



September 1972

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Recommended Citation

Colby Library Quarterly, series 9, no.11, September 1972, p.557-578

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Colby Library Quarterly

Series IX

September 1972

No. 11

HENRY JAMES'S NAMES: TRADITION, THEORY, AND METHOD

By EVELYN J. HINZ

I

"SHE LOATHES my unfortunate name," concluded poor Walter Puddick concerning his unsuccessful relations with the uninhibited and daring Mora Montravers, the titular heroine of one of James's tales. The Traffles, Mora's foster-parents who traffic in trifles to compensate for their barren days, had previously come to much the same conclusion. Speaking to his plain wife Jane, "Traff" begins with an analysis of the girl's name, attempting in the process to excuse her moral irregularities in terms of onomastic determinism:

"Why the deuce did her stars, unless to make her worship gods entirely other than Jane Traffle's, rig her out with a name that puts such a premium on adventures? 'Mora Montravers'—it paints the whole career for you. She *is*, one feels, her name; but how couldn't she be? She'd dishonour it and its grand air if she weren't."

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"It would have been better for us perhaps if she could have been a Traffle—but, failing that, I think I should, on the ground that sinning at all one should sin boldly, have elected for Montravers outright. That *does* the thing—gives the unmistakable note. And if 'Montravers' made it probable 'Mora'—don't you see, dearest?—made it sure. Would you *wish* her to change to Puddick?" This brought her round again, but as the affirmative hadn't quite leaped to her lips he found time to continue. "Unless indeed they can make some arrangement by which he takes *her* name. Perhaps we can work it that way!"¹

They can't! And the tale closes with Mrs. (Mora) Puddick dividing her attentions between divorce proceedings and a col-

1 Henry James, "Mora Montravers," in *The Complete Tales of Henry James*, edited with an introduction by Leon Edel (New York, 1964), XII, 278, 300. All subsequent references to the Tales are from this edition and are identified by volume and page number in the text.

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lector, patron, and "haunter of the best society," Sir Bruce Bagley, Bart.

All novelists attempt to choose suitable names for their characters, but Henry James, like the stars that christened Mora, deliberately "rigs out" his characters with names that give the "unmistakable note," names that "paint the whole career" of a hero or heroine. The reader, consequently, is expected to scrutinize and appreciate the names he finds in James's fiction. But this, of course, is not a discovery: even the most unimaginative and insensitive reader cannot but be amused by "Fanny Rover," irritated by "Remson Sturch," or impressed by "Countess Salvi"; critics using the most disparate approaches are in agreement as to the value of a name as supporting evidence for their respective theories;² and James himself, very frequently, literally forces the reader to take notice of a character's name, either by explicitly punning upon it or by allowing another character to explain its significance.

"He sounds like an Elizabethan dramatist," says Peter Sherringham (*The Tragic Muse*), when he hears the name "Gabriel Nash."³ And Nash, who also sounds like a Restoration or eighteenth-century writer of comedies of manners, is the satirical wit *par excellence*. Mispronouncing the name of the cold, power-seeking Paul Muniment (*The Princess Casamassima*), the Princess calls him "Mr. Monument" (V, 194). "Pinnie" is the affectionate abbreviation of the name of the elderly spinster-dressmaker, Miss Pynsent, in the same novel. For the edification of the little *franche coquette*, Noémie Nioche, Newman needlessly explains that he was "named" for Christopher Columbus (*The American*, II, 8). In the same work, speaking of the wholesome, kindly housekeeper, "Mrs. Bread," the hero suggests that she ought to be called "Mrs. Cake": "She's very sweet. She's a delicious old woman" (257). And lest, "even after a lifetime" of Henry James, the reader does not recognize

2 For example, see Leon Edel, *Henry James: The Untried Years: 1843-1870* (New York, 1953), 220, and *Henry James: The Middle Years: 1884-1894* (New York, 1962), 324; Maxwell Geismar, *Henry James and His Cult* (London, 1964), 66; Oscar Cargill, "The Ambassadors: A New View," *PMLA*, LXXV (September 1960), 439, and "Mr. James's Aesthetic Mr. Nash," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, XII (December 1957), 181-182; Quentin Anderson, *The American Henry James* (New Brunswick, N. J., 1957), 287.

3 Henry James, *The Tragic Muse*, in *The Novels and Tales of Henry James* (New York, 1908), VII, 77. All subsequent references to the Novels are to this New York edition and are identified by volume and page number in the text.

the significance of the name of Maggie's husband (*The Golden Bowl*), Fanny Assingham verbosely traces Prince Amerigo's ancestry to Amerigo Vespucci (XXIII, 78-9).

Furthermore, James's critical comments both on his own work and on that of other writers provide evidence of the importance he attached to fictional names. "It is often enough to damn a well-intentioned story, that the heroine should be called Kate rather than Katherine; the hero Anthony rather than Ernest," he writes in *Notes and Reviews*.⁴ "Trollope," he complains, "sometimes endow[ed] his people with such fantastic names" — Dr. Pessimist Anticant and Mr. Sentiment — that "it would be better to go back to Bunyan at once." On the other hand, "Thackeray's names were perfect; they always had a meaning."⁵

However, if it is therefore obvious that James's names are more than mere fictional formalities, it is neither so apparent nor appreciated that there is a tradition and theory that accounts for his practice.⁶ For if James's predilection for significant names makes him a special case, it does not make him an isolated one; other fablers have also found meaningful names to be more to their purpose than merely conventional or convenient ones. On the other hand, James was never a slavish imitator, and if he followed in others' footsteps one can be certain that it was with a distinctive stride. Finally, conscious craftsman and theoretician that he was, if James consistently provided his characters

4 James, *Notes and Reviews*, with a Preface by Pierre de Chaignon La Rose (New York, 1968), 4.

5 James, "Anthony Trollope," in *"The Art of Fiction" and Other Essays by Henry James*, introduction by Morris Roberts (New York, 1948), 60-61.

6 It is in this respect that my study differs from Robert Gale's compendious and scientific search for the historical, literary, and biographical sources and parallels for James's names ("Names in James," *Names*, XIV [June 1966], 83-108). James collected names from these sources but only in the way that any artist assembles his *materials*, and these materials were *processed* before becoming part of the artifact. To say that because James "admired the actress Blanche Adeline Pierson over the years; perhaps for that reason he named the charming actress in 'The Private Life' Blanche Adney"; or that "it seems likely that James was consciously feminizing his own first name when he christened the redoubtable Henrietta Stackpole" (one notices that Gale's interpretation of her character is entirely inaccurate); or finally, to feel that because "James thoroughly respected George Eliot's seriousness and craftsmanship," his names "often seem to be slight echoes" of Eliot's names: such interpretations are a result of a misunderstanding of James's method and are a slight to his imagination and artistry. James chose a certain name, as *The Notebooks* suggest, because *his* conception of the name fitted the character he had in mind, not necessarily because the original bearer of the name attracted him. Furthermore, his dislike of the presence of real characters in fiction would obviously lead him to conceal rather than emphasize the borrowing. Finally, if a name is allusive, its referent is quite explicitly found in the specific fiction in which it appears.

with significant appellations, it can scarcely be attributed to happy coincidence or subconscious motivation; James always had reasons for his fictional techniques and usually he formulated them. It is, therefore, the tradition, theory, and techniques of James's onomastics that the present study attempts to outline, and, in doing so, to provide a general framework for various examinations of the names in a specific Jamesian novel.⁷

II

Urbaine de Bellegarde, Christina Light, and Gilbert Osmond would probably object to finding themselves in the naive company of Mr. Worldly Wiseman, Uriah Heep, Dr. Goodenough, and Young Goodman Brown. And yet Henry James's "super-subtle fry" do have one thing in common with the progeny of the Puritans and the nineteenth-century British novelists: all were carefully christened by prescient parents.⁸ It is in the tradition of Hawthorne and Dickens that James was working, and consequently the basic motives for his nomenclature will be found in his comments upon writers such as these.

But first it is important to realize that James's theory of names is intricately related to his idea of character and that both, in turn, are a result of his conception of the role of the novelist. James insisted that questions of morality are not questions of art; nevertheless, he was just as emphatic in his insistence that art is serious and that it does have a moral value. Similarly, although literature to James was not philosophy, the greatest artist, he felt, must necessarily be a philosopher: "He must know man as well as men, and to know man is to be a philosopher."⁹ To present a philosophy or vision of Life, therefore, is one of the primary functions of the novelist. And it is this conception of the novelist as seer that leads James to demand characters who are types; prompts him, paradoxically, to

7 For example, this study puts into its proper perspective Arnold Goldsmith's interesting discussion, "The Poetry of Names in *The Spoils of Poynton*," *Names*, XIV (September 1966), 134-142.

8 For a contemporary discussion of the reason and method of Puritan naming, see Charles W. Bardsley, *Curiosities of Puritan Nomenclature* (London, 1880), especially the sections, "Bunyan's Debt to the Puritans" (pp. 198-201) and "The Influence of Puritanism on American Nomenclature" (pp. 201-212).

9 James, "Our Mutual Friend," in *Henry James: Selected Literary Criticism*, edited by Morris Shapira (London, 1963), 9.

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criticize Dickens and Flaubert; and, ultimately, motivates him to nickname Annie T. Miller, "Daisy."

Although as a youth he was an admirer of Dickens, and later could not "erase the force of the Dickens imprint," the mature James could not express wholehearted approval of the creator of Mrs. Gamp and her associates: "Insight is, perhaps, too strong a word [to use in describing Dickens] for we are convinced that it is one of the chief conditions of his genius not to see beneath the surface of things. If we might hazard a definition of his literary character, we should accordingly call him the greatest of the superficial novelists" ("Our Mutual Friend," p. 9). Dickens, to James, is an observer rather than a philosopher, and it is his purely physical vision, in turn, that is responsible for his faulty characterizations: "If Dickens fails to live long, it will be because his figures are all particular without being general; because they are individuals without being types; because we do not feel their continuity with the rest of humanity — see the matching of the pattern with the piece out of which all the creations of the novelist and dramatist are cut."¹⁰

James is speaking primarily of the "mere bundles of eccentricities" that are found in *Our Mutual Friend*, and he does add that such earlier Dickensian characters as Newman Noggs, Pecksniff, and Micawber are acceptable (because they are "exaggerated statements of types that already existed"). Nevertheless, the passage does summarize James's attitude towards Dickens: his characters are too particularized, too unrepresentative. "His novels," says James, "lack humanity," which is "what men have in common with each other, and not what they have in distinction."

James's conception of the novelist as visionary and of character as the means to this vision also accounts for his reservations concerning the methods of the French novelist Flaubert. Although James praised Flaubert for showing us "once and for all that there is no intrinsic call for a debasement of the type," he was not satisfied with "Madame Bovary" herself. She is too "specific," too "narrow middling," not sufficiently "illustrational" for the "typical function."¹¹

Similarly, James felt that the actual historical or contempo-

¹⁰ James, "Ivan Turgénieff," in *Partial Portraits* (London, 1894), 318.

¹¹ James, "Gustave Flaubert," in *The Art of Fiction and Other Essays* by Henry James, 136-141.

rary figure could only hamper the true artist if it were reproduced in fiction. "I can't tell you, no, who it is I 'aimed at' in the story of Henry St. George, and it wouldn't do for me to name his exemplar publically even if I were able," James writes in the Preface to "The Lesson of the Master."¹² Like the Dickensian caricature and the Flaubertian "individual," the actual figure is too particular to be representative of *man*.

A very effective dramatization and summary of James's case against the particular and actual is presented in his short story "The Real Thing." Major and Mrs. Monarch have the clothes, the bearing, and the titles of gentry. But the painter-narrator finds them inadequate as models for his illustrations of the genteel; their identities are too pronounced, and consequently they are unable to transcend their personalities to become types. Speaking for Henry James, Jack Hawley, the painter's friend, laconically but emphatically comments, "*They won't do*" (VII, 252).

William James, after reading *The House of the Seven Gables*, wrote to his brother, "It also tickled my national feeling not a little to notice the resemblance of Hawthorne's style to yours."¹³ And F. O. Matthiessen, describing Hawthorne as the "direct ancestor of *The Golden Bowl*," notices a "fundamental reassertion of kinship in moral values, which defied for both writers any merely realistic representation."¹⁴ What Henry James found to be lacking in Dickens and the realistic and social novel, thus, he found in Hawthorne and the romance: "The charm — the great charm — is that [Hawthorne's romances] are glimpses of a great field, of the whole deep mystery of man's soul and conscience. They are moral, and their interest is moral; they deal with something more than the mere incidents and conventionalities, the surface occurrences of life. The fine thing in Hawthorne is that he cared for the deeper psychology."¹⁵ In Hawthorne, therefore, James found the quality of vision he felt a novelist must possess. And far from being tied to the particular and actual, Hawthorne had a great facility for creating types. "They

¹² James, Preface to "The Lesson of the Master," in *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces by Henry James*, with an introduction by Richard P. Blackmur (New York, 1962), 223.

¹³ Quoted by Marius Bewley, in "James's Debt to Hawthorne," *Scrutiny*, XVII (Spring 1950), 14.

¹⁴ F. O. Matthiessen, "Hawthorne and James," in *American Renaissance* (New York, 1941), 292, 294.

¹⁵ James, *Hawthorne* (London, 1902), 65.

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are all types, to the author's mind, of something general . . . ,” James writes of the characters in *The House of the Seven Gables*.

But Hawthorne, despite James's admiration for this aspect of his technique, was finally to be as unsatisfactory as was Dickens. For to present a vision of Life is only half of the novelist's function; the other half demands an “illusion of life.” It is this part of the artist's task that leads James to demand that although characters be typical they must never be purely allegorical. For this reason he goes on to criticize Hawthorne and, in his own practice, to emphasize the surname (Miller) of his “Daisy.”

Hawthorne's characters, says James, are too typical and too general: “They are all figures rather than characters — pictures rather than persons.” And the “thin New Englander with a miasmatic conscience” was too frequently and too explicitly allegorical: “Hawthorne, in his metaphysical moods, is nothing if not allegorical, and allegory, to my sense, is quite one of the lightest exercises of the imagination. . . . It has produced assuredly some first rate works, and Hawthorne in his younger years had been a great reader and devotee of Bunyan and Spenser, the great masters of allegory. But it is apt to spoil two good things — a story and a moral, a meaning and a form” (*Hawthorne*, p. 63). Whereas James found actual and particularized characters too limited for portraying a vision of Life, he found allegorical characters too abstract and mechanical to produce an illusion of life. And yet both *vision* and *illusion* were necessary, James felt; a character had to be both general and specific, for only in this way could the novelist achieve the timelessness of great art and the immediacy of good fiction.

Fortunately, James was not limited to American and English fiction in his search for a novelist who had achieved the desired fusion; he finally found the ideal method of character portrayal in the work of Turgénieff. “The great strength of portraiture,” James records Turgénieff as saying, “consisted in its being at once an individual of the most concrete sort, and a type.” And “this is the great strength of his own representations of character,” James admiringly adds; “they are so strangely, fascinatingly particular, and yet they are so recognizably general” (“Turgénieff,” p. 113).

If this is James's ideal, he has succeeded (according to William Dean Howells) in achieving it in his own fiction: “the general is lost in the personal. . . and the allegory is so faint that

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it cannot always be traced."¹⁶ T. S. Eliot describes James's characterization in similar terms: "Each character is constructed out of a reality of its own, substantial enough; everything given is true for that individual, but what is given is chosen with great art for its place in a general scheme."¹⁷

And if James has succeeded, his success in part is a result of his carefully chosen names, for the primary and basic function of a Jamesian name is to reinforce the idea of the typical in the particular, to evoke the type and yet individuate it, to portray the "concrete universal."¹⁸ A comparison and contrast of the names of three of James's heroines will illustrate the effectiveness of his method.

Isabel Archer, Milly Theale, and Daisy Miller are the best known of James's American maidens. To emphasize their *typical* function James gives each a name associated with some deity or emblem of purity: "Archer" recalls the Greek goddess Diana, the protectress of the chaste; "Daisy," a flower, is a stock symbol of purity, reinforced in this case by the whiteness of the flower; "Theale" is a rough anagram of *Alethea*, the Greek name for truth. But if James's heroines are typically similar, they are not carbon copies of each other, nor merely allegorical. Each is a maiden and each is innocent, but each is also a particular kind of virgin, and the innocence of each is of a specific variety. And here again, the respective names suggest the individuating qualities. The heroine of *The Portrait of a Lady* is not Machiavellian, but she is "arch"; furthermore, she has a very deliberate aim and, unfortunately, does not miss her target. Also suggested by Isabel's last name is her coldness; for if she is chaste, she is also frigid, a true follower of the moon goddess. Since Artemis is associated with Diana, James's choice of name is also a clue to the idealistic nature of the heroine. Miss Archer's first name may recall the Spanish Queen and patroness of Columbus, and after her experience Isabel is certainly qualified to be the saint of discoverers; but "Isabel" also suggests the famous Old Testament *femme fatale*, "Jezebel." Both are worshippers of idols rather than true gods: Jezebel, Baal; and

16 William Dean Howells, "Mr. Henry James's Later Works," in *The Question of Henry James: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by F. W. Dupee (New York, 1945), 15.

17 T. S. Eliot, "On Henry James," *Ibid.*, 110.

18 René Wellek, "Henry James's Literary Theory and Criticism," *American Literature*, XXX (November 1958), 314.

Isabel, her false idea of freedom. Unlike the wife of Ahab, Isabel is not a wanton, but she does, nevertheless, toy with the loves and frustrate the lives of a number of her male acquaintances. Finally, the biblical and mythical aura that surrounds Isabel Archer by way of her name reflects her education, romantic though it is, and her culture, American though it is. These overtones, too ancient and too moral to be dismissed lightly, portend a serious fable and qualify the heroine as potentially tragic.

James's heroine from Schenectady is obviously much younger than her Albany sister, as the diminutive ending of her first name suggests. She is also much less educated and much more common — the daughter of a "Miller" after all. Naiveté and vulgarity, in short, qualify Daisy's purity. A flower of the sun, she is bright, breezy, and ephemeral; a "miller's daughter," she stems from the fairy tale on the one hand and the vulgar joke on the other. Thus the associations that "Daisy" evokes are lighter and less sinister than those enshrouding Isabel. If hers is an unhappy ending, it is pathetic rather than tragic.

Milly Theale, the third of James's American virgins, may be a tribute to his much loved cousin Minny Temple. But distrustful as James was of the direct value of a historical figure for the imaginative artist, it is unwise to stress the biographical. It is also unnecessary; for Milly, like the other heroines, has sufficient fictional qualities to pass the "particular-in-the-type" criterion, as an analysis of her name will illustrate. If Isabel is chaste because she is frigid, and Daisy is pure because she is innocent, Milly is protected by her invalidism from being sexually initiated. Her first and last names, usually used in combination, phonetically suggest a minimum of bodily activity and grosser passions: Milly Theale is mild and ethereal. Her trial or "ado" is also more abstract than Isabel's or Daisy's; the question she poses is in no way one of propriety or compatibility but rather one of the spirituality of life and love. Unlike the determined Isabel or the flighty Daisy, Milly is quietly self-possessed. She is not weak, however, and thus her first name in full, Mildred, suggests strength and power. To Henry James, the American virgin was never an unmixed blessing; consequently even ideal Milly has a jarring note: she is a "mill"-ionairess. And while this may not appreciably lessen Milly's value, it does suggest the ethos in which she moves. Thus she is the prey of the

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unscrupulous Kate Croy, and hence her money portends unhappiness. It is a thing to fear — *Mil-dred*.

Allegory and realism at one remove might be an appropriate description and summary of James's method of characterization and the basic function of his nomenclature. Isabel, Milly, and Daisy are types, and their names suggest this allegorical function. On the other hand, "Isabel" would not suit the girl from Schenectady, nor would "Milly" be an appropriate title for the lady of *The Portrait*; thus names are also to distinguish and particularize. (The similarities and differences between the two famous French heroines — Marie de Vionnet and Claire de Cintré — provide another example of James's use of names to both *typify* and to *particularize*.) James's names, one sees, play a valuable part in his portrayal of "the eminent instance."

III

In addition to their contribution to the thematic definition of the central characters' roles in the novel, the names of Henry James's characters also have a technical or structural value. For not all of James's *dramatis personae* are heroes or heroines, and yet the entire cast is equipped with meaningful names. Adopting James's own classifications for the various aspects of his compositions, one might categorize the secondary functions of James's names as narrative, pictorial, and dramatic.

In his pioneering study of *The Method of Henry James*, Joseph Warren Beach observes that James's story-telling technique is a reversal of the usual narrative method of fiction. Instead of the progression or series of events in time that constitute action in the conventional fable, in Henry James's fiction events and actions are *fait accompli*; instead of the cumulative development of character, there is a gradual *revelation*. As a consequence, the suspense generated by the usual method — what is going to happen — is replaced by a curiosity as to "what is it that *happened*?"¹⁹

The names of Henry James's characters contribute to the effectiveness of this peculiar type of narration and suspense; for as much as the James novel is a picture that is gradually illuminated, a Jamesian character is a figure that slowly comes into

¹⁹ Joseph Warren Beach, *The Method of Henry James* (New Haven, 1918), 51.

complete focus; the name is not a convenient device to let the author get on with the story; it is the story in miniature. Furthermore, whereas generally names in fiction acquire a tone from the actions of the characters, in James's novels it is the name that colors the reader's interpretation of the characters' actions. That this was conscious and deliberate on James's part may be seen from his "Notes for *The Ivory Tower*": "Horton Crimper, among his friends Haughty Crimper, seems to me right and best, on the whole for my second young man. I don't want a surname intrinsically pleasing; and this seems to me of about the good nuance. My third man hereby becomes, I seem to see, Davey Bradham; on which, I think, for the purpose and association, I can't improve" (XXV, 271). A Jamesian name, in short, is designed to transfer an immediate emotional charge and to create a pattern of expectancy.

To illustrate, Basil Ransom, Caspar Goodwood, and Chadwick Newsome are members of the supporting cast in *The Bostonians*, *The Portrait of a Lady*, and *The Ambassadors*, respectively. The first name captures our affections, the second seems to associate morality and dullness, the third strikes an ominous note. Why is *The Bostonian* hero a pleasant savior? how will the right and might of Caspar manifest itself? what is the *wickedness* of which Chadwick is guilty?: such are the questions their names immediately evoke, rather than what kind of a person is Basil and how will Caspar act. We begin, that is, with the finished product, and watch the unfolding rather than the development of a character. Furthermore, because, by virtue of his name, we sense that "Basil" is pleasant, we also feel that despite his antifeminism he is not a cold misogynist; the rigidity and moral erectness suggested by "Goodwood" prepare us for Isabel's fright and his inevitable rejection; because "Chad" suggests *childishness* and *caddishness* we are not as willing to accept his conversion as is Strether. In the Preface to *The Ambassadors* James suggests that he created the *ficelle* because the reader, not the hero, needs a friend. James's names also are the reader's friends: they prepare, they warn, they predispose.

The "great word for Mr. James is composition";²⁰ the ideal composition is that which approaches the picture or portrait. It is not surprising, then, that James's pictorial preoccupation also motivates his choice of names. For by selecting names that are

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

vivid and definite, and by arranging and juxtaposing these in significant relations James gives his novel more immediacy, greater pictorial unity. An excellent illustration of this technique is to be found in the names of the contenders for the hand of the narrator in *The Ambassadors*. Marie de Vionnet and Maria Gostrey have similar first names and goals (they may not be seeking Strether's hand in marriage — neither are pure "marry" — but both do want Strether "in their boat," as Marie de Vionnet puts it), but similar only to the point of emphasizing their dissimilarities. For "Marie" is obviously French and Catholic; "Maria" (James would pronounce this Ma-rye-a, as most Puritans did, to distinguish it from the "Mary" connotations) is Anglo-American and Protestant. "de Vionnet" suggests nobility and breeding; "Gostrey" connotes colorlessness and waywardness. One needs to read the novel to learn the details, but one need only hear the names to grasp some idea of the picture.

A similar pictorial arrangement enhances *The Portrait of a Lady*. Isabel's suitors are an English Lord, an American businessman, and a Europeanized American aesthete. Their occupations alone would provide sufficient contrast, but how much more effective is the disparity when they *appear* before the reader in the costumes of Lord Warburton, Caspar Goodwood, and Gilbert Osmond!

Equally effective and graphic are the names of the Bellegarde brothers, the one sensitive and loving — Valentin — the other cold and sophisticated — Urbaine. Similarly, in contrast to Verena, the refreshing (vernal) heroine of *The Bostonians*, is her frustrated mentor, Olive. And finally, who needs to be told that Daisy Miller will not survive in the climate of Frederick Forsythe Winterbourne?

"Dramatize, dramatize," James repeats to himself in *The Notebooks*. Possibly it is James's love of the drama that most completely motivates his onomastics. In the first place, many of James's names do not merely evoke the type or the individual but the character in action; a name is frequently a two-word summary of an occupation rather than a sketch of a static quality. Quentin Anderson, usually too far-fetching, is helpful here. James's names, he observes, suggest a "sort of runic sentence" (p. 148) and in that sentence, one should add, the emphasis should be placed upon the verb. Thus "Millicent Henning" would read: "She who mothers and conquers";

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Henrietta Stackpole meddles and bustles continuously; Adam Verver's energy is his "unmistakable note."

But the greatest action, says Aristotle, is not physical; it consists in minds and attitudes rather than bodies in conflict. The second dramatic function of a Jamesian name is to suggest a contradiction of qualities within the individual character. For example, Madame Serena Merle provokes us as much as she attracts Isabel: according to her first name she is a figure of light and calm; her second, suggests a dark bird of prey. Miriam Rooth is similarly dichotomous: "Rooth" (Ruth) and "Miriam" summon sympathy and denote a victim or sufferer; yet "Rooth" (wroth) may suggest that she is the one who inflicts suffering upon others. Finally, the queenliness that is Julia Dallow's by virtue of her christian name is qualified by her surname, which suggests both "shallow" and "tallow."

Joseph Wiesenfarth concludes that the three primary qualities of the dramatic novel are economy, objectivity, and intensity. He also reminds the reader that in addition to the "macro-structural devices of scene and picture used to achieve these qualities, the minimal constant of the novel, its language, the medium *in which* the action is achieved" must also be made to contribute.²¹ Names belong to the sphere of language, and thus it is as a means to these three ends — economy, objectivity, and intensity — that James's nomenclature is also designed.

Economy, to James, obviously did not merely mean brevity, certainly did not mean elimination of necessary information. Rather it meant "precious discrimination" and the "squeezing of a subject for all it was worth." And if the *ficelle* enabled him to dispose of "the seated mass of explanation after the fact," a significant name helped him to do away with a "block" of description before the fact (Preface to *The Ambassadors*, XXI, xix). The names of James's characters are like the body and costume of an actor; merely by their appearance they interest the reader. Furthermore, they provide a convenient handle or key for the reader to grasp. For unlike the usual method of introducing a character by means of a descriptive sketch, James's way is to present the name, and then, frequently much later in the novel and always at a convenient or crucial moment, to add the referential clues. This is a simplification, of course. Further-

²¹ Joseph Wiesenfarth, *Henry James and the Dramatic Analogy* (New York, 1963), 15.

more, the various aspects of James's technique are so interwoven that it is impossible to isolate a particular one and its effect. Nevertheless, if Strether's name itself is not completely responsible for our reservations about his observations before we know precisely who he is, it certainly does contribute. Or to put it another way, in real life a man named Lambert Strether may convince us that he is a dashing Romeo or a shrewd judge of character, but in fiction, especially in Henry James's fiction, our sense of propriety prevents us from accepting him as such.

Chad's case is similar. Although Strether's anticipation of his meeting with the young man is accompanied by some clues to his character, our own anticipation of his appearance and, at the same time, our reservations concerning his character would not be nearly so intense if we did not know his name, or if it were instead a common "John Brown."

Chad's mother will also provide evidence in this respect, that is if one can persuade that formidable matriarch to lend her support to anything not of her choosing. Many critics have admired James's artistry in making the reader *realize* a character who never physically appears. But they have failed to comment on the thing that greatly contributes to her forceful though unseen presence: her name. Without her intrepid appellation one would still be able to give her a form, but it would lack the solidity and vividness that "Mrs. Abel Newsome" provides.

If the name of a character helps us to formulate and anticipate, it also helps us to remember, and to remember not only the name but the characteristics and the role of the named personality. That is, once James has introduced a character, by virtue of his name he becomes unforgettable. And thus James can allow him to drop out of the picture and, much later, suddenly return without straining the reader's memory. Caspar Goodwood and Henrietta Stackpole, for example, make only intermittent appearances in *The Portrait of a Lady*. And yet the reader need never turn back the pages to refresh his memory as to what kind of person this American businessman is or what he may expect of Henrietta.

Similarly, when Tom Tristram — whose first name makes a caricature of the surname, and whose alliterative label suggests a buffoon — volunteers in the opening pages of the novel to show Newman "the real Paris," and returns suddenly at the close of *The American* to offer his sympathies at the hero's loss

of Madame de Cintré, we know exactly the type of condolences they will be: "‘You’re well out of it, at any rate . . . I should as soon have thought of making up to that piece of pale peculiarity as I should have thought of wooing the Obelisk in the Place de la Concorde’" (II, 511).

A final way in which names contribute to the economical quality of the dramatic novel is in the simple but adequate way with which they people the stage. Mrs. Luce, Bob Bantling, Lady Pensil, Miss Climber, and Sir Mathew Hope are necessary minor characters in *The Portrait of a Lady*. But James need spend no time or space on descriptions: he merely names them. In a similar way, the "Bostonian" drama does not take place in a vacuum, yet the descriptions needed to supplement the names of Miss Catching, Ada T. P. Foat, Mr. and Mrs. Amariah Farinder, Dr. Prance, and Mrs. Croucher would scarcely fill a page.

One of the things James especially liked about the drama was that once the dramatist had assigned the various speeches and roles he had had his say; conversely, one of the things that James most detested to find in the novel was authorial intrusions. "Let the poor things speak for themselves," he writes in *Notes and Reviews* (p. 21). Names such as James chose encourage the novelist to be objective; for although the author may reveal his attitude toward a character in his choice of name, once the choice has been made no amount of prefatorial explanations will alter the reader's impression. Count Dreuil (*The Sacred Fount*) will never make an aristocrat; Herr Kapp (*The American*) is simply not a gentleman. "A rose by any other name," in short, would not smell as sweet if the gardener were Henry James.

Names contribute to objectivity in another way. In his analysis of James's "Point of View," Percy Lubbock explains the contribution that this device makes to the objective and the dramatic: "*The Ambassadors*, then, is a story which is seen from one man's point of view, and yet a story in which that point of view is itself a matter for the reader to confront and watch constructively."²² But the reader can do more than "confront and watch"; he can also interpret, and this by virtue of the sensitive register's name. The name is the *only* piece of absolute external evidence in a story told from a limited point of view. And

²² Percy Lubbock, "The Point of View," in *Henry James: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Leon Edel (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1963), 45-46.

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in the fiction of James it is very valuable evidence. For James has named Strether *post facto*; James is the only one who knows the real facts, the only one who knows what his narrator does to them. The name he gives his narrator, consequently, is a clue that he gives the reader. Whereas James *adds* Strether to the facts, the reader must *subtract* "Strether" to get the facts. These facts themselves, of course, are unimportant, but they are necessary if we are to evaluate Strether's perception of them, which in turn, is Strether himself. The function of a Jamesian name in fiction of this type is to put the point of view in its proper perspective, continually to remind the reader that there is a "Stretherian" gloss on the text, that one should not identify with him. If point of view makes for objectivity on the part of the author, then, the name of the central intelligence makes for objectivity on the part of the reader.

To James the dramatic was "the sum of all intensities," and intensity was "the grace to which the enlightened story-teller will at any time, for his interest, sacrifice if needs be all other graces" (*The Art of the Novel*, pp. 326, 318). The contribution James's names make to the grace of intensity has already been touched upon: both particular and typical, they suggest multiple levels of meaning; dichotomous, they portray conflict within the characters themselves; pictorial, they add immediacy and vividness. There is, however, another type of significant name to be found in James's fiction, and it is frequently through these that James most effectively achieves "the maximum intensity with the minimum of strain": the names of streets and buildings.

Since much attention has been given to this aspect of James's technique,²³ a few examples to refresh the reader's memory will be sufficient. Consider, for instance, the name of the constituency, "Harsh," in *The Tragic Muse*. If Nicholas Dormer, the short-time representative of this district, finds politics distasteful, it is not surprising. Similarly, it is a neat and added touch that Hyacinth Robinson, the proletarian bookbinder, finds himself at ease, finds indeed his innate sensitivity and nobility at the Princess Casamassima's country house, "Medley." That the apparently sincere yet somehow sinister Paul Muniment of the same novel lives at "Audley Court" confirms our uneasiness in his presence. Isabel Archer felt that her father's house in

23 See especially Robert Stallman, *The Houses that James Built* (East Lansing, Mich., 1961).

Albany was a type of fortress; she soon finds herself in another, but this time one that imprisons rather than protects — the “Palazzo Roccanera” of Gilbert Osmond. Again, although we never learn the identity of the unmentionable article in *The Ambassadors*, that it is a “Woolett” product gives us some idea of the vulgarity of the article, and even more so does the “Woolett” stamp suggest the materialism of its ambassadors. One may find the name of the shallow, fickle hostess of “The Death of the Lion,” Miss Wimbush, a bit too fantastic, and he may feel that the name of her estate, “Prestidge,” is a trifle unrealistic, but only if they are taken out of context. The same may be said of all the names one finds in James’s fiction; but in their proper framework James’s names, whether of persons or places, do make their contribution to the art of fiction.

Before concluding this examination of the theory underlying James’s nomenclature, one must not fail to mention the most obvious, albeit superficial, motive that accounts for a “Grand Duke of Silberstadt-Schreckenstein” (“The Liar”). It is the simple one of amusing the reader. For example, Christopher Newman may not comprehend the character or motives of Noémie (no love) Nioche, but his creator knew exactly what she and he were doing. For if we find the atmosphere generated by the Bellegardes stifling and frightening, there is nothing mysterious or subtle about Noémie who admits, “‘Everything I have is for sale’” (*The American*, II, 207). In the same way, when the reader, like Basil Ransom, becomes frustrated in the presence of the wretched Olive Chancellor, James strategically introduces the chatty *Adeline Luna* and her monstrous offspring, *Newton*. Finally, if one tires of Strether’s introspections and Waymarsh’s sullenness, there is always Miss Barrace to brighten the scene, both with her revealing name and with her delightful, “Oh, oh, oh!”

IV

“The day had not yet come, perhaps,” writes Van Wyck Brooks of the early James novels and in anticipation of the later ones, “when he was to forget the names of his characters, when he was to refer in his scenarios to ‘my first young man,’ to ‘the girl’ and ‘Aurora-what’s-her-name,’ when he was to speak of the need of individuals of a particular size and weight.”²⁴ Brooks

²⁴ Van Wyck Brooks, “Two Phases of Henry James,” in *The Question of Henry James*, 123.

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is both right and wrong; for Henry James was never to forget the names of his characters, and if in *The Notebooks* "Mrs. A" and "Mr. B" are more frequent than the names we find in the novels, it does not mean that James had forgotten about his characters and their names but that he had perfected his method. It is that method that we turn to now.

Unlike Edith Wharton, who also used significant names but whose characters "always appeared with their names,"²⁵ Henry James's names are the product of great selection, fabrication, and revision. *The Notebooks* suggest that there were three stages in his naming process: the germinal stage, the provisional stage, and the finished stage.

In the germinal or anecdotal stage, characters appear merely as "he" or "she," "the girl" or "Mrs. X." For example, the following is a fragment from the germinal stage of "The Path of Duty": "The young man may give up Miss R and betake himself to Lady G, who may then refuse him, on account of his having done an act she deems dishonorable. . . . (I use these initials simply as convenient signs — knowing nothing of these people)."²⁶ As the parenthetical words suggest, because the function of a Jamesian name is to strike the unmistakable note, he cannot officially name his characters until he knows what the characteristic note is to be.

And this leads us to the second stage in the naming process, the provisional stage. Characters are now given names, but they are only tentative, the characters themselves at this stage being only provisional. Thus, in working out the plot of *Confidence* James writes: "As the incident which constitutes this momentary contact of Harold Stamner and Bianca Vane — their names are perhaps provisional — the former may be imagined. . ." (p. 3). Similarly, the initial name of the heroine of *The Ivory Tower* was also only provisional: "My Girl, in the relinquished thing, was Cissy Foy; and this was all right for the figure there intended, but the girl here is a very different one, and everything is altered" (XXV, 271).

In the previous examples names were changed because the entire plots were reshaped. More frequently the provisional

25 Edith Wharton, *A Backward Glance* (New York, 1934), 210. For an interesting discussion of Wharton's names see Robert L. Coard, "Names in the Fiction of Edith Wharton," *Names*, XIII (March 1965), 1-10.

26 James, *The Notebooks of Henry James*, edited by F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock (New York, 1955), 54.

name is changed solely in favor of a more accurate or significant appellation. The obnoxious, unctuous reporter in *The Bostonians*, for instance, provisionally appeared as "Matthias Pinder." James changed Pinder to Pardon in the final draft, thereby emphasizing the Uriah Heepishness of the vulgar journalist. Similarly, in the same novel, the heroine's father in the final version is named "Selah" rather than the tentative "Amariah" Tarrant. Selah, a musical term from the psalms to indicate a rise in the voice of the chanter, underlines the "rant" of the surname, and hence is a much more effective label for the mesmeric healer.

In the composition of *The Ambassadors* also, James altered two of the provisional names. "Waymark" of the scenario becomes the "Waymarsh" of the novel. Whereas both names connote the aimlessness of the wanderings of "the pilgrim from Milrose," the later name more graphically emphasizes the density and the vulgar potency of that "majestic aboriginal" (XXI, 206). Provisional "Glenn Burbage" becomes "John Little Bilham." The change is probably made to emphasize the diminutive quality of the "young artist-man," diminutive in the sense that he finds pleasure in small, though not necessarily less important, things. His is "a little bill." Also, John is a *pleasant* variation of Jack — the name James consistently used in reference to Americans.²⁷ Ultimately then, by choosing a name that suggests both aesthetic and American qualities, James emphasizes the contrast between Little Bilham and that other young American, Chad. "To give him a name, even if it be not final" (*The Notebooks*, p. 324) is the keynote of the provisional stage. And the reason why there is a provisional stage is the importance James attached to the names of his characters.

The final or third stage in the naming process is, obviously, the first publication. But even at this point, dissatisfied with his final choice, or wishing to alter an impression, James was apt to make changes. For example, Miss Tita of the serial version of *The Aspern Papers* became Miss Tina of the revised edition. Since one of the features of the later publication is the addition of the ambiguous ending of the tale, which suggests that perhaps the narrator had fallen in love with Miss Bordereau, the purpose of the name change is to replace the impression she originally made as rigid spinster with that of elderly maiden, one to

27 See Leon Edel, *Henry James: The Middle Years* (London, 1963), 316.

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whom it would not be impossible to become attracted.

The stages from anecdotal to definitive are not constant for all his compositions, of course, but the preceding analysis does illustrate the general method James followed in providing his characters with names.

V

The way in which James decided upon a certain name for a specific character varies, naturally, with each individual case, and hence defies inclusion within the scope of this study. However, most of the names do follow one of a few definite patterns, and as a conclusion to this examination of Jamesian appellations it will be interesting and helpful to attempt some system of classification.

In the first place, as the lists of names compiled throughout *The Notebooks* suggest, we may divide James's names into two broad categories: those that appeal primarily to the mind's eye or memory, and those that depend upon the mind's ear. The first group, visually significant names they may be called, are usually of three kinds: the allusive, the descriptive, and the foreign. Auricularly important names may be subdivided into the phonetic and the onomatopoeic. None of these classes is absolute or exclusive, certainly, and consequently the following examples are classified essentially according to the faculty and method upon which they most rely.

The first group of visually significant names, the allusive, may be historic: Christopher Newman and Prince Amerigo (the discoverers of the unknown in *The American* and *The Golden Bowl*); biblical: Ralph Touchett (the spiritual guardian of Isabel in *The Portrait*) and Sir Luke Strett (the good and wise doctor of *The Wings of the Dove*); mythical: Diana Belfield (the Isabel-Archeresque beauty in "Longstaff's Marriage") and Hyacinth Robinson (the sensitive youth killed by light — both Christina Light and the culture she represents — in *The Princess Casamassima*); literary: Louis Lambert Strether (the Balzacian hero of *The Ambassadors*) and Beatrice Beaumont (the young actress in "The Papers").

Descriptive names are those that express the essential quality of a character either literally or metaphorically. In this second group of visually significant names one finds Mrs. Grose, the

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dense but kindly housekeeper of "The Turn of the Screw"; Pansy Osmond, the young innocent whose life is shadowed or darkened by her treacherous parents; Julia Bride, the oft-engaged but never married heroine of the short story to which she gives the title.

Frequently James combines adjective and noun to produce the unmistakable note. Thus one finds that refined icicle, Winterbourne ("Daisy Miller"); the delightful Bostonian old maid, Miss Birdseye (*The Bostonians*); or the doubly tautological Fanny Assingham (*The Golden Bowl*).

Foreign names, the third example of the visually meaningful variety, owe their significance to their meaning in translation. The Bellegardes (*The American*) do have a secret to guard well, and they do keep it beautifully; the Dormers (*The Tragic Muse*) are not asleep to opportunities, but their aspirations do have an unreal or dream-like quality; Prince Casamassima is the member of a great house. And Lord Beaupre is a very suitable name for the man who is the target of husband-seeking society ladies, in the short story that bears his name.

The auricularly significant section of James's names is a happy-hunting-ground for the imaginative, and a court of last resort for those who find little explicit evidence to support their positions. But aware of the dangers involved in translating sound into sense, one may carefully provide a number of examples to illustrate James's technique in this area. In the phonetic category, first, one finds the victimized artist, Neil Paraday, who is cursorily adored by the vulgar in "The Death of the Lion"; "ea" is changed to "o" but the Pococks (*The Ambassadors*) still sound like the pharisaical strutters that they are; Paul Muniment's pleasantness is a convenient covering for his personal power-seeking and unhealthy attitudes. The Newsomes (*The Ambassadors*) provide an interesting example of the foreign and phonetic in combination: *nous sommes* perfectly exemplifies the egotistical pride of these self-righteous New Englanders. Similar is the title that the unhappy Claire de Cintré (*The American*) acquires when she becomes a nun: "Soeur Catherine."

The onomatopoeic name, the second auricular type, usually adds a tone to a visually significant one. Thus, while the following names are descriptive, they are also audibly unpleasant: Miss Gulp, the unappetizing teacher in "The Point of View";

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Dotty and Kitty Lutch, the parasitic acquaintances of the Ver-vers' (*The Golden Bowl*); Mrs. Bray, rather asinine and unsuccessful gossip in "The Chaperon." Similar to the onomatopoeic and less grimly comic are the alliterative names of Benjamin Babcock, the very moral and unaesthetic Unitarian minister in *The American*; Bob Bantling, the lightweight Britisher who is snared by Henrietta Stackpole (*The Portrait of a Lady*); and the motley crew including Colonel Clement Capadose ("The Liar"), and Mrs. Susan Shepherd Stringham" (*The Wings of the Dove*); Cornelia Rasch ("Crapy Cornelia"); and Mrs. David Drake ("Julia Bride").

"To discriminate, to learn to find our way among noted sounds, find it as though through the acquisition of a new Ear" is the motto James suggested in his lecture, "The Question of our Speech."²⁸ This gives us some idea of the importance James assigned to sound and tone, and consequently makes his reliance upon the auricular in his choice of names a thing to be expected and a technique to be appreciated.

A knowledge of the tradition, theory, and method that accounts for the type of names one finds in the fiction of Henry James has a double value; not only does it contribute to our understanding of James's own work, but it also provides an important perspective on the significance of names in fiction, generally. So that, as is the case in many aspects of James's, even if one is not an admirer of his practice, one cannot disregard his theory.²⁹

²⁸ James, *The Question of Our Speech and The Lesson of Balzac: Two Lectures* (Boston, 1905), 36.

²⁹ I acknowledge my indebtedness to the Canada Council for financial assistance and to John J. Teunissen for the intellectual stimulation which enabled me to complete this study.

