my chapter on *Portrait*, “emasculate men inhabit the condition of the feminine” as the opening tea ceremony is attended only by male characters (739). My previous chapter has already delved into many layers of feminine absence and lack in *Portrait* as well as its feminization of male characters, and I disagree with Veeder’s claim that being “the negative of the absent does not give presence to men” (739). Those men are, after all, present in the opening scene, and they perform acts of definition that pre-determine the female characters of Isabel Archer and Lydia Touchett in their absence. Nevertheless, men in *Portrait* are repeatedly “marked by ... lack” as Veeder writes, and it is the gender-specific conditions that stipulate the chance to utilize to one’s advantage what is perceived as lacks that I wish to address here.

structures of capital distribution enable this character to acquire large amounts of capital and thus transform his social position on the basis of next to nothing.

When Osmond is first mentioned by Serena Merle in chapter 19, we have just witnessed on the preceding pages how Ralph Touchett convinces his father to leave half of Ralph's inheritance to Isabel. Serena, unaware of this arrangement, has not yet concocted her deceitful plan to marry Isabel off to the expatriate American whose daughter she, and not Osmond's deceased wife, secretly gave birth to. Her characterization of Osmond can be assumed a rather genuine one since there is no motivation so far to arouse romantic interest in Isabel. "He's exceedingly clever," she informs Isabel, "a man to be distinguished." What follows, though, seems to contradict any claim to being "distinguished:" "No career, no name, no position, no fortune, no past, no future, no anything" (James, *Portrait* 171-72). In her choice of words as well as by listing Osmond's features, unwittingly echoing Isabel's account of Lord Warburton, Serena presents Osmond as the perfect opposite of the nobleman whose marriage proposal Isabel has just refused a few weeks earlier, and whom she rates shortly before as a man who "appears to have everything, to know everything, to *be* everything" (James, *Portrait* 70).

By reprising the sequential form of Isabel's characterization of Warburton, Serena's description suggests a comparison of Osmond and Warburton. In her list of Osmond's shortcomings there is not a single lack that Warburton cannot counter-balance: he has a brilliant career, certainly has a name and a position, owns a fortune, and comes from an old noble family; his future looks bright enough – he has, to compensate the last point on the list and to come full circle to Isabel's appraisal, everything. Yet, the blatant opposition of 'nothing' and 'everything' also calls attention to the one thing Warburton does not have, and that is Isabel. This passage hence foreshadows not only how complete a difference there will be between the two men in that Osmond is in fact going to 'have' Isabel, it also underscores the extent to which Isabel is given the status of a commodity from the very beginning (cf. Gilmore 71-74).

And Serena's description of Osmond does in no way stop short at naming what he *is* not and *has* not; it continues with what he *does* not do. She calls him "so indolent that it amounts to a sort of position" and states that he does "nothing; [he is] too deadly lazy" (James, *Portrait* 172), which makes him the antipode of Isabel's other wooer,

Caspar Goodwood. “[H]e’s not a man to do nothing,” Henrietta Stackpole says of Caspar, “[h]e is a man of high bold action. Whatever happens to him he’ll always do something” (92). In contrast to that, Osmond, according to Merle, does nothing, is nothing, and has nothing. Other characters, too, choose a mode of negation to characterize Osmond. When asked by Caspar “[w]ho and what” Gilbert Osmond is, Isabel replies that he is “[n]obody and nothing” (278). “He’s not rich; he’s not known for anything in particular. . . . He comes from nowhere. . . . He has no profession” (278-79). To Caspar’s question what Osmond “has ever done,” she tells him: “Nothing at all . . . Give me up, Mr. Goodwood; I’m marrying a perfect nonentity” (279). To Ralph she describes Osmond in the form of a list that resembles Serena’s, specifying that Osmond has “no property, no title, no honours, no houses, nor lands, nor position, nor reputation, nor brilliant belongings of any sort” (293). Lydia Touchett points out as well that Osmond “has no money; he has no name; he has no importance” (283). All these lists of lacks and voids seem to create a vacuum as though Gilbert Osmond were only perceivable in the negative.

The hollow created by all these characterizations is filled with markers of Osmond’s “style” and taste, in other words, his cultural capital. “He is all pose, all form without substance,” as Richard Ellman puts it (214). Ralph attempts to warn Isabel against the danger lurking behind her fiancé’s cultured appearance in a similar vein: “‘He’s the incarnation of taste,’ Ralph went on . . . ‘He judges and measures, approves and condemns, altogether by that’” (James, *Portrait* 291-92). Ralph utters no general objection to judging and measuring by one’s taste, it is the exclusiveness with which Osmond does so that appalls and worries him for Isabel’s sake. But Isabel cannot yet fathom in how far Osmond’s taste differs from her own or even Ralph’s. She believes good taste to be the mark of a good person: “It’s a happy thing then that his taste should be exquisite” (292), she replies to Ralph’s warning, unable to see that his taste is nothing but the cloak that costumes Osmond’s perfectly worldly and materialistic aims.

Apart from his taste Osmond is, as noted, characterized as a negative. Isabel is attracted to exactly this void that holds nothing but nonmaterial cultural capital. “It’s the total absence of all these things [property, title, houses, lands, position, reputation] that pleases me,” she informs Ralph (293). The first and most crucial step of Osmond’s

incredibly profitable transaction, which allows for his cultural capital to be acknowledged as valuable and legitimate, is hence to make use of a habitus responsive to precisely his capital portfolio. In other words, Isabel's readiness to give symbolic value to Osmond's taste and at the same time to his lack of worldly possessions provides the rare opportunity for him to obtain both Isabel's acknowledgment and her money at once. The result, famously, is a marriage of the greatest convenience for Osmond, who has gained a wife with considerable value as a matrimonial object, control over her economic capital, with it opportunities to accumulate and exhibit objectified cultural capital in the form of collectibles much easier than ever before, the chance to secure a lucrative marriage for his daughter, and an immense increase in symbolic capital wrested from those he deems beneath himself thrown into the bargain. And for all this he has nothing else to offer in exchange but his taste.

The foundation of Osmond's aestheticism is a greed for wealth and power. James lets this culminate in a scene charged with scathing irony towards the end of the novel. Isabel has just received a telegram from her aunt letting her know that Ralph is dying at Gardencourt. When she goes to see her husband about it she finds him in his study, occupied with copying the picture of "an antique coin." He barely takes notice of the news about Ralph, even jokes about it with unmasked cynicism while he is "looking at his drawing through a magnifying glass." Without even turning to face his wife, "he continued to give his chief attention to his work, which was of a sort that would not brook for negligence" (James, *Portrait* 444). This is the last scene in which Osmond appears and it plainly shows what his love of art consists of. He does not create but only copies, and at the center of his attention is the representation of money in a context of historicized culture. He worships it not only by copying it, but by magnifying it so that it becomes larger than life and expands until it fills his entire field of vision. Nothing could be meaningful enough to distract him from his adoration, least of all Isabel's sorrows or Ralph's near death. His aestheticism is unmistakably exposed as misanthropic lucre.

In the light of this reading, James's "most magnificent villain" (Porte 25) appears as a character ideally suited to expose not only the economic interests guiding the ostensibly disinterested aestheticism of his time and the oppressive effects it can produce, but also the gender restrictions imposed upon any chance to invest one's

cultural capital in order to gain or secure a social position. Matrimonial law, which virtually makes him the rightful owner of his wife's money, facilitates Osmond's social advancement, but it is the transubstantiation of a "Nobody" who seems to be "nothing" (James, *Portrait* 278) into a man with the power to openly torment others with relish and without hindrance that foregrounds the prevalence of the masculine habitus in all games of power. Serena Merle, who is arguably more cultivated than Osmond and whose cultural capital receives a lot more acknowledgment, thus determining its value, moreover disposes of a large amount of social capital that exceeds Osmond's by far. Nonetheless, Serena can only provide the conditions for someone else's rise to power and is doomed not only to partake vicariously but also to suffer the consequences when she leaves Europe after Isabel has found out about her true relation to Osmond and Pansy.

And yet, precisely because Osmond qualifies as a "villain," someone who acts with vicious intention and strives to a certain degree openly for a position not legitimately provided for him, does he lack the potential to fully exploit the masculine privilege in this struggle over position taking. As a parvenu, Osmond's habitus proves incompatible to a certain degree with that of the upper classes he wishes to join. He can only find his way in by scheming and deceit, and he will therefore never be the natural member of high society that he wants to be. At the same time, the social reality that presents itself to Osmond's perception as adverse and unsympathetic towards his aspirations supports his conclusion that he can enforce his legitimate claim only through illegitimate means. His habitus of a parvenu is what ultimately determines his status as a villain. It takes a more seasoned and much more privileged player to bring the value of cultural capital for the ascendancy of masculine domination to its extreme; someone who does not even need to recognize this struggle for what it is because he enters the field at such a high point within the hierarchy that the odds are not just in his favor but that he can determine the odds himself. Adam, the original man becomes James's original patriarch. The significance of his cultural capital for this position deserves to be made explicit in these concluding remarks.

Adam Verver, Executive Patriarch

With the character of Adam Verver, James creates the epitome of masculine domination that rests on cultural capital. Adam's symbolic violence functions so flawlessly that the dominated – basically all other characters but first and foremost his daughter Maggie – do not harbor so much as a suspicion against his influence. While there may not be a conscious intention to dominate behind his actions and perceptions at all times, Adam Verver does display a strong sense of entitlement (which also goes unquestioned). With the concept of habitus, which “aims at eliminating” socio-cultural constructs such as the oppositions of “conscious/unconscious, rational and strategic calculation/mechanical submission to mechanical constraints” (Bourdieu, *Words* 107), one can move beyond the attempt to determine how much Adam ‘knows’ of his core belief in his superiority and how far he ‘plans’ the strategies to uphold it. As the most powerful player on the fictional social field of *The Golden Bowl*, Adam's habitus, all his dispositions and categories of perception, make manifest the affirmation, confirmation, and reproduction of that social structure on top of which he reigns as undisputed patriarch. His practical knowledge is therefore manifest in each of his actions, judgments, and cognitive processes without ever having to ‘cross his mind’ in the form of a conscious thought.

Such preconscious convictions at once demonstrate his kinship with and difference from Osmond. Adam does not need to be aware of this belief in his superiority because it remains uncontested. Since he belongs not only to the dominant group but, within the fictional world of the novel, holds the topmost position, Adam enjoys all the “privileges of the dominant,” one of which, as Bourdieu notes, “resides in the fact that they need not engage in rational computation in order to reach the goals that best suit their interests” (*Words* 108). In contrast to Osmond, who painfully longs for it, Adam already occupies the superior position that he believes to deserve. Hence, he can dispense with plotting or scheming – strategies the parvenu has to resort to – and only needs his loyal subordinates, who depend on his position, to look after and secure that position.

Osmond, who believes to occupy the “wrong” social rank and to deserve a better one, experiences reality as hostile towards his ambitions whereas Adam's social reality presents itself as self-evidently in accord with his expectations. Adam already is what

he claims to be, “one of the great collectors of the world” (James, *Bowl* 75). Both characters’ different starting points and their contrasting strategies of position taking can easily be reduced to a significant difference in economic capital: Adam has plenty of money from the beginning, Osmond does not. However, money alone is not the key to their respective social status. As Bourdieu emphasizes, “different types of capital can be derived from economic capital, but only at the cost of a more or less great effort of transformation” (“Forms” n.pg.). While economic capital usually underlies the acquisition of other species of capital and therefore often determines part of their effectiveness, the effort of transformation nevertheless needs to be made, and the conditions for a successful conversion must be beneficial. Osmond has little influence on those conditions and fails to obtain as much symbolic capital as he aims for. When Isabel’s money has made Osmond rich, he is still nowhere near being as highly regarded as Adam; money obtained by fraud does not bring Osmond the kind of symbolic capital that Adam has.

What is the difference, then, between those two men and their symbolic power? Both their social success rests mainly on the accumulation, exhibition, and strategic deployment of cultural capital. Yet, their respective cultural capital differs in three aspects, all of which can be traced back but cannot necessarily be reduced to the obvious gap in sheer quantity. Adam’s wealth is much greater not only in terms of economic capital, but with regard to the other species of capital as well. He has more social capital and has converted much of his money into objectified cultural capital in the form of an art collection, which in turn facilitates the accumulation of symbolic capital. Osmond the dilettante owns a small private collection whose quality and taste is questioned by other connoisseurs in the novel, and his social circle is meagre to say the least. He extends both his art collection and his social endeavors after his marriage, but he can never, as mentioned above, escape his status as a parvenu. Adam, on the other hand, is a professional collector and a wealthy widower, which brings with it professional social obligations as well as female suitors presenting themselves as high-grade matrimonial objects. Adam notices, for example, the rivalry between the Miss Lutches and Mrs. Rance (James, *Bowl* 96), and even though the narrator ridicules the possibility of an actual proposal, Adam nonetheless is terrified by the idea of Mrs.

Rance “seeking him in marriage” even though “she had a husband in undiminished existence” (98).

The first categorical difference that distinguishes Adam’s from Osmond’s cultural capital makes manifest the most obvious link that James’s novels draw between this species of capital and masculine power. It is expressed in the fact that Adam can afford to marry a woman who is without any financial means, which renders Charlotte much more suited than Isabel for a role as trophy wife, a collector’s item to be exhibited the way Adam exhibits his wealth through his art collection. Osmond wants Isabel to fulfill both functions, that of representative of his superiority and at the same time his money source. However, since she sponsors his social ascent financially, she does not yield nearly as much masculinized symbolic capital as Charlotte who is a purely decorative object. Adam’s money puts him in a position to harness the full symbolic profit of a young, attractive wife whose financial dependence on him highlights his role as provider. It is worth noting, though, that his economic wealth is the basis as well as a result of a symbolic power that stems from his professionally deployed cultural capital. By investing in an art collection and thus transforming money into cultural capital, which in turn yields symbolic capital, Adam has transcended plain financial affluence and has taken up his powerful position within the thriving field of cultural production. This two-pronged power makes him far more attractive than Osmond to those who can exercise power mainly vicariously. In other words, his professionalized cultural capital, which he is able to accumulate thanks to his money, grants Adam more masculine capital.

The professional side of Adam’s social standing also constitutes the second important difference between Osmond’s and Adam’s cultural capital. Adam has not only a lot more money to buy cultural objects with, he has also accumulated enough objectified cultural capital to move beyond the private sphere of the dilettante and become a public figure. This in itself expresses a special kind of symbolic capital, one that accrues from the recognition even of strangers, people one has never met in person. “Great people, all over Europe, sought introductions to him; high personages, incredibly high, and more of them than would ever be known, solemnly sworn ... to discretion, ... made up to him.” Adam has reached a stage of fame where privacy becomes a marker of privilege. He does not need to visit anything so vulgar as an

antiquity shop anymore but is “mostly, as a purchaser, approached privately and from afar” (James, *Bowl* 75).

A global or at least transatlantic reputation, and one that rests on cultural capital no less, is more than even Osmond dares to hope for. While Osmond gains an admittedly large influence over his wife and the circle of American expatriates who continue to doubt him personally as well as his taste, Adam’s normative power extends across the entire transatlantic art world. Adam’s cultural possessions and the profession he has made of owning and exhibiting them have become the essence of his public identity: Adam Verver, the great art collector and museum benefactor. His taste is never so much as doubted since he is among those who determine the value of art in the first place. Consequently, his public image, this particularly powerful symbolic capital, also makes trading in art objects much easier for Adam. If being part of his collection is in itself a marker of value, he can quickly reconvert cultural into economic capital by selling a thus valorized object at a price that reflects the value he has helped to create in the first place as “the one man ... likely to give the price” (James, *Bowl* 75). The potential for this easy conversion into economic capital strengthens his position far more than if Adam were actually forced to sell any of his art works. Precisely that he can afford not to make use of this privilege confirms his success and his authority. Osmond, for instance, reacts offended when Ned Rosier asks him if he is thinking of “parting with ... a piece or two” (James, *Portrait* 309).

Thirdly, both characters’ relation to their cultural capital determines how they act as fathers. Pansy Osmond and Maggie Verver are supposed to express and exhibit their respective father’s cultural capital, but in quite different ways. Pansy fulfills her father’s ideal of a submissive girl devoid of agency. Her main function is to idolize Osmond as her direct speech mostly expresses her apotheosis of her father. Even as a teenager, “Mr Osmond’s diminutive daughter” still dresses and acts like an obedient child (James, *Portrait* 218-19), traits that Osmond encourages strongly. He takes measures to ensure Pansy’s education in a convent school and therefore her accumulation of a very restrictive form of cultural capital. By creating a “convent-flower” (220), he takes his daughter’s objectification to an extreme in that her purpose within the Osmond family amounts to nothing more than reflecting her father’s greatness and

becoming a matrimonial object. Again, Osmond's motives are overly transparent and therefore invite criticism (cf. Sanner 156-57).

Adam by contrast passes on his cultural capital to his daughter in order to form a disciple who will eventually become custodian of his empire. As the preceding reading of *The Golden Bowl* has shown, Maggie acts out of her own will, yet her will reveals itself as founded in and conditioned by Adam. The novel reflects her agency by foregrounding her consciousness in its second half and “[t]he question of Maggie’s agency is central to an understanding of the novel,” as Hugh Stevens points out (54). To shed the naturalizing opposition of free will and outside force and to look instead at the relational process in which that agency develops allows one to stop searching for evident applications of force and instead trace it within its outcomes. Alfred Habegger, in his reading of a pivotal scene in *Portrait*, notes that “even though there is not the slightest hint of applied force, the father appears to be in total control” (151). The father in this case is Osmond, of course, and his control over Pansy is indeed quite apparent, justifying Habegger’s speculation about the “cruel operation [that] has been performed on [Pansy]” (151). Adam also brings forth an unsettling compliancy and devotion in Maggie, even though it is much less obvious than in Pansy. The most evident consequences of Adam’s domination are made visible in the way Maggie harnesses her agency. One of these consequences is Maggie’s adoption of her father’s dominant values and a *doxic* belief in the rightfulness of his cultural-capital based dominance. Adam fosters a certain dominating habitus in Maggie, but only to the extent that she wields his power and does so to serve him (by way of protecting him from a reality that is potentially harmful to his authority as patriarch). Unlike Pansy Osmond, who is merely her father’s object, Adam relates to Maggie as a subject, however one that is supposed to act as his proxy.

The beginning of *The Golden Bowl* informs the reader right away about another lead Adam has over Osmond. One of Osmond’s main goals is to marry his daughter to a nobleman, something Adam has already achieved by the beginning of the novel. Conveniently, Adam does not worry about his son-in-law’s financial situation. Amerigo’s lack of money does not matter to Adam the way it matters to Osmond that Pansy’s suitors be well off. Osmond wishes for Pansy to marry someone with plenty of economic as well as cultural capital, ideally the kind of cultural capital he does not

possess. Ned Rosier does therefore not make the grade as his taste and his exquisite yet small collection is not matched by financial wealth or symbolic capital in the form of a reputation. Lord Warburton is the only character who lives up to Osmond's expectations as he combines money with institutionalized cultural capital in the form of an aristocratic title. Amerigo, however, is considered acceptable husband material by Adam as a title of nobility constitutes the only species of cultural capital he cannot acquire with money directly.

The relationship between Adam and Amerigo demonstrates Adam's symbolic domination and the quasi-automatic, pre-conscious or semi-conscious reactions it solicits in the dominated. Like Osmond, Adam regards the aristocrat as a precious addition to his collection:

Representative precious objects, great ancient pictures and other works of art ... had for a number of years so multiplied themselves round him and ... so engaged all the faculties of his mind, that the instinct, the particularly sharpened appetite of the collector, had fairly served as a basis for his acceptance of the Prince's suit. (James, *Bowl* 103)

Even after the marriage, Adam constantly monitors Amerigo's value. During a dinner scene of which Amerigo is the focalizer, he intuits that the gaze with which Adam regards him across the table "was ... much of the same order as any glance directed ... at the figure of a cheque received in the course of business and about to be enclosed to a banker" (238). Adam evaluates his son-in-law without having to either admit or deny it; he does so candidly and self-evidently, which Amerigo in turn accepts as a matter of course: "and just so, from time to time, the amount of the Prince was made sure" (238).

Amerigo is also very clear about the source of his thus ensured value and never questions Adam's authority when it comes to determining his "amount" since submitting himself to Adam's appraisal also means to secure a convenient position for himself. Amerigo understands how "he already reposed in the bank as a value, but subject, in this comfortable way, to repeated, to infinite endorsement" (238). As so often in James's prose, the economist meaning of certain phrases helps to reveal how language accounts for and mirrors the "homology between the economic field (or the political field) and the fields of cultural production" (Bourdieu, *Words* 111). "Endorsement" in this sentence does not only describe the constant, but in no way

guaranteed, increase of Amerigo's value as an asset of the Verver family, it also denotes what Amerigo, as the devoted subject of that family, craves from Adam. Without Adam's endorsement he would be nothing but a pitiful impoverished aristocrat whose cultural capital, chiefly present in his title of nobility, has forfeited its value. Adam's money and his "endorsement" revive Amerigo's value and make it symbolically effective, which provides Amerigo with the comforts of a life in the vicinity of and in favor with power.

The direct effects this knowledge – a non-explicit, non-reflexive form of what Bourdieu calls "*practical knowledge*" (*Words* 112) – has on Amerigo's perception and his behavior showcase once again the functioning of symbolic domination: "The net result of all of which, moreover, was that the young man had no wish to see his value diminish." It is, to all appearances, in Amerigo's best interest to remain valuable to the Ververs, which primarily means to Adam who alone determines everyone else's value, a fact of which Amerigo is also aware: "He himself, after all, had not fixed it [his value] – the 'figure' was a conception all of Mr Verver's own" (James, *Bowl* 238). The Prince knows at whose mercy he really is and this awareness suffices to produce the behavior that both Maggie and Adam favor.

#### "The Sweet Simplicity of Mr Verver"

What appears and is represented as lack and deficiency in the character of Osmond turns into an asset in the case of Adam. Both *Portrait* and *Golden Bowl* emphasize the absence of certain attributes to characterize these two characters, but while this presents Osmond as insubstantial and hollow, Adam's missing attributes rebound to his advantage. At the same time that Amerigo foregrounds Adam's large influence on his own and other characters' social position, their perception and actions, Adam himself appears to be curiously detached from his power. All of the main characters, including Amerigo only a few pages and a short span of diegetic time before the scene discussed above, express their impression of Adam as a harmless, somewhat simple man who seems to be surrounded by a constant air of innocence. When Charlotte discusses their relationship and the need to keep it secret with Amerigo, she expresses a tenderness for Maggie but even more so for Adam who, in her words, is "of a sweet simplicity ---!" (James, *Bowl* 228). Adam is like a "child" and a "lamb" to Maggie,

who goes to great lengths in order to protect his innocence (which in truth is mere ignorance) by keeping Charlotte and Amerigo's affair from him (359). Fanny Assingham, when listing the people she will have to lie to in order to shield Maggie as well as Adam from knowing the details of their spouses' shared past, attributes an additional description only to Adam; her "Mr Verver, dear sweet man" (389) echoes the benevolence and sympathy with which most characters seem to regard Adam.

This peculiar innocence assigned to Adam, coupled with his telltale name, makes him James's purest representative of the *American Adam*, a type most extensively examined by R.W.B. Lewis. In *Golden Bowl*, as Lewis writes, "the Adamic metaphor becomes explicit and central" (*Adam* 153). This pivotal American mythology, as Lewis shows, builds first and foremost on the myths of innocence so integral to a developing U.S. culture and American nation-building. James, however, "detected paradoxes and tensions" in this inherited mythology, which find their utmost expression in his last finished novel. "*The Golden Bowl* is a startling inversion of the Adamic tradition," says Lewis; "it is the world, this time, which is struck down by aggressive innocence. For James saw very deeply ... that innocence could be cruel as well as vulnerable" (*Adam* 154). Through the lens of Bourdieu's theory, this "aggressive innocence" loses some of its paradoxical qualities and can instead be revealed as an affirmative strategy that aims to strengthen the social and symbolic hierarchies.

Amerigo sees Adam's "meagre and modest" aspect expressed in the invariable appearance of his father-in-law (James, *Bowl* 237). To him, Adam seems to be "the man in the world least equipped with different appearances for different hours. He was simple, he was a revelation of simplicity, and that was the end of him so far as he consisted of an appearance at all" (237). Different from Osmond, who is nothing but appearance, Adam barely has what counts as a physical appearance to begin with. Amerigo does, however, not conclude here that Adam does not need "different appearances for different hours" because he stands above any dress code. The fact that Adam can attend any social occasion dressed in the same unobtrusive way, comporting himself with inconspicuous nonchalance without being looked down upon is indeed one of the clearest signs of his normative and symbolic power. It is Adam who determines what is appropriate attire and conduct for any given hour, and it is everyone else's duty to dress up for him.

While Adam appears not to have an appearance, he also seems level at all times, as if naturally in control and in charge. Amerigo, who discerns more than other characters the durable effect over time of this appearance that denies itself, also points out most plainly the link between Adam's cultural capital, his money, and the symbolic power that results from the undeniable recognition of both. Amerigo observes how "everything else the master of the house consisted of, resources, possessions, facilities and amiabilities amplified by the social legend, depended, for conveying the effect of quantity, on no personal 'equation', no mere measurable medium" (James, *Bowl* 237). Not Adam's measurable wealth is what determines his powerful position. Adam's "resources, possessions, facilities and amiabilities" – his economic, cultural, and social capital in short – merely serve to "convey ... the *effect* of quantity" (237; emphasis added) and to do so they depend on something unquantifiable that transcends the personal and allows for a universal evaluation. The desired social effect of Adam's total assets, in other words, depends on symbolic capital.

Adam sits, as Amerigo remarks, "at the top of his table" not only as head of his family but always at the same time as one of the world's great patrons of the arts (James, *Bowl* 237). His symbolic capital, that which Amerigo concisely identifies as a "medium" that is not "measurable" as such, derives much of its value from the "social legend" augmenting Adam's power, a legend which in turn rests largely on his cultural patronage. Instead of appearing "sterile" like Osmond (James, *Portrait* 292), Adam's disinterestedness, his demeanor of a connoisseur and cultivated man, achieves the effect of making him appear modest, unassuming, and therefore a legitimate authority precisely because he can do without demonstrating this authority. With this circular logic, Adam has achieved exactly what Osmond so desperately wants: to be seen as the great benefactor that he believes himself to be and that he becomes through being seen as such, a confirmation of his identity that is constantly renewed by other people's perception. The symbolic capital of Adam's superiority rests on and springs from cultural capital that seems to inadvertently receive acknowledgment.

To make both the parallel and the disparity between the two characters even more obvious, the narrator provides a list of negatives with which Amerigo perceives Adam: "his shoulders were not broad, his chest was not high, his complexion was not fresh, and the crown of his head was not covered" (James, *Bowl* 327). In stark opposi-

tion to Osmond, this negative description of Adam does not create a vacuum; the list rather highlights what Adam has instead of all the attributes of youthful bodily virility. Together with his “possessions, facilities and amiabilities,” Adam’s unobtrusive manner confirms and strengthens the “social legend” that makes the person Adam Verver seem entirely uninvolved in maintaining his dominant position. Despite the physical shortcomings Amerigo observes, “he looked ... so nearly like a little boy shyly entertaining the virtue of some imposed rank, that he *could* only be one of the powers, the representative of a force – quite as an infant king is the representative of a dynasty” (237). Not only does Adam appear harmless and even helpless in this simile, Amerigo’s view of Adam’s position also alludes to a monarch chosen and legitimized by God’s grace.

By absolving Adam as it were of any responsibility for his own power while at the same time implying that it is granted by the ultimate divine instance, Amerigo once more confirms the legend that haunts the entire novel, the legend of a rightful patriarch whose enthronement is legitimized by an impersonal “force” the existence and authority of which is in turn proven by the patriarch’s apparent non-authoritarian behavior. Adam thus unwittingly furnishes the proof of his legitimacy by appearing to deny or ignore the power he holds. To explain this form of false modesty, which he unmasks as a “strategy of condescension,” Bourdieu recounts the impression a mayor in a French village achieved when he addressed his audience in the local dialect (*Language* 68). In order to be “greatly moved by this thoughtful gesture,” as the media presented it, the audience

must tacitly recognize the unwritten law which prescribes French as the only acceptable language for formal speeches in formal situations. The strategy of condescension consists in deriving *profit* from the objective relation of power between the languages that confront one another in practice ... in the very act of symbolically negating that relation, namely, the hierarchy of the languages and of those who speak them. (68)

Like the local dialect in this example, Adam’s unassuming appearance, his non-formal attire and “shy” behavior seem to negate the hierarchy by not submitting to the unwritten law prescribing formal clothes and grandiose gestures to formal occasions such as dinner parties. This feigned negation of the hierarchical difference between Adam and his guests, however, relies on everyone’s tacit recognition of its very existence. The

profit Adam draws from this strategy, evident in Amerigo's admiration, "is possible," as Bourdieu explicates,

whenever the objective disparity between the persons present (that is, between their social properties) is sufficiently known and recognized by everyone (particularly those involved in the interaction, as agents or spectators) so that the symbolic negation of the hierarchy (by using the 'common touch', for instance) enables the speaker to combine the profits linked to the undiminished hierarchy - not the least of which is the strengthening of the hierarchy implied by the recognition. (*Language* 68)

And so the narrator's early assertion of Adam's aversion for his power appears in a different light: "His greatest inconvenience ... was in finding it so taken for granted that, as he had money, he had force. It pressed upon him hard, and all round, assuredly, this attribution of power" (James, *Bowl* 96). Coquettishly bemoaning the burden of a power he believes not to claim for himself only serves to confirm that power which, as Adam correctly deduces, is attributed to him by others but which, as he fails to admit, is legitimized by and therefore grows with his allegedly modest rejection.

However, Adam belies this assumed innocence time and again, most often, tellingly, in conversations with Maggie. He boldly admits, without any discernible signs of ethical objections, to appropriate other people like collectibles or pets. As noted, he repeatedly expresses this attitude with regard to Amerigo, but he also talks about his young wife, Charlotte, in a similar fashion. When he speaks to Maggie about Charlotte's favorable qualities, Adam remarks that "she only wants to know what *we* want. Which is what we got her for" (James, *Bowl* 368). Like Amerigo and Maggie, Charlotte has her assigned role within Adam's universe. She is supposed to cater to his wishes (ask what *they* want) and also to provide more social capital – "to give us a life," as Maggie puts it – which, as Adam reminds his daughter, was to be Charlotte's purpose from the beginning. "[W]e shall have more people, more than we hitherto had, in the country. Don't you remember that *that*, originally, was what we were to get her for" (368).

Despite such straightforward testimony of using others for his personal gain, Adam's symbolic power operates within a structure of hermetic logic that is sealed off against the intrusion of doubt. Like a religious leader who is believed to be God's representative on earth because he claims to be – a claim which he ideally has been legitimized to make beforehand – and who, moreover, finds confirmation of the

claim's truth in the belief that proceeds from it in the first place, Adam acts and is seen as indisputably justified in his position without having to make his power explicit or insist on it. This circular logic follows the same reasoning that a religious explanation of reality employs when it assumes as a given fact what it was supposed to explain in the first place or, as Karl Marx so concisely sums it up, "explains the origin of evil by the Fall of Man" ("Estranged Labour" n.pg.). In addition to awarding Adam a status of unquestionable power, this circular reasoning – self-explanatory in the literal sense – renders brutality and open exercise of force unnecessary.

As such a perfectly invisible force, the symbolic power Adam wields can only be detected in the visible effects it causes, and even those need to be freed from the naturalizing circular reasoning that assumes as a given fact what it is meant to explain. "Phenomenological analysis," as Bourdieu explains, "has the virtue of making visible all that is still granted to the established order by the most *para-doxal* ... experience" (*Meditations* 173). Those effects are to be found in the mental and physical structures of the dominated, their perceptions of the dominant as well as themselves, and their actions. Unlike Osmond, whose true intentions are revealed through other characters' suspicions, through Serena's assessment of his character, and brief insights into his own mind, Adam is protected against doubt from the outside as much as self-doubt or the kind of self-exposure that *Portrait's* narrator has Osmond commit. As there is often no conscious intentionality behind Adam's actions, representation of his mind can only indirectly uncover his part in affirming and reproducing the power structure over which he presides. He is not a character who could be found out by another the way Isabel finally begins to understand Osmond's motives. Adam's authority remains flawless and unquestioned throughout the novel. Hence, James can only fully expose Adam's domination vicariously in what others think of him, what they do for him, and why they prioritize him. The most durable of these effects are therefore to be discovered in Adam's closest ally, his daughter Maggie. In order to understand Adam's hermetic patriarchy and the significance of his cultural capital for maintaining his power it is therefore necessary to divert one's attention from the representation of the patriarch himself and instead take another look at the character that supports and upholds his supremacy like no other.

### Maggie's Equilibrium

Maggie occupies a particularly ambivalent position as Adam's 'second in command.' It requires for her to maneuver around some very difficult contradictions in her conscious and unconscious mind. Since she acts as the performing agent who implements most of the measures necessary to uphold Adam's power, she needs to be convinced, at least partly, by the façade she herself helps to build and maintain. There cannot be a doubt, not even the possibility of even considering doubting, that Adam deserves all the loyalty, devotion, and honor – all his symbolic capital, that is – with which others, foremost among them Maggie, shower him. "Nothing can pull *you* down," she tells him full of admiration after Adam admits he has never been jealous (James, *Bowl* 491). At this point, however, Maggie is already directing most of her attention towards solving the family crisis without giving Adam an occasion for jealousy, which, as Maggie fears, would in fact pull him down. She is, therefore, well aware of his vulnerability. As Adam's proxy, Maggie needs to concern herself with everything that might threaten to undo the illusion of the benevolent and immaculate father while at the same time and to a certain degree believing in it.

This paradox situation results from Maggie's dependence on her father in more than emotional regards. Her social fate depends entirely on Adam so much so that she cannot imagine – and neither can her husband for that matter – that Maggie could achieve any success of her own. Her power is Adam's power, her success is Adam's success, as Amerigo lucidly discerns during one of the dinners at Eaton Square: "The party was her father's party, and its greater or smaller success was a question having for her all the importance of *his* importance" (James, *Bowl* 236). Adam's importance – his symbolic capital – is Maggie's; she does not have any of her own but shares Adam's. Her "sympathy" for Adam's need to maintain his importance – her complicity in his power games, that is – creates for Maggie a "pressure under which she bristled with filial reference, with little filial calls of expression, movement, tone" as Amerigo observes (236-37).

The expression Maggie herself tellingly uses to characterize her relation to Adam as well as to denote what both she and Adam wish, above all else, to maintain, is "equilibrium" (310, 351, 494). She feels "their precious equilibrium" endangered at the beginning of the second book. "*That* was at the bottom of her mind, that their

equilibrium was everything, and that it was practically precarious, a matter of a hair's breadth for the loss of the balance" (310). The unease on which this entire chapter centers, and with Maggie as the focalizer for the first time no less, has been triggered by her fear for a "loss of the balance." She checks this balance during her meetings with Adam and decides, after determining that "[t]he equilibrium, the precious condition, lasted ... the balance persisted and triumphed" (351) to continue with her strategy of keeping Adam uninformed and thus protected. Maggie's equilibrium therefore is Adam's peace of mind and his being free of any mundane or vulgar worries so that his power (which is Maggie's by proxy) stays intact. The equilibrium depends on not raising any suspicion in Adam, hence Maggie's "need that her father shouldn't think her concerned in any degree for anything" (347). "I must do everything ... without letting papa see what I do – at least until it is done!" (326) she tells Fanny.

Adam does not even need to utter any wish or to propose anything since Maggie takes care of his every need, especially those needs he is unaware of: Adam "doesn't ask" as Maggie herself sums it up (248). As the nexus of symbolic power in the novel, in the Verver family, and most of all in Maggie's life, Adam's ignorance of the threat to his virility keeps the scales of Maggie's equilibrium from tipping. Since this virility is inseparable from Adam's patriarchic authority, and since he displays very few typically manly attributes, his masculine power relies on his social status, which in turn derives almost exclusively from his cultural capital as a collector and museum benefactor. Maggie acts as protector, beneficiary, and worshipper of her father's cultivated manly authority. In this triple function, she combines the qualities of Serena Merle and Pansy Osmond in one character.

Most if not all of Adam's symbolic power – including that which he holds over Maggie – rests on his cultural capital and cannot be separated from the effects of his position as "one of the great collectors of the world." Everything he is and does is informed by his identity as a patron of the arts. Hence, when Maggie performs her masterstroke of not only convincing Adam to leave Europe but of making him believe it was his very own idea, she appeals precisely to the symbolic effectiveness of his cultural capital, his reputation. With remarkable finesse she manipulates Adam into bringing up his public accomplishments – such as the new museum in American City – himself by 'accusing' him of sacrificing himself to her. He denies his sacrifice by

leading the counter-argument of his immense, undeniable success as a public figure. “What do you make of what I’ve done for American City?” he asks her (492), and again: “What do you make ... of what I’ve done for my reputation?” (493). After he has thus taken Maggie’s bait she can easily convince him that what he believes to be a precious stash of symbolic capital has actually lost dramatically in value in his absence. “You’ve given it up to them, the awful people, for less than nothing; you’ve given it up to them to tear to pieces, to make their horrible vulgar jokes against you with” (ibid). With the seed thus sown, it takes roughly three more pages of manipulative conversation until Adam admits “You make me quite feel as if American City would be the best place for us,” with which he refers to Charlotte and himself (496).

Adam knows – and it is important to keep in mind that this does not refer to a conscious form of intellectual knowledge – that Maggie is his most important ally. Her unquestioning devotion and her recognition of his greatness are his strongest support. And Adam knows how to remind Maggie of this, how to generate in her the wish to protect his power. After he believes to have made the decision to move back to American City together with Charlotte – a decision Maggie pushes him towards without him noticing – he appeals emotionally, almost melodramatically, to her loyalty as a daughter. She has repeatedly accused herself of selfishness and of “sacrificing” him for her own advantage (James, *Bowl* 492-97), to which Adam finally replies: “I’ll let you know, my dear, the day I feel you’ve begun to sacrifice me ... Well, it will be, for me, the day you’ve ceased to believe in me” (497). Maggie’s belief is what Adam relies on, and she is immersed in their power relation enough to understand – again, not consciously but on a practical, quasi-intuitive level – that her belief can never only be in her father but must always include his persona of the grandiose art collector. Adam needs her to believe in his cultural capital much more than in his qualities as a father, and Maggie responds accordingly:

It had the effect, for her, of a reminder – a reminder of all he was, of all he had done, of all, above and beyond his being her perfect little father, she might take him as representing, take him as having, quite eminently, in the eyes of two hemispheres, been capable of, and as therefore wishing, not – was it? – illegitimately, to call her attention to. (497)

Her “perfect little father” does in fact represent much more than biological fatherhood. Like Amerigo, Maggie also sees Adam as a representative, but her reaction reveals

that Adam represents whatever she decides he represents, which, in their perfect symbiosis, is precisely what Adam wants her to “take him as representing.” The slightest shiver of the possibility of questioning her father’s successful attempts to make her believe what he wishes her to believe about him ruffles Maggie’s thoughts when she asks herself if it is indeed legitimate for Adam to call her attention to *all* he has done and *all* he is capable of when he could simply appeal to her as father to daughter. But, as this scene makes clear, there is no such distinction for either Maggie or Adam – he is the magnate of cultural capital as a citizen *and* as a father.

In this scene, Maggie has just achieved her goal; Adam has announced his wish to leave Europe, and he has reached this point without suspecting either his wife’s infidelity or his having been brought to the point by Maggie’s skillful manipulations. Yet, in her moment of triumph, Maggie is reminded of the source as well as the focus of her triumph. What Adam calls her attention to, legitimately or not, is the “‘successful’, beneficent person” he is in his role as “beautiful bountiful, original, dauntlessly willful great citizen” (497-98). The adjectives are Maggie’s as this passage is written in narrated monologue. Her thoughts then also disclose her basic understanding of how this impressive personage cannot be separated from her father, how both are aspects of the same person: “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” (498).

Having been reminded of the overarching significance of Adam’s symbolic and cultural capital, Maggie sees her father “loom larger than life . . . , so that she saw him during these moments in a light of recognition which had had its brightness for her at many an hour of the past, but which had never been so intense and so almost admonitory” (498). Again with a very gentle note of warning, Maggie’s mind allows for the “almost admonitory” tone of this “light of recognition” to be noticed but not examined any closer. “[L]arger than life” suggests a threat emanating from Adam in the way that the sublime in the Kantian sense contains a life-threatening element. The particular ambivalent pleasure of the sublime in Kant’s conceptualization springs from an exaltation of the mind over the immediate physical danger of a life-threatening event, such as a natural disaster, or the painful experience of being confronted with something that exceeds the human capacity of perception, such as infinity (*Urteilkraft*

244-65; *Critique of Judgement* n.pg.). Maggie has seen Adam in this light before (“at many an hour of the past”) and it allows her to recognize her father’s overpowering influence, but while recognizing its presence and accepting it without question, she has always misrecognized its dominating force. Even now that it is at its most intense, Maggie – like Milly Theale on her walk through unknown London neighborhoods – opts for submission without being aware of her choice.

Her “intense” recognition of Adam results in Maggie’s final and full immersion in her father’s worldview. She draws the connection between what has been called Adam’s “simplicity,” shyness, or “modesty,” which has led to diminutive attributes such as “little boy” and “little father,” and his social success:

His very quietness was part of it now, as always part of anything, of his success, his originality, his modesty, his exquisite public perversity, his inscrutable, incalculable energy; and this quality perhaps it might be ... that placed him in her eyes as no precious work of art probably had ever been placed in his own. (498)

Adam Verver’s “quietness” and “modesty,” Maggie’s terms for what Charlotte calls his “sweet simplicity,” is once for all included in – instead of separated from – his symbolic power. More importantly, Maggie positions herself as Adam’s successor when she adopts his, and many other Jamesian men’s, habit of comparing people to works of art. “There was a long moment, absolutely, during which her impression rose and rose, even as that of the typical charmed gazer, in the still museum, before the named and dated object, the pride of the catalogue, that time has polished and consecrated” (498). Adam – once more in striking opposition to Osmond, who uses a similar image himself – figures in Maggie’s simile as the masterpiece that is already “named and dated” and therefore consecrated. The act of consecration does not, as Maggie believes, happen automatically over time. The gazer, who recognizes name and date, thereby recognizes the work as “the pride of the catalogue” and therefore acknowledges the fetish of the artist’s name as legitimate. Maggie acts as such a gazer in this image and hence renews the consecration. She takes over Adam’s function and his authority as a collector who has the power to consecrate. Now that Adam will leave Europe, Maggie has stepped up to take over his post.

Cultural capital is the key to symbolic power in James’s fictional worlds, but it only functions as symbolic capital for men or for those women who exercise masculine

power by proxy, like Mrs. Walker in *Daisy Miller*, Serena Merle in *Portrait*, Laud Lowder in *Wings*, and, finally, Maggie Verver in *Golden Bowl*. Crucial to the effectiveness of this culturally infused power is its concealment from all persons involved in the conversion of cultural into symbolic capital, including those whose symbolic power it fuels. As the comparison of the characters of Gilbert Osmond and Adam Verver illustrates, only the one completely unaware of his application of force – the dominator who appears as innocent to himself as he appears to others – succeeds in creating and maintaining a fabric of symbolic power that generates its own perpetuation by tacitly inducing those enveloped by it to continue weaving it into the social realities they reproduce. And so, while Maggie acquiesces in her role as an accomplice of domination, she figures as its victim and its survivor at once.

CONCLUSION

I didn't describe to you the purpose of it . . . , I described to you the *effect* of it – which is a very different thing.  
(Henry James, *The Sacred Fount*)

“There is little or nothing going on in Henry James’s mind that is *not* about social relations between women and men; every issue is ultimately gendered,” writes Martha Banta. “Thus to think about gender in James is to think of just about everything he said and wrote” (21). This study, while contributing to the vast field of “gender in James,” throws light on a certain aspect of Jamesian gender relations – the symbolic domination informing gendered power relations and the narrative representation of these structures with an emphasis on their expression in character consciousness. From his first popular success, *Daisy Miller*, to his last finished novel, James created a number of heroines who, despite having a lot in common and being representatives of a certain ‘type,’ respond very differently to the domination to which they are subjected; they find ways to oppose it or try to undermine it, but they also succumb to it or content themselves to acting as its accomplice. The parallels between Daisy Miller, Isabel Archer, Milly Theale, and Maggie Verver render all the starker the contrast of each character’s reaction to the androcentric structures informing their social realities as well as their perception of these external circumstances. Out of a diachronic view onto their struggles we can now discern a development within James’s work that bespeaks a growing acknowledgment of the all but inexplicable resilience of dominant social and internalized structures.

Daisy Miller is a heroine whose naïvely recalcitrant behavior makes her one of James’s most cherished characters and the one usually most accessible to students reading James for the first time. Hers is a rebellion that demonstrates the only superficially paradoxical lack of efficiency that, as a rule, cripples most attempts to rebel against oppression on a personal level without awareness or consideration of its systemic dimensions. As Bourdieu puts it: “Revolt, when it is expressed, stops short at the limits of the immediate universe and, failing to go beyond insubordination, bravado in the face of authority or insults, it targets persons rather than structures,” (*Meditations* 232). Daisy does not target structures because she does not recognize

them; she can hardly be said to even target persons, since her defiance never escalates to insult or the rejection of any one person but remains limited to a refusal to accept certain standards or to satisfy other people's expectations. James's novella accounts for the powerlessness of this kind of revolt, hauntingly represented in Daisy's death and the utter lack of impact it has on the other characters' lives and worldviews.

My analysis of the power structures within the fictional world of *Daisy Miller* from a standpoint informed by relational sociology's concept of social fields, and the symbolic violence playing out in these fields, has shown the true magnitude of the threat emanating from Daisy's social disobedience. Going back to one of the main sources for the formulation of those concepts – Cassirer's derivative of Durkheim's distinction of the profane and the sacred – it was possible to link the harsh reaction of the field that deemed itself under attack to the character's death. Laying bare the symbolic dimensions of Daisy's infection and her subsequent death with the help of Cassirer's deliberations about the division of the perceived reality drives home the fact that the character of Daisy Miller carries more subversive potential than the characters in the text can understand. The theory of symbolic violence then explains why such an understanding must, in the logic of the diegetic reality, be prevented at all cost.

With the depiction of Isabel Archer, and particularly with the shift from excessively authorial to more figural narration that takes place in *The Portrait of a Lady*, James shows his fundamental understanding of the manifold external constraints that render established power relations, and especially gendered ones, so persistent as to appear almost insurmountable at times. Through the contrast between the narrator's demonstrative superiority and condescension at the beginning of the novel and the eventual abdication in favor of the heroine's perspective, the text draws attention to the contingencies of representation and self-image as well as to the social conditionality of (self)perception. The novel shows Isabel Archer's fate and her escape from observation as undoubtedly linked to not only a socially determined personality prone to misinterpret the faulty charms of a Gilbert Osmond, but also to the hardship arising from a self-imposed intention to meet predominant expectations of femininity and womanhood.

Are we to conclude, then, that the narrator changes in some way, that he adjusts his treatment of the characters according to a quasi-personal development that leaves

him more sensitive particularly to Isabel's plight? The narrator's superior position within the narrative framework does not and, in fact, cannot change. An omniscient narrator does not lose this quality half-way through a novel, as Shen (168) and Fludernik (103) remind us. What does change is the slowly increasing preference of not only Isabel's perspective in authorially guided focalization, but a loosening of this authorial grip, most notably in the expansive use of free indirect style in chapter 42. The specific hybrid quality of this narrative technique between the narrator's authoriality and the character's internal perspective makes it particularly suited for the articulation of socially conditioned, pre-conscious practical relations of domination. Enhanced use of such a narrative means to the effect of making otherwise hidden, invisible forms of violence visible does therefore not infringe on the narrator's fundamental superiority in terms of access to information that might be out of reach of the characters and the heterodiegetic position from which the narrator imparts selected information to the reader.

Critics who favor a Foucauldian approach to narrative, and to realist novels in particular, find a basic repressive structure inherent in the genre. A.D. Miller, for instance, postulates an equivalence between novel writing and police work. Characters in a novel, according to Miller, are imprisoned within the fictional reality as they are constantly exposed to the omniscient narrator's observation. Mark Seltzer bases his analyses in *Henry James and the Art of Power* on a similar position, whereas Dorrit Cohn criticizes the basic assumption of an analogy between panoptic vision and narrative strategy with specific reference to Miller's take on free indirect style (*Distinction* 166-67). Miller claims that the "sham" of free indirect style consists in a narrator only pretending to hide the power of his "master-voice" while he "simultaneously subverts [the characters'] authority and secures its own" (25). This specific form of "power play" seems to nominally surrender authority to one agency – the character – "in order that the function of power may be less visibly retained by another" – the narrator (25).

Cohn objects to this by pointing out that free indirect style is a narrative mode in which the narrator does precisely not "impose his own voice on his characters, [but] allows them to impose *their* voices on *him*" (*Distinction* 166). The procedure Cohn describes certainly presupposes a narrator who is in a position to make this decision

and therefore wields a power the characters have no access to. Yet, it does not follow from the implications of this constellation that the theory of panoptic vision can be readily applied to the relations between author, narrator, and characters.

Starting from the premise that James's narrators retain at all times a power comparable to that which Miller criticizes – and it seems difficult indeed to imagine a realist novel to which this would not pertain at least partly – a narrative means that reduces the narrator's perceivable presence and renders his authority less visible may be employed by a patronizing as well as a humble narrator. If this narrator is likely to be imagined as a male voice, equipped with stereotypically male vanity and entitlement – characteristics that apply to many Jamesian narrators, and certainly to that of *Portrait* – then this narrator's stepping back behind the female protagonist's voice and her perspective as well as his eschewal of exhibiting his omniscience can be read as an effort towards a more balanced handling of a power which, since it is a result of omniscience, this narrator could not refute even if he tried.

William Veeder claims that “Henry James understood ... that gender is socially produced. When his society equates business with life, it is defining ‘presence’ in a way appropriate to bourgeois patriarchy: ‘man’ = business = life = presence. Thus ‘woman’ = pleasure = death = absence/negation” (Veeder, “Lack” 99). While *Portrait* addresses this ‘economic’ dimension of all relations of domination – and gender relations specifically – with rather unambiguous demarcations between the morally acceptable, or at least forgivable, and the reprehensible activities on the symbolic markets of personal interaction, *The Wings of the Dove* ventures to account for the complexity of the economy of symbolic goods with its constant entanglement of financial, psychological, and bodily matters. In *Wings* James proves that his sensitivity for the collectively repressed and perpetually concealed foundation of domination extends beyond the deep sympathy for a single character's suffering. The intricate social processes depicted in *Wings* encompass many different stages and mechanisms of the deception inherent in power structures. From Lionel Croy's implicit yet immense influence on his daughter Kate to the social positioning of Milly Theale that only Merton Densher is able to decode to some extent; from the gender as well as class-related conflicts that a socially dictated need for reticence sparks between Kate and Merton to the ambivalent gift Milly bestows upon Merton with her last will, this

novel acknowledges the versatile disguises of domination by *not* making them explicit but by describing their equally numerous and ambiguous effects instead.

Especially the scene which I read as a key moment in the novel, Milly's walk through a London working-class neighborhood, evidences how James constructs Milly's interiority in a more complex manner than he does in older works. Already the scenery opens up possibilities to explore the multi-faceted conditionality of the character's perception that links her identity crisis, triggered by the fatal diagnosis, to fantasies of independence in the unknown city and her first confrontation with glaring class differences. Reading this passage with the instruments of relational sociology showcases the special property of narrative texts to tell something without truly saying it, and in this indirect manner of speaking to articulate the widely ramified interdependencies of socially calibrated perceptions in such bundled and implicative form that any critical-theoretical decoding and detangling can barely do it justice. The practice of literary interpretation then faces the challenge to reconstruct the web of connotation spun by the narrative and to decode it selectively and partially, without risking misusing the selected part as a mere means to the end of proving one's point while neglecting the rest of the work.

One of the reasons why relational sociology's concepts and narrative criticism fit together so well springs from just this necessity to treat one's object of study with such self-conscious care. Few other disciplines in literary studies are as strongly characterized by circumspection and self-inquiry concerning their own methodologies as narratology. Robyn Warhol points out narratology's "insistence on being clear about what questions we bring to bear upon texts and about how we will go about answering them." Narratologists, she explicates, do "not pretend to be making objective or even empirical pronouncements in their descriptions of how texts are put together, and Genette's work especially reflects his awareness that another critic might find different patterns in Proust" (10). For Warhol, narratology's general prudence and self-consciousness serve as an argument for why it forms such a "suitable match" with feminist criticism. "It is a small step," she writes, "from admitting that one's observations are affected by one's subjective position to identifying that position's affiliation with a specific set of convictions" (10). For basically the same reason, the foundational principles and the methodologies of narrative theory and relational

sociology are highly compatible. Constantly keeping the conditionality of one's own position in mind means to consider in one's analyses that this conditionality for the most part eludes one's influence –it cannot simply be 'switched off' – and that awareness of its potential impact constitutes one of the correctives with which critics can hedge against not just overseeing the blind spots of their own perspective, but assuming those blind spots do not exist.

In *The Golden Bowl*, James shows us the effects of a symbolic domination so refined and so deeply ingrained in the fictional social reality and its characters' cognitive structures that it does indeed appear nearly insurmountable. In Maggie Verver's character development and her concern for keeping her father's self-image as immaculate as the image others have of him, this last novel appreciates how resilient structures of symbolic domination really are. While Daisy and Isabel are undeniably victimized in the text – with *Portrait* leaving open at least the possibility of its heroine escaping victimhood in the end – and are, not at all incidentally, among the most beloved of James's heroines, there is considerably more dispute over the morality of both Milly and Maggie's actions. Whether or not Milly falls on the side of victim or manipulator is, as has been pointed out, an issue of ongoing debate whereas Maggie's manipulative scheming is evidently intentional, even though it remains open to dispute in how far her actions are condonable (cf. Armstrong 170-86; Freedman, "Maggie;" Mull 126-33). The more James's texts account for the reciprocity between implicit social constraints and personal choices, the more easily condemnable his heroines' strategies become.

This shift in James's representation of female protagonists is due to the author turning his attention from the personal to the systemic, from a focus on a singular, compelling American girl about whom he creates "an ado" (James, *Portrait* 9) towards foregrounding the complexity of his central characters' entanglement in what surrounds them. The more his narrative style shifts towards figural narration and the characters' internal 'microcosms,' the better James's narratives seem to attend to the systemic macro-dimension of domination, a congruency that does not surprise at all when viewed relationally. Symbolic domination is based on the effective disguise of its own principle of operation and effectiveness. It is being inscribed into mental structures, categories of perception, patterns of behavior, and into socialized bodies in long

processes of acceptance of the dominant symbolic order that are almost entirely concealed from conscious reflection and reasoning. A heterodiegetic narrator hence functions as mediator of that which the characters can neither know themselves nor disclose to the reader because as a result of habitus formation it remains necessarily inaccessible to them. The narrator, however, can make an instructive selection of the effects and workings of this invisible force visible. Since a large part of these effects play out either in a character's consciousness or their pre-reflexive impulses, the carefully tared balance between internal focalization and a more or less audible narrator helps to not only reveal the underlying power structures, but moreover also discursive references to their constant concealment and the opportunities to expose them.

Confirming what earlier works may have indicated in secondary characters but did not focus on in their central protagonist, *The Golden Bowl* acknowledges that even the most privileged among the dominated, like Maggie Verver, have to resort to methods outside the range of official, accepted, legal, or ethical behaviors in order to wield power over others. That Maggie's success hinges on her not merely adopting her father's values but pursuing a goal in perfect accord with the self-perpetuating tendencies of an androcentric system signifies an even deeper insight into the effects of domination on James's part than criticism has so far credited him with.

If my readings insist on exposing hidden power structures in James's texts, it is not to promote a view of "art as impervious to comprehension," a charge Rita Felski lays against approaches to literature whose tacit assumption that only the educated view of the scholar is able to detect some hidden truths in literary works invites elitism (5). Digging up the tangled roots of symbolic domination from underneath the soil of naturalized social regulations that buries them, however, means to figuratively get one's hands dirty and refute the "forbidding 'do not touch' sign" that guards literature from "the grubby handprints and smears of everyday life," in Felski's words (5). In her "manifesto" *Uses of Literature*, Felski argues against "the x-ray gaze of symptomatic reading" that contributes to "a hermeneutics of suspicion" while unmasking what has long become common knowledge, such as "the social construction of reality" (1). Felski pleads instead for a neo-phenomenological approach that abstains from the "permanent diagnosis" of "remedial reading" (1) in favor of an appreciation of the varied "engagements with texts" in which "[t]he pragmatic ... neither destroys nor

excludes the poetic” (8) and where “common knowledge” and critical theory can operate in mutually beneficial ways (13). There is “a widespread intuition,” she asserts, “that works of art reveal something about the way things are” (77).

In order to draw on this intuitive knowledge and describe the full extent of what the work reveals, the theoretical tools provided by relational sociology help to recognize what exactly is being revealed and at the same time minimize the risk of merely searching for confirmation of an intuition that is as much the product of certain habitus formations as the work of art itself is the product of the artist’s habitus. Much as I would have liked to read the ending of *The Golden Bowl* as a howsoever tainted expression of a female triumph, the concept of masculine domination forced me to debunk this first impression and to concede that James does not show a way out of this form of domination, but rather outlines how multifarious and deeply rooted it is in all strata of his fictional realities.

In its delicate narrative structures James’s fictions represent symbolic domination as a force that is so subtly disguised and so effectively inscribed in social, mental, and physical structures that it cannot but remain implicit. Imagery and tacit meaning, parallels or differences between inside and outside view, unresolved confrontations of objective and subjective structures are in fact the spaces literature opens up for disguised power relations to reside in. As Bourdieu’s own approaches to literature indicate, fiction has the capacity to provide more direct accesses to such hidden and convoluted matters than certain theoretical observations. Reading fiction, and reading James in particular, initiates creative processes of detecting and *practically* understanding the divers and unpredictable practices of dissimulation that inform structures of symbolic violence and domination – thus offering an understanding that stands in contrast to a strictly theoretical and thus limited scholarly view. Narratological analysis in turn offsets the temptation to merely cover the text in sociological schemata and thereby disregard its literary aesthetics. Far from intending to impose a pre-conceived meaning on literary texts or to burrow for something allegedly hidden in the text that would serve to confirm what the critic projects onto the literary work, my readings in this study confirm that literary interpretation that targets issues of symbolic power and gendered domination must uncover the deep structures instead of searching the surface

## Conclusion

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because those deep structures may be as hidden in the fictional reality as they are in the critic's and author's social worlds.

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