In the vast amount of critical attention devoted to the novels and short fiction of Henry James, narrative technique has taken second place to 'larger thematic' and biographical concerns. Therefore an attempt is made in this chapter to focus attention on the technical aspects of some of James's 'masterly brevitys'.

Believing that technique can best be seen through a close textual analysis of the kind usually directed to poetry, six tales have been selected for this kind of analysis. They are also categorized into anecdotes, parables and nouvelles. Through this kind of rigorous selection, the manifold subtleties of James's method can be fully appreciated. The tales are analyzed in a way which exhibit, two main narrator methods: First Person and Omniscient—Author. The differences in tone, style and structure between the two methods, and how James attempted to transcend the pitfalls of each is also discussed. James made the subject determine the kind of persona he chose in each case in which he controlled each narrator in the development of the tale. What James called 'operative irony' is discussed in all of its interesting variations. This enables the reader to have a full picture of the general function of a Jamesian narrator, which helps in understanding how James achieves the effects he did and his reason for wanting those particular effects, always in terms of the work itself. The 'point of view' method of analysis is also discussed from a different angle.
First Person Narrative Method:

**Anecdote:** During his saw dust and orange-peel phase James deliberately concentrated on the writing of tales as opposed to novels. This partiality in favor of shorter lengths continued for a few years after the debacle of *Guy Domville* in 1895, so that between 1888 and 1900 there is the greatest concentration of James's tales several of which belong to the category of anecdotes of which one is *Europe.*

Ostensibly *Europe* (1899) may strike one as a variation on the themes of *A Passionate Pilgrim* and *The Four Meetings.* In *A Passionate Pilgrim* the anglomania of its hero was the reverse side of his alienation from his native land. In *The Four Meetings* the emphasis shifts to an innocent New Englander whose catastrophe is caused not so much by the Europe she adores as by her own innocence, which makes her vulnerable and yet ultimately triumphant in a puzzling way. In *Europe* the longing for Europe on the part of the three of its four characters is even more acute than that of Caroline Spencer. Its origin too is the same-only Americans, and more especially New Englanders, James seems to imply, could possibly have this intensity for their old home. But the drama here is acted out within the confines of a family. *Europe* becomes a symbol of liberation, a force that works only with partial success against the "bland" from the 'antique', Mrs. Rimmle who herself becomes a symbol of life denying Puritanism. The three daughters are shown as
hopelessly caught between the two elemental forces of life and death, Europe and Mrs. Rimmle.

Europe is much shorter than A Passionate Pilgrim and The Four Meetings, but the situation is more complex. The narrator of A Passionate Pilgrim has to deal with a character who is rather simple. He depicts the pathetic hero through a series of similar situations. In The Four Meetings again the focus is on one character, all others being subsidiary. The neatness of the tale, more over comes from a process of elimination and the resulting streamlined structure. The heroine of The Four Meetings is more complex than Clement Searle, and her character is revealed progressively, so that there is greater movement in the tale. The narrator of Europe has to deal with four characters of almost equal importance. Despite their apparent solidarity, they are in unrecognized mental hostility, the mother on one side and the three daughters on the other, who have to be further distinguished, one from the other so as not to form a mere block of character. The narrator’s sympathy is with the daughters, but in order to do proper justice to the story he has to devote even greater attention to the portrayal of the mother, who to make the task still more difficult, is an unsympathetic character. The form of narration adopted is not a dramatic rendering of all the important conversations he has with the various members of the Rimmle family or his own sister—in—law. Furthermore, for the proper effect, the narrator must also tackle the
problem of geographically and culturally placing his characters. All this material has to be compressed into a short space without more than a minimum loss of all the inherent values of the situation. Europe consequently is a much more concentrated composition. The coach, to use an expressive Jamesian image is full, and the coach in which he has to maneuver his turn, very narrow. Success lies in achieving that turn without spilling any passenger or displacing any parcel.4

The tale opens with a sentence from a conversation among the members of the Rimmlle family whom the narrator is visiting.

"Our feeling is you know that Becky should go." (XVI, 341) The conversation is picked up again some five pages later. In the intervening space, the narrator furnishes the necessary background details, the geographical location of his characters, which, one later realizes, is important. The background of the family, a concentrated account of Mrs. Rimmlle's own visit to Europe, and the resulting crop of mementos and memories upon which her three daughters have been fed ever since; an impression of Mrs. Rimmlle; an impression of the three daughters and the features that distinguish one from the other; the context of the conversations from which the opening sentence of the tale comes. This is an impressive amount of data and the narrator has to exercise an extra-ordinary degree of control so that each word carries full significance. The conversation, which resumed, is carried through three pages or so until the end of the first section. It brings out
the intensity of the girl's desire to 'go' and their inordinate sense of filial duty, their puritanical conscience which is in conflict with that desire.

The outcome of the conversation is the decision that Becky and Jane should go, while Maria stays with the mother. The narrator informs how,

"each of the daughters had tried — heroically, angelically, and for the sake of each of her sisters — not to be one of the two." (XVI, 344)

After the decision, however Maria remarks apropos the mother's 'I think she is better than Europe'! This produces an exclamation from Becky and Jane, on which the narrator comments,

"It was as if they feared she had suddenly turned cynical over the deep domestic drama of their casting lots. The innocent laugh with which she answered them signified the measure of her cynicism." (XVI, 348)

This is a good instance of the economy and subtlety with which the narrator brings out Maria's hidden disappointment and the alarm of her sisters who see in her remark, an insinuation of her betrayal. The feelings of the mother herself are also cautiously conveyed through the familiar channel of the narrator's intuition, thus foreshadowing the subsequent turn of events.

In the second section the narrator foreshortens several of his visits to the Rimmle's and the conversation with his sister-in-law is necessary, especially in view of the extremely limited space James
allows himself in the tale. She contributes to the dramatic texture of the tale. Instead of a direct report of all that the narrator thinks and feels about Mrs. Rimmle and the helplessness of her daughters, we get this necessary information through the narrator's conversation with the 'ficelle'. Given the peculiar limitations of the first person form, the narrator would have to get this information somehow; the alternative of gleaning it from his own direct observation, would have been even more space consuming. Furthermore, through their conversations an opposition is set up between the Brookbridgean and the Cosmopolitan view of the situation. The amusement of the story, always important to James is also enhanced by the introduction of the funny sister-in-law. These points may be illustrated by a conversation in the third section, after she has informed the narrator of Jane Rimmle's refusal to return home with the Hathaway's; "I listened eagerly after which I produced the comment: Then she simply refused to budge from Florence. Simply she had it out there with the poor Hathaway's who felt responsible for her safety, pledged to restore her to her Mother's, sister's hands and showed herself in a light, they mention under their breath, that made their dear old hair stand on end. Do you know what, when they first got back, they said of her- at least it was his phrase-to two or three people?" "That she had tasted blood?" My visitor fairly admired me,

"How clever of you to guess! its exactly what he did say. She
appeared, she continues to appear, it seems— in a new character.” (XVI, 358-360)

Had all this come from the narrator, much of the excitement, to say the least, would have been lost. Soon after this conversation the narrator goes to Brook Bridge where at his sister-in-law’s house he meets Becky, whom at first he takes for her mother;

"Becky’s age was quite startling, it had made a great stride though, strangely enough, irrevocably seated as she now was in it, she had a wizened brightness that I had scarcely yet seen in her." (XVI, 362)

He reflects how Europe at the second move has brought Becky out, both metaphorically and literally, for it is the first occasion that he meets Becky outside her mother’s drawing room. During the conversation with Becky he is puzzled to hear that old Mr. Rimmle is not alive, and he pays a visit to the Rimmle house in order to satisfy his curiosity. He finds Mrs. Rimmle in her usual place. Though wasted and shrunken, she still occupied, her high backed chair with a visible theory of erectness, and her intensely aged face—combined with something dauntless that belonged to her very presence. The visit is brief and the account of it further abbreviated, the narrator concentrating on the malevolently fantastic identification, in the lady’s confused mind, of ‘Europe’ with death. For Jane is dead, and now its Becky’s turn to ‘go’. The narrator comes away thinking he will never again see Becky, but sometime later he learns about Becky’s
“departure”, her actual death. On his last visit to the Rimmle house, some six months later, he finds the centenarian mummy as external as ever and Maria looking even older than her mother. Jane is still in Europe,

“Won’t Miss Jane come back? On the headshake (she) Maria gave me! Never: It positively pictured to me, for the instant, a well-preserved woman, a rich ripe seconde Jecunecse by the Aeno. Then that’s only to make sure of your finally joining her. Maria repeated her headshake “never.” (XVI, 368-369)

Before coming away the narrator has a brief conversation with Mrs Rimmle. “It was somehow difficult to me to seem to sympathize without hypocrisy, but so far a step nearer could do that, I invited communication.” ‘Have you heard where Becky’s gone?’ It drew from, Maria, as on my previous visit, an uncontrollable groan, and this in turn made me take time to consider. As I considered, however, I had an inspiration. “To Europe”? I must have adorred it with a strange grimace but my inspiration had been right,

“To Europe said Mrs. Rimmle.” (XVI –369)

The tale comes to a close with the mother still alive, Maria it is implied, on her way to Europe – death. The strength of this fine tale comes from the masterly use of images and symbols. The mother assumes a mythical aspect, she becomes a symbol of death. The tale soars into regions of fantasy and terror on the wings of elaborate
imagery. The escape of one of the daughters relieves the gloom to a
certain extent, but the impression that lasts is of the deadening hold of
the sovereign of undistinguishable sex over her daughters. The total
effect is that of a scathing condemnation of the witch like Mrs.
Rimmle. That this can be achieved through the agency of a first
person narrator, whose tone remains light without being frivolous and
whose point of view remains serious without being solemn, is proof of
the wonderful pliability of this time—honored narrative convention.

Novellas (Also Parables)

The difficulty of making a fictional hero out of a perfect artist is
axiomatic—James himself has acknowledged his awareness of it. It is
perhaps only less intricate than the difficulty of giving a similar status
to a perfectly good or a perfectly bad man. Such cases have the habit
of turning out too good to be true in fiction, if not always in life.
James succeeded in overcoming this problem through irony, through
an orchestration of the ironic note, particularly in the tale, which will
be discussed here. That explains why most of his tales of the
supersubtle fry are cast in the comic mode. It also explains why the
narratives must always be chosen with due regard to the idiosyncrasies
of a given situation. A wrong choice of persona invariably produces a
false note as for existence in the case of Maud—Evelyn (1900) where
the narrator reviews the effect of the story by her appropriately,
frivolous form The Next Time.
The contrast between the good and the bad Miter and the enormous disparity between the material rewards of each — was an element in the anecdote Greville Fane. It is the central idea in the nouvelle The Next Time. (1895) Jane Highmore with her 'generation of triplets' is an 'avtar' of Greville Fane with her three novels a year. But in The Next Time James adds an interesting complication. Jane Highmore yearns to be like Limbert but of course only once an exquisite failure which Limbert wears himself out in a futile effort to,

"Make a sow's ear of a silk purse? (XV 204) Her fantastic thirst for quality" (XV, 161)

remains unquenched even as Limbert remains to the end of his career,

"an undiscouragable parent to whom only girls kept being born." (XV, 214)

This antithesis, however is not as mechanically worked out as a summary of the tale might suggest. Most of the tale is devoted to Limbert's side of the dilemma. Mrs. Highmore's failure to be an exquisite failure is more or less taken for granted and used only as an ironic backdrop for Ray Limbert's drama.

The narrator begins with a prologue designed to involve the reader in the ensuing story. Mrs. Highmore approaches her with a request,

"To write a notice of her great forthcoming work." (XV, 157)

The ground of her request being that,

"I had frightened the public too much for our late friend (Ray Limbert) but that as she was not starving, this was exactly what
her grosser reputation required.” (XV, 161)

The narrator is thus bound to the main characters or the tale by a silken thread. He is a rejected suitor, of Maud, Mrs. Highmore’s sister, who later marries Ray Limbert. This is an incidental connection and strictly speaking, not indispensable to his function as a narrator, but it does lend flavor to the tale.9 James’s passion for form is seldom incompatible with his desire to offer a superior amusement to the reader. This is but another way of saying that James’s first person narrators would hardly be the irresistible storytellers they are, if they remained rigorously ‘to the point’ throughout their narratives. Their skill, however, lies in maintaining the total effect without ever straying very far from the narrow path.

The rest of the first section tells us how the narrator is favorably impressed first by Limbert’s work, then by Limbert himself, how he gets him a correspondent’s job with the ‘Black Port Beacon’, and how the job is lost thus putting Limbert’s marriage with Maud in temporary jeopardy. The narrator gets this news from Maud, and the conversation between the two provides an amusing scene. Limbert’s letters are not gossipy enough, and his notice about the narrator’s,

“Wretched book ... was the last straw. He should have treated it superficially.” (XV, 172)

He had done so, but the treatment, in the opinion of the Beacon, was not superficial enough. In the next section Limbert resumes his work
on The Major Key his new novel, while Maud patiently waits for the disappearance of her mother's objections to the marriage. This happens when The Major Key is accepted by Mrs Highmore's Pearl of Publishers for serialization prior to publication. Limbert and Maud are married while the novel is still running.¹⁰

During the next four or five years Limbert produces two unprofitable masterpieces while his family grows by three children. Mrs. Highmore keeps pouring advice into Limbert's ears about,

"How a reputation might be with a little gumption 'worked', save when she occasionally bore testimony to her desire to do, as Limbert did, something some day for her own very self. I never heard her speak of the literary motive as if it were distinguishable from the pecuniary. To listen to her your would have thought the profession of letters a wonderful game of bluff." (XV, 181)

This section contains no fully developed scene, but the impression of domestic pressures which will soon drive Limbert into a long resolute defiance of his genius, is created synoptically.

In this third section we learn that Limbert has accepted an editorial position and what is more, has decided to woo the public if that will enable him to balance his accounts. The narrator wields Limbert's several remarks on the subject into a long cynical greed,

"We've sat prating here of 'success' heaven help like chanting monks in a cloister, hugging the sweet delusion that is somewhere in the work itself. I declare I will put it through if I perish" (XV, 878)

In accordance with this system, Limbert takes all manner of
precautions, but unhappily for him the new book, which he has consciously written down to the public, turns out to be yet another masterpiece. It was no doubt, like the old letters to the Beacon, the worst he could do, but the perversity of the effort, even though heroic, had been frustrated by the plenty of the gift. The whole of the fourth section is a typically Jamesian scene, in which an artificial excitement is imparted to the process nearby. The narrator learns of Limbert’s dismissal from the magazine. Later in the scene, however he prophesies to James Highmore that for Limbert there will never be any success. He also puts down the moral of the parable,

"Que voiles — vows I went on, you can't make a sows ear of a silk purse. Its grievous indeed if you like of you later — there are people who can't be vulgar for trying. He can't it wouldn't come off." (XV, 20)

This is followed by the last section in which the reader’s interest is sustained by the narrator’s now serious tone.

Limbert continues to nurse hopes ‘for the next time as he retreats to the country.’ He had found a quieter corner than any corner of the great world, and a damp old house at temperance a year, which beside leaving him all his margin to educate his children would allow of the supreme luxury of his frankly presenting himself as a poor man. At the same time he keeps adding to the number of his five miscarriages. This section gives greater attention to some of the painful consequences of his commercial failure, but it is done without any
sentimental inflation in the narrator’s tone.

More attention is also paid to Mrs. Limbert’s ultimate acceptance of her husband’s genius,

“I believe that in these final years she would almost have been ashamed of him if he had suddenly gone into edition.” (XV, 212)

As a result of the effect of all these background figures and details, Limbert’s case sufficiently humanized and the tale is saved from being a bare parabolic exemplification of unappreciated genius. As a final twist in the tale, Limbert is shown as having completely renounced his futile efforts to cultivate the public. He goes to work futile efforts to ultimate the public. He goes to work on his last book.

The tone of the tale generally remains that of high comedy, but it does not impair the seriousness of the author’s intention. Furthermore, the chief source of mirth is not the hero himself even though the exaggeratedly protracted defense of his genius which itself is exaggerated, has its comic aspect. The joke essentially is ‘on the broad backed public.’ ... Such a study as that of Ray Limbert’s so prolonged, so intensified, but so vain continuance in hope, is in essence ‘a story about the public’ only wearing a little the reduced face by reason of the too huge side, for direct portrayals, of the monstrous countenance itself.

“This monstrous countenance is telescoped by Mrs. Highmore whose fond consumers, wagged their great collective tail
artlessly for more," (XV, 160)

in Mr. Highmore who,

"Took his stand on accomplished work and of his concomitants warmed his rear with a good conscience at the neat bookcase in which the generations or triplets were chronologically arranged." (XV, 176)

In the BackPort Beacon whose appetite for the chatty is insatiable, in Mr. Bousefield the editor who for all his pretensions prefers the screaming sketches of Minnie Meadows and in the circulating libraries whose sleep Limbert tries in vain to disturb.

In *The Turn of the Screw*, the governess apart from being a narrator, is more than normally an active participant in the action of the tale. In the battle of articles that has raged over the interpretation of *The Turn of the Screw* several combatants, particularly those often designated as Freudians either have attached almost no importance to the governess' role as a narrator or have taken her for a false center of narration. They have tended to misinterpret some of the genetic traits, that the governess shares with the rest of James's first person narrators. Because of this failure to study, the complex inter relation between these genetic traits and the distinctly individual characteristics, and the governess they have mistaken, her main function as an unconscious revelation of her own psychopathological state of mind.

Edmund Wilson, the most persistent exponent of the Freudian
interpretation of the tale was inclined to conclude from analogy and that the story is primarily intended as a characterization of the governess.¹⁴

The fundamental care in any analysis of The Turn of the Screw would seem to be a correct understanding of its narrator's role. The mere fact that she is a first person narrator does not entitle us to conclude that she is also the main subject of the story, or that the intention of the story is primarily to portray her, nor should it lead us to reject her reliability as a witness. In most of James's tales the first person narrative is used primarily as a method of telling the story. The method is variously employed according to each tale's theme, scope, and predesigned point of emphasis. These variations manifest themselves in the structure of the individual tales, in the degree and nature of the narrators functional involvement in the action, in this point of view, in his general mode of apprehension. In none of the tales is the narrator either autobiographical or unreliable. Furthermore the narrator's of these tales have frequent intuitions which evidently have not aroused suspicion in the mind of any critic with regard to their reliability. These intuitions are both a means of foreshadowing the subsequent events and a device to achieve economy in presentation. The governess of The Turn of the Screw despite her comparatively greater involvement in the action of the narrative and her consequent importance as a character in her own right, does not
abandon her function as a narrator. On the contrary, an understanding of her character cannot be divorced from an understanding of her role as a narrator without falsifying the whole meaning of the tale. As a narrator, she is no different, in many essential respects, from the narrators of the tales discussed earlier in this chapter. Whatever differences there are, stem from the nature of the narrative and the underlying theme – with which she is called upon to deal.\textsuperscript{15}

Whenever James employs an ironic center of narration, he is careful to leave the reader in no doubt about his intention. It seems reasonable to expect that he would have done the same for \textit{The Turn of the Screw}, had his intention been to present the governess as an unreliable witness. The importance that should be given to a writer's intention in evaluating his work is, of course, a controversial issue. One may partly agree with Rene Wellek and Austin Warren when they say that the "meaning of a work of art is not exhausted by, or even equivalent to, its intention."\textsuperscript{16} But certainly an excessive emphasis on the author's intention leads to exclusive reliance on historical readings, psychoanalytical interpretation, biographical investigations, conjunctives and so on.

The Prologue to the tale, more than any other of James's Prologues, is integrally related to the main body of the tale. It is also more elaborate than any other. The first narrator performs the usual duty of setting the stage. He mentions the context that led to Douglas's
remark;

"I quite agree – in regard to Griffin’s ghost, or whatever it was – that its appearing first in the little boy, at so tender an age, adds a particular touch. But it’s not the first occurrence of its charming kind that I know to have been concerned with a child. If the child gives the effect, another turn of the screw, what do you say to two children.” (XII, 147-148)

Surely we cannot brush aside this hint which gives us the general idea that the ensuing tale is to be about two haunted children. This is how Douglas’s auditors take the hint.

The first narrator is also engaged in creating a proper mood, for the reception of the governess narrative while reading his account of the curiosity aroused by Douglas’s announcement, we identify ourselves with the receptive attitude of the supposition’s company gathered round the fire on that Christmas eve. We became attuned to the idea of rearing a tale that is “beyond everything”, for general uncanny ugliness, horror and pain. This is the second function of the Prologue.

The third and probably the most important function performed by the prologue is to establish in the reader’s mind, an initial image of the governess’ personality. This is done through the medium of Douglas, according to whom the governess was a most charming person-

“She was this most agreeable woman I’ve ever known in her position, she’d have been worthy of any what ever.” (XII, 149)

Now Douglas, during his brief appearance in the Prologue strikes
us as a fairly sympathetic person, so does this first narrator. There is no reason to suggest, as Wilson does that,

"It is not an infrequent trick of James to introduce sinister characters with descriptions that at first sound flattering." 17

As a matter of evidence, in no Jamesian Prologue – tale is the impression of the second narrator in conflict with the impression given by her first narrator. Of course in The Turn of the Screw the initial impression about the governess does not come straight from the first narrator. We may wonder why James introduces Douglas at all, but the question, carried to its logical limit, would lead us to ask why James prefers a Prologue at all. Why moreover does James make Douglas send for the manuscript, thus causing an unnecessary delay in the launching of the drama? In other words, such questions are merely hair splitting irrelevancies. 18 The fact remains that we have no basis for discrediting the testimony of Douglas in regard to the governess. 19

Finally in addition to establishing the authority of the governess the Prologue also telescopes certain preliminary details about the background of the narrative. As the first narrator points out,

"It appeared that the narrative he (Douglas) had promised to read us really required for a proper intelligence a few words of prologue." (XII, 153)

James exercises a great deal of deliberation and control in the choice of these details, he gives only those which contribute to a proper understanding of the governess' narrative without destroying its
suspense. So we get a condensed account of the parentage of the
governess, of her meeting and instantaneous infatuation with her
handsome employer, of the conditions accompanying her job, of the
death of her predecessor and so on. Through these details James is
also creating the kind of inevitability proper to a powerful ghost story.
But for the fact that she was the youngest of several daughters of a
poor country parson, the governess might not have so readily fallen in
love with her employer, nor would she have been impressed by the
fact,

"That he put the whole thing to her as a favor, an obligation he
should gratefully incur." (XII, 152, 153)

But for her infatuation, the young and inexperienced governess would
not have accepted the job with its forbidding conditions, nor would she
have clung so resolutely to their observance. Again, but for these
strange conditions the subsequent events would not have been so
intensely horrible, nor her behavior so abnormally conscientious.

The Prologue, then properly considered, should dispel many
doubts about the primary subject of the tale, about the reliability of the
governess as a witness, and about her sanity as a character.

The tale itself may be divided for the sake of convenience, into
four parts, each consisting of six sections. In the first part the
governess brings her narrative to the point where she has been exposed
to both the ghosts, in the second, we get the process of reasoning,
supported by outside events, whereby she convinces herself that the
children are corrupted, in the third we get a picture of her awkward
relations with the children and a further confirmation of her earlier
conviction – this phase culminates in the decision to communicate with
her employer; and in the fourth we see first her failure with Flora and
then her success with Mike.

The governess begins her narrative with the adeptness we would
expect of her, not as a governess but as a Jamesian narrator. James, it
will be conceded, is fully aware of the effect he wants to create on the
reader through the medium of the governess. It is not surprising that he
should make her choose such details, have such impressions, throw
such hints as will contribute, by a complex tragic of their own, to the
atmosphere suitable for a tale of the supernatural. Thus the governess' initial state of mind is conveyed through,

“A little see-saw of the right throbs and the wrong.” (XII, 158)

Her first impression of the house for instance is an illustration of the
‘right throbs’,

“I remember as a thoroughly pleasant impression the broad
clean front its open windows and fresh curtains and the pair of
maids looking but, I remember the lawns and the bright
flowers and the crunch of my wheels on the gravel and the
clustered tree tops over which the rooks circled and cawed in
the golden sky.” (XII, 158)

This sunny picture is obviously meant to provide a contrast with the
subsequent shady events that take place at Bly. By the same token, the
following reminiscence of the governess foreshadows later events,

"There had been a moment when I believed I recognized a faint and cry of a child, there had been another when I found myself just consciously staring at the passage, before my door of a light footstep. These fancies were not marked enough to be thrown off, and it is only in the light ... that they now come back to me." (XII, 160)

But the most suggestive premonition of horror is contained in a passage where the governess gives us an illustration of her wrong throbs. Earlier we had the governess’ first impression of the exterior of the house, now we can get her first impression of its interior. The two combine to spotlight the natures between appearance and reality.

These throbs are not here to reveal the governess’ emotional instability or morbidity. In terms of versimilitude they do not violate the sense of how a twenty year old Victorian girl should feel during her first few hours in a huge unfamiliar house. Apart from that, their real function is to create the right atmosphere and plant the right suggestions.

After the reactions of the governess in the opening section, we come to the first objective turns in the tale, the letter from Miles’s school. Accompanying this letter the uncle’s injunction,

"Read him, please deal with him but mind you don’t report. Not a word—I’m off." (XII, 165)

The governess then perturbed at being saddled with an unexpected responsibility on the very second day of her arrival at Bly
is perfectly credible, so is her decision to speak to Mrs. Grose about it. We must remember also that she has not yet seen Miles. So in her conversation with Mrs. Grose the governess understands her own apprehensions in the plainest possible terms so as to watch the housekeeper's reaction. At this stage, in other words, she is not investing the letter,

"On no evidence at all, with a significance somehow

She is only seeking the necessary reassurances. The correctness of the governess' intuition is borne out by the piece meal manner in which Mrs. Grose surrenders what she knows of Miss. Jessel and Quint. Her hesitation about telling the new governess everything all at once is plausible, she does not want to frighten the young woman. This would be the explanation for the protracted cross-examination of the housekeeper by the governess or the level of verisimilitude. But on this level of narrative method, the continual exchange between the two women in the familiar Jamesian practices of dramatizing the process whereby the narrator gradually arrives at this data. Thus when the governess first questions her about Miss Jessel, Mrs. Grose is evasive,

"But the next day, as the hour for my drive approached I cropped up in another place; what was the lady who was here before?"

"The last governess? She was also young and pretty-almost as young and almost as pretty, Miss even as you."
“Ah then I hope her youth and her beauty helped her! I recollect throwing off. He seems to like her young and pretty.”
“Oh he did, Mrs. Grose assented: It was the way he liked me... (XII 168-169)

The point to be gathered from this passage is that it contains the first veiled reference to the liaison between art and Miss. Jessel. Mrs. Grose is at first under the impression that the governess knows something about it—‘Oh he did’. Then she catches herself up and is able to transfer her reference to the master, without being detected because the governess knows nothing about Quint. This is but another instance of the way James deepens the mystery, by dropping hints whose meaning is revealed retrospectively. Through the emphasis on the governess’ apprehension, James is also preparing us for the heightened impact of her spontaneous liking for Miles,

“Everything but a sort of passion of tenderness for him was swept away by his presence. What is then and there took him to my heart was for something divine that I have never found to the same degree in any child.” (XII, 171)

This emphasis on the unearthly beauty of Miles, in its turn, is meant to accentuate the horror of the governess, and of that reader through her, when she later realizes that it is a mere camouflage for the present, it serves to motivate her decision to take no action on the incriminating letter. The governess is however, made to explain this decision as if to forestall possible objections to its correctness, perhaps a more ordinary governess in this position might have adopted a different course of
action. But in that case, James would have written a different story. James made her take the decision, which is consistent with her character, because he wanted his tale to take the course it does. It becomes quite clear later in this section that this governess is also motivated by a desire to impress her employer. On the contrary, James makes her discuss it, in order to justify her desperate observance of the employer’s injunction not to bother him about anything.

In the second part of the tale, the governess reasons herself, and the reader, on the basis of some objective evidence, into a conviction that the children are still under the influence of their false friends. In the seventh section she reports her experience by the lake to Mrs. Grose. It reminds us that she is upset for two reasons, she knows she has seen a ghost, and she suspects that Flora too has seen it and has tried to hide the fact from her. Hence her description of Miss. Jessel is different from that of Quint, less physical in detail,

"Another person – this time but a figure of quite unmistakable horror and evil, a woman in black, pale and dreadful – with sun even hair also, and such a face! on the other side of the lake. I was there with the child – quiet for the hour, and in the midst of it she came." (XI, 203, 204)

By not letting this scene run too close to the earlier one about Quint, James also avoids repetition.

The governess’ knowledge of the reality and her continued failure to recognize its ugly face in the appearance – it is this dilemma that
causes the anguish she feels in the third part of the tale. Her relation with the children, throughout this phase is painfully awkward. This is recorded in her various assertions in section thirteen studied in the context of James’s technique and subject, they are necessary for the very progress of the tale. Another complicating fact now, for the governess is that her eyes are temporarily sealed. There is no accounting for this phenomenon on the rational level, the ghost appears when and to whom it will. But on the fictional level there is an explanation, that James wants to deepen the mystification of the governess — and through her the readers — so as to emphasize her struggle with the demons. Hence also the insistence on the children’s secret communion with the evil spirits in the presence of the governess.

The final part of the tale is remarkable for its combination of accelerated pace, and reflective tone. Things happen in rapid succession, at the same time, we are aware of a weariness in the governess’ voice, a weariness predicting the tragic end. Throughout the tale James has kept the governess’ and through her the reader’s concern for Miles a shade deeper than that for Flora. Thus the effect of the climactic scene — covering the last three sections is considerably heightened through the departure of Mrs. Grose and Flora. The governess is now face to face with Miles, alone except of course for the hovering presence of Quint. The importance of this isolation is suggested through the apprehensive reflecting of the governess,
"No hour of my story in fact was so assailed with apprehension as that of my coming down to learn that the carriage containing Mrs. Grose and my younger pupil has already rolled out of the gates. Now, I was, I said to myself, face to face with the elements and for much — of the rest in the day while I fought my weakness, I could consider that I had been supremely rash." (XII, 293)

Her hopes of saving Miles — hopes that are her motive for pursuing the issue are approximately tempered by her premonitions.

The death of Miles, painful as it is, should not be taken as a sidetrack into disbelieving or damming the governess, for we would be missing the whole point of the tale. The death is the culminating turn of the Jamesian screw. Even as the governess thinks exultingly, of the boy's liberation, she realizes,

"What is truly was, that I held we were alone with the quiet day, and his little heart, had stopped." (XII, 309)

Her tragedy is that with the best of intentions, she fails to save Flora or Miles. The conclusion of the tale is thus profoundly pessimistic: and evil emerges triumphant.

There is however, another way of looking at the final outcome. Are we justified in equating "saving" with the saving of Miles's life? Of course, even if an answer to this question is no, the tale does not gain the optimism — represented by 'happy' ending. But then how many of James's endings are happy in the conventional sense.

The text of The Turn of the Screw even if we ignore all external evidence does not warrant any speculations about the actual intention
of James, the reliability of the governess, the reality of the ghosts. The
governess, with all her deep involvement in the action is a typical
Jamesian first person narrator, where record and reflections – that is
the objective phenomenon she reports and the conclusions she draws
from them are demonstrably meant to be taken as true. Her intuitive
faculty is more highly developed than that of any other Jamesian
narrator. The nature of the subject has a determining influence on the
persona James projects in this tale. The same explanation applies to
the occasional assertions of the governess. There is nothing in short in
the tone of the tale, or in its various details to support the contention
that the governess is a pathological case study or that she is an ironic
centre of narration. According to R.B. Heilman,

"A great deal of unnecessary mystery has been made of the
apparent ambiguity of the story. Actually most of it is a by
product of James's method."  

The minor modifications that may be added to this statement is
that the ambiguity is a product of an unfortunate failure to understand
James’s method, for the method is not inherently ambiguous. With the
aid of this method he quickened the dross of the conventional ghost
story into a terrifying yarn of the supernatural, comparable in power
and meaning to The Ancient Mariner. If The Ancient Mariner is
the greatest literary ballad in English, The Turn of the Screw has
claim to being the greatest literary ghost story.
Omniscient Author Method:

While discussing the method, emphasis is laid on the Omniscience, if not the omnipresence of the author in the tales discussed in this chapter. It is meant to emphasize the dissatisfaction one feels with the prevalent casual use of 'point of view' in convention with James's method. The expression has been frozen into an opaque formula, which is often used to evade or to simplify, the task of examining James's narrative devices in all their intricacy. Having made a ritualistic bow to James's mastery of the point of view, most Jamesians tend to make a beeline for other, more popular concerns, be they thematic or philosophical or biographical both in his early and major tales. James was able to refine the omniscient narrator convention and subject it to a rigorous artistic discipline.

The first story to be discussed is taken from of James's early tales, A Tragedy of Error, which appeared anonymously in The Continental Monthly of February, 1864. It remained unidentified for almost a century until Leon Edel discovered and established it conclusively as James's first published tale. It is told by an Omniscient narrator, and the focus here is, on the nature and method of this narrator. Briefly the plot unfolds in this manner. Madame Hortense Bernier is upset by a letter announcing her husband's unexpected arrival in a French seaport town where she has taken a lover Vicomte Louis de Mayrau. She fears despite facile assurances to
the contrary from her less disturbed lover, that it will be impossible to conceal the love affair. So without taking the lover into her confidence, she resorts to desperate remedy. She makes a deal with a mercenary ferryman to drown the unsuspecting husband when he disembarks as her husband is lame and cannot swim. Eventually she is baffled in her plan by the lover’s deciding to meet Monsieur Bernier aboard the steamer - it happens in such a way, that she cannot prevent it. As a result, the lover is mistaken by the ferryman as his intended victim. The story ends with Madame Bernier’s ‘great cry’ as she sees,

“A figure emerge from below the terrace, and come limping towards her with outstretched arms.” (p. 137)

The tale opens in a melodramatic manner,

“A low English phaeton was drawn up before the door of the post office of a French seaport town. In it was seated a lady with a veil down, and her parasol held closely over her face. My story begins with a gentleman coming out of the office and handing her a letter.” (p. 295)

Then the Omniscient narrator unabashedly reveals the manipulating hand in the first paragraph. It may be pointed out however that James is never shy of occasionally using the authorial ‘I’ in his fiction. He makes a similar appearance in the opening paragraph of The Ambassadors. The operating thing to note is the point at which James picks up in his narrative in A Tragedy of Error the arrival of the husband’s letter of Madame Bernier’s relation either with her husband or with her lover. Our curiosity about the contents of the letter is soon
satisfied. Neither the lady, nor her lover is described directly. That there is something suspicious in their being together is indicated indirectly, and the lady's reaction to the letter is also reflected indirectly. One notices all the adroitness with which the first glimpse of the lover's character is given,

"Her attitude was almost that of unconsciousness, and he could see that eyes were closed. Having satisfied himself of this, he hastily possessed himself of the letter and read as follows." (p. 295)

The letter reflects the husband's innocence and his unsuspecting jubilation at the prospect of a reunion. The irony of this is of course very obvious, indeed far more obvious than it would be on similar occasion in the later James.

The conversation as the lovers drive to Madame Bernier's home is skillfully managed so as to foreshadow later events, and to maintain the reader's suspense. The foreshadowing is done by the dense imagery of the conversation, which also suggests the pompous hollowness of the lover,

"In life we are afloat on a tumultuous sea; we are all struggling toward some terra firma of wealth or leisure or love. The roaring of the waves we kick up about us and the spray we dash into our eyes deafen and blind us to the sayings and doings of our fellows, provided we climb high and dry, what do we care for them?" (p. 297)

Throughout this conversation there is almost no authorial comment, and the reader is left completely free to form an impression of the
speaker. The suspense is intensified by the fact that, as the lovers draw close to their destination, the reader sees through the insincerity of the lover. The character of the wife is another matter, she is the central figure in the drama and the author is particularly keen to prolong the reader’s uncertainty about her. She tells her lover that she has half a mind to drown herself literally, but the discerning reader can see that the other half of her mind is probably occupied with another plan.

The second section is designed to dramatize the terrible character of Madame Bernier. She leaves the house resolved and pale; it is clear she has renounced the idea of suicide since she leaves instructions for her lover to await her turn. We do not know the purpose of her excursion into the crowded region chiefly at the residence of fisherman and boatmen but if a passerby happened to notice her, he could not have helped being struck by the intensity with which she scrutinized every figure she met. James’s use of the hypothetical spectator is a significant compositional device whereby he is able to maintain the indirection or objectivity of his presentation. This is the guise under which the omniscient narrator speaks quite frequently in the later work of James. In a sense it is a substitute for the intuitions and the speculative commentary of the first person narrator.

The next two sections are taken up as they are with the externals of the denouement. In the third section again we see the author in a stance which disappears in James’s later work. If we accept the
narrator’s authority, the heroine has no qualms about the trap she has set for her husband, her thoughts are entirely occupied by her lover who – she has learned has gone somewhere else to pass the night. It may be remarked that in the author’s fidelity to what his heroine does and says, and in his directing his omniscience to her thoughts, loses whatever strength this early tale has. The glimpse that he does give into her thoughts is enough to suggest that he is not yet competent enough to divine the heroine’s mind in more than a naïve elementary way. Furthermore, his objectivity provides sufficient evidence for the reader to deduce the heroine’s thoughts from her actions. Paradoxically however, this is also the weakness of the tale, for it fails to present the situation of the woman in all its psychological complexity.

Leon Edel in his perceptive comments on the tale says that its,

“Plot is some what creaking and we are asked to assume that the lover, who is not lame, also cannot swim.”

But the tale makes no such demand. We are told, of course that the lover takes the husband’s place in the boat, but beyond that the narrator is silent. To imagine that the lover was actually drowned is not necessary in order to appreciate the ‘tragedy’ of Madame Bernier, at any rate it involves us into passing the tale beyond the point that concludes it. Further more the ‘tragedy’ of the title undoubtedly has an ironic criterion which remains independent of the equivocal suggestion
about the fate of the lover. The only other comment on the tale is a brief note by Robert L. Gale, whose ostensible purpose is to advice additional proof for James’s authorship,

"By comparing the figurative and near figurative language of the story with that of James’s later and known fiction.”26

The proof is however redundant in view of Edel’s conclusive evidence. The comparison itself though supported by statistics of sorts, is essentially forced and of a kind that seems to postulate speciously the dictum that in the beginning of every author is his end. For example Gale remarks,

"It is curious that the word floating, which is used in James’s later works so often, that it becomes almost a mannerism, should appear in his very first image."27

During the ten years after A Tragedy of Error James published nine other omniscient narrator tales. Almost all of them exhibit characteristics observed in A Tragedy of Error to varying degrees and almost none of them surpasses it in the it in the restraint and objectivity of the narrative voice.

The Story of a Year (1865) for example opens in a manner similar to A Tragedy of Error,

"My story begins as a great many stories have begun, within the last three years and indeed as a great many have ended, for when the hero is dispatched does not the romance come to a stop?"28

As we read further, we notice that the narrator is far more relaxed than
the one in the earlier tale: "Good Reader, this narrative is averse to retrospect;" "I have no intention of following Lieutenant Ford to the seat of war." "Alack, my poor heroine had no pride!" "But as I can find no words delicate and fine enough to describe the multifold changes of Nature, so, too, I must be content to give you the spiritual facts in gross."

One reason for this garrulous bonhomie may be that James is dealing here with a more complex situation and does not yet have the requisite mastery over his material, consequently he seeks to slur over some of the difficult moments by a rather na"ıve admission of her inability to render them. It has been pointed out that James had,

"Material enough here for a novel but he brought it into the scope of twenty five pages"

Had this been done with success, James we can imagine, would have been proud of the performance. As it is, the tale remains important only for its historical interest.

The common formal characteristics of these earliest James's tales may be summarized in this way: the omniscient narrator is in constant good humored communication with the reader, a habit that is sometimes over done as in The Story of a Year, he exercises his omniscience quite liberally almost indiscriminately, the narrative is a mixture not always well measured enough to produce the right kind of balance, of straight characterization, illustrations, dramatic scenes, and
authorial analysis. According to Cornelia Pulsifer Kelley, the basic flow in most of these tales is James's failure to,

"Reconcile artistry and analysis." 

It may be described as a failure to use the omniscient narrator effectively. The plot is not always so constructed as to avoid jolts, the clearest illustration of such a jolt is to be found in The Story of a Masterpiece (1868) where the author interrupts the main story to give an unnecessarily detailed account of an earlier episode in the heroines past. The style of these early tales is simple and lively although the imagery tends to be either purely decorative or plainly allegorical. It may be remarked in conclusion that James achieves a great measure of artistic success in tales, which are limited in scope and essentially anecdotal in form, for example in A Tragedy of Error, a Day of Days (1866) and The Romance of Certain Old Clothes. (1868)

ANEC DOTE:

To read almost any anecdote of James immediately after one of his great novellas is to be immensely aware of the fact that he was a born short-story writer in the same way that he was a born novelist or a born 'novelist'. Economy as distinguished from brevity, was the soul of his technical concern, as a fabulist and the short-story necessarily puts a premium on brevity. Thus if we find him cramped for want of space in his first-person anecdotes, the problem is even greater in his
omniscient - narrator anecdotes. Several of the latter are "novels intensely compressed" and they but masquerade as little anecdotes. Of the short tales that manage to be genuine anecdotes, there are only a few that are qualitatively comparable to the best of his novellas, even when we keep our minds clear about the individual peculiarities of these two categories of short fiction. These points can be discussed by taking into consideration James's tale Fordham Castle. (1904)

**Fordham Castle** is more complex in both subject and treatment. In it James was conscious of having been,

"Reduced to a finger once more, not a little carefully, a chord perhaps now at last too warped and rusty for complicated music at short order."  
34

The chord was the international theme and James's ruefulness stemmed from the fact that he had,

"Waited with something of a subtle patience, just enough of a wandering air from the down-town penetralia as might embolden as might inform, as might even, conceivably inspire... all to the advantage of my extension of view and my variation of theme."  
35

Thus in **Fordham Castle** he found it difficult, despite all his ingenuity of effort,

"To create for my scrap of up-town subject, a certain larger connexion."  
36

The most obvious thing about **Fordham Castle** is the symmetry of its plot. Abel Taker has been exiled under a false name, C.P. Addard, by his wife Sue who considers him a drag on her social ambitions.
Mrs. Magaw who has been similarly disposed of under a false name, Mrs. Vanderplank, by her daughter Mattie who considers her an obstacle in the way of her campaign for a 'high' marriage. Both the pairs are American. The husband and the mother are drawn together in a Swiss pension by an intuitive recognition of each other’s plight later they confide their real identities and develop even a greater mutual affection. The wife and the daughter come together at Fordham Castle—it is significant that their hunting ground is the same—and recognize each other as kindred spirits. The wife is ashamed of her past: she “only wanted a fair start”, and could not get it “so long as he was always there, so terribly cruel there, to speak of what she had been,” although in her husband’s view ‘she had been nothing worse’. The daughter too is ashamed of her past, her parentage,

“She found her two names so dreadful so dreadful even singly a combination not to be borne, and carried on a quarrel with them no less desperate than Sue’s quarrel with everything.” (XVI, 411)

Then there are other minor parallels. Both Abel Taker and Mrs Magaw receive a letter from the same post from their respective relatives. Even their lies, before they have revealed their true identities, are similar, he has just been to Constantinople to visit Mrs. Addard’s grave, and she has made a similar pilgrimage to her daughter’s grave in Rome. If these amusing symmetrical touches seem to strain our sense of verisimilitude, one can only suggest that we
should not look for such literalness in James, particularly in his fantasies. An even greater source of amusement, however, is the dissimilarity between the situations and sensibilities of the two principal characters. Abel Taker may have failed in the,

"Conduct of the coal, the commission, the insurance and as a last resort desperate and disgraceful, the book agency business." (XVI, 409)

But as C.P. Addard at least, he feels and talks like a supreme ironist with regard to Sue in particular, his irony has the sting of an adder.

Mrs. Magaw, on the other hand, is not,

"Formed for duplicity, the large simple sacred foolish fond woman the vague anxiety in whose otherwise so uninhabited, and un reclaimed countenance, as void of all history as an expanse of western Praries seen from a car window, testified to her scant aptitude for her part." (XVI, 408)

This vast continental image characteristic of James as it is, gives us the measure of contrast between the simple minded Mrs. Magaw, and the ironical Abel Taker. Their conversations derive many of their comic tones from her inability to cope with his devastating sarcasm. Thus while talking of the fictitious graves of Sue and Mattie, she innocently refers to Constantinople and Rome as "places that mightn't have so very much" but for the "fact" that their relatives are buried there. Abel Taker naturally surprised at her ridiculous observation notices, the cautious anxious sound of her "very". The tale is full of similar juxtapositions of conscious irony on the part of Abel Taker and
unconscious humor provided by Mrs. Magaw’s failure to understand him.

The dissimilarity in their situation is equally important and adds to the amazement provided by the tale. Mr. Magaw is naturally interested in her daughter’s future,

“‘It was clear that Mattie’s mother couldn’t be expected not to want to see her married.’ (XVI, 420)

She accepts her exile, she strikes Abel Taker as ‘sacrificed’—without blood, as it were as obligingly and persuasively passive. She is therefore quite happy at the thought of rejoining Mattie whose engagement to Lord Dunderton opens up the exciting possibility of going to Fordham Castle. Like Greville Fane she is perhaps inwardly proud of her daughter’s prospective enlistment in the aristocracy. Abel Taker, on the other hand, can take no such satisfaction in the social triumphs of his wife at Fordham Castle. He cannot get excited over the thought of going there. Unlike Mrs Magaw, he is permanently ‘dead’.

In the context of these differences, his incipient love for Mrs Magaw—‘his senior by several years’—takes on a pathetic overtone, even as it indicates the intensity of his loneliness. He is ready to “give Mrs Taker up, definitely just to remain C.P. Addard” with her. Mrs. Magaw of course, sanctimoniously evades his overtures but he desperately clings to his one connection with the ‘living’.
Needless to say, Abel Taker’s insistence on his being dead is not meant to be a sign of his morbidity. This is his sardonic defense against the anonymity imposed on him by Sue. It is his desperate protest against an identity. It is perhaps a weak man’s defense, but then on the face of it, Abel Taker is a weak man. His wife, by the same token, is ‘strong’ but completely hollow. It is interesting to note that her character is established in abstraction, just as Mrs. Newsome’s is in The Ambassadors. We see Mrs Taker quite as distinctly as we do Mrs Newsome, though the one is perched on the heights of Fordham Castle wilts and the other enveloped in the vagueness of woolens. Mrs. Sue takes her place along with James ... “eternity of mere international young ladies” in spite of the fact that she is not in the “foreground of the general scene”. And yet Fordham Castle is an international tale with a difference. In James’s own words, its few pages are packed with an “exceedingly close complexes of intention.” Some of these intentions bothered him again and again, and in the Note Books we can trace the interesting record of his continual preoccupation with them. The story did not succeed for him, in embodying these ideas clearly enough. But on close scrutiny we find that in the first place, it renders the effect on a sensitive character of a loss of identity. It is also a parable of the American Eve in search of a European Eden and of the American Adam consequently relegated to oblivion. Finally it touches very significantly on the “phenomenon of
the social suppression" of American parents by their children. In these respects this parable has as much relevance today as it had at the turn of the century, considering the current complaints about the domination of the American male by the female and of the American parent by the child.

In describing the narrative principle of Fordham Castle it would be an over simplification to say that the "point of view" is entirely Abel Taker's. For one thing in no tale, whether of James or of Joyce, can the point of view even entirely belong to any character. The author as narrator is always present, the manner of his presence or the mode of his intervention differing from writer to writer and from tale to tale. A story never gets told of itself, it has to be told by some one. For another thing this formula often is a convenient but misleading substitute for the more rewarding task of close analysis. We can appreciate the narrative complexity of Fordham Castle better when we recognize the subtlety with which the omniscient narrator effects his numerous transactions.

"His eyes attached to the envelope, took in the failure of any symptom of weakness in La stroke, and he felt the force of her character more irresistibly than ever as he thus submitted to what she was doing with him."(XVI, 396-397)

In the passage it is clear that the omniscient narrator is recording the strengths of Abel Taker as he looks at his wife's letter. But it must also be conceded that there is a well-designed principle of selection at
work that it is not an interior monologue, is altogether free of any selective principle. He wasn't used to the omniscient narrator's voice. The voice is not there. After that we can hear his voice until we come to "He was quite aware". Then the omniscient narrator adds his voice again, 'it was true'. A similar examination of the rest of the tale would indicate that simply to say that the point of view is entirely that of Abel Taker is to say little beyond the fact that Abel Taker is the most important character in the tale. It is true that the focus generally is on his thoughts more than on Mrs. Magaw's but occasionally we see it moved to a point at which we have a simultaneous view of both of them,

"Their instinct was unmistakably to cling to each other, but it was as if they wouldn't know where to take hold till then all had really been cleared." (XVI, 410)

Again while the authorial comment on generalization is kept to a minimum, it is never completely suppressed,

"Deep emotion sometimes confounds the mind –and Mr. Magaw quite flamed with excitement. But on the other hand it sometimes illumines and she could see, it appeared, what Sue meant." (XVI, 424)

This observation does not proceed from Abel Taker, or from within his consciousness, but from the author himself.

It is surprising that *Fordham Castle* should have been neglected so thoroughly by critics, one exception being Ezra Pound, who calls it a 'comedielta', excellently perhaps flawlessly done. Here as so often the
circumstances are mostly a description of the character, of the personal tone of the "sitters" for his people are so much more, or so much more often, "sitters" than actors. Compare Maupassant's Toine for treatment of case similar to Fordham Castle. we may also compare it to Hawthorne's Wakefield where the husband voluntarily, but whimsically absents himself from his wife for twenty years, during which time he lives on the next street, unknown and unrecognized. The emphasis of Hawthorne's tale is of course on a different issue, acting upon an eccentric impulse Wakefield becomes the outcast of the universe.

NOUVELLES:

Between Madame de Mauves (1874) and The Pupil (1891) James published nearly a dozen omniscient narrator novellas. The best of these, with the exception of The Liar and The Lesson of the Master are marked by that "emphasized internationalism" of which he speaks in the Preface to Lady Barberina and which more or less fades from the productions of his major phase. Of the tales in Volume XIV of the New York Edition. James remarks that,

"In a whole group of tales I here collect the principles of illustration has on the other hand quite definitely been that the idea could not have expressed itself without the narrower application of international terms."

We notice the relaxation of this emphasis clearly in A London Life which significantly enough was not grouped by James with any of the
numerous international tales in the canon, an anomaly that he takes many words to explain in the relevant preface: what concerns us here is that *A London Life* breaks down altogether. I have had to recognize as a contribution to my comprehensive picture of bewildered Americanism. I fail to make out today why I need have conceived my three principal persons as sharers in that particular bewilderment.*

Speaking of the purpose of the tale, he remarks,

"It wasn't after all of the prime, of the very most prime, intention of the tale in question that the persons concerned in them should have had this that or the other land of birth but that the central situation should really be rendered."*

Our own experience of the tale would bear out the soundness of the James discernment.

**The Bench of Desolation;** (1909-10) is James's last and perhaps the best omniscient -narrator nouvelle. It is certainly better than the virtual absence of any detailed critical comment on it might suggest.

The ordeal of Morris Gedge—the conflict between his own refinement and the vulgarity of the idolatrous herd—originates in his troubled consciousness but it is given release through his vengeful irony: he triumphs over the enemies of art with the aid of artifice. His is a battle of ideas and attitudes, his antagonists are the others, his mortification and his victorious subterfuge is largely intellectual. The tormented hero of *The Bench of Desolation* goes through an ordeal that is deeply spiritual, his passage is through the emptiness of his own
inner spaces. It is quite appropriate, therefore that for the better part of this story his darkened consciousness provides the scene of his mute but roaring agony. The atmosphere of this tale is consequently much more terrifying, much more ghostly.

We glimpse the deeply churned mind of the hero with the first sentence of the tale,

“She had practically, he believed conveyed the intimation, the horrid, brutal, vulgar menace, in the course of their last dreadful conversations, when, for what ever was left of pluck or confidence.... He had judged best not to take it up.” (M, XXVIII, 409)

The intensity of his agitation and of his revulsion, is suggested by the nervous pace of this sentence and by the string of charged adjectives chosen to reflect his state of mind. The author conceals his own hand by the carefully placed short clause, ‘he believed’ and by the parenthetical qualification of ‘confidence’. The narrative in the characteristic nature, manner of James, is picked up after the scene between ‘him’ and ‘her’ is over. The scene itself is reflected piece meal through the troubled consciousness of Herbert Dodd. James adopts this alternative to a straight dramatic depiction of the scene, in order to fix our attention from the very beginning on what the ‘dreadful conversation’ does to the hero. He wants to evoke “the very atmosphere of his mind.” While the hero re enact the whole scene in his own consciousness. The reader is left in no doubt that it is a highly
subjective re enactment and that as such it may be partially colored. Thus after we have been given 'the ugly awful words ruthlessly formed by her lips' the words themselves seem less ugly and awful – the author once again concentrates on Herbert Dodd's evaluation of Kate Cookham and the vulgarity of her stand. This evaluation does not proceed from the author, who only reports it. Much of James's skill consists in effectively preventing him from doing so, without at the same time injecting an overt authorial caution. This feat is accomplished by the tone imparted to the agitated murmur going on in Dodd's mind,

“This is what put him so beautifully in the right. It was what might signify in a woman all through... The mere imagination of such machinery, truly what devilish conception and what an appalling nature.”(MXXVII, 410)

This is just enough indication of smug self-righteousness in Dodd's thoughts to give the reader pause and a dim recognition of an ironic intention on the part of the author. The reader to be sure, does not yet know what Kate Cookham's real motives are; but he does perceive that she is desperate enough to resort to anything. Furthermore, he is not quite sure that Dodd hates Kate, as much as he believes he does. Take for instance, the note on which their conversation in the scene ends,

“T take it of course he had swaggered on that your pretensions wouldn't be for a moment that I should after the act of profanity - take up my life with you.” (MXXVII, 412)

Dodd observed as he is with the shock to his sense of delicacy,
hurriedly suppresses his insight into Kate's deeper motives and goes on
to associate her with something – his shop window with its drawn
blind – that is distasteful to him.

At that point the Omniscient narrator imperceptibly takes over for
a few lines in order to provide the necessary information about Dodd's
background and occupation. The transition from Dodd's consciousness
to the narrator's Omniscience is effected with James's usual regard for
the invisibility of the author. A similar transition is seen a few pages
later when the reader gives a minimal necessary account of Kate
Cookham's background and the previous history of the relations
between the two. The authorial interruptions are not blatant here
because of the way in which they are fused with the hero's thoughts, as
well as because of their brevity. The presence of the omniscient author
needs to be pointed out now and then as a corrective to the over
simplification of the 'point of view' analysis of James's technique,
according to which his most mature productions are held to be totally
devoid of authorial presence and comment. That this is not so can be
demonstrated by a close textual examination of any work of James,
including The Ambassadors. What needs to be emphasized instead is
that James exercises an unprecedented economy and restraint in
performing his supervisory functions as an Omniscient storyteller and
almost succeeds in creating the illusion that his narratives are
autonomous. More than that is neither possible nor desirable, and it
serves no critical purpose to go on saying that the point of view in this, that or the other is entirely the point of view of this, that or the other character.

The author does not confine himself in this section to presenting the immediate reactions of Dodd after the encounter with his inexorable 'adversary'. He also succeeds in rendering a full portrait of Dodd - the aspirant to gentlemanliness and the morbid analyst as is commensurate with the essential indirection of his method. One can see the collapse of Dodd's anger in helpless tears that evening, and then again the revival in him of,

"The glow of righteous resentment who should be assured against coarse usage if a man of his really elegant perhaps in fact a triple over refined or 'effete appearance', his absolutely gentleman like type couldn't be."(M, XXVIII, 416)

This rhetorical question gives an idea of the subtlety with which James suggests the working of his hero's mind, and at the same time, his own ironic view of his blinding egotism. Still our interest in Herbert Dodd must be predominating sympathetic and its firm foundations must be laid in this section; otherwise we would fail to be moved by his suffering through long years of desolation. The success of this section lies in its achievement of both effects with astonishing economy and completeness.

One would normally expect the next stage in the narrator to be a straight account, scenic or otherwise of the settlement arrived at by
Dodd and Kate, instead there is first of all a compressed account of Dodd's intimacy with Nan Drury following his final rupture with Kate. Nan has already been briefly mentioned in the first section. The part Nan has played in taking Dodd away from Kate is not known. In any case it is to Nan that he turns to, and it is with her that he sits on his favorite bench.

The Bench of Desolation becomes an open air chapel of grief where one learns, as told in the next section,

"The secret of the dignity of sitting still with ones fate." (M, XXVIII, 432)

A succession of beautiful images unrelieved by fact would have had a closing effect. So, some actuality is reflected in the mirror of his brooding memory, his "recaptured sense of the dismal unavailing awareness that had attended his act of marriage. His recollection of the two direct echoes of Kate in all the bitter years, his marriage with poor Nan who had come to effect him as scarce than any other red nosed dowdy by that time, but this only added to the lasting view of his general and his particular morbid bravery. Toward the close of this section, the persistent echo of poor Nan is repeated, to suggest the sharp point of all his wasted life."

Structurally the first three sections form the first part of the tale where the method of representation on the whole is not scenic. The expanse of time covered is great, particularly in the third section,
equally great is the range of Dodd’s spiritual development from a querulous young victim of self-pity to a serene old man of experience. Consequently the narrative is close knit and heavily compressed in this part. The last three sections of the tale are more dramatic, each section embodying one scene and the temporal gap between one scene and the other being very brief. There is therefore quicker movement in the narrative. Another distinguishing feature of this part is that it seems to be dominated by Kate Cookham, just as the first part is dominated by Herbert Dodd. The focus of course remains on Dodd in the sense that, apart from the dramatic dialogue that gives a direct view of both of them the author permits the readers to see Kate only through Dodd’s eyes; but those eyes see differently now.

Kate’s reappearance in section four is a momentous event, and James renders it with measured emphasis. Instead of bringing the two abruptly face to face, he lets us see the process of Dodd’s gradual recognition of his old friend and foe. This heightens the drama of their reunion. The silence between them enables the author to elaborate Dodd’s view of the greatly changed Kate and her effect upon him.

The next section opens with the promise of another scene. “Off there on the bench of desolation a week later she made a more particular statement which it had taken the remarkably tense interval to render possible.” Curiosity is kept in abeyance while the author reveals Dodd’s thoughts during the remarkably ‘tense interval’, concentrating
on his reflections immediately after leaving Kate’s hotel. The readers are informed that he had gone to The Bench of Desolation where,

"He had begun to look at his extraordinary fortune a bit straight in the face and see if it confers itself as a fairy tale and a nightmare." (M, XXVIII, 459)

He confirms his resolve not to return to Kate, by nursing his memories of his dead wife and daughters until the week is over. On the following Sunday instead of going to church he proceeds to his bench of desolation, thinking that Kate ‘caught between hope and fear’ of meeting her there. Here again as in the scene of their meeting in the fourth section the author slows down his narrative to let the reader see the confusion of various impulses in Dodd’s mind as he sees Kate from a distance on the bench. It strikes him that if he hadn’t been quite sure of her recurrence, she had at least been quite sure of his. He has a sublime ideal flight, which lasted about a minute,

"About turning his back on her." (M, XXVIII, 464)

He watches her watch him and gathers that she is leaving him, not for dignity … but for kindness, free to choose, he stands,

"Rooted neither retreating nor advancing, but presently correcting his own share of their bleak exchange by looking off at the sea. Deeply conscious of the awkwardness this posture gave him, he yet clung to it as the last shred of his honor." (M, XXVII, 466)

Finally she comes to him and says,

"There are twelve hundred and sixty pounds, to be definite but I have it all down for you—and you are only to draw." (MXVIII,
This is the "more particular statement" referred to in the opening sentence of the section, but before coming to it, the author has shown the whole process of Dodd's step-by-step surrender. Without this the spectacle of his final response to Kate would not be moving enough.

'Suspense' is much too weak a term to convey the order of artistic calculation by which James involves the reader, on the remarkably harmonious conjunction of nightmare and fairy tale. It is a story with a 'happy ending' another unprofitable cliché but the effect is not one of life lived 'happily ever after'. The hero and heroine are left, not listening to wedding bells, but together on the bench of desolation, possessed of 'the secret of the dignity of sitting still with one's fate', where in Blackmur's words, the,

"Triumph consists in the gradual inward mastery of outward experience, a poetic mastery which makes of the experience conviction."

What has been concentrated in this chapter, is the technical aspects of the tale with a belief that technique should occupy a central position and that it is generally ignored in favor of the other, seemingly more impressive matters. Besides as Mark Schorer has said,

"When we speak of technique, then we speak of nearly everything."

According to Ezra Pound,

"Honest criticism... cannot get much further than saying to
one’s reader exactly what one would say to the friend who approaches one’s book shelf asking: “What the deuce shall I read?”

James’ tales are the best for one to read.
NOTES


3. Q.D. Leavis, "*Henry James: The Stories*" *Scrutiny*, XIV (Spring 1947) P.223

4. This is the form (volume and page) in which citations from *The Novels and Tales of Henry James* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907-1909) 24 volumes will be made throughout this chapter. References to works not included in the New York edition, unless otherwise specified, are to *The Novels and Stories of Henry James* (London, Macmillan, 1921-1923) 35 volumes. Citations from this edition will follow the same form as those from the New York edition with the addition of 'M' for the Publishers name.


19. The Art of the Novel op. Cited P.174


25. Henry James, 'The Untried Years' P.217.


27. Ibid. P.105


31. Kelley, The Early Development of Henry James, op. cited P.84
32. **Eight Uncollected Tales** op. cit. PP.103-109.

33. **The Art of the Novel** op. cit. P.235

34. Ibid. P.276.

35. Ibid. P. 275

36. Ibid. P. 276.

37. Ibid. P. 277.

38. Ibid. P. 276.

39. **Note Books** pp. 116, 267-268

40. **Note Books** P. 267.


42. Vaid, op. cited P. 201.

43. **The Art of the Novel,** P. 199.

44. Ibid. P. 200

45. Ibid. P.133.

46. Ibid. P. 134

47. James's Phrase, 'The Art of Fiction' (1884) in *Partial Portraits,* P.388.


49. Mark Schorer, 'Technique as Discovery' in *Critiques and Essays on Modern Fiction:* 1920-1951 selected by John