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**Is There Room for the Modern Narrator?**  
**A Study of Narrative Intrusion in Henry James' *The Golden Bowl***

A Thesis Presented

by

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Abstract of the Thesis

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At the turn of the twentieth century, narrative presentation saw one of the most intense transitional movements in literary history. The instructive, omniscient authorial narrator of Victorian literature slowly faced demise as an increasing turn towards subjective, stream-of-consciousness narration dominated the literary age of twentieth century modern realism. The critical and fictional work of Henry James, literary genius who wrote across the century line, persists in the presentation of a distinctive narrating body at the same time that it encourages and anticipates the incipient effacement of such a figure. In his final completed novel, *The Golden Bowl*, James' narrative choices can be seen as influenced by the changing ideals of narrative presentation with an eye towards his own personal admiration of the theater. The transition in theatrical presentation towards a more mimetic, realistic expression of human experience coincides with the similar movement in literature, and provides a compelling parallel to the work James and other modernists accomplished. Through a fully developed interpretation of the particular narrative moves James' narrator makes in *The Golden Bowl* and the pervasive influence of theatrical metaphors in both James' and his contemporaries' work, I will question if and how a modern narrator can exist in the modern idealized concept of narratorial effacement.

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## **Acknowledgments**

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Though the fictional narrator is one of the most longstanding and controversial features in the history of fiction, the narrator as a distinct character only gained serious critical attention during the late nineteenth century when scholars questioned and disputed the authorial presence linked to omniscient narration. As narrative description increasingly entered into the realm of subjective character thought and experience, narrator and author were necessarily separated in narrative theory that identified the implications of conflating the two voices. At the turn of the twentieth century, the result of this new theoretical perspective is evidenced in the work of authors who reflected the changing consciousness of an inwardly turning society through the creation of narratives with similar perspectives of subjective character experience. One such product of his time is Henry James, whose literary canon, like those of others writing during this literary period of intense change to narrative understanding, stretches decades and includes narrative concepts of voice and point of view both Victorian and modern. In his final completed novel, *The Golden Bowl*, James' critical and creative perspectives culminate in a presentation of modern realism—a presentation that at once anticipates the coming stream-of-consciousness disappearance of narrator-as-character and soundly clings to the Victorian preoccupation with a defined narrative persona. The abundant criticism that seeks to explain this characteristic of James' late publications generally shares the opinion that James' scholarly and fictional work encouraged the incipient literary age. Scholars admire the distance James covers from Victorian commentator to minimal narrative intruder and champion James again and again for his pioneering efforts and lasting effects on literature. Although I do not wish to belittle these achievements, I do intend to show why the use of James' work solely as an example of significantly historical changes in fiction misses the rich narratological insights such progress provides.

Through textual analysis of the narrative choices James makes in his final completed novel, *The Golden Bowl*, and discovery of surrounding narrative theory and opinion, I will question if and how the narrator is able to exist in the modern novel as conceptualized by James and his contemporaries. The related subject of theater and its own theoretical transitions will assist in interpreting James' work, in large part due to the similarities between fictional and theatrical representation at the time. Not coincidentally, James' own longstanding admiration for theater and his attempts at playwriting display his attention to dramatic narrative presentation with the goal of mimetic expression, a connection thus reflective of the similarities between theatrical and fictional theories that James found intriguing for his personal aesthetic enjoyment, critical theories, and creation of fictional realities. By proposing that James' final attempt at subjective literary perspective by way of narrative effacement is in some ways unsuccessful according to accepted rules of fictional suspension of disbelief, I will question what this means for the conception of narrative voice in modern realistic fiction. I will suggest, with evidence James supplies in his prefaces and *The Golden Bowl* and by way of linkage to theatrical viewpoints, why he made his narrative decisions. This comparison to the longstanding tradition of theater and combination of theoretical positions will allow me to conclude that narrators-as-characters who invoke their readers function unsuccessfully in the modern novel, as characterized by interiority of subjective experience, because of the very expectations based on rules of fictional suspension of disbelief readers have come to hold. I will then qualify this conclusion by suggestion that James' particular attention to narrative authority necessitates and validates the very narrative situation he shapes in *The Golden Bowl*.

In order to appreciate fully James' specific narrative maneuvers in *The Golden Bowl*, it will be necessary to briefly outline the main plot points and characters of the novel to refresh our

collective memory of the text. Although any one of James' novels could supply rich and copious examples of narrative ingenuity to interpret, *The Golden Bowl* will be the focus of our study. This novel marks James' final completed attempt at the narrative structure he developed through years of perfection, and employs a particularly fruitful theatrical metaphor that will bring our study to a climax and supply meaning to James' narrative choices. *The Golden Bowl* takes a bold look at four people with intertwined lives. Collector Adam Verver and his beautiful daughter, Maggie, marry the seductive Charlotte Stanton and charming Prince Amerigo. The most significant aspect of the respective unions is the relationships they alter. The marriages distance and strain the deep bond and companionship between father Adam and daughter Maggie and reunite lovers Amerigo and Charlotte after years of separation. Unbeknownst to the Ververs, Amerigo and Charlotte reinitiate their affair through the course of their estranged marriages. What happens as a result is the focus of our novel—the reader watches as Maggie, sole focalizing character in the second half of the novel, tries to save her marriage while keeping her father, whom she loves more than anyone else in the world, in the dark about the details. The novel takes the perspectives of a number of characters besides Maggie, including Amerigo, Adam, Charlotte, and neighbor Fanny Assingham in Book I to establish the loving, though tumultuous, relationships between father and daughter, husband and wife, neighbor and friend.

Chapter one opens with the thoughts of Prince Amerigo about his love of London in comparison to his native city, Rome. No more than fifty lines from the start of the chapter, our narrator makes himself known ever so slightly: “The young man's movements, however, betrayed no consistency of attention” (James 3). The simple adjective “young” implies an external judgment to that of Amerigo's—we are viewing Amerigo, through the careful direction of our narrator, as a young man with certain characteristics. The narrator heightens the subtle

prodding to view Amerigo externally when he addresses the reader directly for the first time. The narrator explains that “[h]e had been pursuing for six months as never in his life before, and what had actually unsteadied him, *as we join him*, was the sense of how he had been justified” (James 4 *my emphasis*). The reader can meditate on the mental source of the surrounding narrative, asking whether the past six months of Amerigo’s life are his direct thoughts or indirect narrator interpretation, but we cannot mistake “as we join” him for anything other than an instance of reader invocation. Not two paragraphs from the start of chapter one, the narrator makes it clear that he is telling a story to which he is privy and in the knowledge of which we are now joining him. This initial example of narrative intrusion in *The Golden Bowl*—one instance among dozens and, significantly, the first time our narrator entices the reader to take part in narrative interpretation—initiates the questions that inevitably exist when such a narrative voice and internal perspective are mixed.

Though the assumption that a narrator always exists in the act of narration is imperative to our understanding of the structure of a novel, this current stronghold of literary interpretation only truly developed scholarly language when the authorial voice came under debate. Scholars now understand that author cannot and should not be equated with the narrator for reasons Susan Lanser asserts in her intense examination of the narrative act: “the fact that the identity of the narrators has been so troublesome is in part the result of efforts to separate the text from the circumstances of its creation” (52). Factors such as temporal distance from creation and the act of recalling experience separate the author from his work, no matter the level of autobiography, and display Lanser’s “circumstances of creation” that ask an author to be separate from the narrator in a text. The change from discussing author as narrator to treating the two as distinct agents is apparent when comparing various critical work of the twentieth century. Whereas

Percy Lubbock, James admirer and scholar, consistently equates narrator and author in his 1954 novel, *The Craft of Fiction*: “And so we must see for ourselves, the author must so arrange matters that Strether’s thoughts...” (162), critic Dorrit Cohn writes an entire book twenty years later that dissects the most intricate details of author, narrator, and character interaction. By the second half of the twentieth century, author and narrator are no longer equated, in a major sense, because the narrator-as-character that characterized the Victorian novel has been transformed.

Critic Kathleen Tillotson writes,

In modern fiction one character is missing: the narrator in person. There is no one there who stands outside the story and says ‘I’, who explains how he knows what he is telling us, who addresses the reader, who discourses, confides, cajoles, and exhorts. We are unbidden guests, there is no welcome, no hospitality—the social context embracing us as readers has gone. (Tillotson as cited in Seed, 514)

Without the dominating “I” of storytelling, the narrator no longer exists as a character in the traditional Victorian sense that Tillotson describes. And without this clearly identifiable character, it becomes less easy to equate such a voice with the author of the novel.

The argument for the effacement of the “narrator in person”—a conceptualization that presents the narrator as a distinct character who moralizes, instructs, and speaks directly to the reader in the way Tillotson describes—results from the developing mission of modern realism. The realistic movement of twentieth century modernism attempted to represent, as mimetically as possible, the experiences of everyday, mundane life in fiction. Of course, the actual term realism claims no specific or singular historical instance or aesthetic—what is real is inevitably and subjectively dependant on the particular social moment. Cohn delves into the history of narrative realism in general, exemplifying it as a concept generated from years of art that now inform the modern novel: “this same call, sounding from such different times and places...suggests the important of the mimesis of consciousness for the history of the novel” (9).

The call referred to is for the presentation of the inner life through mimetic representation rather than the outwardly expressed experience by way of narrative explanation. Coinciding with the twentieth century call to mimetic presentation, James makes many critical attempts to prove why effacement of the authorial voice is imperative to such an aesthetic. When interpreting James' theories, it is important to keep in mind that, like critics of his time, James writes about narrative effacement as the muting of authorial presence without distinguishing such from the narrator. When discussing the narrative style of *The Ambassadors*, James explains, "The 'first person' then, so employed, is addressed by the author directly to ourselves, his possible readers" (*Art of the Novel* 321). The more accurate description of this relationship would involve the sending and receiving of information between narrator and reader. Today, the term "authorial narration" as developed by Cohn and adopted by proceeding narratologists, defines a narrative perspective that feels like authorial comment and intrusion, but is never-the-less accredited to the narrator because we no longer equate the two. Cohn's qualification—"the presence of a vocal authorial narrator, unable to refrain from embedding his character's private thought in his own generalizations about human nature"—shows one usage of the term (22). David Seed details James' response to his contemporaries in regards to the function of an authorial narrator (or author, according to James). Seed writes "For James the author's voice on the one hand should not try to evade the creation of the character, nor should it swamp a character with moralizing comment. On the other hand it should not go to the opposite extreme and tell the reader everything about a character" (506). For James, such styles are considered conducive to modern realistic fiction, exactly because they call attention to the medium of fiction in asking the reader to recognize and consider the mode of fictional storytelling presented.

If a narrator displays awareness of the narrative mode or insists that what we are reading is just a story, any illusion of reality is shattered. Robyn Warhol, in a critical comparison of effaced and non-effaced narrators, conceptualizes a breakdown of the characteristics that define the two. Warhol uses the adjective “distancing” to describe a traditional, vocal narrator and “engaging” for the more effaced narrator. Warhol’s conditions four and five describe narrative positions that, in the case of a distancing narrator, do not allow successful illusions of reality: 4) “The narrator’s stance toward the characters,” and 5) “The narrator’s implicit or explicit attitude toward the act of narration” (814-815). In the first condition, the distancing narrator “may seem to delight in reminding the narratee that the characters are fictional, entirely under the writer’s control,” and in the second “frequently reminds the narratee that the fiction is a game and the characters pawns” (Warhol 814-815). Both of these clues into the narrative role as fictional creator break any illusion that realism of the interior novel attempts to maintain. If a narrator admits to the fictionality of his invention by reminding the reader, over and over, that what he or she is reading is vividly and solely make-believe, the narrator gives the reader no choice but to comply with this formulation of fiction. Warhol references James at this point in her article: “Henry James heads the critical tradition that has correctly assessed this whole spectrum of self-conscious artifice as a means of destroying the illusion of reality and reminding the reader that the text is, after all, only a fiction” (815). For James, such a “self conscious artifice” should be abandoned in favor of a subtle degree of control that allows the story to speak for itself. The illusion of reality so dependent on the stance of a less vocal, less self aware narrator is imperative to a realist mission—a mission that James sought to uphold.

The removal of a distancing narrative voice is consistent with James’ proposition that good fiction is like drama because it shows rather than tells a story. According to James,

showing occurs when narrators focalize through characters' minds to allow thoughts to create the reader's experience. Rather than using a distancing narrator to remind the reader that he or she is reading fiction, the narrator (according to James) should remain mostly quiet on topics of moral judgment or explanatory detail. The narrator instead provides the reader, in the modern novel, with access to the thoughts and memories of characters—to produce the highly sought after mimetic representation of the every day. The reader views a slice of life when a narrator delves deeply into the inner consciousness of relatable, recognizable characters. At this point of the inward turning of modern realistic fiction, the genre of theater can be seen to model identically this change, a genre that James came to admire and explore. During the 1880's, James developed a love for the theater and a deep admiration for realist playwright, Henrik Ibsen, that he fostered not only through spectating but by trying his hand at the art of playwriting. Although critics agree that James' talents lie in novel writing—"Little of value, it must be confessed, is to be found in his theatrical attempts" (Dupee 1)—it is intriguing to speculate how this late turn to theater may have affected James' final novels. In an intensive study on the effect of theatrical attempts on the modern novel, David Kurnick makes similar claims to my conjectures about the influence James' theatrical experiences had on his subsequent works. Kurnick begins his critical study, "In at least one version of the story, the modern novel is born from theatrical failure. Henry James is famously supposed to have learned his lesson in the theater, and the lesson was to stay out of the theater" (1). Kurnick cites the manifestation of James' theatrical failure as narrative innovation and development of the 'scenic method'—a style that limited point of view to a few focalizing characters and rejected excessive narrative explanation (1).<sup>1</sup> James' attempt

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<sup>1</sup> See Kurnick's complete text, *Empty Houses: Theatrical Failure and the Novel*, for an enlightening contemplation of James, the modern novel, and the theater. Kurnick's study of James, Elliot, Thackeray, and Joyce as authors of narrative innovation resulting from theatrical failure situates our introductory exploration and suggests further implications of this complex relationship between the theater and the modern novel.

and failure to produce the perfect play would hardly be significant if it were not for the fact that the theater he was being exposed to, especially through Ibsen's work, was also dealing with emerging introspective ideals by way of realistic representation. Ibsen himself, the father of realism, is known for deep psychological inquiry of his characters—something James was watching, acclaiming, and perhaps, attempting to emulate in his final works.

Theater, like literature, began a marked trend towards mimetic representation in the late 1880's in response to and revision of romanticism and melodrama. Émile Zola, French playwright and author of the most influential treatise on naturalism (1890), describes the changing attitude of a populace that no longer craves a showy, over-wrought performance, but rather the sincere experience of the common man.<sup>2</sup> Zola defines theatrical romanticism as “a persistent and monstrous exaggeration of reality, a fantasy that has declined in excesses” and finds tragedy similar, claiming, “such people have never existed” (354). What he does find successful in tragedy is rather “its unique psychological and physiological study of its characters” (366), projecting that theater needs to make its discoveries here in the coming age. In describing naturalism's goal of representing the individual man as a product of his environment, Zola recognizes the arduous task of making interesting that which had until then been deemed inferior. Zola writes, “Therein lies the difficulty: to do great things with the subjects and characters that our eyes, accustomed to the spectacle of the daily round, have come to see as small” (364). All of these predictions of the necessary reinvention of the theatrical model clearly coincide with the literary attention to the abandonment of pure spectacle of action for true investment in representing the human experience. We must at this point note that Zola's

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<sup>2</sup> James and Zola met more than once in their lifetimes, and James discusses the life and work of Emile Zola in an essay originally published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1903. In this essay, James praises Zola for his fictional and dramatic work and laments the death of a literary “hero” who was not given the attention he deserved, praising his illustrations of “large natural allowance of health, heartiness, and grossness” that “strike us as penetrating and true” (*The Future of the Novel* 193).

definition of naturalism cannot be equated with realism—the main difference between the genres being that naturalism studies man as a product of and subject to his environment while realism studies the subjective human experience of free will. What the two do share is an insistence on the study of humans rather than objective, seemingly universal interest. As the twentieth century advanced, ideals of naturalism and realism developed into other theatrical genres that also sought to explore the human consciousness. Christopher Innes writes, “Symbolism and expressionism both exalted interior vision over material realities, seeking to communicate directly on a preconscious level” (96). In these extreme examples of subjective privileging, the genres of symbolism and expressionism place importance in conceived rather than proven truth or reality. And in its most outward similarity to the changing conventions of literature, theater all but dismisses the use of asides and choruses and other forms of direct audience address to maintain illusions of realistic representation. James himself plays with this commonality in his praise of Turgéniéff, avowing, “as always with our author, the drama is quite uncommented; the poet never plays chorus; situations speak for themselves” (James as cited in Martin, 21). The author of a novel, like the playwright of a play, should no longer place a narrator or chorus in a position to tell or instruct—drama, for James and his contemporaries, lies in showing and allowing the viewer or reader to draw his or her own conclusions.

With the removal of the chorus-like, authorial narrator and increasing priority given to subjective consciousness, the phenomenon of internal narration gains its own critical attention due to its increasingly dominating presence in the novel. Kurnick situates this immergence of the interior novel out of theater, theorizing, “while theatrical writing is by definition committed to the absence of a narrative voice, these writers’ [James, Eliot, Thackeray, and Joyce] signal contribution to literature consists of the perfection of a series of sophisticated narrative

techniques” (2). These techniques, involving complex interactions with internal narration, mimic the theatrical method and transform it for the written medium. Internal narration is one aspect that fiction does not share with theater for the very fact that theater, a visual art, cannot represent thoughts in the uncanny way that fiction can without asking an actor to speak such thoughts aloud. Here, the irony of realistic representation arises. The modern movement of the twentieth century considers the most realistic presentation of life to be by way of internal thoughts because they provide subjective, rather than unattainable utopian ideals of universal experiences. With such presentation of interiority, the reader may be prompted to ask how a narrator, who is not our author and did not create the characters he narrates, can know all he does. It is a magic, a breeching of the laws of physics that surrounds and perpetuates the all-knowing narrator. Whether or not this narrator ever leaves one consciousness does not change the magic of all-knowingness, essentially, just the fact that our narrator knows the inner consciousness of one character so intimately can elicit a deep sense of mysticism at this relationship.

To know the mind of even one character as our narrators do involves a phenomenological mystery that readers and critics accept over and over again. Cohn describes this paradox of realistic fiction: “If the real world becomes fiction only by revealing the hidden side of the human beings who inhabit it, the reverse is equally true: the most real, the ‘roudest’ characters of fiction are those we know most intimately, precisely in ways we could never know people in real life” (5). Accepted laws of fiction assign the task of presenting fully developed characters that represent the greatest reality to the narrator because if an author lays claim to his own fabrication of a text, it remains fiction in the mind of the reader. Novels instead require a fictional entity writing realistically about fictional characters and events to preserve realism. Robert Walsh, in a study of the narrating persona, acknowledges, “By conceiving of a fictional

narrative as issuing from a fictional narrator, the reader has canceled out its fictionality, negotiated a mode of complicity with representation, and found a rationale for suspension of disbelief” (496). Because of this logic, the reader accepts the magical narrator, who has impossible access to others’ thoughts, as imperative to the structure of fiction. In general, we do not question his powers in order to suspend our disbelief of the fiction we are taking as truthful expression.

In this way, literature moves from authorial narrative voices that function as authors highlighting the act of creation to narrative bodies that are separated from authors in order to maintain illusions of reality. The narrative voice becomes increasingly effaced to allow the reader the closest connection to the minds of characters. At the same time, theater moves slowly away from the excessive emotional spectacle of melodrama and romanticism to a more realistic, internal view of the human object. We find James encouraging this transition, working to develop his own theory of fiction at the same time that he is putting such theory to practice. Importantly, such changes in literature and theater did not occur incidentally—the arts form and reflect the consciousness of the societies they serve. Erich Kahler elegantly describes this give and take relationship between art and society in his scholarly study of narrative, *The Inward Turn of Narrative*. Kahler writes, “The evolution of artistic forms of expression is one of the most important evidences we have for the changes in man’s consciousness and the changes in the structure of the world” (3). In what Kahler terms an “objectification of the outer world,” or a deeper understanding of the external environment, man is able to comprehend his own subjective role and “takes possessions of his inner world” (5)—a possession that literature, film, theater, etc. strives to reflect and define through its art.

As we make our way into James' *The Golden Bowl* to contemplate its relationship to the theater and this changing social consciousness, I would like first to engage briefly with the most pervasive terminology in narratology as succeeding and revising the critical work James undertakes in his own narrative theories. James' prefaces to his novels, added long after their original publication, are now considered important critical additions to his own theories of fiction. In James' attention to the shortcomings and successes of his own work, we in many ways find the most intensive study of what James considered "good" fiction to entail. Sonja Băsić, in an investigation of the narratological invention James undertakes, describes James' collection of prefaces, *The Art of the Novel*, as "the most eloquent and original piece of literary criticism in existence" (201). Băsić acclaims James, stating, "his terms and tropes, even if sometimes stretched and bent out of recognition, continue to be used as vital working critical concepts" (202). In particular, James' preface to *The Ambassadors* focuses almost entirely on his decision to focalize Lambert Strether's story in one way over any other. In order to highlight the influence of James' critical musings, I will posit the types of narrative point of view James characterizes in *The Ambassadors*' preface against the terminology of Gérard Genette, one of the most commonly cited scholars of narratological inquiry. Although his work has since been expanded and refined, Genette's terms for focalization have remained in the common lexicon of narrative interpretation. Even though Genette writes after James, and therefore James could not possibly have written with such terminology in mind, I find it enlightening to be able to discuss the various and diverse types of narrative used in novels with a common language to contextualize individual texts among larger theories. Such a parallel also helps to view James' poetic, verbose explanations of narrative perspective as precursors to a more concrete and succinct narrative lexicon.

Genette's simple demarcation for focalization technique breaks into three general types, two of which James indirectly considers in his preface: non or zero focalization and internal focalization. Non or zero focalization is similar to the common understanding of an omniscient narrator—the narrator knows more than the characters and is able to tell us not only what they know, but also things beyond their understanding. For James, the all-knowing narrator is necessarily abandoned in order to demonstrate, rather than dictate, actions and events. When discussing his mental process involved in developing the form of *The Ambassadors*, James writes, "I saw in a moment that, should this development proceed both with force and logic, my 'story' would leave nothing to be desired" (314). The development James refers to here is the creation of the 'what's' and 'why's' of Strether's every interior motive and feeling, an authorial story that, if told in an omniscient way, would leave nothing for the reader to interpret or question. Genette's internal focalization posits narrator and character as equal in knowledge—the narrator focalizes through one or more reflective characters. Fixed internal focalization defines a narrator that remains in the mind of one character or reflector, variable focalizes through more than one, and multiple tells the same story through one or more perspectives. James prefers internal focalization, whether fixed, variable, or multiple, for reasons we will fully investigate as our study develops. James recalls, "yet every question of form and pressure, I easily remember, paled in the light of the major propriety, recognized as soon as really weighed; that of employing but one centre and keeping it all within my hero's compass" (317). Such a description clearly exemplifies Genette's understanding of fixed internal focalization. In *The Golden Bowl*, James employs variable internal focalization by having his narrator split time and attention between more than one character, claiming in the preface to this novel, "the whole thing remains subject to the register, ever so closely kept, of the consciousness of but two of the

characters” (329). This statement, although slightly incorrect because the novel takes more than two points of view, shows James’ attention to the interiority of perception and anticipates the terms Genette defines. The second half of *The Golden Bowl* becomes fixed internally with Maggie when James decides, similarly to his creation of Strether’s story, to remain solely in the consciousness of Maggie’s perception.

James describes the choice to use an internally focalizing narrator on the same ontological level as his characters in his preface to *The Golden Bowl*, explaining why he considers such an internally focalized text to be consistent with showing rather than telling a story. James writes, “I have already betrayed...my preference for dealing with my subject-matter, for ‘seeing my story,’ through the opportunity and the sensibility of some more or less detached, some not strictly involved, though thoroughly interested and intelligent, witness or reporter” (327). James refers to this person as “the painter of the picture or the chanter of the ballad” (328). Rather than an all-knowing, all-seeing authorial figure who tells the story, James leaves the creation of his text in the hands of a “witness or reporter” with an internal perspective. The narrator becomes a character in the story alongside the characters he observes—a criterion that fulfills the guidelines of realistic fiction requiring a fictional character, rather than author, to narrate a fictional reality.

In light of James’ description of his narrator-as-character in the story world, we can begin to interpret the text itself in relation to the expectations a reader develops when such a narrator directly invokes the participation of its readers. It will become apparent that James’ narrator, in functioning at once as an immersed participant who relays internal character information and a separate entity who addresses his narrative role, raises questions of who he is, where he exists, and with what authority he knows what he knows. The narrator, as developed through theories

of fiction, is allowed certain knowledge and awareness of the internal mind that are wholly accepted in exchange for the representation of realism. However, a narrator that utilizes this power at the same time that he calls attention to his narrative role breeches the suspension of disbelief that readers require for such acceptance of narrative knowing. James' narrator uses various techniques to address the reader that place the medium of fiction in the foreground of the reader's awareness. This is not, I would argue, what James intended for his narrative, but rather, a side effect of the mingling of realism and reference to narrative construction. As we begin this interpretation, we must be aware that the approach James' narrator takes is not inherently suggestive of narrative construction—narrators-as-characters in their story worlds use any number of phrases that elicit the role of telling. Rather, the unique combination of such techniques with the complete effacement of other markers of identity provokes the readers to certain questions.

The narrator's identity in *The Golden Bowl* is conveyed solely through his narrative style and attention to the reader. No description of his own life, personality, or indicators of his relationship to other characters of the novel appears. The distinct voice James creates in the mind of the reader is the sole evidence we have of the narrator's existence. Although the narrator's voice remains continually present due to the nature of internal focalization, there are times when the narrator speaks unmistakably with his own words rather than through the thoughts and words of his characters. This many times takes the shape of colloquialisms unessential to the narrative structure, which leads us to believe that such extras were placed for a specific purpose. We will consider what that purpose might be as our argument develops. Whatever the possible intention, the effect includes a nod to narrative construction in stark contrast to the psychological realism that *The Golden Bowl* presents overall. In Adam Verver's

chapter, the narrator records, “Mr. Verver, it may further be mentioned, had taken at no moment...” (James 100). The phrase, “it may further be mentioned,” exemplifies an instance of our narrator’s stylistic voice even as it defers agency through passive construction. The phrase displays the narrative choice to give certain information—a choice that exposes the power of creation. This simple, passively-voiced phrase reminds the reader of the narrator’s agency and points to the mode of narration, yet without drawing much attention to the fact that it is doing so. The passive construction of this instance of narrative control demonstrates the care with which our narrator addresses his reader. In a similar example in Maggie’s section, the narrator begins a paragraph, “It must be added, however, that she would have been at a loss to determine...” (James 303). The sentence begins with a representation of narrative voice and nod to arrangement. The narrator has the ability and discretion to add something to our understanding of Maggie’s personality, and so does. By placing the phrase “it must be added” at the start of the passage, we enter with the feeling of being directed to and toured through this place of memory in Maggie’s mind. Again, the passive construction makes it almost easy for the reader to miss the instructive move, and creates a feeling of constant, though subtle, narrative presence.

Another one of the most common ways James’ narrator links reader to the narrative process is the use of “our” to describe characters. The narrator consistently refers to Amerigo as “our young man,” while he terms Maggie “our young woman.” Towards the end of Book I, the narrator deems Charlotte “our friend” (James 158). Similar to the opening chapter in which the narrator invites us to join Amerigo in his thoughts, the shared pronoun “our” places the reader alongside the narrator and asks he or she to view the story as the narrator does. Although such shared pronouns are used to connect narrator and reader throughout the novel, James’ narrator most openly references the narrative act and reader participation in introductory instances, such

as when we are first focalizing through a new character. In Book II when Maggie becomes the sole reflector, the narrator performs a similar series of narrative gestures to those present in Amerigo's introduction. The ways in which Amerigo's and Maggie's sections are introduced are structurally identical in degrees of narrative intrusion. In chapter one, the narrator moves from focalizing the Prince's thoughts, to prompting the reader to view Amerigo with him through the use of "our young man" a paragraph later, to directly calling upon the reader to participate in the story with the phrase "as we join him" on the following page. In Maggie's section, the narrator again initially remains immersed in an indistinguishable fusion of narrator and character: "It was not till many days had passed that the Princess began to accept the idea of having done, as little, something she was not always doing, or indeed that of having listened to any inward voice that spoke in a new tone" (James 300). In this opening sentence, no marker of narrative voice stands out besides what can be inferred from the narrator's style as constructed through previous chapters. Maggie's thoughts and their narrative description are essentially one. On the following page, we find the second and third degrees of narrative presence from the Prince's section appearing in one sentence. The narrator writes, "If this image, however, may represent *our young woman's* consciousness of a recent change in her life...it must at the same time be observed that she both sought and found in renewed circulation, *as I have called it*, a measure of relief from the idea of having perhaps to answer for what she had done" (James 301 *my emphasis*). "Our young woman" performs the same function as Amerigo's "our young man"—we move, as a reader, from the blending of narrator/character voice to view Maggie from a narrative standpoint. "As I have called it," in a similar way to "as we join him," brings narrative structure and act to the forefront. In Maggie's example, the use of "I" is doubly effective to the use of "we" in Amerigo's. Now, rather than lumping reader with narrator, said narrator makes it

clear that he holds sole authority over this story. Such a move brings narrative agency into question because of the rare, uncharacteristic use of the pronoun “I.” The narrator accesses real characters’ minds at the same time that he uses a pronoun that defines an entity of separate consciousness—a separation reminiscent of the authorial narrator of the Victorian age that did not know the minds of his characters in the way realism requires. The reader conceptualizes the narrator as a distinct character through these markers of identity. And because we have no explanation as to who this person is or his relatedness to the story, we are increasingly forced to view such a person as an authorial figure rather than an effaced narrator allowed such cognitive privileges.

In a similar example, the narrator uses “I” when describing Maggie’s thoughts. He writes, “Maggie was to have retained, for that matter, more than one aftertaste, *and if I have spoken* of the impressions fixed in her as soon as she had, so insidiously, taken the field, a definite note must be made of her perception, during those moments, of Charlotte’s prompt uncertainty” (James 323 *my emphasis*). The use of “I,” only for the second time in the entire novel, is surprising for the fact that it is so uncommon to the text. Cohn identifies psycho-narration as a style in which a third person narrator indirectly narrates interior thoughts of characters in a figural, rather than authorial, manner. According to Cohn, psycho-narration can either be dissonant or consonant in nature. Cohn describes a dissonant narrator as “a prominent narrator who, even as he focuses intently on an individual psyche, remains emphatically distanced from the consciousness he narrates,” and a consonant narrator as “a narrator who remains effaced and who readily fuses with the consciousness he narrates” (26). Although James’ narrator is consonant for 95% of his text in telling through reflector characters and not

passing judgment or adding commentary, the brief instances of dissonance are more effective because of their rarity. Cohn describes the effect of dissonant narration:

These stylistic features all point in one direction: the narrator's superior knowledge of the character's inner life and his superior ability to present it and assess it. To some degree this superiority is implied in all psycho-narration, even where there is greater cohesion between the narrating and the figural consciousness. But the stronger the authorial cast, the more empathic the cognitive privileging of the narrator. (29)

James' narrator, in reminding us that he has spoken of Maggie's impressions before and will add to them now, does not give explanatory material to display superior knowledge or cognitive awareness. The superior ability of narrative agency that Cohn defines encompasses our narrator, never-the-less, through the use of "I" and the metaphor of picking and choosing internal impressions to represent. The narrator reminds us of his command with the dissonant use of "I" within psycho-narration. "I" defines a narrator-as-character rather than a vague impression of a narrating body, and in doing so, creates the dissonance that Cohn describes—a dissonance, I would claim, that does not fit in a novel striving as deftly as possible to present drama through the realistic, interior lives of characters. Timothy Martin, in an article comparing the formalism of Percy Lubbock to James's mimetic ideals, reminds us why James found authorial (or rather, narratorial) intrusion to be harmful to a realist mission: "For James, authorial intrusion interferes with the illusion created by the book and prevents the reader from immersing himself in it" (23). Martin explains James' opinion that the narrator be an historian rather than a storyteller because the work of an historian implies a level of reality and truth that storytelling simply lacks. Intrusion from the author or narrator breaks the illusion of an historical account of the story being told, and reminds the reader of its fictionality. Although Warhol's definition of a distancing narrator includes this type of reader address along with an explicit narrative attitude towards the text as fictional creation, explicitness is not the only way that a narrator can

contemplate the performance of narration and compromise illusions of realism. Although James' narrator in *The Golden Bowl* differs highly from the distancing narrator that makes light of his invented creation and puppeteering abilities, he seems to unknowingly break with realistic illusion in a more subtle, but no less significant, way. James' novel shows that any distinct narrative voice included in the modern novel of psychological realism and subjective perspective becomes a striking jolt to a reader's immersed experience.

Another, more complex aspect of James' narrator in *The Golden Bowl* that prompts the reader to recognize his narrative agenda is the construction of time in the novel. The instances of such that we will now explore are less obvious to those of shared pronoun usage or the blatant "I," but are none-the-less noteworthy in relation to the interiority of the text and the reader's level of immersion. The narrator makes use of the hypothetical observer, remembrance within past narrative, and general references to time that all suggest narrative craftsmanship because of the departure such examples make from surrounding amplification of character consciousness. In the second chapter of Book I, the narrator evokes an imagined spectator for the first time when Amerigo and Charlotte are reunited. He writes, "The spectator of whom they would thus well have been worthy might have read meanings of his own into the intensity of their communion" (James 26). This treatment of the narrative situation is very different than how James begins. We move from actively joining Amerigo in his thoughts and viewing him as "our young man" to hypothetically predicting what an observer might have thought had he been present. The use of "have been" reminds the reader that the events of the story are in the past. *Had* an observer been at the scene, he *might* have thought such and such. But why, we might ask, structure the scene in this fashion? If we are to assume that our narrator *was* at the scene, a scene which he now describes to us in our present, then the creation of an imagined spectator complicates this

involvement. The spectators of this scene already exist—the narrator and reader are in the process of reading meanings into the exchange between Amerigo and Charlotte. One reason for such hypotheticality could be that the narrator wishes to invite readers to become active participants in the creation of the story through asking them to imagine what another might have experienced. Simultaneously, the reader becomes attuned—to the time in which the story occurred in relation to current experience. Scholar David Seed accredits this use of the hypothetical observer, in part, to James’ interest in the theatrical medium. He writes, “Such narrative references also put the reader into an imaginary audience and limit the narrator’s scope to explaining what might be inferred from a particular scene” (515). Seed references theater’s uniqueness, explaining that showing rather than telling is made possible in large part through the act of spectating. The audience views what happens through the physicality and stage-business of characters to understand the unnarrated story. Even though the written medium of fiction more easily allows for explanation, James asks the reader to imagine what it would be like to see rather than read about the scene. In this way, James attempts a similar feeling of observation particular to the theater. James also gives his own reasons for the supposed spectator in his preface to *The Golden Bowl*. He writes that he uses internal focalization “essentially to find the whole business” of a scene, admitting, “I have in other words constantly inclined to the idea of the particular attaching case *plus* some near individual view of it; the nearness quite having thus to become an imagined observer’s, a projected, charmed painter’s or poet’s...close and sensitive contact with it” (328). Although James claims that he employs the imagined observer to bring readers closer to the scene and create a more whole experience, I would argue that such a move also distances the reader by prompting questions of our narrator as creator.

The use of the suggestive adverb “might” in relation to a possible observer reappears when the narrator introduces the reader to Adam Verver. He narrates, “Adam Verver, at Fawns, that autumn Sunday, might have been observed to open the door of the billiard-room with a certain freedom—might have been observed, that is, had there been a spectator in the field” (James 92). Again, the implication is of no observer because there was no one at the historical event to see Mr. Verver. In James’ opinion, we are brought into visual participation of the scene through this structure. The only problem is that, if we are to suspend disbelief of narrative knowing, we must imagine the narrator as somehow present at this scene to be able to retell it. If there was no observer, how does our narrator know what he knows? The only logical conclusion is that the narrator is not a spectator, but creator of the scene. At the same time that James asks us to imagine a visual and physical nearness to the event, he gives creative power to our narrator. If Adam Verver simply “opened the door of the billiard-room,” questions of the narrator’s relationship to the scene would not be so abundant.

The narrative choice to use past reflection in a story already conceived in the past tense, alongside the invocation of reader participation the novel employs, also forces attention to the narrative construction of the novel. Hisayoshi Watanabe, in an article entitled “Past Perfect Retrospection in the Style of Henry James” discusses James’ abundant use of the past perfect tense in his canon. James uses this tense most often to show the memories of characters who are being narrated in events that have already occurred. Watanabe describes this use of tense: “The effect is of reduced action and event; those movements which remain are more indirect, less palpable, less objective. The inaction is the corollary of a greater subjectivity in a world of remembrance, reflection, impression, and interpretation” (166). Returning to Adam’s introductory scene, not only does the narrator open the chapter with reference to a hypothetical

observer and use of the past perfect “have been,” but he continues to focalize through Adam’s consciousness in this same tense. He writes, “The justification of the push *he had* applied, however, and of the push, equally sharp, that, to shut himself in, he again applied...” (James 92 *my emphasis*). The narrator not only describes a scene that has already occurred, but he focalizes through a character in the act of retrospection. As Watanabe claims, the effect is of distance created between the action of the scene and the reading event, and an increased psychoanalytical understanding of the character doing the remembering. The abundance of past perfect retrospection in *The Golden Bowl* heightens the feeling of psychological immersion as we witness characters’ brains working to recall impressions rather than to describe current events. One of dozens of examples of this occurs when the narrator focalizes through Adam in this same scene. Adam thinks about his late wife: “It would have had to be admitted, to an insistent criticism, that Maggie’s mother, all too strangely, had not so much failed of faith as of the right application of it” (105). The narrator further describes Adam’s thoughts about his late wife in the past tense before switching back to past perfect—“he even sometimes wondered what would have become of his intelligence...” (James 105). Adam currently wonders in his story being told to us in the past (the verb wondered) and remembers within the past narrative about his wife (use of “what would have”). Watanabe describes the psychological realism that such a change displays. He writes, “There is a psychological truth in the technique—it reproduces the way we perceive things at a ‘great’ moment when our attention is concentrated, with images coming to us overlapped” (Watanabe 175). In this instance of remembrance for Adam, he not only thinks in his present (past for the story), but remembers how he felt in his own past (hence the necessary use of past perfect).

So how might such a structure break an illusion of reality and bring into contention narrative agency? It is not inherently the choice of past perfect retrospection within past narrative that does so, but rather the combination of this method with multiple reader addresses that pinpoint time and break ideals of realism. During this scene of Adam's the narrator tells us, "We share this world, none the less, for the hour, with Mr. Verver" (James 92). This line, at the same time that it employs the pronoun "we" and the active participatory verb "share" to establish the relationship between narrator and reader, engages with three layers of temporality that are found throughout the text. Theories of temporality, although present in literature, are particularly poignant to our study of *The Golden Bowl* when taken from the theater. Because theater is commonly cited for its unique engagement with two levels of temporality—the time of the fictional story being present and the time it takes to actually tell this story in real performance time—theories of such temporality provide richer, more enlightening interpretations than of a written medium. Hans-Thies Lehmann, in his influential work on the postdramatic theater, adds another layer to this already dual temporal relationship of the theater—that of the historical time that the fictional story is representing (153). Although this tripart distinction is most relevant to theater because of the restricted experience of temporality involved in watching a performance, I wish to suggest that the novel can evoke similar layers of time as defined by Lehmann. In the particular way James' narrator tells his story, it is quite hard not to be mindful of the time he engages with. By claiming that we share this world for the hour with Mr. Verver, we are meant to understand that Adam's thoughts and actions in the billiard room took an hour of his time. This represents the historical time of the novel. The fictional time involves the time it actual took to record this historical time—the inner consciousness dictated by our narrator is not an hour's worth of time because it cannot be measured in the way that actions can. Finally, the

question of how long it will take the reader to read this historical hour being presented in fictional time claims a third level of temporal engagement. Although the narrator is not suggesting we are literally going to take an hour to read this section, the attention to time provokes such a feeling. Whose hour are we sharing? The narrator's? Adam's? Taking this one step further, Adam's historical story involves the past perfect retrospection that Watanabe describes. Therefore, a fourth level of temporality appears—the remembrance within the historical past, which is being told in a fictional present, to an actual present reading audience. With the simple move to describe the scene in terms of a shared hour, the narrator forces the reader to ask questions about the legitimacy of his knowing.

There are multiple instances where the narrator refers to time that we “could” or “might have” spent on a particular part of the story had we the time. In a description of Adam's esteem for material value, the narrator describes, “Nothing perhaps might affect us as queerer, had we time to look into it, than this application of the same measure of value to such different pieces of property as old Persian carpets, say, and new human acquisitions” (James 145). Considering the entire novel exists in the past and the narrator has made it clear that we are joining him in this venture into the minds of our characters, why the reference to “if we had the time?” Effectively, we have all the time in the world because the story has already occurred and we as readers are not held to the strict boundaries of a theatrical performance—we may put the book down at anytime. More than likely, our narrator does not want to get into the details—something a reader would accept without question—but the suggestion of a temporal restriction draws further attention to the report as a carefully composed fiction. In another direct reference to a specific amount of hours past, our narrator describes the Prince's experience at Eaton Square in terms of the hours we will share with him. He writes, “The main interest of these hours for us, however,

will have been in the way the Prince continued to know..." (239). Similar to Adam's example, the reference to the interest for the upcoming hours, which already occurred in historical time but have yet to occur in the fictional retelling, pulls our attention to the physical act of reading in time. Through the use of the future perfect, the narrator confuses the levels of time which the reader already juggles. "Will have been" is inconsistent with any reference to time thus far, and forces the reader to consider his or her relationship to the text being told and the person telling it. The hours have already occurred for the Prince, so if we understand this passage literally, this main interest will have been such and such for the reader after we have read the passage. It requires a reading and retrospection, perhaps a retrospection similar to that of our consistently remembering characters. Collectively, this construction suggests a narrator temporally dictating our experience of the text.

These multiple examples of the tension between mostly consonant, interior narrative structure and abrupt narrative address and markers of craftsmanship epitomize the literary period of transitional narrative theory in which James creates. James anticipates the coming modern age of complete narrative effacement while still aligning with a mode of narration that allows the narrator to be a distinct, aware storytelling agent. As a result, this duality creates tensions in regards to our faith in such a narrating persona. It now remains to be asked why these tensions exist. James chose this style of narration for a reason—simply claiming that his attempt at interior psycho-narration and choice to have his narrator use shared pronouns and the occasion "I" fails in the realm of modern fiction prompts no further investigation. To understand why James wrote the way that he did is to discover the mindset of a specific historical moment. Whether or not we can conclude the possibility of the narrator's existence in the modern elimination of narrator-as-character remains to be discovered.

The key to James' unique and somewhat confounding narrative choice in *The Golden Bowl* can be found in the theories of fiction that James and others were developing in the early twentieth century. Just as Walsh describes the necessity of a narrative voice to maintain claims of realism, G.M. Wilson, in a study of implicit and explicit narrative agency in audio/visual narrative, describes this law of fiction in length:

But the actual author who is, in one sense, telling and thereby creating the story does not have the right kind of access to those fictional facts. Hence, there must be a teller who is 'on the same ontological level' as the fictional facts he recounts. Therefore, we must posit that it is fictional in the work that there is someone (who cannot be the author) who has such access and is reporting history to us. This fictional teller is the narrator. (80)

The fictional interiority of characters—the most realistic representation of ordinary life experience—is allowably presented by the narrator. As we have already seen, the theory Wilson describes gives the narrator a fictional power that is at once magical, mystifying, and completely accepted by the reading and critical public as a necessary link between realism and its presentation. As I have claimed through examples of James' narrative choices in *The Golden Bowl*, such an acceptance or suspension of disbelief in the legitimacy of internal narrative perspective can be jeopardized by narrative choice. James, in his presentation of internal realism that generally requires the abandonment of narrator-as-character, maintains lingering effects of such distinction between narrator and other characters. This effectively makes it difficult for readers to accept the implausible as probable—to forget that the narrator is breaking the laws of physics and accept what this magical being knows anyway. Wilson also takes up the concept of narrator-as-character in his article. In fiction with a clearly identified narrative identity, we understand the narrator as a fictional character alongside the others he narrates, and our acceptance of the story relies on this narrating character's reliability, personality, intelligence, etc. In the movement towards effacement of an authorial narrative style, the narrator-as-

character slowly becomes less and less common in the work of modern authors, and in its place arises “minimal narrating agencies” (in the words of Wilson). Wilson writes, “It seems to me that the mere existence of a minimal narrating agency is not sufficient to sustain our sense of the implicit existence of a narrator who is present to us, however dimly, as a personified character, even one whose psychological traits and other traits remain by and large effaced” (76). On this point, I have to disagree slightly. The narrating agency that Wilson describes in this quote, that exists implicit throughout but remains undefined as a narrator-as-character, renders an exact descriptions of what we find in James’s novel. We have no name for our narrator in *The Golden Bowl*. James creates no suggestion of a possible relationship between our narrator and the characters and we know nothing of his personality or life besides what he transmutes through the style of his narrative voice. Such would be considered a “minimal narrating agency” by Wilson, yet I would argue that this agency absolutely sustains the reader’s sense of an ever present narrator. The very fact that James allows his narrator to be present through a subtly intrusive presence and appeals to the reader, even without fully developing such into the traditional construction of narrator-as-character, allows for this level of sustainable narrative presence.

James’ choice to refrain from presenting his narrator as a separately defined character takes shape in his preface to *The Golden Bowl*. As I have already alluded to, some of James’ most deconstructable critical conjectures reside in his prefatory, many times apologetic or revisionary, descriptions. In his *Golden Bowl* preface, James provides motive to his contemporary decision in narrative composition. James refers to his narrator as “some more or less detached...though thoroughly interested and intelligent, witness or report, some person who contributes to the case mainly a certain amount of criticism and interpretation of it” (327). He describes perspective of his text “not as my own impersonal account of the affair in hand, but as

my account of somebody's impression of it" (327). The reason for this intermediacy between creator and story, in James' own words, is complicit with the theories of fiction we have already reviewed. James writes, "The somebody [narrator] is often...but an unnamed, unIntroduced and (save by right of intrinsic wit) unwarranted participant, the impersonal author's concrete duty or delegate, a convenient substitute or apologist for the creative power otherwise so veiled and disembodied" (327). This quote speaks directly to the fears surrounding authorial presence that prompted its effacement. James describes his undefined, unnamed narrator as a minimal narrating agency given definition solely by his "wit," or narrative voice. The narrator serves as the impersonal, or rather, effaced author's delegate for relaying the story at hand. Through this description, we see that James felt the substitution of creative authorial powers to be just as necessary as his critical peers. We find James' understanding of the narrator as similar to the critics who define such as an imperative link between the author's product and the reader's acceptance of realistic fiction. That being said, why does James position his narrator as an interested though unnamed and unIntroduced character, but still insist on using pronouns and language that call attention to the quality of such ambiguity? Our final answer seems to lie in *The Golden Bowl* and James' relationship to critical metaphors of the theater.

James found it necessary to have a narrator in the same fictional realm as his characters for one clear reason—he did not believe that the author as creator served the goals of realistic fiction. Further on in his preface to *The Golden Bowl* James admits, "Anything, in short, I now reflect, must always have seemed to me better—better for the process and the effect of representation, my irrepressible ideal—than the mere muffled majesty of irresponsible authorship" (328). In place of an omniscient, authorial narrative voice which James likens to the muffled majesty of authorship, he chooses a less vocal narrator so as to avoid conflation with an

authorial presence. He proposes that he would rather depict someone's impression of a story than explain away as an author. Martin describes this attention to giving impressions of real life as consistent with James' mimetic school of thinking. Martin writes, "The 'mimetic' school sees art as a means to some moral, cultural, or rhetorical end; the writer attempts to represent life, 'to give the reader the illusion of actual experience' so that he may better appeal to the reader's emotions and moral sense" (22). This attention to illusions of reality prompts James to privilege the creation of an impressionistic narrative view—impressions of characters he internally focalizes present a reality to readers that they are then able to experience. Here, the commonly used metaphor of drama also comes into play, a metaphor that James uses not only in his critical writing, but in *The Golden Bowl* as well. It is a metaphor, when presented in *The Golden Bowl*, which highlights the very tension between narrative effacement and narrator-as-character that we have been trying to uncover.

The modern ideal of narrators showing rather than telling a story that became desired in the work of early twentieth century novelists is often compared to the work of playwrights and actors, largely because the theater is a vivid example of how stories are depicted rather than explained. In an essay on narratology and theater, Cesare Segre writes about this particular quality of theater and its unique way of transmuting narrative to its audience:

The relationship between an I-sender and a YOU-receiver is veiled, although the possibility remains—particularly in the prologues and epilogues, in choruses and asides—that there be direct communication between and I-character and a YOU-receiver (the public). (96)

Whereas in theater the relationship between sender (narrator or author) and receiver (audience) is mostly veiled and only directly unveiled through conscious intervention of choruses or asides, the reverse seems to be true for written mediums. A written narrative presupposes the existence of an author or narrator, and the veiling of such takes a conscious effort on the part of the author.

This veiling, or allowing the story to tell itself, therefore compares easily to the natural existence of this similar dynamic in the theater. Lubbock wrote extensively on James' modern narrative style in the language of theater. Although Lubbock's theories have since been deemed outdated, the way he describes the ideal narrator/reader relationship assists in the comparison between theater and fiction we have been developing, and mimics the theories and practices of James himself. In *The Craft of Fiction*, Lubbock compares the emergence of a less prescriptive fictional method to the way theater naturally functions:

The world of silent thought is thrown open, and instead of telling the reader what happened there, the novelist uses the look and behavior of thought as the vehicle by which the story is rendered. Just as the writer of a play embodies his subject in visible action and audible speech, so the novelist, dealing with a situation like Strether's, represents it by means of the movement that flickers over the surface of the mind...In drama of the theatre a character must bear his part unaided...he cannot look to the author to appear at the side of the stage and inform the audience. (157)

Lubbock further notes that the author can do what the playwright cannot: tell his reader anything about the thoughts of characters through a narrator, whereas the playwright can only do so through the dialogue or actions of characters on stage (unless, of course, he chooses to add a chorus or other narrating character—something Lubbock does not consider). Lubbock warns that such telling, although open to the author (or we might say, narrator) should be avoided for the most effective presentation of dramatic fiction: “But if he prefers the dramatic way, admittedly the more effective, there is nothing to prevent him from taking it. The man's thought, in its turn, can be made to reveal its own inwardness” (158). In this way, the decision to allow the reader to understand through the direct presentation of a character's thoughts remains just that—a decision.

Although necessary to Lubbock's ideals of dramatic fiction, removal of the instructive narrator runs the risks of readers forgetting such a person exists, for the good reason that

Lubbock describes. The reader is allowed to forget that a narrative power exists when all they have are impressions in the minds of characters. An excellent example in *The Golden Bowl* of the narrator choosing not to explain what the reader does not know occurs in chapter three of Book I. In this chapter, Amerigo and Charlotte meet face to face for the first time in years, and for the first time in the text. At this point, the reader is unaware that the two had a previous romantic relationship. The narrator shows us the thoughts and actions of our characters and asks us to infer what these actions mean. He reports, “They stood there together, at all events, when the door had closed behind their friend, with a conscious, strained smile and very much as if each waited for the other to strike the note or give the pitch. The young man held himself, in his silent suspense—only not more afraid because he felt her own fear” (James 38). Whereas our narrator makes himself known in direct addresses to the reader elsewhere, he does not intrude in a scene like this one to tell the reader what he or she actually desires to know. In this way, James remains faithful to the dramatic formula for effective realistic fiction that Lubbock prescribes. James, in his preface, describes Amerigo as an “entangled, embarrassed agent in the general imbroglio, actor in the offered play” (329). The play, or drama, has been offered to Amerigo to act in by James, who has constructed its existence through a narrator. And through this ordering and insistence on showing rather than telling, we are immersed in the story world as James wished.

And so, we return to *The Golden Bowl* a final time to suggest why James makes the unique, yet subtle narrative moves he does. Our example involves the interplay between authorial narration and agency that is at once prohibited in modern realistic fiction, but nevertheless always present because of choices the author makes in creating a text. James ponders the line between having his narrator let go and allow his actors to play and keeping his readers’

awareness of the narrative act through the use of a theatrical metaphor in one pivotal chapter focalized through Maggie. This poignant scene occurs amid the throes of Maggie's plan to save her marriage and keep her father unaware of their spouses' affair. As the scene opens, we find Maggie observing her father, stepmother Charlotte, and husband Amerigo playing a game of cards. She has not joined in on the bridge game, but views the event from across the room. The language casting Maggie as narrative authority of her family's story or writer of the play in which they are acting is abundant. She has removed herself and enjoys the secluded hour "much in the mood of a tired actress who has the good fortune to be 'off,' while her mates are on" but moves quickly from being just another actor in the scene to a more privileged, active inventor of its existence and outcome (James 466). The change begins with a general allusion to the fact that the others are all painfully aware of Maggie's observing eye and a description of her "holding them in her hand," such as an author or creator (James 467). As Maggie moves to the balcony to observe, the theatrical metaphors begin. She thinks, "they might have been figures rehearsing some play of which she herself was the author" (James 470). In a more extended comparison, Maggie thinks, "Spacious and splendid, like a stage again awaiting a drama, it was a scene she might people, by the press of her spring, either with serenities and dignities and decencies, or with terrors and shames and ruins" (James 470). Maggie knows that she could at any moment come out with the truth about Amerigo and Charlotte's affair and ruin the domestic scene she witnesses. It is a domestic stage she peopled through her own marriage, and one she can equally demolish through her current knowledge and choice of how to proceed with such knowing. Not only does this section draw on the theatrical metaphor that echoes the drama of James' style of fiction as described by Lubbock, but by placing Maggie in the role of author or playwright, James mimics his own narrative choices. Maggie has sway over her actors and the choice of

how the story will play out. Will she give away all she knows, such as an author who allows his narrator the power to tell rather than leave the story to be shown? Or will she let the scene proceed naturally, in the manner of the narrator who presents the thoughts of his characters and asks them to speak for themselves? It is this choice made by every author concerning the level of narrative awareness he or she will employ that James characterizes in Maggie's role of author or playwright—a characterization that links Maggie to James' similar dilemma.

James' attempt to allow his creations to 'just be' as portrayed through Maggie's similar position comes in clear response to the Victorian mode of distancing, dissonant narration. James' attention to the "muffled majesty of authorship" being abandoned for an internal perspective is key to an understanding of his fiction. James gives up this muffled majesty, writing, "I catch myself again shaking it off and disavowing the pretence of it while I get down into the arena and do my best to live and breathe and rub shoulders and converse with the persons engaged in the struggle" (328). As we question the undeniable existence of a persisting, distinct narrative voice that suggests such muffled authorship in *The Golden Bowl*, we must question what has become of the authority that James clings to, even against his own insistence of its effacement. In an article published in 2009 about fiction in recent decades, Paul Dawson describes the return to an omniscient, authorial narrator who directly addresses the reader, adds commentary to the narrative, and functions more like the narrator-as-character that was common before the modern movement of stream-of-consciousness. The reason for this return to omniscient, authorial narration is of importance to our understanding of James' 'letting go' metaphor. Dawson claims, "I want to further argue that the reworking of omniscience in contemporary fiction can be understood as one way in which authors have responded to a perceived decline in the cultural authority of the novel over the last two decades" (144). He

describes that the omniscient narrator enables, most successfully, “a specific rhetorical performance of narrative authority” in being able to say and know without restriction, a performance of such that remerged in response to the general decline of the novel’s authority in society. By reasserting authority within texts, the novel reasserts its cultural relevance. How justified Dawson is in linking these two phenomenon is not as important as the simple discovery he asserts throughout his article. Omniscient, authorial narration—as overturned by the likes of James and Lubbock who found it to be intrusive and damaging to realistic representation—has returned to contemporary fiction after decades that watched and fostered its decline.

If in fact the return of omniscient narration stems from the perceived decrease of the novel’s societal influence, the question of whether or not the modern narrator can exist in the idealized twentieth century effacement of narrative authority surfaces even more poignantly than if omniscience had yet to return. James, it seems, held to the shades of narrative authority that are elicited by direct reader address and vague insistence on narrator-as-character through the use of shared pronouns and “I” not out of an unsuccessful attempt at complete narrative effacement. In light of the return of omniscience in response to declining narrative authority and the example James provides of Maggie’s dilemma of invention, it seems that James distinctly and consciously makes the decision to only efface his narrator most, instead of all, of the time for the purpose of maintaining narrative jurisdiction. Just as Maggie dictates how she will intervene in the play of her life, James asks his narrator to serve for his readers as even the smallest reminder of narrative authority. He subtly maneuvers the reader and immerses him or her deeply into the psyche of his characters. James negotiates a place for the modern narrator through this implicit existence, and safeguards narrative authority as threatened by the coming age.

If, in *The Golden Bowl*, James attempts to walk a line between authorial effacement and intrusion, all that remains to be settled is the unintended effect that such a combination of effacement and narrative authority creates—an effect which we have studied at length. If the invocation of narrator-as-character in such an internally focalized novel causes the suspension of disbelief to be breached for readers, for the very fact that they are forced to ask questions of this all-knowing persona, complete effacement also risks breaching the laws of fictionality that critics and scholars have deemed compulsory. I am first claiming that a complete effacement of omniscient narrative authority, such as can be found in the work of modernists like Joyce and Faulkner, grants a suspension of disbelief in the magical powers of a narrator with access to interior minds in ways that James' text does not completely allow. The acceptance of this mind-reading, quasi-telepathic power, is easier accomplished when no narrator-as-character reminds the reader that such is highly impossible.

On the other side of this argument, we have seen that the narrator became necessary for modern, realistic fiction to make logical sense to the reader. Walsh reminds us, "The purpose of the narrator is to release the author from any accountability for the 'facts' of the fictional narrative" (500). In other words, fictional narrator telling a fictional story as if real equates to realism. The author inserts a narrator to mediate the mission of realistic fiction that does not accept author as imagining creator. With the complete effacement of the authorial narrative style, the risk of narrator again being equated with the author resurfaces. Walsh boldly asserts that there is no such thing as a minimal narrating agency as defined by critics like Wilson. He writes, "The narrator is always either a character who narrates or the author. There is no intermediate position" (505). This assertion would leave texts like Joyce's *Ulysses* or Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* without a narrator, since no narrator-as-character can be pinpointed. And if

the narrator does not present himself as a character to his readers, Walsh claims that there leaves only the author to present the story. Although acceptance of Walsh's assertion completely undermines everything that the split between author and narrator has defined about literature, his suggestion uncovers the very question I am attempting to answer. Is there room for the modern narrator?

James's narrative choice in *The Golden Bowl* in many ways asks the reader to question who this narrator is, where he exists, and how he knows what he knows. Narrators who remain completely effaced in novels like *Ulysses* reduce such questions by not drawing attention to a narrative character, but risk the perceived removal of a narrator. In the way Dawson describes the return to omniscient narration, it seems that we may have found our answer. I believe that theories of fiction have yet to agree with Walsh, and perhaps never will, that the narrator can be removed from the fictional text. The implications of such a move are great, and completely transform the traditional understanding of the structure of a work of fiction. At the same time, the removal of a narrative authority in the twentieth century came about in response to a society searching for a more realistic representation of life. So perhaps the narrator cannot exist in the modern stream-of-consciousness narrative in a traditional sense. There is no narrator-as-character or suggestion to the reader that a narrator has to exist in any real sense. This voice could very well be our author. What James develops in *The Golden Bowl* is just what Maggie ponders in the metaphorical creation of her story world. "All the possibilities she controlled" speaks to the authorial choice of how to present a narrative. James wished to show rather than tell his story to align with the ideals of realistic drama, and does so through his lack of narrative judgment or moral qualification. However, he maintains a slim hold on narrative authority by reminding his reader, to whatever cost, that narrative agency and power exists. James reinforces

such a hold through a narrator that does not represent the muffled majesty of his own creative powers, but an ontologically equal in the world of his story. This dynamic displays not only the intense desire to delve into the minds of characters but also to maintain authority of a work that is ultimately and inevitably created by its author. And in the contemporary return to omniscient narrative authority, we see James as not alone in wishing to keep that slim hold on narrative agency. Because without it, he runs the risk of the narrator failing to exist (in the eyes of Walsh) and the structure of logical fictional representation falling apart as defined by Cohn, Wilson, and countless others. Undoubtedly, we ask questions of our narrator in *The Golden Bowl* that break the fourth wall of realism in some ways, but perhaps this is the only way our modern narrator can function. Because as we move into the twentieth century in full force, where does the narrator exist, after all? Only in the critical definitions and insistence of narratologists, it seems. To our every day reader, he all but disappears. And without the narrator and his authority, we simple have an author. And this, James seems to claim, is not what makes interesting fiction.

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