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Spring 2009

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Author: Adam Troldahl

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The "Salient Point": Henry James & the New Woman in *Portrait of a Lady* and *The Wings of the Dove*

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English

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Abstract

The "Salient Point": Henry James & the New Woman in *Portrait of a Lady* and *The Wings of the Dove*

In the nineteenth century, gender relations were rooted in social dogma that promoted separate spheres. This project explores the redefining of gender relations at the turn of the century that enabled the rise of the New Woman, who transcended her domestic sphere and ventured into new geographic and social spaces. For Henry James, geographical mobility connotes social progress, and textual/geographic thresholds and passages track representations of the New Woman's body in both *Portrait of a Lady* and *The Wings of the Dove*. James depicts the New Woman's body as alternately a spectacle on public display and a pathologized, dying subject.

Dr. Casey A. Jarrin

English

Introduction

Daisy Miller: An *Urtext* for James's New Woman

"Nevertheless, he went back to live at Geneva, whence there continue to come the most contradictory accounts of his motives of sojourn: a report that he is 'studying' hard – an intimation that he is much interested in a very clever foreign lady" (*Daisy Miller* 64). These are the words with which Henry James ends the novella that not only sparked his fame, but also a transatlantic discussion about the "American girl." *Daisy Miller*, comparatively short and accessible in relation to James's later works, captivated Anglo-American audiences and cemented his early career. Ms. Miller, young and stubborn, is whisked from America to Europe, ignorant of her compatriots and Old World expectations. In many ways she embodies a rough, early prototype for the New Woman. Though she is less introspective than *Portrait of a Lady*'s Isabel Archer and a far cry from *The Wings of the Dove*'s mobile mavens (the divine and manipulative Kate Croy as well as the ephemeral princess Milly Theale), she symbolizes a feminine entity pushing back against society's expectations. Her ignorance can be comedic at times, but what she represents is very real. She exemplifies James's career-long pursuit of tracing an emergent redefinition of womanhood, or what James believed was the "most salient and peculiar point of our social life": "the situation of women, the decline of the sentiment of sex, the agitation on their behalf" (Henry James, 1883). Henry James, like the protagonist Winterbourne in *Daisy Miller*, was "studying" the opposite sex, and both

Portrait of a Lady and *The Wings of the Dove* provide James with an context for representing several "very clever (...) lad[ies]".

I begin my essay with the dual contexts of the ending of *Daisy Miller* and the close of the nineteenth century. The turn of the last century was a time of contradiction, during which old and new (e.g. social orders, archetypes for femininity, conceptualizations of womanhood) often coexisted, battling for influence upon and ownership of the female body. The historical juncture represented a culmination of the tensions that arose throughout the century, when traditional (often aristocratic) social orders confronted revolutionary, often industrially-driven emergent modes of social organization that rooted themselves in an ideology that favored the rules of the marketplace over and against modes of social organization rooted in feudalism. These confrontations become the dominant source of tension represented in literature and debated by Anglo-American society, reflective of the industrialized and increasingly market-driven England during the nineteenth century. Elements of these conflicts provide the economic and social contexts of George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*, and Dickens's *Bleak House*. For working-class women especially, industrialized society provided forms of employment outside of the home. These women, working most often inside of factories (the paradigmatic industrial workshop) not only left the domestic sphere on a daily basis, but staked a claim larger than their bourgeois sisters in the public sphere. By the end of the century, however, unrest prevailed among almost all women, including and sometimes especially the

middle class; Matthew's writes, "It was the class that was most committed to an ideal of respectable domesticity and to separate spheres – but it also produced the committed rebels against that ideology, as well as the women who were making tentative steps outside the home" (10). Because James refrains from Dickensian methods of representing vertical cross-sections of class structure, we seldom glimpse into the world of the working class. His representations of the turn-of-the-century redefinition of womanhood focus squarely upon an often gentrified, almost always bourgeois female body. Thus, this essay examines the rise of a very specific New Woman, one not only first emerging at the turn of the century, but also of an upper middle class transatlantic social set. James's New Woman emerges from within a middle class "most committed to an ideal of respectable domesticity" but is herself, in figures such as Henrietta Stackpole and Susan Stringam, a New Woman who was a "rebel against that ideology". James grounds her movement within the narrative landscape using the metaphors of the threshold and the passage, showcasing her both metaphorical and literal "tentative steps outside the home". I will also examine the relationship of this transatlantic, bourgeois social set to old aristocracy. Most often, the reactionary attitudes working against the rise of James's New Women are depicted both within spaces marked as aristocratic, such as Gardencourt in *Portrait of a Lady*, or with attitudes that represent old aristocratic orders, such as Daisy's most fervent critic, Winterbourne's aunt Mrs. Costello. Mrs. Costello, with her "long pale face" and "high nose", is not only portrayed as physically and stereotypically aristocratic looking, but employs a distinctly aristocratic

excuse for mingling with the Millers. She considers Daisy Miller and her family "very common", and explains that it is beyond her own power to meet them: " 'Ah, you don't accept them?' said the young man. 'I can't, my dear Frederick. I would if I could, but I can't.' "(17). Mrs. Costello stakes her belief in an "ideal of respectable domesticity" that discourages earnest vertical interaction between social sets. In accepting and propagating this bourgeois re-appropriation of aristocratic class segregation, Mrs. Costello also denies her own agency. Beginning in *Daisy Miller*, one of James's earliest works, the bourgeois transatlantic female body is the location of both support of an existing social status quo in which female bodies alternately are denied and deny themselves their own agency and "rebels" fed up with the existing dogma of social and gender interaction. The latter group may be interpreted as James's New Women.

The situation of women throughout the nineteenth century had been rooted in a social dogma reflecting the notion of separate spheres for women and men. Though the gender roles instituted by this policy provided a place where, theoretically, women maintained a sovereign domestic space, the concept of separate spheres ideologically reflected the necessity for women to rely upon patriarchal powers. Jean V. Matthews reflects upon the obsolescence of separate spheres in the dawning of an age defined by mobile women:

The doctrine of "separate spheres" which had been worked out at the beginning of the nineteenth century, that men and women were designed by God and nature to operate in quite different arenas –men in the public world of exploit, war, work, intellect, and politics; women in the world of nurturance and the affections centered on the home –

had offered an appealing solution for ordering the relations of the sexes in a modern liberal democracy. In effect it maintained the subordination of women without necessarily harping on their inferiority. It seemed to offer women their own autonomous space, and as long as they stayed there the culture showered them with fulsome compliments to "Woman" as the "Angel in the House," "Queen of the Home," the morally superior civilizer of men. Nevertheless, the whole doctrine rested on the premise that women's lives were always ancillary to those of men, and that women should always be *dependent* on men." (5)

As Matthews implies, however, the relationship between the sexes under the dogma of separate spheres comes under reconsideration when, specifically in large metropolitan areas, bourgeois women were granted a mobility (if but superficially) to at least be *seen* within the "public world of exploit, war, work, intellect, and politics." The rise of the department store, for example, meant that middle-class women were granted yet another and decidedly feminine space. There they could shop and work, buy and sell, look and be looked upon (the department store as a feminine sphere for social exchange is documented in Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, among other novels). Thus, the "appealing solution" provided by separate spheres comes crashing down at the end of the nineteenth century when the "Angel in the House" suddenly moves rapidly through London, New York, or Chicago, buying not only commodities which she will bring back to nurture her family, but also personal items – shoes, scarves, dresses, makeup, hats – with which she will armor her body as she repeats her ventures into the public sphere over and over again (see Rachel Bowlby).

At the end of *Daisy Miller*, James reflects upon the "contradictory" accounts of Winterbourne's "motives" following Daisy's death. Her death is in and of itself contradictory, for Daisy was and remained innocent until the very end, despite

Winterbourne's beliefs otherwise. At the same time, however, Old World social dogma continues to be influential. It exerts a strong enough influence to repress feminine hesitation for the separate spheres that dominated gender relations. Daisy's death of malaria, in Italy no less, is itself emblematic of her death at the hands of the Old World. She will not return to America, from which she sprang forth, and, other than Winterbourne, she will not be acquitted by her those who doubt her innocence. As Judith Fryer clarifies, "it is not so much [Daisy's] innocence that is in question, but rather her disregard for Old World customs" (Fryer 99).

W.D. Howells wrote of the reaction to James's novella on at least one side of the Atlantic, telling a mutual friend of his and James that the latter had "waked up all the women with his *Daisy Miller*";"the novel" led to speculation in American social circles about the identity of the young American girl. Howells writes, "The thing went so far that society almost divided itself into Daisy Millerites and anti-Daisy Millerites" (Horne, p. 111). Howell's words are reflective of the binary which James demonstrates in both *Portrait of a Lady* and *The Wings of the Dove*, one that casts female bodies into either anxious representatives restless with their domestic, and often married futures, and those supportive yet of reactionary social powers.

In *Daisy Miller*, the emergent bourgeois female body is both a spectacle on display (evidenced by the discussions Daisy causes at the resorts and Winterbourne's corporeal fascination with her body), as well as one that eventually becomes sick. These representations continue into both *Portrait of a Lady* and *The Wings of the Dove*.

Especially in *Wings,* these alternating representations become the dominant modes of representing James's perspective on the New Woman's body. Milly Theale, independent of family and fabulously wealthy, may purchase her own mobility and make her own decisions. Her body, however, is crumbling. Her archetypal embodiment of the New Woman's escape from patriarchal hegemony is unsustainable. Kate Croy alternately represents a woman whose mobility is provided by two sources. First, technological innovation (the subway), enables her to travel around London. Second, the resources provided her by her wealthy aunt provide her with the means, albeit with strings attached, to travel to Italy. The archetype for the New Woman provided by Kate possesses a spectacular body. Her body is Densher's trophy, and it enables her manipulation.

In James, one is constantly reminded of the three-dimensionality of the spaces within which his characters, especially these female bodies, operate. The representational strategies he uses lay specific emphasis upon how and to what extent the female body may move within that narrative landscape. In *Portrait of a Lady,* the anxiety for separate gendered spaces is palpable: the married woman's presence within the domestic sphere is represented as claustrophobic instead of an autonomous space for which she is thankful. When Isabel accepts Mr. Osmond's proposal, she ceases to "soar and sail", and for the first time, as Ralph says, "touches the ground" (374). Her acceptance of the domestic space as Osmond's terms of the contractual obligation of their marriage clips her wings. Published nearly twenty years later, *The Wings of the*

Dove provides passages which enable transgression of domestic and social thresholds. With repeated transgressions, these passages demonstrated the obsolescence of thresholds as they were no longer successful in separating female and male bodies, or female bodies from the public sphere. Thus, the female body in *Wings* is defined by its mobility, and now that she is mobile, the question becomes what enables her mobility. The passages which most directly enable her mobility may be either literal, like the subway system, or social, such as the career and independence of widowhood exhibited by Susan Stringham.

This essay examines the representations of the New Woman's body, keeping in mind that James embraces cross artistic-representational methods. His most iconic tome is a novel represented as a *Portrait*, and the paradigmatic moment for the New Woman in *The Wings of the Dove* is a textual interpretation of Caspar David Friedrich's painting *The Wanderer Above a Sea of Fog* (1818). When Henrietta Stackpole visits an Italian art gallery, the Coreggio painting *Virgin Adoring the Christ Child* is represented as music in a moment of synesthesia. Finally, John Singer Sargent's society paintings (*Madame X, An Interior in Venice,* and *Mrs. Ralph Curtis)* play a significant and illuminating role in demonstrating ways of representing the New Woman, the space she inhabits, and her body. In many ways, Sargent and James both generate prototypes for the New Woman's body reflective of contemporary social redefinitions: one of them just happens to be using the brushstroke over and against the pen stroke. As friends and collaborators, the connection between their works was more than just coincidental;

the two often inspired each other. Visual and textual practices inform each other in late nineteenth century.

In short, *Daisy Miller* provides many of the thematic cornerstones to which James returns to throughout his career, none more evident than the plight of the New Woman. For James, the redefining of womanhood and renegotiation of gender relations at the turn-of-the-century was the "salient" question of his time. With regard to tracking representations of the New Woman in James, *Daisy Miller* is the Urtext for both *Portrait of a Lady* as well as *The Wings of the Dove*. Focusing specifically upon cross-artistic representational strategies and the narrative spaces which James's women inhabit, I will track James's portrayal of the emergent New Woman in both novels.

Chapter 1

The Threshold & the Frame: Portraiture and Progress in *Portrait of a Lady*

In the narrative landscape that Isabel Archer traverses, frames and thresholds reappear. Aristocratic spaces such as Gardencourt and Osmond's villa are architectural frames whose interiors promote the gender relation status quo and where James represents time as suspended. Moreover, the text itself becomes a narrative frame from which Isabel cannot escape. At the heart of the concept of the frame as a cage – a confining space, the gilded border that separates the art within it, (more often than not in *Portrait* a portrait) from its immediate surroundings. As Isabel is the figure whose portrait painting *is* the novel's objective, Isabel is cursed from the very beginning, fighting a losing battle against the narrative form James employs to represent her life. Thresholds, on the other hand, communicate moments of anticipation or expectancy, of potential (and eventual) passage mobility. When characters transgress thresholds, social progress is made. Thus, while frames confine, thresholds become the doorways (sometimes literally) through which light pierces into the dark: Henrietta's lone call for Isabel's divorce, the reproductive energy that surrounds Pansy, and Mr. Bantling's atypical appreciation of and surprising affection for a strong willed, defiant and masculine woman. Though Isabel's ending is tragic (and I argue, unavoidable), as she returns from Ralph's deathbed to her own cage of a marriage and lives inside the gilded frame in which Osmond suffocates her, James ends with Caspar and Henrietta standing underneath a doorway as a literal threshold. *Portrait*'s meaning lies in the moments in

which the threshold and the frame converge. These episodes are signifiers of the struggle between change and stasis, progress and the status quo in both a larger, historical trajectory as well as within the more local, narrative history that the novel covers.

Within historical trajectories at the turn of the last century, the threshold becomes particularly symbolic with regard to historical progress, but more specifically with regard to the renegotiation of the social order throughout the 19th century, which reaches a critical mass at the turn of the century. Thus, though *Portrait* concerns itself with representing the small, the specific, the familial, James's characters play an exemplary role within larger, national histories and the rise of a new social order. Suggestive of this point is that the novel neither begins nor ends with Isabel, the portrait's explicit muse. *Portrait*'s opening chapter paints the waning moment of the aristocracy, while its closing scene focuses on two Americans most representative of the new social order. Goodwood's multiple traversals of the Atlantic, for the sole purpose of speaking with Isabel, anticipate today's global world and the benefits of time-space convergence, or the notion that technological innovation has effectively reduced the space between people. Henrietta works for the newspapers, earning a living not only outside the home but altogether outside her national home as well. Osmond's cloistered daughter Pansy stares down Henrietta as if she's a phenomenon (522); while those who surround her age or die off, Henrietta stays "as fresh as ever" (520). Isabel's husband Osmond will not even admit that she's a woman, and Ralph Touchett sums her

up best: "Henrietta (...) does smell of the Future – it almost knocks one down!" (113). Though the narrative traces the psychological development of Isabel Archer, James never loses himself in the minutiae of Isabel's story completely; instead, he remains always attuned to these larger, historical trajectories and the way in which his characters portray or reflect the particular transformation of the late nineteenth century. His eye is on the "Future" with a capital F.

James neither begins nor ends *Portrait* with his authorial eye on his heroine. Instead, the novel begins at Gardencourt, the main Touchett residence. Gardencourt functions within or presents two historical trajectories: First, it's the home of the Touchetts, its cold walls witness the events that shape their family history. At Gardencourt, Isabel becomes a member of the family, Mr. Touchett dies, and Lord Warburton's proposes to Isabel. Ralph even races back to the home before he can accept his own impending death. It is as if Gardencourt must also witness this event. The Touchetts are not the only family, however, that have occupied Gardencourt. The institution of Gardencourt, like the English throne, survived the rise and fall of many patriarchs. When the last dynasty ended, and "owing to circumstances too complicated to set forth," the estate again changed hands. This time, it was to witness Ralph Touchett, "a shrewd American banker", take the throne (20). Here again, James underscores the historical context and the rise of a new social order, giving Gardencourt over to the highest bidder, in this case a businessman. This is an example of the upper middle class re-appropriating aristocratic ideals for themselves, with an American

businessman literally buying his way into an aristocratic landmark, and by doing so joining a gentrified social set of lingering aristocracy; his neighbor is a Lord.

James also paints Gardencourt as one of the great homes of England – a proper English estate – it plays a role in broader English history. Gardencourt has both "a name and a history," the narrator tells us:

> It had been built under Edward the Sixth, had offered a night's hospitality to the great Elizabeth (whose august person had extended itself upon a huge, magnificent and terribly angular bed which still formed the principal honour of the sleeping apartments), had been a good deal bruised and defaced in Cromwell's wars, and then, under the Restoration, repaired and much enlarged; and now, finally, after having been remodeled and disfigured in the eighteenth century, it had been passed into the careful keeping of a shrewd American banker. (20)

In James's description, the property rises and falls lock-in-step with the triumphs and tribulations of the English monarchy; it is "bruised and defaced" during the Interregnum, "repaired and much enlarged" during the Restoration, and "remodeled" and "disfigured" during the long eighteenth century (when power began to shift toward Parliament and away from the sovereign). Thus, the house is a historically aristocratic space. Gardencourt also partakes, if but momentarily, in English history – receiving the "great" Queen Elizabeth, whose fleeting visit at Gardencourt is memorialized, the "magnificent" bed on which she "extended herself" still forms the "principal honour of the sleeping apartments" (20).

Ralph provides a figure for the transformation of the Touchetts from nouveau riche Americans into acting members of the aristocracy. "Quite of a different pattern,"

Ralph Touchett is "tall, lean, and loosely and feebly put together, he had an ugly, sickly, witty, charming face" (22). Later Lord Warburton, their neighboring English Lord and a legitimate member of the aristocracy with which they associate, describes Ralph as, "the last of the Tories" (413). Like the fledgling English aristocracy, the Touchett family suffers consistently yet leisurely at the hands of time. The social stratification that they represent is in its waning moments, but they are not being driven from their lifestyle. James sets the teatime that opens the novel during the transition moment between afternoon and evening: "Real dusk would not arrive for many hours; but the flood of summer light had begun to ebb" (17). Ralph serves as a constant reminder of this waning historical moment, this impending sunset, dying slowly over the course of the novel. Ralph's physiognomy exudes both the "sickly" and the "witty," and his slow death from tuberculosis serves as the gauge of time passing in the last half of the novel. The changing of the seasons direct his movements, as he must escape to warmer climates to preserve his health. Much like an alarm clock, his death (as the final outcome of the ravages time has had on his body) finally stirs Isabel into action from her stasis in Rome. Though the teatime at the beginning of the novel hints at the "waning" moment of the Touchett family's personal history, it simultaneously signifies the waning of the English aristocracy generally, whether legitimate like Lord Warburton or illegitimate like the Touchetts. Thus, Ralph is representative of both the Touchetts' and the larger aristocracy's own dusk.

Two aspects of James' representation of the waning aristocracy in *Portrait* are vitally important for contextualizing both the threshold and the frame. The first is that Gardencourt is represented as a painting. The second is that James lives during the time about which he writes, experiencing first hand these historical trajectories.

As Mr. Touchett owns his property he comes to truly enjoy it as an aesthetic space in constant flux. The estate is not only renovated, but also renovates its occupants, converting its tenants from Americans to acting members of the British aristocracy. Gardencourt transforms its "shrewd" American owner from "grumbling at its ugliness, its antiquity, its incommodity" to having "a real aesthetic passion" for it (20). At first he views his English estate as "ugly," but later Mr. Touchett embraces Gardencourt as both antiquated and incommodious. As Mr. Touchett comes to enjoy his residence, Gardencourt becomes a work of art; Mr. Touchett knows "all its points and would tell you just where to stand to see them in combination" (20). It is as if Gardencourt is a painting in a gallery and Mr. Touchett directs his visitors to view his abode from the perspective that most becomes its masterful structure as a work of art. Furthermore, James invites us to view Gardencourt as that work of art. He introduces us on the second page of *Portrait* to a home represented as a painting within a novel represented as a portrait. James encourages us to explore these cross-artistic representational methods where the visual and literary arts converge.

Also crucial to James's representation of the waning aristocracy is that he lives to witness this transformation. He not only knew of, but also befriended and socialized

with many of his contemporaries in both visual art and literary circles. Much of the current scholarship in James studies concerns itself more with the man that created the literature than the characters which he spent his entire life meticulously sculpting. Peter Brooks focuses specifically on the extent to which James's early period in the French capitol, and especially the people James met there, informed his personal life and work throughout his career. Millicent Bell argues that Isabel is rooted in James's wish to represent the unrealized potential of his cousin Mary (Minny) Temple, who tragically died after a long battle with tuberculosis and with whom James had an extremely close, platonic relationship. James attempts to craft Minny early in his fiction, Bell argues, starting with *Daisy Miller*, (the novella that made James famous), and he continues with Isabel in *Portrait* before culminating in his most explicit portrayal of Minny as Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove*. Bell's argument encourages us to think of his artwork as perhaps James's only outlet: "The fictional Milly Theale, the 'dove' of his novel's title and its implied heroine, had her germination in his memory of his remarkable cousin Mary Temple" (Wings intro xiii). In *Meaning in Henry James*, Bell argues that Isabel was a "detached character" for James; he began with an abstract conceptualization of Isabel and the narrative of *Portrait* "grew from [this] 'germ' of a character"(81). I agree with Bell that many of the characters which find their way into James' novels, novellas, and short stories are deeply rooted in real figures – whether family members or friends – or composites of those individuals. What is important here is not that James's many female protagonists are his attempts at accurately portraying

particular figures in James's life – including his attempt at portraying his cousin – but instead that James was inspired enough artistically by his own life to actively allow it to inspire his art.

Much has been made of the later aesthetic and collaborative relationship between John Singer Sargent and Henry James. I believe their association, especially in light of James's presumed sexual identity, illuminates his personal attraction to literary portraiture and the figure of the frame. James and Sargent share similar biographies. Although they spent the majority of their respective lives in Europe, both artists were born Americans. Their connection was not only biographical, but also artistic and surfaced repeatedly in their work. Sargent had become famous in large part due to his portraits of women like the *parisienne* American expatriate Virginie Amelie Avegno Gautreau (*Madame X*), in other words representations of the same American social set that James later portrays in his literature (i.e. Milly Theale of *Wings of the Dove*). Barry Maine argues that in a tribute essay James wrote about Sargent, "Picture and Text," James discovers that "what he admired in Sargent's work were interests, values, and talents that mirrored his own" and

Figure 0: A young Henry James circa 1863-4

that "there is no greater work of art than a great portrait"(Picture & Text 1893, p. 136, 114). Portraiture becomes the focal point of this artistic relationship between James and Sargent, a relationship in which the former admired the latter not only for his works' visual aesthetics, but also for the underlying "interests" and "values" that James saw the two as sharing. (More explicitly, Maine also suggests that James's literary landscape of Florence in *The Aspern Papers* (1887) comes directly out of a series of Sargent's portraits that featured the same city in the early 1880s). Maine then speculates that these similar values and interests extended to another shared interest: "each had apparently chosen a life of celibacy" (138). In this way, James's sexuality becomes one context through which to understand his high esteem for Sargent's work and portraiture in general. In an attempt to define what many James scholars consider his repressed homosexuality, John Bradley discusses an early event that shaped James for years thereafter:

> By James's own account, when he first saw Gus in his military cadet uniform the latter was an exceptionally beautiful 12-year-old – red-headed, athletic and mature for his years. In 1864, when James was 19 years old, he called on his older brother William and John La Farge in the studio they were sharing, and found that they had placed Gus naked on a pedestal. James could have stayed, since he was practicing painting at the time; but in his confusion he walked out. He later saw Gus at Harvard, and again was struck by his elegance. This time, however, he did not greet him. A few months later he learned that Gus had been killed in the American Civil War. James had earlier asked William for the portrait of naked Gus, which he kept for the rest of his life. (Bradley 17)

Bradley argues that James denied himself ever pursuing anything beyond the "adolescent friendship" that he shared with Gus Barker, much as he later denied himself any other sexual relationships. In this scene Bradley paints, Gus Barker's body is the

muse for practicing portraiture, of representing the body artistically. William James and John La Farge use paint as medium to represent Gus's body on the canvases in front of them. Singer Sargent used the same medium to portray not only the physical body, but also the aura of the women he painted (I will discuss this again in the second chapter). Meanwhile, James took the "germ" of his cousin Minny Temple, constructed a "background" for this muse, and represented his cousin using language. James may have left Gus's naked body and the studio behind, but he took portraiture along with him. Thus, I agree with Maine's belief that what James saw in Sargent, who came to be known as the preeminent portraitist of the time, were not only shared "interests" and "values", but also a mode of representing those interests and values that roots itself in representing the body, namely portraiture.

James embraces a continuum between the visual and the literary arts, and invites us to interpret his early writing as representational self portraits of the young man. Sedgwick discusses what Bradley refers to as "a narcissistic, homo-erotic consciousness" in James's prefaces to the New York editions of his early works published after the turn of the century, as well as the revisions of his early works which accompanied these prefaces:

The James of the prefaces revels in the same startling metaphor that animates the present-day literature of the 'inner child': the metaphor that presents one's relation to one's own past as a relation*ship*, intersubjective as it is intergenerational. And, it might be added, almost by definition homoerotic (Sedgwick 215-6).

His early writing, within the context of his later career, became for James a series of literary self portraits. His heavy editing of those early works, complete with prefaces that elucidate the younger James's intentions and shortcomings, is an interaction between two Henry Jameses. Again, James may have left the naked, twelve year old Gus Barker on his pedestal, a symbolic gesture representative of turning away from interaction with the physical body, but he took portraiture with him. Eventually, portraiture enables James to conduct a metaphorical "relation*ship,* intersubjecive as it is intergenerational," with another male entity – himself.

As an orphan figure, Isabel both seeks the safety of the domestic space and is disillusioned with it. She also may be interpreted as another mode of James's literary self-portraiture. William Veeder says that, "young Henry found the truest representation of his self in the figures of the orphan and the woman" (Porte 95). Young Isabel uses the walls of her family's home to separate herself from her siblings, and later she is effectively adopted by her aunt. In her "office", young Isabel voraciously reads the books she discovers in the adjoining library. Though depicted in another room, detached from her sisters, she remains within the same house. An orphan figure, Isabel seeks the shelter of the domestic space. Whether young or old, she does not vacate the domestic space (e.g. Isabel returns from Gardencourt to Osmond's home). She hides in an abandoned office, a room in which the door to the outside world has literally been boarded up (38). In this most impenetrable of rooms, young Isabel, "kept her eyes on her book and tried to fix her mind" (41). In this way, Isabel may be seen as

also disillusioned with the domestic space. The book provides Isabel with an imagined escape from the house without literally vacating it. Reading is a mode of subversion achievable from within the domestic space and suitable for the orphan figure. Moving back and forth between her library and "office", Isabel performs the role of author, evoking the author of her own story.

Though Isabel could portray herself as a victim of structural limitations, she owns her decision to marry Osmond. When Henrietta suggests divorce, Isabel reminds her that she helped to make her own bed, and now she must lie in it: Isabel laments, "One must accept one's deeds. I married him before all the world; I was perfectly free; it was impossible to do anything more deliberate. One can't change that way" (521). Isabel denies any potential victimhood, and takes responsibility for marrying Osmond, "before all the world". She was "free" when she made her choice, and "deliberate" in her action. This emphasis upon agency is important for the future of the women's movement; "One can't change that way," she says. Her words may be read as both advice for her friend Henrietta as well as advice for fellow women within her bourgeois, transatlantic social set. Isabel frames herself as a martyr for womanhood and directs Henrietta toward utilizing agency over victimhood.

The metaphor of the threshold may be read as sexual; it often represents the moment preceding sexual climax, its transgression the metaphorical orgasm. The Countess describes Madame Merle as a "a kind of full-blown Lily," the "incarnation of propriety" (581). The Countess's metaphor, uttered before she divulges to Isabel

Madame Merle's scandalous past, is delightfully accurate. The irony (which the Countess is aware of) is that Madame Merle is no virginal flower. She is the overtly sexual femme fatale, surviving her impropriety despite everything she does to the contrary. She cheats on her husband with Osmond, the biological daughter Pansy as the material result of their conjugal union. She is directly associated sexually with at least two men, and her movements within the narrative landscape, her constant transgressions of domestic spaces owned by various men and inhabited by the many wives married to those men, mimic the movements of a prostitute as well as of sexual intercourse. She may be a "full-blown Lily" only so far as she is the most generative, both the most overtly sexual and fecund. For the implicitly sexual Merle, transgression of thresholds is no problem. Merle's ability to both wield and manage some aspect of social power within the same social set that Isabel is powerless is undeniable. Merle's social power, however, is ultimately portrayed by James as negative. She is the femme fatale, associated both with the color black (*merle* means crow in French) and with a form of transgression which results in disharmony. Merle's approach toward raising Pansy only reinforces the separate spheres ideology that keeps women in the domestic space. Furthermore, her mobility comes at the expense of the men whom she wrongs, lying to her husband and having another man's child. In comparison, trapped within Osmond's villa, the immobile Isabel is portrayed as relatively innocent. At the same time, Merle's character also reinforces Isabel's hesitation. She will not leave Osmond

because the prototype set forth by the moral compass of the novel correlates the freedom of post-marriage mobility (divorce or widowhood) with marital deception.

Merle's daughter Pansy becomes the forefront of the battle between new and old social orders, as who controls the future becomes intrinsically tied to women's bodies and reproduction. As Isabel and the Countess hear Osmond's reasoning behind sending Pansy back to the convent, Isabel ruminates on her husband's "genius": "[Isabel] sat looking, like him, at the basket of flowers – poor little Pansy became the heroine of a tragedy" (567). With Isabel's fate sealed roughly half way through the narrative, Pansy becomes the focal point – a second chance for a female, in this case no longer the protagonist, to break through the barriers set in place by the crumbling social order as represented by Osmond and his villa, and instead join the ranks embodied by Henrietta Stackpole. Both Osmond and Merle's goal is to keep Pansy as submissive as before Isabel became her step mother, moving her between his home, the convent, and what he believes to be the residence of her future husband. Isabel and Osmond's discontent with each other often is displaced onto the battle between Warburton and Rosier, Pansy's suitors. This is an appropriate displacement because any discussion of Pansy's future marriage necessarily intimates both her sexuality and fertility (In contemplating Pansy, both Osmond and Isebal stare at "the basket of flowers"). We are told that Pansy is "impregnated" with the notion of her submission (278). Pansy is the next generation, but the obsession about her fertility impacts not only the next generation, but consecutive generations. Pansy, though naïve, seems aware of the

battle over her fertility: "She held her bouquet very tight" (468). Her intact chastity provides power within society, much as Isabel's repeated marriage refusals in the first half of the novel served to increase her allure.

Osmond wants to put, or should I say keep, Pansy (like his wife) in a gilded frame. He wants to retain possession of her body, selling her to the highest bidder and building upon his fortune. His position as her father resembles that of a flesh-peddler. Even this tried and true method of repression, however, becomes transformed by artists like Sargent, who use portraiture and framing more radically. Instead of portraits representing a temporal stasis, Sargent paints the New Women of this transatlantic, bourgeois social set in a metaphorically positive light. *Madame X* is a spectacle for many at the time, well aware of the power she wields by both accepting her agency and owning her body. When Sargent uses portraiture to demonstrate suffocation or being trapped, his subjects are women in Isabel's situation. For example, In *An Interior in Venice*, Sargent paints the Curtis family, who both he and Henry James

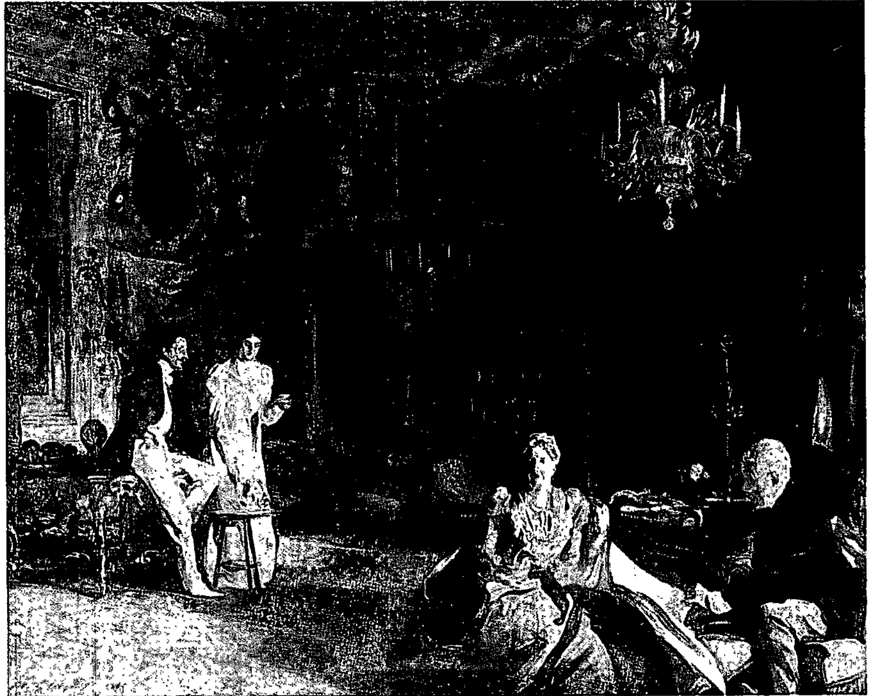

Figure 0: *An Interior in Venice* by John Singer Sargent (1899)

knew, and one with which James had recently stayed. He contrasts the younger generation, the newlyweds, as happy and very much absorbed with one another against the foreground of the long married couple. The wife of the older couple stares blankly right back at the viewer, as if pleading for an escape from her gilded frame – in this case both the room Sargent depicts her in as well as the frame around the painting. Meanwhile, her husband looks down at a newspaper. We presume that he, like Osmond, is rather unconcerned. That he reads the newspaper in Sargent's portrayal reminds the viewer that it is he who gets to leave the house, the gilded frame, while his pleading wife remains behind. Reading the paper also allows him to effectively escape the domestic space and connect with the business sphere, recalling young Isabel reading in her "office".

Representations of womanhood in *Portrait* extend beyond merely the visual, however, to third level sensory aesthetics. James employs music, for example, as a method of representing both Isabel's situation as well as that of her step-daughter. *Portrait* presents a binary in which harmony, "the opposite of processional," is associated with frivolity, deviousness, and freedom, while rhythm – the "march" to "stately music" – suggests tradition, submissiveness. James paints Isabel's confinement as follows: "She nevertheless assented to this intimation that she too must march to the stately music that floated down from unknown periods in her husband's past; she who of old had been so free of step, so desultory, so devious, so much the reverse of processional" (463). This "stately", "processional" music juxtaposes the wedding

"march" with Isabel's earlier, harmonious and "free" movements. James's representation of Pansy with regard to music is, as her status as a battleground would suggest, a convergence of harmony as well as rhythm. Pansy loves to dance, and to dance the music must consist of both its elements. Thus, James takes the convergence of melody or harmony with rhythm or bass and makes it explicitly corporeal. More generally, Isabel and Osmond dance around their control over Pansy's body, avoiding the topic explicitly by displacing their concerns regarding Pansy onto her suitors, Lord Warburton and the Frenchman Rosier.

Both music terminology (e.g. harmony) and a prose that is itself musical work in tandem to demonstrate a synesthetic moment in which the frame and the threshold converge. When Henrietta Stackpole encounters Caspar Goodwood while looking at her favorite painting in the picture gallery in Florence, she wishes to discuss Isabel. She states that she wants to address something "less harmonious" (490) than Correggio's depiction of the Madonna *Virgin Adoring the Christ Child* (489). How can the Correggio be more "harmonious" than Isabel's current situation? The narrator reasons:

Figure 0: *Virgin Adoring the Christ Child* by Antonio Allegri da Correggio (1489-1534)

> One of the latter was the little Correggio of the Tribune – the Virgin kneeling down before the sacred infant, who lies in a litter of straw, and clapping her hands to him while he delightedly laughs and crows. Henrietta had a special devotion to this intimate scene – she thought it the most beautiful picture in the world. (489).

Inside of a museum, Henrietta encounters an actual aesthetic landscape. Henrietta "ascends the high staircase," passes through the "cold marble" corridor, ignoring the "antique busts," before turning into the gallery of paintings, and eventually making her way to the *Virgin Adoring the Christ Child* (489). Though this scene focuses specifically on her movement through the museum, Henrietta also tours through the aesthetic landscape of the narrative, presenting her own aesthetic principles. In this scene, her affinity for *Virgin Adoring the Christ Child* reveals her own aesthetic *Weltanschauung*. "Harmony" is the primary tenant of her notion of beauty. In the painting, the "Virgin (...) claps" while the infant "delightedly laughs and crows," filling the canvas with a cacophony of sound. The sound is depicted within the actual painting, but also highlighted by James's description. The scene depicted is one of joy between both mother and son, as well as between old and new, and between incoming and generative generations. The mother is "kneeling down" over the "sacred" infant; she is the older, established generational figure blessing the new, soon-to-be transformational figure of the next generation. In this way the painting looks toward the future. The cacophony of sounds – the clapping, laughing, and crowing – are depicted within a joyful representation of Madonna and child, a synesthetic moment in which Henrietta views the painting and both she and the reader hear the music. Henrietta's love for this painting reflects her convictions with regard to family, womanhood, and social progress.

Henrietta favors the painting's depiction of harmonious music to the march of the procession, the "stately music." Her "special devotion" for a depiction that praises birth (and Jesus) seems appropriate as her character is itself born at this time, and Henrietta is the sole representative in *Portrait* of this New Woman.

Henrietta's visit to the gallery, during which she views the *Virgin Adoring the Christ Child,* happens as a detour during a series of errands. Her errands take her in and out of various structures, effectively transgressing many physical thresholds in the form of doorways as she travels between her hotel, Caspar Goodwood's hotel, and the museum. This emphasis upon Henrietta's mobility within and between architectural structures implies the New Woman's ability to transverse city landscapes. It also gives meaning to the architectural spaces represented in *Portrait,* none of which are eclipsed by Gardencourt in either symbolism or in the amount of text allotted for description.

The focus on temporality that characterizes the early chapters of *Portrait* (e.g. the slow demise of the Touchett family, Lord Warburton and Ralph Touchett's political discourse, and capped by Mr. Touchett's death) gives way in Chapter 22. The chapter opens with a reference to Mr. Touchett's death: In "one of the many rooms," a "composed - small group" meets "on one of the first days of May, some six months after old Mr. Touchett's death" (249). The group meeting, however, has very little to do with "old" Mr. Touchett. Rather, this chapter's primary purpose within what James refers to as the "architecture" of his novel involves the introduction of two new figures: Mr. Osmond, Isabel's future husband, and his daughter Pansy. Halfway between the

opening and closing scenes, chapter twenty-two locates the narrative within a previously unvisited space. Mr. Osmond's villa, not unlike Gardencourt, is far removed from the city center of Florence, placed well outside the city gates, atop a hill. Its relative isolation recalls Gardencourt's own relative isolation. Gardencourt is also, "upon a low hill (...) forty miles from London" (20). Both are spaces where the old ways, whether they be social (traditional gender relations, separate spheres) or political (a Countess and Lord are frequent guests), persist, ignorant of progress and insistent upon their own histories. Outside of the villa, the piazza encourages "lounging (...) passively" on its "stone bench," many more of which can be found on the terrace, "mossy and sun-warmed" (249). Inside the villa, the furnishings are set against Osmond's *bibelots*, as "faded hangings of damask" rival "relics of medieval brass and pottery" (249). Outside the villa, the theme of passive lounging persists; a "lounging generation" reclines upon "deep and well padded" chairs (250). Osmond's home is a "seat of ease," inferring both Osmond's adherence to traditional values as well as his diligence, both of which combine to create this faux castle despite his low birth: "He had never forgiven his star for not appointing him to an English dukedome," the narrator tells us later (329). Unlike Gardencourt, however, which transforms its occupants into acting members of the aristocracy, Osmond actively creates his fortress, his own "seat". Like the Touchetts, though, he too purchases his aristocratic home, a member of a transatlantic, bourgeois social set taking up the ways of the aristocracy.

The suspension of time at the villa is a forewarning of Isabel's future within a space she will soon inhabit. When Isabel is first introduced to Europe, almost every man who meets her falls in love with her, and the vast majority also propose. Isabel is fresh, but unlike her friend Henrietta, who loses none of her "crispness," she wilts over the course of her relationship with Osmond (520). At the close of the previous chapter, the narrator describes Isabel's situation within the language of forward trajectory:

> The charm of the Mediterranean coast only deepened for our heroine on acquaintance, for it was the *threshold* of Italy, the *gate of admirations*. (...) She was glad to *pause*, however, *on the edge* of this larger adventure. (246) [emphasis added]

Isabel's movement through the narrative has, up until this point, been painted in terms of forward progression. An anticipatory aura surrounds her, and we are reminded that though resting at the seaside with her cousin Ralph, she is only "pausing." Though her destination, whether a space within the narrative landscape or a state of mind within her psyche, remains unclear, she proceeds nevertheless toward her "larger adventure." The narrator adds velocity to her situation, as Isabel not only moves, but moves *briskly*; standing on the beach, a threshold that nature provides between the land and the sea, she "glances" back at Caspar and Lord Warburton, who had "*quickly* fallen into the background" (247, emphasis added). Her past suitors are barely visible in her rearview mirror. Thus, as the twenty-first chapter ends, Isabel ruminates upon her past suitors as if destined for greater things. She stands on, "the threshold of Italy", at a "gate" that we assume she will soon pass through. Instead, the opening of the following chapter foreshadows that her forward trajectory, her "larger adventure", will soon crash into

the suspended animation that is Osmond's villa, where dense, viscous traditions grind temporal motion to a halt. After marrying Osmond, Isabel, not unlike Osmond's display of ornamental "relics", becomes "shut up". Her display is unnatural, and she resists becoming yet another one of Osmond's *bibelots*. Isabel is a living being stifled, exuding an "odour of mould and decay" (462).

In a text that wants to keep women from breaking through the threshold, caught in a suspended atmosphere of temporality and living within a gilded frame, Henrietta resists. She seems placed within *Portrait* from a Dreiser novel – or a James novel not written yet (See Chapter 2). Pansy's future, on the other hand, is left unclear, the winner of the battle over women's bodies has not yet been settled in *Portrait of a Lady*. In *The Wings of the Dove,* we see the emergence of women's ownership of their bodies, the spoils of the battle waged between Isabel and Osmond over Pansy's body. Isabel never breaks through the threshold, and within the context of Bell's interpretation (e.g. that she is based on a real figure and that she inherits her wealth in the oldest of ways) Isabel's destiny is to marry the most aristocratic of men and die. If not physically like James's cousin Minny, at least spiritually. At the end of *Portrait,* Isabel exists but is not alive. She endures, but her immortality is that of a portrait trapped in a frame, her story bookended by two chapters in which she is entirely absent. The novel that is Isabel's portrait lives on for future generations of women, Pansy's descendents as a constant reminder of the progress that has been made, the thresholds that will be transgressed and the frames that will be destroyed.

Chapter 2

A Passage through the Mountain: Representations of the New Woman in *The Wings of the Dove*

James, albeit seventy pages into his novel, introduces the metaphorical dove of his title. Milly Theale is traversing an alpine pass. It's a very Jamesian moment: an American heiress, leaving Italy, and accompanied by her fellow American Susan Stringham, heads north toward England through a Germanic land. American expatriates and pervasive intra-European travel figure prominently in James, and they certainly are not unique to *Wings*. Even less extraordinary are these two female bodies depicted alone in a landscape in which men are absent, or in which the implicit male presence is that of the author himself. With respect to my interpretation of the New Woman's depiction in *The Wings of the Dove*, however, this scene serves as the paradigmatic moment of threshold imagery. The geographical passage (the alpine pathway that navigates the mountains) and the textual passage (the opening of the third book) provide evidence for a New, and very mobile, woman. James depicts a moment of simultaneous threshold transgression and female mobility. This powerful image of Milly and her companion atop a mountain also evokes Caspar David Friedrich's *The Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog (Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer),* one of if not the paradigmatic painting of German romanticism. In considering James's proverbial dove (Milly) alongside Friedrich's *Wanderer,* two aspects of the novel come to light: First, the metaphor of the threshold largely gives way to the metaphor of the passage, and second, *Wings* represents geographical mobility as symptomatic of the emergence of

the New Woman. Within the narrative landscape, geographical passages connect the world of James's characters. The alpine passes unite Italy to the rest of the continent, and England back to Italy. At the heart of these geographical passages is the Brünig, emblematic of the alpine geography most often invoked in Anglo-American notions of the Germanic world. Besides geographical passages, there are metaphorical ones: passages enabling mobility, often the result of technological innovation, and passages functioning as time machines, reaching toward the past (i.e. aesthetic or historical moments of the collective past, as found by the English in Venice). Throughout all of this, James's admission that *Wings* "has too big a head for its body" reminds us not only of the headiness of the prose, but also of the individual brain which formulated prose, and finally suggests the text itself as a body (Norton 468). I argue that James's textual body evokes the New Woman's body, and is alternately presented as sick (Milly Theale) and a spectacle (Kate Croy).

The opening sentence of *Wings* is emblematic of the representational methods, themes, and prose throughout the novel. James refrains from introducing Milly Theale until roughly a third of the way through the text, and instead opens with Kate Croy, who in many ways is Milly's New Woman *doppelgänger*, the Becky to her Amelia: "She waited, Kate Croy, for her father to come in, but he kept her unconscionably, and there were moments at which she showed herself, in the glass over the mantel, a face positively pale with the irritation that had brought her to the point of going away without sight of him" (23). Kate Croy is anxious, "irritated" by her father's delay. Her

physiognomy embodies her irritation, a representational strategy that makes affect visible in the realm of the corporeal. Throughout *Wings*, the symptoms of disorder, their causes rooted in social inequality or injustice, surface on the female body. Here, her father's mysterious dishonor, made all the more poignant by his tardiness, causes Kate Croy to flush in anticipation. (Later in the novel, Milly Theale's body becomes diseased, slowly decaying before our eyes). Kate Croy's opening scene, confined to a small, "vulgar" room, tracing back and forth between various pieces of furniture, recalls a doctor's waiting room, and mirrors Milly's later trip to Dr. Strett's office. Other themes in the novel also surface in this early moment. The narrator draws attention to the suffocation Kate Croy experiences within the little room through her need to repeatedly visit the balcony in search of fresh air. Furthermore, she moves back and forth, emphasizing her desire to not only be outside, but also to be mobile more generally. At this early point in the novel, Kate has already traveled across town to visit her father alone, and has crossed over many physical thresholds in the form of doors and entranceways. Lastly, an aspect of hesitation or waiting exists within the prose that reflects Kate Croy's own waiting, effectively communicated by the six commas that serve to break up the sentence; these imply a disjointed prose style that stands in contrast to the more fluid prose in *Portrait of a Lady.* It is a prose that often calls attention to itself (e.g. awkward sentence structure, unclear antecedents, run-on sentences) while simultaneously working as a representational method for evoking the

New Woman's situation. It anticipates a new prose form for representing a New Woman, making *Wings* a proto-Modern text.

A 1902 piece in the *Times Literary Supplement* picked up on at least one of the aspects of the prose style in the first sentence of *Wings*:

> This is, we repeat, an extraordinarily interesting performance, but it is not an easy book to read. It will not do for short railway journeys or for drowsy hammocks ... The dense, fine quality of its pages ... will always presuppose a certain effort of attention on the part of the reader. (*Times Literary Supplement,* 1902, unidentified author)

This critique, namely that prose comes across as "dense," suggests that James's project demands an alert reader. Evidence exists that James actively sought reader participation. For example, in response to what some considered the lack of evidence for Miles's evil[1] in *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), James cites the effectiveness of an imagined evil: "make [the reader] think the evil, make him think of it for himself, and you are released from weak specifications" (as quoted in Brooks *Melodrama* 167). With regard to *The Turn of the Screw*, James believes that less is more[2]. James's brother William reacts with similar sentiment toward *Wings*, citing a lack of narrative clarity reminiscent of this earlier critique of the *Turn of the Screw*: "You've reversed every traditional canon of story-telling (especially the fundamental one of telling the story, which you carefully avoid)" (Mathiessen). Both these reviews intimate that *Wings*'s plot

[1] We as readers are not privy to witnessing Miles's possibly "evil" actions, instead granted access to the story only from the perspective of the governess's narration.

[2] For James, an evil that the reader must imagine is scarier/more effective. This invokes an argument similar to Freud's concept of the uncanny (*das Unheimlich*), in that our fears are personalized.

is filtered by the way in which James's prose guides the narration. Given James's attention to detail, however, his prose style was most likely intentional, designed to provide a depth that aids the "fundamental" process of "telling the story." The prose serves as the means through which James takes the imaginative impulse behind the story and records it, or what Stowe labels a "record of a preexisting story" (195). In this regard, the text itself may be interpreted as a passage through which the narrative flows, the preexisting story residing in James's imagination or consciousness. The pen transcribes it from its raw source to a communicable, printable medium. This medium provides the link between author and reader, artist and pupil, craftsman and consumer. This prose style, however, also anticipates modern prose, as if a new prose must accompany a New Woman, with previous methods for representing women using language somehow obsolete.

Figure 0: John Singer Sargent's *Mrs. Ralph Curtis* (1898). Born Lisa DeWolf Colt, she married into one of the preeminent Anglo-American families living in Venice, with whom James was very close. The primary residence, Palazzo Barbaro, provides the setting in *The Wings of the Dove*. (Cleveland Museum of Art)

The "dense" prose suggests from very early on that *Wings* takes place in a different moment for the New Woman than the one represented in *Portrait of a Lady*. Over James's long career, with the twenty years

between the two novels encompassing the vast majority of his writerly life, social history marched onward. During this time, the New Woman established herself as a major force within Anglo-American society, more often than not her power and presence growing, and this is reflected in *Wings*'s portrayal of a specifically bourgeois, transatlantic New Woman. John Singer Sargent's *Mrs. Ralph Curtis* represents visually/through the medium of portraiture the emergence of this New Woman during this period. Born Lisa DeWolf Colt of a wealthy American ammunitions family, she married into one of the preeminent Anglo-American families residing at the time in Venice. The Curtis family, friends of both Singer Sargent (to whom Ralph Curtis, the family *dauphin*, was a distant cousin and close friend) and Henry James, is the family featured in Sargent's *An Interior in Venice (1899).* James coyly references the Curtis family as Milly's imaginary absent landlords, complimenting them as, "charming people, conscious Venice-lovers" (339). Maine proclaims that, "the details of James's description of the room and Sargent's Venetian Interiors series are so similar that it requires no large leap of faith to conclude that James had Sargent's work in his mind's eye as he wrote the story" (Maine 147). While Maine argues that it requires no "leap of faith" to presume that James used Sargent's portraits as a blueprint for crafting the narrative spaces in *Wings*, James's representations of the New Woman also draw from Sargent's portraits of the Curtis family. In *An Interior in Venice* (addressed in the first chapter of this essay), Sargent depicts Lisa Curtis and her husband in what is most likely the same living room at Palazzo Barbaro in which he painted *Mrs. Ralph Curtis* (until

1998, the portrait remained in this location; the Palazzo Barbaro is where, unbeknownst to many, James sets the Venetian escapades of Milly Theale, Susan Stringham, and Kate Croy in *The Wings of the Dove*). Singer's portrayal of Mrs. Ralph Curtis in this portrait aligns well with the representation of the entire family in *An Interior in Venice*. Standing alone, her hands behind her as she poses in front of a table, she gazes upward and past the viewer. Sargent's composition places emphasis on her chest, jetting forward, and her figure reminiscent of a maritime figurehead, suggesting forward momentum. She lives for the future and not the moment. Sargent paints her entire body, head to toe, and sets her in such stark contrast to the background of the sixteenth-century palace room that this backdrop all but disappears from the canvas. Kate Croy, who later resides in a literary adaptation of the very palace depicted in both of Sargent's paintings, embodies *Mrs. Ralph Curtis*'s forward trajectory. In contrast, in *An Interior in Venice,* Sargent depicts her mother in law, born Ariana Wormeley and the daughter of an English admiral, next to her husband, the family patriarch. Sargent paints her physiognomy as uncomfortable with its artistic representation. She looks both surprised and dismayed. Coincidentally, upon viewing the painting when it was presented to her by the artist as a gift in 1898, Ariana Wormely rejected it; among her primary reasons for refusing Sargent's gift was that she had "been made to look too old" (Kilmurray 151-152). James evokes Sargent's portrayals in his *Wings of the Dove*. For example, James provides Kate Croy mobility within the narrative landscape to move beyond the domestic space (transgressing "the threshold"), a literary adaptation of the painted

representation of forward momentum in *Mrs. Ralph Curtis*. Also, in comparison to Isabel Archer, Kate exhibits a corporeal self-ownership largely if not entirely absent in *Portrait,* for Croy's 'portrait' is a literary one in which the title suggests movement – flight – and not the frame.

The threshold provides a contextualizing metaphor for interpreting the New Woman in *The Wings of the Dove.* When first musing upon writing what would become *Wings,* James contemplated, "the little idea of the situation of some young creature (...) who, at 20, on the threshold of a life that has seemed boundless, is suddenly condemned to death" (Norton 460). As in *Portrait,* James's "threshold" illustrates hesitation to move, self-imposed or otherwise, and reflects the anticipatory social climate for women in the late 19th century. More generally, this "threshold" provides a vantage point from which one may examine *either* 1) the development of progress towards the rise of a new social order, and with that the New Woman, within the larger historical trajectories in which Milly and Kate, as well as James, are operating *or* 2) the efforts of reactionary traditionalists pushing back against the rise of these new social orders. More often than not, the former is illustrated by women outside, literally free from stifled, indoor air (such as when we first meet Milly Theale and her traveling companion traversing the Brünig Pass), or figuratively, in the sphere of business or the marketplace (Susan Stringham's writing a prime example). The "reactionary threshold" manifests in either continued hesitation, standing on or underneath the threshold, or

abatement from the threshold, returning inside to the domestic space of a home or household under a watchful patriarchal eye.

With respect to narrative spaces, corporeal mobility enables *Wing*'s female characters to move from the threshold out into the world. Women in *Wings* are freer than their counterparts in *Portrait of a Lady* to "move about the cabin." I use this pun intentionally to draw attention to innovations in transportation which allowed for this mobility and provided public spaces for interaction between men and women. In 1864, the first stretch of underground railway opened in London, the beginnings of the first subway system in the world. This original stretch of the underground was called the Metropolitan Railway. One can only imagine what it must have been like to be among its first patrons, careening through one of industrial engineering's greatest triumphs directly beneath the busy streets of the vast metropolis, itself a conglomeration of innumerable feats of industrial engineering. In the nineteenth century, London was already a bustling, crowded city, and the chance to bypass sections of the city was truly novel. What has come to be casually known as the "Tube" is quite literally a network of passages, a secondary sewer system filled with human occupants, their material objects, thoughts, ideas, and above all bodies in a constant flow underneath the city. In the compartment of the underground train that Kate Croy and Merton Densher occupy, the confined lovers interact with each other, each conscious of the other's movements, each attempting to get closer to the other. Merton is "alert" and "impatient"; Kate is sure of "the young man's true goal" (63). Their interaction is both personal as well as

sexual. And yet, their ability to get physically closer to one another depends on the movements of the strangers in their public compartment. The affordable public subway system stands in stark contrast to the private, invite-only dinner parties at Kate Croy's watchful aunt's home. This relatively new phenomenon of the London subway system, developed considerably from its original 1864 route into a vast network, allows Kate Croy to escape her aunt's watchful eye and yet adhere to the fading rules of Victorian sexual decorum, providing not only a passage but also a destination itself. The subway car careens through the underground tunnels, moving from point A to point B, and simultaneously the inside of the car serves as the meeting place for Kate and Merton. Their rendezvous inside of the car mirrors the dinner parties thrown at Mrs. Lowder's mansion, as the subway car becomes a new space, marked by industrialization, for interaction between the sexes. Furthermore, this new space allows for more uninhibited interaction than the spaces (i.e. dining, living, and drawing rooms) in which young women were watched and guarded[3]. The subway also discourages geographical stability, as Lord Mark hauntingly suggests when he tells Milly upon her arrival to London that, "there was no such thing to-day in London as saying where any one was. Everyone was every-where – nobody was anywhere" (130). Lord Mark implies that where men once were, now "everyone" is. The hustle and bustle of the commercial life of the city now includes women, if perhaps only as viewable or observable objects. Kate pretends she is at the park when in reality she is much further away, and her various

[3] In *Portrait*, Pansy moves between narrative spaces in which her father may easily shelter her

"errands," whether driven by commerce or love, can be accomplished within the same time span. At the dawn of the twentieth century, the relationship between distance and time is in flux, and the relationship between the two is no longer directly correlative. Advancements in industrial technology enable the rise of this network of passages. What is more, in this scene of the novel literal passages, a series of tunnels, enable Kate Croy to escape a traditional domestic space. The subway car also creates a space which may be defined by its patrons; a personalized destination that allows for both public and private exchanges.

Technology also enables the rise of other passages, creating alternate contexts for threshold transgression without digging actual tubes under the streets. Adrian Poole addresses this concept, speculating that what Kate Croy and Merton Densher really need is the mobile phone: "It's in James's later fiction that mobile phones are most badly needed ... think of all the lovers' assignations, the plotting and planning, the secrets and the duplicity: how much easier life would have been ... for Merton Densher and Kate Croy" (Poole 81). Poole's thesis references the effects of time-space compression, or how technology can bring people together without the need for travel or physical mobility. His point is a rather simple one; a mobile phone presents an alternative to/means of transcending physical separation or domestic imprisonment. These types of technological innovations create passages which allow effective transgression of barriers, making people and places closer to one another without the need for actual physical mobility. In the 1997 film adaptation of *Wings of the Dove*, a

telephone sits prominently in the entrance way to Mrs. Lowder's mansion, a symbol of wealth and progress to be sure, but also an implicit reminder that the domestic space has been quite explicitly transcended via technological innovation (see later in this chapter for a more extended analysis of this film adaptation).

Wing's women relish their mobility, and it comes to define the body of the New Woman as one that is, above all, mobile. If Kate Croy, for example, is to be the proprietor of her own body on the marriage market, then she must enjoy the ability to move from Merton Densher's apartment to her Aunt's home, to visit her father and stop by her sister Mrs. Condrip's domestic prison, to shop with Milly Theale, and to travel to Venice to enjoy the company of a man to whom she is not married. This continuous movement traverses the dividing line of the threshold, its importance diminishing exponentially when the New Woman's excursions on the subway, window shopping expeditions, and visits to friends (or even the doctor) result in/require countless transgressions of doorways, gates, and compartment doors on subway cars each and every day. Last but not least, the instability about which Lord Mark complains implies the breakdown of separate social spheres for men and women, as urban spaces become hybrid public and private places that encourage mobility.

James's New Woman's mobility and the transgression of the threshold come together when Milly visits Dr. Strett. Though ultimately James does not privilege "us" with a specific diagnosis, passage imagery and threshold transgressions chart Milly's visit. The action of passing through the threshold of Dr. Strett's office allows Milly, who

at this moment is alone in London for the first time, to be examined properly, hear the doctor's advice, and listen to the words that, in condemning her fate, permit her to live: " 'isn't to 'live' exactly what I'm trying to persuade you to take the trouble to do?' "(200). Not only is this a moment in which the threshold is both literal and prominent (she has entered Dr. Strett's office), but also one in which the female body provides the explicit reason for the visit. Milly, afraid she is dying, takes her health in her own hands, and in so doing, her solitude becomes a form of self-ownership/self-determination that reflects freedom of mobility: She is a New Woman. The narrative emphasizes this as her first time out and about in London alone, certainly her first moment depicted both alone and out of doors since her meditation in the mountains, and it is an unequivocal moment of freedom (200). Though Milly enters the inside of an office, it remains a moment of exhalation and liberty, especially set in contrast with *Portrait* (Osmond's villa, Gardencourt, Pansy's convent). Dr. Strett provides his patient with knowledge and not permission. Milly assures Kate of this after her visit: "Kate wondered as if things scarce fitted. 'But does he allow then that you're ill?' 'I don't know what he allows, and I don't care. I *shall* know'" (190). Milly twists Kate's words. Milly relies upon the expert advice of a male physician, but her relationship with Dr. Strett is information driven. In this way, Milly presents her and Dr. Strett as equals, and later, Dr. Strett is her "distinguished friend" (200).

Yet at the same time, there are ways in which traditional gender roles prevail, as the social hierarchies that encourage Mr. Strett to become Dr. Strett implicitly hinder a

woman's ability to do also advance herself through education. In 1900, after all, a woman who held a high school diploma, regardless of her family's wealth, was still a rarity, and American universities dotting the East Coast were still inaccessible to women (Matthews 11). Even Kate Croy, a New Woman, anticipates that her physician be male and accepts him as an authority figure. In this way, Kate Croy is unlike Milly. For Kate Croy, this patriarchal voice of reason (Dr. Strett) must "allow" for his female patients to be sick (or for that matter, for them to be well). Dr. Strett's orders are a far cry, however, from those patriarchal voices that Milly Theale and Mrs. Stringham ignored before embarking on the Brünig, the voices reminiscent of Osmond in *Portrait of a Lady*.

Milly's diagnosis evokes the Brünig Pass, as James paints the process of corporeal investigation as a passage, an adventure, a "voyage to the North Pole" (199). In this scene at the physician, passages create more passages, as Milly's mobility enables her solitary transgression of Dr. Strett's office, resulting then in a metaphorical passage of medical inquiry, quite literally compared to a geographical adventure. Furthermore, when she leaves his office, again stepping back over the threshold of his office's entrance, she relishes a freedom that is suddenly more poignant. She is not only alone, a powerful image of the New Woman, but she also now possesses empirical knowledge regarding her own corporeal health, which will enable her to make decisions for herself – where she wants to go, how little time she has, and to whom she wishes to bequeath her fortune. This powerful image of female independence returns outside, to the busy London street scene.

James continues the tradition of the Henrietta Stackpole figure with the equally mobile Susan Stringham. Once again, James portrays the working middle-class woman as a wielder of the pen. (Rather self congratulatory of James, isn't it?). In fact, Susan's act of writing reestablishes her old relations with Aunt Maud, which in turn commence their venture from Italy back to London, and establishes their social circle for them once they arrive (124). In short, writing provides an impetus for their mobility, a reason for reestablishment in London. Unlike Henrietta Stackpole, however, Susan writes short stories instead of newspaper columns. While Kate Croy spends most of her days literally outside of her aunt's well-appointed domestic space, riding the subway to visit her secret lover, for Susan Stringham that domestic space is entirely foreign, one from which she never had to escape: "She had not herself been brought up in the kitchen; she knew others who had not; and to speak for them had thus become with her a literary mission" (100). Susan Stringham lionizes the female contemporaries that, like her, refrain from a life in the domestic space. Here it is evident that not only has historical/social time passed since Henrietta Stackpole's stand out role in *Portrait*, but that the very existence of a New Woman in the text is somehow less trailblazing, or at the very least less novel. The subjects of Susan Stringham's stories, like herself, were not raised in the domestic spaces from which they would have had to break free. Instead, Susan Stringham's writing archives the lives of a burgeoning female minority for whom the domestic is and always has been entirely foreign. Her choice to rally around

these particular women solidifies her role as champion for female equality, performing the role of literary cheerleader.

Thus, for both Kate Croy and Susan Stringham, forward motion is achieved via traversing the threshold, with freedom of mobility, aided by technological innovations that create passages or effectively compress space. In addition, the pervasiveness of mobility for these New Women curtails the barrier of the threshold itself, its importance reduced as the transgression increases. The net result is that these continuous transgressions of the threshold take the emphasis away from the threshold and toward the passages which enable those transgressions.

Mobility, the threshold, and the passage become conflated in what I have already referred to as the paradigmatic moment of the New Woman in *Wings of the Dove*, when James first introduces Milly Theale and her traveling companion Susan Stringham. They are not merely traversing a geographical pass within the narrative landscape, but successfully doing so "as we meet them". Here again the narrator observes with the reader, joining "us" as he will later do in Dr. Strett's office:

> The two ladies who, in advance of the Swiss season, had been warned that their design was unconsidered, that the passes wouldn't be clear, nor the air mild, nor the inns open – the two ladies, who, characteristically, had braved a good deal of possibly interested remonstrance were finding themselves, as their adventure turned out, wonderfully sustained ... They were making it in fact happily enough as we meet them. (97)

The "two ladies" (a phrase repeated twice) ignore the warnings of the men they have encountered, instead pressing onward through the often tough terrain of the alpine

pass. In the midst of their adventure, they "find themselves ... wonderfully sustained." This is another moment of freedom and exhalation in comparison to the claustrophobic narrative spaces in *Portrait,* a moment in an external landscape, beyond the physical thresholds of the homes that, were they married, would confine them, or of the hotels that they have just left behind in Italy. Their travel remains, however, an "adventure," and James (his implicit male presence as author embodied in the text) does not let them speak to us. Moreover, James implies their emblematic nature as only *potential* archetypes for female identities in that they are, "in *advance* of the Swiss season" (emphasis added). Their introduction is one emblematic of a portrait or painting, a static image with commentary provided by our guide the narrator, who joins us in viewing the scene – as "*we* meet them" (emphasis added).

Figure 0 Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer Above the Mists* [*Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer*] (1818)

This portrayal of movement, of their Alpine "adventure", shifts the masculine terms of Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog* (1818) in order to reflect the self-determination of James's New Woman. Friedrich's painting, one of the most influential and paradigmatic works of German romanticism, depicts a well-dressed man resting his walking stick after having climbed far enough up one of the alpine trails to have reached a vantage point from which he may look outward. Our perspective is nearly coincident with his point of view, as we view the sublimity of the surrounding mountain peaks, yet we observe both him and his view. We are on the precipice with him, and his momentum carries us forward, he himself having just stopped on the edge of the cliff. His presumed wealth, reflected in mode of dress, provides the socioeconomic capital enabling his travel, his masculinity an implied catalyst for tackling the mountain we presume he has just climbed, as well as for his being alone as the eponymous wanderer. The painting is, however, at the same time both masculine and emasculating. We herald his achievement while realizing, in typical Romantic fashion, that while he is within and surrounded by nature, he cannot become one with nature. He stands in direct opposition to the surrounding peaks and distanced from the sea of fog and mist. Friedrich paints the neighboring peaks as tall, almost phallic structures, jetting upwards towards the sky and through the mist, towering over the human figure that views them, captivated by their sublimity. The idyllic moment is by definition endangered, and appropriately this approximation of a specifically Romantic idyllic moment is captured by a painting. Whereas *Portrait* represents a novel as a work of art,

this scene from *Wings* appropriates Friedrich's *Wanderer* for the New Woman. The introduction of Milly Theale and Susan Stringham thus depicts a literary adaptation of the "Wanderer" scene, its solitary man replaced by not just a New Woman, but two prototypes of the New Woman.

Milly and Susan's venture through the Brünig stands in stark contrast to Isabel Archer's domestic prison. Isabel stood, both with respect to narrative space and her historical moment, on a doorstep or at a threshold. She either could have gone outside, into the world of men where Henrietta had found success, or surrendered to the powers of tradition and stepped back inside the domestic space, helping her husband and Madame Merle raise Pansy, molding her to be a part of the next generation of submissive, static women. Isabel's existence in *Portrait* remains, however, always shy of the threshold; taking merely a step forward to visit her dying cousin despite her husband's remonstrance, or a step backward, to again return from Gardencourt and continue living with Osmond after Ralph's death. The moments of her mobility are fleeting, and she neither breaks free nor surrenders. She is hesitant and stays hesitant, or rather she is made by both her husband and James to both be and stay immobile. She is on the brink of traversing the threshold.

Similar representations of Isabel's immobility or hesitation, while not explicitly associated with either Susan Stringham or Milly Theale, still exist in the background of *Wings*. Milly and Susan are traversing a pass, a geographical threshold between the flat terrains situated on either side. This moment provides an insightful approach toward

geographical mobility as symptomatic of social mobility in this novel. Their successful progress through the pass, indicative of their disregard for traditional gender roles, is confounded by the very existence of this larger, geographical pass. James graces Milly and her companion with conditions entirely outside their control, such as fine weather, providing built-in advantages to their physical crossing of the Brünig. Individual and more collective trajectories towards the emergence of New Womanhood exist simultaneously. These advantages are not unlike Milly's wealth and Susan Stringham's widowhood and pen (all of which enable or encourage mobility), providing tools that ease their exhibition of relatively maverick approaches towards middle-class womanhood. The majority of women, without these financial resources or social tools, dependent upon the traditional family structure for their prosperity and livelihood, have an even steeper hill to climb: the women still heeding those pervasive patriarchal voices that their "designs were unconsidered", or worse, would never "design" in the first place; the women still on either side of the pass, either to the north in Germany (and by extension across the channel in England), or to the south in Italy. It was primarily wealthy Anglo-Americans who crossed the Brünig, and about which James almost exclusively writes, as the bourgeois might jump flights across the Atlantic today. These socioeconomic privileges, however, do not guarantee the emergence of the New Woman, but rather merely provide an impetus for change, a blueprint for New Womanhood within a very specific, transatlantic and bourgeois social set. Wealth does not necessarily translate to transgression of the threshold, as demonstrated by Isabel,

who is emblematic of those women emboldened by wealth but disempowered by traditional household structures, the women confined to the pass, stuck on the threshold.

At the moment "we" meet Milly Theale, the voices reminiscent of Osmond still exist, but *Wings* represents them as faint and ineffective reverberations of their previous power, and they do not hinder the traveler's mobility. These voices warn the two women that their "design was unconsidered" and suggest that they will not find lodging or will face unwelcomed weather. They warn of geographical, climatic, and structural hindrances. Though these reverberations may echo through the alpine valleys of the Brünig or in the back of Milly and Susan's minds, they have been left behind by both women and withheld from dialogue by the author. James blesses the women who ignore these voices with a successful journey. From this early moment, the New Woman in *Wings*, in comparison to her representations in *Portrait*, seems well on her way toward triumphing, if not already having triumphed, in one of the first battles of a much larger campaign. Perhaps more poignant, *Wings* shows James as the physician, prescribing geographical mobility as the treatment to overcome social inequality inflicting the specific female bodies about which he writes.

The next question, however, becomes: why is this moment of largely feminine conquering of rugged mountains, of geographical mobility as emblematic of social mobility, set in the Germanic world, represented in a Romantic space that rewrites a painting?

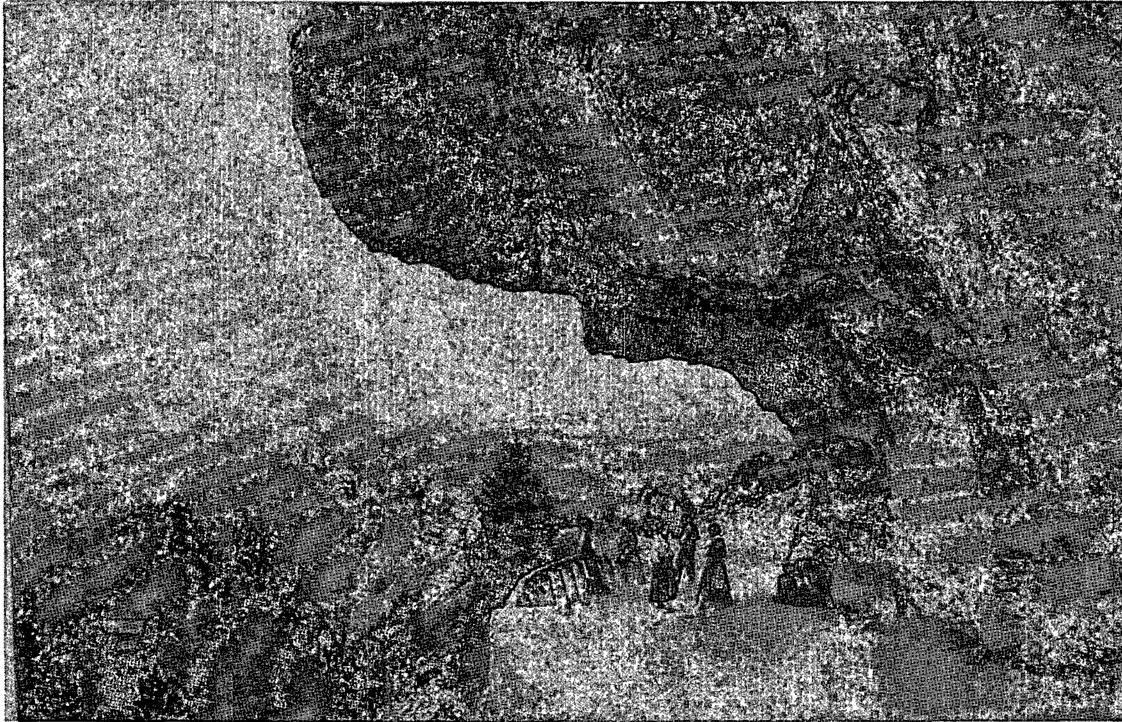

Figure 0: An anonymous photograph depicting what appear to be two women, three men, and an unidentifiable shaded figure traveling along the Brünig Pass in 1887. (*from* "Photographs taken on trip to Europe, in Switzerland", The Schlesinger History of Women in America Collection)

For most Anglo-American travelers in the 19th century, the Germanic world was rarely the destination. One may visit or have spent their youth there, but one may not stay or return with the intention of staying there. Milly utters but a fragment of dialogue before Susan decides that the two really have spent *too* much time in the Alps, all the while the latter insisting that she had "bullied" Milly into stopping in the first place, a rather violent verbal characterization of her treatment toward her dear companion, and reflective of her intense desire to revisit the land she associates with her youth (114). Popular depictions of the German world throughout English literature have painted it as a glorified passage, an avenue through which one reached Italy or returned to Paris and Calais, and by extension, the British Isles. James begins *Daisy Miller* in Switzerland and

ends it in Italy, and in *The American*, Valentin leaves Paris for Geneva to conduct his duel for Mademoiselle Noemie's hand on foreign soil. Once wounded there, he does not return. Even Thackeray's femme fatale Becky Sharp, whose incessant social climbing and predilection to lying manages to set the entire British dominion against her, is at first castigated to the resorts in Germany, yet later returns from her card dealing on the Rhine to Amelia Sedley's English household. *Vanity Fair* itself, after detouring in its waning chapters to witness the Sedley family vacation along the Rhine, moves back to England before it finally concludes – just as James's *The American* runs away from Switzerland to the French countryside, followed by Paris, and finally America, moving further and further away from the Swiss location of Valentin's deathbed.

References to the Germanic world abound throughout *Wings,* often referencing childhood and early education. Merton Densher, the man Kate Croy and Milly Theale fawn over and the most prominent male figure in the novel, has Germanic roots ("his Swiss schools, his German ancestry"), and Milly's own companion was educated in Vevey. Mrs. Stringham insists that she and Milly stop in Switzerland, where she went to school and, coincidentally, first met Kate Croy's Aunt Maud. These references to the Germanic world associate it with a personal past: of childhood and schooling. Mrs. Stringham reminisces about her youth spent in Vevey: "a term of continuous schooling ... with rewards of merit in the form of silver medals tied by blue ribbons and mild mountain-passes attacked with alpenstocks" (108). The memory of her childhood years exemplifies the concept of romantic irony, of a moment expressly idyllic only because

the subject is not aware of its idyllic nature. Her reminiscent description, awkwardly presented through the haze of free indirect discourse, is both ephemeral and sensory. "Blue ribbons" "tie" and "alpenstocks" "attack." These are her rewards. Poignantly, while one reward is a medallion, essentially a trophy, the second is an opportunity to both be outside and amongst the emblematic scenery of the Romantic. Her childhood alpenstock mirrors the Wanderer's cane. Furthermore, as the century progressed, visiting continental Europe was common for not only the fabulously wealthy, but also increasingly mobile-middle class Anglo-Americans. Sargent spent much of his childhood in Switzerland and Germany, the result of his middle-class American parents diverting the bulk of their resources toward retaining residence in Europe rather than a comfortable, static life in America. Stringham's childhood embodies Sargent's; "It made all the difference for (her), thanks to her parents' thrifty, hardy faith, she was a woman of the world" (108). Her parent's "faith" recalls that in the decision process to send their children to schooling abroad was not merely the result of practical reasoning, but also an ideology. Europe was somehow "better."

Germany, and by extension the Germanic world in general, was (and still is) where the geographical passes existed that connected Anglo-American travelers to the south of Europe, most notably Italy. Many, if not most travelers along the Brünig, ventured south toward Italy from permanent residences on the British Isles or across the Atlantic. Florence, Venice, and Rome were the great cities of the past, of antiquity, of an urban and ancient civilization that stood in stark contrast to the Anglo-American

homelands as well as the alpine villages and rugged terrain of the Germanic world through which they traveled. One endures the mountains to get to Italy. In both *Wings* and *Portrait*, Italy embodies a more distant past than does the Germanic world, it is where Henrietta Stackpole may easily detour en route to visit Caspar Goodwood to view the Corregio painting *Virgin Adoring the Christ Child*, where the fictional Milly Theale and her real-life landlords, the Curtises, may live in architectural memorials of bygone eras, or to where Milly Theale may take respite in an attempt to impede time's forward march, and it is where Ralph Touchett repeatedly returns to spends his summers in a similar attempt to prolong his fragile life. In Italy, the Countess lives on, mingling with her brother, who himself, enabled by his permanent residence in Italy, may adopt and cling to aristocratic values and gender relations. The Germanic World, for most Anglo-Americans, remains a glorified expansion of that Brünig Pass through which Milly and Susan Stringham traverse, a way to reach back – to the Renaissance, to brilliance, to paintings like the *Virgin Adoring the Christ Child,* and to old empires, long since dead but sitting yet in ruins. When these travelers are refreshed, or for that matter when the *ennui* sets in, the route to both England and America returns through them.

While *Wings*'s representation of Milly Theale and Susan Stringham's movement within the narrative landscape focuses upon passages that enable mobility, the prose's use of the spoken word demonstrates hesitation reflective of the inability of language to capture the Romantic ideal. It is as if James's prose, like Isabel in *Portrait*, is stuck on a threshold. The chapter of Milly and Susan's Stringham's introduction reads like the

untamed hills through which the two are traveling, the interactions between Milly and Susan entrenched within James's prose. Dialogue, while implicitly referenced, is explicitly absent. There *is* no dialogue, in fact, until the following chapter. As if to draw attention to this omission, Book 3, Chapter 2 opens with a vacillation between silence and speaking:

> The girl said nothing, when they met, about the words scrawled on the Tauchnitz, and Mrs. Stringham then noticed that she hadn't the book with her. She had left it lying and probably would never remember it at all. Her comrade's decision was therefore quickly made not to speak of having following her; and within five minutes of her return, wonderfully enough, the preoccupation denoted by her forgetfulness further declared itself. "Should you think me quite abominable if I were to say that after all - ?" (114)

Milly's first moment of dialogue is an incomplete thought, one that is anticipated, understood, and then finished by Mrs. Stringham: "You don't care for our stop here – you'd rather go straight on?"(114). Playfully, James opens the chapter with "The girl said nothing," as Susan vacillates between speech and silence. While on one hand she finishes Milly's sentence, on the other hand Susan decides not to mention having seen her friend "seated at her ease ... upon a perch" along the mountain trail a few hours previously, where the heiress had been in deep meditation (111-112). At that moment, the narrator depicts speaking as having dangerous consequences: "as if a sound, a syllable, must have produced the start that would be fatal" (112).

Milly's own actions with regard to her Tauchnitz, as well as the book itself, emphasize the extent to which the problem of language persists throughout the novel. In a highly symbolic moment, Milly leaves her book, most likely a novel, behind not once

but *twice*. First, she sets the book down to reach the cliff. Later, she forgets to pick it back up again, returning empty handed to their inn. At the turn of the century, the Tauchnitz series of cheaply reproduced copies of famous novels proved popular amongst English speaking residents and tourists alike on the continent (Penguin 543). The German-printed Tauchnitz series, however, could not be published in England due to copyright reasons and legal ramifications. Thus, Milly's Tauchnitz novel, castigated from the literary climate that created it both temporally (time has passed since it was written) as well as geographically, echoes the maverick natures of many of *Wings*'s characters. Simultaneously, it embodies the foreign educations of not only Susan Stringham, Merton Densher, and Mrs. Lowder, but also John Singer Sargent and Henry James, all of whom received predominantly Anglo-American educations based upon Anglo-American texts while in schools geographically situated in the Germanic world. Nevertheless, Milly leaves the book behind, and it is castigated by its owner. As a literary record of a "preexisting story," the Tauchnitz book is an artifact of attempted communication; in this moment, the incommunicable triumphs over the communicable. The representations of life within what is presumably a novel pale in comparison to Milly's own situation. Though James describes Milly as being seated, almost every other aspect of this moment – one too precious to later speak about, and one in which the artifact left behind is a forgotten work of written language – more closely approximates Milly as the Wanderer: "The young lady had been seen not long before passing further on, over a crest and to a place where the way would drop again ... (Milly) had rid herself

of the book, which was an encumbrance, and meant of course to pick it up on her return" (411). Milly sets the "encumbrance" of the written word behind, instead driven by the inspiration of the sublimity that surrounds her, to go, "straight down to it, not stopping till it was all before her" to observe "a 'view' pure and simple, a view of great extent and beauty, but thrown forward and vertiginous" (411).

Pervasive signals both in this opening passage and throughout the chapter remind us over and over again that a word's most elemental purpose is, after all, to signify something. Mrs. Stringham's "imagination" catches the "unmistakable flash of a signal," a figurative synopsis of this process of communication and signification, and James obsesses over the extent to which this communicative property of language often fails. When the two future travel companions first meet, her eyes read Milly's body. It has "marks," communicating her age to an onlooker in a written language of human experience, and wears "robes of mourning," signaling that she has recently experienced a loved-one's death in the language of both fashion/style and socially constructed symbolism. But when it comes down to writing about Milly, the "real thing" about which she yearns to write, language fails: "To *be* in truth literary had ever been her dearest thought," the narrator muses on Susan Stringham's purpose for writing. Upon meeting Milly, though, "all categories failed her" because they "cease ... to *signify*...the *romantic* life itself" (emphasis added) (100). Milly invokes a response in Mrs. Stringham so powerful that words fail to convey an appropriate or sufficient message from the perspective of the author (Susan) herself. We remember that Mrs. Stringham's

profession, like James's, is to write. Susan Stringham, confined to methods of literary representation reliant upon type and signification through written language, writing primarily of "masters, models, (and) celebrities," finds capturing Milly with the written word a challenge too difficult to overcome, and gives up the idea much as Milly abandons her Tauchnitz volume (100).

This fascination with miscommunication resonates with James as well. Fowler argues that the complexity of the "centers of consciousness" in James's later works, of which *Wings* is emblematic, mirrors how James felt about the world around him at the end of his career: "the confusion experienced by Winterbourne over Daisy Miller is a simple matter by comparison with the confusion created by Milly Theale in those around her" (181). Confusion, again, evokes miscommunication and the failure of signification. Attempting to represent Milly Theale with the written word confuses Susan Stringham, for example, and Milly confuses her companions even more by keeping her illness a closely-guarded secret, refusing to attempt communication. While Milly may create confusion in those around her, so too does James create confusion for the readers of his late fiction. The hesitation to indulge in the spoken and written word in this chapter, and throughout the novel, mirrors James's own vacillation with regard to his writing career. Sure enough, James closes his preface for *Wings* by admitting that he fell short as an author: "I become conscious of overstepping my space without having brought the full quantity to light. The failure leaves me with a burden of residuary comment of which I yet boldly hope elsewhere to discharge myself" (Norton 16).

Despite the tenacity with which he "oversteps," he cannot bring the "full quantity to light". His frustration not only mirrors the author Susan Stringham, who finds herself falling short of capturing "the romantic life itself," but frames his frustration within a spatial context: "I become conscious of *overstepping my space*". Unlike the New Woman's boundary transgressions, James describes his own transgression as less effective. He does not accomplish his goal, and is left with "residuary comment".

Millicent Bell argues that Milly Theale is, like the intended subject her character provides Susan Stringham, based upon a real individual – James's cousin Minny Temple (Penguin xiii). Bell goes on to say that it had been James's intention to capture his cousin's early and tragic death in many of his literary projects. She traces a development of attempted portrayals of Minny Temple from Daisy Miller through Isabel Archer up to Milly Theale, each protagonist's creation reflective of an attempt to capture his dear Minny. Interestingly, the disillusionment for the written word in *Wings* conflates with German Romanticism's own frustration, echoing Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's dissatisfaction as he wrote his triumph *Faust*, the project which consumed his life. Goethe addresses these frustrations in his dedication:

Once more you near me, wavering apparitions
That early showed before the turbid gaze.
Will now I seek to grand you definition,
My heart essay again the former daze? [4]

---

[4] Ihr naht euch wieder, schwankende Gestalten,
Die früh sich einst dem trüben Blick gezeigt.
Versuch′ ich wohl euch diesmal fest zu halten?
Fühl′ ich mein Herz noch jenem Wahn geneigt? (*Faust*, Zueignung)

Goethe wrote his dedication, or *Zueignung*, in 1797, roughly twenty years after he first began writing *Faust*. After twenty years, he returns to his work, unsure if this time his attempts will be successful: "Will now I seek to grand you definition?". Goethe addresses his characters, speaking to them in his dedication as if they had become real individuals; "once more you near me," "you press me". If we accept Millicent Bell's belief that Henry James attempted over and over again to capture the essence of his cousin Minny Temple, Milly Theale was only the most recent attempted literary reincarnation of James's beloved cousin. James would have spent over twenty years in his attempt to capture her. Both authors struggle with perfecting their imaginative creations, Goethe takes over twenty years to translate his fiction to nonfiction while James's Minny undergoes the opposite transformation, as James attempts to fictionalize her. The prose's hesitation in *Wings*, its confusion, is symptomatic of James's disenchantment for the written word, for language as a medium for adequate representation, whether it be for Minny or Milly. The irony is that *Wings* does represent the elusive female body by itself becoming a female body, its prose symptomatic of the task of representing a different woman, a New Woman (an idea to which I will return in a moment).

In *The Wings of the Dove*, James continually reminds us of a link between female bodies and the powers exerting ownership or operating control over those bodies. Kate Croy's aunt, albeit a maternal rather than patriarchal capitalist, treats her niece as a commodity for which she will be handsomely compensated, acquired from her father at

a bargain and one in which she reinvests her time and financial resources in order to produce a satisfactory future wife to be "jumped at"[5]. Kate Croy has, even for her lover Merton Densher, a "tangible value"; this implies that her value is qualitative as well as quantitative. Both ends of the transaction, Aunt Maud as the seller and Densher as potential purchaser, are aware of her value on the market of marriageable young women. The value inherent in Croy's body echoes what was at stake in Pansy's body in *Portrait*, for both the emergent New Women as well as the traditional, reactionary powers. Julie Olin-Ammentorp summarizes the works of Thorsten Veblen and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, whose research regarding marriage among the upper and middle classes she paraphrases as follows: "The roles of woman and servant are inextricably linked in a society that demands that women earn their bread through sexual and social service (...); the prostitute, both claimed, was emblematic of legitimately married women, as the exchange both made was the same" (Norton 540). If, ultimately, corporeal self-ownership amounts to an emancipation from "sexual and social service", and is partially the goal of redefining the role of this new, mobile woman, then the ability for women to overcome foreign acquisition of their own bodies (whether resisting marriage or redefining the female role within traditional marriage) is at some level always about the female body itself. Kate Croy and Milly Theale's mobility within the narrative landscape is symptomatic of an increased self-ownership of their own corporeal space. Both understand the value that their bodies possess, and neither

[5] At one Mrs. Lowder's dinner parties, Lord Mark characterizes the potential transaction.

attempts to diminish or disavow that value; and instead, each stakes a claim of self-ownership. Milly Theale will climb her own mountain and she will visit her own doctor - *alone*. Merton Densher must work for Kate Croy's body by exploiting Milly. Kate makes him earn it. Capitalism triumphs in that *Wing*'s collective (reified) consciousness presents a solution of self-ownership for the New Woman yet does not remove the female body from the marketplace itself. In this way, the female body works to sell itself, in many ways becoming the spectacle, aware that it is, as Benjamin proclaims, both "saleswoman and wares in one" (Bowlby 10). Thus, the spectacle of the female body that James ultimately provides for the New Woman is not a passive objectification of female bodies, but instead a self-promoting, active usurpation of public space by making the New Woman's body one that self-commodifies itself for the purpose of public spectacle.

Susan's failed representation of Milly and James's frustrating attempts at representing his cousin Minny stand in stark contrast to screenwriter Hossein Amini's film adaption of Kate Croy. In his film, Kate's body becomes the spectacle through which the viewer is privileged. Her actual body comes to the forefront.

Director Iain Softley's movie uses the text as a method of representing James's novel, and the narrative, as literally embodied by Kate Croy, dominates the adapted film. Amini describes the ways in which he structurally removes James from the film:

I highlighted the love triangle at the expense of (...) the author's [James's] take on turn of the century society. I changed the order of certain events so that the audience would follow the story like a thriller, rather than be ahead of it as James had intended. Where

the book plays the major confrontations "off camera", I had to reinvent them. (as quoted in Bailey 75)

First, Amini discusses his choice to focus on Kate's scheme and ensuing "love triangle" as opposed to James's "take on turn of the century society." Amini sets his film at least a few years after *Wings'* publication, as one obvious revision of James; Klimt's 1908 masterpiece "Der Kuss" ("The Kiss"), itself a painting eroticizing the female body and depicting a private moment, makes a prominent and somewhat startling appearance. Second, Amini's comment that he wanted the film to flow like a "thriller", "reinvent(ing)" scenes of altercation or embodied passion, implicitly reflects narrative building toward sexual climax.

The translation of Milly's illness from the novel to the screen underscores the film's focus on the body. In the novel, Milly's illness, which the reader is only somewhat aware of, remains vague for both the reader and her physician Dr. Strett. James frames her diagnosis as an adventure:

> ... after much interrogation, auscultation, exploration, much noting of his own sequences and neglecting of hers, had duly kept up the vagueness, they might have struck themselves, or may at least strike us, as coming back from an undeterred but useless voyage to the North Pole. (199)

The reader "interrogat(es), auscultat(es) (and) explor(es)" James's text here, a fact-finding mission not unlike the doctor's reading of Milly's body. They both amount to "vagueness": It "strike(s) us" that the "voyage" was "useless," meaning that *we* don't know what she suffers from. The narrator tells us to read this as intentionally vague, and includes himself as an implicit observer through the use of the first-person plural

pronoun, "us". For Softley and Amini, adapting this text requires a visualization of Milly's illness because a focal point of the plot is that Milly is dying. Her dying body becomes explicit on screen. Bailey identifies these choices in adaption as moments in which the moviemaker must "find a way to replicate James's sub-text through images" (Bailey 75). For Amini, the "interrogation, auscultation, (and) exploration" of the camera lens leads to a visual, and in this case also aural, representation of Milly's illness. The film presents her illness as something someone can hear, and that others not only know of, but also experience: Kate Croy's tortured expression is the focus of a shot in which Milly coughs uncontrollably. In scenes such as this, Softley both attempts to translate the "vagueness" of James's prose onto the screen as well as create the "thriller" he mentions. Milly coughs often and forebodingly so, but only from outside the frame. In this way, the filmmakers capture the obscuring haze of James's narrative style. Generally, however, the adaptation attempts to fill in these narrative gaps by creating clarity from where there was confusion.

Figure 0 Kate Croy (Helena Bonham Carter) and Merton Densher (Linus Roache) depicted in an elevator during the opening sequence of Softley's film adaptation. (*The Wings of the Dove*, 1997)

One primary cinematic strategy is that Softley focuses on the love triangle and the female body, making the film intentionally sexual, as Amini wanted, with "the visual spectacle provided by women" finding itself "central to the narrative" (Bailey 73). Bailey argues that, "as Softley refrains from positioning Kate as a 'central consciousness' through whom the action is filtered, the action revolves around and depends upon her rather than her perception of it, ultimately making the viewer more intent on the visual image on screen" (75). Bailey references the opening scene as one in which the film assigns the audience to the role of voyeur by establishing the female body, specifically Kate's, as the spectacle (77-78). We peer through the wrought iron bars of the elevator's grate during momentary periods between floors, sneaking brief peeks into

the car carrying Kate Croy and Merton Densher. Simultaneously her oversized, cerulean accented hat and fur-collared dress attract attention to her bodily form while the demure, sapphire velour or velveteen fabric and darkened subway lighting deemphasize the outline of her actual body. The movie presents her body as hazy, not unlike James's presentation of *Wing*'s female bodies through a prose wrought with confusion, hesitation, and disenchantment with language. At first, the lovers stand apart, apparently unacquainted with one another, but as the scene develops we peer into their secret rendezvous, as we both follow the couple during their elevator car's trip upward between darkness and light, and voyeuristically observe them as they embrace and kiss.

Thus, the film adaptation of *The Wings of the Dove* integrates two prime archetypes for the female body offered in the novel, specifically that it may be both ill, like Milly's body, or presented as a spectacle, as is Kate Croy's body in the elevator scene and throughout the rest of the film[6]. The spectacle of Kate's body often resonates in an erotic representation. While Milly coughs out of frame or shuts herself up in the *Palazzo*, removing her body from public view in order to nurse it, Kate and Merton have intercourse in an alleyway, and Kate's stark nakedness ends the film;

[6] Bailey argues for how this initial scene establishes visual and sexual contexts for the film: "This elevator scene creates a context for the rest of the film: Kate and Merton meet in the billiard room during a party given by Kate's Aunt Maud, a jealous Kate kisses Merton lingeringly, then tells him to go back and kiss his escort (which he has done previously to enrage Kate) "with that mouth"; the pair have intercourse against a wall in a Venetian alley; Milly and Kate giggle over pornographic illustrations in the men's section of a bookstone; later the girls cuddle in bed at Lord Mark's castle with their hands clasped over Kate's breast, and finally kate and Merton doff their clothes completely in the film's closing minutes". (78)

Kate's body, this time unclothed, becomes the focus of the voyeuristic lens, much as it was in the opening moments.

Bailey is right to emphasize how the camera mediates the viewer's accessibility to the narrative as a voyeur kept continually entranced by Kate Croy's body, but this phenomenon is not unique to the film itself. James limits the female body's representations in the novel, alternately portraying the body as an eroticized spectacle or as a pathologized, dying form. In embodying the former, Kate is revered by those around her for her impeccable dress while her style remains inexplicable: "she probably couldn't have given the key to these felicities" (25). In the opening scene, she even stares at herself in the mirror, entranced, "too hard indeed to be staring at her beauty alone" (24). Consequently, Milly's debilitating illness provides the strongest evidence for the other prototype for the female body's representation in *Wings*. While emblematic of these two primary methods of representing emergent, mobile female bodies of the New Woman, Kate Croy and Milly Theale are not types, and consequently James occasionally inverts the representational schema, exchanging one for the other. Kate Croy's body is ill in the scene in which she visits her father, mirroring Milly's later visit to Dr. Strett's office. In both scenes, the health and prognosis of the female body provide the reason for the meeting. Also, though Milly is primarily represented as a sick body, she is most certainly the spectacle of Mrs. Lowder's dinner parties upon her arrival. Furthermore, her quest (and competitive drive) for Merton Densher suggests her own sexuality.

James's body of text may be interpreted, like the archetypal female bodies in *The Wings of the Dove*, as either a spectacle or a pathologized, dying subject. We interpret the novel as ill, like Milly Theale's body, or causing confusion, like Milly Theale's presence; the prose style leads to confusion amongst the novel's readership, their reactions approximating the *London Times* and William James's reviews. *Wings* fails to "tell the story," the "fundamental" purpose of a novel project. The novel, however, may also be interpreted as a spectacle like Kate Croy's body. While on the one hand confusing, the prose style also evokes sexualized patterns, as the text repetitively jolts back and forth between streams of prose and bursts of pure dialogue. As a commodity spectacle, the book sells itself upon a literary marketplace as Kate offers her body as observable commodity for not only Merton Densher, but also each and every person she will pass while conducting her errands around London.

Considering the text as representative of the New Woman's body, two important passages emerge: First, the female body is itself emblematic of humanity's own passage, a semblance of its own collective potential. The battlefield over who will shape social, cultural, and political prospects depends on who exerts control over the female body, and, as Pansy reminds us in *Portrait*, who will raise the children that these bodies produce. The novel as female body invites us to speculate about genre and the literary marketplace at the turn of the century. The authors of those novels, the type of fiction which flew off of book shelves, helped to determine the future prose forms of the 20th century. *Wings* may be seen as a proto-modern text in that, in comparison to the

nineteenth century-style, straight-forward prose of *Portrait of a Lady*, which is itself the portrait of a woman denied mobility, *Wings* archives the emergence of a New Woman with a new type of prose. Second, when the prose creates confusion, the text as a "record of a pre-existing story" becomes a blocked passage, one that separates instead of uniting the author to his readers. Here again we observe the hesitation of the novel towards forms of communication and signification. In these instances, the prose does not serve as a passage through which the narrative travels. The frustration of the blocked passage brings us full circle – taking us back to what the *London Times* critic felt was "dense" prose, its "recording" purpose, at least from the reader's perspective, not fully accomplished.

The work that Kate Croy accomplishes in *The Wings of the Dove* is only eclipsed by James's work writing the novel. In an attempt to redeem her poor lover's worth in the eyes of her patroness aunt, she encourages Merton Densher to seduce Milly Theale, hoping that the American heiress will bequeath her ample fortune to him. James, on the other hand, has a much loftier goal. He attempts to accomplish what Susan Stringham fails to do when she meets Milly: using the written word to capture "the romantic life itself." I believe that James's prose in *Wings,* a prose largely unique to James's last four major works, is symptomatic of what he views as the rising complexity of the early 20th century. The pervasive hesitation in the text reflects James's anxiety that literature, especially his literature, may fail on a fundamental level to communicate. At the point of intersection between the New Woman and James's hesitation, *Wings*

itself becomes a female body, and like the female bodies illustrated in *Wings*, it is one that stakes a claim to its ownership, a self-proprietor like Kate Croy, resisting both any singular interpretation or James as its male creator or sole owner. Though I argue that Kate Croy is represented as a New Woman by James, she nevertheless meets an "unhappy" end. The very actions that define her as a New Woman (mobility, self-ownership of her body, using her body as a spectacle) are antithetical to her initial goal of marrying Merton Densher. The contradiction between female social progress and Croy's love affair with Merton mirrors the contradiction between a prose style that is simultaneously confusing and somehow representative of the New Woman, one that is proto-modern. Kate Croy becomes the broken sentence of the novel, at once triumphant and defeated. This, ironically, suggests that James's take on the New Woman is a negative one, that he represents her existence as detrimental to her own health (e.g. Milly) or antithetical to marriage (Kate Croy).

Because James creates a Romantic landscape for his New Women, he places the social movement associated with the New Woman within an expansion period. The Romantic landscape in which he introduces Milly and Susan is one that *Wings* associates with youth, specifically childhood. Susan Stringham, Mrs. Lowder, and Merton Densher are all educated in the Alps. Milly not only traverses that Romantic landscape, but herself embodies the romantic spirit. She is, "the romantic life itself". Thus, Milly is both a New Woman and a "Wanderer".

Just as the first sentence of the novel hints at the themes, representational strategies, and prose to follow, so too does a moment buried within a paragraph two pages later concisely and strikingly elucidate many of the aspects of my interpretation of the New Woman's role in *The Wings of the Dove*: "[Kate] hadn't given up yet, and the broken sentence, if she was the last word, *would* end with a sort of meaning. There was a minute during which, though her eyes were fixed, she quite visibly lost herself in the thought of the way she might still pull things round had she only been a man" (25). On a fundamental level, regardless of the New Woman's individual triumphs or failures within *The Wings of the Dove* (or any James text, for that matter), the state of expectancy, of "agitation" as James coined it, exists. Both Kate Croy and Milly Theale are "in advance" of the New Woman's season, but that the season is dawning is almost always apparent in James, and it will be a season in which future Kate Croys will continue to rely upon the spectacle of their own bodies, albeit in a way in which they are self proprietors of their own bodies, to "pull things around".

Conclusion

Happily Ever After? Marriage, Space, and the New Woman's Future

When Isabel accepts Mr. Osmond's proposal, she ceases to "soar and sail" and for the first time "touches the ground" (374). In both *Portrait of a Lady* and *The Wings of the Dove*, James portrays marriage as antithetical to the New Woman. Isabel's marriage guarantees her misery; Kate Croy and Merton Densher's future together is left vague; and Milly Theale dies before she entertains the possibility of marriage. Simultaneously, James's naturalist text places significance in narrative spaces and boundaries. We know that Isabel is miserable because of the spaces she inhabits. James represents Osmond's villa as a place where time has stopped, where a lingering performance of aristocracy continues. Kate Croy and Milly Theale move from one location to another within the narrative landscape, and this mobility defines them as New Women. Subsequently, neither of them marries. Henrietta Stackpole, the only New Woman in either novel to have a "Happy Ending," finds a man willing to invert the established roles of man and woman in marriage. Gossipy Mr. Bantling lets Henrietta speak on behalf of them, and she totes him from city to city. But if marriage and New Womanhood are represented as antithetical to one another, the very future of the New Woman with regard to social organization become what is at stake for the New Woman as depicted by Henry James in both novels.

James references Isabel's childhood home only once in *Portrait of a Lady*. Her grandmother's mansion, however, is the first architectural structure Isabel lives in. The

passages of the novel depicting her time spent there showcase the metaphors (e.g. the threshold, the passage) present throughout the novel. James illustrates the home as having been divided, united by an "arched passage" found by Isabel and her sisters:

> On the third floor [of the house] there was a sort of arched passage, connecting the two sides of the house, which Isabel and her sisters used in their childhood to call the tunnel and which, though it was short and well-lighted, always seemed to the girl to be strange and lonely, especially on winter afternoons. (39)

In the context of my reading of *Wings*, this early moment in *Portrait* takes on new meaning. The "passage" enabling Isabel and her sister's transgression between two divided domestic spaces is "a tunnel", recalling the subway system in *Wings*. The divided home connotes the separate spheres meant for women and men that defined gender relations for most of the nineteenth century. Feminine transgression of separate spaces is enabled by a "passage, connecting the two sides of the house". For Isabel, this tunnel always "seemed ... to be strange and lonely." Later, as they traverse the Brünig Pass, Milly and Susan are "in advance of the season." The "passage" in her grandmother's house seemed "especially ... lonely" on "winter afternoons," recalling the waning moment of the aristocracy depicted by the tea service at the outset of *Portrait of a Lady*.

In her grandmother's home, Isabel also distinguishes herself from her sisters. She spends her time in a room that would have been the foyer of the duplex's secondary unit, reading books instead of socializing with her family. In the neighboring library, books attract her "by the frontispiece[s]"; "she carried [them] into a mysterious

apartment which lay beyond the library and which was called, traditionally, no one knew why, the office" (40). The room comes to be known as the "office" because no one remembers why or when it began. "The office" moniker is a satirical depiction of "tradition". Moreover, Isabel judges a book by its cover. The "frontispieces" of novels attract her attention, not unlike how in *The Wings of the Dove* Kate Croy's body attracts Merton Densher, Milly Theale's dying body becomes the spectacle for Kate Croy, Susan Stringham, and Merton Densher, and the book itself a spectacle for the marketplace.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the New Woman's mobility was also a spectacle. Matthews references an example of female mobility put on display for the masses:

When in 1889 Joseph Pulitzer of the *New York World* decided to send a reporter around the world in less than the eighty days of Jules Verne's recent novel hero, he chose a twenty-two-year-old "girl reporter," Nellie Bly. The stunt would not have had such an impact if he had dispatched a man. Nellie Bly symbolized both the new mobility and the new visibility of women outside the home. (9)

First, that Nelly Bly is considered a "girl reporter" emphasizes that she stands for the future of women in American society rather than the past. Second, Nellie Bly may be interpreted as a real life version of the fictional Henrietta Stackpole. She works as a journalist, traveling the world and reporting back her experiences. She embodies the new "visibility" of women outside of the domestic space, and the earnestness with which her reporting will be met. Bly's assignment, however, is still a novelty – it remains a "stunt". Mathew's describes it as a stunt precisely because she is representing the new phenomenon of women both "mobil(e)" and "outside the home".

But what happens when Bly's assignment is no longer a "stunt"? The question that James viewed as the most "salient" of his time was one he never answered. He does not reconcile the institution of marriage, itself a "tradition", with the rise of the New Woman. His New Women have no "happy endings". Daisy is dead, Kate is alone, and Milly is dying from the onset of the novel. Only Henrietta Stackpole enjoys some semblance of happiness at the end of *Portrait*, and her triumph is made sober by her solitude. Before marriage, the New Woman is a sole proprietor over her body. She rejects men's advances and, if socioeconomically independent, may live a relatively free lifestyle. Isabel's multiple marriage refusals only serve to increase her social power. Upon entering into the contractual obligation of marriage, however, the New Woman transfers ownership to her husband. Only because Mr. Bantling is differential can Henrietta continue to live as she did prior to their union. Thus, the female body is and remains a commodity. Rachel Bowlby focuses on the female body as commodity, and relates it back to the institution of prostitution and the longstanding relationship between it and women's bodies:

An issue which arises at every point is that of gender. Women's contradictory and crucial part in "the oldest trade in the world" – at once commodity, worker and (sometimes) entrepreneur – can be taken as emblematic of their significance in the modern commercial revolution." (9)

Bowlby connects the "significance" of women in "the modern commercial revolution" to "the oldest trade in the world". The history of the female body dictates its significance within modern commercialism, as it is at once a "commodity", a "worker",

and an "entrepreneur". Karl Beckson inadvertently supports Bowlby's thesis when he lists several ways that the New Woman performed her "alternatives to the traditional roles for women";

> Her smoking in public, riding bicycles without escorts, or wearing "rational dress" was ... the result of principle, for she was determined to oppose restrictions and injustices in the political, educational, economic, and sexual realms in order to achieve equality with men (129)

Beckson's list demonstrates that the New Woman's methods for showcasing her "alternatives" to traditional gender relations concern the corporeal space; whether "smoking", "riding", or "wearing", her protests utilize the body. The New Woman's methods for "achieve[ing] equality with men" employ rather than denounce her "contradictory and crucial part" in prostitution, not unlike my reading of the New Woman's body in James. Her body, one of a transatlantic, bourgeois social set, may be interpreted as a self proprietorship, aware of its value and evoking that knowledge in the creation of a spectacle. Thus, her spectacle is not one that is passive, an objectification of her body, but instead an active usurpation, a self-commodification in which female agency creates spectacle.

Thus, it is not surprising that James's predominant mode for representing the New Woman's body is one of a spectacle. Bowlby argues that this mode of representation of the female body as a spectacle is rooted in the history of the relationship between women and prostitution, and that this notion of spectacle continues to pervade our society, evident in our daily lives. The spectacle of the female

body in James, however, is one of self-determination, of choice, of a self-proprietorship in harmony with the marketplace but nevertheless resultant of female agency. It is one that still thrives in modern commercialism. She follows us from the grocery store, splayed across magazine covers, to the cinema, projected larger than life across the movie screen, to our living rooms, inviting us to purchase shampoo, alcohol, and cars. With respect to the institution of marriage, I believe that James's portrayal of the New Woman as antithetical to the institution is a question that until this day remains unanswered. How can the institution of marriage, itself representative of limitations, synonymous with motherhood and the Angel of the House figure, foster an environment in which a woman may continue to usurp a male-driven world by actively employing her body as spectacle? The act of marriage is itself an act of choice, of the female body removing itself (or being removed) from the marketplace. When a woman is married, we say she is "taken". Thus, in conclusion, I wish to evoke the image of a woman who has perhaps, more than any other, used her body in an active usurpation of public space to create spectacle after spectacle, a woman who actively employs sex to drive her career, and perhaps not coincidentally, a woman who is herself twice divorced: Madonna. Thomas Ferraro writes, "It is a commonplace to wonder at the successive reincarnations of Madonna ... [her] reanimation ... takes advantage of, operates within, and variously re-inflects a regime of representation that is older than concert rock and roll and MTV, much much older – the magisterially erotic female taking center stage" (161).

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