CHAPTER VI

VOICELESS AND LITTLE TRAGEDIES

Henry James's novels—The American, The Portrait of a Lady, The Wings of the Dove and The Ambassadors—fall into a clear pattern; a pattern which is common to all great tragedies. The Jamesian protagonist, like any other tragic hero, passes through the phases of innocence, experience, passion and perception and James in his portraiture of the innocent man's fall and his transcendence shows the same tragic vision as the great tragedians. But in spite of all James has been able to achieve there are some points of differences between his tragedies and the traditional tragedies. The traditional tragedies, as we have seen in the first chapter, are called high tragedies. They are high in every respect, high in terms of conception, mode, characters emotional content and effect. In other words, they are tragedies of the most dignified kind, where kings, princes, queens, commanders and such men as really mattered played out the tragic roles. A brief acquaintance with a Sophoclean and a Shakespearean tragedy will provide us with a springboard from where to leap into the Jamesian tragedies which are little and voiceless compared to the traditional tragedies.
In a Sophoclean tragedy like *Oedipus Rex* gods and destiny play a pivotal role though they do not prevent a towering personality like Oedipus from engaging in personal clashes. Oedipus, as the play opens, is proud and singleminded in his pursuit of finding the murderer of Laius. He takes to task the blind seer Teiresias, his brother-in-law Creon and the old herdsman who was instrumental in saving him when he was a child. But, then, the quest to find the murderer of Laius charges into one of the most ultimate queries for Oedipus, "Who am I?" He finally gets an answer to this question: he is "the brother of the sons/ He fathered; to the woman out of whom/He sprang, both son and husband—and the sire/ Whose bed he fouled, he murdered."¹ This gives Oedipus the rudest shock of his life. Greatly depressed Oedipus blinds himself and laments, "Alas! It comes! It comes! And all is true/ Light! Let me look last on them, for I/Stand naked now. Shamefully was I born!/ In shame I wedded; to my shame I slew."² Then Oedipus banishes himself and saves Thebes from plague. Thus in a high Greek tragedy like Oedipus we see how the fate of a man is inextricably bound up with gods and with his own society.

A Shakespearean tragedy like *Othello* also tells a story of exceptional calamity leading to the death of a man in high estate. But the calamities of a tragedy like *Othello* do not simply happen or are decreed by the gods as in Oedipus, but they proceed merely from the actions of characters. Othello, the hero of the play, is an exceptional being. He is a man of public importance
and his actions and sufferings are of an unusual kind. His nature is also exceptional and generally raises him in some respect much above the average level of humanity. Othello, the black Moor, reaches the zenith of his joy when he marries Desdemona. But his married life begins to crumble when Iago, the most formidable of Shakespearean villains, sows the seeds of suspicion in the mind of Othello. The great Othello falls from his elevated position and begins to behave like a low, mean ruffian and even kills Desdemona. Then he realises the cruel plot against him. He is shocked by the horrible reality, but it enables him to regain some of his former dignity and he stabs himself to death.

Both *Oedipus* and *Othello*, though different in some respects, present before us very powerfully the superb qualities of a high tragedy. Both of them are verse dramas intended to be staged. The language used is very powerful and it makes the strongest appeal to the emotions of the viewer. At the centre of each of the tragedies is a larger than life figure who is not only eminently placed socially, but is also conspicuous for his many qualities of the head and heart. In a high tragedy the central figure's fall from eminence is worked out elaborately as one having wider repercussions. The sin of Oedipus brings a plague to Thebes and his banishment from the place redeems the place. Similarly, the fate of Othello is tied up with the fate of Cyprus where he is the governor. The writers of high tragedies make their protagonists responsible for their fate. As the action proceeds, all non-essentials are shed one after
another till the tragic protagonist's struggle becomes a symbol of the conflict of good and evil in the world. Oedipus may appear a puppet from a divine point of view, but he engages in a clash of personality so human that the gods almost disappear. But in Othello, gods totally disappear and character is destiny. That is, Othello tells a tale of suffering and death which are caused not by Fate, Destiny or some other outside agency but by the action of Othello himself. Thus a high tragedy like Oedipus Rex or Othello is full of action leading to great conflict—both external and internal. It begins with external action but as the action advances, the conflict becomes more and more internalized. We get a peep into the suffering soul of the tragic hero and become conscious of the inherent nobility, grandeur and heroism of the human spirit. Thus a tragedy like Oedipus Rex or Othello is a high tragedy, vibrant with human emotions and feelings. In other words, a high tragedy is like a mighty ocean. Its immensity and ever restless nature remind us of the mysterious nature of life itself.

Eversince the death of Shakespeare there has been a strong feeling among the writers of the world that the tragic muse has had a most unceremonious exit from the dramatic literature of the world. Bernard Shaw, Ibsen and others were not able to put on the mantle of Shakespeare and make any seminal contribution to the field of tragic literature. But during the years following the death of Shakespeare something has been taking place the world over in the field of literature and that has been the birth of tragedy in an
entirely different genre, namely novel. The event, the birth of tragedy in the novel form, has both been acclaimed and denounced. Some saw in it an effort to dilute and cheapen tragedy. But Herbert J. Muller, Joseph Wood Krutch and others saw in it the best way to satisfy the perennial thirst of man for tragedy. Herbert J. Muller writes that modern tragedy is,

\[(A)t \text{ its best when it is most distinctly modern. For it is bound to be different from ancient tragedy, and in some respect is bound to suffer from the inevitable comparison with it. The responsible modern writer cannot escape the radica and continuous change that the political, industrial and scientific revolutions have brought about. He cannot blink the new knowledge about the nature and history of man and the universe, cannot evade the terms of life in a mass society. He cannot write like Sophocles or Shakespeare.}^3\]

So we realize that with the sweeping changes that have taken place in and around man it was necessary to find new ways and means to represent the tragic nature of man's life. As Muller opines, with the loss of faith in the divine origin of kings, and with the dawn of democracy no modern writer could write like Sophocles or Shakespeare. In other words, the scope for high tragedies, with gods and kings and eminent characters was totally out of the question. Of the writers in America who laboured and succeeded in shaping the tragic nature of man's life under the changed circumstances, Henry James...
occupies pride of place and his novels especially the ones selected for our study are a powerful restatement of the paradisiacal story of innocence, evil, passion and perception which form the kernel of any tragedy. In respect of the essence of a tragedy and the tools used for its portrayal, Jamesian tragic novels do not vary very much from traditional high tragedies. But there are a few notable differences. First of all they are little and secondly they are voiceless.

Jamesian tragedies are little tragedies mainly on account of two things. The first reason is that Jamesian tragedies are novels and not dramas and they obviously lack the direct and instant appeal of a drama in which characters and episodes are all well designed with the sole motive of bringing out the agony and ecstasy, defeat and victory and the perception and vision experienced by the tragic protagonists. The second reason for a Jamesian tragedy to be little is the social stature of his protagonists themselves. Unlike the protagonists of Sophocles and Shakespeare Jamesian protagonists are not kings or princes who are public persons and enjoy great power over their people and who carry with them the fate of their people as well. At the same time James has been very cautious in the selection of his protagonists and has, in fact, selected the very best people available in his society. In a democratic set up the supreme instrument of power is money and the class possessing this supreme instrument becomes the aristocracy of the modern world. James makes such people his heroes to the exclusion of all others particularly the
poor, the working class and the trading classes. So the Jamesian heroes are liberated from all kinds of pecuniary worries and they are endowed with all the external appurtenances of civilization. James lets them live in the finest houses filled with the finest furniture; lets them wear the finest clothes; gives them the most cultivated tastes; lets them spend all or almost all their time at luncheon parties or dinner parties observing rigidly all the conventions of social intercourse. Then, on top these cultivated tastes and habits, James gives them also the most refined sensibilities, the most delicate perception and a developed power of articulating all that they feel and see, and passing in this way from the external appurtenances of civilization to the internal, James endows them with the gifts of insights and powers of discrimination and analysis, in the field of moral relations in particular, far exceeding the reach of men in real life. The protagonists of James are also free from all kinds of social commitment. They are not burdened with the role of a father, husbands, professional man, leader, public personality or any other role that implies an obligation to reality. Sensitive and solitary, attracted by intellectual, artistic values, they conceive of life as daring and adventurous only in the realm of inner striving and tensions and it is there and only there they look for assurance and success. So, the Jamesian protagonists form the cream of the society and they are superior to all others though they are of much less stature compared to Oedipus or Othello or any other hero of a traditional tragedy. The heroes of a traditional tragedy come to grief because
of what they do but a Jamesian hero suffers because of what is done to him. In other words a traditional tragic hero is an active doer whereas a Jamesian hero is passive and ascends to tragic height by the way he reacts to the deceptions and betrayals practised on him. Thus a traditional tragic hero is a hero by action but a Jamesian tragic hero is a victim turned hero and this accounts for the littleness of a Jamesian tragic novel.

Besides being little a Jamesian tragic novel is also voiceless. James's high sense of morality is chiefly responsible for this. James, though he did not believe in any religion, possessed a scrupulous conscience. He could not stomach the idea of revenge and bloodshed which the traditional tragedies ennobled. Instead, James saw tragic nobility in accepting one's lot gracefully, forgiving one's antagonists, and in renouncing all thoughts of revenge. For James successful engagement depends on adherence to rather simple old-fashioned values like courage, endurance, magnanimity, forgiveness and renunciation. The highest good for him was not, strictly speaking, a state of society so much as a condition of human development in which certain qualities could flower and thrive, in which cultivated sensibility and moral integrity gave one what he called the power to be finely aware and richly responsible. As a result of this view of James, we find all his tragic protagonists to be motivated by a sense of refinement and a desire for moral perfection.
The Jamesian tragic heroes being highly refined, sensitive and considerate, remain more reflective and silent than the heroes of the high tragedies who are by nature rebellious and vociferous in their protest against fate. Oedipus loudly curses his fate, Othello bewails his lot and Hamlet laments that the world is out of joint. On the other hand, betrayal and the consequent suffering awaken in the Jamesian protagonists a new moral sensibility. Now more responsible than before, through their infinitely thoughtful attention and reflection, they comply not so much to a code of propriety and good fortune as to an ethic that makes profound spiritual demands and must guarantee their lasting human quality. They abandon all conduct founded on selfish motives and act even to the detriment of their own interests hoping to be rewarded in some mysterious unexpected way beyond their present predicament. They refuse to compromise with evil, they deny themselves love and friendship, success and wealth when such rewards must depend on the suffering of others. Richly responsible and scrupulously conscious, they adopt the unique greatness of sacrifice and renunciation.

What makes a traditional tragedy so pitiful and horrific is the clash between good and evil it envisages and the thirst for revenge of the protagonist against his deceivers. The motive of revenge, in fact, makes traditional tragedies so noisy and barbarous. Though the Jamesian tragic protagonists also confront evil and though consequently their world of illusion is smashed to smithereens, their response to treachery and betrayal is a
voiceless one. Their high sense of morality and refinement prevents them from taking revenge on their antagonists. For James revenge is also a kind of exploitation in which a person seeks to bend another to his will. A Jamesian tragic protagonist who attains a great expansion of consciousness as a result of his tragic experience feels that by taking revenge on his betrayers he will remain false to the light he has received. He thinks that he grows not by tearing other people down, but by building them up. Revenge forsworn appears in James's fiction as a phenomenon of enlightenment and forbearance is presented as more desirable than the sight of the opponents' humiliation. As a thoroughly refined human being the Jamesian tragic protagonist believes in compassion by means of which he purifies his sensibility and perfects it as his instrument of perception. We find that the end result of all the experiences of Jamesian tragic protagonist is a kind of Christian humility. Frederick observes in his book *The Tragedy of Manners*: "Believing as he does that other people have an acquaintance with life that is as valid as his own, and recognizing his relative unimportance in the great panorama that he sees, he is characterized above all by magnanimity. He believes in everything as a part of life but in nothing as a final virtue of it." Thus, a Jamesian tragedy ends in enlightenment, refinement of sensibility and expansion of consciousness and as a result of all this becomes a voiceless tragedy with the protagonists accepting their lot, taking the full responsibility for their fall. They are
defeated like any other tragic hero, but they gain their victory through their moral growth and achievement of refinement.

The novels of James selected for the study namely, *The American*, *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Wings of the Dove* and *The Ambassadors* are little and voiceless tragedies in every sense. But, all of them do contain the essence of a high tragedy and the protagonists of these novels finally come to achieve maturity and wisdom through their encounter with evil. They lose their innocence but gain self-knowledge, which is in fact, the essence of every tragedy.

*The American* is, in every sense, a little and voiceless tragedy. Being a novel of the early period of James, it lacks the depth and poignancy of the other three novels selected for our study. The protagonist of the novel, Christopher Newman, cannot be equated with the great Oedipus or Othello. He evidently lacks their stature and power. Newman is only a typical American who has risen in life through his hard work. He is not a noble man by birth and has no title or any such credentials to boast of. The childhood of Newman has been one of misery and privation. When he was fourteen necessity had taken him by his slim young shoulders and pushed him into the street to earn that night's supper. He had known bitter failure and what it was to have utterly exhausted, his credit to be unable to raise a dollar. But through his enterprising and speculative nature Newman did rise to affluence like the
archetypal American, Benjamin Franklin. Newman is in fact, very proud of his humble beginnings and he tells Valentin, "I had not a penny when I began to range." Upto the age of thirty five Newman had only one aim in life and that was to make money. Now he is rich and is on a tour of Europe to improve his mind. He tells Mr. Tristram, "I seemed to feel a new man inside my old skin, and I longed for the world"(AM.24). Unlike the heroes of the high tragedies, Newman feels no compunction in admitting his severe lacks. He confesses that he is not an intellectual and that he has come to Europe to cultivate society. Europe, initially, gives him a scare and he makes no effort to hide it and he frankly tells that he does not feel at all smart there and feels as simple as a little child. So we see him first in Europe hardly befitting a tragic hero of the traditional line—lounging on a commodious Ottoman exhausted by his efforts to comprehend the artistic sublimity of Louvre. So, Newman is a different kind of tragic hero, a loner and a wanderer in a foreign country, with no retinue or any traditional trappings. The hero of a high tragedy carries with him the fate of his nation. But Newman is virtually an orphan deprived of any commitment; social or familial. He has no parents and his sisters are married off. So, Newman is an absolutely free individual who has the time and money to explore Europe and thereby explore his soul as well. In a Jamesian tragic novel, an exploration of Europe inevitably leads to an exploration of one's soul; a quest for Europe culminates into a quest for the self.
Though Newman lacks the traditional grandeur of the hero of a high tragedy, he does possess all the qualities necessary for a tragic hero in the changed circumstances. James being a realist could not write like Sophocles or Shakespeare. He had to take into account the democratic set up of the world he had been living in while writing about the tragic aspirations of man. Newman, in fact, is the first of Jamesian tragic heroes embodying his concept of tragedy. James as a writer does not go by the traditional norms of nobility like high birth and possession of political power and all other things associated with it. A tragic hero for James is a rich man with no social commitment, individualistic, sensitive, magnanimous, but with a tragic flaw—innocence, which leads him to great suffering. Newman in his character embodies all these traits. He is immensely rich and that makes him presumptuous and ambitious. Valentin tells him, "You evidently are a success. You have made your fortune. You have built up an edifice. You are a financial, commercial power. You can travel about the world until you have found a soft spot and lie down with the consciousness of having earned your rest"(A.M.85). Newman is also conscious of the power of money and the great advantages it can fetch him. His being rich, in fact, gives him a lot of confidence and makes him long for things of the finest quality. He tells Mrs. Tristram, "I want the biggest kind of entertainment a man can get; people, places, art, nature, everything! I want to see the tallest mountains, and the bluest lakes, and the finest pictures, and the handsomest churches, and the
most celebrated men and the most beautiful women" (A.M.25). Newman also cherishes a secret desire in his mind and that is to marry the most magnificent woman in the world, which he thinks, he is capable of doing with the power of his money. Money is a source of corruption in James. But, the tragic protagonists of James are untainted by it. Money may make them victims for exploitation but they never use it to exploit others. On the other hand, they use their money to help others. Newman is rich, but he is never proud or arrogant. He is a simple, straightforward, easy-going Westerner in his dealings with others. He is free with the people belonging to all the classes and treats everybody on the footing of equality. He is self-assured, confident and daring. The strange world of Paris, though it unnerves him initially, does not cow him down. In his innocence, and unawareness of evil, he confidently offers to let the world go ahead and try him. Unlike the relatively powerless innocents of James's fiction, Newman acts powerfully to change destinies, tempt characters with money and jobs and offer them seemingly endless possibilities.

The confident air of Newman gives great charm to his personality and it is admired by many of the characters in the novel. Young Madame de Bellegarde says that if she had not known who Newman was she would have taken him for a duke—an American duke, the Duke of California. Valentine tells him, "You've got something it worries me to have missed . . . . It's not money, its not even brains, though evidently yours have been excellent for
your purpose. It's not your superfluous stature though I should have rather liked to be a couple of inches taller. It's a sort of air you have of being imperturbably, being irremovably and indestructibly at home in the world... You strike me—as a man who stands about at his ease and looks straight over ever so many high walls" (A.M.39). Newman also has an image of him as a good, noble and civilized person. He tells Mrs. Trisfram, "I have a very good opinion of myself" (A.M.32). He also tells her, "I am a highly civilized man" (A.M.32). When she jokingly accuses him of being a Western Barbarian, who has come to swoop down upon the poor effete old world, Newman obviously has no doubt about his nobility though he is not born noble. He tells Valentin when he objects to his marrying Claire on the ground of his being not a noble, "A title? What do you mean by title? . . . . A count, a duke, a marquis? I don't know anything about that. But I say I am noble. I don't exactly know what you mean by it, but it's a fine word and a fine idea; I put a claim to it" (A.M.101). Newman proves his claim to nobility by making himself acceptable to Claire, the finest flower of the French noblesse. It is, in fact, Newman's goodness joined with an essential dignity which draws Claire to him. Being a strong man, possessing a fine mind Newman is generous and magnanimous and never wicked in his words or deeds. He is also never guilty of any dirty work and is always refined in whatever he does. But he always sticks to his own guns and never likes to resemble any one as he tells Claire. In his attempt to present Newman as a superior person James also gives
Newman a set of uncanny prescience that he often seems to function of his intuitive understanding of other characters. Shortly after he has been accepted as Claire's suitor, Newman judges the marquis and his mother for Mrs Tristram—"I shouldn't wonder if she had murdered some one—all from a sense of duty, of course (A.M.152) and "If he has never committed murder, he has at least turned his back and looked the other way while some one else as committing it" (A.M.152). To be sure, Newman commits many errors in judging others and misses much of what goes on around him, but he is hardly an unrefined or uncouth person. Thus we find that Newman, though he stands below the heroes of the high tragedies, is essentially a tragic character, Adamic in his innocence, experience of evil, passion and perception.

What makes a tragedy really impressive is the reaction of the tragic hero to his various adverse experiences. Christopher Newman, just like the hero of a high tragedy, is tested in the fire of suffering. He comes to Europe, as he himself says, only to amuse himself and to improve his mind. He never expects to have a testing time there. But, he is tested in Europe several times, but he faces all his tests in a typical Jamesian manner, that is, in a voiceless manner, very much unlike the hero of a traditional tragedy, who raves and rants and engages in a blood bath. The famous museum in Louvre becomes the first scene of Newman's testing. He meets there Noemie, a young Parisian beauty belonging to a poor middle class family. She is a poor copyist waiting in the wings to start the successful career as a courtesan. Newman, in his
innocence, is attracted by her charm and buys her painting for an enormous sum. Later he understands the truth about her that she is only a flirt ready to trap any man for his money. Newman pities her for her fate and offers to help her poor father Nioche to find money to send her away in marriage. But, he dreadfully realizes how ignorant he is of French manners when Noemie refuses his help and declares her intention to ride the skies in her own way, enchanting men to their doom. Newman can only watch with horror and helplessness even when she provokes his best friend Valentin to fight a duel over her. Knowing her wretchedness, heartlessness and mercenary ways Newman despises her and the only revenge he takes on her is just banishing her out of his mind. He does the same thing towards her father Nioche also who in the beginning had appeared to him as a righteous person very much worried about the loose ways of his daughter, but later proved to be a hypocrite taking much relief in the financial success of his daughter.

Newman experiences another severe trial in his relation with Valentin, Claire's younger brother, and he takes it also mildly with the geniality of a highly civilized man. Newman and Valentin strike a close friendship despite their many differences. Newman, in fact, takes great interest in Valentin, a very promising young man, but made useless and wretched by the manners of French nobility. Valentin's interest in women especially in the tart Noemie greatly offends Newman, but he treats him with the greatest sympathy. Newman loves him so much that he even thinks of shipping him off to
America and turn him into a successful banker. But, then Valentin picks a quarrel with the son of a low German brewer over Noemie. Newman's effort to put some sense into the head of Valentin fails and he fights the duel and sustains a fatal wound. Newman being a good friend endures every thing silently and rushes to the help of Valentin, but he dies leaving Newman in great sorrow.

Newman's voiceless nature of protest and sense of high refinement are very well brought out by the way he takes his greatest disappointment when his love for Claire is quite ruthlessly thwarted by her wicked mother and brother. Newman becomes the happiest man on earth when Claire finally accepts his love. The Bellegardes even celebrate the event with a good party and Newman is introduced to their friends. Meanwhile they also make arrangements to marry Claire off to Lord Deepmere, a distant English cousin of Claire. When she refuses to comply with the plot, her mother and brother cruelly prevent her marriage with Newman and she, fed up with every thing, joins the Carmelites to the utter dismay of Newman. The treachery of the Bellegardes has been beyond the wildest dreams of Newman. Now he finds himself insidiously beguiled and betrayed by persons pretending to represent the highest possible civilization and for the first time a thought of revenge begins to ruffle his hitherto composed mind. He says quite uncharacteristic of his true nature that he has been cruelly wronged and he wants to hurt the Bellegardes who have hurt him.
Newman first tells of his betrayal by the Bellegardes to Valentin after much persuasion. Valentin, who is dying from a fatal physical wound, now receives another wound of a different nature which pains him more. He feels terribly disappointed by the treacherous act of his family and begs Newman's pardon on their behalf. He then tells Newman that Mrs. Bread, the old family servant, will help him in having his revenge. Mrs Bread exposes to Newman the villainy of the old Madame and her elder son and gives him the letter which the late Marquis wrote accusing them of having murdered him. Newman decides to use this letter to cow the Bellegardes down. But to his surprise he finds them nonchalant and unrelenting and he approaches the Duchess intending to seek redress. Her evading and pompous ways fill the mind of Newman with disgust and he leaves for America to soothe his bruised heart, shelving his thoughts of revenge for some time. He then returns to Paris after a few months deciding to stay there for ever.

Newman, immediately after his arrival in Paris, goes to view the lifeless exterior of the Carmelite convent in which Claire has immured herself and expects that the sight will fill him with rage and hatred, but he finds instead that "the barren stillness of the place seemed to be his own release from ineffectual longing" (A.M.321). He realises the folly of standing there making himself a laughing stock. He thinks that it will be a sacrifice as sterile as that of Claire herself. Newman then goes to the Notre Dame Cathedral.
While he rests there, he works himself even more fully beyond the rage which would bind him indefinitely to the role of a helpless avenger: "The most unpleasant thing that had ever happened to him had reached its formal conclusion" (A.M.321); he had learnt his lesson and could now put away the book. "He leaned his head for a long time on the chair in front of him; when he took it up he felt he was himself again. Somewhere in his mind, a tight knot seemed to have loosened. He thought of the Bellegardes; he had almost forgotten them" (A.M.321). Now his recent experience is unpleasant but not teeth-gnashingly horrible, not the bottomless pit into which he had previously felt pushed, emotionally and rhetorically. Newman gains distance on his painful experience by consigning it to a fiction—a book that he can now put away. Newman thus returns to his characteristic equanimity and becomes himself again.

The attainment of control over himself refines Newman. Now, he can be free of the Bellegardes in the most profound sense: free even of the wish to do them harm: "He gave a groan as he remembered what he had meant to do; he was annoyed at having meant to do it; the bottom had suddenly fallen out of his revenge . . . of course, he would let the Bellegardes go" (A.M.322). He no longer wishes to hurt them, all he wants is to banish them from his mind and never think of them again. So, Newman, at the supreme moment turns away from the bitterness of his personal loss yielding to the very force of his aversion. He burns the incriminating document in an act of noble contempt.
and character. By burning the evidence with which he might ruin the Bellegardes Newman proves his superiority to them and affirms the exalted view of the possibilities of human conduct which he and James found wanting in an uncongenial Parisian world. Newman passes an important milestone in his development as an ethically mature person when he decides to forgo vengeance upon the Bellegardes. Though he does not forgive them, he at last develops the capacity to submit to the inexorable logic of life, accepting the inevitable limitations it imposes upon the human will, even, in a sense, making terms with the unconquerable element of evil or perversity in the nature of things. Newman thus rediscovers his moral virtue in an essentially American way and the last view we have of him is that of a strong man indifferent to his strength and too wrapped in fine, too wrapped above all in other and intenser reflections for the assertion of his rights.

Thus Newman by renouncing revenge registers his voiceless protest against his antagonists and achieves a moral victory over them and establishes himself as the first tragic hero of James. As a tragedy The American may be little and voiceless, compared to the high tragedies, yet it remains a tragedy capturing the very essence of a tragedy—the journey of the soul into light through darkness. Being innocent, he is swallowed by the evil of darkness, but in the end he comes out of it by abandoning his thoughts of revenge. Thus he comes to light and attains great tragic height through all his experiences.
The Portrait of a Lady which James wrote in his middle phase is a typical Jamesian tragic novel, in that it is a little and voiceless presentation of the passage of a human soul from innocence to the great tragic height through the experience of evil and suffering. Isabel Archer, the protagonist of The Portrait of a Lady, is a little tragic heroine. She is no Antigone to question the wisdom of the gods or the laws of the state. She cannot also boast of her high pedigree or bewail her cruel fate. Isabel is only a young, charming American girl affronting her destiny in a unique manner of her own. Her life is tragic, but it is the tragedy of everyman. Isabel, in short, is one of us, in her innocence, illusion, experience of evil, suffering and growth. Mrs. Touchett, her aunt, describes Isabel's condition when she first sees her, "I found her in an old house at Albany sitting in a dreary room on a rainy day, reading a heavy book and boring herself to death" (PL. 6). Isabel herself speaks of herself as, "I've neither father nor mother: I'm poor and of a serious disposition; I'm not pretty" (PL. 228). In her younger days she was an ordinary girl satisfied with the little things of life—boubons, bouquets, dancing, new dress, the London Spectator, the latest publications, the music of Gounod, the poetry of Browning and the prose of George Eliot. Her father was a gambler and squandered substantial fortune and was in no way worthy of being the father of a great tragic heroine. So Isabel is only a little person compared to the great heroines of the high tragedies. She is not of divine origin or has any noble blood in her body. She is also no public person involved in great issues
affecting the fate of the people. Isabel is thus a mere orphan, a solitary creature, responsible to no one but herself. So a tragedy revolving round her can only be little in its scope.

Though Isabel hardly resembles a traditional tragic heroine due to her lack of stature and social commitment, James invests her with all the heroic qualities he expects to find in a tragic heroine of his time. Her sense of independence is the first quality that emerges as James unfolds her story. While independence is a quality of American womanhood in the 19th century, Isabel's independence has a strongly personal note about it, inseparable from her intensely romantic and adventurous spirit. What Isabel seeks is a true exploration of life and she wishes to be free of all suggestions and advice. At the very opening of the novel itself James highlights the independent nature of Isabel through the telegram Mrs. Touchett sends her husband "Taken sisters girl . . . quite independent"(PL.13). The idea of Isabel's independent nature is further stressed several times in the novel. She tells Ralph, "I'm not a candidate for adoption . . . I'm very fond of my liberty"(PL.23). When Mrs. Touchet promises to take her to Florence if she does everything she tells her, Isabel retorts, "Do everything you tell me? I don't think I can promise that" (PL.35). Isabel is, as she herself says, always too fond of her ways. She tells Casper Goodwood, her American suitor, "I like my liberty too much. If there is a thing in the world I'm fond of . . . it's my personal independence" (PL.228) and she declares, "I belong quite to the independent class . . . I try to
judge things for myself... I don't wish to be mere sheep in the flock. I wish to choose my fate" (PL.228). Isabel's inordinate desire to be free springs from her total ignorance of evil and this finally leads her to her doom.

Besides a high sense of independence James provides Isabel with a remarkable intelligence and a soaring imagination. James writes that Isabel was called the intellectual among the three sisters. Her father considered her to be 'clever', superior, and remarkable. Edith's (her sister's) suitors were afraid of Isabel—they had a belief that special preparation was required for talking with her. Her reputation for reading a great deal hung about her like the cloudy envelope of a goddess in an epic. She had an immense curiosity about life and was constantly staring and wondering. She carried within herself a great fund of life and her deepest enjoyment was to feel the continuity between the movements of her own soul and the agitation of the world. For this reason she was fond of seeing great crowds and large stretches of lands, of reading about revolution and wars, of looking at historical pictures. Isabel is undoubtedly a young woman of extraordinary profundity being a prodigy of learning endowed with a finer mind. Isabel is also gifted with a high imagination and that is a corollary of her remarkable intelligence. As a young girl, the feeding ground of her imagination has been the library of her grandmother's house in Albany, an idyllic place in every sense. James comments about Isabel's imagination, "Her imagination was by habit ridiculously active; when the door was not open, it jumped out of the window.
She was not accustomed to keep it behind bolts"(PL.42). On another occasion James writes, "The girl had a certain nobleness of imagination which rendered her a good many services and played her a great many tricks. She spent half her time in thinking of beauty and bravery and magnanimity; she had a fixed determination to regard the world as a place of brightness, of free expansion, of irresistible action"(PL.68). Thus James presents Isabel as the loveliest and the most appealing of his heroines though she may be little compared to the traditional tragic heroines. Isabel's independent spirit, and her being too young, too impatient to live, too unacquainted with pain and her near total ignorance of evil make her a very worthy candidate for tragic experience according to the Jamesian norm of tragedy.

Isabel's thirst for independence and infinite growth is put to the severest test at the time of her courtship. She rejects her two worthy suitors, Caspar Goodwood and Lord Warburton for fear that they will curtail her freedom and draw her into their own system. She selects Gilbert Osmond to be her husband whom she conceives of as a man without any system but inclined to respect her freedom. But she finds herself terribly deceived after her marriage. James builds up the history of Isabel's mistake carefully and gradually and finally gives the reader a full statement of her tragic fallibility in her all-night vigil. What first emerges from Isabel's analysis of the failure of her marriage is the real character of Osmond. She has indeed found him to be a deadly fiend bent upon reducing her to be an object of art, possessing her
heart and soul. She also thinks of her motives for marrying him, and how the
two have deceived each other. The final outcome of her vigil is her total
disillusionment with Osmond and her life in general.

What makes the tragedy of Isabel voiceless is her response to her
suffering. Isabel's nobility, at odds with her circumstances, is never affected
even under the severest pain. Even when she sees her life cheated and drained
and violated, she does not curse any one or blame her fate. She takes the
responsibility for her failure on her own shoulders and tries to adjust herself to
her life of suffering. Her initial reaction to Osmond's grasping nature is a very
humorous, ironic and tender one and then it becomes one of passionate plea.
But, however much she suffers she never allows any body to see it. She
conceals her suffering so well that Caspar tells her, "I cannot penetrate
you"(PL.318). Isabel tells Henrietta, "I can't publish my mistakes . . . I'd
much rather die"(PL.284). Ralph finds Isabel wearing a mask hiding her true
feelings and he observes that she appears to have succumbed to the worldly
view of her husband and acquired a formal and false persona. Isabel, unlike a
traditional tragic heroine tries her utmost never to exhibit her saddest feelings
and the result is a voiceless tragedy.

The attitude of Isabel towards her exploiters also contributes to making
*The Portrait of a Lady* a voiceless tragedy. In a traditional tragedy, the rule is
an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Revenge forsaken is a sign of
cowardice in such a tragedy and a hero justifies himself to his title by his act of vengeance over his antagonists. But Isabel never cherishes a feeling of revenge towards either Madame Merle or Gilbert Osmond who have deliberately plotted against her to gain her money.

Madame Merle is an arca betrayer and her treachery against Isabel is unforgivable, she being Isabel's friend and confidante. According to James the worst sin is trying to shape other's destiny through manipulation and Madame Merle commits that sin by tampering with the life of Isabel for her selfish gains; precisely to provide amusement to her erstwhile lover and a loving and rich mother to her daughter Pansy. Isabel realises how wicked her trusted friend has been when she fails to win Lord Warburton for Pansy. Madame Merle, for the first time in her life, loses her composure in front of Isabel, and expresses her anger, displeasure and disappointment. She even explicitly states that she has played a great role in bringing her close to Osmond and she still enjoys some influence on him. The mystery of Merle's relationship with Osmond is further exposed by Osmond's own sister, Conn tess Gemini. She tells Isabel that they have been old lovers and Pansy is Merle's daughter via Osmond. She also tells Isabel that she has been the victim of a plot and Merle had married her to Osmond for her money. Isabel is shocked but the illumination strengthens her. When Isabel meets Merle for the last time at Pansy's convent, Merle flounders in front of her and Isabel gains her ascendancy over her. Isabel's knowledge is power here because it
allows her to transform her situation by engaging it practically by confronting Merle rather than fleeing from her or submitting to her passively. For example, when Merle attempts to regain the epistemological upper hand by claiming to know "at bottom" (PL.388) Ralph is to blame for Isabel's marriage because he gave her his inheritance, Isabel shows herself willing to fight back if she needs to. Asserting the full force of her ascendancy, Isabel vanquishes Merle with the reply: "I believed it was you I had to thank" (PL.389). Though Isabel proves herself equal to Merle in wit and resourcefulness in the end, she refuses the temptation to take revenge on her. Countess Gemini advises Isabel to be "nasty and feel a little wicked for the comfort of it" (PL.371) but, unlike the heroine in a high tragedy, a Jamesian tragic heroine cannot indulge in revenge as it only belittles her and makes her barbaric. Isabel can only pity Merle for her fate and for what she has done. Merle's disappointments in life appeal to Isabel's compassion and she thinks of her as an ill-rewarded accomplice and as an unloved mother. Osmond has cruelly made use of her and as Merle herself says he has dried up her soul and eyes. Pansy, on her part, doesn't recognize her to be her mother and hates her. Thus in resisting the temptation for a defiant revenge and in forgiving Merle and allowing her to choose a punishment for herself—exiling herself to America—Isabel proves herself to be a worthy tragic heroine of James.

Isabel's response to Osmond's villainy and her final return to him also testify to the voiceless nature of *The Portrait of a Lady* as a tragedy. Isabel
tries her best to keep her relationship with Osmond without any serious harm in spite of her disillusionment with him as she has a great faith in the sanctity of matrimonial alliance. When she contemplates an open rupture with Osmond in the event of his forbidding her to visit Ralph's sick room in Rome, she tells herself that almost any thing is preferable to repudiating the most serious act of the single sacred act of her life and still later she tells Henrietta who advises her to leave Osmond that one must accept one's deeds. She had married him before all the world and she was perfectly free and it was impossible to do anything more deliberate. Osmond himself invokes the same principle in his attempt to prevent her journey to Gardencourt to the dying Ralph. He reminds her that their marriage was their own deliberate making and they should accept the consequences of their action. As Osmond speaks in the name of something sacred and precious, Isabel's sense of justice is deeply touched and she prefers to stay at home and not to be by the bedside of her dying cousin disobeying her husband. But she finally decides to act and goes to Gardencourt when Countess Gemini exposes to her the plot of Merle and Osmond.

Isabel faces the greatest temptation of her life at the end of the novel after the death of Ralph when Caspar Goodwood appears before her and offers her a new life. But his offer though it initially attracts Isabel, becomes repulsive as she realises that his world is one of all consuming passion and an acceptance of it would only mean a throwing overboard of all the experiences
and insights she has received through her suffering. So she tells him that the world is very small in response to his enthusiastic invitation to her into his life, "We can do absolutely as we please . . . . The world's all before us, and the world's very big" (PL.435). Enlightened as she is by her plunge into evil and suffering Isabel knows that the world's very small for her and "there was a very straight path" (PL.436) and that is to return to the lives of Osmond and Pansy. She feels that being responsible to one's fate and forgiving others is the best from of revenge. Isabel thus gains in height and vision at the end of the story by her resoluteness and resignation which she achieves by mastering herself. She thus becomes a lady with all that it means and implies. Refinement of a sensibility, expansion of consciousness and the realization of one's self are the hallmarks of a Jamesian tragic novel. Isabel attains all these when she traverses her dark alley of suffering and comes to the light of reality. Her renunciation to escape from Osmond and of happiness with Goodwood is a triumph of her idealism; it avows the supreme dignity of the human being. James does nothing to minimize the suffering with which Isabel must spend the rest of her life, but he suggests that the acquired wisdom, the expansion of consciousness, represents a development far higher not only than her life in America but higher than her life with Warburton and Goodwood might have been. Thus The Portrait of a Lady is also a typical Jamesian tragic novel, which though voiceless and little, embodies in itself the very essence of tragedy.
The novel *The Wings of the Dove* reveals life to be an all consuming tragic passion. All the characters in it are caught in the tragic passion it celebrates. The world mercifully gives Milly life, hope, love and even money enabling her to envision the complete life but at the same time it makes it impossible for her to attain them fully leading to a harrowing sense of immense waste. Kate Croy and Merton Densher, the other two important characters in the novel, are also seared in the fire of suffering. Thus the world of *The Wings of the Dove* is a world which is enlightened and ennobled by suffering but which is also ruined and consumed by it. And it is this consuming passion, the tribute of devotion joined with the betrayal, that the novel exacts. Though *The Wings of the Dove* in its portrayal of the passion of an innocent soul on its way to the realisation of its self and the world around it is a typical Jamesian tragedy, recreating the fall of the innocent Adam and his rise to a better life, it cannot be compared to a traditional tragedy. *The Wings of the Dove* obviously lacks the amplitude, sweep and dignity of a high tragedy. Nevertheless, it can be considered as a voiceless little tragedy, Milly around whom the story revolves being reticent and reserved in her person and in her reaction towards things happening to her. In this novel also James strikes the chords of renunciation, resignation, refinement and inner triumph in the face of outer defeat very much keeping with the spiritual beauty of his American epoch.
Milly Theale is a total misfit to be the heroine of a traditional tragedy. She comes on to the scene as an orphan and wanderer, an exotic among the English and a merely amused spectator when among the Americans. She has no parents, no friends, or relatives and she has to seek the company of a stranger, Susan Shepherd Stringham, to accompany her to Europe. Thus Milly is the most absolute of orphans created by James fated to bloom alone. Susan finds her to be a young girl of twenty two, slim, constantly pale, delicately haggard and very much unlike the heroine of a high tragedy wearing remarkably black clothes. Milly is also starved for culture and totally ignorant of evil. As a result when the story opens Milly is socially and morally quite immature. She is also physically stricken with a fatal disease, a disease which has taken away all her near ones. Milly is also condemned to die under a short respite and her doctor gives her only "a great rare chance." So Milly is a potential victim for exploiters—a young person so devoted and exposed, a creature with her security hanging so by a hair, with every chance to fall into some abysmal trap. A tragedy based on a heroine like Milly is quite unconceivable for a traditional tragedian. For him there is nothing dignified in Milly who is not high born or whose life is not in any way connected with the fate of the masses. Milly is just a solitary individual for him who is concerned only with her personal growth and refinement.

But Milly becomes, in the hands of James, a worthy tragic heroine, a female prototype of the American Adam, with her innocence, desire for
experience and knowledge and the readiness to be responsible for the consequences of her action. Milly is, in spite of her poor health, a great heiress with a pile of money behind her back. James presents all his protagonists as not having to work for their daily bread. As a result of this all of them are free to pursue their ultimate goal, namely the expansion of their soul with an exploration of Europe which finally turns out to be an exploration of their soul. Milly is rich and it is a very positive quality about her. It gives her freedom, immense freedom to do whatever she likes. She needs to ask nobody for anything, to refer nothing to any one and for her, her freedom and her fancy are her laws. She becomes a success and the darling of the Lancastrian folk because of her money. She is also deceived and betrayed by them just because she is rich. And finally, Milly wins a decisive moral victory over her deceivers on the ground of her being rich. The bequest of her wealth to Densher whom she loves and who deceives her makes Milly a typical Jamesian tragic heroine as it brings out her magnanimity and sense of refinement. Thus wealth plays a major role in making Milly's charisma so special. Nowhere else has James used it as so charming a force constituting a major element of one's power, that confers one the freedom to exercise one's imagination and feelings. Milly's wealth opens before her a great rare chance to live and also a great abyss of complexities forcing upon her a great challenge to her innocent existence totally lacking a vision of evil.
Besides being rich Milly is also proud, imaginative and endowed with a great desire to experience life just like the other Jamesian tragic protagonists. Her pride forbids her to reveal the precarious condition of her health to anyone. Pride, in fact, is the fatal flaw of Milly. Her infernal pride causes her to turn down help when she most needs it. She will not speak of her illness or expose herself to the pity of those around her. Milly is also highly imaginative and she dreams of a normal life in spite of all the odds against her. She, in her effort to live is ready even to play the role of a dove or a princess as desired by her admirers. Milly's inordinate desire to live and experience life is a remarkable Jamesian tragic trait. She goes too far out to find a life of her own. In the Alps, empowered by her active imagination and her wealth, she surveys the kingdoms of the earth. Like Kate Croy she declares that she wants everything and goes down in order to take full in the face the whole assault of life. She manifests again and again her determination to return to reality from the seductively free realm of abstract possibilities to come back and embrace the fate she is making for herself. By carefully taking up her destiny Milly at one stroke transforms abstract into concrete potentiality, desire into decision, vision into action. The Lancastrian folk provide her with an experience of life which, though it crushes her, opens her to the light of reality and makes her a fuller person. Thus Milly, though doomed to live fast as she is stricken with a fatal disease, achieves a sense of having lived, however short the life is.
The two images that James uses to present Milly, the image of the dove and that of the princess, also bring out his conception of a tragic heroine. Both these images reveal the heroine and emphasize the paradoxical nature of her position which is the essence of her tragedy. They also add to the story of Milly certain common association of thought and feeling which tend to universalize it. The image of the dove is suggestive of Milly's innocence, beauty, wealth, weakness and her capacity to be beguiled. It is therefore appropriate that this analogy comes from the realistic imagination of Kate who looks upon Milly as her potential victim. But, it must be kept in mind that the image of the dove is used by James to bring out Milly's power as well. That is the main reason why James draws our attention to the wings of the dove in the title. Densher observes when Milly makes her triumphant appearance before her guests in her Venitian palace, attired in white with a necklace of pearls around her neck, "that doves have wings and wondrous flights have them as well as tender tints and soft sounds." It even comes to him dimly that such wings could in a given case spread themselves to give protection. Thus the wing image, in so far as it implies "wondrous flights" signifies the effortless superiority of Milly to earthly forces. Milly is as innocent as a dove but also as powerful as one as is implied by its wings. Thus if the mainspring of the novel's plot is the relationship of Kate and Densher and their scheme to deceive Milly to achieve their own union, the central theme of the novel emerges as the power of the wings of the dove on
human nature. It is this power that makes things turn out quite differently from Kate's calculations. Even though Densher is basically an idealist, the change in him is certainly immense. He gives up Kate for whom he stooped to play the sordid game. The image of Milly as a princess is also paradoxical in nature. She is a princess in the sense Alexander Selkirk is a monarch. Being abandoned in an uninhabited island Alexander feels that he is the monarch of all that he surveys. Similarly, left alone in the world by all her relatives who have been struck down by a fatal disease and falling heir to all their wealth, Susan her friend looks upon Milly as a princess. But, the empire Milly presides over is one of emptiness and solitude. She is a princess who loses everything—love, even at last the illusion of love, even life itself. Thus the title princess underscores the irony of Milly's tragedy. But just like the image of the dove, it also embodies the power of Milly. After her death Milly begins her reign as an undisputable princess. She conquers the soul of Densher and becomes the princess of his affection thereby achieving a great victory over her defeat. Thus the little Milly rises to be a great tragic heroine of James having gained a mastery over life through her experience of evil and suffering.

Just like the other Jamesian tragedies The Wings of the Dove is also a voiceless tragedy. It owes its voiceless nature to the disposition of Milly to be reticent about the things and events happening to her. Milly is in the grip of a mortal disease but, the readers are given no specific idea about her illness
chiefly owing to her nature to be silent about it. We can be sure that if Kate were ill all the world would know exactly what she was ill of. But we are not sure whether Milly is dying of cancer, tuberculosis or any other dreaded disease. She predicts early that she could die without its being noticed and in a sense, this is what she achieves. To the end, as Kate observes, she does not smell of drugs. The nature of her disease remains a mystery between Milly and her doctor. Milly knows that an active romantic life is next to an impossibility for her. But she determines to live as her doctor advises her by option and by volition. The doctor offers her the beauty of a great adventure, a big dim experiment or struggle, in which she might, more responsibly than ever take a hand. But, her adventure and struggle are fated to be voiceless as they are mostly confined to the world of her soul with very little external action.

Milly comes to Lancaster Gate, London, in search of life, love and adventure. She is prepared to suffer pain, confusion and humiliation and finally total deprivation and loss for their sake, but she will never let any body know the wrenchings of her soul. Milly loves Densher and very much wishes to share her life with him. It has been an acquaintance she had picked up in her bereaved state in New York and now she places much hope on it. But the realisation that Densher loves Kate drives a golden nail into her heart but Milly conceals it from every one. She never speaks to Kate about her familiarity with Densher and Kate also keeps absolute silence about the affair.
Milly sees in Kate a great rival who can virtually excel her in everything except wealth. Kate is handsome, has a remarkable social grace and a great talent for life. She also enjoys robust health which Milly evidently lacks. Milly makes no attempt to push Kate out of the way in her effort to win the love of Densher. She loves Kate even when suspicions of her intentions rise in her mind. Milly always waits for a chance to arrange things for her and contents herself making certain enquiries about Densher's relationship with Kate. For example, she meets Mrs. Condrip, Kate's sister, and learns from her that they will never allow Kate to marry Densher as he is poor. Aunt Maud and even Susan lie before her that Kate does not love Densher. Milly takes comfort in these assurances from others and never dares to ask Kate about her true feelings for Densher. She rather willingly allows herself to be deceived to preserve her rather tenuous hold on life. She knows that she cannot have a row with Kate over Densher and plays the gracious role of an innocent American girl when she finds evidences contrary to her wishes. Kate shrewdly realizes Milly's position and gauds Densher to play the role of a lover for Milly and even marry her if she wishes with the evil intention of inheriting her money after her death which she feels is imminent. Densher obliges the wish of everybody to stay with Milly in Venice and Milly is much relieved by his company.
Milly's passion for Densher is also rather a voiceless one rendering *The Wings of the Dove* a voiceless tragedy. Her love for Densher is never erotic or violent though it is deep and the only thing that sustains her. What she wants to fulfil in her relationship with Densher is her innate desire to love and be loved. So Milly chooses an ancient Venitian palace where history and romance dovetail to enact her silent love for Densher. She pities Densher for his unrequited love for Kate and treats him with the mildness of a dove and the graciousness of a princess. She communes with him in silence, in nods, in smiles and brief sentences. Densher remains always passive, his mind filled with his sensuous love for Kate, but he finally realizes that he has acted through his inaction and talked through his silence. Milly takes the love of Densher to be very sincere and never expects him to deceive her.

The way Milly reacts when she realizes that she has been the victim of a plot and that everyone including Densher has been trying to deceive her also contributes to making *The Wings of the Dove* a voiceless tragedy. It is Lord Mark, out of his spite for Densher, who exposes the plot against Milly. He tells Milly that Densher and Kate are engaged to be married and Densher's love for her is only a pretence to gain her money. This revelation certainly shatters the soul of Milly but she does not rave or rant. She does not even curse Densher or wail like Othello, "Farewell content:/ Farewell the plumed troops and the big wars/ That make ambition Virtue! O, farewell!"(Act III, Scene III). Milly does only one thing; she turns her face to the wall. Her
action is emblematic of her voiceless reaction. She refuses to see any one, abandons her desire to live and spends her days staring at the light of her illuminations. Finally, Dr. Luke Strett, her physician and counsellor arrives and helps her see everything in the right perspective. She calls Densher who has been wandering in Venice feeling guilty of his terrible deed and begs him to leave Venice allowing her to face her last moments alone. Milly accepts everything silently and in fact feels better for what she has been able to learn about life in the brief time allotted to her.

James as a tragedian gives no place to revenge in his novels. He rather regards it as something bestial and places in its stead the divine qualities of compassion and forgiveness. Milly also exemplifies in her person this trait in James and thereby remains voiceless in her treatment of her betrayers compared to the protagonists of conventional tragedies who challenge and murder their enemies. Her heroism of self-denial unto death brings her to assert a higher form of gratification—in generosity, forgiveness and sacrifice. She respects in Kate and Densher the happiness that she has been denied and, to guarantee their union beyond risk, she leaves Densher her immense fortune. She loves him still. Her gesture is to repay him for all his past kindness and attention, and to give her friend Kate the chance that she herself has missed. Densher realizing too late his unworthy double-faced attitude towards Milly—even though it has not been entirely his fault—looks for his own redemption by rejecting the fortune and success at which Kate is
so overjoyed. He refuses to marry her unless they give up the inherited money; he has fallen in love with the memory of the dove whose wings, in their symbolic leap toward death, have outstretched for a new flight and now cover him. And so Milly is victorious, at last, receiving the love that she could not obtain whilst alive.

Thus just like Newman and Isabel Milly also becomes triumphant in her defeat. Her encounter with evil and the suffering that breeds it lead to the growth and expansion of her consciousness and provide her with a new awareness of life. As a result she becomes a morally mature person. She also achieves a refinement of her sensibility through the exercise of her finer feelings of compassion and forgiveness. More than all by finding a permanent place in the heart of Densher she finally fulfils also her greatest desire to be loved by him. Thus the life of Milly which is essentially tragic culminates in a great celebration of life, which is, in fact, what every true tragedy does.

The Ambassadors, the finest of James's mature novels, is also a voiceless little tragedy like the other three novels we have already seen. The protagonist of this novel, Lambert Strether, can hardly be compared with a great tragic hero like Oedipus. Strether is a middle aged man, with the prime of his life stretching behind him like a barren desert. He is neither favoured by fortune nor supported by success. He has lost both his wife and his only child and he often reflects in anguish and sorrow on his misfortunes and
failures. He confesses to Maria Gostrey at the outset of the novel that he is "a perfectly equipped failure." To the people of Woollet, a Massachusetts' manufacturing town, where he belongs, he is known only as the editor of a quarterly magazine called Review, subsidized by Mrs. Newsome, the awesome widow who owns both the town and the quarterly. What makes Strether totally unfit to be the hero of a high tragedy is his breeding in Woollett, the heartland of New England puritanism. It has to a very great extent warped his personality. His prejudice, intolerance, narrow mindedness, smugness and fear of experience can all be traced back to his limiting puritan milieu. So, in the opening pages of the novel, we find Strether as the very incarnation of the New England conscience. Just like his compatriots he also shares their view on Paris as a place where people's moral scheme does break down and believes like any of them that Chad is held back in Paris by a charming prostitute.

Strether has not lived a life of his own while he has been at Woollett. He has been too dependent on Mrs. Newsome for everything. He has owed his identity as a public person to the quarterly she subsidized and has ever been indebted to her for his daily sustenance. We can never imagine a traditional tragic hero playing the demeaning role of an ambassador to his mistress. But, Strether does it, that too willingly, expecting the hand of Mrs. Newsome as a reward for his services. Strether realizes his incompetency and the great havoc wrought on his person by the Woollett
culture once he sets his feet on the European soil. James very fittingly describes Strether at this stage as a child, he being socially and morally infantile. He then depends on another woman, Maria Gostrey, to lead him by the hand. She weans him from his misconceptions and guides his steps as he holds on by her garment until he is ready to toddle alone. A character like Strether who wants a petticoat to hang on in his various ordeals in life can never be a worthy candidate for the sceptre of a traditional tragic hero. He can only be the protagonist of a Jamesian voiceless, little tragedy.

Though Strether obviously lacks the dignity and glamour of a traditional tragic protagonist, James endows him with all the traits he expects of a tragic hero of his. In the eyes of James Strether is yet another unfallen Adam in the line of Christopher Newman, Isabel Archer and Milly Theale. He is innocent, ignorant of evil, open, imaginative, highly perceptive and blessed with a high sense of morality. He is also an orphan and financially free as Mrs. Newsome is there to support him. So like all other tragic protagonists of James Strether is also at liberty to pursue the expansion of his soul once he is out of Woollett. Though life in Woollett has prevented the natural growth of Strether's mind with its insistence of cloistered innocence and its own prejudiced view of things and persons, Strether feels himself liberated from its restricting influence once he lands in Europe. He becomes a changed man at the first note of Europe and begins to experience a feeling of refreshing ease and even harmony. He slowly grows out of his Woollett
notions and decides to see and judge things on his own. So, Strether opens up a new chapter in his life in Europe and his past appears to recede from him into the limbo of forgetfulness. James comments on Strether's feelings of his own rejuvenation, "He had never expected—that was the truth of it—again to find himself young, and all the years and other things it had taken to make him so were exactly his present arithmetic" (AMB.57). Strether's consciousness opens out in all its sensitive fullness responding to the myriad impressions of life in Europe and reflecting on the significance of these impressions. For the first time in his life, the middle aged Strether tastes the thrill of involvement in experience.

Woollett has been able to stifle Strether's desire for experience and adventure but it has not been able to kill it altogether. It emerges with a redoubled force under the congenial atmosphere in Europe and it is implied in the impulse which prompts him to delay his encounter with Waymarsh, a puritan friend of his who is to accompany him in his ambassadorial mission. Strether longs for a private understanding of new experiences—a consciousness of personal freedom something which he had not known for years. So Strether submits himself to his impressions and decides to float on their stream. He is overwhelmed by a great desire to live but finds himself unable to do it with only a few more years remaining for him to live. When he urges little Bilham to 'live' his conviction of wasted time is made acute by his appreciation of Chad's fulfilment. He sees Chad and the young Jeanne de
Vionnett in the beautiful garden of Golriani and taking them to be lovers sees in them his missed youth and lost opportunities. Now unable to live actively and immediately he can live only passively. He is not however, experiencing life in a merely vicarious way. Through seeing and through understanding, he does have his life.

As any other Jamesian tragic hero Strether is also immensely imaginative and perceptive. He has a rare genius to form impressions about persons and things. The settings that crucially affect Strether's consciousness are not so much objective public settings in Paris as those that his prodigious imagination creates out of the not very—Parisian scenes before him. He has a great capacity for intense reflection and he forges a series of mental settings, and his sense of the richness and value of places and persons issue chiefly from the self created scenes and only in a lesser way from the tangible reality of Paris. What he sees is impressive enough, but what moves his consciousness is a fanciful version of it. He converts what he sees into what he likes to see and invents a backdrop that exists no more. Strether gets himself deceived and betrayed by vain appearances because of his inherent trait to be moved by impressions. The social grace of Chad and the beauty and elegance of Madame de Vionnet, for example, make Strether impervious to the reality about them. He takes Paris to be a land of wonder and is easily carried away by its external charm. In short, Strether makes a grave mistake by equating external charm to good. This is a mistake most of the tragic
protagonists of James make and suffer from. But, just like any of them, Strether also takes up the entire responsibility for his failings, qualifying himself to the crown of a tragic hero.

What makes a conventional tragedy so full of sound and fury is the rebellious nature of its hero. A traditional tragic hero challenges his fate, questions the gods and engages in the liquidation of his enemies. But a Jamesian hero never loses his composure when he is buffeted by the vicissitudes of life. He takes the offence against his person in a very silent and voiceless manner, often forgiving his enemies rather than exterminating them. Deceit and betrayal make him reflective and aloof and he uses such experiences for a perfect examination of his conscience. Finally the Jamesian hero emerges out of his shattering experiences with a mature vision about himself and the world around him.

Strether finds himself deceived by all. He realizes that Mrs. Newsome, with her puritan notions has been hindering his growth as a fuller human being. Her refusal to believe his reports about Paris and Madame de Vionnett and her beneficial influence on Chad, creates a great dent in their relationship and finally Strether separates from her for ever. However, he bears no grudge against her and forgives her for her cruel intervention in his life which has been responsible for rendering it barren and deprived of joy. Strether finds himself betrayed also by Maria Gostrey, his
mentor in Europe, who had pledged him all help in the successful carrying out of his mission. When Strether needs her help and guidance most, oblivious of her promise, she leaves him alone to grope in the darkness. Strether grows magnanimous enough to ignore her breach of promise and continues to love her as before. But, he graciously refuses the offer of her hand in marriage to him. Strether forgives his young little friend Bilham who has told him the flat lie that the relationship between Chad and Madame de Vionnet is a virtuous one on the ground that he had only behaved like a true gentleman. The deception of Chad and Madame de Vionnet stupefy Strether, but his experiences in Paris so broaden his mind that he is moved by pity for Marie for her pathetic plight. Marie becomes for him a most pitiable creature, a love-lorn creature languishing in pain for her young man. Strether even promises to save her, but the cruelty of Chad who has been victimizing her all these years discomposes him a little. Strether finally realizes that Chad, whom he once wished to be, is the most wicked of all. Chad tells him openly that he is tired of Madame de Vionnet and he wants to go back to Woollett to take up the advertising business. Europe has just been a holiday toy for him to be discarded at will. So, at the end of the novel Strether finds himself in a terrible fix. But he does not rail at any one or curse any one. Having attained a thorough knowledge about human affairs, he remains voiceless but remarkably alert and alive internally. He realizes that born as men are to sin no man is completely exempt from the generic stains of the human race.
Human weakness does no more provoke Strether's contempt, but gains in his sympathy and understanding which enables one to view life objectively and dispassionately, without depriving oneself either the heights, or the depths of life.

Strether's changed perceptions lead him away from the safety not only of the Woollett creed but with it of an opulent future with Mrs. Newsome. But Strether scrupulously avoids being swayed by such personal considerations and this precisely is part of his distinction. This is, as he realizes, the refinement of his supreme scruple—that he wishes to leave out of the account what he himself may forfeit and to do every thing for the sake of lucidity alone. It is why he leaves when Maria Gostrey falls in love with him and at the end all but offers herself as a substitute for the lady he has lost. Since it is his only logic not to have got any thing for himself out of the whole affair, he must go "to be right" [AMB.438]. Here Strether echoes Isabel's final words before her return to her fiendish husband," as seems right".

Any tragedy, whether a traditional one or a modern one, becomes worthy of its kind, only when it portrays its protagonist as coming to light after his perilous and precarious journey through life. He gets bruised and lacerated in the process of living, but he is rewarded with an expansion of his consciousness which finally liberates him and gives him a great sense of ease and freedom. It is this aspect of tragedy which makes it a celebration of life
despite all the sufferings it entails. Looked at from this point of view *The Ambassadors* is also a great celebration of life despite all the losses sustained by Strether. Like the old man Santiago Strether goes too far out into the sea and is punished for his excessive zeal to experience life. But he evidently attains a moral victory over his defeat by what he learns and gains.

Though Strether tells Miss Gostrey that he is returning to America empty-handed, he is conscious of the large imaginative experience he has had in Europe; his sympathies have been widened and his understanding deepened. Strether sees, as Courtney observes, "the interconnectedness of things—with himself included in the tapestry—with remarkable composure, so much so that, knowing what it feels like to be part of things, yet not so much a part of them as to be obsessed with them, he remains compassionately self-sufficient, stable and calm." For James living is awareness by which he means the ability to look beyond one's immediate surroundings into the absolute, infinite light. Strether is illuminated in the end by an aura of awareness and acceptance. He is no longer merely an observer separated from life. During the six months of his stay in Paris, Strether, in the fullest sense of the word, lives and gets involved in the lives of others. Chad, Madame de Vionnet, Maria Gostrey, Sarah and even Mrs. Newsome are all subject to an objective and discriminating study in the mind of Strether. He also evaluates the two opposing systems as represented so vividly by Mrs Newsome and Madame de Vionnet. As a result of his study and evaluation Strether finally
realizes the truth about everything and emerges as a free and independent person. The sense of freedom that Strether enjoys at the end of the novel despite all the losses and suffering he endures is essentially tragic by nature and it is the thing that makes a tragedy enduring. At the close of the novel as Courtney observes Strether is able to look out "into absolute, infinite light." He sees no longer in a limited, but in a limitless way. He attains a complete vision of life and feels content, and fulfilled with a strong awareness of his personal triumph. Nevertheless, Strether knows that he is going back "to a great difference," but he is not despondent about his future; at least he knows that, "I shall see what I can make of it." Thus Strether comes to the end of the story just like any tragic hero—materially diminished but spiritually enriched.

The study of the four representative novels of James namely, *The American*, *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Wings of the Dove* and *The Ambassadors* in this chapter exposes the truth how the Jamesian novels are essentially tragic by nature though they are little and voiceless compared to the high tragedies of the past. It has also been seen that the novels of James remain little and voiceless as a result of the altered position of man in the universe and the altered concept about man himself. Being a member of a democratic world, with kings and kingdoms having receded into the world of the oblivion and with science and psychology holding the sway, there is no scope today for a tragic protagonist to steal the show by a display of bravado. So it is very necessary for a modern writer to focus on the inner world of the
protagonist. This shift of focus from the wide external world of events to the inner world of the person's soul, tracing his reflections, expansion of his consciousness and his attainment of moral maturity and refinement tends to make Jamesian novels little and voiceless. But, in all essence, they remain tragedies as they portray the agony and ecstasy of the human soul as it traverses from a state of innocence to a state of knowledge experiencing great tussles and passions enroute.
NOTES


2 Ibid., 85.


5 Henry James, *The American* (London: Penguin Group, 1995) 87. (All future references to this novel will be given parenthetically with the abbreviated form AM)

6 Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady* (New York: Random House, 1951) (All future references to this novel will be given parenthetically with the abbreviated form PL)

8 Henry James, *The Ambassadors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) 30. (All further references to this novel will be given parenthetically with the abbreviated form AMB)


10 *Henry James and the Evolution of Consciousness* 41.