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Leon Edel Prize Essay

Overhearing Testimony: James in the Shadow of Sentimentalism

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Washington Square is one of its author's most explicit statements about the relation between the Jamesian novel and other, older forms of fiction. Lavinia Penniman would love to turn James's tale into an anti-paternal romance; and indeed father and aunt compete as potential authors of Catherine Sloper's story. Whereas Mrs. Penniman attempts to guide Catherine and Morris Townsend to an illicit wedding ceremony "performed in some subterranean chapel" (82), Dr. Sloper watches Catherine's struggle somewhat as Flaubert claimed to watch his own creations sizzling and popping in the frying pan of his imagination. Curious as to whether she will "stick" in her spirited opposition to him, he may have "hoped for a little more resistance for the sake of a little more entertainment" (79). Sloper has the "big intellectual temperament" James sees in Flaubert but also his "dryness and coldness" (*HJL* 27). The novel is too conscious of literary milieus, however, to confront Sloper's naturalism with a broadly conceived "romanticism." Wherever Mrs. Penniman "wished the plot to thicken," she seeks to deepen more precisely "the sentimental shadows of this little drama" (79, 81). She will bring it to a "sentimental crisis" by means of her "insinuating sympathy" (79, 83). Throughout James's work, in fact, the primary weapons of his meddlers, intruders, exposers, and pressmen are the "familiarity" of sympathy and the rhetoric of sentimentalism. What I want to do here is look at the critique and the practice of intrusion in James—at penetrations into psyche and privacy—as both a continuation of and a reaction to the project of the sentimental novel. I argue furthermore that sympathetic penetration in the novel has always been torn between the implications of confession and testimony. The Rousseauvian ethos of confession in the early novel seeks to protect its characters from a testimonial condition that would be antithetical to a healthy habit of "full disclosure" because testimony implies a statement that has been crafted and prepared by self-interest. This ethos, however, falls victim to a backlash in the nineteenth century that

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reaches a certain apex in James as he carries the critique into modernism. James's "international theme" is in fact most persistently iterated as a conflict between what he sees as a quintessentially American demand for confession—with its notion that honest and sincere statements will be "unprepared" and will leave nothing in reserve—versus a European insistence on the individual's right to testimony: that is, on one's right to speak as an envoy or ambassador *for* oneself; on the right to negotiate and *represent* oneself in what is always, ultimately, a public forum, no matter how intimate the conversational gathering may be.

In *Washington Square*, when Mrs. Penniman assures Morris that Catherine's father would come to believe in his "disinterested" motives if they eloped without hope of the doctor's fortune, Morris asks, "Do you think he is so sentimental?" (87–88). To this fiction's progenitors in the sentimental novel, there may be no project more fundamental than the adjudication of its subjects' interestedness. The profiteering at issue, however, is not just a matter of financial or "worldly" gain: it is equally imperative in the early novel that its heroes and heroines avoid taking "credit" for the sentimental generosities and sacrifices that constitute their heroism. Catherine would have been a viable sentimental heroine because she does not speak of her renunciation; she does not bring it "into account." Together with most of her nineteenth-century sisters, in fact, Catherine achieves a perfection of disinterestedness that the majority of her sentimental forebears cannot. Because the mimetic project of the early novel usually binds itself to the real-world conditions of a personal history—its testimonial reality as an iterated narrative—it instigates a complex (and sometimes comic) machinery of letters, found diaries, and exposing editors. The epistolary novel thus forces its heroine to announce ungraciously, to bring into account, her acts of benevolence or renunciation. To compensate, these fictions stage intricate scenarios of penetration into her privacy, scenarios that portray her testimony as having been unexpectedly extracted from within.

For a brief example we can look at a scene from Henry Mackenzie's 1777 *Julia de Roubigné*, which was one of the more direct paths by which Rousseau's model of achieving personal transparency through confession infused itself into the English novel. A subplot in the story features one Herbert, whose role in the fiction is to achieve a certain posture: to become the central figure of a specific sentimental tableau. Herbert suffers from a profound grief over his wife's not-so-recent passing. Savillon, our epistolary narrator, reports to his friend Beauvaris that Herbert heroically keeps this grief invisible to his "circle of society," whose members he continues to entertain with "good humour" (52). Herbert sits with this grief only in the private apartment by which he "shut[s] out the world." Savillon gains access to this sanctum, however, by virtue of his sympathy, which grants him "a sort of privilege with [Herbert's] distress." "The whole scene before me," a tableau of the mourner listening to his departed love through an echo of old letters, is revealed in an act of penetration: "I entered his room yesterday, when he had thus shut out the world, and found him with some letters on the table before him, on which he looked, with a tear, not of anguish, but of tenderness" (52–53). Clearly a correspondence in prose to the engraved tableaux interspersed in the pages of Rousseau's own *Julie*, this is the species of "artistic tableau" that Mrs. Penniman had hoped Catherine's story would achieve (*WS* 82).[1]

As it reinforces a Rousseauvian ethos of confession and transparency, Savillon's ingress into his friend's room reifies an inside/outside borderland in Herbert's psychic landscape and effects an otherwise impossible confirmation of his "interior" sensibility and disposition. In the epistolary novel, however, all of these effects are always already achieved in "our" own voyeuristic consumption of the letters: in the fictional premise that none of these epistlers or memoirists had ever dreamed that their writing would make its way into a larger public sphere. In each and every case, this writing has been "diverted" from its intended recipient, has fallen into the hands of an "editor," and we as readers have now the privilege of spying on these lives, of "overhearing" a discourse that had originally been intended to move only from one "private" heart to another.

In his portrait of John Marcher in "The Beast in the Jungle," James emphasizes the peculiar sentimentalist meaning of the "disinterestedness" that such maneuvers are meant to protect. As readily as it will suggest a rejection of "worldly" gain, the term refers to a renunciation of words and self-expression. About Marcher's obscure intimation that a catastrophic destiny awaits him, James writes:

> He had thought himself, so long as nobody knew, the most disinterested person in the world, carrying his concentrated burden, his perpetual suspense, ever so quietly, holding his tongue about it, giving others no glimpse of it nor of its effect upon his life. . . . [T]his was why, above all, he could regard himself, in a greedy world, as decently—as in fact perhaps even sublimely—unselfish. (77–78)

"Greed" becomes the name of a desire not to grasp and hoard, but to expel and to speak.

James frequently calls attention to the testimonial reality of the personal statement, of that which is "brought out" into utterance, thus creating a "record."[2] As I have suggested, however, the reality of any such record, whether or not it is intended for a public eye or ear, precludes the absolute silence that disinterestedness ideally requires. Neither Savillon nor his epistolary counterpart, Julia, could ever achieve the reticence Herbert achieves as he confirms his pristine and disinterested sentiment even as he remains "unable to speak" (53). Into the nineteenth century, however, the growing conventionality of omniscient narration, which had once been one of the most fantastic propositions of fiction, would guarantee for the sentimental subject a perfect silence and disinterestedness. Her interiority could be extracted and laid bare without her having to say, write, or even think a word. One might even argue that omniscient narration would largely displace the epistolary novel because it manufactures for its characters, seemingly without residue, an absolutely sealed and silent interiority: an interiority that is continually brought into discourse nonetheless. When the sentimental novel had assigned all of its constituent statements the status of testimony—by acknowledging their documentary objectivity—the novel's presentation was at odds with its discourse: the fact that interiority apparently cannot manifest itself except in the external "mask" of testimony puts into question the continual insistence within the novel on the absolute severability of interior and exterior. Omniscient narration,

once it disappears into convention, silently buries this otherwise impassable question. In the novel's cosmology, the spectrality of omniscience thus creates a new natural law, reifying the pre-discursive interiorities that it alone produces.

In the nineteenth-century reaction against sentimentalism, the sanctum-infiltrating agent of sympathy, formerly heroic, becomes one of the novel's primary antagonists. Sentimentalism becomes increasingly associated with mushy-headed political reformism, a moon-eyed philanthropism, and feminism. Despite the generally condescending tone of the Victorian critique, it ultimately infuses sentimentalism with a dangerous political and social power, just as the concept of "petticoat rule" would come to both ignite and assuage social-revolutionary fears. Many nineteenth-century novelists see sentimentalism at the heart of a disciplinary nannyism that seeks to penetrate and bring order to both house and mind. In the United States, Herman Melville will even portray sentimentalism as one of the most important tools of his "confidence-man." As that novel mocks figures like Lord Shaftsbury and Mark Akenside, its con man achieves familiarity and friendship with everyone he meets, insisting that they open their hearts to one another and bring forth in conversation everything within. The con man sometimes creates scenarios of "overhearing" to achieve this trust and familiarity. As he speaks in "soliloquy" at the railing of the steamship *Fidèle*, for instance, he only pretends to be unaware of his mark's overhearing. "[T]hrowing off in private the cold garb of decorum, and so giving warmly loose to his genuine heart," the con man's apparent innocence of this overhearing "attested his earnestness" (Melville 31).[3]

In the English novel, meanwhile, and in fictions James will be reading closely, the sentimental backlash strikes prominently in the work of Anthony Trollope. The first two of his Barsetshire novels, for instance, depict the ethos of sensibility as at the root of a democratizing, disciplinary reformism. In *Barchester Towers*, the Reverend Obadiah Slope insinuates himself into Barchester society through an alliance with the existing sentiment-enforcer in the diocese, Mrs. Proudie. This petticoat ruler smooths the way for Slope's reformist imposition on Barchester, which begins with a campaign calling for a strict observance of the Sabbath. He plans to bring these parishioners' Sunday activities to account, demanding a greater articulation and detailing of this otherwise unregistered time. Meanwhile, Slope comes under the spell of the novel's heroine, the young widow Eleanor Bold. At the moment he does so, we can see exactly how Trollope rewrites the indispensable scene of sentiment-approval that the novel of sympathy had blueprinted and which *Julia de Roubigné* had exhibited in Savillon's movement into his friend's seclusion. Like Herbert, Eleanor is confirmed by an "outer" narrator to be a person "with most singular disinterestedness" (Trollope 437). In *Barchester Towers*, he who would espy and approve Eleanor's hidden sentimental landscape, for our benefit as well as his own, is now the villain, known as such precisely for his successful incursions into privacy. The theater of Eleanor's exposure begins with a scene of maternal intimacy: the words opening its chapter are those of a private, inaccessible language of the mother loving her child ("Diddle, diddle, diddle, diddle, dum, dum, dum" [128]). The baby pulls Eleanor's hair from beneath her cap, and more cooing ensues. Into Eleanor's state of deshabillé, Mr. Slope suddenly appears:

> At this moment the door opened, and Mr Slope was announced. Up jumped Eleanor, and with a sudden quick motion of her hands pushed back her hair over her shoulders. . . . Mr Slope . . . immediately recognized her loveliness, and thought to himself that, irrespective of her fortune, she would be an inmate that a man might well desire for his house, a partner for his bosom's care very well qualified to make care lie easy. (129–30)

It is an intrusion as abrupt and apparently inexorable as ours has been. By joining us in Eleanor's seclusion, Slope is said to have gained a vantage that we might normally suppose, under a post-epistolary regime, to be available only to omniscience: instant apperception of invisible, interior qualities. The "loveliness" that strikes him is not physical beauty: he has met her before without giving her a second look, and we had just been told two paragraphs earlier that her beauty was apparent only to "old friends" (Trollope 129). Having revealed to him instantly that Eleanor would be "well qualified to make care lie easy," the door of Slope's ingress has opened onto more than one interiority. The discovery of Eleanor's picturesque domesticity has revealed, in Nancy Armstrong's terms, "a woman whose value resided chiefly in her femaleness rather than in traditional signs of status, a woman who possessed psychological depth rather than a physically attractive surface" (19–20). The exposure has confirmed in Eleanor the sentimental disposition required for her to become the novel's primary subject, but its particular staging as an intrusion is especially effective in maintaining a rigid distinction between public and private—again, as long as we remain unconscious of the prior incursion of omniscience itself. When at the end of the novel the narrator makes a cryptic apology for introducing the contents of an epistle into the narrative, promising that "no further letter whatever shall be transcribed at length in these pages" (430), we might hear a certain contempt for the garrulous self-construction required by the epistolary novel and a satisfaction that the sanctified privacy of *this* novel's denizens have to be wrenched from them by force.

In *The Portrait of a Lady*, James inherits the very tableau, almost unchanged in form and function, by which Trollope's heroine was successfully excavated. It appears just when the novel, in its denouement, makes its surprise move in transforming Henrietta Stackpole into a sympathetic figure and feminizing her formerly unchecked masculinity. The scene takes place in the Florentine Uffizi Gallery, where Henrietta unexpectedly runs into Caspar Goodwood, the indignant, failed suitor of Isabel Archer. Having once encouraged Caspar to draw Isabel away from her European ties, back to the safety of American moral purity, Henrietta now asks him to desist and in this way signals a humble deflation of her own righteousness. By itself, however, this appeal would not be enough to confirm Henrietta's formerly unsuspected sympathetic depth; her encounter with Caspar thus begins with his accidental disruption of the first "private moment" James has yet to give Henrietta. In the "empty vista" of the gallery's upper chambers, "scantily visited" at this time of year, Henrietta had sought a particular painting:

> [I]t 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. . . . She was about to turn into the Tribune when a gentleman came out of it; whereupon she gave a little exclamation and stood before Caspar Goodwood. (505)

Although the consummation of her bond with this scene of maternal intimacy is deferred on this visit, the passage nonetheless exhibits proleptically the theater of Henrietta's sentimental gaze. And as if to underscore that Henrietta is herself the proper sentimental subject of this recalled scene, despite her position as spectator, the novel's omniscience at the beginning of the episode effects the indispensible intrusion into her own privacy by calling unusual attention to the exercise of its "privilege to look over her shoulder" (504).

As in Trollope, there is an unresolvable tension in most of James's work between, on the one hand, his excavation and appraisal of the hidden sentimental disposition of his characters and, on the other, his violent opposition to the confessional, sentimentalist ethos that demands this penetration and interiority-policing. After all, Henrietta—whose privacy he has just exposed—had formerly embodied the intrusiveness James continually ridicules. According to Henrietta, and to most of James's Americans, an honest and open soul is one who proves at every moment there is nothing hidden within an interior; she will be consistently available and accountable to a public. Even Isabel is not exempt. At one point Ralph Touchett explains to her the disposition of his private space:

> "I keep a band of music in my ante-room. . . . It keeps the sounds of the world from reaching the private apartments, and it makes the world think that dancing's going on within." . . . Isabel often found herself irritated by this perpetual fiddling; she would have liked to pass through the ante-room, as her cousin called it, and enter the private apartments. . . . [S]he would have been glad to undertake to sweep them and set them in order. . . . [H]er cousin amused himself with calling her "Columbia" and accused her of a patriotism so heated that it scorched. (113–14)

Between the literal and the figural, private space and inner self, it might seem unquestionable that the bulk of this vignette's import is carried by the latter. Only in that register, it would seem, could James's alarm intelligibly sound: his warning about the potential universalization of Isabel's command to "sweep" and set "in order" Ralph's interior. Yet almost thirty years later, in a personification of America as "a motherly, chatty, clear-spectacled Columbia," James obliquely recalls his many Isabels and Henriettas with an exegesis that clearly does not see the architectural construction of interiority in merely figural terms (*AS* 362). In the essays of *The American Scene*, James returns after more than a generation's absence to discover that the interior-accountability depicted in his fiction was

now, in his homeland, instantiated in the very distribution of its walls and doors. An effect of the United States's social as opposed to merely political democracy, James writes, is an antipathy to "the preservation of *penetralia*; so that when *penetralia* are of the essence, as in a place of study and meditation, they inevitably go to the wall" (250). For this reason, "the most salient characteristic" of New York skyscrapers, for instance, is the window (95). Yet the eradication of private space is also something "the public institution shares impartially with the luxurious 'home'" (166). And as he elaborates the "universal custom of the house" in America, James asks us to remain aware of these structures as the expression of a peculiar "conception of life":

> The instinct is throughout . . . that of minimizing, for any "interior," the guilt or odium or responsibility, wherever these may appear, of its *being* an interior. The custom rages like a conspiracy for nipping the interior in the bud, for denying its right to exist, for ignoring and defeating it in every possible way, for wiping out successively each sign by which it may be known from an exterior. . . . [I]t strikes you as . . . positively serving you up for convenient inspection. . . . [It is a] conception of the home . . . as a combination of the hall of echoes and the toy "transparency" held against the light. (166–69)

Capping this odious portrait with the image of "light" as a key element in the obnoxious architecture of American modernity, one is reminded of how frequently James targets the trope of "enlightenment" as an instrument used to "defeat" opacity and its "right to exist." In his fiction, the agents wielding this instrument, enforcing everywhere a "note of 'familiarity,'" are usually "the newspaper and the interviewer," as he writes in a notebook of 1887 (*CN* 40). There is not enough space here to demonstrate how consistently James portrays the newspaper as the primary conduit for a modern ethos of personal transparency and confession: figures like Henrietta Stackpole, the journalist who "thinks one's door should stand ajar" (*PL* 285), and Matthias Pardon of *The Bostonians* are only the most obvious points in which an intrusive, regulatory sentimentalism is completely imbricated with a solidly institutionalized public journalism. Even George Flack of *The Reverberator*, a man "professionally . . . occupied with other people's affairs" (28), imagines his loutish intrusions in terms of an "enlightened enterprise":

> I'm going for the inside view. . . . That's about played out, anyway, the idea of sticking up a sign of "private" and "hands off" and "no thoroughfare" and thinking you can keep the place to yourself. . . . [I]t ain't going to continue to be possible to keep out anywhere the light of the Press. Now what I'm going to do is set up the biggest lamp yet made and make it shine all over the place. We'll see who's private then, and whose hands are off. (63)

James is not simply suggesting that the pressman misuses or perverts the metaphor of enlightenment. Appearing everywhere he satirizes the press, this is the same

knowledge-producing light revered by any healthy empiricism and also by a disciplinary ethos that knows only a criminal avoids the light. Flack's direct analogue in "The Aspern Papers" similarly has no qualms about "opening lights into [Aspern's] life. He had nothing to fear from [me] because he had nothing to fear from the truth" (6). These fictions—companion pieces, really, serialized the same year—together suggest that the automatic reverence given to any documentation of an "inside view" permeates all levels of cultural discourse, not just yellow journalism (*RE* 63). Over and again, James's writer-investigators use this light to occlude the productive nature of their narrative creations, casting them instead entirely in terms of discovery and disclosure: a necessarily virtuous exhumation of salient facts.[4]

As Flack approaches the golden ring of his completed *Reverberator* article, he reminds Francie, "I want everything, as I told you. . . . But I want it in the right way and of the right brand. If I can't get it in the shape I like it I don't want it at all; first-rate first-hand information, straight from the tap, is what I'm after" (123). With a metaphor of "straight" and immediate transmission, bizarrely unconscious of the "shaping" injunction immediately preceding, it is an ultimatum that James had originally put into the mouth of Flack's precursor, Henrietta Stackpole. Long after her initial epistolary announcement that she's coming to England because "the *Interviewer* wants some light on the nobility," Henrietta expresses satisfaction with her chaperone and "informant," Mr. Bantling:

> He has told me just the things I want to know. . . . I can't make out that what he tells me about the royal family is much to their credit; but he says that's only my peculiar way of looking at it. Well, all I want is that he should give me the facts; I can put them together quick enough, once I've got them. (222)

Like Flack, Henrietta screens from view the interpretive and evaluative operation of her writing simply by making reference to its traffic in value-free facts. As evinced by the contrast between the satirically alarming pronouncements of George Flack and the urbane, subtle, reasonable apologias of the narrator of "The Aspern Papers," James sees the most insidious legitimization of this rhetorical abuse in the claims of biography. The task of villainizing this narrator's intrusion is difficult: his stated motive, after all, is only to augment the glory of his literary "god" (5). He seeks the Aspern letters only to sculpt a more accurate and revealing portrait of the man, and the result will be nothing but revelation and honest disclosure. Although Flack's mission statement is bald and outrageous in comparison, it is significant that this narrator's analogous self-explanation, which sounds much more familiar and reasonable, nonetheless sharply recalls the elements of Flack's language that are used in every defense of a generalized and systematic surveillance of the individual:

> We held, justly, as I think, that we had done more for [Aspern's] memory than anyone else, and we had done it by opening lights into his life. He had nothing to fear from us because he had nothing to fear from

> the truth. . . . His early death had been the only dark spot in his life, unless the papers in Miss Bordereau's hands should perversely bring out others. There had been an impression about 1825 that he had "treated her badly," just as there had been the impression that he had "served" . . . several other ladies in the same way. Each of these cases Cumnor and I had been able to investigate, and we had never failed to acquit him. . . . (7)

With perfect sincerity, the biographer will later describe his work—the articulation either of an "acquittal" or of the "dark spots" of his subject—as an expression of "beauty," the like of which shines from Aspern's immortal verse. The invisible and unconscious transformation of this tawdry public inquest into a "revealing" artistic expression is impossible without the continuity he achieves through the trope of enlightenment. "I felt . . . a moral fraternity with all those who in the past had been in the service of art. They had worked for beauty, for a devotion; and what else was I doing? That element was in everything Jeffrey Aspern had written, and I was only bringing it to the light" (43). In a climactic repetition of the narrator's self-defense, this time directly to the Aspern letters' guardian, James draws our attention to the familiar philosophical rhetoric of truth by which "revelation" masks a production of knowledge. Facing the man who has finally identified himself to Juliana as "a critic, an historian," she suggests that the "discoveries" of such investigators are "mostly lies" (89). The critic disagrees:

> "The lies are what they sometimes discover. . . . They often lay bare the truth."
>
> "The truth is God's, it isn't man's. . . . Who can judge of it—who can say?"
>
> "We are terribly in the dark, I know," I admitted; "but if we give up trying what becomes of all the fine things? What becomes of the work I just mentioned, that of the great philosophers and poets? It is all vain words if there is nothing to measure it by."
>
> "You talk as if you were a tailor." (89–90)

Juliana perceives that the sticking point is precisely this notion that the mere act of confirming false statements of fact could establish the "measure" of philosophical or poetic truth in general. The narrator unconsciously confirms for the second time that his enlightenment could only consist of a discourse that either affirms or denies the testimony of his subjects. Earlier he had described one of the truths he expects to establish, a mystery he hopes to resolve upon obtaining the letters:

> It was incontestable that, whether for right or for wrong, most readers of certain of Aspern's poems . . . had taken for granted that Juliana had not always adhered to the steep footway of renunciation. There hovered about her name a perfume of reckless passion, an intimation that she had not been exactly as the respectable young person in

> general. . . . Certain it is that it would have been difficult to put one's finger on the passage in which her fair fame suffered an imputation. (48)

Clearly, the truths this narrator will extract from the hidden Aspern papers will be generally indistinguishable from the kind of truths said to be whispered by the available text of Aspern's poetry. When the narrator and his ally had "acquitted" Aspern upon their former investigation of the way he had treated his many female admirers, they had done so by acquiring another batch of correspondence. Yet even upon that successful exposure and "bringing to light" of once-hidden papers, the absoluteness of the acquittal had flown yet again out of reach: "I judged him perhaps more indulgently than my friend; certainly, at any rate, it appeared to me that no man could have walked straighter in the given circumstances" (7).

With the biographer's awareness that the most important discoveries he seeks are matters of interpretation and "intimation," how could *these* Aspern papers ever finalize the questions? How could they disclose, any more than the others, a previously hidden measure of truth? Against these questions the investigator's hope resides in the deceptively simple metaphysics of veiling and unveiling. As with so many other fictions, the condition of the inaccessible letter is the very engine of "The Aspern Papers," but it is also the figure that has come so prominently to govern twentieth-century literary criticism in general. In his *Allegories of Reading*, Paul de Man describes a predominant "metaphorical model of literature" in the past century

> as a kind of box that separates an inside from an outside, and the reader or critic as the person who opens the lid in order to release into the open what was secreted but inaccessible inside. It matters little whether we call the inside of the box the content or the form, the outside the meaning or the appearance. (5)

The truth the letter will reveal is inside the closed book, or locked within a lover's bureau, but when the signifier is finally exposed, the final answers fly away again to yet another outside.

The letter whose inaccessibility keeps intact the promise of truth is reinforced in James's fiction by grafting itself onto a topology: a scenario of potential or frustrated physical penetration. In "the closed windows of my hostess," for instance, at which the "Aspern Papers" narrator gazes "for hours . . . looking up over the top of my book" from the garden below,

> no sign of life ever appeared; it was as if, for fear of my catching a glimpse of them, the two ladies passed their days in the dark. But this only emphasised their having matters to conceal; which was what I had wished to prove. Their motionless shutters became as expressive as eyes consciously closed. (44)

The narrator attempts to underwrite his phantasm—his "perception" of content, of explosive secrets, in a mere absence—by making reference to an empirically

verifiable arrangement of walls and shutters. This delusion takes hold of George Flack as well, but the topography exciting *his* imagination is the Parisian "social landscape" that so many of James's Americans strain to discern. When Flack assures Francie's sister early on that the Proberts couldn't possibly be the hidden "rose" of the American-Parisian social set, "or anything near it," because they were unknown to his long-established Parisian informant, Delia has "a flash of inspiration":

> She asked if that didn't perhaps prove on the contrary quite the opposite—that they were just *the* cream and beyond all others. Wasn't there a kind of inner, very *far* in, circle, and wouldn't they be somewhere about the centre of that? George Flack almost quivered at this weird hit. . . . "Why, do you mean one of those families that have worked down so far you can't find where they went in? . . . That's the kind of family we want to handle!" (44)

As these sham "centers," circles, and interiorities begin to pile up, we find *The Reverberator* calling into question even the "privacy" it is supposed to be defending. When Delia speaks of her own privacy, it clearly corresponds, on the one hand, to the reality of a private room, but we also know it to be something she has manufactured as a false front in order to impress the socially elevated Proberts. When her family meets Gaston for the first time at their hotel, she leads them to her saloon, "where they should be so much more private: she liked . . . to hear herself talk of privacy" (45). One is reminded of Mrs. Penniman's conversation with Morris in *Washington Square*, in which she repeats the phrase "a private marriage" because "she liked it" (85). Delia, like so many of James's Americans, really has no use for privacy; she rather embodies Flack's ideal of a life articulated entirely in public terms, proudly and continually molded so as to be ready to transcribe, in its entirety, into the "women's pages" of the *Sunday World*.

As had been the case for their sentimental ancestors, what is essential to the "works" produced by James's scribbling investigators is not the "content" they try to extract from these imaginary borderlands of inside and outside, private and public. The only facts their prose will require are those that can construct a theater of penetration. When Flack finally coaxes from Francie the suggestive information he will later use for his article, he happens to do so as they are making their way to the studio of a fashionable artist, Mr. Waterlow, where a portrait of Francie is in progress. Flack purports to his readers that the occasion for the article is this portrait. The scandalous details flow "spontaneously" out of this seminal object in an associative current: the portrait is said to be a sign of Francie's rapid elevation in the Parisian social scene, which is subsequently confirmed by her engagement to Gaston Probert, whose family has been drawn so far into society's inner circle they have become invisible, and there have been startling discoveries about this family. "Didn't you understand," Flack will later ask Francie,

> that I wanted you to know that the public would appreciate a column or two about Mr. Waterlow's new picture, and about you as the subject of it, and about your being engaged to a member of the grand old

> *monde*, and about what was going on in the grand old *monde*, which would naturally attract attention through that? (180–81)

In the end, nothing in Flack's article has required an act of witnessing on his part, except for the otherwise irrelevant anecdote about the portrait. The mere act of having insinuated himself into the artist's studio, of having seen with his own eyes the object originating this associative chain that leads to the hidden "choice bits" of the old world, is the only means by which Flack can establish the status and the authority of the successfully penetrating witness (*RE* 63). As I have suggested, the early novel's confessional project established the need and the protocol for this authority right from the beginning, but this particular strategy of confirming that the true and the authentic has been brought back from the field is something the "new journalism" inherits from its travel-writing parentage, from a tradition of articulating the Other that in fact reaches back to antiquity, and that historians such as François Hartog have demonstrated to be the impetus of classical historiography itself. Flack must articulate his activity as one of penetration in order to stake his claim in what Hartog identifies, in *The Mirror of Herodotus*, as autopsy. The reporter, in a tone that strikes Francie as "'higher,' somehow, than any she had ever heard him use," had previously advised her: "If I want to see the picture it's because I want to write about it. . . . I wouldn't write about it without seeing it. We don't *do* that" (127). In the ability to report that he has seen with his own eyes, a narrator confirms his successful penetration into what had once been veiled, and thus into truth. The truth of his "seeing it" confirms the truth of what he will write about it. With the sequence "I have seen, it is true," James's investigators, like Herodotus, ensure that "no separation is made between saying and seeing" (Hartog 251).

Despite James's repeated insistence that the interiorities his reporters seek to penetrate are chimeras of one kind or another, the moral urgency of his critique paradoxically depends on the terrifying specter of these investigators violating very real and legally recognized interior spaces. Casing the Bordereaus' villa, the "Aspern Papers" narrator had been "laying siege to it with my eyes while I considered my plan of campaign" (5). And the danger he represents is ultimately measured by his compulsion to steal into the very boudoir of his hostess at the climax of the story. Similarly, George Flack threatens "the idea of sticking up a sign of 'private' and 'hands off' and 'no thoroughfare,'" and the presumption that "you can keep the place to yourself" (63). Especially amid the echo of the "Aspern" narrator's intimate encroachments, it is difficult to hear this "hands off" as referring to anything other than bodily intrusion. These warnings anticipate what James will later write about the disciplinary architecture of *The American Scene*, where "every part of every house shall be . . . visible, visitable, penetrable" to accommodate a confessional regimen in which "everything one says is said for the house" (168).

The paradox of American plain speaking, for James, is that it must exhibit the disinterested, unpremeditated transparency of a confession, but as it is always already destined "for the house" it must be accountable to any public as testimony. This portrait of an American-led modernity in which the private is

hopelessly contaminated with the public has created a critical debate about James that has hinged itself on Michel Foucault's conception of a disciplinary society. Mark Seltzer's *Henry James and the Art of Power* remains the most influential, if also controversial, Foucauldian approach to the author. Seltzer argues that "the almost automatic opposition" in James "of a creative aesthetics to a constraining politics precisely covers the 'productiveness' of modern apparatuses of power" (132). Although there is no rigorous or objective way of verifying whether this "covering" actually takes effect, it seems fairly clear that the knowledge-production masked as revelation that we have seen repeatedly targeted in James's fiction—especially as it is embodied in the apparatus of the newspaper—challenges this strand of Seltzer's thesis. However James might portray an "autonomous (literary) discourse," it seems impossible to rest assured that it "effectively screens the filiations between power and discourse in modern society" (132), especially after our confrontation with the literary investigator of "The Aspern Papers" has just the opposite effect: clearly exposing the mechanism by which his discipline, like the journalist's, can generate a discourse of penetration to mask the pure productivity of the biography, the means by which Aspern's life will be registered into public discourse.

Seltzer's more general thesis—that James is ultimately complicit in a disciplinary "mastery" pervading his socio-political environment—has already been subject to pointed critique (13). Whereas Seltzer proposes a filiation between the Jamesian narrator's mastery of his fabula and the mastery of discipline in general, Dorrit Cohn, for instance, argues that such correspondence can never be "simple and stable" (179), and Gert Buelens rejects Seltzer's suggestion that Jamesian desire surmounts the chaotic and contingent "hotel-world" depicted in *The American Scene*, arguing instead that James immerses himself in "the metonymic contiguity" of its social and sexual mosaic (305).[5] These critiques, however, tend to hinge on the inherent vagaries of what does or does not constitute control or "mastery" over narrative, desire, or the social world as a visual field subject to panopticism. The most compelling accounts of literature as a disciplinary agent, accomplished by Seltzer and others, still await evaluation against the more concrete mechanism Foucault keeps in view: the knowledge-producing apparatus, strictly indispensable to discipline as such, of the registry. As it produces subjects within the tables of discipline, the registry achieves legitimacy—and even in its most efficient operation, invisibility—when it appears not to have been created by the institution(s) that maintain it, that is, when the registry is comprised primarily of the personal testimony of the recorded subjects themselves. Often in the guise of "private" confession, testimony, as James points out, is the means by which a subject inscribes herself into public record and makes herself intelligible and accountable to power.

That the novel in general has ended up reinscribing a disciplinary ethos even when it seems to have brought discipline directly into view is an argument proposed most famously in D. A. Miller's *The Novel and the Police*. Like Seltzer, but in relation to the nineteenth-century novel in general, Miller deftly marks out the novel's contribution to a discourse that affirms a circumscribed limit to disciplinary power, a realm of privacy safely beyond its reach. Pretending to be

"set off" from worldly power by virtue of its purported supplementarity, the novel has historically asserted itself to be independent of, and indeed a challenge to, that power. The novel shakes its artistic fist at social structures from within its own supposedly impermeable frame as an aesthetic object. Whereas Seltzer challenges the conceptual poles of "aesthetic self-containment" versus "the political,"[6] or art versus power, Miller's terms are the private and the police. By the end of both compelling studies, however, we find ourselves in a strange position: we have been convinced that the complete absence of the police in a novel like *Barchester Towers* confirms the fantasy of a bourgeois world removed from policing—but also that the *presence* of the police, in a novel like *Oliver Twist*, only serves to reinscribe a mystification that would locate the exercise of power only where there are buttonholing bobbies. Both the tenuousness and the virtuosity of the argument is its ability to confirm itself in the face of any and all possible representations of the police.

Adroitly, if somewhat selectively, these analyses trace the conceptual landscapes that the novel makes possible through both its discourse and its fabulous representations of subjection and freedom. The arguments weaken, however, when they claim to have discerned, from any one such novel, a totalized ideological effect. *The Novel and the Police* makes a convincing case, for instance, that *Oliver Twist* sustains the illusion that the middle class constitutes an independent "outside" in relation to a disciplinary power wholly identified with the policeman's beat; i.e., with urban blight. Yet Miller also reveals that the demystification of this illusion is adequately accomplished by the novel's own discourse: the middle-class Brownlow, who had ostensibly rescued Oliver from the city's disciplinary institutions, is exposed by the novel as an agent "constitut[ing] Oliver as an object of knowledge" and thus "assum[ing] power over him as well" (9). How is it, then, that the novel-reader's identity is "confirmed" by the "evidence," as Miller puts it, of the middle class's "constitutive 'freedom'" but that identity is not disrupted by the novel's own deconstruction of that evidence? (x). That the extra-urban family that comes to shelter Oliver is itself "'one of the family' of disciplinary institutions," Miller writes, is an idea "only discreetly broached by the text" (10). But by what measure and what evidence can we support the corollary assumption that the family's independence of disciplinary power is made obvious by Dickens's novel, *not* something that is "only discreetly broached by the text"? As we might ask Seltzer of James: why does the novel's hidden service to a disciplinary ideology successfully engage but the equally embedded challenge to that ideology does not? When *The American Scene* mourns the "land of the 'open door'" and the decline of living spaces which, "by not taking the whole world into their confidence, have not the whole world's confidence to take in return" (407), it is explicitly describing the material instantiation of a nineteenth-century "incitement to discourse." And in light of its prescient prediction that "The desire to rake and be raked has doubtless . . . a long day before it still," it is difficult to see how this analysis of modern discipline is any less potent than Seltzer's own (168).

To achieve their goal of exhibiting an ultimately singular ideological effect of a given novel—even if the discursive forces behind that effect are not coher-

ent—Miller and Seltzer must reach beyond their convincing demonstrations of how the panoptic eye of the omniscient narrator ensures that a character is, in Foucault's words, detailed, mapped, and brought "to account" (139). They are forced to make a further claim about the assured predictability of the disciplinary effect on any and all of the novel's readers. The reader must become the interface between the fiction and the historical real. When Miller addresses the novel's ultimate failure to perform its putatively subversive function in relation to power, he claims it does so either by "confirm(ing) the novel-reader in his identity as a 'liberal subject' . . . whose private life, mental or domestic, is felt to provide evidence of his constitutive 'freedom,'" or by rehearsing within itself the sham drama of its own "scandalous" confrontation with the social order, thus "forming . . . a subject habituated to psychic displacements, evacuations, reinvestments, in a social order whose totalizing power circulates all the more easily for being pulverized" (x, xiii). Relying in both cases on a slippage between the fictional and the readerly subject, Miller claims to unveil, with Seltzer, "a discrete continuity between literary and political practices" (Seltzer 15).

The significance of this step will not fully resolve without a brief recapitulation of Foucault's own conception of the relationship between discourse and power. The rise of the human sciences, in his genealogy, fostered and refined the discourses by which the self could become knowable and accountable. Although modern society thus taught itself the terms and the taxonomies by which a subject *shall* become intelligible, the fulfillment of an individual's subjection takes place only through the operation of particular apparatus, at historically specific interfaces, i.e., when the subject records herself (or is recorded) in a questionnaire, an affidavit, a diagnosis, profile, interview, application, trial, etc. The austerity of this vision of subjection cannot provide what Miller and Seltzer require. Impelled by what is ultimately a very old and persistent desire of literary criticism—to figure out how a fiction actually "works" on a reader—the attempt to trace a systematic effect from any given novel will always be bound, exclusively and inescapably, to that which would enable such systematicity, that is, to the *general* iterability of the novel and the pure anonymity of its address. So conceived, the novel's effect could only be ideological and has nothing to do with subjection as Foucault finds it: in the recorded encounter between apparatus and individual. This is why Foucauldian literary critics have had to erase silently the distinction between discourses of subjectivity—their language and logic, which the novel certainly has helped to normalize—and the actual, historical subjection of individuals. A document has productive (as opposed to normative) disciplinary power only where it plays a role in mapping an historical subject, adhering the produced details to a name, and rendering her knowable and recognizable within a tabulated series of other subjects. A fiction, like any document without the means of recording and individuating its readers, cannot possibly "produce" them as subjects. Hence the major historical thesis of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*: although power had previously staged spectacles of punishment and rehabilitation to subject the individual—an attempt to represent *to* the individual a properly disciplined subject in the hopes he will "identify" with it, or that he will take the representation "to heart"—that strategy of discipline through represen-

tation was replaced (by the eighteenth century) with practices of self-subjection and self-registration.[7]

The prevailing Foucauldian criticism, then, which seeks to demonstrate the novel's "efficacy in producing . . . privatized subjects" has unwittingly rejected Foucault's definition of modern discipline (Miller 82). The mechanism by which the supposedly private life of the novel's subject "confirms" that of the reader, or by which the reading subject becomes "habituated" to the disciplinary predicament of the fictional character, could only be one of identification or internalization and could only have been conducted through representation. It is in service to these terms that literary critics have so grossly over-emphasized the single chapter in *Discipline and Punish* on Bentham's panopticon, inflating it to the almost complete occlusion of the book's much greater emphasis on the mechanics of serial individuation and the documentary tactics of "'cellular' power" (149). Because panopticism is read as something that internalizes within the subject a kind of disciplinary superego—necessarily born, as are conduct books and barracks regulations, in iterability—such a systematic power is easily discerned in the pages of fiction; hence the eagerness of literary critics in particular to reduce all disciplinary activity to "the political dream" that the panopticon represents (Foucault 198). It allows Seltzer to identify panopticism with discipline in general.[8]

My critique here, however, clearly cannot diminish the great accomplishment of Seltzer's study in its illumination of the problem I have been circling in these pages: the paradox by which the "comprehensive supervision" that James takes to task in his critique of American society is deployed in "his own techniques of representation" (Seltzer 114–15).[9] But instead of reading this tension as the effect of a "criminal continuity" between the Jamesian novel and disciplinary power (57), I see it as yet another stage in the ongoing conflict in the novel between testimony and confession. As I have argued, omniscient narration surges to the fore in the nineteenth century partially because it solves a central problem that had always beset the sentimental project: it can reveal a character's sentimental correctness without requiring her own attestation of it, an action that could always be motivated by self-interest. The suspicion of testimony's interestedness, which omniscience raises to a peak, eventually expands and solidifies in the nineteenth century into a broad epistemological register. It becomes a truism that even if a testimonial narrator such as Joseph Conrad's Charlie Marlow has all of his facts straight, everything he says is nevertheless "colored" and "filtered" by his "subjectivity" and thus could never under any circumstance reach an untainted truth that now belongs only to the dislocated, omniscient narrator. The incoherence of this epistemology continues to hold sway in literary criticism to this day. Whereas Marlow, for instance, is regularly said to "disclose . . . the relativism of modern epistemology," as Ursula Lord writes, and to "acknowledge that we always perceive the world many times removed, filtered through our own consciousness and that of others, as through a glass darkly," these effects are never attributed to eighteenth-century epistolary novels, which employ the same testimonial structures that Conrad uses (63–64). As I have argued elsewhere, James is fully committed to this confused epistemology. Even as he fights against

the sentimental demand for confessional transparency and for the right of the individual to negotiate the social world with the ambassadorial posture of testimony, he cannot follow Conrad in trusting his fiction *to* testimony (see Artese). The "accurst autobiographic form" in fiction "has no authority," James writes, and "its grasp of reality and truth isn't strong and disinterested" (*HJ* 500). When Conrad allows Marlow's testimony to constitute the novel itself, the result is "a prolonged hovering flight of the subjective over the outstretched ground of the case exposed" (*YG* 157). The "case" explored by the narrative will be fatally obscured by the "shadow cast by the flight" of the testimonial narrator. Despite the fact that James's own narrator is itself an "observant and recording and interpreting mind" (*HJ* 500)—exactly the kind of observer he sees in Charlie Marlow, whose "omniscience" provides a "beautiful and generous" interpretation of events (*YG* 157)—James implicitly denies that his own narrator casts any interpretive "shadow" over the story he narrates. James cannot conceive, in short, that his narrator testifies.[10]

For James, the reformist legacies of sentimentalism, which the nineteenth-century backlash frequently gathered under the banner of "feminism," now had their vanguard in the United States. The "land of the open door" had become a socius ruled by the discipline of confession, by a posture of transparency and full disclosure. Europe, then, comes to represent a society that has not yet anathematized the individual's prerogative to maintain a testimonial stance, whether in a public forum or before family and friends.

In most cases, however, as soon as these conflicts seem to be producing a neat morality tale, James gives a turn to the screw. The reticent and privacy-loving European frequently turns out to have been deceiving the American ingénue in a fundamental and harmful way, using his personal reserve to conceal self-interested stratagems—just as the sentimentalists had always feared. This new conflict puts a great strain on James's argument against the confessional ethos, and nowhere is the tension more evident than in his treatment of *Portrait*'s Madame Merle. The sentimental function of this character is readily apparent when we compare her with a nineteenth-century analogue such as Madame Neroni, to take another example from *Barchester Towers*. One of the most striking things about the cosmopolitan Madame Neroni is the extent to which Trollope goes out of his way to align her with the omniscience governing the novel itself. Neroni, who assists the novel by certifying the "most singular disinterestedness" of the heroine Eleanor, acts primarily as a wry observer of the Barchester scene and exercises an almost supernatural power of seeing into the hearts of men (437). She does so, in any given salon, from her signature position on a couch she cannot leave: like the novel, she cannot participate in the world she so perceptively surveys. Yet she is beautiful and seductive, generating "useless" desire in others (241). She is a "powerful spider that made wondrous webs" but has "no use for the victims when caught" (242). To one contemporary reviewer of the novel, she seems "absolutely unnatural. She is an intrusion upon the stage, utterly out of harmony with the scenes and persons round her, and we cannot but think with the nature of her sex" (Smalley 83). Neroni is a gay but somewhat cynical and world-weary foreign outsider, yet she also proves, in the end, to be the master of Barsetshire puppets,

determining the final dispensation of the novel's hero and villain, steering Eleanor into the right man's arms and instigating Slope's retreat. When we are told that "such matters were her playthings, her billiard-table, her hounds and hunters, her waltzes and polkas, her picnics and summer-day excursions" (Trollope 367–68), it is difficult not to be reminded of the half-contemptuous ennui with which Trollope himself often wrote about novels and novel-writing.

Like Neroni, James's practically omniscient Madame Merle is wise, well travelled, Europeanized, and perhaps just a little too experienced. Although no movement in the psychological drama surrounding Madame Merle escapes her and although she, too, will prove to have held the puppet strings of the central heroine's fate all along, James does not exempt her, as Trollope had Madame Neroni, from the novel's ability to scrutinize her soul and hold it to account. The very trajectory of *Portrait*'s second half is governed by the penetration of Madame Merle's fascinating, well-wrought exterior, which brings to light dark intentions and a hidden agenda. Before this exposure, however, she is largely opaque, which is simply to say that she remains a dramatic figure, necessarily impenetrable as an object on stage, and no omniscience intervenes to adjudicate the honesty or hidden "interest" of her speech. Like Madame Neroni, functionally opposed to a heroine whose sublime *ignorance* of the secret workings of others' hearts is an index of her sentimental value, Madame Merle presents the cautionary specter of a future that Isabel might very well inhabit if she were ever to achieve the older woman's power of omniscience. Thus, when Isabel comes to a pass where she might "look into" her friend's privacy more closely, she recoils. "With all her love of knowledge she had a natural shrinking from raising curtains and looking into unlighted corners. The love of knowledge coexisted in her mind with the finest capacity for ignorance" (251). The propriety of Isabel's retreat from knowledge is thus confirmed through the "enlightenment" trope that has taught us to recognize all dangerous and intrusive investigation. Yet it is precisely this vocabulary that the novel puts into the mouth of Madame Merle herself when she speaks her own veiled protest against privacy invasion. Figuring herself as a "chipped and cracked" tea service that can "do very well for service yet, because I've been cleverly mended," she makes sure "to remain in the cupboard—the quiet, dusky cupboard where there's an odour of stale spices—as much as I can. But when I've to come out and into a strong light—then, my dear, I'm a horror!" (245). As *Portrait* does eventually expose her secrets, but leaves Ralph Touchett inviolate behind the secrecy of his "ante-room," the novel seems to take its justification from the "Aspern Papers" narrator: Ralph "had nothing to fear" from the Jamesian lantern "because he has nothing to fear from the truth" (*AP* 6).

Although James will always denounce the righteous lantern of the "Aspern" narrator even as he holds it aloft, his insistence on one's right to maintain a testimonial stance before the world intensifies in the later novels. The now familiar satire of Americans attempting to ferret out the "secrets" of Europeans who have the gall to maintain a public front protecting their privacy is at the heart of *The Ambassadors*. Critics such as Christopher Butler and Christophe Campos articulate, I think, a perennial misreading of James in the belief that, "At heart, he was fascinated by Europeans, and yet he always suspected them of possessing

some secret that was out of reach because they would never express it clearly" (Campos 135).[11] It is difficult to take such an interpretation seriously in light of Lambert Strether's early obsession with Chad Newsome's "secret"—a secret that would encompass much more than the banal fact of a liaison with Mme de Vionnet and that is almost entirely the coinage of his own and of the collective Woollett brain (*AB1* 227). "Are you engaged to be married," Strether asks of him: "is *that* your secret?" Woollett wants to encompass the general mystery of Chad's new "Europeanized" self into a single explosive revelation. In his response, Chad attempts to disengage the metaphysical bent of his American friends from the practical fact that one always selectively represents oneself and acts as an ambassador *for* oneself. "I have no *secret*," Chad answers, "though I may have secrets!"

In Waymarsh James presents an American who cherishes his privacy and reserve as much as Chad or any other continentalized figure. But like Delia Dosson and Lavinia Penniman, who love above all to *refer* to their privacy, Waymarsh always makes sure that his "silence" is "charged with audible rumblings" (*AB1* 79). The reticence of James's Americans, including that of Mrs. Newsome, is meant to speak volumes. *The Ambassadors* enacts this memorably when Waymarsh, having to endure "in stricken silence" an outing of shopping and touring with Strether and Maria Gostrey in the morally frivolous streets of London, suddenly and ostentatiously dives into a shop alone (*AB1* 85). Returning, he "told them nothing, left his absence unexplained, and though they were convinced he had made some extraordinary purchase they were never to learn its nature." Strether and Gostrey correctly interpret Waymarsh's silent gesture as a declaration of his "different" moral standing, fairly deafening them with its "sacred rage."

True to Jamesian form, however, Strether's eventual acceptance of the European's right to testimony and his emergence from a busybody provincialism are marred in the end by the sense that his innocence has been abused. In this novel, however, James strongly emphasizes the degree to which this innocence is almost entirely the American's own creation and had not been crafted by an active old-world deceit. When Strether asks Little Bilham directly, referring to Chad and Mme de Vionnet, "Then they are the virtuous attachment?" Bilham answers, "I can only tell you that it's what they pass for. But isn't that enough?" (204). As an ambassador, Strether is simply not perceptive enough at this stage to hear Bilham's diplomatic language.

More explicitly even than Madame Neroni or Madam Merle, Fanny Assingham in *The Golden Bowl* exhibits powers of omniscience and manipulation normally reserved for the disembodied narrator. Although the novel has great fun with Fanny's attempts to act as arch-interpreter and even behind-the-scenes puppet-master, James is no longer averse to taking a serious look at what this affinity means. This "most luminous of wives," as Colonel Assingham observes, accomplishes a grand survey of the network of relations that is *The Golden Bowl*, and her insights are not to be dismissed (320). She clearly articulates many of the worries and possibilities to which the "normal" extradiegetic Jamesian narrator would want to draw our attention. But James also insists, more consciously than ever, that the authorial eye presiding over his fiction cannot, or perhaps ought not,

avoid merging with the projected public eye Mrs. Assingham represents: regulatory, normalizing, and even vulgar. As Amerigo considers the propriety of a rendezvous with Charlotte in London, he knows the American woman represents the beginning and end of all such adjudication. "Who was there," he asks himself, "to raise [an objection] from the moment Mrs. Assingham, informed and apparently not disapproving, didn't intervene?" (103).

The tension that builds in Mrs. Assingham's consciousness throughout the drama grows into the familiar terms of the international conflict, where James, too, is caught in the middle. She laments her burdensome knowledge of the European heart and the responsibility of managing these transatlantic unions, both of which have put her at a distance from the "innocence" and "quaintness" of her American countrymen, "from whom I've so deplorably degenerated" (318). *The Golden Bowl*, however, is peculiar among James's transatlantic tales in that it is simply impossible to know how seriously we are supposed to take this particular self-deprecation. Unlike *The Wings of the Dove*, which is plunged in the definitive sentimentalist worry about the interestedness, the self-serving "calculation" of largely opaque Europeans, the later novel unambiguously presents this worry as the product of a fatal paranoia. The Europeans whom Maggie Verver comes to see as her opponents habitually maintain behind their words the same reserve that James had championed in Ralph Touchett, he who habitually presents to the world an "ante-room" that acts as a testimonial envoy from his "private apartments" (*PL* 113). When Maggie perceives that Amerigo's words and actions are born of calculation, "Always from calculation," we know that, for her, there can be nothing honest about the conscious act of representation that testimony necessarily performs—an instrumentality that Amerigo, in his sticky relational web, particularly needs (387). The American is driven to paranoid distraction by the mere existence of this testimonial reserve. Always "believing herself in relation to the truth," she comes to read "symptoms and betrayals into everything she looked at . . . " (383).

I have been suggesting that the nineteenth-century novel's slowly evolving critique of what might be called a disciplinary sentimentalism reaches, in Henry James, the height of its lucidity. But there it also reaches a crisis: for even as the author insists on the individual's right to maintain the unarticulated reserve afforded by a posture of testimony, as opposed to confession, the moral import of his fiction depends on the old sentimental project of approving the disinterested interiority of the heroine and exposing the secrets of her counterparts, who inevitably use their testimonial reserve for evil purposes. It may seem far too tidy a conclusion to suggest that James's last great novel breaks through this crisis in both its drama and narrative strategy and emerges into what I would argue is a fully modernist consciousness of the novel's relation to testimony. Yet it is extraordinary that *The Golden Bowl* so adamantly refuses to violate European reserve and thereby eliminates the possibility of judging what, if anything, the old-world emissaries may or may not be keeping there. This unprecedented restraint for James can only leave his American on the brink of madness. Even more significantly, the novel creates a proxy narrator, a figure who is clearly meant to embody—and even satirize—the "observant and recording and interpreting

mind" of the traditional Jamesian narrator and plunges her into the frame of the fiction. This overseer is now *among* other subjects who are all perforce *responsible to* one another. She is now "a reciter, a definite responsible intervening first person singular"—precisely the narrator that James bemoans in Charlie Marlow (*YG* 157). Like the sentimental investigators before her, Mrs. Assingham grapples with the question of whether Charlotte is "sincere," and her husband astutely observes: "that—I see—happens to be another of the questions you can't ask her. You have to do it all . . . as if you were playing some game with its rules drawn up—though who's to come down on you if you break them I don't quite see" (237–38). James deliberately shocks his mastermind, who would police the interior dispositions of those in the quadrangle she helped to create, with the inescapable accountability and responsibility of the testifier.

NOTES

[1]Compare the *Julie* engravings, for instance, with the picture Mackenzie paints of the Roubignés in the throes of their misfortune:

> When I saw the old man, with indignant pride, stifling the anguish of his heart, and pointing to the chaise that was to carry them from Belville, his wife, with one hand clasping her husband's, the other laid on her bosom, turning up to Heaven a look of resignation; his daughter, striving to check her tears, kneeling before him, and vowing her duty to his misfortunes. . . . (6–7)

[2]John Marcher is tempted "to take his stand on the intimacy of his loss, in order that it *might* be questioned and his retort, to the relief of his spirit, so recorded" (*BJ* 115).

[3]Halttunen provides an excellent history of conduct manuals and other publications in mid-nineteenth-century America whose "central dictum" was that "proper conduct was to demonstrate above all a perfect sincerity or 'transparency' of character" (xvi). She too argues that a strong "sentimental culture" existed in America whose impulse was "to shape all social forms into sincere expression of inner feeling" and which persistently called attention to the sins of the confidence man as the inevitable consequence of detaching one's inner life from outer conduct (xvi). I agree that the anxieties of sentimentalism could only have been intensified by an urban "world of strangers"—a world of potential predators—that emerged as "the city gradually replaced the town as the dominant form of social organization" (35), but I disagree with Halttunen's thesis that sentimental culture in America emerged as a *response* to this danger. Halttunen's reversal of cause and effect in this regard is encapsulated in her use of Melville's *The Confidence-Man*. Although she allows the novel to echo throughout her study as if it were part of a cautionary literature about the moral danger of keeping one's inner feelings out of public view, she fails to acknowlege that Melville's critique is *against* the sentimental expectations in American social relations. Melville's hustler, who ensnares his victims by calling on their moral duty to achieve an instant heart-to-heart familiarity and confidence with him, could not possibly operate without the decrees of sentimentalism.

[4]See Burns and Thomas for further exploration into the tightly entwined relationship in James's novels between journalism and the evolving conceptions of privacy and publicity in American modernity.

[5]See, too, Meissner's argument that James ultimately makes "visible those invisible power structures" that Seltzer brings to the fore (11).

[6]"The political," for Seltzer, is a strangely undifferentiated blend of material and conceptual apparatus: within it is "the law," for instance, but it is unclear upon any given iteration of that term whether it refers to the ideal, registered decrees of "public policy" or to the actual engagement between state apparatus (including the police) and the individual—that is, to the historical reality of power that always exceeds the law.

[7]I see an ideal Foucauldian approach in Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, which holds itself to a progression in which conduct books and novels articulate the terms by which individuals are made intelligible to power and through which disciplinary apparatuses *subsequently* subject them. Armstrong's reading of the novel thus avoids at the outset having to rely on conceptions of internalization and ideology that Foucault tries to think beyond.

[8]Invoking Foucault in a discussion of H. G. Wells's *The Future of America*, Seltzer writes: "Wells's account of the future in America is backed by the comprehensive social redistribution of

power that has been characterized as the formation of the 'age of organization' and, more recently, as the institution of the panoptic or 'disciplinary society'" (105).

[9]Any discussion of James's narrative technique and his own conception of worldly power should acknowledge Edel's observations on the matter in 1962. James experiences a certain "uneasiness," Edel writes, when considering the relation between ancient Roman art and the imperial power behind it:

> Power was acceptable to him only in some attenuated or disguised form. . . . Perhaps this was because he had always known it in disguise, . . . and by the disguises he himself had assumed when he gave himself a motionless observer's role . . . while his eyes and mind took possession of them. . . . [I]t was the observing of one who could play omniscient author in the lives of his characters while finding many ingenious technical devices to conceal his omniscience. He was to become, as a consequence of this, one of the masters of the *devious* in the modes of narration, and was to invent many new ways of concealing the storyteller from his readers. (101)

[10]It will be objected that Marlow and the Jamesian narrator cannot be compared as testifiers because the former, unlike the latter, knows all possible facts about the fictional world he narrates; therefore, James is correct in suggesting a character-bound narrative cannot have the same "grasp of reality and truth." This would only be true, however, where the character-bound narrator is ignorant of relevant diegetic facts that would hinder her "recording and interpreting" the story she narrates. In the case of Conrad's Marlow novels, however, which James is addressing in "The Younger Generation," they go out of their way to remind readers that there is "no incertitude as to [the] facts" of the narrative that Marlow is transmitting (Conrad 56). The pertinent questions that these testimonial novels raise are never about facts; the questions they do raise, whether they be called existential, ethical, or political, would have remained questions without Marlow's "intervention," i.e., even if the entirety of each novel had been voiced in third-person omniscience.

[11]Cited by Butler in *AB2* (446–47). Butler mistakenly cites page 137.

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