Victimization of Kate Croy: A Suppressed Consciousness in *The Wings of the Dove*

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> No themes are so human as those that reflect for us, out of the confusion of life, the close connexion of bliss and bale, of the things that help with the things that hurt, so dangling before us for ever that bright hard medal, of so strange an alloy, one face of which is somebody's right and ease and the other somebody's pain and wrong. (*The Art of the Novel* [1] 143)

The basic plot of *The Wings of the Dove* is, as Peter Brooks suggests, melodramatic; "a Balzacian intrigue of deceit, deception, and betrayal" (Brooks 180). Kate Croy and Merton Densher are passionately in love but their poverty prevents their marriage. Kate conceives a cold-blooded plan to deceive Milly Theale and entices bewildered Densher to exploit her innocence and generosity. Milly's counter-motion, however, transcends this diabolism and after her redemptive death, Densher becomes repentant and estranged from Kate. In this way, Kate can be regarded as a defeated manipulator and Milly a powerful redeemer. But how much do we really know about Kate, whose consciousness is closed to us very early in the novel[2]. Do we know her any more than Milly, who is famous as an absent heroine?

The narrative of *The Wings of the Dove* relies very much on centres of consciousness: "reflectors" in Henry James's own term or "focalizors" in Gérard Genette's. Although it is a third-person narrative, the narrator is reticent and seldom makes any authorial, that is by definition reliable, commentaries on the narrative. The Focalization shifts among the characters in the novel, but the duration and intensity are not distributed equally. I have discussed elsewhere in detail the relation between figural perspective and the behavior of the authorial narrator, as well as the handling of Jamesian "picture" and "drama" in the novel[3]. Here I should like to point out that the narrator's employment of a figural perspective is far deeper in Densher's case than any other character in the novel. Densher is used as a focalizor not only in the largest and the last part, but is also given priority over any other character whenever he is 'on stage'. And, as Seymour Chatman explains, "[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": we identify with a character "simply because he is the one continually on the scene" (157–8). Densher's reflection is foregrounded to such an extent that he becomes in the later part of the novel to occupy a position almost like that of an intradiegetic narrator (Genette's term for a narrator participating in the narrated world). Although the tense used in the narrative is past and the reference is the third person, what is expressed in the narration is not the authorial narrator's reflection[4], but Densher's figural perspective, which inevitably augments characteristic distortions.

Thus, Densher's perspective has a critical influence on our impression of the novel, which

begins as if it were Kate's realistic narrative and ends as if it were Milly's romance. Our understanding of the characters is substantially affected by Densher's understanding of them; the basic plot of the novel originates in Densher's reflection. The object of this paper is, then, to explain how Densher's perspective is dilated with psychological fabrication, and to attempt to discover another view of the novel, by tracing Kate's point of view expressed in her dialogue, as well as to consider the impact of some narrative strategies in the novel.

I

The novel opens as if it is going to be a realistic novel, of which the heroine is Kate. It situates her in the confinement and adversity of a "penniless girl" who is yet determined to resist the pressure of her surroundings. The opening serves to impress us with her predicament: "the burden and tension of her self-consciousness" (Graham 165). In relation to the time scheme, however, a much earlier event appears in Book Two as Kate's own recollection. We glimpse her pre-Lancaster-Gate profile in her first meeting with Densher. This is at a party, overflowing with "the wonder of the world at large", a "scene. . . of supreme brilliancy" for a girl who lives "obscurely" under "her mother's roof" (I: 51 – 52). She notices a young man, and their eyes meet: "within five minutes something between them had — well, she couldn't call it anything but *come*" ; "[i]t wasn't, in a word, simply that their eyes had met; other conscious organs, faculties, feelers had met as well" (I: 53). The passage as a whole is full of the freshly innocent fascination, especially in Kate's vivacious image of a "garden-wall" and of climbing a "ladder".

It is on her mother's death that Kate has been taken to Lancaster Gate. During the first winter, she perceives that "life at present turn[s] to her view from week to week more and more the face of a striking and distinguished stranger" (I: 27). She senses that the world is entirely different from what she has taken for granted through her childhood and girlhood. Mrs. Lowder displays the power of wealth in the form of "material things" that "speak" to her. Kate is ashamed to see how she is affected by such lures, yet she likes "the charming quarters her aunt had assigned her" (I: 28). For a girl who was content with her humble life with her mother, the ostentatious magnificence of Lancaster Gate is at the same time irresistible and frightening:

> it was in the isolation above all that her neighbour[aunt]'s influence worked. . . . She had almost liked, in these weeks, what had created her suspense and her stress: . . . the certainty, in especial, of her having to recognise that should she behave, as she called it, decently — that is still do something for others — she would be herself wholly without supplies. She held that she had a right to sadness and stillness; she nursed them for their postponing power. What they mainly postponed was the question of a surrender, though she couldn't yet have said exactly of what. . . (I: 29)

Here we find Kate's sharp fear of the loss of innocence in her confrontation with the overwhelming power of wealth. The episodes of Book One come after this. With her wish to "escape" the materialism of Lancaster Gate, she turns her father for support, but he flatly refuses her and sends her back to her aunt. Her "narrow little family feeling" is, for her, her "virtue", "a small stupid piety" (I: 71). But in order to fulfil the requirements of her family, she is urged to

surrender herself to the power of money. Still, she remains loyal to her family. She declares to Densher, "'I shall sacrifice nobody and nothing. . . . That. . . is how I see myself (and how I see you quite as much) acting for them[her family]'" (I: 73, sic). He merely views her family, however, as "a serious nuisance" (I: 73). Her family feeling is one thing Densher never understands about her.

In this situation, only the relationship with Densher is her "saving romance". Before Densher goes to America, they are engaged. Their future prospect seems good, at this point, in their eyes. For one thing, they are certain that Mrs. Lowder immensely likes him. (He says to Kate, "I quite suspect her of believing that. . . she likes me literally better than — deep down — you[Kate] yourself do" (I: 89)). For another thing, he has a commission for a new project in America, and she rejoices at his promotion. (He tells Kate that "they[managers] evidently wished a new tone associated, such a tone as, from now on, it would have always to take from his[Densher's] example" (I: 87)). She seems to think in her naivety that if only she holds out patiently her aunt will support her marriage to such a successful journalist. It is important to notice that Kate at this stage does not understand what value Mrs. Lowder, "the Britania of the Market Place", detects in her, which is why she wonders: "what made the girl wonder most was the implication of so much diplomacy [taken by Mrs. Lowder] in respect to her own value" (I: 57). She does not yet know how Mrs. Lowder's class-conscious ambition depends on her marriageability. Her education in this respect takes place later in the presence of Milly. Therefore, here Kate declares her everlasting love:

> Suddenly she said to him with extraordinary beauty: "I engage myself to you for ever."
>
> The beauty was in everything, and he could have separated nothing — couldn't have thought of her face as distinct from the whole joy. Yet her face had a new light. "And I pledge you — I call God to witness! — every spark of my faith; I give you every drop of my life." (I: 95)

This may be the most touching portrayal of Kate, seen from the perspective of Densher. They are in a state of the "practical *fusion* of consciousness" (*AN* 299). It may well be "the happiest hour" they are to know, because when he returns from America, their relationship is no longer so simple.

But a premonition of their future separation is already there even before the end of this *rendez vous*. When Kate says that she will herself post her letters to Densher, he disappoints her. Although she means that they are too precious for her not to, he misunderstands her intention as concealment and therefore deception. In addition, when they talk about the danger they must face if Mrs. Lowder demands them to explain their relationship, he disappoints her again by admitting it is not he but she who will have to lie in order to protect their relationship. Densher pretends to be tolerant, but none the less reveals his prejudice that women are prone to deception and Kate, as a woman, is no exception. Kate resents, in his view, "rather more seriously than she need the joke about her freedom to deceive" (I: 99). In her reaction, we may discern her conscientiousness about telling a lie. Kate laments:

> There are refinements — !" she more patiently dropped. "I mean of consciousness, of sensation, of appreciation," she went on. "No," she sadly insisted — "men *don't* know.

They know in such matters almost nothing but what women show them." (I: 99)

Her conscientiousness is another thing that Densher never understands about her. (He twice conjectures that she has utterly lied to Milly about their relationship, as we shall see later.)

II

By the time Densher returns from America, Kate has acquired a sophistication of intellect, emotion and social behaviour, under the influence of Mrs. Lowder. What she has gathered most is how at the same time to accommodate Mrs. Lowder's principle and retain her own motives. This has caused her a sprit between her appearance and her mind, which is going to bewilder and frighten Densher so much that he comes to doubt her. (Moreover, for the reader this is what makes it more difficult to fix Kate's characterization.) By contrast, Densher's situation has not changed as if he has been in a "parenthesis", while Kate has been in the current of "general text" (II: 11). His "letters form the States" have not gained for him so high an opinion from his managers "as he had meant they should" (II: 7). Accordingly, the prospect of his income does not change. Densher compares himself and Kate in economical terms:

> He had no more money just as he was than he had had just as he had been, or than he should have, probably, when it came to that, just as he always would be; whereas she, on her side, in comparison with her state of some months before, had measureably more to relinquish. (II: 21, sic)

Even more disturbing is his fear that Kate's intelligence might surpass his. She understands the social situation much more than he does, so that he needs to ask her perpetually for explanations. What is worse he continually fails to understand her words:

> He didn't want her deeper than himself, fine as it might be as wit or as character; he wanted to keep her where their communications would be straight and easy and their intercourse independent. (II: 19)

During several months of separation, he has stagnated while Kate has progressed. In Densher's reflection focalized in Book Six, what he most feels toward Kate is, in a word, frustration. He fears that if things go on at this rate he might lose her. Therefore he asks Kate again and again to confirm her love.

When Densher asks Kate to marry as they are, Kate replies: "Ah do let me try myself! I assure you I see my way. . . wait for me and give me time. . . and it will be beautiful" (II: 19). She also says: "Only be nice to [Aunt Maud]. Please her; make her see how clever you are—only without letting her see that you're trying" (II: 23), and then Milly will "help" them. As Ruth Bernard Yeazell points out, "[t]he sinister motive which in hindsight we might attribute to Kate are nowhere explicit here; we cannot know if at this point Kate has consciously acknowledged them even to herself" (77). What is clearly endorsed in the text at this stage is that Kate tries to give an appearance of compliance to Mrs. Lowder's policy: "Aunt Maud's line is to keep all

reality out of our relation. . . . She'll get rid of it, as she believes, by ignoring it and sinking it—if she only does so hard enough" (II: 27). Also, Kate is certain of Milly's delight because at the National Gallery Kate has seen Milly visibly affected by seeing Densher just as Kate herself had been before. Moreover, Kate is confident of Densher's constancy to her. Otherwise, how can she *not* mind Milly's "leading" him(II: 25)? Possibly, her confidence is based on her own constancy, and it makes a sharp contrast to Densher's repeated fear of her deserting him.

Curiously, the temporal order of the narrative is an anachrony as regards the events from Densher's arrival in London until the location changes to Venice. In other words, "the order in which events or temporal sections are arranged in the narrative discourse" is different from "the order of succession these same events or temporal segments have in the story" (Genette 35). Little attention has been paid to the fact, but it is important to notice that the events of the particular week are shuffled in Book Five, Six and Seven, with subtle indications embedded in the text for the reader to reconstitute the chronology. The anachrony is made inconspicuous because the segmentation of the narrative sequences accords with the continuity and shifts of focalization. (Hereafter the episodes are labeled as A, B, C. . . H, according to their order in the story, and the connection with the order in the narrative discourse is shown as (episode: Book-Chapter)).

(A: 6-1) Densher arrives at London. Kate meets him at Euston Station.

(B: 5-5, 6) In the evening of the same day, Kate meets Milly at her hotel. Kate exposes the danger of Lancaster Gate, and calls Milly for the first time a "dove".

(C: 5-7) Next morning Milly goes to the National Gallery and encounters Densher and Kate. Milly brings them to her hotel and they lunch with Mrs. Stringham.

(D: 7-1) Next morning, Mrs. Stringham visits Mrs. Lowder at Lancaster Gate, and talks of Milly's fatal "case" and says that Milly must be made happy. Mrs. Lowder agrees to help.

(E: 6-2) Densher visits Kate at Lancaster Gate. Mrs. Lowder allows them privacy. It is in this dialogue, as we have seen, that Kate asks Densher to go and see Milly and be good to Mrs. Lowder.

(F: 6-3) Mrs. Lowder gives a party at Lancaster Gate, which Milly does not attend. Milly is perpetually the topic of conversation during the dinner. Densher feels uncomfortable because he is regarded as the discoverer of Milly.

(G: 6-4) After the dinner, Densher and Kate talk alone. Kate mentions Milly's illness and Milly's love for him and her wish for him to make Milly happy. Subsequently, Mrs. Lowder preaches at him not to lose "the occasion of [his] life". Densher guesses that she is "buying him off" with Milly's money. Mrs. Lowder tells him that she has told a "proper lie", and he rightly suspects that she has deceived Milly into believing that Kate does not care for him.

(H: 6-5) Next day Densher visits Milly at her hotel, when she happens to be alone. She welcomes him and asks him to take a ride with her. While she has gone off to dress herself, Kate comes in but, seeing him there, leaves without seeing Milly.

What is most illuminating about the anachrony here is the episode D: 7-1, which occurs in the chronology so early, yet appears in the narrative so late. This episode relates the conversation between Mrs. Lowder and Mrs. Stringham, in which they reach the agreement that they will make Densher love Milly. Mrs. Lowder tells Mrs. Stringham to negate even the probability that Kate is in love with Densher. She declares: "I'll help you for Milly, because if that comes off I shall be helped, by its doing so, for Kate" (II: 117). Mrs. Stringham finds herself "quite willing

to operate to Kate's harm", or at least "not caring what became of Kate" (II: 117). Mrs. Lowder makes up a "plan of action" and decides to give a party for Milly to meet Densher.

If this episode were presented in the narrative according to the chronological order, it would be much more obvious for us that the party of episode F is a part of their "plan of action", and it would seem that Densher is entrapped in their scheme rather than Kate's. The elder ladies launch their conspiracy the day before episode E, in which Kate for the first time tells Densher to be "good" to Milly. This even suggests the possibility that Kate is also under the influence of formidable Mrs. Lowder. But because episode D appears so much later than episode E, the narrative gives the impression that Kate is the person who has conceived the sinister plan, and the impression is intensified through the utilization of Densher's distorted reflection, especially in the episode H: 6–5, as we will discuss presently.

(There is, however, another side to this question. This episode D is a singular one, as it offers us a view of the affair at which neither Densher nor Milly nor Kate is present. If there were not this particular insertion, we would be denied the opportunity to notice that the design for Milly is originally conceived by the elder ladies. Taking into consideration that the strategy of the elder ladies is to achieve their goal, this episode seems to suggest the comparative naivety of Kate's insight at this stage, because we can infer that both Mrs. Lowder's indulgence in episode E and Mrs. Stringham's absence in episode H are part of their scheme.)

III

Episode H at Milly's hotel is rendered in large part by a Jamesian "scenic treatment" of Densher's mind: a presentation of his consciousness in the form of narration, which records peculiar fluctuations. On the way to see her, Densher is uncomfortable about his obedience to Mrs. Lowder and Kate. In her presence, he is pleased with "their excellent, their pleasant, their permitted and proper and harmless American relation" (II: 70). But his conscience is disturbed because he notices that Milly's benevolence is based on the delusion that Kate does not like him. Then he remembers that he himself has done nothing deceptive: "It was Kate's description of him. . . it was none of his own; his responsibility would begin. . . only with acting it out" (II: 76). He tries to soothe his conscience by differentiating "acting" and "not acting", yet he is aware that everything is acting except speaking the truth. He thinks he should not deceive Milly but neither should he betray Kate. After all he rationalises that he should do nothing that will harm Milly's "pure pleasure" (II: 78).

Face to face with Milly, Densher feels "something like a start for intimacy", and then feels as if "they had really fallen to remembrance of more passages of intimacy than there had in fact" in their past (II: 79):

> An uncriticised acquaintance between a clever young man and a responsive young woman could do nothing more, at the most, than go, and his actual experiment went and went and went. (II: 80)

In the middle of this circumstance, Densher imagines a scene in which Kate tells Milly a lie: "Listen to him, *I*? Never! So do as you like." (II: 81). Although it is bracketed in quotation

marks and looks like Kate's direct speech, it is a fabrication of Densher's mind. On the one hand, Densher has been convinced from the beginning that Kate has told a lie to Milly. But he cannot have known if she has really told anything of that kind. He cannot after all know what the girls tell each other when they are alone. The text remains very vague about Kate's lie. We may infer, however, it is unlikely that the girls would say anything about Densher, taking into consideration their mutual avoidance of the topic. Also, it is unlikely that Kate would tell any blatant lie, taking into consideration her reaction to Densher's "joke about her freedom to deceive", as we have seen above. On the other hand, Densher knows that Mrs. Lowder *has* told "a proper lie". Nevertheless, it is only Kate's lie that he calls into question. What is indicated by all the contradiction and rationalisation in Densher's mind? We shall return to this below.

In the Venetian scene in Book Eight, Densher's thought becomes positively aggressive to Kate. After he has visited Milly in her palace under Mrs. Lowder's direction, he thinks that he has been humiliatingly manipulated:

> 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)

Although Mrs. Lowder is primarily the person who directed him, he oddly blames Kate. Interestingly, his resentment towards Kate appears almost as a reaction to "the unexpected impression" he has received from "poor pale exquisite Milly":

> Her welcome, her frankness, sweetness, sadness, brightness, her disconcerting poetry, as he made shift at moments to call it, helped as it was by the beauty of her whole setting and by the perception at the same time, on the observer's part, that this element gained from her, in a manner, for effect and harmony, as much as it gave. . . (II: 184 - 5)

Such fluctuation of emotion is a repetition of what he felt at Milly's hotel in London. Only, this time, both the attraction and the repulsion become more intensive. Furthermore, he keeps this renewed impression a secret from Kate, without making "any such comment on Milly's high style and state as would have corresponded with the amount of recognition it had produced in him" (II: 185).

In short, the man who attacks Kate for what he terms "her pure talent for life" (II: 176) is the same man who is secretly moved by "Milly's innocene", "Milly's beauty" (II: 180). Then it seems that Kate touches a sore point when she says to Densher at Piazza San Marco that he is in love with Milly, even if she may intend a jest. It explains why he must assert to himself that his feelings are "all for Kate, without a feather's weight to spare" for Milly:

> He was accordingly not interested [in Milly's state], for had he been interested he would have cared, and had he cared he would have wanted to know. Had he wanted to know he wouldn't have been purely passive, and it was his pure passivity that had to represent his dignity and his honour. (II: 204)

It is a complicated logic. The accumulation of subjunctives turns out in the end an apophasis. It betrays that he must be passive in order to keep "his dignity" and "his honour" whether he is interested or not. It also explain why Densher thinks that it would be "most amusing" if he could feel jealous of Sir Luke. The fact that he must resort to such rhetoric to negate his emotion does paradoxically betray its existence. To simplify crudely, this is a classic case of a man who shifts his affection to a new woman and deems the old one an obstacle. The problem he faces as a gentleman who must esteem "his dignity" and "his honour" is that he must disguise his true feeling because firstly he has engaged to Kate and must be loyal to her, secondly it is unbearable to be considered venal, and thirdly to admit is to surrender to the power of what he terms the "circle of petticoats"[5]. It is not that Densher grows out of his immature love for Kate because he realizes that Kate is amoral and manipulative[6], but that he regards her as amoral and manipulative because he has fallen out of love with her. After all we have no textual evidence that Kate behaves any more dishonorably than Densher does, in spite of his condemnation. It is most likely that for his own psychological defense Densher discounts Kate's value and disfigures the magnanimity of her mind.

IV

Kate seems aware of Densher's sentiment, when she asks him at the Veronese party: "Don't you think her[Milly] good enough *now?*" (II: 217). At the beginning of the party, Densher is absorbed in "the beauty of the scene":

> he felt her[Milly] diffuse in wide warm waves the spell of a general, a beatific mildness. There was a deeper depth of it, doubtless, for some than for others; what he in particular knew of it was that he seemed to stand in it up to his neck. He moved about in it and it made no plash; he floated, he noiselessly swam in it, and they were all together, for that matter, like fishes in a crystal pool. (II: 213)

In her white dress, he thinks, she is "different, younger, fairer" and "happily pervasive" (II: 214). He even feels that a "communion" closer than ever has passed between them through "the single bright look and the three gay words" (II: 214). In contrast, he notes the recession of Kate's beauty: "Kate was somehow — for Kate — wanting in lustre. As a striking young presence she was practically superseded; of the mildness that Milly diffused she had assimilated all her share" (II: 216). He even wonders how Mrs. Lowder appraises her. Densher looks at Milly and admires her; looks at Kate and assesses her. Meanwhile, Kate must be looking at Densher looking, and he is the person whose "long looks" have been for her "the thing in the world she could never have enough of" (I: 61) and who shows, in Kate's eyes, his feeling "always too much and too crudely" (II: 28). She cannot fail to perceive the emotion expressed in his look.

Kate gazes at Milly's pearls, and says that Milly is a bejeweled dove. Densher becomes aware of "something intense in his companion's feeling":

> Kate was just now, for reasons hidden from him, exceptionally under the impression of that

> element of wealth in her which was a power, which was a great power, and which was dove-like only so far as one remembered that doves have wings and wondrous flights. . . (II: 218)

Then he suspects that "Milly's royal ornament" is for Kate "a symbol of differences":

> Wasn't *that* the great difference that Milly to-night symbolised? She unconsciously represented to Kate, and Kate took it in at every pore, that there was nobody with whom she had less in common than a remarkably handsome girl married to a man unable to make her on any such lines as that the least little present. (II: 219)

Although Densher thinks that "the vision was actually in Kate's face" (II: 219), it is not a representation of Kate's vision but Densher's vision of it, and they are not identical. It is in his vision, then, that the material side of the extravagant jewels is emphasized, and the power of wealth is considered simply in a financial frame and is assumed to be no different from the purchasing power.

But the true potential of the power of wealth resides in its transformativity, which is what enables a feeble dove to take a wondrous flight. The poetic beauty of the Veronese party that sublimates Milly is a successful result of the "expert professional measure" of Eugenio, "a mercenary monster" (II: 142). It is the "thumping bank-account" (II: 51) that enables Milly to pursue her "counter-move to fate" (II: 142), the illusion of eternal beauty, the romantic life. Densher is absorbed in the artistic impression and fails to notice its understructure. The pearls are component parts of the illusion. Kate, who has "the art of seeing things as they are", is also a gifted dresser. When she pays attention to the pearls, she seems to perceive, without being quite articulate about it, how the entire beauty of the soirée is an artistic composition. The power of wealth affluently proclaims its romantic potentiality.

While Mrs. Lowder's pompous display of her power repels Kate and she can dismiss it as vulgar, Milly's power is demonstrated with consummate art and her sense of the beauty compels Kate. Kate is witnessing how it affects the man who used to look at her with the tenderness of love. Certainly Densher may be indifferent to the material side of money, but Milly's precious innocence as well as her poetic beauty, by which Densher is irrevocably enchanted, are not attainable without her extraordinary power of wealth. It is the romantic potential of money that overwhelms Kate. Not only that, Kate is forced to learn the success of Mrs. Lowder's policy. She says to Densher at the Piazza San Marco:

> The very essence of her[Mrs. Lowder]. . . is that when she adopts a view she— well, to her own sense, really brings the thing about, fairly terrorises with her view any other, any opposite view, and those, not less, who represent that. (II: 188)

If Kate has thought that she would appear to oblige her aunt, she now must recognize that to manipulate appearance is to manipulate the substance as well.

When Densher finally articulates their course: "Since she's to die I'm to marry her?" (II: 225), she answers in the affirmative. He is horrified and presses: "So that when her death has taken place I shall in the natural course have money?" He is convinced that "all along— to his

stupidity, his timidity — it had been, it had been only, what she meant" (II: 225). But it is possible that Kate has not known till very late what a hard course they are to be induced to take as a result of their disguise and accommodation of Mrs. Lowder. In one sense, Kate yields to the victory of the compact between the older ladies. She answers in "her controlled and colourless voice": "You'll in the natural course have money. We shall in the natural course be free." (II: 225). Kate's words sound cruel, but is it not a cruelty to herself rather than to Milly? Since Densher and Milly are mutually in love, is he not to marry her before she dies and everything becomes too late for Milly? It is undeniable that there is truthfulness in Kate's wish for Milly's happiness. It is the authorial narrator, in spite of his general reticence, that guarantees her sincerity:

> It may be declared for Kate, at all events, that her sincerity about her friend, through this time, was deep, her compassionate imagination strong; and that these things gave her a virtue, a good conscience, a credibility for herself, so to speak, that were later to be precious to her. (II: 140)

Kate has once called her loyalty to her family "my virtue — a narrow little family feeling", "a small stupid piety". Here it seems her compassion in her friendship is her virtue, too. But her friendship with Milly is another thing that Densher never understands and even denies about her.

Kate is yet to endure the "ordeal of consciousness" when she finds how harshly the man who used to love her can treat her. The precariously united "realm of thought" of Densher and Kate is absolutely severed at the Veronese soirée, when Densher demands her body in exchange for his stay in Venice with Milly. In making "the sharpest possible bargain", he tastes a sadistic triumph that is "too sharp for mere sweetness" (II: 231). The man, whose love has been for Kate a "saving romance" in the exploitative world, whose "mind" has represented for her a sanctuary in materialistic society, to whom she says with tears in her eyes: "I'm taking a trouble for you I never dreamed I should take for any human creature" (II: 223 - 4), now pushes their relationship into an economic model in which "nobody does anything for nothing". If Kate has convinced herself that they have been cooperating to secure a happy ending compatible with Milly's happiness, his demand must cause her affliction. The beauty of their relationship is destroyed in an instant and transformed into the bleak connection of a business deal. Densher's action here may well match the fatal blow that Lord Mark brings to Milly. Kate concedes, leaving her pathetic words: "I'm a person. . . who can do what I don't like"; "when you know me better you'll find out how much I can bear" (II: 226 - 7). After this scene Kate disappears from the narrative until much later, when Densher visits her at Lancaster Gate, as late as two weeks after his return to London.

V

After the unrepresented final meeting with Milly, Densher flees away from Venice with "the resolution to regard Milly as already dead to him" (II: 339). Back in London, he avoids Kate as much as possible, because in her presence he is acutely reminded what damage he has caused to Milly and what obligation he owes to Kate. After he has received Milly's letter on Christmas

Eve, however, he decides to visit Kate at her sister's house in Chelsea. After some nervous attempts at postponement, he finally produces Milly's letter to Kate. He claims that the letter is a "reward" for her "sacrifice", her "act of splendid generosity" (II: 386). What does he cover up with these noble words? He varnishes over her concession to his demand. Insisting that her act was a "sacrifice", he denies that it was the "sharpest possible bargain" he imposed on her. Pretending that it was not a bilateral contract, he evades his part of the obligation. (Notably, his conduct is essentially the same as Mrs. Lowder's strategy to negate the relation of Kate and Densher, which has worked to this extent.) When Kate takes the letter, she acquiesces to his wish to negate the contract.

Densher's behaviour is, moreover, doubly insulting to Milly and Kate. He indicates the letter as "something I feel as sacred" (II: 385). In contrast to the pompous words, he tramples on Milly's affection by refusing to read her last will and submitting it to the other woman. He also hurts Kate by expecting that she will do such an indecent thing as to break the seal of the personal letter. It is only natural and sensible that Kate should become "inordinately grave" (II: 384). She declines, but in response to his insistence, she takes the letter and throws it into the flames. Is not her action the only possible way for her to save Milly and herself? By cremating the letter, she preserves Milly's letter from profanity, protects her honour, and serves Densher's demand. Here we see Kate's penetrating brilliance in her accomplishing these three aims in one action.

But in depth, Densher may have wanted Kate to do something absolutely base when he declares that he desires her to take Milly's letter. When he submits the letter to her, he says to Kate: "It's because I love you that I've brought you this" (II: 384), as if the submission of a written proof of Milly's love to him will prove his love to Kate. In this behaviour, he seems to regard Kate as a vicious woman in some classic melodrama, which she is not. Two months later, Densher receives the legal document. This time he forwards it to Kate in order to "measure the possibilities of [her] departure from delicacy" (II: 399). Densher, who has required her to break the seal of Milly's "sacred script", now blames her for her breaking the seal of nothing more than a legal document. The distinction is almost ridiculous. As Sallie Sears suggests, "there is something wrong with Merton's sanctimonious viciousness, especially when it is coupled with the comparatively gentle, forgiving attitude he has toward himself" (95). It is only natural and sensible again that Kate is "struck" when he says that he wanted — "in so good a case" — to "test" her(II: 399). This is a trap rather than a test. It comes to this, that Densher is determined to provide himself with a foundation for his conviction that Kate is an evil woman.

He seems to differentiate himself from Kate in the end by his triumphant noncommitment, according to his sense of the difference between "acting" and "not acting". He contends that he has always been "in [her] power" and that her "liberty" is "in every way complete" (II: 401). At the finale, he forces her to choose between two alternatives: either to take the fortune and thus lose him; or allow him to give up the fortune to marry him. But Kate has never been in any way at "liberty". Exactly because she is not, she needs the money: it provides the only solution that will liberate her from the pressure and the responsibility her family has imposed on her.

The novel ends with Kate's words as she leaves Densher behind. Densher says to Kate that he will marry Kate as they were, to which she responds they will never again be as they were(II: 405). It is asking too much to her if he really thinks that she will consent to marry him after he has inflicted so much humiliation on her. When forcing her to choose, he is in fact forcing her to

choose between his hollow love and Milly's substantial money. Even if he could cancel a contract, it would be impossible for anyone to cancel the past. What has happened has happened between them. Lost love is lost, and he has no right to expect her to accept his hollow love. Kate is right in her recognition of the inalterability of history.

VI

Thus far, we have attempted to look through the self-delusions in the foregrounded Densher's vision and to excavate the trace of Kate's perspective behind it. We have discovered that the evil image of Kate is based on Densher's mental image, which is fabricated from his own need to protect his self-estimation. When we direct our attention to Kate's own words and actions, her self-sacrificial aspect rises to the surface. She surrenders herself for her family, her "saving romance" for Milly, her honour for Densher, and gives him the precious memory of Milly. Milly says to Lord Mark: "I give and give and give" (II: 161), but is it not what Kate does? In the early days Kate believes that the "mind" of Densher would be the way to liberate her from the society of the "workers" and the "worked"— something which has been disproved. What Kate must realise in the course of events is the fundamentally materialistic structure of the harsh reality that even romance is realisable, only by a "dove" with "wings" who has spent an extravagant amount of money in addition to her life.

It is now time to consider the meaning of the suppression of Kate's consciousness in the narrative, since the effacement is caused, as we have seen, through the operation of the narrative: the intensive foregrounding of Densher's perspective, the anachrony in the plot, and the arrangement of direct and indirect discourse. One possible explanation is that there is a dominating force in the narrative to accomplish the romance of Milly: the dying girl enamoured of life who represents the author's "very old" and "very young" memory (*AN* 288).

For that purpose, the reflection of the young man who is in love with her memory is the most effective media. Brooks is right in stating that "[t]hrough Densher's agency, James's imagination reaches. . . to a world-historical struggles of torturers and victims. The story of Milly Theale is at the last faithful to its melodramatic premises" (192). After Milly is dead and her letter is lost, Densher treasures his thought as "all his own"; Kate is "the last person he might have shared it with" (II: 395). He is absorbed in contemplation of the burned letter:

> like the sight of a priceless pearl cast before his eyes— his pledge given not to save it— into the fathomless sea, or rather even it was like the sacrifice of something sentient and throbbing, something that, for the spiritual ear, might have been audible as a faint far wail. This was the sound he cherished when alone in the stillness of his rooms. (II: 396)

As Kate appropriately expresses in the dénouement, Milly's memory is his love; he wants no other. As is initially anticipated by the narrator, he does "drop what was near" and "take up what was far" (I: 48). If Kate's lucid reflection were adopted, the realistic understructure of the romance as we have discovered would certainly surfaced too obviously. In order to achieve the air of real romance, Kate's perspective is effaced, her predicament is obscured and her "ordeal of consciousness" is suppressed.

There is, however, more to it than this. It deserves mention that Kate does not choose to refute Densher and endures his abuse silently. In doing so, she seems to play a positive role in the protection of Milly's romance from the violation of reality. She embodies "a kind of expensive vagueness made up of smiles and silences and beautiful fictions and priceless arrangements" (II: 298). It is Kate who calls Milly a "dove", to begin with, and it is she who reminds us of this image at the end:

> [Kate] went on with her thought. "I used to call her, in my stupidity — for want of anything better — a dove. Well she stretched out her wings, and it was to *that* they reached. They cover us."
>
> "They cover us," Densher said.
>
> "That's what I give you," Kate gravely wound up. "That's what I've done for you." (II: 404)

With these words, Kate concludes Milly's story as the romance of the "dove" with the "wings" and the young man who is in love with her memory, even though it has deleted her own romance. Kate is the character who wishes more than anyone else for romance to survive and flourish in the harsh reality in which she herself is confined.

This leads us finally to an interesting issue concerning James's view of reality and romance:

> The real represents to my perception the things we cannot possibly *not* know, sooner or later, in one way or another. . . . The romantic stands, on the other hand, for the things that, with all the facilities in the world, all the wealth and all the courage and all the wit and all the adventure, we never *can* directly know; the things that can reach us only through the beautiful circuit and subterfuge of our thought and our desire. (*AN* 31 - 32)

For James, the "romantic" is something to be pursued through the resolute effort of postponing the emergence of the "real", in spite of the recognition of its final inevitability. Kate, who knows reality and yet protects romance, then, is the character whose vision corresponds most closely to the author's.

Notes

[1] Hereafter cited in parentheses as *AN*.

[2] After the first Book and the early part of the second, the narrative does not, in general, focalise in Kate's consciousness. There is, however, an important exception in Book Seven, which we shall see later.

[3] See my MA thesis "The Cryptic Love: Suppressed Consciousness in The Wings of the Dove" presented to the Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, The University of Tokyo.

[4] This is achieved by an extensive employment of the technique: "narrated monologue" defined by Dorrit Cohn.

[5] See Michael Moon for discussion how Densher's resentment to the female dominance is the reflection of his anxiety about his unstable masculinity.

[6] Critics who emphasize Densher's moral development take this view. See for example Daniel

Mark Forgel.

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