

The Spectacle of the Empire:  
Haunting Figures in Henry James's Later Works

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## Chronology of Henry James

1843	Born in New York City.
1855-59	Extensive travels and education abroad.
1862-63	Harvard Law School.
1864	First story "A Tragedy of Error" published anonymously.
1865	First signed story, "The Story of a Year."
1870	Death of Minny Temple. First novel, <i>Watch and Ward</i> .
1875	First collection of stories, <i>A Passionate Pilgrim</i> , <i>Transatlantic Sketches</i> , <i>Roderick Hudson</i> .
1875-76	Visit Paris, where he meets Turgenev, Zola and Flaubert. Later, settles in London.
1877	<i>The American</i> .
1878	First volume of essays, <i>French Poets and Novelists</i> , "Daisy Miller: A Study."
1879	<i>Hawthorne</i> .
1881	<i>Washington Square</i> , <i>The Portrait of a Lady</i> .
1882-83	Visits America. Death of his parents.
1884	Returns to London with his sister Alice. <i>The Art of Fiction</i> , "The Author of 'Beltraffio.'"
1886	<i>The Bostonians</i> , <i>The Princess Casamassima</i> .
1890	<i>The Tragic Muse</i> . Dramatizes <i>The American</i> , which has a short run.
1891	Writing for the Theater. "Sir Edmund Orme."
1892	Death of Alice James.
1895	Booed off stage at première of Guy Domville. Gives up writing for theater.
1897	Settles at Lamb House, Rye. <i>The Spoils of Poynton</i> , <i>What Maisie Knew</i> ,

- “The Altar of the Dead.”
- 1898 “The Turn of the Screw.”
- 1899 *The Awkward Age*. Friendship with Joseph Conrad, H. G. Wells, Stephen Crane and Ford Madox Hueffer.
- 1900 “The Third Person.”
- 1901 *The Sacred Fount*.
- 1902 *The Wings of the Dove*.
- 1903 *The Ambassadors*, “The Beast in the Jungle.” First meeting with Edith Wharton.
- 1904 *The Golden Bowl*.
- 1905 Visits America for the first time in twenty years.
- 1906-10 Prepares New York Edition of his works in twenty-four volumes.
- 1907 *The American Scene*.
- 1908 “The Jolly Corner.”
- 1910 Last story, “A Round of Visits.” Death of brother, William.
- 1913 Autobiography, *A Small Boy and Others*.
- 1915 Becomes British subject.
- 1916 Dies in London.
- 1917 Unfinished novels, *The Ivory Tower* and *The Sense of the Past*.
- 1934 Collection of prefaces to New York Edition, *The Art of the Novel*.

## Introduction

“A spectre is haunting Europe—The spectre of Communism.” These famous opening passages of “The Communist Manifesto” (1848) have brought forth numerous allusions where the trope “specter” and “haunting” typically imply fear and uncertainty.<sup>1</sup> Since it jeopardizes the social system and hierarchy of the time, it is natural that communism has historically aroused a level of such fear that “all the powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise” it (31). Still, the connection between a specter and communism is not sufficiently clear. I do not dare involve myself in the controversy regarding why Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels used the trope and exactly what that implied. However, a certain curious coincidence took place approximately a month after the publication of “The Communist Manifesto” s.

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<sup>1</sup> It is a cliché in journalism to use these passages replacing Europe with another region or country such as the US, Africa, or Asia; or, that they are used to show some negative aspects or probability of danger in the situation. To name a few, “Palin’s Specter Haunts Romney Campaign” (*Bloomberg*, Mar. 13, 2013), “A Specter Is Haunting Cuba” (*Global Post*, June 1, 2013), “Again, The Specter of A Shutdown Haunts the Halls of Congress” (*CNN*, Nov. 20, 2013) “Specter of Lynching Haunts Central African Republic” (*Japan Today*, Dec. 12, 2013). Moreover, they are alluded in book titles, such as *A Specter Is Haunting Texas* (1969), a science fiction novel by Fritz Leiber. Among them is Jacques Derrida’s *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning & the New International* (1993), where Derrida asserts the relevance and the paradoxical visibility of Karl Marx’s thought, not Marxism or communism, after the fall of the Wall of Berlin. In this book, Derrida identifies the specter in Marx’s writing with *Hamlet*’s ghost.



Maggie and Kate Fox, two young sisters in New York State, reportedly began hearing noises and communicating with spirits. As is well-known, the Fox Sisters' report on the spirit began the craze of spiritualism, which subsequently swept the Western countries. What I attempt to suggest here is not that Marx and Engels supported occultism nor that the Fox Sisters read the "Manifesto."<sup>2</sup> Instead, its pure coincidence suggests the simultaneity between communism and spiritualism in the late nineteenth century; while the former called for a change in the society and the latter shed an uncanny light on mortal life, both cast a doubt on the world at that time and urged it to be reconsidered. What matters here is not the objective reality of the ghosts but the recognition of them, since it defamiliarizes the world we live in and disturbs the existing "natural" order of things. From this perspective, it is no wonder that the recognition of supernatural apparitions is sometimes tinted with politics, as proved by

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<sup>2</sup> Marx and Engels clearly knew of the craze of spiritualism, as they sometimes referred to it in their writings. All of their references, however, are brief and none are favorable. Engels once wrote in his letter about the spiritual movement in American society that "the Americans take over . . . lots of medieval tradition, religion . . . superstition, spiritualism, in short, all nonsense." (de Tollenaere 47).

the fact that spiritualism gave rise to some new religions, such as Theosophy, which were based on non-Christian beliefs and joined hands with social movements.<sup>3</sup> It was inevitable for Marx and Engels to use the supernatural as a trope because communists, in the eyes of the powers of old Europe, were indeed the “super-natural” apparitions that would destabilize the world.

In this context, ghostly apparitions inevitably bear political implications, which not only manifest social unrest but also simultaneously pose an epistemological question to the viewers. In this dissertation, I attempt to uncover the specimens of these “ghosts” in Henry James’s later fictions. While deliberately disguising and dissimulating, James uses ghostly figures to recapitulate the social and political unease of his time. In a sense, both literally and etymologically, James’s ghosts are “specters,”—they do nothing more than look back at the viewers. However, their eyes

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<sup>3</sup> The most emblematic figure that can exemplify the link between spiritualism and social movements is Annie Besant, a British socialist and women’s rights activist, who later became the president of the Theosophical Society. Though she left the Fabian Society and the Marxist Social Democratic Federation when she converted to Theosophy, she continued to be active in political matters in India and was elected president of the India National Congress in 1917.

frighten the viewers, as their gaze reverses the relationship between those who see and those who are seen. In doing so, their gaze challenges the hierarchy between them. As Michel Foucault makes clear, the gaze endows the viewers with power by reducing those who are seen to the object of the gaze. Consequently, when the ghosts look back at the viewers, their gaze divests the viewers of their privileged status and it reduces them to its object. James's ghosts thus suggest disorder in the politics of the gaze. Of necessity, this disorder reverberates the disorder in the politics of the late nineteenth century when territorial inclusion and the economic system of the day blurred the boundary between colonial power and the colonies, thereby destabilizing the imperial order. Therefore, James's ghosts are described as being brutal or beast-like, which are the traits attributed to the colonies under the orientalist dichotomy between civilization and savagery.

Moreover, the ghosts additionally pose an epistemological question, as they problematize the vision of the viewer. Through the gaze, the viewer not only

objectifies the others but also differentiates him/herself from them; specifically, the viewer simultaneously gains the privilege of being the subject and the power to view the world subjectively. In this sense, the gaze authorizes the viewer to re/present the world through his/her own subjective vision.

From this perspective, the act of seeing is similar to the act of creating art. James is so cognizant of the similarities that he repeatedly claims that a novelist constructs his/her works based on his/her own personal observations of life. Clearly, for James, creating art is a form of cognitive act, an extended perception of the world.

Therefore, when James maintains that “the conditions of place, of manners, and of thought” in a novel “must be drawn from personal observation” of the writer (*The Art of Fiction* 18) or “art deals with what we see, it must first contribute full-handed that ingredient; it plucks its material . . . in the garden of life” (*The Art of the Novel* 321), he means neither that life is a mere material of a work of art nor that art should be a copy of life. Art is a re/presentation of what the artist perceives in life, through

which we can realize “the hard latent value” in life (*The Art of the Novel* 120).

H. G. Wells cannot fully grasp this articulation of life and art in his literary quarrel with James. As a social-reformist, Wells sees literature as a tool to inform and guide people to improve their lives:

There is of course a real and very fundamental difference in our innate and developed attitudes towards life and literature. To you literature . . . is an end, to me literature . . . is a means, it has a use. . . . I had rather be called a journalist than an artist, that is the essence of it, and there was no other antagonist possible than yourself. (Wells, qtd. in James *Letters* 4:768)

For Wells, life means social status or the livelihood of people and the value of literature resides in its usefulness for “life.” Consequently, he criticizes James’s obscure and sometimes incomprehensible novels as art for art sake. Nonetheless, in relationship to the ideology that literature helps improve life, James’s understanding of art does not appear extremely different from that of Wells. However, he employs the

term “life” in a broader and more abstract sense, as obvious in his reply to Wells:

[S]o far from that of literature being irrelevant to the literary report upon

life . . . I regard it as relevant in a degree that leaves everything else behind.

It is art that makes life, makes interest, makes importance, for our

consideration and application of these things, and I know of no substitute

whatever for the force and beauty of its process. (*Letters* 4:770)

What James implies with the word “life” is the existential condition of human beings.

While his “art” may not assist in reforming one’s livelihood, it serves to improve one’s

being. It is additionally noteworthy that he intentionally displaces “literature” with

“art,” as this paraphrase clearly demonstrates the difference between the two novelists

in their attitudes toward literature. As shown in his remark, “I had rather be called a

journalist than an artist,” for Wells, the essential part of “literature” is literation—to

report “life.” Meanwhile, James regards it as a process of re/presentation, as with any

other form of “art,” such as painting or sculpture. Such a formulation inexorably

baffles Wells, the literalist:

I don't clearly understand your concluding phrases—which shews no doubt how completely they define our difference. When you say “it is art that makes life, makes interest, makes importance,” I can only read sense into it by assuming that you are using “art” for every conscious human activity. I use the word for a research and attainment that is technical and special.

(Wells, qtd. in James *Letters* 4:770)

While Wells clearly regards “art” as the fruits of skillful labor, James regards it as outside the concrete creation of a work, as with any other conception of human consciousness. For James, art is “the result of some direct impression or perception of life” (James *The Art of the Novel* 45) and it “plucks its material, otherwise expressed, in the garden of life—which material elsewhere grown is stale and uneatable” (321). This is why James attaches such tremendous importance on observation; his “art” is not a mere imitation or “a research and attainment that is technical and special” but a

process of the perception of “life.” The artist thus re/presents life in his/her works of art, and its foundation is formed through his/her “conscious human activity”—seeing.

From this perspective, James’s theorization of fiction making inevitably approaches that of epistemology, and seeing constitutes the essential part of art:

The house of fiction has in short not one window, but a million—a number of possible windows not to be reckoned . . . they have this mark of their own that at each of them stands a figure with a pair of eyes, or at least with a field glass, which forms, again and again, for observation, a unique instrument, insuring to the person making use of it an impression distinct from every other. . . . The spreading field, the human scene, is the “choice of subject” . . . but they are, singly or together, as nothing without the posted presence of the watcher—without, in other words, the consciousness of the artist. (*The Art of the Novel* 46)

It is unmistakable that James confers certain privileges on the viewer. His ideology



regarding the “choice of subject” can be paraphrased as that the artist i.e. the viewer, can bring forth the world within his/her subjective vision. Therefore, from James’s outlook on works of fiction, the viewer possesses the authority over the narrative and what appears in the text is his/her own subjective vision.

In this context, the apparitions in the text become more problematic. By intruding into the subjective world where they are not supposed to be seen, they defy the authority of the viewer. Their gaze suggests that they see the viewer as an object in their own vision and that they see the world in their own way. They are ghosts not merely in a literal sense but in a figurative sense as well, as their emergence inevitably implies the presence of the other life or the other world, which is constituted by the vision of others.

The intrusion of others into the subjective vision in James’s texts resonates with the actual situation in the late nineteenth century. Fredric Jameson insightfully surveys the internalization of otherness in the empire:

[C]olonialism means that a significant structural segment of the economic system as a whole is now located elsewhere, beyond the metropolis, outside of the daily life and existential experience of the home country . . . .

Such spatial disjunction has as its immediate consequence the inability to grasp the way the system functions as a whole. Unlike the classical stage of national or market capitalism . . . it can never be fully reconstructed; no enlargement of personal experience . . . no intensity of self-examination . . . no scientific deductions on the basis of the internal evidence of First World data, can ever be enough to include this radical otherness of colonial life.

(“Modernism and Imperialism” 50-51)

In this sense, the prevalence of gothic novels in the late nineteenth century is a symptom of the anxiety regarding the infiltration of such “colonized otherness.” As a transatlantic writer, James is acutely aware of the situation in which he bestows the characteristics of “colonized otherness” on his ghosts. Consequently, they disturb and

reverse the viewer's world, thereby defying the authority of the viewer as an imperial subject. From this perspective, since it is the nation of the New World—the other world—which defied the authority of the British Empire and disturbed its imperial order, it is not coincident that the ghosts are associated with America. Notwithstanding, after achieving independence as a postcolonial nation, this nation approved its own territorial expansion and emerged as a new colonial power in the late nineteenth century. James manifests the anxiety for the future of America in his fictions.

Accordingly focusing on the ghosts, this dissertation presents a new reading of Henry James's later works. In the first chapter, to explicate how James evades the dogmatism of the subjective vision by introducing the intersubjective vision in his texts, I deal with "The Author of 'Beltraffio'" (1884) and *The Sacred Fount* (1901). Demonstrating that they are epistemological as well as cultural others in the vision of the viewer, Chapter Two examines the ghosts in several short stories. Chapter Three illustrates a collision between two visions of the world in "The Turn of the Screw"

(1898). Under the circumstances of imperialism, the subject inevitably has to face the eyes of the colonized others, which consequently inverts the hierarchy and disrupts the imperial order. Therefore, the ghosts in James's works are tinged with racial otherness, as clarified in Chapter Four, where I additionally elucidate the race consciousness and colonized otherness behind the alter ego in "The Jolly Corner" (1908). Dealing with *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), Chapter Five reveals that James ingeniously allegorizes how America, a young democratic nation, takes its course toward imperialism. These arguments can help us to discern the politics deliberately concealed in James's works and additionally reveal how he conjures up the ideals of the post-colonial nation in his allegories.

## Chapter 1

### When You Find a Ghost:

#### *The Sacred Fount* as an Intersubjective Text

In James's point-of-view fictions, what appears in the text is decided through the viewer's consciousness, so he/she determines the vision on the surface of the text even though this is usually intervened in and dispersed by the third-person narrator. The viewer-narrator gains and exercises full authority over the vision of the first-person narrative, behaving as if he/she were its master. However, the problem is that the first-person vision inevitably collides with that of others, since the viewer subjectively chooses and interprets what to see and forces it on the others.

Such dogmatism of the subjective viewer is manifested, for example, in "The Author of 'Beltraffio'" (1884), in which an aesthete brings about a tragedy. The first-person narrator in *The Sacred Fount* (1901) also shows the behavior of the viewer-master of his subjective vision; what is significant in this novel is that the

viewer has to admit that others see the things in quite different ways. Thus, through analysis of the novel, it becomes clear that James foreshadows Edmund Husserl's notion of intersubjectivity. Indeed, apprehending the danger of a purely (singular) subjective vision, James presents an intersubjective way of seeing the world in his point-of-view fictions.

Though frequently regarded as a realist, James's theorization of art coincides with his contemporary aesthetes, such as Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, his metaphor of "the house of fiction" and the observers gaining "an impression distinct from every other" recalls Pater's "narrow chamber of the individual mind," where "each object is loosed into a group of impressions" and into which "the whole scope of observation is dwarfed" (Pater 151). Equally, when James asserts that life is "all inclusion and confusion" with, conversely, "art being all discrimination and selection"

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<sup>4</sup> According to Ruth Robbins, a dispute arose in the late nineteenth century over the criteria for a work of art concerning lucidity and obscurity, one of the most conspicuous cases of which was the court-case contested by James McNeill Whistler and John Ruskin. The new style, representing not photographic clarity but the obscure impression of the artist, gave rise to impressionism, and its notion of artistic adumbration became dominant among aesthetes.

(*The Art of the Novel* 120), it seems as if he was mimicking Wilde, who considers that art is “really a form of exaggeration; and selection, which is the very spirit of art, is nothing more than an intensified mode of over-emphasis” (Wilde “The Decay of Lying” 1079).

James is, however, not at all an aesthete, just as he is not a mere realist. On the contrary, he disapproves of the aesthetes, especially Wilde.<sup>5</sup> J. Hillis Miller suggests, for example, that Gabriel Nash in *The Tragic Muse* (1890) is in part modeled on Wilde. Nash, an admired initiator of art and beauty, encourages Nick Dormer to pursue a career as an artist instead of a politician, but Nash’s influence and appeal gradually diminishes and finally disappears from Nick’s mind.<sup>6</sup> Nick’s resignation from

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<sup>5</sup> Though having an acquaintance with Pater and being influenced by his renowned description of Renaissance art, James did not greatly appreciate Pater, as indicated by his nonattendance at Pater’s funeral. And James clearly shows contempt for Wilde, whom he met early in 1882, when he felt an antipathy to his flamboyant and frivolous behaviors. Thus James’ scornful remarks in his letters, that Wilde “was never in the smallest degree interesting to me” (*Letters* 4: 10) and that his plays were “infantine to my sense, both in subject and in form” and not worthy of “analysis or discussion” (*Letters* 3: 372).

<sup>6</sup> With the insignificance and superficiality of Nash’s view on art, James seems to retaliate against Wilde, who, just before the publication of the novel, had derisively commented that “Mr. Henry James writes fiction as if it were a painful duty, and wastes upon mean motives and imperceptible ‘points of view’ his neat literary style,

Parliament and dedication to art at the end of novel suggests, perhaps, that James does not necessarily reject aestheticism as such but rather its insistence on devotion to art; what James does not tolerate is its irresponsible negligence of life and its dogmatism.<sup>7</sup>

“The Author of ‘Beltraffio’” displays James’s attitude toward aestheticism.

Focusing on the problem of how to deal with a work of art, especially when it possesses at the same time beauty and pagan corruptness, this tale foregrounds the relationship between art and life. The narrator, a young American admirer of Mark Ambient, is clearly depicted as an aesthete, and when he states his impressions of Ambient’s house, he betrays the Wildean discourse of aestheticism:

There was imagination in the carpets and curtains, in the pictures and

books, in the garden behind it . . . that appeared to me to have been copied

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his felicitous phrases, his swift and caustic satire” (1074).

<sup>7</sup> Actually James based the character of Nash on a friend, Herbert Pratt, who was born wealthy but became a wandering American bohemian. Nash’s spiels about art, however, are similar to the aesthetic discourse of that time, especially Wilde’s paradoxical and satirical speeches. Moreover, as Miller points out, there is the possible influence of *The Tragic Muse* upon Wilde’s own *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), the former being published in *the Atlantic* between January 1889 and May 1890, just before the latter began appearing in *Lippincott’s Magazine* in July 1890.



from a masterpiece of one of the pre-Raphaelites. That was the way many things struck me at that time, in England; as if they were reproductions of something that existed primarily in art or literature. It was not the picture, the poem, the fictive page, that seemed to me a copy; these things were the originals, and the life of happy and distinguished people was fashioned in their image. (732) <sup>8</sup>

This remark is paraphrased in Wilde's famous aphorism: "Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life." Thus the 'Beltraffio' narrator regards art as being prior to life, and enacts his principle through Ambient's family. He enthusiastically praises Ambient's novels and persuades Ambient's wife to read them. Reading her husband's novels, which she strongly dislikes and which even Ambient himself considers "immoral and baleful", she suspends any medical treatments and indirectly kills her sickly son, Dolcino, to save him from his father's unwholesome influence.

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<sup>8</sup> It should be mentioned that "The Author of 'Beltraffio'" precedes Wilde's "The Decay of Lying" by five years, since this may suggest another possible influence of James upon Wilde.

Eleven years before Wilde's trial and imprisonment, the tragedy of the Ambients foresees the fate of an epicurean aesthete, who is impertinently and excessively adherents to art and seemingly regards life itself as merely a form of art. Nevertheless, James did not intend to put the blame on a work of art itself, nor on its author. Although his "Beltraffio" is eulogized by the narrator as "the most complete presentation that had yet been made of the gospel of art—it was a kind of aesthetic war-cry" (729)—Ambient does not consider art to be prior to life. Indeed, as shown by his momentary rage over the narrator's remarks on Dolcino, that "he's like a little work of art" (741), Ambient is alert to the danger of confusion of art with life: art is "the plate through which people look into [life]" (755), and must never be regarded as life itself.

In this sense, the tragedy in 'Beltraffio' is a consequence of the conflict between two visions: those of the narrator and of Ambient's wife. While markedly diverging in their opinions on Ambient's novel, they both adhere to their own subjective visions;

and much in the same way that the narrator neglects life for art, Ambient's wife does so for morality. What kills her son is her excessive moralism, which, just like the narrator does his aesthetic principle, she forces on her family. Though neither of shows malevolence, their intolerance to the other has destructive effects, which Ambient, the very author of the immoral novel, can evade by accepting his wife's vision. What Ambient embodies, then, is the coexistence of diverging subjective visions, in other words, an intersubjective way of seeing the world. In expressing anxiety about the intolerance, therefore, James demonstrates the intersubjective vision.

Perhaps what James detests most in Wildean aesthetes is the arrogance they show toward life. Wilde compares art to a veil screening us from life and asserts that all we can see is the veil; only the artist has the privilege and the power to create the veil free from reality or truth, for the world "did not exist till Art had invented" it (Wilde 1086). Therefore, art is an equivalent to "lying" because "art, very fortunately, has never once told us the truth" (1089) and "[the artist] alone is in possession of the

great secret of all [Art's] manifestations, the secret that Truth is entirely and absolutely a matter of style" (1081). In effect, Wilde assumes the omnipotence of the artist.

James, on the contrary, never doubts the priority of life over art and asserts that art "sniffs round the mass as instinctively and unerringly as a dog suspicious of some buried bone" searching for "the hard latent value with which alone it is concerned" (*The Art of the Novel* 120). What screens us is the glass through which we look in confirming life. Other visions endorse reality or truth in art; as a million windows in James' metaphor of "the house of fiction" suggest, there are a million viewers seeing life as well as the artist. Thus introducing the notion of intersubjectivity, James avoids falling into subjective dogmatism.<sup>9</sup>

In *The Sacred Fount*, James demonstrates how the dogmatic viewer fails to find

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<sup>9</sup> Edmund Husserl asserts in *Cartesian Meditations* (1931) that objective reality, or the "thereness-for-everyone" of the world, can be attained only through intersubjectivity : "In any case then, within myself, within the limits of my transcendently reduced pure conscious life, I *experience* the world (including others)—and, according to its experiential sense, not as (so to speak) my *private* synthetic formation but as other than mine alone, as an *intersubjective* world, actually there for everyone, accessible in respect of its Objects to everyone. And yet each has his experiences, his appearances and appearance-unities, his world-phenomenon; whereas the experienced world exists in itself, over against all experiencing subjects and their world-phenomenon. (91)

truth in life and, indeed, how intersubjectively the world is constituted. Partly because of its peculiar ambiguity, critics have tended not to deal with the novel, and their opinions differ on how to categorize it.<sup>10</sup> The ambiguity of the novel stems from the first-person narrator: we cannot tell whether he really witnesses a vampire-like supernatural phenomenon in Mrs. Server, as he narrates, or whether he is crazy enough, as Mrs. Briss declares, to cherish such a fanciful illusion. It is not only impossible to know what is really happening in the novel, however, since the very notion of “what is really happening” is essentially meaningless when reality is intersubjectively constituted. Rather, the focus of the novel lies in its indecisiveness: the novel displays people’s diversity in seeing and interpreting what would seem to be the same thing. It should be noted, then, that observation is equated with the creation of a work of art. The narrator has authority over his vision, so he operates his mastery over his “work”:

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<sup>10</sup> For example, Leon Edel regards it as having “gothic theme,” while Paul Giles as “arctic theme.”

I was positively—so had the wheel revolved—proud of my work. I had thought it all out, and to have thought it was, wonderfully, to have brought it. Yet I recall how I even then knew on the spot that there was something supreme I should have failed to bring unless I had happened suddenly to become aware of the very presence of the haunting principle, as it were, of my thought. This was the light in which Mrs. Server . . . showed herself. . . .

It was exactly as if she had been there by the operation of my intelligence, or even by that—in a still happier way—of my feeling. (77)

Thus does James actualize Mrs. Server to complete his composition. In this sense, the narrator is an artist who creates his work by narrating: “I only talk . . . as you [Obert] paint; not a bit worse!” (19). Nevertheless, and by the same token, the narrator denies his authority to prove the authenticity of his vision. As he regards himself as a sensible observer who notices what others do not, what he sees has to be true. Hence, by calling his work “a theory” or “a law,” he disavows his mastery: “I had created

nothing but a clue or two to the larger comprehension” (63)

The deceitfulness of his “theory,” however, is disclosed by Mrs. Briss in the conclusion of the novel. Denouncing the narrator as crazy, she reveals that she sees things in a quite different way.

‘Long *isn’t* what he seems?’

‘Seems to whom?’ [Mrs. Briss] asked sturdily.

‘Well, call it—for simplicity—to *me*.’ (154)

‘Call the thing simply my fact.’

[Mrs. Briss] gave her high head a toss. ‘If it’s yours it’s nobody else’s!’

(159)

In this sense, it seems that the dogmatic narrator is reiterated by reality. Yet the novel rejects such a reading, since it never explains what does or does not happen in reality (in the sense of objective fact). Mrs. Briss does just the same act as the narrator—seeing and narrating. Indeed, the narrator does not necessarily find truth in

her remarks: “[I]t wasn’t really that I hadn’t three times her method. What I too fatally lacked was her tone” (187). What she narrates is her fact and if the narrator is a kind of artist, so is Mrs. Briss, and if she carries the day, it is only “tone” that wins it for her.

Another artist in the novel, a painter, Ford Obert, also sees and narrates, tellingly, “with . . . constructive joy” (130). It is significant that while recognizing the change in Mrs. Server, Obert does not try to look for her lover:

[Obert] was wrapped in the ‘psychologic’ glow. ‘I have [Mrs. Server]!’”

[The narrator says] “Ah, but it’s a question of having [Mrs. Server’s lover]!”

He looked at me on this as if I had brought him back to a mere detail, and after an instant the light went out of his face. “So it is. I leave it to you. I don’t care.” His drop had the usual suddenness of the drops of the artistic temperament. (42)



Unlike the narrator, Obert does not choose Mrs. Server's lover as something, or someone to see. All the "artists" in the novel—the narrator, Mrs. Briss, and Obert—choose what to see and accordingly narrate it. And what we see is the totality of this, which, insofar as they combine, presents an intersubjectivity.

The diversity among and problematic combination of viewpoints presented is manifested in the scene in which the guests at Newmarch gather in the gallery to look at a painting of "the man with the mask in his hand" (34). Exchanging their opinions about what the painting look like, such as "the Mask of Death," "a lovely lady," "poor Briss," they cannot reach a conclusion. Indeed, this scene reiterates the novel itself: the various characters narrate what they see, and their diverse views are juxtaposed without them—or us—ever deciding what the truth is.

Thus, what is in the center of the novel is indecisiveness. It seems that we can only receive from the text the unreliable subjective vision of the narrator, with no authoritative reality appearing. The text involuntarily betrays other visions, since the

narrator does not deny them, which suggest that there are other subjects who see things differently and that they inevitably see the subject:

[Mrs. Briss says to the narrator] “So I all the more resent your making me a scene on the extraordinary ground that I’ve observed as well as yourself. Perhaps what you don’t like is that my observation may be turned on *you*. I confess it is.” (46)

“Oh, I’ve watched *you*,” said Ford Obert [to the narrator] as if he had then perhaps after all the advantage of me. (129)

Other subjects in the text relativize and dismiss the authority of the narrator by degrading him as an object of the gaze. Therefore, the narrator has to break off his narration: he loses the privilege to exclusive narration of his subjective vision. And thus does *The Sacred Fount* contain diverse subjects within the text and give us not only the dogmatic vision of the narrator but, through these alternate visions, his acquisition of the intersubjective way of seeing the world.

## **Chapter 2**

### **A Guide to the Other World:**

#### **The Way of Seeing in Henry James's Supernatural Tales**

Through the intersection of the gaze — to see others and to be seen by them — the subject can recognize others as other subjects and the intersubjective constitution of the world. The recognition of the gaze of others, however, is a painful experience; it necessarily involves the loss of his or her privilege over his vision. Such a problem of experiencing others is foregrounded most in James's "Gothic" tales, in which others as foreign bodies within the subjective vision of the viewer take the shape of ghosts. In this chapter, I examine the common characteristics of James's ghosts to show that they are not only epistemological, but also cultural others, acting as guides to the other world. The analysis will make it clear that we can find such "ghosts" in James's international novels.

The ghost in "Sir Edmund Orme" (1891) clearly indicates the characteristics of

ghosts in James's later fictions. We cannot know why the ghost of Sir Orme appears before the eyes of the narrator or what he wants. As Mrs. Marden, Sir Orme's old fiancée, believes the apparition may be a punishment; or Sir Orme might be watching over her daughter, Charlotte, so that she will not repeat her mother's sinful behavior of 20 years earlier. However, nothing in the text affirms this interpretation.

The ghost of an old smuggler, Cuthbert Frush, in "The Third Person" (1900) is also filled with incomprehensibility. Miss Amy's assumption — the ghost shows bravado and smuggling something can dissipate him — may be right; yet what exactly Miss Amy smuggles is never explained other than as something "big enough to have satisfied him" (45). Moreover, it is unclear whether or not the ghost actually disappears. As the Frush sisters suspect each other, either of them might continue to meet him secretly. The questions about the ghost also remain unsolved in this text. Ultimately, James's ghosts always remain a mystery to the reader.

The incomprehensibility of James's ghosts exhibits their otherness. They are so

similar to ordinary human beings that the viewer does not see them as supernatural beings until he or she finds them incomprehensible. It is a general characteristic of ghosts in James's fiction, as Virginia Woolf points out in her essay about "The Turn of the Screw" (1898): "Henry James's ghosts . . . remain always a little worldly" (159). Further, when she says that the ghosts "have their origin within us" (159), she unwittingly suggests the blurriness of distinction between the viewer and the ghosts, subject and object, self and other. That is, their otherness can be traced back to those who see; their ghostliness depends on the viewer.

Therefore, the ghosts cannot be seen by anyone but the viewer. It is noteworthy that James employs the metaphor of the "window" separating the viewer from life. The viewer can see the outside through a window, but it can sometimes reflect the inside as if it were on the outside. Thus, a window externalizes and defamiliarizes the inner world of the viewer. The ghosts are the external projection of the viewer's inner world; that is, they are his or her alter ego. In this sense, James follows the process of

Husserlian ideas of experiencing the other.

In experiencing the other, Husserl argues that the ego already includes “the intentionality directed to what is other” (94) and the recognition of the other as an “other subject” is preceded by the constitution of an “alter ego”:

In this pre-eminent intentionality there becomes constituted for me the new existence-sense that goes beyond my monadic very-ownness; there becomes constituted an ego, not as “I myself,” but as mirrored in my own Ego, in my monad. The second ego, however, is not simply there and strictly presented; rather is he constituted as “alter ego” — the ego indicated as one moment by this expression being I myself in my ownness. The “Other,” according to his own constituted sense, points to me myself; the other is a “mirroring” of my own self and yet again not an analogue in the usual sense. (94)

Thus, we experience the other at first as an “alter ego,” a “mirroring” of our selves,

and the analogy between “he” and “I,” or the conditional identification of “me” and “him,” allows us to “empathize” with the other as an “other subject” who experiences not only the world, but also “me” just as I experience “him.” In this sense, when we see others, they necessarily look back at us, as in a “mirror.”

Therefore, the ghosts as others necessarily look back at the viewers. They are mirroring the viewer as well as his or her gaze. In addition, we can draw some analogies between the ghosts and the viewer: Miss Jessel was the governess in Bly, as is the narrator of “The Turn of the Screw”; Sir Orme was the suitor, as is the narrator; Cuthbert was a Frush, as are Miss Susan and Miss Amy. Their resemblances prove the mirroring quality of the ghosts.

Even though the apparitions are reflections of those who see, they still remain as essential others. The two ghosts in “The Turn of the Screw” clearly manifest the ambivalent quality of the ghosts; while Miss Jessel is a double of the governess, Quint still remains an essential other for the governess. This ambivalence is intensified by

their silence. Sir Orme, Cuthbert Frush, and Quint and Miss Jessel never ask or explain, or even speak a word. Their silence suggests the suspension of communication which is necessary to understand and recognize others as “other subjects” in the world. Such incommunicability of ghosts can be attributed to their cultural differences.

Husserl’s meditation on the process of experiencing others is followed by speculations on “the problem of the constitution of the specifically human surrounding world, a surrounding world of culture for each man and each human community” (132), since it is inseparable from the constitution of the “other.” According to him, communalizing our lives and the lives of others, we have necessarily fashioned our “individual and communalized living and doing” into “a cultural world,” and, consequently, we constitute “different surrounding worlds of culture, as concrete life-worlds in which the relatively or absolutely separate communities live their passive and active lives” (133). This difference between cultural worlds prevents us



from communicating beyond it, since “certain originality” of one community, while making it possible to all members to understand mutually, bars anyone from another community from entering. Nevertheless, Husserl does not approve of the disjunction between each community. Reducing a community into groups of monads, he claims:

Is it conceivable . . . that two or more *separate pluralities of monads*, i.e.

pluralities *not in communion*, co-exist, each of which accordingly

constitutes *a world of its own*, so that together they constitute *two* worlds

that are separate ad infinitum, *two infinite spaces and space-times?*

Manifestly, instead of being a conceivability, that is a pure absurdity. A

priori, as the *unity* of an intersubjectivity (an intersubjectivity, moreover,

that possibly lacks every actual relation of community with the other

intersubjectivity), each of two such groups of monads has, to be sure, its

possibly quite different looking “world.” But the two worlds are then

necessarily *mere* “*surrounding worlds*,” belonging to these two

intersubjectivities respectively, and mere aspects of a single Objective world, which is *common* to them. (140)

Thus, he applies the idea of intersubjectivity to the relationships between communities.

When he asserts that the pre-eminent types of social communities “have the character of ‘*personalities of a higher order*’” (132), here emerges once again the conflict between subjectivity and objectivity. Much in the same way as each human being as a monad sees the world subjectively, each community, though it is intersubjectively constituted by such monads, sees the world “subjectively.” In this sense, the experience of the alien community and its culture is in proximity to that of the other.

What appears as “other,” then, is not only epistemological but also cultural.

Transgressing the boundaries between the inner and outer worlds, and between different cultures, the ghosts suggest the other world, as if they are guides. Then, such “ghosts” appear not only in James’s “Gothic” tales, but also in his “international” novels in which the two cultures, namely America and Europe, collide in the

subjective vision of the viewer. We can find the most conspicuous example in Miss Gostrey in *The Ambassadors* (1903).

It is almost needless to say that this novel deals with the conflict between two different cultures: modern America (Woollett) and old Europe (Paris). However, what is noteworthy is that the narrative is biased by Strether's subjectivity:

[H]e came down the Rue de la Paix in the sun and, passing across the Tuileries and the river. . . . In the garden of the Tuileries he had lingered, on two or three spots, to look; it was as if the wonderful Paris spring had stayed him as he roamed. . . . The palace was gone, Strether remembered the palace; and when he gazed into the irremediable void of its site the historic sense in him might have been freely at play — the play under which in Paris indeed it so often winces like a touched nerve. He filled out spaces with dim symbols of scenes. (58–59)

These passages foreground what he sees and what he does not. While he thus

envision the lost palace of the Tuileries, he overlooks the most remarkable structure standing over the garden of the Tuileries, the Eiffel Tower. Thus, he arbitrarily chooses what he sees in Paris.

What he finds beauty in the relationship between Madame de Vionnet and Chad is also what he wants to see, as little Bilham suggests:

Strether came round to it. "They then are the virtuous attachment?"

"I can only tell you that it's what they pass for. But isn't that enough? What more than a vain appearance does the wisest of us know? I commend you," the young man declared with a pleasant emphasis, "the vain appearance."

(124)

As an American immigrant to Paris, little Bilham can mediate the two conflicting visions, Strether's European one and Sarah's American one. He has already attained the intersubjective vision.

The pagan metaphors intensify the cultural difference between those two visions.

When Strether first meets Chad, he wonders “if the boy weren’t a Pagan” (102) according to Woollett’s way of seeing, and yet as he feels delight in Paris, he comes to consider himself a Pagan “sacrificing so to strange gods” and whose hands “were embued with the blood of monstrous alien altars” (260). These metaphors imply not only the change of Strether’s way of seeing, but also that Woollett and Paris, namely America and Europe, regard each other as Pagan. Little Bilham’s remarks about conversion show the painfulness of acquiring the intersubjective vision:

“You[little Bilham] come over to convert the savages — for I[Miss Barrace] know you verily did, I remember you — and the savages simply convert *you*.”

“Not even!” the young man woefully confessed: “they haven’t gone through that form. They’ve simply — the cannibals! — eaten me; converted me if you like, but converted me into food. I’m but the bleached bones of a Christian.” (125)

As a convert, little Bilham can be aware of the fact that both visions are equally limited and biased. His remarks foreshadow Strether's following experience in which Chad and Madame de Vionnet convert Strether to prey on. The exposure of their deception is the moment Strether acquires intersubjective vision.

In addition, in these remarks, we can also find a desire to convert the savages, in other words, a desire to conquer another culture; and more than anyone else in this novel, Waymarsh embodies such a desire. In his initial days in Paris, Miss Barrace calls him "Sitting Bull" (158), whereas after the arrival of the Pococks, Strether sees in him the image of a "Southern planter of the great days" (270). These two metaphors indicate Waymarsh's shift from a resister to an exploiter: at first he resists being conquered by Europe, but in turn, receiving the reinforcements by the Pococks, he conquers Europe and exploits it.

Thus, two changes occur in *The Ambassadors*: Strether's conversion and Waymarsh's shift of status. It should be noted that no one but themselves can "see"

Miss Gostrey. Madame de Vionnet tells of the difficulty of “seeing” her:

“I went to see her[Miss Gostrey],” she added, “almost immediately after I had seen you[Strether]. . . She’s absent . . . so that I may not see her.” (161)

“Well, [Strether] won’t let you[Sarah] see [Miss Gostrey], you know,”

Madame de Vionnet sympathetically threw in. “He never lets me — old friends as we are: I mean as I am with Maria.” (225)

Not in a literal sense, of course, but in a figurative sense, Madame de Vionnet and Sarah cannot “see” Miss Gostrey. In contrast, Waymarsh can “see” her: “I’ve seen her quite a number of times. . . . I’ve kept my eyes on her right along” (226). Indeed, those who can see Miss Gostrey can experience change; she appears only before Strether and Waymarsh as a guide to the other world, the other culture. It is not irrelevant to say, then, that she is another “ghost” in Henry James’s fictions; in this regard, Miss Gostrey becomes “Miss Ghostly.”

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Empire of Henry James:**

#### **Revolving “The Turn of the Screw”**

Attribution of otherness to the differences in “cultural worlds” allows for another reading. In Henry James’s tales, the ghosts stand not only for epistemological others, but also cultural others. They are literally “foreign” bodies in the subjective vision, urging the subject to acknowledge and accept the cultural diversity that sometimes generates the conflict between two different cultures. In this sense, James’s ghostly tales deal with the same motif as his “international” works. In this chapter, reconsidering the categorization of James’s works, I will illuminate the embedded internationality in his most popular ghostly tale, “The Turn of the Screw” (1898).

Although apparently dealing with different topics, James’s works are undoubtedly based on the subjective vision of the protagonist, that is, how and what he/she sees. Reconsidering the too-familiar classification from this standpoint, then,



can bring new light to reading James. Traditionally, James's enormous fiction writings have been classified roughly into three themes, as follows: "international," "gothic," and "artistic." In his "international" novels, James posits analogous protagonists, typically an innocent young lady newly arrived from America, and portrays the conflict provoked by the protagonist's entrance into European society. The "gothic" tales involve supernatural experiences, while the tales treating the interrelationship between art and life are distinguished as having an "artistic theme." While these themes have rarely been connected, we can find a common motif among them, namely the recognition of the gaze of others' eyes.

What James consistently describes in his works is the intersection of the gaze. Whereas the "artistic" tales illustrate how to see life through art, the innocent protagonists in the "international" novels cannot see the world appropriately and collide with others. Using the stream-of-consciousness technique, James depicts the limitations of their subjective vision, which reveal how they are insufficiently able to

fully comprehend their situations. They are exploited until they realize that the world is not as it seems to them, and that they are also seen by others as an object of the gaze. Finally, in the “gothic” tales, whether through psychogenetic hallucination or as actual entities, the ghosts that the protagonists witness bear a certain similarity to those who see and look back at them. Their gaze degrades the viewer to an object, suggesting another way of seeing the world.

James’s “international” novels and “gothic” tales are therefore like two sides of the same coin. We can find internationality in his “gothic” tales, since James’s ghosts always appear as cultural others, as argued in my previous chapter. Their peculiar cultural otherness is clearly manifested in “The Turn of the Screw,” which exemplifies the cultural otherness of James’s ghosts.

“The Turn of the Screw” provides us with the best opportunity to see this colonized otherness in James’s “epistemological” stories, since it represents the unseen relationship between colony and home country.

The text of "The Turn of the Screw" has long been controversial in critical history. At first, reactions to it simply praised its excellence as a ghost story. Some of his contemporary critics even admitted its peculiarity as regards the Gothic tradition; for example, Virginia Woolf states that "Henry James's ghosts have nothing in common with the violent old ghosts" (159). About forty years after the first publication of "The Turn of the Screw," the critical reception drastically changed with Edmund Wilson's suggestion that the ghosts may only be the hallucinations of the governess. He argues that "there is never any evidence that anybody but the governess sees the ghosts. She believes that the children see them but there is never any proof that they do" (170-71). He concludes his analysis with the Freudian point of view that the ghosts are hysterical hallucinations evoked by the governess's repressed libido and infatuation with her employer. This stimulating argument provoked a fierce controversy. For instance, Robert B. Heilman, asserting that the ghosts are beyond doubt, incisively rebuts Wilson's interpretation, saying that "the sly Freudian

readers . . . seem to miss its whole tone and import. . . . The Freudians misread the internal evidence almost as valiantly as they do the external” (178). Heilman finds an allegory of the Garden of Eden in this story, comparing Miles and Flora with Adam and Eve. The controversy over whether the governess perceives real ghosts or merely hallucinates has continued without pause, but, with developments in literary criticism, there has appeared a new strategy which focuses on the ambiguity of the narrative itself. Shoshana Felman sees its uncertainty for interpretation as the play of differences such that even the history of its interpretive controversy itself becomes an object of discussion as participation of its textual action. Throughout the critical debate, however, most critics have rarely argued about the colonial image within the text. If we postulate that Quint and Miss Jessel are neither ghosts nor hallucinations but the essential others within the country house, we can see the reflection of colonial relationships in “The Turn of the Screw.”

The actual colonies are mentioned once in the text. The extra narrator, who

makes some introductory remarks heralding the governess's story, tells us that the master "had been left, by the death of his parents in India, guardian to a small nephew and a small niece, children of a younger, a military brother whom he had lost two years before" ("The Turn of the Screw" 4). This explanation associates the text with the colony and enables us to read it as an allegory of the disturbance of imperial order.

To fully comprehend this allegory, we should first look at the relationships among the characters. The master, despite his indifference, dominates whoever inhabits this novel. Meanwhile, the governess, Mrs. Grose, and the children never hide their liking for the uncle in any difficult situation:

"When do you think he will come? Don't you think we ought to write?"—there was nothing like that enquiry, we found by experience, for carrying off an awkwardness. "He" of course was their uncle in Harley Street; and we lived in much profusion of theory that he might at any moment arrive to mingle in our circle. (77-78)

His dominance over them is obvious. In contrast, Mrs. Grose is subordinate to all the other characters: She is obedient to what the governess says, even when she finds nothing to prove the presence of ghosts; she serves the children and never doubts their essential goodness. Before their relationship becomes complicated, the governess—at least ostensibly—dominates the children. Thus, we can find politics in the household in *Bly*, which is established as a hierarchical order with the employer at the top, followed by the governess, then the children, and finally Mrs. Grose.

The allegory is reinforced by the seclusion of the country house. The sense of distance, or disjunction from the master's Harley Street transforms the country house into a kind of colony, in which each character is assigned a role—the master as the imperial power, the governess as the governor, and the children and Mrs. Grose as the subalterns.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, as the governess aptly remarks, the country house in *Bly* is a

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<sup>11</sup> In addition, Mrs. Grose's illiteracy clarifies the class division within the subaltern group: She represents the uneducated servile class, while the children represent the educated ruling class. This view is reinforced by the governess's lesson to the children, with "all the romance of nursery and the poetry of the schoolroom" (18), since Gauri Viswanathan demonstrates the role of the literature in the colonial

colony.

“I forebore for the moment to analyze this description further than by the reflexion that a part of it applied to several of the member of the household, of the half-dozen maids and men who were still of our small colony. (50-51)”

The imperial order in the “colony,” however, is disturbed by the ghosts. Therefore, the governess—clarifying their otherness by referring them as “my visitants”—declares them to be “infamous” (31). According to Mrs. Grose, they transgress the class boundary:

“Come, there was something between [Quint and Miss Jessel]?”

“There was everything.”

“In spite of the difference—?”

“Oh of their rank, their condition”—[Mrs. Grose] brought it woefully out.

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education of the Indian subject.

“*She* was a lady.” . . .

“Yes—she was a lady.”

“And he so dreadfully below,” said Mrs. Grose.

. . . [T]here was nothing to prevent an acceptance of my companion’s own measure of my predecessor’s abasement. (59)

The ghosts’ transgression of this boundary necessarily causes a disturbance in the country house. Before his death, Quint “had been perpetually together” with Miles “for a period of several months” (34), and this induces him to prevaricate about himself and Miss Jessel. The children thus learn deception, and disguise their disobedience to the governess by behaving innocently and obediently. This stratification of relationships subverts the dominance of the governess over the children, and disrupts the hierarchical order in the country house. Therefore, the governess, who needs to restore her power over the governance of the “colony,” obsessively asserts that the ghosts are evil and violently oppresses the children until



they admit their secret meetings with them.

The subversion of the relationship between the governess and the children necessarily collapses the colony, which, as a matter of course, results in revolution. It is not a mere metaphor when the governess states that she became aware of the deception by Miles; rather, it is the genuine crisis of the colony:

Miles's whole title to independence, the right of his sex and situation, were so stamped upon him that if he had suddenly struck for freedom I should have had nothing to say. I was by the strangest of chances wondering how I should meet him when the revolution unmistakably occurred. I call it a revolution because I now see how, with the word he spoke, the curtain rose on the last act of my dreadful drama and the catastrophe was precipitated.

(90-91)

The tropes the governess employs—"title to independence," "struck for freedom" and "the revolution"—clearly expresses her imperialistic vision and its instability. Thus

recapitulating the anxiety for the disturbance in the colony, the text by the same token exemplifies the oppressiveness of the imperialistic vision. The governess's vision is obviously subjective not only in an epistemological sense but also in an imperial sense: the ghosts disturb the governess as an imperial subject.

In this way, "The Turn of the Screw" not only represents the colonial relationship, but also foreshadows its tragic future. Therefore, James employs an open ending in the conclusion of this frame narrative: what closes the frame of the text is history.

## Chapter 4

### The Ghost of Empire/ The Empire of Ghost:

#### “The Jolly Corner” as Imperial Gothic

“The Jolly Corner” (1908), the last of James’s Gothic tales, is regarded as one of his masterpieces, and a variety of critiques have been advanced.<sup>12</sup> In this chapter, I will try to shed some light on a dimension, which has until now not been fully analyzed, that is, a presentation of a new reading based on the postcolonial view of the tale. By illustrating the racial consciousness in the figure of the alter ego that Brydon confronts, I will examine the representation of the disturbance of the hierarchical order between the empire and the colony that is implied by the colonized otherness within the alter ego. Through this, the “gothicness” of the tale enables us to connect it to James’s

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<sup>12</sup> Traditionally, reading of “The Jolly Corner” has centered on the view that regards Brydon as an autobiographical figure of James, which relevantly sees the tale as a story of compensation for the sense of guilt about his leaving America in his youth. Tuveson, comparing it with *The Sense of the Past* (1917), defines the tale as the story of re-living the past. Some recent critics have examined new readings of the tale: Reising analyzes how the change in the American self and politics brought about the development of capitalism in America; and Savoy explores the oppressed queerness of Brydon in the alter ego, to name but a few. Especially Hawkins’s argument, in which she illustrates in the figure of the alter ego the representation of blackness within the American identity, is quite useful for examining racial consciousness in the tale.

international themes and allegorically conjures up the ambivalence of America as “the postcolonial empire” in the turn of the century with which the contemporary James wrestled.

In 1904, Henry James returned to America for the first time in twenty years for a lecture tour of major cities around the United States. What he witnessed in America was not the familiar homeland that he had nostalgically and romantically expected and written about in his letters to William Dean Howells or William James prior to his return, but the astonishing changes in its landscape that America had undergone during his absence. His impression of the “modern” America of his day is depicted in *The American Scene* (1907) in which he profoundly observes modern America and portrays its vileness and charm.<sup>13</sup> In this book, his contemplation of the amalgamation of race in New York exposes his political unconscious:

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<sup>13</sup> Though James’s lecture tour reached the large cities on the West Coast, *The American Scene*, devoting three chapters to the South enables a focus on an impression of the East Coast. James’s conclusion to his preface that he “shall have to take a few [other chapters] for the rest of my story” (ii) anticipates a second book centered on the West, which was

There are small strange animals, known to natural history, snakes or worms,  
 I believe, who, when cut into pieces, wriggle away contentedly and live in  
 the snippet as completely as in the whole. So the denizens of the New York  
 Ghetto, heaped as thick as the splinters on the table of a glass-blower, had  
 each, like the fine glass particle, his or her individual share of the whole  
 hard glitter of Israel. (132)

In these notorious remarks about “the New York Ghetto,” James tries to describe, and perhaps admires, the vitality and the race unity that the Jews maintain amid isolation and divergence in the great modern city. Yet, as many critics censure, his metaphor of “snakes or worms” betrays his contemptuous view on the Jews.<sup>14</sup> In another part, he also conjures up horrible images of Jewish expansion:

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never written.

<sup>14</sup> While almost all of James’s characters are presumed to be Caucasian, we can admit the fact that quite a few exceptions of Jewish figures appearing in his works are often depicted unfavorably, as Freedman clarifies. Ben-Joseph presents the most comprehensive and specific study on James’s view of Jews and other races.

The way, at the same time, this chapter of history [of Israel] did, all that evening, seem to push, was a matter that made the “ethnic” apparition again sit like a skeleton at the feast. It was fairly as if I could see the spectre grin while the talk of the hour gave me, across the board, facts and figures, chapter and verse, for the extent of the Hebrew conquest of New York. (132)

It is easy to spot racism in this passage. However, what is noteworthy here is not so much James’s more or less anti-Semitic view as his tropes. The Jews, associated with lower animals like “snakes or worms” in the prior passage, are associated with ghostly images like “apparition,” “skeleton,” and “spectre.” In short, racial otherness appears as ghostliness and bestiality in James’s eyes. This association casts a new light on reading James’s ghost tales, for he imbues the ghosts or supernatural apparitions in his tales with bestiality, typically in “The Beast in the Jungle” (1903), “The Turn of the

Screw” (1898), and “The Jolly Corner” (1908), associating them with brutality or savageness. We can therefore capture the racial otherness in James’s ghosts.

To reconsider James’s ghosts as representations of the racial other, we should not overlook that most of his ghost stories are piled up after 1891. In *Henry James: Stories of the Supernatural*, an anthology compiled by Leon Edel, with the exception of four stories written before *Daisy Miller* (1878), fourteen tales are written around the turn of the century, the precise period when Gothic novels flourished; Bram Stoker, Oscar Wilde, Robert Louis Stevenson, and numerous other writers published Gothic novels. This trend was preceded by the emergence of spiritualism. Starting from the Fox sisters’ poltergeist phenomenon in 1848, spiritualism became so popular in the late nineteenth century that many séances were held and many scholars began to study psychic phenomena, as in the Society for Psychical Research. Though James did not cast himself into this craze, spiritualism surrounded him: the James family lived in New York City where the Fox sisters had séances and caused a

sensation; Henry James Sr. recorded his spiritual experience of seeing a ghostlike vision in 1844; William James organized the American Society for Psychical Research in 1885 and later became its president; and Henry James himself had an experience of witnessing and chasing a ghostlike figure, which would become the source of the plot of “The Jolly Corner.”

The craze of spiritualism in the *fin de siècle* stemmed from the reaction to the materialism and positivism that developed in the late nineteenth century Western world and the ensuing distrust in Christianity. It is significant that spiritualism and occultism frequently refer to the Orient, especially India. The most conspicuous example was the Theosophical Society, founded by Madame Helena Blavatsky in 1875, which grew so influential in those days that many intellectuals, including Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein, and William James, became members. While its doctrine denies the dogmatism of Christianity and reverses evolutionary theory, it is



Indian philosophy that forms its kernel.<sup>15</sup> Moving its headquarters to India and cooperating with the nationalist organization there, this society indirectly participated in the independence movement in India. As proof that the society was beyond mere spiritualism, Indian leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi joined it.<sup>16</sup>

It is not coincidental that spiritualism was linked to India and the nationalist movement there since imperialism dominated the world in the late nineteenth century. Imperialism epitomizes the materialism and evolutionary theory that paradoxically brought about the craze of spiritualism in that era. It was justified by enlightenment theory, which regarded European colonial domination as a mission to civilize dark savages. Under the dichotomy between civilization and savagery, spiritualism—antithesis to the fruits of European civilization, such as science or

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<sup>15</sup> Blavatsky advanced a theory of spiritual evolution, which claims that mankind did not evolve from, but rather degenerated spiritually from anthropoids, and self-reliant evolution in spirit brings about the completion of mankind, which allows us to be close to God (see Blavatsky).

<sup>16</sup> Gandhi joined the Theosophical Society in 1891 two months before Blavatsky died and seven years after the Society for Psychical Research discovered the trick in Blavatsky's prophecy. The Theosophical Society then returned its headquarters in London. It is clear that for Gandhi this society had merits besides spiritual interest, which is proven by the fact that he and other Indian leaders made Annie Besant the President of the Indian Congress Party.

Christianity, which are embodied in the empire—is necessarily identified with the colonies in which savagery is embodied. Therefore, Gothic novels, flourishing against the background of spiritualism, have an inevitable affinity with the colonies. Brantlinger coins the term “Imperial Gothic” for the adventure stories in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras that are set in the colonies of the British Empire and have a Gothic composition, for example, H. Rider Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines* in 1885 and John Buchan’s *Greenmantle* in 1916:

Imperial Gothic combines the seemingly scientific, progressive, often Darwinian ideology of imperialism with an antithetical interest in the occult. Although the connections between imperialism and other aspects of late Victorian and Edwardian culture are innumerable, the link with occultism is especially symptomatic of the anxieties that attended the climax of the British Empire. No form cultural expression reveals more clearly the contradictions within that climax than Imperial Gothic. (227-28)

Imperial Gothic typically narrates the way a Western protagonist is frightened by a supernatural existence that is non-Western or exterior to the Christian order.

Brantlinger analyzes that its center is anxiety:

Imperial Gothic expresses anxieties about the waning of religious orthodoxy, but even more clearly it expresses anxieties about the ease with which civilization can revert to barbarianism or savagery and thus about the weakening of Britain's imperial hegemony. (229)

What is manifested in Imperial Gothic is anxiety about the reversion and subversion not only of the British Empire but also of Western civilization. Though Brantlinger does not include James among Imperial Gothic writers, probably because his works are not set in the colonies, his temporal classification corresponds with James's Gothic tales. It is not irrelevant to reconsider them as Imperial Gothic, especially in view of contemporaneity and James's friendship with Robert Louis Stevenson, Rudyard

Kipling, and Joseph Conrad, whose works Brantlinger defines as typically Imperial Gothic.<sup>17</sup>

To examine the association between the colonies and the ghosts in the Gothic novels of the *fin de siècle*, Jameson's theory of otherness under imperialism is useful. He explains that the colonies bring "radical otherness" to the empire. Despite the territorial inclusion, the colonies are the other, both culturally and epistemologically, whom the empire can assimilate into its subject(s) neither in the meaning of the folk nor of the ego. The economic system allows this "colonized other" to haunt the empire, which is represented in literature:

The prototypical paradigm of the Other in the late nineteenth century . . . is the other Imperial nation-state. . . . Such "others" will then circulate . . . in

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<sup>17</sup> James's library had more than ten books relating to colonies, including a French diplomat's memoir of the Middle East, a British military officer's record of the war in Afghanistan, and a travel writer's memoir of India. They exemplify his interest in colonies and European dominance over these colonies.

high literature during this period—as in the various foreigners who add an exotic note to high society in the English novel. . . .

But this masking of one axis of otherness by a very different one, this substitution of rivalry for exploitation, and of a First World set of characters for a Third World presence, may be thought of as a strategy of representational containment, which scarcely alters the fundamental imperialist structure of colonial appropriation. . . . The colonized other who is its essential other component or opposite number has become invisible.

(49-50)

This theory can be applied to James's works. The invisible "colonized other," inevitably bearing the bestiality associated with the colony and its savagery, appears as the ghosts in his Gothic tales. It is noteworthy here the implication of the term "Gothic." As is well-known, "Gothic" etymologically means "connected with the

Goths,” referring to the architectural style. The fifteenth Italian intellectuals began to use it as a synonym for “barbaric” to show contempt for vulgar medieval style. Since the Goths are a German tribe that invaded and led to the collapse of the Roman Empire, the term “Gothic” inevitably implies an otherness that can disturb the imperial order and, at the same time, the barbarism internalized within it. Suggesting the reversion and subversion of Western dominance, James’s ghosts highlight such “Gothic” horror.

What frightens James’s protagonists, then, is not the apparition itself but the infiltration of the “colonized other” implied by it. “The Jolly Corner” exemplifies the “colonized otherness” of James’s ghosts. In this tale, the ghost takes the form of the alter ego of the protagonist, Spencer Brydon:

People enough, first and last, had been in terror of apparitions, but who had ever before so turned the tables and become himself, in the apparitional

world, an incalculable terror? . . . [H]e wondered if he would have glared at these moments with large shining yellow eyes, and what it mightn't verily be, for the poor hard-pressed *alter ego*, to be confronted with such a type.

(211)

Brydon thus chases his alter ego in the vacant house on the jolly corner, which he inhabited as a child and revisits after spending much of his life in Europe, to know what he might be if he remained in America. Brydon's aggressiveness, however, cannot persist in the encounter with the alter ego, which scares him enough to make him faint. This plot reiterates one of James's international novels. They typically focus on the friction not between Europeans and Americans but between the Americans excessively Europeanized and maintaining their Americanness, which frequently results in catastrophic collapse. Condensing it into one person, James reverses the American-quasi-European relationship in "The Jolly Corner."

Moreover, the relationship between Brydon and his alter ego is evocative of another racial dynamic. The alter ego, having a black face and wearing white gloves, is compared to Harlequin at the Christmas farces while Brydon is Pantaloon (213).<sup>18</sup>

Warren points to the inevitability of black masking of racial otherness:

[O]ver the course of the 1880s, 1890s, and through the turn of the century, popular representations of black/white racial difference exert a constant pressure on the work of an author like James such that in thinking through the possibility of aesthetic redemption it seemed almost necessary to distance oneself from black strangers. By masking Brydon's other self in black, "The Jolly Corner," like black minstrelsy, simultaneously

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<sup>18</sup> Harlequin is a clown of a farce acted with a black mask since *commedia dell'arte* in the sixteenth century in Italy and was performed as a servant along with the master Pantaloon in the nineteenth century, which was adopted in American minstrel shows. Warren explains that New York theaters where James frequented in his youth made it a custom to conclude the day's program with a short play of minstrel show and that the people at that time usually went to see minstrel shows on Christmas Day (125-26). It is not irrelevant, then, to associate the alter ego with the minstrel Harlequin.



acknowledged the power of, while establishing the means of control over,  
 the Other. (128)

The confrontation between the two on the black-and-white marble floor thus emblemizes the impossibility of the assimilation of racial difference. What Brydon, and perhaps James, too, sees and fears is an America infiltrated by other races, which is no longer familiar to him but turns into “a black stranger” and “an awful beast.”<sup>19</sup>

The racial connotation becomes more telling when Brydon’s pursuit of the alter ego resembles hunting:

[H]e had tasted of no pleasure so fine as his actual tension, had been introduced to no sport that demanded at once the patience and the nerve of this stalking of a creature more subtle, yet at bay perhaps more formidable, than any beast of the forest. . . . [H]e found himself holding his breath and

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<sup>19</sup> Ichikawa Mikako points to James’s Anglo-Saxonism and imperialistic view in the revisions to the New York Edition, which began just after the publication of *The American Scene*. It is another example of the racial anxiety that increased in James during his return to modern America.

living in the joy of the instant, the supreme suspense created by big game alone.

He wasn't afraid (though putting himself the question as he believed gentlemen on Bengal tiger-shoots or in close quarters with the great bear of the Rockies had been known to confess to having put it). . . (210)

What is significant here is that Brydon regards the chase as "sport" and himself as "a sportsman." According to MacKenzie, hunting is classified into three types according to the purpose and the class involved: the practical and utilitarian hunt, the ritualistic Hunt, and the pleasurable Sport. Sport and Hunt overlap at many points, but while Hunt avoids risks, Sport seeks them. Ritualistic and pleasurable hunting was a recreation of the European aristocrats, and after the Industrial Revolution, the gentlemen of the Empire began to enjoy it.

In the nineteenth century, the hunting field was transferred to the colonies, and more significance was attached to hunting under imperialism:

As the nineteenth century progressed hunting became a central part of imperial culture. For the first time a dominant elite assumed a global significance and the various historical themes [of Hunt] . . . were translated to a world stage. An imperial and largely masculine elite attempted to reserve for itself access to hunting, adopted and transformed the concept of Hunt as a ritual of prestige and dominance, and set about the separation of the human and animal worlds to promote “preservation” (later “conservation”) as a continuing justification of its monopoly. (MacKenzie 22)

In the colonies, hunting was the demonstration of and access to the power of Western civilization, and it proved and justified European supremacy over its colonies.

European hunters were inclined to pursue big game, for the bigger game they hunted, the more power they could demonstrate. Big-game hunting epitomized the conquest of savagery by Western civilization. Brydon also enjoys big-game hunting as a European hunter. The dark side of the house “affect[s] him as the very jungle of his prey,” and what encourages him is “the white electric luster” which is “human actual social” and “of the world he had lived in” (“The Jolly Corner” 211). Brydon is an imperial gentleman, seeking his prey in the dark jungle, supported by the light of civilization.

But the “evil, odious, blatant, vulgar” (226) beast in the dark jungle is Brydon’s alter ego, no matter how aversively he denies that. Whereas he tries to differentiate himself from the alter ego, which connotes racial otherness, by calling it “a black stranger,” they make no difference in Alice Staverton’s eyes:

“[T]his brute, with his awful face—this brute’s a black stranger. He’s none of *me*, even as I *might* have been,” Brydon sturdily declared.

But [Alice Staverton] kept the clearness that was like the breath of infallibility. “Isn’t the whole point that you’d have been different?”

He almost scowled for it. “As different as *that*—?” (231)

Admitting the ostensible difference between them (“[H]e isn’t . . . *you!*” (232)), the alter ego is no horror to Alice, for it is the other self of Brydon. As he might possibly become like the alter ego and vice versa, they are identical to her.

The identification with the alter ego is, however, profound horror to Brydon, for it, invalidating the difference between the two, breaks down the boundary and the dichotomy between the civilized and the savage. What terrifies him most is neither being hunted nor seeing the face of the alter ego but acknowledging it to be his (“The face, *that face*, Spencer Brydon’s?”), which resulted in his “falling straight from his height and sublimity” (225). This passage clearly manifests the fear of degeneration haunting the empire in the *fin de siècle*; despite enlightenment theory, the empire

might disintegrate into savagery in its conquering and ruling of the savages. We should not, then, overlook the striking contrast between the alter ego's face and its clothing:

So Brydon, before him, took him in; with every fact of him now, in the higher light, hard and acute—his planted stillness, his vivid truth, his grizzled bent head and white masking hands, his queer actuality of evening-dress, of dangling double eye-glass, of gleaming silk lappet and white linen, of pearl button and gold watch-guard and polished shoe. No portrait by a great modern master could have presented him with more intensity, thrust him out of his frame with more art. (225)

Its fine clothing exhibits that the alter ego is also an imperial gentleman, “a sportsman,” enjoying big-game hunting. Just as Brydon does, the alter ego epitomizes

imperial power; what Brydon sees and fears is the other face of imperialism, the dark side of enlightenment.

Also, the reversion of the relationship between the two implies the reversion of European supremacy over its colonies. These anxieties are expressed in Imperial Gothic novels, and “The Jolly Corner” can be included among them. Indeed, “The Jolly Corner” is an adventure story set in a colony; we consider America to be, at least formerly, a British colony. In the alter ego’s shift of position, we can read the history of America, the colony that became independent by overthrowing European dominance.

Moreover, Brydon’s hunting has yet another dimension. Horne and Ichikawa point to the shadow of Theodore Roosevelt in Brydon.<sup>20</sup> Roosevelt felt hostility toward James, which he exhibited in the essay “True Americanism” in 1894.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Horne indicates that Brydon’s description during his hunting resembles that of Roosevelt who uses the phrases “big game” and “close quarters” in his 1885 account of going after a grizzly.

<sup>21</sup> What made Roosevelt hostile to James is unclear. When James first met Roosevelt, who

Without mentioning the name, Roosevelt criticizes James:

[He] becomes a second-rate European, because he is over-civilized, over-sensitive, over-refined, and has lost the hardihood and manly courage by which alone he can conquer in the keen struggle of our national life. Be it remembered, too, that this same being does not really become a European; he only ceases being an American, and becomes nothing. (40)

This emigré may write graceful and pretty verses, essays, novels; but he will never do work to compare with that of his brother, who is strong enough to stand on his own feet, and do his work as an American. (41)

It is probable that James retaliates against Roosevelt by making the seemingly

masculine big-game hunter faint as he faces the horrible ghost. The resemblance

between Brydon and Roosevelt, however, has more significance in view of

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was a student under his brother, William, at Harvard, in 1883, they had a friendly conversation. Therefore, puzzled at first when Roosevelt began mentioning him unfavorably in his speeches and essays, James responded to the attacks, and their antagonistic relationship lasted until 1905 when Roosevelt invited James to a dinner party and had a talk with him. See Horne.



Roosevelt's discourse on genderization. Roosevelt accuses James, who emigrated "because he . . . has lost the hardihood and manly courage" and "he, with his delicate, effeminate sensitiveness, finds the conditions of life on this side of the water crude and raw" and "he cannot play a man's part among men" (40). Since Roosevelt, an enthusiast for hunting, attaches importance to manliness and masculinity, it may be natural for him to feminize the opponent. Yet what is significant here is that he feminizes Europe, contrary to the discourse of Orientalism. Besides, he attaches to the semi-European James a moral or mental weakness, which is commonly attached to the colony in the discourse of imperialism. This reversion of Orientalism in Roosevelt's discourse resonates with American imperialism as it develops throughout the nineteenth century. Murphy examines the idea of the Western Hemisphere, the foundational notion, which determines America's diplomatic policy throughout history:

The “Western Hemisphere idea” was appropriated and redefined during the revolutionary period of 1776-1823, when many of the newly formed American states perceived and claimed a political and . . . “mystical” identification with their hemisphere based on their common revolutionary break from European colonialism. . . . [H]owever, this construction of a hemispheric history links the New World revolutionary experience of postcolonial nationalism with the simultaneous, ongoing processes of Euro-American imperialism. . . . (1-2)

Thus, America has two divergent qualities: postcolonialism and imperialism. Denying European imperialism by the Revolution, America maintains white supremacy over Native and African Americans and expands imperialistically into South America, the Pacific Ocean, and Asia in the late nineteenth century. It is the ambivalence of the postcolonial empire that brings forth the twist in Roosevelt’s Orientalistic discourse since it has to differentiate itself from the old world as well as the Orient. Indeed,

America is the alter ego of the European empire, being different from but at the same time identical to it.

When we look at the resemblance to Roosevelt, Brydon, a quasi-European American, epitomizes American imperialism. We must read, then, “The Jolly Corner” as not only European but also as American Imperial Gothic whereby James envisions the course of this new, postcolonial empire, frightened by the internalization of the racial, colonized other. The plot of the tale is emblematic: while the protagonists in Brantlinger’s Imperial Gothics go to peripheral colonies to see the ghosts, Brydon confronts his alter ego with a black face on his return to the homeland. As such, the colonized others do not transgress from the periphery but always exist in the center of the postcolonial empire. Thus, “The Jolly Corner” expresses anxieties about the reversion of the empire, which inevitably awaits America on the road to imperialism.

## Chapter 5

### A Lady, a Text, a Nation:

#### Dual Allegory in *The Portrait of a Lady*

*The Portrait of the Lady* (1881) is typically considered Henry James's most acclaimed and popular novel. James himself praised the novel in the preface of the New York edition of the book as having "a structure reared with an 'architectural' competence . . . that makes it . . . the most proportioned of his productions after 'The Ambassadors'"

(13). Critics see the novel legibly demonstrating his "international" theme within it.

The plot of the novel is a kind of bildungsroman, typical Jamesian one: an innocent young American lady Isabel learns about the world when she collides with experienced Europeans.<sup>22</sup> Such a reading is undoubtedly reasonable and adequate, yet oversimplified. This chapter explores, in the words of Joel Porte, "something left over that baffles interpretation" (4) in the novel or, more exactly, explicates what is being built in this bildungsroman novel. Drawing analogy between the characters and books,

I will exemplify Isabel's allegorical growing as a text, and, by the same token, seek

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<sup>22</sup> Joel Porte briefly summarizes: "[A] traditional humanistic reading of *Portrait*, whereby 'America' and 'Europe' stand as the metonymic poles of 'innocence' and 'experience' between which his essentially noble New World everywoman must negotiate her perilous way" (4). The leading Jamesian critics in the twentieth century, such as F. O. Matthiessen, F. R. Leavis, and R. W. B. Lewis, established and reinforced such a view on the novel.

the implication of an innocent young nation facing the discrepancy between its foundational notion and the real politics. Thus, I will illustrate James's awareness of these political issues and how he puts them into his work of art.

To begin, James's use of meta-fictional phrase. For example, when Henrietta Stackpole admonishes Isabel that she should not "say such things as that—like the heroine of an immoral novel" (187) or Lord Warburton confesses his infatuation with Isabel by saying "I fell in love with you then. It was at first sight, as the novels say; I know now that's not a fancy-phrase, and I shall think better of novels for evermore" (124), James seems perhaps a little jesting.<sup>23</sup> The author, seemingly not yet fully developing his style, offers these platitudes in a nineteenth-century manner, just like his half-omnipotent narrator pretends to be a biographer and calls Isabel "our heroine." These meta-fictional phrases, however, are aligned with the analogy between the characters and writings. Ralph depicts Henrietta as being "as crisp and new and comprehensive as a first issue before the folding. From top to toe she had probably no misprint. . . . She struck him as not all in the large type, the type of horrid

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<sup>23</sup> While the phrase "the heroine of an immoral novel" seems to refer to sensational novels popular in the late nineteenth century, it may imply James's own novella *Daisy Miller* (1878). Though gaining wide popularity, the novella and the heroine were blamed as being immoral, and James had to write a letter to Eliza Lynn Linton in August 1880 to explain what the story meant two months before *The Portrait of a Lady* appeared in a magazine.

‘headings’” (103). While Henrietta’s profession of journalism unquestionably conveys such an impression, the bookish metaphor is employed in describing Madame Merle as well: “She was always plain Madame Merle . . . who stayed with people a great deal and was almost as universally ‘liked’ as some new volume of smooth twaddle” (276). Moreover, Pansy is compared to an unwritten page, as “she was like a sheet of blank paper—the ideal *jeune fille* of foreign fiction. Isabel hoped that so fair and smooth a page would be covered with an edifying text” (303) or “Pansy was really a blank page, a pure white surface, successfully kept so” (341). Thus the female characters in *The Portrait of a Lady* are analogized with (un)written text; thus, these descriptions of other female characters tinge Isabel with textuality. As Laurel Bollinger insightfully elucidates, the novel reiterates a pattern where “women figured in terms of written language, but bound to men unable—or unwilling—to ‘read’ them” (139). In other words, human relations are equivalent to the act of reading in *The Portrait of a Lady*, and the novel recapitulates a reader-text relationship within the text.

According to reader-response theory, a text has to be read and the reading itself brings forth a new text. As Shoshana Felman explores, reading, especially in James, is

a performative textual action.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, reading *The Portrait of a Lady* as a bildungsroman—a story of a young lady building up herself through the relations with the people surrounding her—constitutes Isabel’s formation of subjectivity, as Bollinger suggests:

[The] concept [of reader-response theory] becomes particularly problematic when applied to the new commonplace idea—so clearly evoked by James’s complex figuration in *The Portrait*—that subjectivity too can be described in terms of text. Reading, or interpretation, essentially creates a new text; human interaction, functioning as reading, is also irrevocably involved in rewriting (141).

The metaphors of writings ascribed to each character indicate that one’s subjectivity *i.e.* a text is determined by how to be read. There the aporia of reader-response theory arises, resonating with existentialism: who is the author? This question underlies the discussion of “self” between Madame Merle and Isabel:

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<sup>24</sup> “[T]he critical debate, in its intentions and contentions, itself partakes of the textual action . . . The actors, or the agents of this textual action, are indeed the readers and the critics no less than the characters. Criticism, to use Austin’s terminology, here consists not of a statement, but of a performance of the story of the text; its function is not constative but performative. Reading here becomes not the cognitive observation of the text’s pluralistic meaning, but its ‘acting out.’ Indeed it is not so much the critic who comprehends the text, as the text that comprehends the critic” (Felman 161).

[Madame Merle said] “[W]e are 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. I know a large part of me is in the clothes I choose to wear. . . . One’s self—for other people—is one’s expression of one’s self; and one’s house, one’s furniture, one’s garments, the books one reads, the company one keeps—these things are all expressive.” . . .

“I [Isabel] don’t agree with you. I think just the other way. I don’t know whether I succeed in expressing myself, but I know that nothing else expresses me. Nothing that belongs to me is any measure of me” (222-23).

Interestingly, both characters here employ the verb “express.” Both of them tacitly understand that “self” should be expressed and consequently be “read”; hence their epistemological debate anticipates the controversy over “misreading” in twentieth-century literary criticism. In a broader sense, however, Isabel and Madame Merle do not differ in their views on “self.” Admitting that the clothes, a large part of her “self,” are her own choice, Madame Merle puts a priority of the expression of “self” on her own being, much in the same way Isabel claims her “self” to be a priori.



What matters here is how the expression should be read, or more precisely, whether the self as a text is self-sufficient or not.

Essentially, this encounter between Madame Merle and Isabel echoes the dilemma that James faced: though the writer takes a priority, he/she does not have the authority of a text. The interpretation of the reader ultimately forms the text, however different it is from the writer's intention. In the preface of *The Portrait of a Lady*, James writes about the relationship between the writer and the reader with resignation:

[The novelist] is entitled to nothing, he is bound to admit, that can come to him, from the reader, as a result on the latter's part of any act of reflexion or discrimination. He may enjoy this finer tribute—that is another affair, but on condition only of taking it as a gratuity “thrown in,” a mere miraculous windfall, the fruit of a tree he may not pretend to have shaken. Against reflexion, against discrimination, in his interest, all earth and air conspire (15).

Just like Madame Merle chooses what to wear, James reflects that he constructs a text, arranges the characters, and designs the plot, in the hope of conveying his intentions to a reader. Ultimately, though, this exercise is insufficient and incomplete unless it is

read; yet, as long as it is read, the writer cannot expect his work to be “rightfully” interpreted. Though handing over interpretive authority of a text to the reader, James does not cease to be a “master” of the text, for, as Felman points, his ostensible disappearance from his text itself functions as his mastery (166). Rather, he keeps possessing power over a text, but cautiously conceals it. As to representational power politics in James’s text, Mark Seltzer argues that “James’s art of representation always also involves a politics of representation” and that “the Jamesian aesthetic is elaborated precisely as a way of dissimulating and disavowing the immanence of power in the novel” (16). A text overflows into the reader—into his/her interpretation—and then flows back. Thus the writer and the reader conspire to build a text.

Given this relationship between the author and the reader, then, another question arises: who is the writer? That is, who “writes” Isabel, in the novel where subjectivity as a text is built through human relations functioning as reading? It may be Isabel herself as she asserts, yet we can find another writer who arranges the surroundings and designs the plot for her: Ralph Touchett. He makes half of his inheritance over Isabel and lets her “do what she likes with” (204). Since what she experiences in

Europe is the outgrowth of the fortune, Ralph is the prior writer of Isabel as a text. And it is him that Bollinger leaves over in the aforementioned summarization of the novel as men being unable to read. He is a reader: “Living as he now lived was like reading a good book in a poor translation—a meagre entertainment for a young man who felt that he might have been an excellent linguist” (57). It is no wonder that he has the traits of a writer and a reader at the same time; to James, reading and writing are two sides of the same coin. Claiming that an artist has to draw his/her material from life, James contends that an artist, “in search of hard latent value,” has to discriminate and select life that is all inclusion and confusion (*The Art of the Novel* 120).<sup>25</sup> These materials are “nothing without the posted presence of the watcher—without, in other words, the consciousness of the artist” (46). That is, a work of art is an interpretation of life by an artist, and hence an artist should be a good reader as well.

The characteristic of a reader proves Ralph to be an artist, who displays his artistry in writing Isabel. Ralph as a writer evidently knows that he has no authority

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<sup>25</sup> It is noteworthy that James employs the same word “discrimination” to refer to the reader’s act in the aforementioned quotation. Compare these sentences: “Life [is] all inclusion and confusion, and art [is] all discrimination and selection”; “[The novelist] is entitled to nothing, he is bound to admit, that can come to him, from the reader, as a result on the latter’s part of any act of reflexion or discrimination.”

over his text and it cannot be built by him alone: “I shall not live many years; but I hope I shall live long enough to see what [Isabel] does with herself. She’s entirely independent of me; I can exercise very little influence upon her life. But I should like to do something for her” (204). Thus renouncing his authority, Ralph disappears from his text, and the novel itself is concluded by his death, as if it anticipates and embodies Roland Barthes’s theorization of “the death of the author.” Thus interpretative authority of Isabel as a text is handed over to the people surrounding her, just like the novel’s open ending allows its readers to interpret it whatever they like. Ralph’s behavior does not mean he abandons his power over the text. Rather, as suggested in the last conversation between Ralph and Isabel, his absence itself is part of his mastery. While disavowing his control over Isabel (“You wanted to look at life for yourself—but you were not allowed; you were punished for your wish”), Ralph still holds his mastery over her, which attains completion by his death: “[Isabel says to Ralph] ‘I always tried to keep you from understanding; but that’s all over.’ ‘I always understood,’ said Ralph. ‘I thought you did, and I didn’t like it. But now I like it’” (612). Indeed, Ralph traces James’s own behavior toward his novel—maintaining

but/by dissimulating the power—when he says to Isabel that “You won’t lose me—you will keep me [in spite of his death]. Keep me in your heart” (611).

This absence of semantic authority of a writer from a text is foretold from the beginning of the novel in the discussion between Ralph and Lord Warburton about the interpretation of Mrs. Touchett’s telegram:

[Mrs. Touchett’s telegram says] “Changed hotel, very bad, impudent clerk, address here. Taken sister’s girl, died last year, go to Europe, two sisters quite independent” (27).

[Ralph says] “But who’s ‘quite independent,’ and in what sense is the term used?—that point’s not yet settled. Does the expression apply more particularly to the young lady my mother has adopted, or does it characterise her sisters equally?—and is it used in a moral or in a financial sense? Does it mean that they’ve been left well off, or that they wish to be under no obligations? or does it simply mean that they’re fond of their own way?” . . .

“You’ll see for yourself,” said Lord Warburton. (28)

No wonder Ralph as reader can find many ways of reading the telegram; the text is insufficient and indecisive by itself. The meaning of the text can be variable and pluralistic according to who reads it. Ralph learns this when he asks Mrs. Touchett about the meaning of the telegram: “‘What you meant then, in your telegram, was that her character’s independent.’ ‘I never know what I mean in my telegrams—especially those I send from America’”(61). Indeed, it is not the writer but the reader who decides the meaning of a text—the reader must see for him/herself. Thus prefiguring the devolvement of semantic authority over a text, James implies that this novel is a kind of allegory about how a text can be ruined by the reader. *Isabel* as a work of art is ruined into being “immoral,” as Henrietta observes:

Isabel’s changing every day; she’s drifting away—right out to sea. I’ve watched her and I can see it. She’s not the bright American girl she was. She’s taking different views, a different colour, and turning away from her old ideals. I want to save those ideals (140).

A text is changing beyond the writer’s reach, beyond his/her ideal in writing it, by the reader. In this regard, it is obvious that Henrietta, whose name is symbolically the feminine form of Henry, is a righteous reader who can “throw in . . . the fruit of a tree”

to the writer—who can correctly read and interpret a text just as the writer intends, as proven by the fact that Ralph leaves his library to Henrietta “in recognition of her services to literature” (618). In spite of his ostensible renouncement of authority over a text, the reader is still goaded to read like Henrietta, just as Casper Goodwood, one of the inappropriate readers of Isabel, comes to Henrietta in the conclusion of the novel. Truly, *The Portrait of a Lady* is a kind of allegory of how to read, and rewrite, a text—in other words, how a text is, and should be, built by the reader. It is a bildungsroman of a text.

This reading becomes more significant in light of the internationality the novel embraces. As elucidated by numerous critics as far back as T. S. Eliot, James’s protagonists, when contrasted with his European characters, are regarded as having the national identity of America. The problem of what exactly it is aside, what is certain is that James depicts in his novels—and what is typified by *The Portrait of a Lady*—the formation and formulation of the American self.<sup>26</sup> In this regard, Porte’s analysis gives us insightful suggestion:

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<sup>26</sup> From this standpoint, the aforementioned conversation between Madame Merle and Isabel reveals James’s critical view on contemporary modern American society in the Gilded Age. In negating Madame Merle’s materialistic view (“I’ve a great respect for *things!*”), Isabel states that “To begin with it’s not my own choice that I wear [the clothes]; they’re imposed upon me by society” (223).

Europe was in effect the laboratory setting for [James's] experiment—the matrix out of which these new creatures called Americans had evolved and to which, as to an abandoned and perhaps unrecognized parent, they needed to return for . . . ultimately a sense of their own identity. . . . The return to origins represents the recapturing of a repressed past, the relearning of a language that one did not know one understood. For James, America was Europe in translation; his work amounts to a continual comparing of the two texts (2).

Porte's metaphors unwittingly reveal textuality of America as a nation. Indeed, America is a text: it was defined and commenced by being written and has been rewritten by being read and interpreted.<sup>27</sup> Narrating subjective formation of a young lady, *The Portrait of a Lady* thus details the subjective formation of a young nation as a text, whose identity as a cohesive whole became appreciable all the more for the schism of the Civil War. It is an allegorical bildungsroman of America as well.

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<sup>27</sup> We can say every nation is more or less a text in the light of the concept of "an imagined community" as coined by Benedict Anderson, who stresses the importance of the emergence of "print capitalism" and the dissemination of printed literature in nation-building. In Murphy's elaborate study on the Monroe Doctrine, we can see an example of how America was defined by being written and was rewritten by interpretations at the time.



What is so frequently neglected in the dominant critiques on James, however, is that he re/presents not only metaphysics but also the real politics of the nation. For example, James acclaims that Nathaniel Hawthorne's characters "are not portraits of actual types, and in their phraseology there is nothing imitative. But none the less, Hawthorne's work savours thoroughly of the local soil—it is redolent of the social system in which he had his being" (*Hawthorne* 320-21). James does not so much critique Hawthorne—"too immature in critical acumen" as Eliot says—as elucidate his view on how novels should be. His admiration for Hawthorne's novels in turn reveals his own literary enterprise—to be "redolent of the social system in which he had his being."

Therefore, *The Portrait of a Lady* is James's epitome of "the social system" of late nineteenth-century America, and each of the characters embodies different traits and aspects of the nation. First, the two quintessential notions of America are ascribed to Isabel: independence and liberty. "'I like my liberty too much. If there's a thing in the world I'm fond of,' [Isabel] went on with a slight recurrence of grandeur, 'it's my personal independence' (182). Isabel so frequently, and often excessively, refers to and places emphasis on her "independence" and "liberty," which is acknowledged by the

people surrounding her including in the example of Mrs. Touchett's telegram. Also, Henrietta is the personification of American democracy; as Isabel says: "[S]he's a kind of emanation of the great democracy—of the continent, the country, the nation. I don't say that she sums it all up, that would be too much to ask of her. But she suggests it; she vividly figures it" (112). In particular, the nature of her profession—journalism—is democratic in nature to James.<sup>28</sup> The pecuniary metaphors that describe Casper Goodwood associate him with capitalism: "[Isabel] intensely rejoiced that Casper Goodwood was gone; there was something in having thus got rid of him that was like the payment, for a stamped receipt, of some debt too long on her mind" (185). He is a child of the Gilded Age; "the son of a proprietor of well-known cotton-mills in Massachusetts," who at present manages "the works, and with a judgement and a temper which, in spite of keen competition and languid years, had kept their prosperity from dwindling" (135). This sketch of Casper clearly exemplifies the nature of capitalism: "[H]e liked to organise, to contend, to

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<sup>28</sup> Allan Burns points that, for James, journalism often represents the distressing influence of democracy and journalists are associated with "the dissolution of the private sphere, a prevailing preoccupation with things of the moment, the rise of commercialism and vulgarity, and the collapse of social 'forms' and manners" (1). Though James seems comparatively sympathetic to Henrietta, she has the same tendencies more or less. In addition, she plays the role of the parochial New World figures commonly accompanying Jamesian protagonists—from Benjamin Babcock in *The American* to Sarah Pocock in *The Ambassadors*—who, while finding it somewhat attractive, abhor European culture and society.

administer; he could make people work his will, believe in him, march before him and justify him. This was the art, as they said, of managing men” (135).<sup>29</sup>

In a sense, it is natural that the newcomers from the other continent bear the characteristics, with a certain degree of exaggeration, associated with American. What is curious, then, is the sketch of Madame Merle:

Madame Merle glanced at Isabel with a sort of world-wide smile, a thing that over-reached frontiers. “I was born under the shadow of the national banner.” . . .

“I came into the world in the Brooklyn navy-yard. My father was a high officer in the United States Navy, and had a post—a post of responsibility—in that establishment at the time. I suppose I ought to love the sea, but I hate it. That’s why I don’t return to America. I love the land; the great thing is to love something” (195-96).

Curiously, Madame Merle, the experienced quasi-European who has been generally regarded as being a counterpart of the innocent American protagonist, displays the

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<sup>29</sup> In this sense, Casper forms a striking contrast with Lord Warburton, another suitor for Isabel and a “specimen of an English gentleman” (83). The latter is a cultivated and sophisticated European aristocrat, the former a born capitalist simple and uncultured; the latter has a good taste of art, the former “the art of . . . managing men.” This contrast reminds us of the long list of the things “absent from the texture of American life” (*Hawthorne* 358).

most nationalistic and patriotic background among the characters. This ostensible discrepancy can be resolved by noticing the epithet applied to her smile. Paul Giles points out that “patriotic forms of flag worship” surged up after 1865 “to heal the fissures of the Civil War” (111). America expanded its territory throughout the frontier of the West and went further west beyond the sea in the late nineteenth century, which was underpinned by its naval power as conspicuous in Commodore Perry’s expedition to Japan and later annexation of Hawaii. When a daughter of a naval officer puts on a “world-wide smile” in opposition to “a thing that over-reached frontiers,” the connotation becomes tangible. In this sense, it is natural that she has been Europeanized, since America, though having revolutionary broken off from European colonialism, justified its territorial expansion with the discourse of enlightenment, as the terminology of “Manifest Destiny” clearly suggests. She should be Europeanized, and by the same token be patriotic, for she represents American imperialism.<sup>30</sup>

In this way, the main characters in *The Portrait of a Lady* are each invested with discrepant aspects of the late nineteenth-century America, and the novel tells us how

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<sup>30</sup> We should recall James’s remarks on Kipling in 1899, after the publication of the notorious verse “The White Man’s Burden”: “I can’t swallow his loud, brazen patriotic verse—an exploitation of the patriotic idea” (*Letters* 4:124). Considering the fact that the verse is subtitled as “The United States and the Philippine Islands,” James views, at least to some extent, patriotism as a synonym for imperialism.

the nation changed by way of Isabel's changing. In this regard, we can find another parable in the sketch of the house in Albany: "There were two entrances, one of which had long been out of use but had never been removed. . . . The two houses together formed a single dwelling, the party-wall having been removed and the rooms placed in communication" (38-39). Here, the strange double structure of the house is a metaphor of a nation that underwent the Civil War, and significantly Isabel is taken from the secluded room in this house called "the office" to the outside world. On the other side of the street there is an old house called "the Dutch House," which has "a peculiar structure dating from the earliest colonial time" and is used as a school (39). Isabel had "the opportunity of laying a foundation of knowledge in this establishment; but having spent a single day in it, she had protested against its laws and had been allowed to stay at home." She recollects it with "the elation of liberty and the pain of exclusion were indistinguishably mingled" (40). This childhood incident intelligibly recapitulates the founding of America. What James depicts in the form of Isabel's journey, then, is how America is transformed from its foundation—"taking different views, a different colour, and turning away from her old ideals" (140)—into the New World empire.

As if following Madame Merle's precedent, the close companionship with the Old World propels Isabel into imperialism. We can see the manifestation of her imperialistic desire in the conversation with Osmond where she suddenly reveals her intention to go to Japan:

"If I were to go to Japan next winter you would laugh at me," Isabel went on.

Osmond gave a smile . . . "You have an imagination that startles one!"

"That's exactly what I say. You think such an idea absurd."

"I would give my little finger to go to Japan; it's one of the countries I want most to see. Can't you believe that, with my taste for old lacquer?"

"I haven't a taste for old lacquer to excuse me," said Isabel.

"You've a better excuse—the means of going" (333).

While talking about the plan to voyage around the world, Isabel names Japan with no particular "excuse." This strange mention of the Far East country is not a mere expression of exoticism or Japanism at that time. Rather, Isabel's destination cannot be other than Japan, since the American empire was necessarily heading beyond the west coast toward the Far East. The manifestation of such a desire, for example, is

clear historically from Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry, the commander of the expedition to Japan in 1853, who, ostensibly negotiating a treaty of commerce, considered the possibility of subjugating Japan and asked President Fillmore's permission to occupy the Ryukyuan Kingdom (now Okinawa Prefecture in Japan).<sup>31</sup>

Thus imperialistic discourse infuses the conversation, where Isabel, resonating the domestic controversy about territorial acquisition overseas, hesitates to go to Japan with no appropriate reason, while Osmond entertains the Old World imperialistic view in saying "the means of going" itself as being the justification.

It is natural, then, that Osmond equates the gratification of desire with triumph:

"Go everywhere," [Osmond] said at last, in a low, kind voice; "do everything; get everything out of life. Be happy,—be triumphant."

[Isabel said] "What do you mean by being triumphant?"

"Well, doing what you like."

"To triumph, then, it seems to me, is to fail!" (334)

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<sup>31</sup> The official account of the expedition was written—though Perry initially wanted Hawthorne to write it—by Francis Hawks and published in 1856. Murphy explains the difficulty Hawks faced: "Perry was asking him to represent a global and imperial mission to a highly divided audience. His *Narrative* would of course be at pains to justify military aggression and differentiate the expedition from European colonialist efforts" (71). It should be noted that James was a close friend and a correspondent of Thomas Sergeant Perry, a grand-nephew of Commodore Perry, who, by a curious twist of fate, would later go to Japan to teach English at Keio University.

The European empires invaded lands around the world with no justification but having “the means of going.” The colonies were the fruits of their triumph—of the Western civilization as well as their military power—over the savages. Isabel’s paradoxical observation, then, exhibits the dilemma of the New World empire: it could not contain its desire to expand overseas, which would inevitably jeopardize its identity as the New World nation. For America, to triumph means to fail to fulfill its foundational promises—liberty, equality and democracy.

Significantly, the feminized version of James, Henrietta, is the character who first perceives that Isabel is “not the same as she once so beautifully was” (140). Indeed, when Henrietta confides her worry about Isabel, James indubitably expresses his own anxiety for the nation which was about to take the course to imperialism. He wants “to save those ideals” of the nation “drifting away—right out to sea.” In this sense, Henrietta, the “emanation of the great democracy,” is a righteous reader of the nation as a text who cannot save it from being ruined by its imperialistic “reading.” Thus the novel allegorically envisions how European imperialism alters the young democratic nation into the New World empire. It is not just a young lady but a young



nation that is built and ruined as a text. In this sense, *The Portrait of a Lady* is an anti-bildungsroman of America.

## Conclusion

A spectre is still haunting the world—the spectre of imperialism. Ironically enough, a couple of decades after communism virtually ceased to exert its influence on Europe, the world is being haunted by the specter of imperialism. Afghanistan, Crimea, China—reading the headlines of international news makes us feel as if we were in the nineteenth century. It is surprising that the anxiety which Henry James manifests in his fictions still holds true today; Orientalistic discourse prevails through much of the world and cause international tension here and there.

It is curious, then, that the specter of imperialism dwells in the Oriental countries such as China and Japan. Though they used to be the object of the imperial gaze of the Western powers, these countries now harbor the imperialistic desire and their own gaze is fixed on other Oriental countries in Asia. Indeed, imperialism is infectious. In a sense, it may be more apt to call it not a specter but a zombie: never

satisfactorily biting others, it propagates itself; and once bitten, the bitten get infected and become another zombie.

The symptom of the infection is manifested in the historical writings in the nineteenth century. Ranald MacDonald's memoir is useful to see how strongly and unconsciously the imperial gaze is internalized. MacDonald is a half-Chinook, half-Scot adventurer who ventured to go to Japan under the strict isolationist policy. He managed to reach Ezo (Yesso, today's Hokkaido) but was caught by the Ainu (Inoe) people. He describes his impression of the Ainu:

Yesso—the homeland of the Inoes—being (as before said or intimated) merely tributary to Japan, with a certainly distinctive people in physique and mental and moral characteristics—stronger in body on the whole; heavily bearded and very hairy generally—which the Japanese are not, in general—but morally inferior, in the sense of being a subject race. (167-68)

Denigrating the Ainu people as savages, thus he reveals his imperialistic view. What is

significant is that he attributes moral inferiority to “a subject race,” though he himself belongs to “a subject race” as a half-Native American.

It is noteworthy, then, that when he mentions the Ainu, he always compares them with the Japanese:

When I got amongst [the Inoes] first my feeling was that I had got into a nest of pirates of Tartars, with their heavy beards, uncombed long hair, and unwashed faces; they looked uncouth and wild, both in person and dress, comparing very unfavorably in this respect, with the clean, refined, and cultivated Japanese. (169)

In contrast to the Ainu, MacDonald repeatedly praises the Japanese for their civilized culture. His motive for the adventure was the legend that his ancestors had come from Japan. For him, Japan is his ancestral land and he and the Japanese belong to the same race. Applying the Orientalistic dichotomy between civilization and savagery to the Ainu and the Japanese, then, he unconsciously claims the moral superiority of his

race.

This is the most problematic point underlies the infection of imperialism: the object of the imperial gaze does not look back the viewer but turns their own gaze to others. Takayuki Tatsumi's analysis on Japanese westernization explicates this behavior of the Oriental object.

[T]he Japanese tried to import a huge number of Anglo-American cultural products and unwittingly misread their own occidentalism as a genuine internationalism. And Japan's excessive occidentalism has sometimes gone so far as to simulate the most canonical discourse of western orientalism.

(11)

Orientalistic discourse is thus paradoxically reproduced and propagated by the Oriental countries themselves. As a result, they, attributing inferiority to each other, turn their imperial gaze on other Oriental countries. They find comfortable this mimicry of western Orientalism because it assures, at least within their visions, the superiority

over others. Thus imperialism is justified and prevails around the world.

This is the reason a specter, or a zombie, of imperialism is lingering around.

What is needed, then, is not to look away but to look back—that is, to relativize the gaze and acquire intersubjective vision of the world, as demonstrated in Henry

James's texts. Therefore we should read Henry James today.

Indeed, his texts foreshadow today's international situation. Certainly Isabel

Archer comes all the way across the Pacific to Japan.

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