The Narrator behind the Centres of Consciousness in *The Wings of the Dove*

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I

"You're cryptic, Love!", said Merton Densher to Kate Croy at the soirée at the Palazzo Leporelli—and Kate does indeed seem "cryptic". In the triangular relationship of Milly, Kate and Densher, Kate has been usually regarded as an antagonist, either for Milly or Densher as a protagonist. Critics have emphasised Milly's forgiveness, dedication and divine sacrifice crystallised in her final act of bequest[1]. Densher's spiritual transformation has also received attention[2]. In both of those readings, Kate is almost automatically regarded as a victimizer, a manipulator, a deceiver, who conceives a diabolical design, entices Densher and exploits Milly. Even so, critics often find it difficult to dismiss her as a pure villain. Instead, they allow that here are the elements of "pity and generosity" in her plan (Graham 205); her "genuine devotion" to Milly (Krook 204-5); her "intensified sense of duty to behave nobly and unselfishly" (Fogel 56), etc. Ruth Bernard Yeazell argues that "the lovers' plot encourages [Milly's] desire for life" (83). More recently, Lee Clark Mitchell and John Landau even raise the question of whether Kate is really blameable. Is Kate, then, a mixture of good and evil? Does she deserve the condemnation she has so often received for heartless manipulation? Is she condonable? Or, is she not really culpable? Why is it so difficult to answer these questions? We may wonder whether James makes any clarifying comments to sustain any of these views, and, if so, which? The object of this discussion is to re-examine the role of Kate Croy in *The Wings of the Dove*, especially in relation to Merton Densher, and to attempt to resolve some of the problems around Kate by considering her from a narratological perspective.

II

Contradictory characterizations of Kate are not just recent: they can be traced back to James himself and to his first detailed plan for the novel. The idea that was to be developed into *The Wings of the Dove* first appears in his Notebook entry for 3 November 1894, eight years before publication. The story was to be about a dying girl, and her triangular relationship with a young man and his fiancée. The couple endure a long engagement because he has "no income" and she "no fortune". The girl falls in love with him without knowing he is already engaged, while the couple recognize her attachment, as well as her fatal illness, and most of all, her wealth.

On 7 November James reconsidered and extended this idea. His two entries on the 3rd and 7th are remarkably different in terms of the characterization of the young lovers, especially the fiancée. In the former, the man takes the lead. He pities the girl and says to his fiancée:

> 'Don't be jealous if I'm kind to her—you see *why* it is.' The fiancée is generous, she also is magnanimous—she is full of pity too. . . 'Oh yes, poor thing: be kind to her.' It goes further than she likes; but she holds out—she is so sure of her lover. (*CN* 104)

On the other hand, in the later entry, it is the fiancée who takes the lead. She and the girl dislike each other. She makes the man "mystifiedly and bewilderedly" follow her plan:

> Play a certain game—and you'll have money from her. But if she knows the money is to help you to marry me, you won't have it; never in the world! (*CN* 105)

The fiancée vulgarly instigates the action of the young man out of self-interest, and in the end she takes the money bequeathed by the girl to the man and marries a Lord X.

In brief, the former notebook entry represents Kate as a pathetic woman, and the latter as an evil woman. Although the realized novel seems to be an extension of the later plan, it retains certain aspects of the earlier one. Viewing the relation between Kate and Densher, what Kate does is similar to the later version, but viewing her attitude toward Milly, what she is remains more like the earlier one. Yeazell argues that "insofar as the lovers' plot encourages [Milly's] desire for life, it too may be called beautiful. For. . . Kate and Densher have at least granted her the illusion of love—have allowed her to 'live'" (83). The crude outline was thus profoundly amplified. In the novel, the fiancée becomes a character with depth.

In his Preface to the New York edition, written about six years after the publication of the first edition, James recognizes that the novel is a compound of two subjects. The primary subject is located in Milly Theale; the secondary subject resides in the interaction and the correlation between other characters, especially Kate Croy and Merton Densher. They are "far from a common couple":

> what they have most to tell us is that, all unconsciously and with the best faith in the world, all by mere force of the terms of their superior passion combined with their superior diplomacy, they are laying a trap for the great innocence to come. (*AN* 303)

This is almost to suggest that they trap Milly, but do it quite unintentionally and only as a consequence of their pursuit of their unfulfilled passion. There is hardly any indication recorded in the Preface that James regards Kate as a villain or a manipulator. His nearest approach to such a view may be a convoluted sentence that runs as follows:

> Heaven forbid, we say to ourselves during almost the whole Venetian climax, heaven forbid we should "know" anything more of our ravaged sister than what Kate Croy pays, heroically, it must be owned, at the hour of her visit alone to Densher's lodging, for her superior handling and her dire profanation of. (*AN* 301)

At a glance, James seems to associate Kate with "handling" and "dire profanation". But this

sentence and the next to it are exceptional in their taking as their subject 'we', that is the readers, instead of 'I', that is the author. James leaves his own view deliberately noncommittal, and at the same time acquiesces in the reader's tendency to regard Kate as a manipulator[3]. Why then do readers tend to associate her with diabolism, and with heroism too?

III

The question above provokes another more fundamental one, that is: how credibly are we informed about Kate Croy's thoughts and emotions? As many commentators have pointed out, Milly Theale is a conspicuously absent heroine[4]. She does not appear until the third of the ten Books in the novel, and disappears as early as the ninth Book. Compared to her, Kate is much more visible. The text begins and ends with her. She is absent from two Books only: the third Book, which introduces Milly in the setting of Swiss Alps, and the ninth Book, in which Densher alone stays in Venice with Milly. But her presence itself does not guarantee a secure insight into her inner thoughts and emotions. Because the narrative of *The Wings of the Dove* relies so much on successive centres of consciousness, or "reflectors", to use James's term, we may comprehend what a character thinks or feels, only when the narrator chooses to use that character as focalizor, or when the narrator chooses to confide to readers authoritatively. Thus our view of the characters is limited, in general, to how the reflector understands them. And this typically Jamesian procedure is made more complex by the fact that the focalization shifts in the novel from Kate Croy to Milly Theale, and finally to Merton Densher.

In order to facilitate further discussion, it may be helpful here to trace the outline of the story, paying attention to the shifts in focalization. In Book One and part of Book Two, the narrative uses Kate as focalizor, introducing her and describing her difficult family situation, her happy relationship with Densher, and her settlement in the milieu of Lancaster Gate. Part of Book Two uses Densher as a focalizor, on his visit to Mrs. Lowder. Book Three introduces Milly from the viewpoint of Mrs. Stringham, who admires her warmly and likens her to "the wandering princess" (I:171). Books Four and Five, in which Milly enters London society and makes a tremendous success, are mainly related through Milly's "single throbbing consciousness" (*AN* 300). The narrative then switches to Densher as focalizor in Book Six, where he returns to London and establishes friendly relations with Milly, even while he is passionately attached to Kate. Book Seven then shifts to Milly as focalizor again, though there is an exception in chapter I, in which conversation between Mrs. Lowder and Mrs. Stringham takes place. Between chapters II and III, the setting shifts from London to Venice. The atmosphere of the Palazzo Leporelli, totally different from that of Lancaster Gate, is related from Milly's point of view. The focalization reinstates Densher after he appears at Venice, and it remains with him through Books Eight, Nine, Ten to the end, even though the setting returns to London at the beginning of Book Ten. Book Eight covers Densher's arrival in Venice to Milly's climactic soirée. The clandestine meeting of Densher and Kate takes place behind the scenes between Book Eight and Nine. Book Nine begins after the departure of Kate and deals with Densher left with Milly in Venice. Lord Mark's visit and the sudden change in Milly's condition--which are key events in the development of the plot, and seem exactly the kind of material that might have

made a strong dramatic scene--are not depicted, but only intuited by Densher and later described to him by Mrs. Stringham. The final meeting of Densher and Milly takes place again between Books Nine and Ten. At the beginning of Book Ten, Densher has returned to London and appears at Lancaster Gate. Milly's death occurs in the background, and the text ends with Densher and Kate confronting each other with the legal document containing Milly's legacy in between.

The first insight derived from the above overview is that there is a preference in the narrative for Densher as regards focalization. Not only is he given the largest and the last part, but also he is given priority over any other character whenever he is 'on stage'. The narrator's employment of a "figural perspective" (i.e. where "the mediating narrator is replaced by a reflector: a character in the novel who thinks, feels and perceives, but does not speak to the reader like a narrator"[5]) is far deeper in Densher's case.

But the question of focalization and its shifts as used by James are not the only important features of the novel. Before examining further the problem of perspective, it is worth considering the two different narrative methods, which James refers to as different kinds of "treatment" and which he makes full use of in the novel, and to which he attaches great importance in the Preface.

IV

James distinguishes his narrative method employed in *The Wings of the Dove* into 'pictorial treatment' and 'dramatic treatment'. His remark in the Preface: "picture. . . is jealous of drama, and drama. . . suspicious of picture" (*AN* 298) clarifies the point. They both belong to the method of 'showing'. According to Gerald Prince, 'Picture' is a "nonscenic rendering of some character's consciousness of a situation" (71), while 'drama' or 'scene' is "[t]he scenic rendering of situations and events and, more particularly, of the characters' speech and behaviour" (23) In other words, the former corresponds to 'internal focalization' and the latter to 'external focalization'[6]. If the 'pictorial treatment' dominates, the narrative exclusively deals with what the consciousness perceives. On the other hand, if 'dramatic treatment' dominates, by definition, the narrative keeps each character at the same distance, and neither differentiates nor expresses any character's consciousness.

Throughout the text we witness many conversations between Densher and Kate, most of which are dramatized. They talk about Mrs. Lowder, about Milly, and about their future prospects. At first at least, it is a joy for them to talk together freely:

> if they could have no other straight way, the realm of thought at least was open to them. They could think whatever they liked about whatever they would—in other words they could say it. Saying it for each other, for each other alone, only of course added to the taste. (I: 65)

As well as the frequent use of 'they' in the narration, the 'dramatic treatment' is a foundation for the "practical *fusion* of consciousness"(*AN* 299). "Saying" here is made transparent as though it

were equal to thinking. The consciousnesses of the couple are not separated but occupy a single "realm of thought". Later on, however, their relationship passes through different phases and their conversation becomes much more restricted:

> [Densher] had on several recent occasions taken with Kate an out-of-the way walk that was each time to define itself as more remarkable for what they didn't say than what they did. . . . (II:391)

Silence could, of course, be indicative of deep communication. They may be both conscious of the same thought which they choose not to say, or at least conscious of the fact that they have something they choose not to say. But here the very fact that they avoid saying it suggests the separation of their "realm of thought". That they become scrupulous and refrain from free talk is an important feature which indicates the transformation of their liaison.

Yet the ending of the text is a dialogue between Densher and Kate. Dialogue, at first sight, implies zero focalization, and should neutralize the point of view. But this is not the case. The 'dramas' in *The Wings of the Dove* do not allow readers' neutral response to the characters' point of view. On the contrary, they function to favour Densher's consciousness. This is because, for one thing, the 'dramatic treatment' in this case is not complete but tends to employ Densher's perspective; for another thing, even if the treatment is thoroughly 'dramatic' for part of the 'dramas', the reader is not necessarily prevented from identifying with Densher's point of view.

The first point can be confirmed by specifying some passages interposed between the verbalised speeches. For example, when Densher meets Kate at Lancaster Gate a few days after his return from America, there is a passage of free indirect discourse almost a paragraph long during their dialogue:

> It wasn't to torment him—that again <u>he didn't believe</u>; but he had to come to the house in some discomfort, so that he frowned a little at her calling it thus a luxury. "Wasn't there an element in it of coming back into bondage?. . . . He didn't want her deeper than himself. . . ; he wanted to keep her where their communications would be straight and easy and their intercourse independent." (II:19, emphasis and quotation marks added)

Inside the added quotation marks is Densher's indirect discourse. When Densher is introduced by Kate to Lord Mark after the dinner at Lancaster Gate, the narrator allows the reader to see what Densher thinks of the other man:

> <u>He recognised</u> it in a moment as less imponderable than it might have appeared, as having indeed positive claims. It wasn't, <u>that is, he knew</u>, the 'Oh!' of the idiot, however great the superficial resemblance: it was that of the clever, the accomplished man. . . (II:57, emphasis added)

The emphasised tags of thought-phrases indicate that they are not the narrator's report of facts,

but spring from Densher's mind. During the dialogue between Densher and Kate at the Piazza San Marco, there is a further passage from *his* perspective:

> It was the first time since the launching of her wonderful idea that <u>he had seen</u> her at a loss. <u>He judged</u> the next instant moreover that she didn't like it—either the being so or the being seen, for she soon spoke with an impatience that <u>showed</u> her as wounded; an appearance that produced in himself, <u>he no less quickly felt</u>, a sharp pang of indulgence. (II:197-8, emphasis added)

Another example is from their dialogue at Lancaster Gate after his return from Venice, in which the narrator elaborately repeats mental phrases:

> <u>His idea had been</u> in advance that she would. . . . <u>He had fairly fancied</u> her even wanting to. . . . <u>He had asked himself if</u> he were prepared to hear her do that, and <u>had had to take</u> for answer that he was prepared of course for everything. "Wasn't he prepared for her ascertaining if her two or three prophecies had found time to be made true?" <u>He had fairly believed</u> himself ready to say whether or no. . . . But what was in fact blessedly coming to him was that so far as such things were concerned his readiness wouldn't be taxed. (II:324, emphasis and quotation marks added)

Thus there are recurring intrusions of 'picture' from Densher's perspective even during 'dramas'. And it should be emphasised that there is no passage which gives us Kate's perspective.

Seymour Chatman's discussion of the characters' point of view and narrative voice is helpful here. Chatman argues that "[access] to a character's consciousness is the standard entrée to his point of view, the usual and quickest means by which we come to identify with him," and that we identify with a character "simply because he is the one [and only one] continually on the scene" (*Story* 157-8)[7].

The placement of Densher in the text satisfies both of these qualifications for winning the reader's sympathy, no matter if the dialogues are completely 'dramatic'. Firstly, the dialogues in which Densher participates are always either surrounded or at least preceded by figural narration focalizing Densher, except that in Book Two, Chapter I. Secondly, in Books Two, Six, and from Eight through Ten, where Densher is present, Densher is the character who is "continually on the scene". Besides, figural narration is extensively placed in the introductory parts, namely, the first chapters of Book Six and Book Eight. Those chapters (and the second and fourth of Book Nine as well) are almost wholly dedicated to Densher's free indirect discourse. In this respect, Book Two, Chapter I is again exceptional, but the earlier part of its second chapter is related from Densher's point of view. All these applications of extensive figural narration must function to transpose the reader's view from either Kate's or Milly's to Densher's, and finally make it totally absorbed in his.

In addition, the content of the verbalized speeches also contributes to the reader's tendency to identify with Densher. The conversations between Densher and Kate almost always fall into a pattern where he asks questions and she answers them. Indeed, he asks about Milly, about Mrs.

Lowder, about Lord Mark, and even about his own situation so persistently that she sometimes cannot help seeming impatient. While he pursues her with endless questions, it is always she who tries to appreciate the situation, considers and produces certain explanations, which are given externally in direct speeches[8]. As a result Kate functions rather like a confidante for Densher than a protagonist, (as Maria Gostrey does for Strether in *The Ambassadors*). The reader, who has limited information on these matters, is ready to assume his position but not hers. We are inclined to see even her impatience from his point of view and assume her to be secretive and scheming. Thus the accumulation of the procedures pervading the text performs to adjust the reader's view gradually but inescapably to Densher's.

That Kate's perspective vanishes at an early stage of the text has been acknowledged by some critics. J. A. Ward points out, "Though we get very close to Kate in her conversation with Densher, her consciousness is closed to us after the first book" (176), and Leo Bersani states, "the last time we are inside her mind is a few pages before she insists that Densher go to see Mrs. Lowder" ("Narrator" 639). My analysis above of the textual arrangement of dialogues and figural narration affords a more rigorous basis for such arguments. After the second chapter of the second Book at the latest, the narrator does not choose to take up Kate's consciousness, except on certain rare occasions[9].

V

It is odd, then, for James to state in the Preface that Kate's consciousness is "turned on largely at Venice":

> It is in Kate's consciousness that at the stage in question the drama is brought to a head, and the occasion, on which, in the splendid saloon of poor Milly's hired palace, she takes the measure of her friend's festal evening, squares itself to the same synthetic firmness as the compact constructional block inserted by the scene at Lancaster Gate. (*AN* 301)

This is misleading because it accounts for only half of the situation.

James compares here the party at the Venetian palace with the party at Lancaster Gate by which Milly is introduced to Mrs. Lowder's circle. In James's term, the London party is a 'picture' using Milly as a focalizor, where, he declares that everything is recorded as disclosed through " Milly's single throbbing consciousness" (*AN* 300). By contrast, James regards the Venetian party as submitting to "another rule", that is, of 'drama'. But the 'drama' in question is, as we have argued, related from Densher's point of view. Kate is certainly seeing, feeling, thinking and, James might say, 'everything'; but what we are allowed to see is not the operation of her consciousness, it is only the *expression* of it. Moreover what she says to Densher is decoded by his consciousness before being recorded in the text.

We can see this, for example, in the following passage:

> "Pearls have such a magic that they suit every one."

> "They would uncommonly suit you," he frankly returned.
> "Oh yes, I see myself!"
> As she saw herself, suddenly, he saw her—she would have been splendid; and with it he felt more what she was thinking of. Milly's royal ornament had—under pressure now not wholly occult—taken on the character of a symbol of differences, differences of which the vision was actually in Kate's face. (II:218-9, emphasis added)

Even if this is a fine example of "the lucid interplay of . . . conspiring and conflicting agents"(*AN* 301), the argument remains the same. It is not her vision that we are shown but it is only his vision of her vision, or merely his assumption of it. However vibrant Kate's consciousness may be, it is screened from the reader's eye.

Having admitted the remark in the Preface is misleading, it is illuminating in another sense that James makes such a comparison between Milly and Kate. James suggests here that Kate's consciousness is, although undetailed, as sensitively vibrant and vividly excited by the vision as Milly's fully focalized one in "the long passage that forms. . . the opening of Book Fourth" (*AN* 300).

For James, the individual vision of each character is one of the million "windows" to the "house of fiction". At each "window" stands "a figure with pair of eyes", entertaining "an impression distinct from every other":

> He and his neighbours are watching the same show, but one seeing more where the other sees less, one seeing black where the other sees white. . . . The spreading field, the human scene, is the "choice of subject"; the pierced aperture, either broad or balconied or slit-like and low-browed, is the "literary form"; but they are, singly or together, as nothing without the posted presence of the watcher—without, in other words, the consciousness of the artist. (*AN* 46)

The coexistence of varying figural visions thus inspired James. The "optimal condition for a novelistic creation" was a simultaneous presentation of the "viewer's sensibility" and the "integrity of the view" captivating the viewer[10]. The ultimate watcher within the text is the narrator, and the narrator may adopt any window, that is any figural perspective, arbitrarily, on one condition: that the figure is "the only sort of person on whom we can count not to betray, to cheapen or, as we say, give away, the value and beauty of the thing" (*AN* 67). For James, then, the perspective adopted for his art is by no means chosen because it is the most accurate one. In other words, the perspective may well be unreliable, so long as it achieves "value and beauty".

VI

On the one hand, in *The Wings of the Dove*, Densher's perspective is given priority over any other character's in the novel. On the other hand, however, we may now understand why accuracy is not necessarily the reason why it is chosen. It is relevant therefore to ask what the relationship between Densher's view and the authorial narration is.

Bersani offers us an insight to start off with. In his opinion, although James was committed in his later novels to "the narrative technique of presenting his stories through centers of consciousness", the narrator is *not* "effaced behind the fictional reflectors". Instead:

> the centers of consciousness tend rather to be merged with the narrator, to be assimilated into his point of view on the story. The psychological center of the drama in James's late novels is in the narrator's mind. ("Narrator as Center" 635)

Since Bersani regards Densher as the central dramatic character and the novel as Densher's moral drama, his argument about the centers is virtually centered on Densher's consciousness[11]. The argument is based on the observation that the distinction is vague between "the centers' expression of their own thoughts" and "the narrator's presentation of them, or indeed even his comments" (635).

Narrative theorists have, however, informed us of the importance of the distinction between the author and the narrator, and between the narrative voice and the characters' perspective[12]. In stating that "the boundaries between Densher's consciousness and James's have in many areas been obliterated; the two are fused into a single awareness" (636), Bersani's argument seems to confuse this basic division. The authorial narrator is after all, outside the narrative, authoritatively narrating it. Densher is within it and always a product of the authorial narrator's invention. Densher and this narrator are situated at different narrative levels[13]. It is not that the narrator becomes the center, but that the narrator makes the character the center. If the consciousness of the narrator and that of the character seem to merge into one, it is because the voice is the narrator's, while the perspective is the character's and the focalization is thus intensified and extended. In other words, such merging is a characteristic case of 'narrated monologue' as defined by Dorrit Cohn.

The narrative method of presenting figural minds in a third-person context is classified by Cohn into three types: 'psycho-narration', 'quoted monologue', and 'narrated monologue'[14]. Narrative may smoothly shift among the three, and oscillate between them and narration. 'Narrated monologue' is the nearest to narration in its linguistic features. It is "the technique for rendering a character's thought in his own idiom while maintaining the third-person reference and the basic tense of narration" (100). The border between narrated monologue and narration can be so blurred that it reduces "to the greatest possible degree the hiatus between the narrator and the figure existing in all third-person narration" (112). Such a technique enables a third-person fiction to enter "the domain previously reserved for first-person. . . fiction", and to "focus on the mental and emotional life of its characters" (113).

James is, as Cohn identifies, one of the novelists who most extensively utilizes this technique, which enables him to institute "the norms of the dramatic novel, objective narration, and unobtrusive narrators" (115). Accordingly, narrated monologue in a third-person context functions as an effective substitute for first-person narration (presumably without its "fluidity"). In other words, the authorial narrator may foreground a character through the narrated monologue to such an extent that the character becomes almost like a narrator (and has been confused by some critics with the narrator). Once applied to this novel, this observation suggests

that Densher becomes at certain points a proxy for the first-person narrator, as a result of the large-scale employment of his narrated monologue.

James is famously the creator of first-person narrators whose reliability is disputably suspicious. If we accept uncritically what a suspicious narrator-character presents to us, we miss what each text conveys as a whole. Analogically, the character's view, which becomes more obtrusive than the authentic narrator's in a third–person narrative, is not to be taken for granted, because in such novels the foregrounded centre of consciousness is granted the power to present its mental process at the expense of the other characters' point of view. What the Jamesian hero of *The Wings of the Dove*, Densher, conceives is certainly not the one and only interpretation of the fictional situation in the novel, and also not necessarily the most correct version of it.

In the first-person context, the possibility of another interpretation apart from the narrator-character's is either to be found in the other characters' disapproving comments or to be revealed in the inconsistency or irrationality of the view itself. As well as such manoeuvres, in the third-person context, a narrator exists, however covertly, who may treat the character's view ironically. In narrated monologue, the narrator usually refrains from making distinct comments, but the language tends to bear "the stamp of characteristical limitations and distortions" (Cohn 102) of the focalizor. Furthermore, because the voice is the narrator's:

> The narrated monologues themselves tend to commit the narrator to attitudes of sympathy or irony. Precisely because they cast the language of a subjective mind into the grammar of objective narration, they amplify emotional notes, but also throw into ironic relief all false notes struck by a figural mind. (Cohn 117)

Thus the existence of the irony on the part of the narrator is an important clue to suggest the unreliability of the character's view.

In *The Wings of the Dove*, both the narrator and the other characters function to preserve Densher's view unattacked. But ironically enough, Densher's reflections are full of self-justification and self-exaltation[15]. Even Bersani, who basically claims Densher's "spiritual victory" ("Narrator" 645), does not fail to point out that "James's organization of Densher's thought and emphasis of certain aspects of it suggest an ironic comment" (642-3). Indeed, projection as a defence mechanism is undeniably there in his narrated monologue. For example, when he realises that Lord Mark has told his secret to Milly, in spite of her stricken condition, he feels "exhilaration" (II:264), thinking he is absolved of all responsibility:

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

It suits him to cast an imputation on Lord Mark. Julie Olin-Ammentorp points out that Densher's view of Lord Mark is coloured by his rivalry and frustration (47-48). Even though Densher thinks Lord Mark "a brute" and "an idiot of idiots", we must be careful not to take his view for granted.

The same may be said of Kate. In Densher's narrated monologue, in the early part of his stay in Venice, he explodes into hostility toward female manipulation, which he later calls "a circle of petticoats" (II:209). He accuses Kate most of all for his frustration:

> It was Kate who had so perched him, and there came up for him at moments. . . a sensible sharpness of irony as to her *management* of him. . . . There glowed for him in fact a kind of rage at what he wasn't having; an exasperation, a resentment, begotten truly by the very impatience of desire, in respect to his postponed and relegated, his so extremely *manipulated* state. (II:175-6, emphasis added)

Thus in Densher's vision, the image of Kate is established as a manipulator. Whether she deserves the accusation or not is a different matter. It is to be noted, however, that Densher is meanwhile attacking the most vulnerable and the least potent of the women in the novel, including Milly, "an angel with a thumping bank account" (II:51)[16].

At the Veronese party, Densher brutally articulates the task that Kate wishes him to take on—and accepts it, in return for Kate's sexual favours. He establishes his masculine control over her by making her pay for what he thinks of as her management of him. That is why, when he forces her finally to obey, he feels a sensation of "vulgar triumphs" in his "playing with her pride"; "the vividness with which he saw himself master in the conflict" (II:231). Olin-Ammentorp argues that "Densher chooses to push his relationship with Kate into an economic model. . . . he makes 'the sharpest possible bargain' in forcing her to use her only commodity, her body, to obtain what she wants" (45). By introducing such a businesslike deal, he degrades a relationship that used to be for Kate a "saving romance" in her hard life (I:72).

At the finale, Densher forces Kate to choose: either to take the money and thus to lose him, or to allow him to give up the money and marry her. As Sallie Sears states, Densher's final attitude toward Kate is one of "sanctimonious viciousness. . . coupled with the comparatively gentle, forgiving attitude he has toward himself" (95). Densher seems to differentiate himself from Kate here by his ostentatious noncommitment. It suits him to exonerate himself by laying all the responsibility on Kate. His incrimination of her should be explained as a process of projection, which derives from his own feeling of guilt toward Milly.

VII

The text of *The Wings of the Dove* invites the reader to assume Densher's view. Densher's perspective is foregrounded to such an extent that even the narrator's perspective is overshadowed, especially in the later part of the novel. The images of the other characters are influenced by Densher's consciousness, which may not be identical to the authorial narrator's. The moral ambiguities, as we have seen, allow us to assume that the narrator does not entirely approve of Densher's view. If one identifies with him uncritically, one also accepts unawares the distortion interwoven into his vision. Densher's professed purification and spiritual growth is suspicious because it is a vision only from his perspective without any support by the authorial narrator. Even though Densher regards Kate as a manipulator, that is only his unreliable and

prejudiced conviction.

Provocatively, James remarked his dissatisfaction with the novel again and again in the Preface, mentioning compositional faults and structural failures. He deplores that "one's plan, alas, is one thing and one's result another" (*AN* 296). He mourns over "the absent values, palpable void, and mocking shadows" (*AN* 297). He even admits that its latter half is "false and deformed" (*AN* 302). Most conspicuous of all, he says: "There is a job quite to the measure of most of our monitors—and with the interest for them well enhanced by the preliminary cunning quest for the spot where deformity has begun" (*AN* 302-3). With such intriguing self-criticism, he claims our attention for the other face of the "medal": what is suppressed behind Densher's fallacious perspective. We may infer that the deformity begins with the foregrounding of the unreliable figural narration, and that the latter half is "false and deformed" precisely because it is overshadowed by Densher's delusive perspective. James has aimed at a simultaneous presentation of hermeneutic multiplicity, and mourns because it is not realised due to the too obtrusive figural narration.

In the Preface, we may perceive that James regretted his readers' tendency to be hostile to Kate. Some light may also be shed on the problem by a later fictional treatment that repeats the Kate-Densher problem with new variations. In 1909-10, James published a novella entitled "The Bench of Desolation". It is the story of *Herbert Dodd* and his ex-fiancée, *Kate Cookham*, related from Dodd's perspective. The parallels with *The Wings of the Dove* are striking: even the names of the protagonists are suggestive. Dodd has come to loathe Kate because (he believes) she is vulgar and manipulative. He breaks his engagement with her, for another woman, agreeing to pay Kate a considerable amount of money for his breach of promise. He prefers the other woman because (he believes) she is beautiful and tender-souled, but their marriage turns out a failure. They are badly off. He comes to think she is dowdy and grudging. Their married life ends in her early death. Then one day he encounters a "real" lady: Kate after ten years of absence. He finds her "handsome, grave, authoritative, but refined" (269). She makes him understand that it is not only he who has suffered all these years. She has saved up a large amount of money (nearly five times more than the amount he paid her), with the intention of rendering it to him. She lets him choose whether or not to take the money. He takes it, without offering anything in return. He is not ready to admit finally that he needs her, but she offers to take care of him. In short, Herbert Dodd is another example of an unreliable and prejudiced focalizor. Kate has always been constant and considerate, while Herbert has been unstable and selfish. It is he who has not appreciated her true nature. Perhaps we can see the novella as an epilogue to, or a reflective variation on, Kate Croy and Merton Densher. It is as though James here has tried to rectify the partial interpretation that arises in *The Wings of the Dove*.

In the longer novel, Densher's vision is not the authentic presentation of the fictional situation. Rather, it is a fabulous façade. The latter half of the novel is "false and deformed" because it foregrounds so entirely his distorted vision. Just as with the solipsistic narrator-character of The Sacred Fount, Densher's conviction would not survive if challenged by other interpretations. The simultaneous coexistence of multiple consciousnesses fascinated James, and in order to inscribe it in this text, the manipulation of focalization has been of great significance. This novel exists, then, as a synthesis of James's initial two conceptions which, as we have seen,

were apparently incompatible. On the surface is 'Kate as an evil woman'—the version in the figural perspective of Densher. In depth we may still find the version of 'Kate as a pathetic woman', unrecognized or unaccepted by Densher's self-centered consciousness. Kate has remained misunderstood behind his figural perspective. She, we might say, has waited patiently for redemption attainable only through the "attention of perusal" (*AN* 304) on the observant reader's part.

Notes

[1] Quentin Anderson, Dorothea Krook, Laurence B. Holland, and William Stowe are of the many who sees Milly as the central theme of the novel.

[2] See Daniel Mark Fogel and Leo Bersani.

[3] Ruth Bernard Yeazell refers to the tendency and argues that critics have "a dangerous tendency to fill in" the gaps in the text "in our knowledge, and then to talk not about James's novel, but about their own" (138).

[4] Milly's absence has been inspiring critics, for example, Nicola Bradbury(Nothing), Sheila Teahan, and Priscilla Walton.

[5] See F. K. Stanzel(5).

[6] 'Focalization' is a term introduced by Gérard Genette to describe what is traditionally called 'point of view': the perspective in relation to the presentation of the narrated situations and events. He classifies three types of focalizations: zero focalization, internal focalization, and external focalization. They correspond respectively to (classical) narrative with 'omniscient narrator', narrative with 'point of view', and objective narrative.

[7] Mieke Bal also argues that focalization produces a manipulative effect on the power structure between the characters (109-10). Stanzel notifies that this phenomena of identification would have to be clarified by "psychological investigation of readers' reactions" to the techniques of presenting consciousness (127-28).

[8] We must remember here that both Densher and Kate are witnessing practically the same thing at the same time, and yet it is he who demands and she who supplies clarification. She observes, recognizes, and infers on her own. He does not. In this case, the accuracy of her interpretation implies that she is much more endowed with perception and intelligence than he is.

[9] A subtle intrusion of the narrator's view of Kate is found in a passage: "The girl spoke indeed with a noble compassion"(II:52). Here the nomination, "The girl", is the indication. For further explication, see Stanzel(189-90).

[10] The argument here is indebted to Dorothy Hale, especially 84-88.

[11] Leo Bersani asserts "All the principal centers—first Kate, then Milly and finally Densher—seem to be reenacting the moral choice of the mind from whose point of view the story is really being enacted. It's as if we had three images of the self confronted with the alternatives of the world of the lioness and the world of the dove. And when Kate has chosen the former and Milly the latter, they allegorically become their choice for *the final and most crucial spiritual performance, which is of course Densher's.*" (Future 142; my emphasis).

[12] See Chatman's discussion on the "nonnarrated stories" in Story and Discourse, 146-58.

[13] See Genette on narrative levels. He explains that "any event a narrative recounts is at a diegetic level immediately higher than the level at which the narrating act producing this narrative is placed" (228 originally italicized). He calls the level of the authorial narration 'extradiegetic' and that of the narrated events 'intradiegetic'.

[14] Simple formulation for the three types given by Cohn is as follows: "1. psycho-narration: the

narrator's discourse about a character's consciousness; 2. quoted monologue: a character's mental discourse; 3. narrated monologue: a character's mental discourse in the guise of the narrator's discourse" (14)

[15] Drothea Krook argues that Densher belongs to a line of Jamesian heroes of the "sacred terror", who are characterised by the combination of personal charm and moral indecisiveness (223-225).

[16] Michael Moon argues that Mrs. Lowder and Milly have 'phallic' power but Kate lacks it.

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