

THE FICTION WITHIN A FICTION:  
HENRY JAMES'S *THE WINGS OF THE DOVE*

---

MASAHIRO UEDA

---

It begins as a kind of make-believe  
And the make-believing makes it real.

T. S. Eliot

*The Confidential Clerk*

I

Freedom of will is a theme of supreme significance in Henry James's fiction; his idea on free will, accordingly, has been investigated from various angles. There is, however, little or no agreement among critics as to whether James should be considered a determinist or a non-determinist. Sallie Sears has gone to the length of declaring James's "almost violent rejection of the notion of free will."<sup>1</sup> Still, it would raise no objection to say that James, with Ralph Touchett of *The Portrait of a Lady*, is "an apostle of freedom." It is possible, of course, to be "an apostle of freedom" without believing in the freedom of will. The "rejection of the notion of free will," however, is productive of inconvenient ramifications in the fundamentals of ethics because of its concomitant rejection of moral responsibility. We cannot hastily come to the conclusion that James is a hard determinist.

Arnold Goldsmith offers an answer to this question in his essay "Henry James's Reconciliation of Free Will and Fatalism," in which he quotes a celebrated passage from *The Ambassadors*—Strether's exhortation to little Bilham—and comments:

As many other critics have already pointed out, this is one of the most significant philosophical statements in all of Henry James's fiction. Here is William James's pragmatism: if an illusion leads to successful action, to progress, to happiness, then it is meaningful, whether it is true or not. The important fact is not whether science or philosophy can prove or disprove that free will exists, but that some people want to believe that they, to a considerable extent, can control their own actions. In this way, the illusion becomes a major motivating factor in human behavior.<sup>2</sup>

It is widely maintained that James's philosophy is similar to his brother William's pragmatism. "My first act of free will," said William James, "shall be to believe in free will." Then free will, to say bluntly, is a matter of belief. Henry, too, was aware, to say the very least, of the tenuousness inherent in the postulation of free will, though he was, at the same time, "an apostle of freedom" to the backbone.

The recognition of the free will/determinism paradox concurs, almost inevitably, with the recognition of the fictitious nature of human reality. Human society, which constitutes our Reality with a capital R, necessitates, if it should maintain itself, some functional fictions such as free will. Every social institution, or every system of concepts and values operating in any cultural region, is a human fabrication in the sense that its legitimacy is sustained only "intersubjectively" by the members who pertain to it. Human society is a stage, in a literal sense, on which each individual plays his or her assigned (or achieved) role according to a given cultural scenario, although the drama of society is real because it is defined as real almost unanimously except by veritable psychopaths. Henry James seems highly conscious of the fictive principles involved in the maintenance of human society especially when he inlays his works with the imagery of theatre and of *objets d'art*, or when his characters conceive of their situations in terms of fiction—dramas, novels, fairy tales, paintings, and so on. To liken life to drama is a musty

figure of speech; but James's use of the same metaphor is charged with deep psychological and sociological insights into human reality, which is actually involved in a dialectical relation with its opposite. We can say, though it may sound like a truism, that reality and fiction are the warp and woof of which the Jamesian carpet is woven.

Tony Tanner refers, though only parenthetically, to Erving Goffman's "brilliant book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*" in his essay on *The Portrait of a Lady*.<sup>3</sup> Goffman's book deals with none other than the fictitiousness inherent in social behavior and interaction; the perspective Goffman employs in the book is "that of the theatrical performance."<sup>4</sup> Today it seems fairly common among social scientists to view social interactions under the aspect of fiction.<sup>5</sup> James, evidently enough, possessed and employed the same perspective as an artist. Mark Ambient—the art-for-art novelist in "The Author of 'Beltraffio'"—"looked at all things from the standpoint of the artist, felt all life as literary material."<sup>6</sup> It is not fair to identify the fictional author with James; nor is it correct to do so. Yet there is no doubt that among James's repertoire of perspectives there is one in which life is viewed as fiction.

If James's fiction could have relevance to our era, it should be ascribed to the fact that James incorporated in his works his critical acumen concerning the mechanisms of "reality construction"—that is, how contingent Reality is upon the constructs of our brains and how the taken-for-granted structure of our everyday life is a product of our conscious and unconscious effort to preserve it. Presumably it is in the works of his later period that that aspect of James is most palpably in the foreground. In this light we shall consider *The Wings of the Dove* in the following section.

## II

The London society James depicts in *The Wings of the Dove* is a world

where reality and fiction are inextricably intertwined to the point of interchangeability. The scene in which Lord Mark shows Milly the Bronzino portrait aptly illustrates this point. Lord Mark and Kate Croy find that Milly is "the image of the wonderful Bronzino."<sup>7</sup> It is to be noted, however, that the Bronzino portrait rather stands for *their* image of Milly, no matter how much real resemblance there is between Milly and "the pale personage on the wall" (XIX, 224). Lord Mark and Kate Croy find separately Milly's resemblance to the Bronzino and strive, as it were, to confirm it, the former showing the portrait to Milly herself and the latter showing it to the third party Lord and Lady Aldershaw. Their act, which is not collusive but by no means a mere coincidence, could best be described as an imputation of a role. Put differently, they want to define Milly as such a bejewelled young lady as the Bronzino portrait represents. To be sure, Milly is extremely rich; she cannot "get away from her wealth" (XIX, 121). To be rich, however, is only a part of Milly's whole self. Milly's confrontation with the portrait is the beginning of her entanglement in the distorted reality (which is what we call fiction), in which Milly is obliged to play a role allocated to her by others.

It is not Milly alone, however, who is manipulated in London society. It should be underscored that Kate Croy suffers as much manipulation as Milly does. The first two books of *The Wings of the Dove* are devoted, in substance, to the delineation of Kate's manipulated state. In contradistinction to Milly who has no blood relation, Kate is besieged by the coersive family—Lionel Croy (her father), Mrs. Condrip (her sister), and Mrs. Lowder (Aunt Maud). All of them expect Kate to do her duty, that is, to bring them some profit by a *mariage de raison*. Although Kate is secretly affianced to Merton Densher, the marriage with him is out of the question since he is a penniless journalist. Kate cannot choose but play, at least for the moment and outwardly, the expected role:

It wouldn't be the first time she had seen herself obliged to accept with smothered irony other people's interpretation of her conduct. She often ended by giving up to them—it seemed really the way to live—the version that met their convenience (XIX, 25-26).

At the very outset of the novel we find Kate waiting for her father in "the vulgar little room" on "the vulgar little street." And "the girl's repeated pause before the mirror" represents "her nearest approach to an escape from" the shabby circumstances (XIX, 3). "She stared into the tarnished glass too hard to be staring at her beauty alone" (XIX, 3-4). Kate's "repeated pause before the mirror" forms a plain parallelism with Milly's confrontation with the Bronzino. The girl reflected in the mirror is the image of Kate who is reduced to a mere quantity, a girl who is exchangeable for money, a commodity put up at auction. Kate, too, is caught in a distorted reality—"the tarnished glass"—in which she is obliged to play a role allocated to her by others.

Mrs. Lowder is a symbol of London society, or rather, a symbol of modern society at large. "Mrs. Lowder was London, was life—the roar of the siege and the thick of the fray" (XIX, 32). And the main characteristics of Mrs. Lowder is her strong will—will to impose her "version" of reality (her fiction) on others:

The very essence of her . . . is that when she adopts a view she—well, to her own sense, really brings the thing about, fairly terrorises with her view any other, any opposite view, and those, not less, who represent that. I've often thought success comes to her . . . by the spirit in her that dares and defies her idea not to prove the right one. One has seen it so again and again, in the face of everything, *become* the right one (XIX, 277).

Mrs. Lowder's *modus operandi* is mainly an economic one; but her will is not anything other than the *forza del destino* for Kate, who knows its irresistibility.

James uses the imagery of animals and of war to characterize Mrs. Lowder. James's intention, it is plain, is to superimpose the image of a jungle on civilized society, in which "the worker in one connection was the worked in another." (XIX, 179) It may be a foregone conclusion, then, that there emerges a scheme that Mrs. Lowder preys upon Kate and Kate, in turn, preys upon Milly. The scheme is that of an unmistakable food chain. Mrs. Lowder's society is a jungle disguised as civilization; food chain, commensalism, symbiosis, and parasitism are fit terms to describe its ongoings:

[English] society might on some sides be a strange and dreadful monster, calculated to devour the unwary, to abase the proud, to scandalise the good; but if one had to live with it one must, not to be for ever sitting up, learn how . . . (XIX, 277).

There is no other choice for Kate, who possesses "the art of seeing things as they are," but to emulate Mrs. Lowder, to act as the social system decrees, to create her own fiction and impose it on others if she is to live at all.

Thus begins Kate's fiction-making, her well brewed plot against (for, if you like) Milly. Kate's *modus operandi* is the art of impression management, to use Goffmanian phraseology; whilst Mrs. Lowder's is, if deprived of its disguise, power politics by means of monetary threats. Since Kate has no power comparable to Mrs. Lowder's, she writes a scenario (a highly plausible one) and acts it out herself; and she has no rival in the performance capacity. Kate has "the extraordinary and attaching property of appearing at a given moment to show as a beautiful stranger, to cut her connections and lose her identity"—she can play any role if necessary, which is "her pure talent for life" (XIX, 211).

The play Kate attempts to enact to interchange fiction and reality thereby has a plot-line like the following: Milly Theale and Merton Densher fall in love with each other. Their happy marriage ensues. But Milly is doomed to a

premature death. She dies immediately after the marriage, bequeathing her large fortune to her beloved. Densher, now a wealthy widower, falls in love with Kate Croy and marries her. They live happily ever after. The play is written for the good of all the three personae. If Machiavelli's dictum is true that the end justifies the means, Kate's fiction is amply justified. The main resource she employs in an attempt to make this fiction come true is the manipulation of appearance—the art of impression management.

What Kate must do to actualize her vision is to cast a role to each of her actors including herself. First, she acts so as not to make it known that she is on particularly intimate terms with Densher; namely, she casts to herself a role of a woman Densher loves unilaterally. Secondly, she casts to Milly a role of a heroine of tragedy who is rich, innocent (= ignorant), and doomed. Although Milly is actually rich and doomed, it is doubtful whether she is actually innocent, or gullible, enough for the scheme to turn out a success. So Kate, as if she were anxious to define Milly as "innocent," designates her "a dove," which is a symbol of innocence; and Milly accepts "as the right one . . . the name so given her" (XIX, 283). In Kate's plot, Milly is reduced to the three elements: wealth, invalidism, and innocence. The rest of her is simply ignored.

In London society, Milly is caught in a web of role-expectations: people admire her rich apparel, her goodness, and surround her with "the machinations of sympathy." Milly is obliged to accept the expected role since their role-expectation is seemingly derived from their good intention. In a subtle and civilized way Milly's conduct is controlled. The combination of this general role-expectation and Kate's deliberate imputation of the role renders her helpless. The following passage sums up the sieged state of Milly:

It pressed upon her then and there that she was still in a current

determined, through her indifference, timidity, bravery, generosity—she scarce could say which—by others; that not she but the current acted, and that somebody else always was the keeper of the lock or the dam (XIX, 274).

Merton Densher is a participant-observer in Kate's fiction (as well as in James's); he occupies a coign of vantage in the sense that he is both on and behind the stage. Obviously he is one of James's suave and sensitive characters who are inclined more for seeing than doing. Densher and Kate are attracted to each other "under the protection of the famous law of contraries;" namely, what she loves in Densher is his reflexiveness. "It was on the side of the mind that Densher was rich for her and mysterious and strong." (XIX, 50-51) Densher's reflexiveness, however, is inseparable from his incapacity for action. It is quite ironical, therefore, that Kate, in order to accomplish her fiction, must cast to him an important role which requires a certain capacity for action (=performance). Densher is able to perform in the given role only in so far as he is exempt from the consciousness of performance; he is too much of an observer to be a downright participant. Kate's scheme, in fact, would have gone well like Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond's, if Densher had been a competent performer with less conscience.

Densher acts according to Kate's directions simply because he does not want to lose her; and it is not with pleasure that he consents to Kate's tacit suggestion that they should dissimulate their intimacy. But he must and does play the assigned role in the name of love. It is too much for him, however, to make passes at a stricken girl even if it were an act of kindness to her. So he tries to think of Milly as a mere American girl rather than a dirigible wealthy invalid so that he can pay visits to her without consciousness of performance. Because Densher gained acquaintance with the not-yet-fictionalized Milly in New York, he can deal with her without consciousness of playing a role by utilizing "her unused margin as an American girl." (XIX,

295) But this is the limit of his action; he can go no further:

... his responsibility would begin, as he might say, only with acting it [deception] out. The sharp point was, however, in the difference between acting and not acting: this difference in fact it was that made the case of conscience (XX, 76).

To act or not to act: that is the question. The passage reminds us of the Prince of Denmark. Ironically again, however, it is his philosophy of passivity that makes him plunge deeper and deeper into the sea of machinations.

While Densher thinks of "it," Kate acts "it" out. While he is seeking a way of self-justification, Kate's plan continues to develop steadily and the situation eventually proceeds to a point of no return. Now that Densher's love for Milly is established as a fact and Milly's death is immanent, the case is no longer "the case in which chucking might be the minor evil and the least cruelty" (XX, 71). The disclosure of reality, at this stage, is a death warrant to Milly. Nevertheless, Densher is still unwilling to propose to her with the ulterior motive of cheating her out of money. At this critical moment, Kate, sensing his hesitation, begins to use her carrots and sticks in order to manipulate him at her will. "I verily believe," says Kate, "I shall hate you if you spoil for me the beauty of what I see!" (XX, 30) What is more, she goes so far as to invest her only capital—her body—for the purpose of making him stay in Venice alone with Milly, which is equivalent to a proposal of marriage. Here Kate's *modus operandi* is no less vulgar than Mrs. Lowder's. But she can do nothing about it—she is herself being manipulated and she is manipulating herself by manipulating others. It is not unplausible to say that Kate is the most pathetic, let alone the most attaching, creature in *The Wings of the Dove*.

Densher remains in Venice as he promised Kate to do in return for her

nocturnal visit to his room. Suddenly, however, Lord Mark, who is not prescribed a role in Kate's scenario, springs up onto the stage and discloses to Milly what he believes is really going on. Lord Mark's debunking of Kate's scheme gives Milly a fatal blow; she takes to her bed, turning her face to the wall. Lord Mark's visit to Milly is "a descent, an invasion, an aggression, constituting precisely one or other of the stupid shocks he [Densher] himself had so decently sought to spare her." He violently resents Lord Mark's inconsideration, which, however, brings it home to him that "the only delicate and honourable way of treating a person in such a state was to treat her as *he*, Merton Densher, did" (XX, 265). He realizes clearly that knowledge of reality brings about in some cases irreparable consequences. This realization gives him "a sense of relief."

It was *he* [Lord Mark], the brute, who had stumbled into just the wrong inspiration and who had therefore produced, for the very person he had wished to hurt, an impunity that was comparative innocence, that was almost like purification (XX, 265).

Densher realizes indeed the necessity of "commendable fictions" (XX, 339). At the same time, however, he is reproachful about the fictions involved in the whole affair—the fictions in which he has played, willingly or not, a vital role.

We can find in *The Wings of the Dove* a pair of formulae: life=fiction, death=reality. It is fiction that gives Milly a will to live; and it is reality that deprives her of it. Furthermore, Milly's acceptance of fiction—she ends with accepting Kate and Densher's fiction as true despite her knowledge of reality—is an ironical proof of the equation of life and fiction. Milly seems fully aware that life demands "a willing suspension of disbelief." Indeed she acts according to the awareness that illusions are necessary to sustain civilization, society, and humanity. Although Milly's act is a perfection of

self-negation, which is beyond words of admiration, it should also be noted that she derives her moral strength from the fact of death. It is Milly's special condition—her confrontation with the *Grenzsituation*—that enables her to sustain, with full awareness, the fiction of others. Milly need not create her own fiction and live on it since she is to die soon. The moral height she attains is an inhabitable height like the Alps she climbs with Mrs. Stringham.

The imagery of height and depth James utilizes in *The Wings of the Dove* is persistent, deliberate, and of particular significance: the contrast of depth and height, I suppose, is representative of all the antitheses deployed in the novel—life/death, fiction/reality, aesthetics/morality, Kate/Milly.<sup>8</sup> But James's use of the imagery of height and depth could be misleading because it gives the impression that James (or, the implied author) is decisively on Milly's side. Sure enough, James seems to be on Milly's side in a passage like the following:

It was a conspiracy of silence, as the *cliché* went, to which no one had made an exception, the great smudge of mortality across the picture, the shadow of pain and horror, finding in no quarter a surface of spirit or of speech that consented to reflect it. "The mere aesthetic instinct of mankind—!" our young man had more than once, in the connection, said to himself; letting the rest of the proposition drop, but touching again thus sufficiently on the outrage even to taste involved in one's having to *see*. So then it had been—a general conscious fool's paradise, from which the specified had been chased like a dangerous animal. (XX, 298-299)

It may easily be inferred from this that Densher is decidedly opposed to the principle of London, the world of aesthetics. And yet he knows, as we mentioned before, the necessity of fiction-making.

Kate and Milly represent aesthetics and morality respectively in the sense that Kate invents a fiction and Milly accepts the fiction as true. If we may

ignore the charge of oversimplification, we shall proceed to add another presentational simplification: Kate is a symbol of life, Milly a symbol of death. Life consists of one's invention of a personality (= character) to match one's environment (= scene and audience) and constant effort to revise the personality-behaviour pattern—to give it the highest plausibility (= actuality). Kate stands for such a view of life; and she is (to be exact, tries to be) the author of her own life. Milly, on the other hand, is quite alien to such a view of life. Milly simply endeavors to fulfill her role-expectations. And isn't it the ultimate definition of morality to fulfill one's role-expectations? Morality, however, could be a powerful agent of repression. Nietzsche would say without prevarication: "Morality negates life."<sup>9</sup> It is sensible to say that the contrast of Kate and Milly has a close affinity with the Freudian formulation of the life instinct and the death instinct. Then, it is no wonder that Densher refuses to choose between Kate and Milly at the close of the novel: he must do justice to both of them (the aesthetic and the ethical) if he is to live at all.

It is erroneous to assume that Densher discards Kate in favor of Milly's memory. Densher is willing to marry Kate if she is only willing to marry him as he is, that is, without Milly's money. To be sure, when Kate, who is acute enough to detect Densher's love for Milly's memory, asks him his "word of honour" that he is not in love with Milly's memory, he fails to give it. Densher's dilemma, however, ought to be described as an approach-approach conflict: he is obviously in love with both Kate and Milly. But, since the choice of one precludes the other, he renounces the option itself. What he discards is not Kate but the act of choice itself.

### III

In this section we shall consider *The Ambassadors* to make our point clearer, applying to it the same interpretive schema that we have employed

for *The Wings of the Dove*.

At the final scene of *The Ambassadors* Lambert Strether, like Merton Densher, finds himself in an either-or situation, in which he is obliged to choose between Mrs. Newsome and Maria Gostrey. Strether escapes, like Densher again, from the either-or decision and the novel ends with the famous perplexing "Then there we are." The rationale Strether gives to his refusal of choice is that "to be right," "out of the whole affair," he cannot get anything for himself.<sup>10</sup> The rationale we give to his refusal of choice, however, is that he cannot choose one at the sacrifice of the other. Strether's ideal is to attain both of the given alternatives. Yet it is an utter impossibility; therefore he renounces the option itself.

Mrs. Newsome is representative, to a considerable degree, of Woollett, Massachusetts; and Maria Gostrey is representative of Paris—"the vast bright Babylon"—to the extent that she plays at the final scene of the novel the role of the surrogate of Madame de Vionnet, whose first name, suggestively enough, is Marie. Pushed far enough, Strether's option is that of America and Europe. As for the meaning of America and Europe in James's fiction, most critics would agree, whether completely or partially, with Ferner Nuhn who says: "To put it perhaps in its most general form, Europe is form without spirit, America spirit without form."<sup>11</sup> It could also be said that America represents the moral, Europe the aesthetic aspect of life. Obviously Strether's two alternatives are mutually exclusive, but they are inseparable as well. We can easily imagine Strether's unwillingness and/or inability to choose between the two.

The opening of Book Fourth of *The Ambassadors* relates Strether's disordered attempts to persuade Chad to return immediately home. Strether, however, seems to be more interested in Chad's change ("a case of transformation unsurpassed") than in his ambassadorship. Strether theorizes on Chad indefatigably:

He had been wondering a minute ago if the boy weren't a Pagan, and he found himself wondering now if he weren't by chance a gentleman. It didn't in the least, on the spot spring up helpfully for him that a person couldn't at the same time be both. There was nothing at this moment in the air to challenge the combination; there was everything to give it on the contrary something of a flourish (XXI, 160).

Simply stated, to regard Chad as a pagan is to see him from the Woollett side; to regard him as a gentleman is to see him from the Paris side. The above passage clearly indicates that Strether is willing to believe in the compatibility of the two different interpretations of Chad. It is also clear that Chad whom Strether "should have enjoyed being 'like'" is that Chad who seems to embody his ideal of the both/and. The reason why Strether marvels at Chad is that "the rare youth" seems to be equipped with both American and European merits. Chad's display of social arts—his "knowing how to enter a box," his "knowing how to make a presentation" (XXI, 209)—impresses Strether. Chad's air of freedom—his immunity from burdensome "New England conscience"—is what Strether envies in him. These are European merits. Indeed, Chad displays no American merit, by which I mean moral rectitude in particular. But we should not fail to notice that Strether's admiration for Chad lasts only as long as he believes in the virtuousness of Chad's attachment to Madame de Vionnet. The belief in the "virtuous attachment" is a *sine qua non* for Strether to idolize Chad. Strether's eagerness to believe in it is indicated by his self-deception involved in the sustenance of the belief. Little Bilham, who is the initiator of the myth of the "virtuous attachment," says to Strether: "You're not a person to whom it's easy to tell things you don't want to know." (XXI, 202) Strether is partly responsible for the deception as to the liaison of Chad and Madame de Vionnet because he himself, even though unconsciously, has invited it in order to live a full life vicariously through Chad. Unless Chad is an

embodiment of the ideal both/and, Strether cannot get the "vicarious joy."<sup>12</sup>

Strether is endowed with an "odious ascetic suspicion of any form of beauty," (XXI, 193-4) while he is unmistakably attracted to Paris, Miss Gostrey's bare shoulder, Madame de Vionnet, the ornaments and relics in her salon, Lambinet-like landscape, and so on. Then, it seems fair to say that for Strether to live a full life is to live a life both morally and aesthetically satisfying. To repeat: Strether projects his own ideal onto the "improved" Chad so as to enjoy the full life vicariously. So Chad ought to be both morally and aesthetically impeccable.

Before long, however, the moment of disillusionment comes when the "virtuous attachment" turns out to be an "eminent 'lie'" (XXII, 277). Though this means that the Woollett interpretation was right after all, it does not "send him swinging back to Mrs. Newsome." There occurs no "revulsion in favor of the principle of Woollett" (XXII, 296). Strether has been oscillating between Woollett and Paris so far; but now he seems to have found his right place at the neutral point between the two. "To be right" is to remain neutral. Strether must refuse to choose between America and Europe because he must do justice to both.

As should be clear by now, what we can say about Merton Densher holds true of Lambert Strether to a surprising degree. The similarity, it is to be supposed, is due to the fact that in both of the two novels the same question is presented—the question concerning the dialectical relation of reality and fiction. We could find the equation of life and fiction operating in *The Ambassadors* as well as in *The Wings of the Dove*. Strether reacts to the fiction involved in the whole affair in much the same way as Densher. "It was the quantity of make-believe involved and so vividly exemplified that most disagreed with his spiritual stomach" (XXII, 265). Strether, being puritanical at bottom, is evidently opposed to Chad and Madame de Vionnet's performance; but he knows at the same time that he must approve of Bilham's

"technical lie" which has sustained the myth of "virtuous attachment." It is none other than the fiction that gives him a sense of living a full life. As in the case of Milly, to live, for Strether, is to suspend doubt and swallow the fiction.

Perhaps we have emphasized too much the similarity between the two novels so far. We must not forget that there are also differences which are worth receiving our thorough attention. For instance: while *The Wings of the Dove* is tragic in tone even when the heroine's death is subtracted from our consideration, *The Ambassadors* is almost comic. The cause of this difference is not hard to surmise. In the former novel, the fiction is imposed on Milly from every side; on the other hand, in the latter, the fiction is self-inducedly imposed on Strether. This difference, in turn, explains the difference in the narrative technique of the two novels—one employs several points of view (focalizers) and the other only one point of view (focalizer). But we make bold to declare that these differences, however numerous, show us, instead of marking the difference itself, how much James took pains from one novel to another to represent in its entirety the process of projection and introjection by which his hero and heroine, who are *our* representatives, try to give a definite form to the eluding reality.

The fictive world in which Strether gets caught results from two main factors: one is the manipulation of appearance (performance and lies) on the part of people around him, and the other is his own wishful thinking. What we call reality is not a mere accumulation of physical facts which stimulate our sense-organs. Human reality is an interpretation of materiality; it is the physical world seen from a specific viewpoint. It can be said, therefore, that there are as many realities as there are points of view. Then, weighing this all up, we can reach the conclusion that reality is, and can be, constructed by subjective as well as objective means.<sup>13</sup> James made this point clear through Strether's and Milly's entanglement in the fictional fictitious world.<sup>14</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Sallie Sears, *The Negative Imagination: Form and Perspective in the Novels of Henry James* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1963), p. 83.
- 2 Arnold L. Goldsmith, "Henry James's Reconciliation of Free Will and Fatalism," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 8 (1958), p. 117.
- 3 Tony Tanner, "The Fearful Self: Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*," in *Henry James: Modern Judgements*, ed. Tony Tanner (London: Macmillan, 1968), p. 151.
- 4 Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1969). It is stated in the Preface that "the perspective employed in this report is that of the theatrical performance; the principles derived are dramaturgical ones."
- 5 The reader interested in the analogy between social life and the stage can profitably consult J. A. Jackson (ed.), *Role* (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1972), or George J. McCall and J. L. Simmons, *Identities and Interactions: An Examination of Human Associations in Everyday Life*, Revised edition, (New York: Free Press, 1978).
- 6 Henry James, "The Author of 'Beltraffio,'" *The Complete Tales of Henry James*, ed. Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1964), V, 333.
- 7 Henry James, *The Wings of the Dove*, Volumes XIX and XX of the New York Edition, *The Novels and Tales of Henry James* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), XIY, 217.

Subsequent quotations from *The Wings of the Dove* refer to this edition; hereafter, all page references will be given in parentheses after the quotation.

- 8 Oscar Cargill relates the water imagery of *The Wings of of the Dove* to "Tristan's legend which has more seascapes and sea journeys than any other Arthurian legend"[O. Cargill, *The Novels of Henry James* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), p. 341]. To be sure, the curious juxtaposition of life and death in the novel may have some thematic affinity with Wagnerian *Liebested*. However, since the water imagery, in *The Wings*, is closely related to the imagery of depths, it should be considered in contrast to the imagery of heights. In my supposition, the water imagery could have significance only when it is counterpoised to the imagery of heights.
- 9 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. and

- ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1968), p. 611.
- 10 Henry James, *The Ambassadors*, Volumes XXI and XXII of the New York Edition, XXII, 326. Subsequent quotations from *The Ambassadors* refer to this edition; hereafter, all page references will be given in parentheses after the quotation.
- 11 Ferner Nuhn, *The Wind Blew from the East. A Study in the Orientation of American Culture* (Port Washington, N. Y.: Kennikat Press, 1967), p. 107.
- 12 Henry James, *The Notebooks of Henry James*, ed. F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1947), p. 393.
- 13 For a more useful and interesting account of the concept of reality, see Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1967), or Alfred Schutz, *On Phenomenology and Social Relations*, ed. Helmut R. Wagner (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1970), especially pp. 245-262.
- 14 An approach to the later James exemplified in this paper is not altogether a new one. A somewhat related approach has been taken by several scholars. Notable examples are: Stephen Koch, "Transcendence in *The Wings of the Dove*," *Modern Fiction Studies*, 12 (Spring 1966), pp. 93-102; Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Language and Knowledge in the Late Novels of Henry James* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1976); Stuart Hutchinson, *Henry James: An American as Modernist* (London: Vision Press, 1982). I acknowledge, with gratitude, my indebtedness to R. B. Yeazell's superfine monograph. To the other two, however, I owe nothing.