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The Finest Entertainment: Conscious Observation on Film in Adaptations of Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and *Washington Square*

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“THE FINEST ENTERTAINMENT”: CONSCIOUS OBSERVATION ON FILM
IN ADAPTATIONS OF HENRY JAMES’ *THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY*,
THE WINGS OF THE DOVE, AND *WASHINGTON SQUARE*

by

Rachael Decker Bailey

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Department of English
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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

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This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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ABSTRACT

THE FINEST ENTERTAINMENT”: CONSCIOUS OBSERVATION ON FILM IN
ADAPTATIONS OF HENRY JAMES’ *THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY*,
THE WINGS OF THE DOVE, AND *WASHINGTON SQUARE*

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The works of Henry James are renowned for their dense sub-text and the manner in which he leaves his reader to elucidate much of his meaning. In the field of adaptation theory, therefore, James presents somewhat of a problem for the film adaptor: how does one convey on screen James’ delicate implications, which are formative to the text without actually existing on the printed page?

This project not only works to answer that question, but it also addresses a more serious question: what does adaptation have to offer to the student of literature? In the case of Henry James, the film adaptations of his novels expose the trope of voyeurism which functions as one of the central operative mechanisms in the novels, allowing both authorial omniscience into the minds and lives of the characters, as well as the creation of a voyeuristic character through whose perceptions the reader’s

knowledge is filtered. In examining recent film adaptations of *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and *Washington Square*, it becomes apparent that the key to adapting James is careful attention to this trope of voyeurism, which ultimately becomes more important to a successful adaptation (an adaptation which most closely reproduces James' observations and biases rather than those of the director) than exact fidelity to the plot itself.

With these considerations in mind, I have indicated that Jane Campion's 1996 adaptation of *The Portrait of a Lady* most successfully achieves James' purposes, highlighting both the on-screen voyeurism of Ralph Touchett, then using techniques (lighting, camera angles, editing, sound) to similarly construct the viewer as voyeur. Agnieszka Holland's *Washington Square*, however, ignores James' careful positioning of Catherine Sloper as an object of visual amusement to her father and creates an insipid film that plays the drama as a mercantile transaction gone awry. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Iain Softley's *The Wings of the Dove* bloats the construct of viewer as voyeur into ineffectuality through his use of full nudity to capture the eye of the audience, ensuring that the film's images, rather than its story, are all that is remembered.

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To my husband, who patiently listened to me theorize

And my daughter, who patiently waited.

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Introduction: Adaptation Theory, the Cinematic Voyeur, and Henry James

Thus was produced, with the invention of cinema, a transformation in a previously valued social self, called the voyeur, spectator, or the looking self. This self became an extension of the camera's looking eye. It would know itself and others through the investigative, inquisitive, often erotic gaze, the gaze which would render the other intentionally naked.

--Norman Denzin, *The Cinematic Society: The Voyeur's Gaze*

In 1925, a concerned Virginia Woolf voiced her opinion that an “alliance” between film and literature was not merely “unnatural,” but ultimately “disastrous” to both genres. More significantly, Woolf felt that while such a pairing was beneficial to neither film nor novel, literature ultimately had more to lose as the “‘prey’ and ‘unfortunate victim’” of the parasitic film adaptation which devoured and cast aside the novel (Boyum 6). Since Woolf’s statement, public opinion on film adaptations has softened somewhat, but the popular view of a given film revolves largely around the question “How well did it follow the book?”

This question is natural, due to the long-held belief in the primacy of the text over the film. After all, the text is the “original,” the “masterwork,” while the film usually is categorized as the recourse of those who have neither the desire nor the mental stamina to engage with the complete text. Yet recently, scholars and critics have begun to consider the film as an entity of its own, able to both contribute to new understandings of the text and also to stand on its own as a separate and distinct artwork, a movement that on the whole has created the new field of adaptation theory.

Before proceeding, I wish to note that this thesis is not designed to be a study of how a text is “transferred” to film, but rather an analysis of the way in which adaptations of novels by the same author reveal underlying structural similarities between the novels; or rather, similarities in the operative mechanisms which drive the novels. The novels of Henry James are a particularly fit subject for this critical examination, as the voyeurism which is subtly woven throughout many of the novels becomes increasingly apparent in the films. Where the novels employ the device of a man watching a woman in order to provide and direct the action of the story, the films not only edit the shots in such a way that it is clear that one character is plainly watching the other,¹ but also position the viewer as voyeur, using what Norman Denzin calls the defining elements of the “voyeur’s film”: “long, telephoto lenses, wide, high-angle, subjective . . . and close-up camera shots . . . framing devices such as doors, windows, shadows, framed portraits and mirror reflections” (7). The concept of the viewer as voyeur will be discussed more fully in the section of this introduction dealing with the cinematic voyeur, but for my purposes now I will merely note that my choice of James is due in part to the status of his works in the American literary canon, and in part to the manner in which his novels and their subsequent adaptations illustrate the theory I have posited regarding film’s exposure of the novel’s devices. In short, adaptations of James depend heavily on the voyeur, both the voyeur in the film and the voyeur(s) of the audience, which dependency reveals in turn the manner in which James’ novels depend on the voyeur in the book and the voyeur in the reader.

In conjunction with this idea, I see the value of adaptation theory as multifaceted. Its value derives in part from the discovery of underlying structures in the text which are

exposed by the adaptation. However, such adaptations also expose a deeper cultural structure in the world at large which make both novel and film operative. In the case of Henry James, this cultural structure is that of the gaze and the half-acknowledged lure of the voyeuristic spectacle. Finally, adaptation theory also examines our Western method of mediation with reality.

In order to clarify what I mean by “mediation with reality,” a brief discussion of Frederic Jameson’s theories on this point is helpful. In noting the differences between nostalgia film (which he also terms “pastiche”) and the older historical novel/film, Jameson remarks,

Cultural production has been driven back inside the mind . . . it can no longer look directly out of its eyes at the real world for the referent but must, as in Plato’s cave, trace its mental images of the world on its confining walls. If there is any realism left here, it is a ‘realism’ which springs from the shock of grasping that confinement and of realizing that, for whatever peculiar reasons, *we seem condemned to seek the historical past through our own pop images and stereotypes about the past*, which itself remains forever out of reach. (287, emphasis added)

What I find particularly intriguing is the manner in which, as Jameson notes earlier, film itself continues to revisit the same historically apparent themes. Just as *Star Wars* “reinvents” the experience of the “Saturday afternoon serial of the Buck Rogers type—alien villains, true American heroes, heroines in distress, the death ray or the doomsday box” (287), so film adaptations reinvent the experience of the novel. This is an obvious point, but one which I think worth further discussion. Brian McFarlane notes in *Novel to Film* that the majority of recent Academy Award-winning films are adaptations (6). In

short, many successful films look not to the “real world as the referent,” but often to novelized stereotypes about the past.

Jameson states that one of the critical features of postmodernism is the “transformation of reality into images” (294), leading me to posit that the transformation of images is the heart of film’s appeal. Where reality is too complex and too fraught with problems to be readily interpreted (or perhaps “confronted” is a better term, especially given the post-war modernist angst preceding postmodernism), we turn instead to the flickering of shadows on the walls of our Platonic cave—or in other words, to the flickering images of the cinema, which acts as a mediating space between ourselves and the world of reality. Thus, these images of “popular culture” are a ground where we can draw closer to our past, as represented specifically by the literature of the past, which acts itself as the chronicle of human experience. Consequently, film adaptations become a vital site for examination, as they are the way in which we can confront reality through transferring our exploration of history into images, breaking it down further into momentary frames for easy consumption. Rather than confronting reality itself, or even the reflection of that reality in the novel, we focus instead on the filmic version, the reflection—someone else’s mental conception played out in celluloid of what the world was, is, or ought to be.

While I do wish to provide a theoretical basis for the valorization of the filmic text and adaptation theory itself, the primary purpose of this introduction is to lay the groundwork for the critical project I have chosen for my thesis: the film adaptations of three Henry James texts. In order to do so, a brief examination of the fidelity criterion (which I believe to be erroneous and damaging to the film, particularly a Jamesian

adaptation) is necessary. Secondly, I will review some of the peculiar problems of adapting James to the screen. This last will bring me to a discussion of cinematic voyeurism, which I have previously mentioned as the operative mechanism in successful Jamesian adaptations.

The Fidelity Criterion

In order to contextualize my argument, it is necessary to give a brief overview of not only the debate surging around the value of the fidelity criterion, but the reasons for such concern. The intersection of the adapted text with the original work shows (often by the very nature of the changes made in transferring the novel to film) points which were existent but not readily apparent in the original text. Lee Clark Mitchell remarks in his essay “Based on the Novel by Henry James” that adaptations

expose possibilities in the original text not immediately apparent . . . any adaptation opens up aspects of character (frequently through inventive casting), or clarifies plot (customarily through flashbacks and parallel editing), or modulates narrative pressures (by emphasizing visually muted scenes, often through the sound-track) that we hadn’t necessarily appreciated in the original. (296)

This idea of additional revelation about the text plays out in Walter Benjamin’s discussion of the new viewpoints for study opened up by the filmic nature of the camera. Benjamin argues for the manner in which a “different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye—if only because an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man” (334). In short, the perceptions of the camera are capable of revealing that which is filtered out by normal human observation—because natural observation happens too quickly, too slowly, or is simply

discarded in the rush of information pouring in—and so the camera is also capable of making prominent in film the textual material which has previously functioned only on the level of sub-text, an important issue in the works of authors like Henry James, where much of the “action” that occurs or is of prominence never actually appears on the printed page.²

The problem which immediately presents itself is in the depiction of such sub-textual action. In revisiting the earlier question of “how closely did the film follow the book,” one arrives at the notion of fidelity, the popular criterion for the consideration of the value and success of a film adaptation. Significantly, George Bluestone’s 1957 text *Novels into Film* (widely regarded as the beginning of criticism on film adaptation) immediately devalues the fidelity criterion. Five pages into his text, Bluestone notes the folly of such statements as “‘The film is true to the spirit of the book’; ‘It’s incredible how they butchered the novel,’” remarking that such comments

assume, among other things, a separable content which may be detached and reproduced . . . that incidents and characters in fiction are interchangeable with incidents and characters in the film; *that the novel is a norm and the film deviates at its peril* . . . what is common to all these assumptions is the lack of awareness that mutations are probable the moment one goes from a given set of fluid, but relatively homogenous, conventions to another; *that changes are inevitable* the moment one abandons the linguistic for the visual medium . . . the end products of novel and film represent different aesthetic genera, as different from each other as ballet is from architecture. (5, emphasis added)

More recently, prominent theorist Brian McFarlane adopts Bluestone's stance, stating that "there will often be a distinction between being faithful to the 'letter', an approach which the more sophisticated writer may suggest is no way to ensure a 'successful' adaptation, and to the 'spirit' or 'essence' of the work . . . the fidelity approach seems a doomed enterprise and fidelity criticism unilluminating" (9). Yet while it is my opinion that the concern with fidelity to the author's intent³ has long held film back from equal valorization with the novel, this is not to say that a film should completely disregard all elements of the novel, removing itself from the category of adaptation entirely. Rather, McFarlane emphasizes the difference between plot and story, quoting Terence Hawkes' definition of each: "'Story' is simply the basic succession of events, the raw material which confronts the artist. Plot represents the distinctive way in which the 'story' is made strange, creatively deformed, and defamiliarized" (McFarlane 23). Thus a film may retain the 'essence,' or 'story,' that an author creates without retaining fidelity to the plot,⁴ or the particular way the author describes that story.⁵

However, while fidelity is discounted in adaptation circles, it has yet to fall into disfavor with the general public (hence my discussion of it here). Consequently, many categories have been suggested by theorists to counter this problem of fidelity; for instance, Geoffrey Wagner's delineation between transposition, "in which a novel is given directly on the screen with a minimum of apparent interference," commentary, "where an original is taken and either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect . . . when there has been a different intention on the part of the film-maker, rather than infidelity or outright violation," and analogy, "which must represent a fairly considerable departure for the sake of making another work of art" (McFarlane 11). McFarlane

himself argues for a distinction between “transfer” and “adaptation proper,” noting the potentiality for

transferring the novel’s narrative basis and of *adapting* those aspects of its enunciation which are held to be important to retain, but which resist transfer, so as to achieve, through quite different means of signification and reception, affective responses that evoke the viewer’s memory of the original text without doing violence to it. (21, emphasis McFarlane’s)

My purpose in surveying these categories of fidelity criticism, particularly the critically acknowledged necessity for alternative methods of adaptation, is not to argue for a new category in the realm of fidelity criticism; rather, it is to show that fidelity has been essentially discarded by adaptation scholars. Yet fidelity does remain part of the logic of cinematic representation of an adaptation, and as such assumes that firstly, there is some sort of transferable content; secondly, that certain things are more worthy of transfer than others. Such a fixation on certain elements at the expense of others is inherently voyeuristic, indubitably linking adaptation theory with voyeurism.⁶ Finally, I see McFarlane’s comment about “quite different means” as an important one,⁷ particularly since some of these adaptive methods are misconstrued by the popular viewer as rash methods of altering the text, while in reality they merely serve to evoke the same feelings and reactions as the original text, albeit through different avenues.

Adapting James to Film

This discussion becomes particularly interesting when considering the works of Henry James, the subject of this critical study. Immersed in psychological realism, James’ novels are notoriously difficult to adapt to film.⁸ As French director Jacques

Rivette notes, James is “among the authors who are ‘unfilmable’, who ‘can be filmed diagonally, taking up their themes, but never literally’” (qtd. Horne 35). This notion of diagonal filming, or finding the “essence” in a Jamesian work, seems to have led to the most success⁹ in adaptations of Henry James. As I have previously noted, it is only by devaluing fidelity as a criterion that James can be successfully adapted. This rejection of fidelity and subsequent focus on “essence” is continually played out in recent adaptations of *The Portrait of a Lady*, *Washington Square*, and *The Wings of the Dove*.¹⁰ In these works, as in much of James, the problem revolves around James’ sub-text: “nothing is ever stated and film doesn’t allow that kind of vagueness” (Horne 36); instead, the audience is left to speculate about what James has implied but not said outright.¹¹ Yet this statement is not so much an attempt to rule out the idea of filming James as to define its limits and problems: what is merely implied must often be fleshed out. This engenders in itself a departure from fidelity--one may be able to retain the story of James, or the raw material, but the plot is another matter due to the way in which James frequently intimates the action of a scene that does not appear on the page itself. Much like McFarlane, James scholar Philip Horne recognizes the problems inherent in fidelity to James’ texts, stating simply that absolute fidelity is impossible and a new balance may be struck. Horne goes on to add that ‘extreme closeness’ to the original may be ‘dangerous’ unless it has been thoroughly analyzed (38). Thus, there is a *necessity* for the story/plot distinction in terms of Jamesian adaptations, since fidelity to the plot is likely damning to the film.

In his study of the 1997 adaptation of *Wings of the Dove*, Anthony J. Mazella fully outlines the problems confronted by those adapting James:

[James'] texts are constructed upon the accumulation of minute analyses of interior states of mind. His characters live most fully in the realm of thought. . . . the central challenge, then, of adapting James has been the attempt (but, more often than not, the result has been the failure) to capture in a visual medium the "state of mind" that defines first his characters, then their story, and finally the whole of the work itself. Since states of mind in fiction are, by definition, communicated through words, filmmakers who are interested in a certain kind of fidelity to a literary source are sorely pressed to invent ways to capture the words that in a film are *not* spoken. (582)

Of such an attempt to find an alternative way to explore a text's themes, Joy Gould Boyum remarks in the conclusion to her critical study *Double Exposure: Fiction into Film*: "the rhetoric of fiction is simply not the rhetoric of film, and it's finding analogous strategies whereby the one achieves the effects of the other that the greatest challenge of adaptation lies" (81). Lee Clark Mitchell adds that "film adaptation . . . seems to cry out for alternative sequences not in the original novel, if the reader's experience is to be recreated in the cinematic medium" (282). This addresses the most critical point in Jamesian adaptations: how does one successfully convey on screen what is only implied in James—or perhaps not even implied, but exists only as an impression delicately conveyed, available on a different level to each new reader? Moreover, when fidelity is discarded as a criterion of judgment, what does one then look for when performing a critical study of film?

The purpose of this project is an attempt to answer these questions. As I mentioned earlier, adaptation theory's value was never derived from its ability to evaluate

a film's faithfulness in reproducing a text; rather, its value derives from demonstrating that the film is interesting because of what it uncovers in the novel. More specifically, the adaptations of these three novels exhibit a shift towards the utilization of the trope of cinematic voyeurism. Again, as has been discussed earlier in this paper, the films not only place characters in the position of voyeur in their observation of each other, but construct the audience itself as voyeur. The films play out James' sub-text in such a manner that the audience is privy to the most private interactions between characters, watching both physical and emotional intimacy.

Why, then, does sexual representation and voyeurism become the vehicle of choice in recent Jamesian adaptations?¹² This question is answered in part by the manner in which James constructs his novels.¹³ One famous caricature of James by Max Beerbohm focuses on the author, who, "eyes bulging and ear pressed to the keyhole, kneels before the door of a hotel room with two pairs of shoes outside it," ultimately playing with "portrayal of the voyeurism implicit in acts of Jamesian perception" (Cross 131). Such voyeurism is generally engendered by the nature of the novels themselves, which focus on showing to the reader the "conscious observation of a lovely woman" (James 231). Consider, for instance, Brian McFarlane's remark on the use of "central reflectors" in texts, making specific mention of the character of Winterbourne in James' *Daisy Miller*. Such reflectors, he says, "provide a point of identification for the reader, not necessarily in the affective sense but as a more or less consistently placed vantage-point from which to observe the action of the narrative" (19). To this, I would add the characters of Ralph Touchett in *The Portrait of a Lady* and Dr. Sloper in *Washington Square*, both of whom facilitate the reader's observations of the central female character

in the novel. Although Winterbourne figures more prominently in the position of the “central reflector,” acting as a filter for the reader’s perceptions of Daisy (much as Nick does in *The Great Gatsby*, mediating the audience’s understanding of Daisy Buchanan), James consistently uses these watching men to influence the reader’s views.

Consequently, it is no surprise that Jamesian adaptations build upon this idea of “watching,” using these same male characters to facilitate the voyeuristic nature of the films, where much of the focus remains on the actions (and body) of the female lead.

Some Jamesian adaptation scholarship thus far has picked up on this thread. For instance, in her essay “Conscious Observation: Jane Campion’s *Portrait of a Lady*,” Nancy Bentley mentions James’ use of the idea of “girl-watching,” (174); John Carlos Rowe notes in “Sex, Gender, and Recent Film Adaptations” the way in which *Portrait*, *Washington Square*, and *Wings of the Dove* work out “their various conflicts principally through the representation of feminine identity and . . . the overt theatricalisation [sic] of sexuality and the substitution of the sensuous body for Jamesian psychological interiority” (198). Yet these are only passing comments; in large part, the method in which this is depicted on film has largely been ignored in favor of studies of costuming, dialogue, and the like in essays dealing with James on film. While Bentley’s essay on *The Portrait of a Lady* led to passing mention of voyeurism in *Portrait* by other James scholars, none of the other novels have been examined for such devices; in particular, no attention has been given to any such unifying trend in successful Jamesian adaptations. What is particularly disturbing about such a lack is that it also reflects a similar emptiness in literary scholarship on James as a voyeur. Consequently, the importance of a critical

study of voyeurism in the films is doubly significant, as it adds to extant literary scholarship by exposing voyeurism as the operative mechanism in the novels as well.

In clarification of this idea, a portion of Bentley's essay is helpful, since it touches briefly on this notion of voyeurism in *Portrait of a Lady*. She builds this section of analysis around Ralph Touchett's notion that "the conscious observation of a lovely woman [his cousin Isabel] struck him as the finest entertainment that the world now had to offer" ("Lovely Woman" 231). Bentley then goes on to note:

today in an age when watching lovely women has become a mainstay of mass entertainment, James' sentence carries an unexpected resonance, a note of literalism he could not have anticipated. Moviegoers, whether partial to art films or horror flicks, know that the observation of a beautiful woman is a central preoccupation of the celluloid world: *voyeurs do it*, worshipful suitors do it, star-struck fans and demented slashers do it—above all, film directors do it, *as prelude to the woman-watching their audiences will do* in theaters. (Bentley, "Conscious Observation" 127, emphasis added)

James' texts lend themselves so remarkably well to this idea of cinematic voyeurism precisely because that is what the texts do themselves, if less overtly. The psychological realism that is so central to his text allows the reader to see what the characters are thinking or what motivates their actions, even allowing an understanding of that which is never manifest to the characters themselves.¹⁴ Such intimacy can only be paralleled onscreen by the voyeur's gaze, where the body becomes the site of exploration and fascination, where the crisis of the novel becomes on film one which is "sexual, a predicament of the body and of bodily desire" (Bentley, "Conscious Observation" 128).

The Cinematic Voyeur

Critical scholarship on the voyeur's gaze in cinema has focused primarily on the filmed depiction of the character of the voyeur watching another character. Interestingly enough, most studies of cinematic voyeurism do not appear to find Jacques Lacan's theories (or those of the post-Lacanian) on the gaze itself helpful, while studies of Lacan and cinema tend to focus solely on the mirror stage. Consequently, a study of the construction of the spectative audience as voyeur is somewhat difficult, but it is still possible to construct a theoretical background for such an analysis by regarding extant scholarship in other areas, albeit in a somewhat unconventional manner.

In *The Cinematic Society: The Voyeur's Gaze*, Norman Denzin attempts to bring together much of the critical scholarship surrounding the gaze of the character of the voyeur on film. While such a study, as I have already indicated, is not fully relevant to my project, Denzin's work still sheds light on the critical tropes and theory behind the spectacle of cinematic voyeurism. In particular, he begins his survey of the tradition of the voyeur in cinema by noting that the cinematic apparatus itself "turns the spectator into a voyeur who gazes at the screen" (3).

This positioning of the viewer in the space of the voyeur is accomplished by a dual mechanism. While the screen plays images of intimacy that one would not see in the normal course of social interaction (and I do not distinguish here between physical or emotional intimacy; I wish merely to reference those private scenes which are not on display for the casual observer or acquaintance), the filming of the scene is done in such a way that, as Walter Benjamin notes, "the audience's identification with the actor is really an identification with the camera. Consequently the audience takes the position of the camera" (329). Assuming this space gives the audience a position of privilege, an

assurance of anonymity and supposed objectivity. In short, it is a “safe position” from which to watch these depictions of the hidden portions of others’ lives. As Denzin notes, “cinema made voyeurs out of spectators. In the shadows of the theatre is reproduced the concept of a private, sacred space which the spectator . . . voyeuristically enters [into] the public and private worlds that the on-screen voyeur trespasses” (14).

Moreover, where the eye is normally free to select from its range of vision what it wishes to focus on, film eliminates this choice: “film, by the presence of the camera-narrator, always mediates its materials and controls and directs our perceptions” (Boyum 38). The viewer has no choice in assuming the stance of the voyeur, since the very act of watching the film puts him in a position where he willingly accepts and views whatever passes on the screen before his eyes. Expanding on this point, Laura Mulvey’s essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” describes the way in which the “viewer identifies with the male hero because the camera identifies with the male hero. The camera focuses on what the male hero is looking at . . . this alignment forces the woman into the position of the object of the male gaze” (McGowan 210). This becomes particularly relevant in a discussion of adaptations of James, where the novels revolve around men who are looking at women. An adaptation of such a novel inherently calls for the camera/male hero alignment, immediately constructing the audience in the position of voyeur by merely watching the screen, since their eyes will be directed only by the camera.

This power of the cinematic gaze on the audience is what gives it the power to make the viewer into an unconscious (or half-willing) voyeur. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty notes in “The Intertwining—The Chiasm,” “the look . . . envelops, palpates,

espouses the visible things . . . finally one cannot say if it is the look or if it is the things that command” (165). The potency of the look of the screen outwards onto the viewers, who assume the status of “things,” results in such enveloping absorption that the viewer can literally become incapable of commanding the image, unable to tear away the fascinated gaze from the reflected gaze of the screen.

Yet the constructed and voyeuristic gaze of the audience at the screen, the commonality which binds this group of Jamesian adaptations together, is only one aspect of the way voyeurism can play out in cinema. Cinema, argues Denzin, can ultimately produce three varieties of the gaze: that of “the camera as it records events, the look of the audience as it watches, and the looks of the characters as they watch each other” (43). To varying degrees, all of the Jamesian adaptations which I have chosen to discuss toy with this notion of one character “watching” another, partially through the idea of the central reflector, which I have discussed elsewhere in this introduction. Consequently, these films lend themselves particularly well to the codes of what Denzin terms the “voyeur’s film,” where the film positions a male character ‘in search of the truth about an event that has already happened, or is about to come to completion” (8). (Consider in this category Ralph Touchett, Dr. Sloper, and Winterbourne’s curiosity about the choices that Isabel, Catherine, and Daisy will make in matters of love and marriage, or the truth about their respective characters.) Finally, notes Denzin, this code “probes the secrets of female sexuality” (8).

Yet such statements about voyeurism seem to indicate that only certain (male) characters, exposed onscreen, derive pleasure from outward observation. However, I myself am an inveterate people-watcher. My husband and I play a game at the grocery

store where we attempt to guess, based on the items being purchased, something of the nature and character of the shoppers around us. Are they dieting? Married? Planning a party? Junk-food aficionados? It is perhaps for this reason that I find James' novels so relevant, as his stories become the printed description of what many do in occasional moments: attempt to derive an understanding of the psyches of those around me based on what is observed of their actions. Or in other words, there is often a general tendency to turn outwards for entertainment, watching others lead their lives and then comparing them to our own experience.

The voyeurism in these novels—and consequently, the films adapted from these novels—functions in a similar way. However, the notion of voyeurism is itself problematic. A word which has been frequently used in critical theory without an appropriately narrowed definition, it can mean any number of things, implying actions that range from innocent people-watching of the park-goers to the sexual invasion of the peeping tom. For my purposes, I will use voyeurism to mean the conscious observation of another for one's own gratification, whether it is for sexual arousal or a distraction from one's own mundane life. In the category of voyeur, I will include not only the voyeur of the printed page, but also James himself, the directors of the films who “watch” James in the process of adapting his works, and finally the reader or theatrical audience, who watch a director watch James watch a character watch another. If Ralph Touchett, gazing at Isabel Archer for his own diversion, is voyeuristic, then James is doubly so, as is Campion in her replication of the story—as am I in watching Campion's film.

Ultimately, the question as to why this voyeurism is so appealing (both for the characters onscreen and for the audience watching) is answered in part by Jacques Lacan, where he comments on the manner in which “this showing” satisfies “some appetite of the eye on the part of the person looking” (540). The nature of this appetite is never defined by Lacan, yet significantly, he notes that “it must be fed” and such an appetite engenders a hypnotic gaze on the part of the observer. In studying filmic voyeurism, it is important to note that the appetite differs from subject to subject, but it is the existence of a similar desire which is the key, serving to unite an increasingly voyeuristic audience in pursuit of some *je ne sais quoi*.

It is this trope of voyeurism which serves to bind together these novels and their adaptations, pulling out the “essence” of conscious observation of the female body and actions. As I have noted, James’ texts already function on this level of voyeurism, tracing the innermost lives of his characters, implying through sub-text what he never fleshes out in words. The voyeuristic gaze parallels this onscreen, offering the audience the opportunity to not only watch the characters, but to see their own observation reflected in the characters’ study of one another. Ultimately, as Slavoj Žižek remarks, such a gaze is the “stain in which the subject ‘sees nothing,’” but ultimately is the “‘knot which condenses all . . . it enframes the very frame which confers meaning on your life’” (15). The seeming insignificance of the appetite which drives the gaze and the gaze which drives the spectator, both in the film and in the novel, indicate the underlying societal structure which *makes them function* for both readers of the text and the viewers of the film.

The remainder of this project will focus on a detailed analysis of each novel and its accompanying adaptations in an attempt to trace the relative levels of incorporation of the voyeuristic trope, examining the manner in which some films achieve it successfully and subtly and others take it to the extreme.

Chapter One

The Implications Are Present: Fleshing Out James in Jane Campion's *The Portrait of a Lady*

The Portrait of a Lady is James' famous novel of necessity, the story of the young American Isabel Archer who is bequeathed a fortune by her uncle, sets out in Europe determined to exercise her agency and expand her character (refusing in the process an offer of marriage from both her American lover Caspar Goodwood and the desirable English bachelor Lord Warburton), but is instead trapped into marriage to the cold dilettante Gilbert Osmond. A story which revolves around the observation of Isabel, the most "Jamesian heroine" (Edel *Conquest* 422) and her actions, framed by the views of her cousin Ralph Touchett, it is a highly stylized "portrait" of the feminine mind, body, and spirit. As such, the novel presents a problem to the film adaptor, primarily as a result of its heavy reliance on the psychological realism for which James' works are justly famous. Since much of the "action" takes place in Isabel's mind,¹⁵ rather than in interactions between characters, how does one show this on screen?—and even more perplexing, how does one film James' subtle intimations of things that never really reveal themselves on the printed page?

As of the date of this thesis, *The Portrait of a Lady* has only been adapted to the screen twice. The first, made for TV (BBC) in 1968, was directed by James Cellan Jones with a screenplay written by Jack Pulman. The six-episode series, which featured Richard Chamberlain as Ralph Touchett, Suzanne Neve as Isabel Archer, and James Maxwell as Gilbert Osmond, was primarily praised for its casting of Chamberlain. The more recent (and more prominent) filmic version was released in 1996, directed by Jane

Campion, written by Laura Jones, starring Nicole Kidman as Isabel Archer, John Malkovich as Gilbert Osmond, Martin Donovan as Ralph Touchett, and Barbara Hershey as Serena Merle (with a brief appearance by Viggo Mortensen as Caspar Goodwood).

The second adaptation of *Portrait* is largely responsible for the surge of interest¹⁶ in Henry James films. *The Henry James Review* ran a special edition in 1997 entitled “Responses to Jane Campion’s *The Portrait of a Lady*,” featuring articles by Dale Bauer, Mark Bousquet, Karen Michele Chandler, Alan Nadel, Priscilla Walton, Virginia Wright Wexman, and most significantly, an article by Nancy Bentley¹⁷ entitled “‘Conscious Observation of a Lovely Woman’: Jane Campion’s *Portrait* in Film,” which remarked in its opening paragraphs:

When James named his novel *The Portrait of a Lady*, he signaled his awareness that the genre of the novel, like that of portraiture, provided for a species of girl-watching . . . among the many nuanced meanings James’ novel attaches to ‘the sweet-tasting property of observation,’ certainly it includes an anticipation of the kind of diffusely eroticized watching that has such a central place in our contemporary popular culture. Still, what James couldn’t have known—though Jane Campion clearly does—is that girl-watching would be one of the motivating energies in the history of cinema. (Bentley “Lovely Woman” 174)

Going on, she remarks on the various representations of women visually, maintaining that

a film version of James’ novel of necessity has to be written in flesh, conveyed in the visual images of actor’s bodies rather than the hieroglyphics of print . . . a ‘portrait’ in film, Campion seems to insist, is not a novel. Even a famous

nineteenth-century text by a famous language-obsessed novelist will be fashioned out of elemental acts of looking at the faces and bodies of women once it is recreated on screen. (Bentley “Lovely Woman” 174)

Yet from this point Bentley diverges to explore other aspects of the film; specifically, the departures which Campion makes from James’ text, which she sees (and I agree) as not only necessities, but a sort of fleshing-out of James’ work that still maintain its fidelity of purpose. Unfortunately, this portion of her essay is the one which has received greatest attention from her fellow critics, and was what she chose to focus on in an expanded version of the original article,¹⁸ published in the essay collection *Henry James Goes to the Movies* as “Conscious Observation: Jane Campion’s *Portrait of a Lady*,” a focus which I see as a logical but unfortunate consequence of adaptation theory’s obsession with firstly, a film’s fidelity to a text, and secondly, the very validity of fidelity as a criterion. What I see as the question of greater concern is the issue Bentley originally introduced—the adaptation into film of Jamesian novels which focus on girl-watching. More specifically (and going beyond Bentley’s proposition) I see such a focus on “girl-watching” as the mechanism for the entire film, focusing not merely on the actors’ bodies but on every aspect of their lives, prying inside (as did James himself) for the ultimate voyeur’s experience, satisfying the voyeuristic impulse not only for the actors onscreen, but for the audience itself. In utilizing such a mechanism, Campion’s *The Portrait of a Lady* becomes a literal “portrait,” a visual representation designed for the observer’s satisfaction.

All of the action in James’ *The Portrait of a Lady* directly descends from a voyeuristic impulse on the part of Ralph Touchett. James takes great pains to establish

Ralph as a man who gains pleasure from watching Isabel. Less than forty pages into the novel, the author tells us of Ralph:

It seemed to him that the delights of observation had never been suspected . . . it was very probably this sweet-tasting property of observation to which I allude . . . that was mainly concerned in Ralph's quickly stirred interest in the arrival of a young lady [Isabel] who was evidently not insipid. If he were observantly disposed, something told him, here was occupation for a number of days . . . conscious observation of a lovely woman had struck him as the finest entertainment that the world now had to offer him. (38)

As Ralph introduces Isabel to Gardencourt, he continues to exact more pleasure from watching her than from examining with her the beauties of his home. Noting that Ralph spends less time looking at the pictures lining the gallery at Gardencourt (which he is showing to Isabel) than at Isabel herself, James writes "He found himself pausing in the middle of the gallery and bending his eyes much less upon the pictures than on her figure. He lost nothing, in truth, by these wandering glances; for she was better worth looking at than most works of art" (43).

This last passage is particularly interesting, since it shows not only Ralph as the voyeur, but also begins to construct the reader into a similar position. By noting that Isabel is "better looking than most works of art," James hints to his audience that Isabel is the item most worthy of study in this particular work of art—his novel. Thus, he posits her as an entity to be examined, to be consumed by the gaze of Ralph and hence by the mind of the reader, since Ralph functions as the lens through which the reader may examine Isabel. Moreover, by casting Isabel as a "work of art," James dehumanizes her

to the point where it is not only acceptable to bend the intrusive and inquisitive glance, but such a glance is actually an item of negligible thought. Her status is already wavering between “person” and “object”: one can think of her as either with equal facility.

As Ralph is the means through which the reader comes to know Isabel, it becomes increasingly important for James to show the manner in which Ralph objectifies and then consumes Isabel. A few pages further on, Ralph feels that “If his cousin were to be nothing more than an entertainment to him, [he] was conscious that she was an entertainment of a high order. ‘A character like that,’ he said to himself, ‘is the finest thing in nature.’” Expanding upon this idea, he compares her to a building to which the key has been

put into his hand . . . he surveyed the edifice from the outside, and admired it greatly; he looked in at the windows, and received an impression of proportions equally fair. But he felt that he only saw it by glimpses, and that he had not yet stood under the roof . . . she was intelligent and generous, she had a fine free nature, but what was she going to do with herself? (59).

Thus, reader and Ralph are able to excuse themselves upon dual grounds; firstly, they have succeeded in objectifying Isabel, secondly, their motives are pure—they wish only to see what this “fine free nature” will do: her “originality was that she gave one an impression of having intentions of her own. ‘Whenever she executes them,’ said Ralph, ‘may I be there to see!’” (58-59).

The novel’s dependency on voyeurism as its operative mechanism is solidified with the will of Daniel Touchett, father to Ralph and uncle to Isabel. Ralph persuades his father to bequeath seventy thousand pounds to Isabel on the grounds that he would like to

see what she will do once she is capable of fulfilling any wish she may imagine. When his father responds, “You speak as if it were for your entertainment,” Ralph replies in turn, “So it is, a good deal” (171). Finally, his perplexed father remarks “I don’t see what good you are going to get of it,” and Ralph concludes, “I shall get just the good that I said just now I wished to put into Isabel’s reach—that of having gratified my imagination” (173). As a dying man himself, Ralph intends to gratify his own imagination through the continued observation of his cousin, who will now be a woman rich enough to pursue any scheme she pleases.

Unfortunately for Ralph, Isabel does not fulfill his expectations in the manner in which he hoped for. James describes him as finding “much entertainment in the idea that, in these few months that he had known her, he should see a third suitor at her gate . . . Ralph looked forward to a fourth and fifth *soupirant*; he had no conviction that she would stop at a third” (255). Ralph’s dismay at finding that his cousin is determined to marry Gilbert Osmond is complete. Interestingly enough, James does not cast him in the light of discouraging Isabel’s marriage through any high motive of his own; instead, as Isabel notes, “Ralph apparently wished her not to marry at all . . . because he was amused with the spectacle of her adventures as a single woman” (323). In reality, Isabel escapes Ralph’s amusement at her actions only to cast herself as another piece in the collection of Gilbert Osmond.

Before the reader is introduced to Osmond, they are presented with a description of his belongings, an apt introduction for the man who will complete the objectification of Isabel Archer. James describes his home as telling of “habitation being practiced as a fine art. It contained a new variety of those faded hangings of damask and tapestry, those

chests and cabinets of carved and time-polished oak, those primitive specimens of pictorial art in frames pedantically rusty, those perverse-looking relics of mediaeval brass and pottery” (210). Ultimately, it is fitting that Isabel eventually assumes the status of a figurine in Osmond’s collection, since this is the plan he has for her from the very beginning:

He was fond of originals, of rarities, of the superior, the exquisite; and now that he had seen Lord Warburton . . . he perceived a new attraction in the idea of taking to himself a young lady who had qualified herself to be in his collection of choice objects by rejecting the splendid offer of a British aristocrat. (280)

It is Isabel’s very independence, which causes her to reject Lord Warburton, that results in her cage with Osmond. Similarly, her independence and exuberance of spirit results in the fortune which attracts Osmond to her, as her fortune derives from the fascination she holds for Ralph. Hence, the foundation of the novel depends on outright voyeurism and the pleasure derived therein. Because the text depends upon and revolves around voyeurism, a successful adaptation is the voyeur’s film that still tells the same story as that told by the text. The thematic essence must be retained, but the means of conveying this essence are understandably different in a film as opposed to a written text.

This is exactly what Jones fails to do in his 1968 version. A perfect example of unswerving fidelity to Jones’ own reading of the text, it clearly shows the effect that such devotion has upon the finished film. Recognizing that Ralph’s observation of Isabel is the genesis of much of the action in the film, it takes care to include James’ lines about various characters watching Isabel,¹⁹ even going so far as to create some new dialogue²⁰ about this same topic. Unfortunately, while it faithfully recreates (through dialogue)

James' narration about Ralph's desire to watch Isabel, it utterly fails to do so visually. Indeed, the first two hours of the film are much more about Ralph than they are about Isabel (an understandable choice, considering the fact that Neve is capable of only two emotions: irritating cheerfulness and red-faced anger, while Chamberlain is witty and captivating). The viewer experiences much the same problem with this Isabel as with James' Daisy Miller or F. Scott Fitzgerald's Daisy Buchanan²¹—where the text tells us that this is a fascinating woman, her on-screen counterpart fails to create the same impression. *Campion* solves this problem by making the spectacle of Isabel as visually fascinating to the viewer as it is to the on-screen characters, making it a movie that is literally about watching Isabel; but *Jones* is content for the dialogue to tell the viewer that the other characters are excited about this woman without ever making the audience feel a corresponding emotion. In short, this film *says* it all—literally. James' narration is transformed into dialogue (and rather ponderous dialogue it is), and there is no attempt to take advantage of the visual medium of film. Where *Campion's* is a film playing out a text through images, similar to the images James creates in the minds of his readers, *Jones'* is a stiff reenactment, full of lengthy shots, extreme (and unflattering) close-ups that fail to give any sense of continuity, and awkward stiff acting that likely results from the problematic dialogue. Consequently, *Jones'* film is absolutely faithful to the printed text, but fails to capture its essence on screen (the notion of “watching”), giving us a paradoxical film where characters onscreen consistently talk about the pleasure of watching others and the audience offscreen snores undisturbed, utterly detached from a film which might as well be a cold read of the script for all the visual ingenuity which went into its making.

Campion's success derives from her decision to make the voyeuristic tendencies of her film immediately transparent. While she does not have the freedom of James' omniscient narrator, commenting on Ralph's pleasure in watching other women, she uses other methods to convey to the audience that this is very much a film about watching women. The construction of Campion's film as voyeuristic begins before the first images roll onto the screen—in fact, before entering the theatre. It begins when the audience learns that Nicole Kidman plays the title role. When *The Portrait of a Lady* was released in 1996, Nicole Kidman was famous for her work in *Days of Thunder*, *Far and Away*, *Batman Forever*, and *To Die For*, roles which had made her famous not for her chameleon-like ability to assimilate herself into a character (an ability which she later demonstrated in her portrayal of Virginia Woolf in *The Hours*), but for her remarkable beauty of both face and form. In fact, Kidman was considered a sex symbol by many viewers, something to be consumed by the appetite of the eye. Casting Kidman thus signaled to viewers that this was a character to be watched, consumed, and devoured on one's own terms. As Robert Stam notes in his essay "The Dialogics of Adaptation," the cinematic performer "brings along a kind of baggage, a thespian intertext formed by the totality of antecedent roles. Thus Lawrence Olivier brings with him the intertextual memory of his Shakespeare performances, just as Madonna brings the memory of the various personae of her music videos" (Naremore 60). Such prior suppositions and prejudices about characters created by an actor's past roles²² result in another level of subtle machinations by the director, where the "performer [can] play against the intertext, thus exploiting a realm of tension not available in the novel" (Naremore 61). Kidman thus indicates that Isabel is a sex symbol, an objectification of the body, a commodity

open for consumption not only by the male characters in the film, but by the audience itself, who will ogle Isabel as they have learned to ogle Kidman.

As the film begins, blackness initially greets the viewer, while women's voices speak in the darkness about love. As the screen lightens, the women are visible, although they have stopped speaking and are now staring back at the camera, fully conscious of its gaze upon them, and by implication, that of the viewer. What is particularly interesting



Figure 1. Two of the women in the opening sequence of Campion's film, who reflect back the gaze of the viewer.

about this sequence is that it not only “catches” the voyeur in the act of looking, it also signals to the viewer that this is a film about watching a woman on a screen—there is nothing to distract the viewer's eye, no explosions or car chases or even background movement—simply the faces and bodies of the

actresses onscreen. Much as Isabel wants to see the world (a wish which she frequently expresses in the opening pages of the novel), it is she herself who is sketchily captured and forever viewed by others.

The signaling that this is a film about watching women onscreen, introduced in the opening credit sequence, is continued throughout the film. Campion consistently uses shots which signal (as noted in the Introduction to this thesis) the status of this as a voyeur's film: high-angle and canted shots, blurred and partial images,²³ and lighting shifts that accentuate certain characters onscreen and leave others in the dark as free observers.

Moreover, in addition to the stylization of shots and lighting marking this a voyeur's film, there are the images themselves that occupy the screen. One of the common complaints against Campion's film is that she departs from James' text by focusing her film around scenes which never take place in the novel. Yet despite the attacks on Campion for her expansion upon and departure from James' text, even these same critics can grudgingly acknowledge the power that these deviations give to the film, terming it (as does one James scholar) "flawed, lugubrious, often gloriously beautiful" (Horne 41). While Campion's adaptation retains the same raw material as the Jamesian text, her focus is different.²⁴ Instead of stopping after addressing the social and moral aspects of Isabel's crisis as they are described by James, Campion, argues Nancy Bentley, portrays Isabel's crisis as a sexual one, a predicament created by physical desire and the body itself. According to Bentley, Campion's focus on sexuality is the logical consequence of adapting Isabel's plight into film, which she describes as "a medium in which female agency is finally inseparable from the questions of the body and its visual image" ("Conscious Observation" 128). Ultimately, the sexual nature of Isabel's plight in the novel falls into the vast category of James' vague textual implications. It is the expansion of these implications, the pulling out of essence rather than halting at the plot, that makes Campion's adaptation "work." While I agree with Bentley, I argue that the construction of Isabel's crisis as a physical one is most interesting *because* of this inseparability of female agency from visual image. An audience will not watch a twenty-minute sequence of Isabel thinking her conflicted thoughts with the same rapt attention which they will give to the on-screen panorama of her fantasies, her naked body, or her

abuse by her husband. Hence, the construct of such a crisis, a vital pole about which the movie revolves, depends on the construction of the audience as voyeur.

Such a construction is built upon throughout all the film (for instance, the casting of Kidman, the opening sequence, and the shot and lighting considerations which have been already discussed) but occurs most obviously in the scenes for which Campion has received most criticism. Campion's adaptation of *Portrait* has sparked controversy primarily over its portrayal of Isabel's sexual fantasies and the manner in which she handles the abusive relationship between Isabel and her husband Gilbert Osmond. What is particularly interesting about such controversy is that these portions of the film are the most inherently voyeuristic, dealing both with the hidden fascination of the body on the screen and also with the "hidden details" of people's lives, that sort of guilty curiosity that keeps tabloids in business; hence, the audience's fascination with Osmond's physical abuse of Isabel. Moreover, using such voyeuristic constructs exposes the implied aspects of James' novel, allowing it to function on screen. Thus, the forces of ideal and fantasy that drive Isabel in the novel and the emotional and physical abuse that destroy her relationship with Osmond ultimately become the operative mechanisms for the success of the film.

The first scene I have mentioned, Isabel's fantasy sequence, relies heavily on the observation of Isabel by Ralph. As I have previously noted, not only does Ralph "take his entertainment wherever he could find it" (James 233), but he makes the decision to spend much of his time watching and observing Isabel. Such a notion of Ralph's gaze upon Isabel is played out by Campion in one of the most debated scenes in the film. After Goodwood leaves Isabel's room in London, Isabel imagines a sort of erotic fantasy

with Lord Warburton and Caspar Goodwood while Ralph looks on. In essence, says Bentley, the scene builds upon the cinematic notion of voyeurism to become a literal picture of the entertainment Ralph derives through watching Isabel and her relationships with other men (“Conscious Observation” 138). Moreover, this scene is also important in the discussion of the story/plot diad and the notion of playing out James’ implications. Obviously, this scene is not in the book, and yet the genesis of the scene is very much present in James’ text. The scene in both film and text occurs after Goodwood has left Isabel’s room in London. While James’ text is not overtly erotic, the implications are present:

She was not praying; she was trembling--trembling all over. She was an excitable creature, and now she was much excited; but she wished to resist her excitement, and the attitude of prayer, which she kept for some time, seemed to help her to be still. . . . there was something exhilarating in having gotten rid of [Caspar Goodwood]. As Isabel became conscious of this feeling she bowed her head a little lower; the feeling was there, throbbing in her heart, it was part of her emotion, but it was a thing to be ashamed of—it was profane and out of place. It was not for some ten minutes that she rose from her knees . . . her agitation had two causes, part of it might be accounted for by her long discussion with Mr. Goodwood, but it might be feared that the rest was simply *the enjoyment she* found in the exercise of her power. (James 152, emphasis added)

Thus, James gives us a scene where Isabel is in the attitude of prayer in an effort to control her wild emotions, but she is unsuccessful—she is still overcome by a feeling which is “profane and out of place,” which gives her wild enjoyment after a fashion.

Moreover, ten minutes are unaccounted for in the struggle with this “profane emotion.” The thoughts which occupy Isabel’s mind during this period are left entirely to the reader’s imagination, with the only hint as to their content being the phrase “it was a thing to be ashamed of—it was profane and out of place,” but it nonetheless gives her intense enjoyment. More specifically, for Isabel the profanity lies in her enjoyment of her power over her suitors, rather than the erotic implications. Consequently, as Campion uses the cinematic medium to flesh out one of James’ implications, Isabel does not give rein to any wild demonstrative passion. Rather, she allows the men to touch and caress her, deriving her enjoyment simply from their obvious desire for her.

However, while Campion uses this scene as an opportunity to show the pleasure that Isabel finds in the exertion of her power, she also uses it to simultaneously show the corresponding objectification of Isabel by her suitors. As Michael Anesko writes of the sequence,

Making visually explicit what James reticently suggests, Campion’s treatment of this scene is richly nuanced . . . in becoming aware of Ralph’s longing gaze . . . Isabel simultaneously becomes aware of the extent to which she has objectified herself for her lovers, an epiphany that both feeds and disrupts her fantasy of arousal. This evocative scene works at once to convey Isabel’s ripe vulnerability as well as to confirm her modest, virginal capacity for self-defense. (Bradley 181)

Campion’s interpretation of the scene focuses on what type of person Isabel is and what motivates her actions. Yet for my purposes, this scene is more important for its voyeuristic content. As Bentley notes, where film generally regards feminine sexuality as something almost public in its transparency—and thus available for general viewing and

the viewer's "imaginative possession"—Campion's scene captures the essence of this idea by visually exposing Isabel's inner desires. While Bentley indicates that the realization that she is watched leads toward titillation on Isabel's part, I would argue that the opposite is the case: the recognition by the viewed of the voyeur's gaze results in discomfort and disillusion for the subject of such a gaze. For instance, it is upon Isabel's realization that Ralph is watching that her fantasy dissolves, rather than builds to a higher peak. What I find most interesting about this scene is that it serves as a case study of Champion's construction of Isabel as increasingly uncomfortable in the role of "object" in a scene that has a clear voyeur, both onscreen and off. This is a somewhat confusing assertion, but my meaning becomes more apparent when the scene is analyzed in terms of its composition: costuming, lighting, dialogue, and so forth.

The scene to which I refer is approximately two and a quarter minutes long, occurring only sixteen minutes into the movie. It takes place when Isabel is alone in her room in Pratt's Club in London, immediately after Goodwood (Viggo Mortensen) has left Isabel, who has refused his proposal of marriage. It is after he leaves her, with a departing caress, that she enacts an eroticized fantasy sequence between herself, Goodwood, and Lord Warburton (Richard E. Grant), with Ralph Touchett (Martin Donovan) looking on. The most striking aspect of this scene is the fact, as previously noted, that it does not take place in its explicit detail in James' text, occasioning a great deal of controversy among Jamesian film scholars as to the appropriateness of its inclusion in the film.

The costuming in this scene is not particularly striking, with the exception of the contrast between Isabel's clothing and the action of the scene. She is dressed in a long-

sleeved, collared blouse, buttoned up over her neck and throat, underneath an ankle-length black dress and vest. In fact, her attire is not far removed from a schoolgirl's uniform, underlining her seemingly demure and naïve character—scarcely the attire for a fantasy assignation. As the scene progresses, her collar is unbuttoned to allow for Goodwood's caresses (although we do not see the actual unbuttoning), her skirt slides up to reveal Warburton kissing her knee between her stockings and bloomers, and the scene ends with her still unbuttoned and ruffled-looking, even after the men have faded away. The choice to leave her collar unbuttoned may simply be an oversight on the part of Campion (after all, if the men exist only in fantasy, then she cannot be unbuttoned by a dream), but it may also signify the intensity of Isabel's desires translated into visual reality. Fantasies of the mind leave no outward mark—yet on Isabel, they do.

While the set does not distinguish itself—it is merely the comfortably furnished (but not ornate) temporary bedroom of a rather untidy young woman—it provides part of the impetus for Isabel's fantasy. As Goodwood makes his way to the door in the preceding scene, he pauses near Isabel and gently caresses her cheek and chin. After Goodwood leaves, Isabel replicates the gesture herself, then, apparently unsatisfied with her own touch, she moves to her bed, where she rubs her face, forehead, and nose against the fringe which dangles from the bed's canopy. The canopy fringe thus provides the critical intervening step between Isabel's self-pleasuring and the desire to be pleased by other (more human) means, acting as the final springboard for her dreams of the physical caresses of the men who have previously sought her physical acquisition.

As Isabel replicates Goodwood's touch on her face, she gives a little gasp, which seems to be the cue for the first low bass notes from the violins. The melody repeats a

few phrases over and over, creating a theme which builds in both pitch and volume as Isabel becomes more immersed in her fantasy. It reaches a climax of intensity at the moment when Isabel opens her eyes and realizes that Ralph is intently watching her, then rapidly fades and dies as the images of the men fade away, dissipating completely as the screen darkens. However, what is most interesting about the music is that it is the theme which plays when one goes to the “scene selection” options on the DVD. Consequently, as one deliberates which image of Kidman to click on, this background theme is an audible reminder of the most physically objectifying and eroticizing scene in the film, lending weight to Nancy Bentley’s assertion that this film plays out Isabel’s crisis as one of the body and sexuality (“Conscious Observation” 128).

The eroticization of the scene which has begun with the soundtrack is subtly underscored by the lighting. In contrast to the scene immediately preceding it, this scene is conducted in low contrast lighting. However, the lighting is uniformly brighter²⁵ than is much of the movie, which is apparent at the beginning of the scene, as Isabel moves from her darkened sitting room to her brightly lit bedroom, and at the end of the scene, when the lighting suddenly dims as the men disappear from the screen and the music decrescendos. Consequently, while the lighting is not dramatic, the sudden lightening of the screen focuses the viewer’s attention more readily on the images, signaling, as do foot-lights and spot-lights, that here is an object worthy of visual consumption, highlighting the contrast between actors, who are in full light, and audience, who gazes from the dark. This brightness of the screen hearkens back to standards of voyeuristic films (and similarly, pornographic films), where the object of the voyeur’s gaze is under a bright light, while the viewer remains in shadow.

This voyeuristic standard becomes more apparent in examining the actual shots that comprise this scene. While the majority of the shots²⁶ are standard fare, there are three at the end that stand out as a group. As Goodwood kisses Isabel, the camera pans to reveal their faces and that of Ralph, lying across the top of the bed and watching Isabel and the other men. Establishing Ralph's position, the next shot is a subjective shot or eyeline match from his point of view; a close-up on Isabel and Goodwood as Goodwood kisses her. As Goodwood retreats from the frame and Isabel's face becomes its focus, she opens her eyes and looks at Ralph. The next shot is also a subjective shot, but this time it is from Goodwood's vantage



point, a close-up on Isabel and Ralph as she realizes Ralph is watching her. With the past two shots as subjective shots from the perspective of two of the three men, the natural next step is a third such shot, likely from the perspective of the third man. However, this next shot is from behind Isabel and all three men. This, too, is a subjective shot, as indicated by the previous shots, but instead the audience is the locus from which this subjective shot is taken, which shows the backs of the actors. Instead of Lord Warburton, the camera—and hence the audience—becomes the implied voyeur.

Yet while the audience is constructed as voyeur, it is the realization of Ralph's gaze upon her that dissolves Isabel's fantasy. As he watches the other men caress her, Ralph speaks the only words of dialogue in the scene: "I love you." Interestingly

enough, no such words appear in the screenplay (whose only directions for this scene are the words “Isabel has refused two ardent suitors, and although she has done what is truest to her theories about liberty, she entertains Caspar Goodwood, Lord Warburton, and Ralph, who now appear in her fantasies” (Jones 18)). When Ralph speaks, Isabel’s fluttering eyelids snap open to stare at him, then she jerks her head away to stare at the ceiling. The spell has been broken for her—she is visibly uncomfortable. When Ralph moves, Isabel sits upright, and the men back away and disappear. The realization that she is being watched ends the fantasy for Isabel, breaking up the voyeur’s picture which has been enjoyed by the audience—in this case, an on-screen audience in the person of Ralph, as well as the cinematic audience. The words “I love you” are meaningless in themselves to Isabel—she hears only the voice of an observer.

I now wish to return to a point I made earlier before the analysis of this scene—that Campion repeatedly uses the cinematic medium to flesh out what James only implies. In essence, the controversial scenes in Campion’s film are those which are the scenes of the voyeur—the fantasy sequence, the travel montage, and the abuse scenes between Isabel and Osmond (which latter two will be discussed in the following chapter). I argue that these scenes which have sparked so much controversy about their departure from James’ text are actually the most “faithful” to the essence of James’ work. Why? Simply because Campion is fleshing out James’ subtext, which depends, as does the novel itself, upon an *observer*. The films are simply the visual representation of James’ textual exploitations: the camera peeks around the door which James has nonchalantly and cunningly left ajar.

Chapter Two

“To Be Sacrificed, Any Girl Would Do”: The Violent Voyeur

In the preceding chapter, I noted the fact that debate over Campion’s adaptation of *Portrait* has revolved around its portrayal of Isabel’s sexual fantasies and the manner in which she handles the abusive relationship between Isabel and her husband Gilbert Osmond, where the second major construction of *Portrait of a Lady* as a voyeuristic film begins.

Campion’s choice to depict Osmond as physically abusive towards Isabel becomes an issue of the essence of James’ story, as does the eroticization of Isabel’s reflections after Goodwood leaves her. The text portrays Osmond as undoubtedly psychologically abusive to Isabel. For instance, when Osmond refuses Isabel’s proposal that she go to England to attend Ralph on his deathbed, James notes, “But what she was afraid of was not her husband—his displeasure, his hatred, his revenge; it was not even her own later judgment of his conduct—a consideration which had often held her in check; it was simply the violence there would be in going when Osmond wished her to remain” (498). There is a very real sort of violence in their relationship—physical violence is simply the easiest way to show it on film.

Interestingly enough, Jones’ 1968 version of the film, while problematic in many areas, identified the need to somehow extrapolate from James’ text the breakdown of the relationship between husband and wife, clearing the way for Campion’s striking visual interpretations of James’ sub-text. James makes it apparent that Osmond and his wife do not love each other, that Isabel, at least, has been made very miserable by her husband. Thirty years before Campion shows us Osmond slapping his wife in the face with her

own gloves, Jones gives us this exchange between the couple after Osmond has mocked his wife for her disenchantment with the marriage after entering into it of her own free will:

OSMOND: It's a great comfort to know you live with that icy despair gripping you. You've been a great disappointment to me, and all your money doesn't compensate for that.

ISABEL: I have tried to be what you wanted, Gilbert. But after all I am not nothing. I am myself.

OSMOND: And what is that, pray? The concoction of vulgar tastes and notions that might grace the mentality of a shopkeeper. And in your heart you set yourself above me.

ISABEL: Yes . . . how you must hate me.

OSMOND: God—if only I had words to let you know how much. (Portrait of a Lady)

From this verbal abuse, which physically appears nowhere in James' text but is implied in every line, the next step to visual interpretation of such hatred is Osmond's derisive physical treatment of his wife. In a film which does not have the same freedom to explore Osmond's psychological manipulations as does the nearly 700 page book, *Campion* is careful to show Osmond's abuse of Isabel as more emotional than physical, even as he does use brute force. As Ralph thinks to himself, "he had an almost savage desire to hear her complain of her husband . . . he knew by instinct, in advance, the form that in such an event [Lord Warburton's defection] Osmond's displeasure would take. It could only take the meanest and cruellest [sic]" (429). Again, while the abuse of Isabel

by her husband shown onscreen is physical, it is not designed to brutalize—it is intended to humiliate and abase.

The scene which most readily shows Osmond’s multifaceted abuse of his wife occurs one hour and thirty-nine minutes into the movie, and takes place upon the couple’s return from a formal evening party. Characteristic of the intensely private action in this scene, it begins with a series of high-angle shots, then moves to extreme close-ups, characteristics which are commonly used to label the “voyeur’s film” (Denzin 7), as well as employing the sort of low-contrast lighting that accentuates the hidden nature of such a scene and highlights the pallor of Isabel’s face, aiding the viewer in perceiving her as someone who is very much afraid of the man with her. Moreover, notes Rebecca Gordon, the canted overhead angles from which most of the scene is shot “forces viewers into an eerily omniscient point of view; we become voyeurs of a scene of domestic violence. The film provokes in the audience a sense of being implicated . . . after all, this is a private occasion” (Gordon 20).

When Isabel moves into the scene, her very clothing indicates the control which her husband has exerted over her life. Unlike her plain attire and frizzed hair in earlier



Figure 3. Madame Merle, the model for Isabel's transformation.

scenes, Isabel is dressed in an exquisitely tailored low-necked evening gown, elaborately bustled and looped, with heavy embroidery, gold buttons, lace at her throat, and a short train. Her hair is worn exactly like Madame Merle’s, with a mass of heavy dark coils looped and twisted in a crown around her

head. She is wearing several rows of blue stones around her neck and in her ears that match the blue tones in her dress and bring out her eyes, while black evening gloves and a gold net bag finish off her doll-like appearance. Every careful detail of her dress not only reminds the viewer that she is a younger copy of Merle, but that she is identified as a work of art very much like those



Figure 4. Isabel preceding her marriage.

which Osmond keeps in his more immobile collection. Clearly, Isabel's new appearance is due to Osmond's influence, not her own choice—he is molding her as he pleases. As James himself notes earlier, she is²⁷

Slender still, but lovelier than before, she had gained no great maturity of aspect; but there was a kind of amplitude and brilliancy in her personal arrangements which gave a touch of insolence to her beauty . . . her light step drew a mass of drapery behind it; her intelligent head sustained a majesty of ornament. The free,



Figure 5. Isabel in the first scene after her marriage.

keen girl had become quite another person; what [Ralph] saw was the fine lady who was supposed to represent something. 'What did Isabel represent?' Ralph asked himself; and he could answer only by saying that she represented Gilbert Osmond. (363)

As the actors move through the set, the most striking thing about it is not the luxury of their surroundings, but the way they interact with the

furnishings. Isabel does not appear to be comfortable in her own home. Taking her gloves off, she stands rigidly and makes no move to seat herself (although both the book and the screenplay call for her to do so). While most women would lay their gloves and handbag down when coming into their home, she continues to hold tightly to hers throughout the scene. Osmond, however, strides around the room, tearing cushions from chairs and piling them up on tables. He knows exactly where everything is—he never falters for a moment to search. The interaction of the characters with the sets underlines the fact that Osmond controls Isabel, even to the point that she is not at ease in a place that should be her refuge and haven. The uneasy silence between husband and wife is heightened by the absence of music in the scene; a silence maintained by Osmond and unbroken by his terrorized wife.

James' text skims over the relationship between husband and wife; as in all his work, he hints at the sordid side of life without ever exploring it outright. The dialogue in the scene is taken almost directly from the book.²⁸ However, what is most interesting about the dialogue is noting that which has been deleted in the transferal process from novel to film. In essence, all of these deletions serve two goals: they establish Osmond as more heartless towards his wife and consequently position Isabel as more completely subject to her husband's machinations. Consider, for instance, the following two examples.

Osmond opens the scene in the novel by saying to Isabel "I don't understand what you wish to do . . . I should like to know—so that I may know how to act." In turn, she responds, "Just now I wish to go to bed. I'm very tired," to which he replies "Sit down and rest; I shall not keep you long. Not there—take a comfortable place" (James 443).

In the film, Osmond says nothing about resting in a comfortable spot in response to Isabel's declaration of fatigue—instead, he immediately attacks her with the next comment he makes in the text: "I think you're trying to humiliate me." Nothing has been added in this exchange, but the deletion of Osmond's line makes him appear much more heartless towards his wife. Indeed, in the film he does not even invite her to rest—he merely grips her arm and forcibly walks her to where he has decided she should be for the duration of their conversation.

The second example more explicitly demonstrates Isabel's heightened susceptibility to her husband's words and actions. The text contains an extensive interchange between the point when Osmond accuses Isabel of "playing a very deep game" that she has managed beautifully and the following point where she finally asks what it is that she is accused of. In fact, Isabel is the one who steers the conversation back to this accusation, spurred by what James terms a "rising curiosity." Her entire line reads as follows: "I might say to you that I judge you've nothing to say to me that's worth hearing," she rejoined in a moment. "But I should perhaps be wrong. There's a thing that would be worth my hearing—to know in the plainest words of what it is you accuse me" (James 444).

In essence, Isabel partially defies her husband in acknowledging that she is capable of deciding that he has nothing of value to say to her, but also acknowledges that while she does wish to hear something from him, it is her choice as to whether it is worth her listening—it is not his choice to make, and she in fact requests that he respond. In the film, this is eliminated. She asks what it is that she has managed, and Osmond responds that she has kept the matter "quite in [her] own hands" (incidentally, this line does not

appear in James' text). It is then that she asks of what she is accused. By deleting the line where Isabel flatly tells Osmond that she *could* consider his comments valueless, the viewer's sense of Isabel's fear of her husband's displeasure is more intense than it would otherwise be.

So much for Osmond's psychological manipulation and abuse of his wife—while such matters lay the groundwork for Osmond's physical treatment of his wife, the physical aspects of his abuse are more interesting to the student of voyeurism. As I have noted, the camera work²⁹ in this scene is not complex, but it depends heavily on characteristic angles and approaches of the voyeur's film. Much of this scene is shot in extreme close-up, bringing the audience into an intimate setting where they are privy to everything. In fact, the intense proximity results in shots which occur so rapidly that they do not completely register with the viewer as separate entities. Instead, the viewer receives merely an impression of what they have seen in a number of shots that are characteristic of the blurred images seen throughout the film. One such sequence is the first time Gilbert slaps Isabel with her glove. There is a shot of his hand taking her glove one shot earlier in order to establish the fact that it is indeed a glove that he is holding. The camera then cuts back to a close-up on Isabel as she is speaking, and then rapidly flashes between the glove in Osmond's hand, next to Osmond's face which is drawn tight in an expression of rage, and Isabel's face as the glove cracks across it. These occur so rapidly that the viewer has only an impression of Osmond's rage and Isabel's shock and humiliation, but it is devastatingly effective.

Further camera techniques emphasize the feeling that Isabel is both trapped by and terrified of Osmond. Such an impression results from bracketing a shot of the

camera moving towards Isabel, so that her whitened face is visible, with shots of an enraged Osmond. For instance, we see Osmond turn towards his wife, and the next shot is a medium shot of Isabel, but the camera is rushing towards her and it rapidly becomes a close-up. Her face is frantic, and we understand why when Osmond's shoulders loom into the foreground and he picks her up bodily and replaces her on the cushions. The camera "traps" Isabel just as she is trapped by Osmond—she cannot escape from either.



Figure 6. Isabel's terror-stricken face as Osmond approaches.

Campion seemingly goes to extremes in her depiction of Osmond's abuse, her work is not unfounded; in fact, she draws upon James' text to explore Osmond's machinations, then uses classic voyeuristic techniques to make the audience privy to such abuse. While not the perpetrator of Osmond's treatment of his wife, the viewer becomes a complicit accomplice in the derivation of visual pleasure from the scene and its place in the film. In brief, as Osmond treats his wife, so does the viewer, trapping her equally in the humiliation of a public display. Osmond's abuse is not physically damaging, but it is emotionally searing. Rather than striking her forcefully with his fist as he would an equal opponent, he slaps her face with his gloves as contemptuously as if he is striking a slave

Moreover, she is trapped not only by her husband and the camera, but by the relentless gaze of the viewer, rushing through the medium of the camera to publicize her pain and humiliation even as she tries to run for private sanctuary.

The point which I wish to make from

this examination is to show that while

or animal, rather than his wife. In a later scene when Isabel is walking away from him, he chooses not to forcibly push her to the floor, but steps on her train, forcing her to trip and sprawl awkwardly at his feet. His actions toward Isabel are designed to be humiliating rather than painful.



Figure 7. A high-angle shot of Osmond and Isabel.

Yet even while Campion takes a more psychological approach to the physical abuse, there is still plenty of room in James' text for a harsher display, as is evidenced by the interchange between Madame Merle and the Countess Gemini when Isabel and Osmond first meet. When Madame Merle states that Isabel "is not to be subjected to force," the Countess immediately replies "you are *capable of anything*, you and Osmond" (James 248, emphasis added). Campion's incorporation of such scenes is not abuse for the sake of abuse or violence for the sake of violence, rather it is a *tool*, used equally by James, that captures and holds the voyeuristic viewer. She does not depart from James' text; instead, she uses the medium of film to achieve the same exploitative effect embraced by James, using the "guilty curiosity" of the observer to fix and draw attention to the problems at hand.³⁰

I have mentioned several times that I see Campion as "fleshing out" the implications of James' text, specifically in the manner in which she depicts Isabel's fantasies and the abusive relationship between Isabel and her husband. More importantly, the manner in which Campion fleshes this out is through the gaze of the

voyeur—and the importance of this action comes through the fact that James’ novel is inherently voyeuristic. Consider, for instance, Ralph Touchett’s statements, quoted in the previous chapter, on the joy that he derives from the observation of a lovely woman, namely Isabel. Like many James novels (Dr. Sloper in *Washington Square*, Winterbourne in *Daisy Miller*, Merton in *The Wings of the Dove*) the reader is fed their ideas about the central feminine character through the lens of a male character who is close to her. Often problematic in film adaptations,³¹ this viewing of the female character through the male is a consciously voyeuristic move by James that results in the dependency of the successful Jamesian adaptation upon a similar technique. In a quick survey of the novel, one can immediately identify a number of men who consciously observe Isabel’s actions—in addition to Ralph’s³² somewhat distanced gaze, Osmond coldly watches Isabel to see if she will marry Pansy to Warburton (and is quick to punish her when his observations indicate she has done the opposite), Warburton and Goodwood³³ hover about her in hopes that she will marry one of them (and continue to stay close after her refusal and subsequent marriage), and even Madame Merle³⁴ keeps a close and manipulative watch upon Isabel, molding the girl for her own uses and benefit.

Ultimately, James himself “spies” upon Isabel, reaching deep into her mind and emotions and laying them out on the page for the reader. He lays bare the most intimate details of her thoughts and physical life, exposing and uncovering her relationships and all the inner turmoil of her soul. The difference between novel and film at this point is that Campion documents visually what James glosses over—but it is a gloss that is superficial enough that it is easily scraped away by the astute reader, accustomed to such Jamesian tricks. Finally, the title itself hints at James’ voyeurism—it is a one-

dimensional “portrait” only, an incomplete picture gained by hidden and superficial viewing. It does not represent the entire woman, only that which is readily available for consumption by the observer.

This visual consumption reaches its pinnacle at the middle of the film with a black and white montage purporting to document Isabel’s travels. This film-within-a-film is esoteric to say the least: a combination of various cinematic styles that create a dizzying effect for the viewer. Yet while all the pieces seem to be uncohesive, they all convey a similar idea, says Bentley, presenting

female desire as troubled, fraught, even pathological . . . by presenting such disparate film styles in quick succession, the sequence also breaks up any easy sense that we are seeing that desire as it is, as a simple and knowable object . . . we become conscious of the fact that female sexuality is visible only through time-bound conventions of representation. (Bentley “Conscious Observation” 140)

Ultimately, we are again reminded that we are regarding a portrait, not a woman. This plays on the way that James’ descriptions of Isabel are filtered through Ralph, so that the reader receives only a picture of Isabel as Ralph sees her, rather than a wholly objective and thorough depiction.

All this is well and good—but does nothing to address the final images of the montage. Near the end of the sequence, Osmond’s face appears, stern against a spinning black and white background (presumably Isabel’s parasol from a previous scene). A nude woman, seen from behind, is superimposed over his face. The shot is abruptly from the front, and we see Isabel, naked from the waist up, seemingly shielding her eyes from

the spinning of the parasol. Osmond's hand reaches out and grips her across the stomach, in a deliberate counterpoint to the image which began the montage (and adorns the cover of both the film and the screenplay)—his hand seizing the back of her waist. It is not a caress. His fingers do not curve around her—instead, they are splayed flat, holding and imprisoning rather than supporting. Osmond's hand prevents Isabel from escaping the eye of the camera. Significantly, the shot cuts off her head and feet—she has no visible method of escape; no way to stare back and challenge the gaze that is directed so mercilessly upon her. Instead, her flesh is held within the frame, literally as well as figuratively. This seems to be a direct tribute to an interchange between Isabel and



Figure 8. Osmond's grasping hand.

Osmond in the original text: “He said to her one day that she had too many ideas, and that she must get rid of them . . . he really meant it—he would like her to have nothing of her own but her own pretty appearance” (393). To Osmond, the idea that a beautiful object has mind and conscious awareness is disturbing; hence, in this ultimate on-screen objectification, she is denied a face—denied identity. It is only her body that matters to the gaze of the viewer.

This total denial of the ability on Isabel's part to challenge the gaze of the voyeur brings me to the final point I wish to make: the way that Campion films the voyeur, and more specifically, Isabel's reaction to and awareness of the voyeur. I have already

discussed the manner in which Isabel's fantasy is disturbed and broken by her realization that Ralph is watching her; what I wish now to do is to examine other points in the film where Campion exploits James' notion of voyeurism.

As the opening titles (with their women who smile knowingly at the camera) draw to a close, the camera moves in to focus on Isabel's face in an extreme close-up. As the camera finally pulls back, the audience sees not only Isabel, but as Jones writes in the screenplay, "behind the tree, unseen by Isabel, stands a pair of male legs. . . . The tree's foliage hides the owner of the boots. Circling around the tree, *we find the voyeur watching Isabel* through the foliage is Lord Warburton" (2, emphasis added). Thus, only a few minutes into the movie, the audience knows that this is a movie about watching women. However, a less obvious point which this scene introduces is brought up by the juxtaposition of the women who look directly back at the camera in the opening sequence with Isabel, who is obviously unaware of the camera and discomfited by the idea of the voyeur in the person of Lord Warburton. Hence, a question is proposed: is it a movie about women who know they are watched and are comfortable with such knowledge, or a movie about women who are caught and bound by the gaze without any say in the matter?

This idea of a woman captured against her will by the observer is played out literally on film through an interaction between Ralph and Isabel. While Ralph's comment about "conscious observation of a lovely woman" is never directly quoted in the movie, Campion makes his belief explicit in film. In the sixth scene, the screenplay indicates Ralph as following Isabel through the National Gallery, keeping an "endlessly fascinated eye" fixed on her (Jones 10), then later indicates that he is "shocked and

humiliated” when she removes herself from his intimacy (and hence his gaze) after he argues with her about Osmond’s character (Jones 65). Later in the film, he catches “a glimpse of her natural face [under the mask imposed by her marriage] and wish[es] immensely to look into it” (Jones 90). In fact, his wish is so intense that he holds Isabel against her will, refusing to free her until she physically wrenches her wrist away with visible anger and fear. Trapped by the one who wishes to see her in her entirety, her reaction is not willingness, but rather intense fear. In another scene at Gardencourt, Isabel comes up behind Ralph and covers his eyes while they talk, with no attempt to make him “guess who”—she is concerned only with keeping his gaze from her for the duration of the conversation.

Isabel’s discomfort as she realizes that she is the object of visual consumption is heightened as the film continues, corresponding to a remark she makes in the text to Goodwood after refusing him: “Don’t think me unkind if I say that it’s just that—being out of your sight—that I like. If you were in the same place as I, I should feel as if you were watching me, and I don’t like that. I like my liberty too much” (149).

After her engagement to Osmond becomes a matter of general knowledge, Goodwood comes to see her in Rome to confront her about the veracity of the report. While their conversation in the text is a six-page discussion of the speed of Goodwood’s journey from America, the character of Gilbert Osmond, and the like, on film Campion reduces it to only a few key lines, borrowed from James. What is particularly interesting about her selections is that she focuses on Goodwood’s acknowledgement of his desire to see Isabel, and eliminates Isabel’s full awareness of the situation (for instance, her response that his coming to look at her is “better for you, perhaps, than for me,”), but she

still maintains the discomfort Isabel feels under a gaze of which she is now conscious. Their exchange follows, with those lines which are included in the film in italics and those which are in the screenplay but not in the film unitalicized:

CASPAR: *When I had your letter I thought there might be some mistake.*

ISABEL: *There's no mistake whatever.*

CASPAR: I saw that as soon as I came into the room. *Well, I've done what I wished, I've seen you.*

ISABEL: *Do you mean you came simply to look at me?*

CASPAR: I wished to hear the sound of your voice.

ISABEL: You've heard it and it says nothing very sweet. (Jones 60)

Thus, while in the original screenplay Goodwood tells Isabel that his motive for coming was at least partially to hear the sound of her voice, in the film he tells her only that he wished to see her. At this, Isabel is clearly uncomfortable and at a loss for words; in fact, she does not deliver her next line until she has given him her hand, he has taken and released it, then exited the room. She addresses his back and receives no answer. The question, then, is whether Campion chooses in the final version to make Isabel fully conscious of the gaze of others as it is directed towards her?

Before offering my answer to this question, I wish to address an additional scene, which is present in both James' text and the screenplay but deleted from the final film. This scene takes place directly after Henrietta, Touchett, and Goodwood discuss their departure from Rome, and occurs as Henrietta and Isabel watch the Countess Gemini unload her luggage at the Osmonds' home.

HENRIETTA: I don't know what you want to do.

ISABEL: I want to be alone.

HENRIETTA: You won't be alone so long as you've so much company at home.

ISABEL: They're part of the comedy. You others are spectators.

HENRIETTA: Do you call it a comedy, Isabel Archer?

ISABEL: Tragedy then, if you like. You're all looking at me. It makes me uncomfortable.

HENRIETTA: You're like the stricken deer seeking the innermost shade. (Jones 100, emphasis added)

This seems to be such a clear declaration of Isabel's consciousness of her position as spectacle that its removal in the final version of the film demands analysis. She not only realizes that her life is a tragicomedy eagerly devoured by spectators, but the understanding that her life is the subject of such intense scrutiny makes her uncomfortable, to which Henrietta (unfeelingly but aptly) replies "You're like the stricken deer seeking the innermost shade" (100). Perhaps Campion removed this scene because it states outright what she is seeking to subtly imply during the course of the whole film, and such a blatant declaration would be inherently "un-Jamesian," but I think it more likely that Campion denies such a realization to Isabel in part because such an epiphany that unmask the voyeur also destroys the pleasure of the voyeur in the moment of realization by the subject. As the entire film functions through the mechanism of voyeurism, to unmask the voyeur on screen also necessitates an equal unmasking of the audience, if not literally then figuratively as the onscreen characters with whom the audience identifies are stripped of their concealment.

Similarly, where in the text Isabel emphasizes her distaste for being observed and her love for liberty (149), coupled with a wish to “look about me,” (140), she renounces these desires absolutely upon her marriage. As Ralph remarks to her³⁵

“I think I have hardly got over my surprise,” he said at last. “You were the last person I expected to see caught.”

“I don’t know why you call it caught.”

“Because you are going to be put in a cage.”

“If I like my cage, that needn’t [sic] trouble you,” said Isabel.

“You must have changed immensely. A year ago you valued your liberty beyond everything. You only wanted to see life.”

“I have seen it,” said Isabel. “It doesn’t seem to me so charming.” (James 310)

Unfortunately for Isabel, the “cage” of marriage is also the cage of objectification.

Osmond sees her not as a person, but as a

present of incalculable value . . . His egotism . . . had never taken the crude form of wishing for a dull wife; this lady’s intelligence was to be a silver plate, not an earthen one—a plate that he might heap up with ripe fruits, to which it would give a decorative value, so that conversation might become a sort of perpetual dessert. He found the silvery quality to perfection in Isabel; he could tap her imagination with his knuckles and make it ring. (324)

Isabel’s original desire is to be independent, to “see the world,” but ultimately it is she who is trapped by this very notion of “seeing.” The Touchetts gratify her desire to see the world in providing the funds for her to do so, but this is only done so that she may be watched in her progress, while this same desire to see and appreciate the unusual results

in her marriage to Gilbert Osmond, who wishes only to add her and her fortune to his collection. In explaining to Ralph why she and Osmond have taken up residence in Italy, she tells him that she has “‘seen life’ in a year or two, and that she was already tired, not of life, but of observation” (326). When Isabel halts her own observation—when she gives up her independence—she loses her last vestige of freedom, becoming caged by the observation of others.

Consequently, the only scenes in the entire film where Isabel seems conscious of the gaze directed upon her operate exactly as does the Marxist process of subversion and containment. The subversive element is introduced when Isabel realizes Ralph is watching her in her fantasy sequence or similarly in the travel montage where she stares at the camera, directly back at the audience—and then it is quickly contained by the objectification of Isabel already inherent in the scene—in the first instance she is enacting an erotic fantasy in front of the camera’s eye, setting herself up for the “peeping tom” of the cinema, in the other her nude body flashes on the screen in the ultimate physical objectification of her body.

The beginning and end of the movie serve as bookends, bracketing the objectification of Isabel with the unseen voyeur of the audience and the characters on screen. The screenplay for the movie’s final scene reads as follows: “Isabel wanders into the little rustic arbor where Lord Warburton proposed . . . as the twilight deepens and shadows gather around her, she has a sense that she is not alone. She glances around quickly and sees . . . Caspar Goodwood, a little way off, staring at her” (Jones 129-130). *Campion* thus commences the final scene of the film in the same way in which she began

it—Isabel, alone with her thoughts, in distress, the unconscious subject of the gaze of the voyeur on screen and the voyeur in the audience.

Significantly, Campion ends the film with this scene, rather than the original screenplay ending where Isabel returns to Rome and to Pansy, where the last image on-screen is that of Isabel's hands reaching out blindly into the light towards Pansy. Instead, Campion closes the film with Isabel running away from Goodwood and his persistent gaze and physical demands, towards the door of Gardencourt which she can close behind her. Yet the door is locked, and Isabel is forced to turn back towards Goodwood and the gaze of the audience, frozen and trapped under the relentless scrutiny of all who have watched her tragedy.

Chapter Three:
Transactions of the Flesh:
Agnieszka Holland's *Washington Square* and Iain
Softley's *The Wings of the Dove*

In my discussion of *Portrait of a Lady*, I focused on the manner in which Campion successfully adapts James' sub-textual implications, creating a film whose operative mechanism is that of voyeurism, paralleling the fundamental constructs in the novel. With *Washington Square* and *Wings of the Dove*, however, that construct becomes problematic. While both novels follow the voyeuristic pattern exposed in *Portrait*, I argue that the film version of *Washington Square* flirts with voyeurism as a tool but fails to fully capitalize on its potential, choosing instead to focus on other areas in an attempt to render the film more appealing for a "middle-brow" audience; similarly, in its effort to appeal to the same audience, *Wings of the Dove*, the most financially successful Jamesian adaptation to date,³⁶ goes to the other end of the spectrum, exploiting the voyeur to the point where the events onscreen are a mere step away from soft-core pornography.

Similar to *Portrait of a Lady*, the plots of *Washington Square* and *Wings of the Dove* both revolve around a girl who is desired in marriage primarily for her fortune and is essentially "sold" by another woman to her prospective husband. These similarities render them uniquely fit for comparison, particularly as all three novels further depend on the construct of the voyeur in order to tell their stories. However, unlike *Portrait*, the matches in the latter two novels are never consummated. In *Washington Square*, Catherine Sloper is jilted by Morris Townsend when he realizes that her father will disinherit her upon their marriage, thereby removing the fortune which was at least part

of Townsend's motivation; while Milly Theale in *Wings of the Dove* dies before marrying Merton Densher—but not before she (presumably) leaves him her fortune.

Consequently, while *Portrait* is the story of the freedom and then the caging of Isabel Archer, *Wings* and *Washington Square* revolve around the pursuit of the young woman, with the race cut abruptly short.

As a result, the voyeurism of these two novels is markedly different from that in *Portrait*. For instance, I see *Washington Square* in particular as a less-developed version of *Portrait*.³⁷ The motivations and story line are much the same—there is an older woman who seeks to unite Catherine and Morris Townsend while Catherine's father, he who controls the money, watches the spectacle; ultimately, Catherine is disabused of her romantic ideals about Morris. Yet *Washington Square* is less complete than *Portrait*, in part because Catherine is not the well-developed character which Isabel is—a young woman setting out to conquer the world, secure in her possession of health, beauty, uncommon intelligence, and fervent idealism. Instead, Catherine is admittedly dull-witted and unattractive,³⁸ growing older in Washington Square without the prospect of marriage, over-devoted to her selfish father and her foolish aunt. Moreover, *Washington Square* denies Catherine the full realization of a life with Morris and its probable consequences; where Isabel matures into a sober woman as a result of her marriage, Catherine simply grows old. Nothing is made of Catherine's experience—she fell in love with a fortune-hunter and the match dissolved when her father threatened to disinherit her. There is none of the complex motivation that makes the story of Isabel Archer so timeless.

Wings, however, is a story of a very different sort. As James writes of the novel in the preface to the 1909 New York Edition

The idea, reduced to its essence, is that of a young person conscious of a great capacity for life, but early stricken and doomed, condemned to die under short respite, while also enamored of the world; aware moreover of the condemnation and passionately desiring to 'put in' before extinction as many of the finer vibrations as possible, and so achieve, however briefly and brokenly, the sense of having lived. (Crowley 3)

In short, the characterization of Milly Theale, a young woman with "a great capacity for life," is similar to that of Isabel Archer. The distinction is that while both women are courted for their money, Milly dies a literal death in place of the emotional and spiritual death which Osmond attempts to inflict on Isabel. Hence, while *Washington Square* is a preface to the fuller-bodied *Portrait*, I see *Wings* and *Portrait* as alternative lenses for the same story, published twenty years apart.

Washington Square

As I have previously mentioned, *The Portrait of a Lady*, though published the same year as *Washington Square*, seems to be the more complete novel of the two. Both novels share striking similarities, a pair coupled more closely than any of James' other works. Such kinship arises from the fact that both have central male characters in control of the money, who then bend their gaze upon the women of the story to see what will happen in consequence of the existence of that money, particularly with suitors who are drawn to that money. However, I would suggest that the differing levels of voyeurism³⁹ in the two novels are in part what distinguish the novels in terms of maturity and a feeling

of completion. Ralph Touchett is an invalid, whose sole occupation is the observation of an admittedly brilliant and beautiful woman, while Dr. Sloper is an active man and practicing doctor with multiple interests, watching a daughter of whom the narrator says “there was nothing to be proud of in poor Catherine” (18); indeed, a daughter who has bored him prior to her love affair with Morris Townsend. Hence, Ralph Touchett’s observation of Isabel is proportionally increased since she is “worth” watching, particularly for a man with no other interests, while dull, plain Catherine is only marginally interesting to her father.

Consequently, the author must find a way to make this central character interesting to the reader. While James generally offers insight into the thought of such characters, he is most effective when describing those in the text who are so fascinated by the central character. Although the reader is constructed as a more direct or primary voyeur in *Washington Square*, the construction is actually more effective in a novel like *Portrait*, where the reader is given the pattern of the observer to follow, with frequent textual reminders about the worthiness of this woman as an object of one’s gaze and attention. “Poor Catherine,” failing to be of much interest to her most immediate relatives, is likely of little interest to the reader. Just as her father only finds her fascinating in contemplating her probable course of action with Morris Townsend, so the reader loses interest in her when there is no “action” between her and Townsend on the page. The voyeur is interested in Catherine when watching her interact with others, but the voyeur is interested in Isabel for the sake of Isabel herself. Hence, voyeurism as an operative mechanism is less fully developed and explored in a novel like *Washington*

Square; consequently, the adaptation of such a novel to film will be correspondingly more problematic.⁴⁰

The dependency of Jamesian novels upon the mechanism of voyeurism, however, is initially acknowledged by Agnieszka Holland's 1997 adaptation of *Washington Square*.⁴¹ As Alan Nadel notes, the status of the viewer as 'observer' is deliberately engendered from the opening credits:

the camera draws too close to the Sloper home for the shot to retain its objectivity, and then it tilts up toward the roof at a very sharp angle and back down to the first floor window, as though it were replicating the head motion of someone surveying the façade. Then the camera takes us through the parlor window, moving slowly towards the dining room, looking around at the décor as it goes. We can tell now that our view is being guided by a handheld camera, indicating that we have assumed the perspective of some subjective, although ostensibly invisible, presence. (205)

Going on, Nadel remarks that these subjective and objective points of view "illustrate the perfect synergy possible between cinematic technique and James' understanding of fiction as the integration of privileged windows" (206). I would suggest that these "privileged windows" are those of the voyeur, an impression underscored by the fact that the camera moves in through the parlor *window*, hardly the usual entrance for one who is a welcome guest, but an appropriate method of gaining egress for one who is wary about the propriety of one's presence and observing eye.

Following Campion's lead in using the casting as a method of introducing thematic elements from the film, Holland's choice in casting the female lead also

signifies, at least in part, the type of attention that should be directed towards Catherine. As Karen Michele Chandler notes in “‘Her Ancient Faculty of Silence’: Catherine Sloper’s Ways of Being in James’ *Washington Square* and Two Film Adaptations,” Jennifer Jason Leigh, who plays the role of Catherine, is “better known for playing brazen twentieth-century writers, drug addicts, and prostitutes” (170). While Chandler sees this as indicative of “the filmmakers’ unfortunate, unjustified departure from their staid nineteenth-century source” (170), I argue that Leigh’s prior roles as prostitute or pitiful addict indicate not only her status as a commodity in this film, but also her equal facility to view others in a similar light, a point which I will address in further detail later in this section.

Continuing the motif which she began with the credits, Holland creates several scenes showing Catherine as the object of her father (Albert Finney)’s critical gaze. For instance, in the very beginning of the film, the young Catherine is poised to sing a solo for her father’s birthday. Standing in front of the assembled crowd and conscious of the fact that she is on display, deliberately trying to amuse her father, the pressure is too much, and the camera moves downward to show urine dribbling down her leg to pool on the carpet. While distinctly un-Jamesian in its manner of representation, Holland has established her point: Catherine is uncomfortably conscious of her status as entertainment for her father.

Later in the film, the viewer is shown several scenes in which it is obvious that Sloper is audience to the drama of Catherine and Morris (Ben Chaplin). When coming home one day, the Doctor sees the two posed under a tree (in a somewhat stiff tableau); Morris hands Catherine flowers and she gratefully accepts. Both move on without

acknowledging or seeing Sloper. In a subsequent scene where the two lovers play and sing a duet, Aunt Penniman (Maggie Smith) and Doctor Sloper are positioned as spectators behind the piano. Yet while Lavinia (regrettably for the listener) joins the duo as a participant, Sloper continues to watch in critical silence, clapping at the end and remarking “Bravo,” presumably to Morris’s consummate performance as lover, rather than musician.

However, such scenes do not come in for much attention from Jamesian scholars. Instead, much of the critical body of work on this adaptation of *Washington Square* revolves around Catherine’s transition from a silent young woman to one who is able to give full expression to her thoughts through her words. While I agree with this assessment, I think that such a focus is merely identifying the symptoms which are apparent in the film while subsequently ignoring the underlying themes which give rise to such symptoms. For instance, Chandler makes much of the equation of Catherine with her caged bird, finally noting “neither is free to develop her inner resources by exploring the world, but each can learn to sing within her particular cage” (185). The cage, I believe, is the manner in which Catherine is trapped by the gaze and expectations of those around her. From her father, who contemplates permitting her affair with Townsend, as “he was very curious to see whether Catherine might really be loved for her moral worth” (53), to her Aunt Penniman, who “delighted of all things in a drama” (76),⁴² the prospect of Catherine’s love affair bids fair to provide amusement—or at the very least, an occupation⁴³—for her family. Ultimately, Catherine is caged by the conflicting wishes of her father and her lover, neither of which can be satisfied without damage to the other.

Trapped in limbo, Catherine exists in a state of misery for most of the novel, wishing so desperately to cause no pain that she can receive no happiness.

In Holland's film, Catherine's misery is much more evident to the viewer than any amusement her spectacle may provide to her father and by extension, the viewer. Yet in James' text, the Doctor's observation of Catherine is central to the novel, giving the reader license to enjoy and appreciate this drama through the medium of the Doctor. When she is conducting her love affair with Morris, the resulting entertainment Catherine's conduct provides for him is something the Doctor considers worth noting: "I wait with suspense [to see what Catherine will do regarding Morris]—with positive excitement; and that is a sort of emotion that I didn't suppose Catherine would ever provide for me. I am really very much obliged to her" (157). Later, when Dr. Sloper reflects on the fact that he has forbidden his daughter to continue the relationship, "he made the further reflection that his daughter was not a woman of great spirit. [The narrator] kn[ew] not whether he had hoped for a little more resistance for the sake of a little more entertainment" (113). Indeed, when Catherine protests his command, Sloper decides that "this idea of Catherine 'sticking' appeared to have a comical side and to offer a prospect of entertainment. He determined, as he said to himself, to see it out" (140). Voyeurism, then, becomes the motivating principle which underlies the telling of this little drama.

As a result of this foundational mechanism, Sloper's profession of medicine becomes vital to his character and to the story. As a doctor, he judges physical symptoms and surface characteristics to draw his conclusions.⁴⁴ He fails to consider the thoughts and motivations of his patients. As he remarks to Mrs. Montgomery, he has a "habit of

dividing people into classes, into types. I may easily be mistaken about your brother as an individual, but his type is written on his whole face” (105). While he acknowledges that he has “nothing but [his] impression to go by . . . [he is] in the habit of trusting [his] impression” (104). Yet while Sloper has a lifetime of experience to back up and justify his physical impressions, as well as the capacity to form some estimation of character (for instance, he is able to identify Morris as a fortune-hunter), he has failed to pass it on to his daughter, whom he neglects and ignores. The only way she can learn from him is to watch his example—and watching thus becomes the basis of her judgments, as it is for him.

Yet of all these straightforward comments which James gives to Sloper, Holland includes not a one. This shatters much of the reasoning which she uses to support this film as the tale of commercial transaction which it eventually becomes. While Sloper’s tendency to regard his daughter’s life in the light of a theatrical presentation sets up the mechanism of voyeurism through which the novel operates, particularly as it frees the narrator to make additional voyeuristic comments, it is Sloper’s establishment of visual exteriors as the supreme method of judgments that dooms his daughter’s love affair. Smitten with Morris Townsend’s beauty and outward professions of love and idealism, Catherine has never learned to look past superficial attributes, as her father consistently relies on snap judgments and physical characteristics as the basis for ascertaining character. Consequently, where Isabel Archer was doomed to marriage with the fortune-hungry Gilbert Osmond because of a voyeuristic impulse on the part of Ralph Touchett, Catherine’s marriage will never occur because her voyeuristic father has taught her only to look at the exterior symptoms as a standard of judgment. Hence, when Sloper is not

constructed as a voyeur, the audience not only fails to “watch” Catherine with him, but they also fail to see the grounds from which Catherine makes her judgments.

This brings me to a point which is unique about *Washington Square*, especially when compared to *Portrait*: not only is Catherine a commodified source of entertainment to her father, but her upbringing leads her to view Morris in a similar light, something which is constantly acknowledged by various characters throughout the film and the book. In consequence, a film adaptation of *Washington Square*, rather than relying upon conscious observation of a woman as does *Portrait*, instead turns to a study of the contract of marriage and the transaction of courtship. It is at this point that the film abandons its promising beginnings as a voyeur’s film, turning instead into a treatise of commodification and objectification. Before Catherine meets Morris at the engagement party of her cousin Marian, Catherine has this interchange with her aunt:

CATHERINE: Oh, see how she beams? They must be very much in love.

MRS. ALMOND: Dear child, he’s a stockbroker. He’ll make a fine husband.

That is all Marian requires. I oftentimes think it’s easier to be basic. One’s needs are so simple. (Washington Square)

In short, one’s needs consist only of marrying a husband with a profitable business who can support one comfortably—never mind love. It is, after all, “easier to be basic,” an assertion which Catherine’s tale seems to bear out.

Catherine’s first view of Morris is very like her father’s estimation of him in text and film. James tells us that “Catherine would have liked to change her place, to go and sit near them, where she might see and hear him better” (36). Similarly, in the film Sloper observes to Morris that in addition to the young man’s “good right arm, [he] has

[his] subtle brain and [his] amazing physiognomy,” but in the text remarks in more detail to his sister, Mrs. Almond, “Physically . . . he’s uncommonly well set up. As an



Figure 9. Holland's film frames Sloper's context for judgments based on physical structures.

beyond the bones to the extent that he at least acknowledges that there is something else that comprises a man besides physical beauty, Catherine cannot. In the middle of their benighted courtship, Catherine writes to Morris that she wishes to see him. When he finally appears, she tells him only that her father has not changed his mind. Upon his inquiry as to why she asked him to come if she had no news for him, their conversation is as follows:

“Then why have you sent for me?”

“Because I wanted to see you,” cried Catherine, piteously.

“That’s an excellent reason, surely. But did you want to look at me only? Have you nothing to tell me?”

His beautiful persuasive eyes were fixed upon her face, and she wondered what answer would be noble enough to make to a gaze as that. For a moment her own eyes took it in, and then—“I did want to look at you,” she said, gently. (148)

anatomist, it really is a pleasure to see such a beautiful structure; although, if people were all like him, I suppose there would be very little need for doctors,”” to which his sister replies ““Don’t you see anything in people but their bones?”” (59).

Yet while Sloper can see

For Catherine, it is enough only to look at him. To her, the mere act of looking is sufficient enjoyment to warrant his company. In Catherine's eyes, Morris appears "resplendent; it was some time before she could believe again that this beautiful young man was her own exclusive property" (194). Consequently, at the end of the novel, when Morris's appearance has changed, Catherine remarks "It was very different from his old—from his young—face. If she had first seen him this way she would not have liked him" (261).

Yet if Catherine watches Morris for visual pleasure, he seems to acknowledge and glory in his "watchability." For instance, James portrays him in one scene in the following manner: "'We must settle something—we must take a line,' he declared, passing his hand through his hair and giving a glance to the long, narrow mirror which adorned the space between the two windows" (75). Morris is conscious of the fact that he is, in effect, putting on a performance for Catherine, enacting the role of the passionate and thwarted young man. He delivers the proper line while simultaneously admiring its effect in the mirror.

More detrimental to Catherine is the habit she has acquired from her father of viewing people not only for the pleasure to be gained therein, but of viewing them as a commodity. While in Europe, the doctor tells his daughter:

I have done a mighty good thing for him in taking you abroad; your value is twice as great, with all the knowledge and taste that you have acquired. A year ago, you were perhaps a little limited—a little rustic; but now you have seen everything, and appreciated everything, and you will be a most entertaining companion. We have fattened the sheep for him before he kills it. (182)

What I find most interesting about this passage is not merely the way in which it objectifies Catherine, but its implication that the acquisition of knowledge comes through “seeing” everything.⁴⁵ Significantly, while Sloper’s comments about watching Catherine do not make it into the film, the scene between Morris and Catherine, as well as that between Doctor Sloper and Catherine which I have quoted from the text appear in almost identical form in the final film—to Holland, it is more important to transfer effectual commodification rather than the voyeuristic impulse which is the underlying cause.

In light of this idea of visual beauty as a standard of judgment and the general acceptance of person-as-commodity, one scene that Holland creates for the film is particularly significant. When Catherine pleads with Morris to simply acknowledge that he wished to marry her for her money, they have this exchange:

CATHERINE: Say it!

MORRIS: Say what?! That I wanted you with your money? Is that so immoral? Would you want me without my attributes? You have money, I have this. It was a fair exchange.

As Julie Rivkin notes, “if valuing Catherine with her money is a form of commodifying her, he also performs this act upon himself. He sees his beauty and charm as negotiable attributes much like her wealth, and to say that his feeling for her depends on her money is no different from noting that hers for him is conditioned by his own attributes” (150).



Figure 10. An angry Morris challenges the immorality of his pursuit of Catherine for her fortune.

One point I wish to make clear here is that telling this story as one of “the marketplace” is actually a logical move for Holland. Not only is the film of the voyeur more difficult to construct, as one must incorporate and implicate the audience *within* the film, but as Rivkin explains, any analysis of film adaptations of *Washington Square* must not only consider the methods whereby the filmmakers deal with the privacy of the drama in the novel, but also the method by which the subject material is “re-coded” in the context of the historical moment in which the film is made (148). In short, for a twentieth century adaptation, a focus on money and transaction updates the story and makes it more relevant. Yet by focusing so exclusively on such themes, I believe Holland simultaneously dooms her film. She fails to draw the audience into the “commodity trade;” they are no more party and observer to the negotiations than is Doctor Sloper—a grievous mistake.

Where Holland fails is in her attempt to make the viewer a similar voyeur to Doctor Sloper. We derive no pleasure from seeing this love affair played out on screen. Instead, one feels a sick sort of shame at having witnessed such misery and exploitation. Perhaps all viewers may not react with the sort of visceral revulsion which I experienced—while I was fascinated by Isabel and Osmond, watching Catherine and Morris only made me wonder how anyone could be so gullible and so desperate.

In short, the viewer is never constructed as voyeur. Instead, the audience is free to watch the manipulations, the follies, and the cruelties onscreen, without ever becoming an accomplice, if such is the appropriate term. Where Campion creates Ralph as a frame for the eyes and reactions of the audience, Sloper never functions in such a way. Holland toys with such a construction—the opening shot at the beginning, which I have

mentioned previously; the reflection of Catherine and Morris kissing in a mirror (an indirect shot that implies a clandestine point of observation), the retreat of the two behind the parlor doors in an effort to be alone where the camera follows them as the doors shut. Yet these are only a handful of shots in the entire film, and seem more happenstance than a deliberate attempt to construct this (even in token fashion) as a voyeur's film.

Instead, Holland seems to be filming a mercantile transaction. As Catherine remarks to Morris near the end of the film, "You think too much of money, Morris"—and so does Holland. James' mechanism of the voyeur is not so outdated that one must seek for an alternative way of representing it. In an age where reality shows with hidden cameras are all the rage, one need not over exaggerate the commodification in the marriage market in an attempt to make the film successful. By so doing, Holland obscures the means by which such commodification has taken place, as the voyeur's gaze is the ultimate objectification of the flesh. Moreover, in obscuring and reducing the place of the voyeur in this film, Holland fails to adequately capture the audience's attention. In eliminating the connection of the reader or viewer with Doctor Sloper, the "privileged window" has been blocked up that makes *Washington Square* one of James' most accessible texts.

The Wings of the Dove

If Holland's *Washington Square* occupies one end of the spectrum in terms of the mechanism of the voyeur, Iain Softley's *The Wings of the Dove* is its polar opposite. The text which James authored is a more disturbing version of the theme he explores in *Washington Square* and *Portrait*: that of a man marrying a woman for money, aided in doing so by another woman. This time the plot has a more sinister twist—the accomplice

of Merton Densher (Linus Roache), Kate Croy (Helena Bonham Carter), is his fiancé, moreover, the pair intends to wed themselves after the demise of the dying heiress, Milly Theale (Allison Elliott), who presumably would bequeath all her money to her prospective husband. As with the other two novels, James places the heroine Kate Croy in a place of “visual” prominence for the reader, but Softley extends this to full female nudity onscreen, bloating the construction of audience-as-voyeur to the point where it no longer functions.

As with *Washington Square* and *The Portrait of a Lady*, James is careful to create a text where the visual spectacle provided by women is central to the narrative. Like Isabel Archer, Kate Croy is a woman of great personal attractions: “She was handsome . . . she had stature without height, grace without motion, presence without mass. Slender and simple, frequently soundless, she was somehow always in the line of the eye—she counted singularly for its pleasure” (22). When Milly Theale meets her, she begins immediately to describe Kate as “the handsome girl” (106) and continues to do so even on better acquaintance and intimacy: “the handsome girl, as Kate continued even now preeminently to remain for her” (123).

What I find particularly interesting about the relationship between Milly and Kate is the way in which it shows how even Milly, a woman herself, views Kate in an objectifying fashion, or at least a manner that fails to appreciate Kate as a person. For instance, part of her interest in Kate derives from the fact that the other girl “really presented herself to Milly . . . as the wondrous London girl in person . . . she thought of her, at her best, as handsome just as Kate was, with turns of head and tones of voice, felicities of stature and attitude” (113). To Milly, Kate is the personification of a fictional

image which Milly has created from “the tales of travelers and the anecdotes of New York, from old porings over *Punch* and a liberal acquaintance with the fiction of the day” (113). Later, Milly’s view of Kate seems to indicate one which the reader might adopt with equal facility: “[Kate] was above all a subject for curiosity” (134). In short, Milly, who might be supposed to sympathize with Kate, merely indicates the manner in which Kate may be exploited in the view of the reader, a somewhat paradoxical move given that it is Kate who intends to exploit Milly for her own uses.

James also makes it clear that Merton Densher, Kate’s lover and sometime fiancé, watches her with much the same eagerness felt by Milly. While Merton’s position as spectator is somewhat of a surprise to him, it does not deter him any longer than a moment:

It was as if the drama—it thus came to him, for the fact of a drama there was no blinking—was between *them* [Kate and her aunt] quite preponderantly; with Merton Densher relegated to mere spectatorship, a paying place in front, and one of the most expensive. This was why his appreciation had turned for the instant to fear . . . the drama, at all events, as Densher saw it, meanwhile went on. (207)

I find it significant that while Densher is momentarily taken aback by his position as spectator rather than actor, he has no thought of averting or putting a halt to the drama.⁴⁶ His acceptance of his position as spectator (and unspoken permission for the continuance of the drama) becomes clear when Kate outlines her scheme regarding Milly. Upon her proposal to him that he court another girl, his primary objection is that he will be required to visually focus on another (less appealing woman): “All women but you are stupid. How can I look at another? You’re different and different—and then you’re different

again. . . . The women one meets—what are they but books one has already read?” (222). Significantly, rather than asking Kate how he can “pretend to love another” or “spend time with another” or “pay court to another,” Merton protests directing his gaze toward another, because Kate is so eternally interesting and fascinating to him—she offers a perpetual prospect of entertainment.

In her book *The Wings of the Dove: Henry James in the 1990s*, Robin Wood notes that while in the text it is Merton and Milly who seem to watch Kate (although Kate is originally positioned as the novel’s “central consciousness”), the film “makes Kate plainly its central character, its consistent centre of interest” (28). In connection with Wood’s assessment, screenwriter Hossein Amini states that he chose deliberately to use conventions of film noir in an effort to portray the love triangle which Kate creates:⁴⁷

I borrowed from film noir in the way that film noir must have somehow borrowed from James. I highlighted the love triangle at the expense of the minor characters and the author’s take on turn of the century society. I changed the order of certain events so that the audience would follow the story like a thriller, rather than be ahead of it as James had intended. Where the book plays the major confrontations ‘off camera’, I had to reinvent them. I used what James had hinted at in the novel and added emotions and ideas inspired by film noir. (vii)

Such a decision, in my opinion, engenders a number of significant consequences for the film. As Softley refrains from positioning Kate as a “central consciousness” through whom the action is filtered, the action revolves around and depends upon her rather than her perception of it, ultimately making the viewer more intent on the visual image of Kate onscreen. But in removing the idea that Merton and Milly “watch” Kate, Softley also

runs the risk that in failing to see an onscreen voyeur with whom they can identify, the audience will fail to become itself a voyeur. Consequently, in his adaptation⁴⁸ of *Wings of the Dove* Softley must do two things: he must find some way to make this a voyeur's film; or at least to interest the audience in the love triangle and specifically in Kate, and he must, as one must always do on film but more especially with James, find a way to replicate James' sub-text through images.

While it is not clear if Softley is consciously trying to achieve the first, he certainly is the second.⁴⁹ The method which he chooses to address both these problems, while somewhat drastic, is certainly effective: he turns this film into something akin to soft-core pornography, ensuring that the audience's eyes will be positively *glued* to the screen, ogling in properly voyeuristic fashion. Interestingly enough, Softley makes no other effort to make this a voyeur's film. In fact, not only does he remove any consciousness in the film of Merton and Milly watching Kate with interest as they do in the original text, but he also eliminates more subtle implications of the voyeur in the film which did exist in the original screenplay. For instance, in the screenplay Milly watches the shadow of Kate undressing behind a screen (53), "drunken passersby whistle lewdly" (57) as Kate and Merton kiss, Milly pulls Merton's hand away when he tries to stop her from looking at a group of boys swimming naked in the canal (67). In discarding such scenes, Softley seems to make a deliberate choice to have any voyeurism whatsoever in this film function on the part of the audience, giving no hint of it between characters onscreen. This seems heavy-handed, especially when one considers the delicate manner in which James constructs "registers," as he terms them, through which characters

observe one another and in turn give the reader a frame of reference indicating appropriate observational habits.

In ignoring the idea of such registers and concerns of the gaze in general, the film becomes, as Mark Eaton notes, “rather conventional. There are no odd camera angles or other stylistic innovations to get in the way of the narrative. There is one overhead shot of Merton Densher on a park bench, waiting for Kate Croy; but for the most part the camera movement does not call attention to itself” (170). Yet at first glance, Softley does not *need* to make this a voyeur’s film through devices such as camera angles—the simple impact of the imagery onscreen is sufficient. Where this eventually becomes problematic is when one considers that this particular Jamesian film is not destined merely for art houses, but also for what Mark Eaton terms “middle-brow culture” (161), a concern which I will revisit later in this paper.

In any case, the choices Softley makes, says Dianne Sadoff, result in a “reconfigure[ation of] . . . marital choice as a sexual destiny, rewrite[ing] a story of multiple motives for matching Milly and Merton into a film about the heterosexual couple and its erotic adventures” (270). Such a rewrite is visible from the first few shots in the film. The opening credits appear against a backdrop of blurred spheres, which eventually coalesce into the headlights of trains running on London’s underground. Moments later, Kate and Merton walk into an elevator together; the doors close. As the elevator ascends, the viewer is shown brief shots through the barred doors of the two standing together before the next floor obscures the camera’s frame of vision as the elevator continues to move upwards. In the first few shots they are standing on opposite sides of the elevator, exchanging furtive glances; in the next frame they are passionately

embracing. Yet the shots are fragmented by the elevator's bars and by the various floors in the building; consequently, the picture is incomplete and the viewer strains to see clearly. As Sadoff notes, "spectator absorption is guaranteed . . . we, too, want to see more—under the darkened theater's cover" (271).

This elevator scene creates a context for the rest of the film: Kate and Merton meet in the billiard room during a party given by Kate's Aunt Maud, a jealous Kate



Figure 11. Kate and Milly in Milly's bed.

kisses Merton lingeringly, then tells him to go back and kiss his escort (which he has done previously to enrage Kate) "with that mouth"; the pair have intercourse against a wall in a

Venetian alley; Milly and Kate

giggle over pornographic illustrations in the men's section of a bookstore; later the girls cuddle in bed at Lord Mark's castle with their hands clasped over Kate's breast, and finally Kate and Merton doff their clothes completely in the film's closing minutes.

It is this final scene which is most indicative and symptomatic of the problems which plague the rest of the film. In general, however, Softley has created a lyrical film that recreates James surprisingly well, meeting his original goal of using imagery to make clear sub-text. In an effort to interpret on film what Owen Wister once termed James' "bewildering style,"⁵⁰ the film, says Anthony Mazella, "in its visual choices for scene and action, for camera angle and camera set-up, invokes concurrently with the images, the words that aren't there in the film but that are present in the text" (586).⁵¹ Where this

construction becomes overtly problematic is in its portrayal of the flagrant sexuality in the final sequence.

In order to make clear what I mean by the interpretation on film of James' text and sub-text, let me briefly outline the context in James from which this final sequence is drawn. This scene of unconsummated and destructive love replaces visually Kate's last line in James' text: "We shall never be again as we were!" (407). At first glance, it seems that the scene is the visual representation of Kate's words; if so, it works successfully to show that nothing is now possible between Merton and Kate. But on closer analysis, this too breaks down. If the assumption is that this line is excised from the film because it has been replaced by this failed sexual encounter, a problem lies in the fact that the audience has never seen the pair experience mutual pleasure in a similar setting. In fact, the audience never sees Kate and Merton actually enjoying each other's company in any situation—there is no high plateau to which they can return. In its consistent effort to construct the audience as a voyeur--the fondling embrace in the elevator, the demanding kiss in the billiards rooms, the two plotting to acquire Milly's money, the painful encounter in Venice—the film fails to include any proof of mutual affection and genuine respect (a marked contrast from the relationship which grows between Merton and Milly). In seeing only the moral decline between the two rather than that of their attraction and friendship, this final image is only one of two people who cannot enjoy intercourse, rather than the ruination of their love and characters. The very first shot of the two is a voyeuristic sexual encounter; that the last is the same fails to give the audience the idea that things have ever been enviable between them.

Yet while the question of whether this scene accurately conveys James' intent is a valuable one, the subject which precedes it is whether the audience is brought to the point where they are able to consider such a question. To foreground my argument, I feel it important to note that critics generally adopt one of two viewpoints on this scene: either they feel it to be too much; as Robin Wood writes, "quite the reverse of 'sexy,' disturbing in [its] coldness and alienation, the final scene [is] singularly *unsatisfying*" (Wood 87).

Or, as Richard Alleva remarks,

The filmmakers do bring out a surprising number of the novel's themes, especially that of the destruction of carnal love through contact with spiritual purity. Disapproval has been expressed about the film's penultimate scene in which Kate bares her body in a desperate effort to keep her lover after Milly's death. There are no naked ladies in Henry James, some critics rather prissily inform us. But it seems to me that the scene conveys with passionate imagery precisely what James expressed in his allusive prose" (581).

As for myself, I find an issue more troubling with this scene than whether the sexuality is appropriate to James' text. In Philip Horne's assessment of this concluding scene, he suggests that "the film pulls off a daringly painful final scene of 'explicit', loveless sex which unexpectedly captures, at the very last minute, some of the moral force of James' original" (47). While I tend to agree with Horne, my concern is that the scene is in itself so overwhelming that viewers who are not intimately acquainted with James' text will be incapable of analyzing this scene in terms of any sub-textual message which it is intended to convey. Instead, the viewer will be incapacitated by the images onscreen. One is either mesmerized, or so stunned and revolted, as I was, that one turns away from the

screen and so misses any attempted subtleties. Either way, this is one case where a picture is not worth a thousand words; instead, the picture itself obscures communication between filmmaker and audience.

Yet in making these assertions, I find myself confronted with another problem. I have thus far given Softley the benefit of the doubt, assuming that his goal in creating this scene was to show the emptiness of Kate and Merton's relationship through failed sex, using so graphic a medium to highlight the extreme gulf between them. I have assumed this rather than simply stating that this scene works to magnetize the attention of the viewer—after all, nothing creates a voyeur more quickly than naked flesh, particularly if we are talking about “girl-watching” (and indeed, Merton's on-screen exposure is nowhere near as explicit as Kate's). Yet if the purpose of this scene is more artistic than explicit, why include many of the other controversial scenes in the film? Arguably, such scenes individually advance the film or the plot in some small way, but taken as a whole they obscure the artistic merits of the film and leave it as an overly explicit rendering of James, which uses plot as a vehicle for nudity and pornography.

Where this becomes of particular concern, as I have indicated previously, is in the attempt to render *Wings* a film for a more mainstream crowd, rather than the art-house patrons who comprised the audiences of Campion's and Holland's films. As Dianne Sadoff remarks wryly, “Celebrity sex guaranteed *Wings* the middlebrow audience and big box office the other James films lacked. Whereas the eroticized scenes in *Portrait* endow Isabel with sexual fantasy, the high-profile start of *Wings* has sex with her screen lover” (273). Sadoff does not distinguish between the two sex scenes in the film, but I feel that this is a distinction worth making.

While still problematic, the scene in the alley between Kate and Merton handles the voyeuristic construct more effectively. It is obvious to the eye of the observer what they are doing, but more importantly, it is equally obvious that their affection for one another is damaged by their activity. Anthony Mazella remarks “They are close, each in profile looking downcast at the other, recognizing, without passion and without ardor, that they are trafficking in the commerce of human exchange” (602). Elaborating on this idea, Robin Wood explains

The major source of disturbance is their moral deterioration, the collapse of all emotional fineness. What Kate is doing to Milly is scarcely worse than what she has done to herself, the coldness necessary to the execution of her scheme isolating her not only from Milly but from Merton, for whom she can no longer feel desire or even tenderness. As for Merton, this man of high principles is now reduced to forcing sex upon a woman who doesn't want it. Sexuality itself has been poisoned, along with the characters' capacity for spontaneity, intimacy, and affection. The progress of the film is the charting of the effects of spiritual poison. (71)

While certainly not as visually remarkable as the image of the pair in tears at the end of the film, trying desperately to make love when neither of them can be aroused by the other, this scene does much to show the increasingly problematic relationship between Kate and Merton, even if we have never seen “the capacity for spontaneity, intimacy, and affection” which Wood mentions. Perhaps a portion of the effectiveness of this “alley scene” derives from the fact that it comes (in part) from James’⁵² mind, although it happens “offscreen,” as it were. In the novel, as in the film, Merton agrees to seduce

Milly if Kate will ‘come to him’: “I’ll tell any lie you want, any your idea requires, if you’ll only come to me . . . to my rooms, which are perfectly possible, and in taking which, the other day, I had you, as you must have felt, in view” (295). Similarly, in the film, their exchange is as follows:

MERTON: You want me to seduce a dying girl? And you really think she’ll just leave me all her money?

KATE: Yes.

MERTON: Why?

KATE: Because I know her. I know how she loves.

MERTON: And how do you love? Show me how you love . . .

KATE: I don’t understand.

MERTON: If you don’t understand me, then I don’t understand you. (The Wings of the Dove)

When Merton asks Kate to “show me how you love,” she looks up at him slowly out of the corners of her eyes, conveying infinite emotion. It is clear that while the idea is not pleasant to her, she is beginning to realize that this may be the only way to convince Merton to carry out her plan. As she replies “I don’t understand,” her eyes never meet Merton’s, and his similarly do not look at her when he replies “If you don’t understand me, then I don’t understand you.” There is a pregnant pause; then Kate, saddened and resigned, looks slowly into his face. Seemingly encouraged, Merton finally moves closer, presumably to kiss her; Kate averts her face for a long moment, then turns away completely and walks out of the frame. When the camera returns to them, we see primarily Merton’s back rather than the shattered visual expressions which we see in the

final nude scene, but the appearance of Kate and Merton as they have conducted and arranged their “transaction” have been enough. What is most important in this scene is that while the gaze of the onlooker is



Figure 12. Kate turns away to avoid Merton's kiss.

initially captured by their activities, there is so little to actually see that one cannot help a mental reversion to the preceding scene in which Merton so deliberately laid out his terms to the contract. These are the images that remain with the audience at the conclusion of this scene, whereas the image at the end of the film is the nude body of Helena Bonham Carter, erasing the careful (and admittedly brilliant) construction which Softley has built up over the course of the film.

In short, I believe that the final scene would work successfully if it had been edited for nudity. The facial expressions of Bonham Carter and Roache are heart-breaking, particularly since they never look directly at each other and stare blindly towards the camera throughout the entire sequence, working to convey the desolation and misery felt by both characters. Yet these images are interspaced with various shots of Bonham Carter’s nude body (in poses that recall the Gustav Klimt exhibit the film substitutes for the National Gallery scene in the book), ultimately destroying in its very hope of completion what Softley set out to do. As Alan Nadel concludes,

Softley substitutes historical opacity for psychological or ethical ones so that he can then reduce causality to explicit acts, which the movie spectator can observe

with security from a privileged position. Helena Bonham Carter's stunningly lit nudity in the final scene thus returns the triangulated relationship of the film's three principals to the reductive norm of mainstream cinema's fetishistic gaze, reasserting the masculine authority that Densher consolidates. (204)

In an effort to make a film that draws the attention of the voyeur to the erotic side of James, since such is the sub-text, Softley has created a film about a love triangle that ignores the loss and moral destruction which are its logical consequences until the final scene, when in an effort to highlight such themes he uses such overpowering imagery that all else is lost but those last few starkly-lit frames, superimposing themselves on the viewer's memory of all that came before. Where Richard Alleva terms it an "intellectual bodice-ripper" (579) the film ultimately is less remembered for its power and poignancy than for what is under the bodice, a devastatingly effective example of voyeurism exploited too crudely and carelessly.

Conclusion:

Essence, Voyeurism, and the Valorization of Adaptation Theory

In the Introduction, I remarked on the “trope of voyeurism which serves to bind together these novels and their adaptations, pulling out the “essence” of conscious observation of the female body and actions” (18). It is this essence which I now wish to discuss, as essence is the key to both the adaptation debates and to my argument and analysis in this work. Essence, I have remarked earlier, is a complicated and troubling topic for many adaptation theorists.⁵³ Robert Stam takes particular issue with the idea that a film must be faithful to some essential characteristic of the novel

The notion of fidelity is essentialist in relation to both media involved. First, it assumes that a novel ‘contains’ an abstractable ‘essence,’ a kind of ‘heart of the artichoke’ hidden ‘underneath’ the surface details of style . . . but in fact there is no such transferable core: a single novelistic text comprises a series of verbal signals that can generate a plethora of possible readings, including even readings of the narrative itself. The literary text is not a closed, but an open structure . . . to be reworked by a boundless context. (57)

While I agree with much of Stam’s argument, particularly in regard to the open nature of the literary text, the very fact that adaptation is possible implies an abstractable quality which has created the adaptation. Yet it seems that Stam, in noting the multiple “readings” of the novel that would problematize any attempt at fidelity in the film, is focusing more on essential devices of plot or narrative, rather than the operative and

essential mechanism making such possible. In other words, I see Stam's comments as applicable to the attempt to transfer identical constructs of story from novel to film, rather than the method by which such stories are told or made interesting to the reader.

I see the essence of James' novels as voyeurism rather than story. By this I mean that the essence of James' work which must be adapted to film is not the narrative itself, but the tool of voyeurism which is used to convey that narrative. As the author himself once famously remarked, "all depends upon the observer, the nature of one's observations, and one's curiosity" (Edel *Middle* 176). James' methods are of particular interest to the student of his work as a result of the deeply intimate scenes which he portrays, using psychological realism to utterly strip the characters bare in such a way that much of the action of the book actually takes place (intrusively) within the minds of its characters, resulting in what Lee Clark Mitchell terms "visually splendid voyeurism" (287). Moreover, James makes conscious use of the figure of the voyeur in order to interest the reader in his text, using the persona of Ralph Touchett, Dr. Sloper, and Merton Densher in the novels which I have discussed in order to convey to the reader the amusement which can be derived from watching (variously) Isabel Archer, Catherine Sloper, and Kate Croy.⁵⁴

As each novel is built upon a literal foundation of voyeurism (Ralph's wish to watch what Isabel would do if made rich endows her with the fortune that attracts Gilbert Osmond, Dr. Sloper's eagerness for the prospect of amusement in Catherine's love affair dictates his course of action, while Kate Croy enacts a drama at which Merton Densher names himself a spectator), a successful adaptation becomes one which uses the

perspective of the voyeur to control the eye and attention of the viewer, just as James used the persona of the voyeur to capture and depict all the private lives of his characters.

Consequently, a film adaptation that is “essentially” true to James focuses not only on the bodies of the actors but on the fact that they are being *watched*, using the mechanism of the voyeur to uncover and reveal every intimate detail. “Girl-watching” becomes both the means and the end for text (and consequently, film). It is for this reason that I have named Campion’s *The Portrait of a Lady* as the most essentially Jamesian,⁵⁵ as she deliberately creates the film as a portrait in flesh, a visual commodity meant for the viewer’s pleasure. It is the expansion of James’ implications about Isabel’s plight that ultimately make Campion’s adaptation functional. In fleshing out scenes which James implied but skimmed over, Campion brings to light (and full color) what was previously left to the imagination of the reader. The three scenes of most controversy in the final film—the fantasy sequence, the travel montage, and the abuse scenes between Isabel and Osmond—ultimately become the most faithful to James. (Ironically, these scenes are also the ones most often singled out for criticism by viewers interested in fidelity.) In constructing the audience as an observer through the expansion of the novel’s subtext (the erotic or abusive scenes which James delicately implies), Campion implicates them in the same fashion as does James with his readers, as the author draws the reader on to turn the page in hopes of further revelation.

If *The Portrait of a Lady* is successful because it carefully shows Isabel as subject and Ralph (and by extension, the audience) as voyeur, then this is also where *Washington Square* and *The Wings of the Dove* become problematic. Failing to include any of James’ careful detail about the enjoyment Dr. Sloper derives from watching Catherine’s love

affair, Holland's film is a flat and unsuccessful appeal to a middle-brow audience.

Couched in the form of the mercantile nature of 19th century marriage arrangements, it is a matter both archaic and foreign to the viewer. *The Wings of the Dove*, on the other hand, eagerly embraces the idea of audience-as-voyeur, using the mechanism to ensure that the audiences are drawn to see flesh and flesh only, using the essential trope to obscure any of the other elements for which it might have served as vehicle. In other words, in bloating the construct of the voyeur, Softley ultimately renders it inoperable.

In her overexaggeration of marital commodification, Holland is successful in obscuring the reason for such commodification—the eyes of the voyeur. By supplanting the voyeur with this commodification, Holland also eliminates the connection of the viewer with Dr. Sloper, who is the vital “reflector” in James' text, filtering one's perceptions of Catherine to the point where this “dull” girl becomes worth one's attention (Holland solves this problem in the film by casting an attractive actress whose personality ultimately becomes almost complete enough to offer her a redemption of sorts).

Iain Softley, however, in realizing that his elimination of the manner in which Merton and Milly observe Kate requires a substitution for the onscreen voyeur, spares no effort in making sure that the audience's eyes will be glued to the screen. Deliberately enacting in exposed flesh the transactions which James skims over, Softley forces his audience into the seat of the voyeur without any of the delicacy of *Campion's* filmic text. Rather than luring them with camera angles and lighting, Softley simply avoids the issue of costuming in the final scene, obscuring the otherwise admitted artistry of the film with its final pornographic sequences.

I recognize that it is, of course, problematic to label any adaptation as “good” or “bad.” Consequently, the focus of my analysis has been on the adaptations which most successfully bring James’ focus on voyeurism to the screen, using this narrative and filmic device to interest the theatrical audience in the stories of Isabel, Catherine, and Kate in the same manner in which James used the figure of the voyeur in his novels to draw the attention of the reader. Yet my ultimate purpose in this thesis is twofold—while I wish to show the manner in which the operative trope of voyeurism influences and dictates the films which have been adapted from James’ texts, I also wish to argue for the value and place of adaptation theory in the literary classroom, a movement which is slowly growing, but which has much more to offer than most students and professors in the discipline currently realize.

Apart from the surge of interest in adaptation theory (paralleling past interest in Marxism, feminism, psychoanalytic criticism, and the like) I feel that a study of a literary master through the modern camera lens is particularly valuable because of its ability to uncover what is essential to the operation of said master’s novels. As I have remarked, the essence of James is his propensity for the voyeuristic observer, something which is indeed apparent to the devoted reader but becomes unmistakably clear to the filmic audience. Thus, through film’s lens literature becomes more apparent. Indeed, remarks Lee Clark Mitchell, “for those devoted to the original, even poor adaptations—perhaps those especially—allow a reconsideration of what it is that keeps drawing us back to the narrative, compelling a desire for it in another form. Adaptation establishes, in short, what is at stake in the novel, thematically and otherwise” (297).

While I am not advocating a movement for the classic novel to give way to the film adaptation (a move which would surely have many high-school-aged advocates), I am arguing for the valorization of adaptation as a companion to the novel, a device to which one may turn in study of the novel, seeking out what is so central to the novel's operation that it must carry over to the film. It is true that this will not always be of benefit—often the weak or loose adaptation bears only faint resemblance to the original plot, characters, etc. Yet as directors turn to literature as a source, the pool of available films becomes increasingly large, presenting a possible companion to the study of literature in the classroom that is likely to yield new insight in a time when we are searching for theories that will appropriately match changing world views. And indeed, what better to reflect the advances of the past decades than adaptation theory, a methodology which embraces classical texts and modern media in an effort to uncover new patterns and areas for study and research?⁵⁶ The limiting factors of the film make it an admirable medium—in paring down a text, it must find what is the essential operator in order to successfully adapt it to film—and for the student of literature, finding just such an essential may well change much literary scholarship from routine dissection of plot and character to an intense, exhilarating study of just how character and plot are brought to life. In a discipline where the last fifty years have wrought great changes in the canon and its surrounding theories, I can imagine no more logical step than the continued and more prominent inclusion of the film as literature.

Notes

¹ Bogdanovich's *Daisy Miller* is a particularly fine instance of this, addressing the way in which Daisy's story is filtered through Winterbourne by bracketing point-of-view shots with shots of Winterbourne looking at something, or having him appear in profile with another character, allowing his "implied gaze [to] act[s] as a focus for the viewer's gaze" (McFarlane 152).

² Leon Edel notes the way in which James does this in *The Wings of the Dove*, remarking "He creates a novel in which all the 'great scenes'—all the expected ones—are left out" (*Master* 119).

³ Of this concern with author's intent, Robert Stam notes: "authors often mask their intentions for personal or psychoanalytic reasons or for external or censorious ones. An author's expressed intentions are not necessarily relevant, since literary critics warn us away from the 'intentional fallacy,' urging us to 'trust the tale not the teller.' The author, Proust taught us, is not necessarily a purposeful, self-present individual, but rather 'un autre moi.' Authors are sometimes not even aware of their own deepest intentions. How, then, can filmmakers be faithful to them?" (Naremore 57).

⁴ For instance, the story in "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" is Goldilocks's invasion of the bears' home, while the plot is characterized by the repetitive structuring language the characters use throughout the story, i.e. "this porridge is too hot...this porridge is too cold...this porridge is just right!" and she ate it all up."

⁵ This idea of an abstractable essence is troubling to fidelity and non-fidelity advocates alike. Without reiterating the arguments for such essence which I explore in the body of my paper, I will note merely that the term "adaptation" inherently implies some quality which can be abstracted in order to even create the adaptation.

⁶ Through adaptation theory's concern with fidelity, the theory itself becomes voyeuristic, where fidelity is predicated on the reproduction of fixated features in the text. As theorists see surmounting the fidelity criterion as the concern of greatest interest, this fixation on the devaluation of such a criterion at the expense of other exploration labels adaptation theory as voyeuristic. Moreover, since the fidelity criterion has grown out of the everyday theatergoer's belief that the film must follow the novel, such an examination labels society itself as inherently voyeuristic, thus the examination of James transferred to film uncovers a problem that is symptomatic of society as a whole. In fact, one could even go so far as to suggest that such a fixation, in Freudian terms, indicates a countering repression in another area.

⁷ James Naremore builds on McFarlane's idea, remarking that "a variation on the theme of fidelity suggests that an adaptation should be faithful not so much to the source text, but rather to the essence of the medium of expression" (58).

⁸ Indeed, if one believes William James' description of his brother's work, it seems foolhardy to even attempt to read the author, much less adapt his work for the screen. In comparing his own writing to his brother's, William remarked that his own style was "to say a thing in one sentence as straight and explicit as it can be made, and then to drop it forever; yours to be to avoid naming it straight, but by dint of breathing and sighing all round and round it, to arouse in the reader who may have had a similar perception already . . . the illusion of a solid object made . . . wholly out of impalpable materials, air and the prismatic interferences of light, ingeniously focused by mirrors upon empty space . . . say it *out*, for God's sake and have done with it!" (Edel *Master* 301, emphasis original).

⁹ It is difficult to quantify any measure of success, particularly in a film where one's own judgment is the ultimate standard. For my purposes here, I will define "success" as the extent to which a film reproduces James' observations and biases rather than those of the director.

¹⁰ As of the date of this work, there exist some ten adaptations of *The Wings of the Dove*, thirteen of *Washington Square*, and two of *The Portrait of a Lady*. While examining all twenty-seven in the body of a thesis might be appropriate for a student seeking a degree in film, I am first and foremost a student of literature; consequently, my analysis of the films is derived from a way to show how the merger between film and literature can actually uncover and expose foundational mechanisms of the original text through the medium of the film. Consequently, I have chosen to focus my analysis around the most recent adaptations of all four novels. I have chosen the most recent films because all three novels were adapted in 1996-1997. Such close release dates inevitably suit the films for further comparison, since all were designed with the same technological advantages, pool of actors, and audience base.

¹¹ For instance, consider the hotly debated scene in Jane Campion's *Portrait of a Lady* where Isabel imagines a sort of erotic fantasy with Lord Warburton and Caspar Goodwood while Ralph Touchett looks on. While the scene as Campion envisions it does not appear in the text, James remarks of Isabel "she was trembling--trembling all over . . . the sense was there, throbbing in her heart, it was part of her emotion, but it was a thing to be ashamed of—it was profane and out of place" (James 175). See Chapter One for a fuller discussion of this scene and its genesis in the text.

¹² In addition to the works which I have previously mentioned, these same tropes of voyeurism are played out in other James adaptations. For instance, Merchant Ivory's adaptation of *The Golden Bowl* depicts a meeting between two characters in Mme. Tussaud's wax museum in a manner in which the characters "supposedly feel safe from their social circle, even as the wax figures gradually seem to come alive, gazing watchfully at them, wonderfully embodying the adulterous couple's anxiety about being watched as well as what others might think or know. James' interior monologues have taken up residence in a collection of wax eyes" (Mitchell 288). In this case, the wax figures function in the same manner as the theatrical audience, further constructing the film's viewers in the position of voyeur.

¹³ "[James] tried to create 'informing' characters as aids to narrative; and he arrive at the ultimate integration in his work of 'picture' and 'scene.' Above all he grew watchful, as if he were a lens, over "point of view." He had begun long ago by thinking of story-telling as a form of painting, now he merged painting with drama...often we are placed in the minds of his supersubtle observers to the exclusion of much of the "normal" detail of the conventional novel. It was a case of the novelist skilfully [sic] withholding information rather than giving it; or making it available piecemeal, doling it out and asking the reader to keep close track of it" (Edel *Treacherous* 113).

¹⁴ "Henry, at any rate, argued that a novelist . . . did not necessarily have to deal with the life of action. He could through characters such as Isabel, or Milly, record the fascination of mental and emotional experience...Thus Isabel Archer could sit quietly by her fire during the long and remarkable sequence of her thoughts in the *Portrait* while she reviewed in subtle detail the history of her life...The challenge for him as a novelist and narrator was to make of this act a matter as exciting as 'the surprise of a caravan or the identification of a pirate'" (Edel *Conquest* 394).

¹⁵ Consider the famous Chapter 42, where Isabel turns over, among other things, Lord Warburton's "uneradicated predilection for her society" (James 390), the possibility "of her husband and Madame Merle being in more direct communication than she had suspected" (391), Osmond's "faculty of making everything wither that he touched" (391), and finally, that her life with Osmond is "the house of darkness, the house of dumbness, the house of suffocation" (396). Significantly, Isabel goes on to note to herself "Of course it was not physical suffering, for physical suffering there might have been a remedy" (396).

¹⁶ In addition to textual scholarship on *Portrait*, directors also saw James as a marketable commodity: after *Portrait's* release in 1996, *Wings of the Dove* and *Washington Square* were both released in 1997.

¹⁷ Bentley is well-known for her scholarship on James and his contemporaries; of particular note is her work *Ethnography of Manners: Hawthorne, James, Wharton* (1995), published by Cambridge University Press.

¹⁸ Remarking on the "girl-watching" in James' novel that has since become a focus of the cinema, Bentley then states "the themes of James' novel offered director Jane Campion an opportunity to explore film as a medium for the conscious observation of women . . . there is a sense, then, in which Campion has made a movie about movies, recreating James' nuanced study of the "sweet-tasting property of observation" as her own proleptic history of women in film. Yet Campion's cinematic "intervention" in the story, I wish to argue, still deserves to be called a faithful adaptation of James' novel . . . Campion's focus on her medium, I contend, allows her film to sidestep a species of nostalgia frequently generated by movie versions of nineteenth-century novels . . . avoiding something foreign—contemporary nostalgia—in the world of

James' novels" (Bentley B 128). From this point, Campion focuses on Isabel as spectacle in the novel, the "figure of a woman actively trying to redefine the terms of her own womanhood" (129), and the way in which her quest is transposed to film, rather than examining the literalization of *Isabel as spectacle*, where she becomes a visual commodity in film to be consumed by the other characters (who in turn proffer themselves and their actions as secondary spectacles) and ultimately by the audience.

¹⁹ Ralph (Chamberlain) tells Isabel (Neve) that he is "fascinated to see what a young lady does who won't marry Lord Warburton," and she retorts that he's the same as his mother. In the scene where Ralph persuades his father to make over a portion of his fortune to Isabel, the father tells his son "You speak as if it was for your amusement," and when Ralph responds, "In a way," Mr. Touchett comments "When I was a young man and cared for a girl I wished to do more than look at her." Finally, Ralph tells his father that he will get the same good out of it that Isabel will: "I shall have met the requirements of my imagination."

²⁰ For instance, the elder Mr. Touchett remarks to Isabel "I have a new hobby—watching you enjoy yourself," to which the perpetually sprightly Neve replies "Then you shall have a full time habit then."

²¹ In his article in *Literature Film Quarterly* on Jack Clayton's 1974 adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* starring Robert Redford and Mia Farrow, Dennis Cutchins postulates that the film is a dismal failure in part due to the fact that the audience can see and judge Daisy for itself, rather than relying consistently on Nick's perspective and view of her: "The unfiltered image of Daisy that Clayton allows on screen before the credits have scarcely finished running literally dooms the film. . . . because they are not privy to Nick's or Gatsby's perceptions [the audience] never quite understand[s] Gatsby's attraction to Daisy or his reasons for seeking her attention. From the film's first scenes she looks like what she is, a selfish and shallow person" (299, 300). Hence, the audience immediately realizes what takes Nick the entirety of the novel—Daisy, like her husband Tom, is shallow, selfish, and concerned only with self-preservation.

²² Going on, Stam cites the casting of Jack Palance, who had previously played the roles of Attila the Hun and a barbarian, as the despicable Prokosch in *Contempt*. Consequently, says Stam, the audience comes to the film with the supposition that the character is both "gangster and barbarian," a supposition which is later affirmed by Prokosch's actions.

²³ By "partial images," I mean the frequent device used by Campion in which the tops of the actors' heads are cut off or only half of their bodies are visible in a shot. As the actors move in front of the camera, different pieces of them are "cut off," as if they are moving in front of a spyhole or frame to one's vision, heightening the feeling that one is peering in at them from a crack in the wall or chink in the door.

²⁴ I wish to refer the reader to a distinction I noted in the introduction; namely, Terence Hawke's discussion of the story plot distinction: "'Story' is simply the basic succession of events, the raw material which confronts the artist. Plot represents the distinctive way in which the 'story' is made strange, creatively deformed, and defamiliarized" (McFarlane 23). Thus a film may retain the 'essence,' or 'story,' that an author creates without retaining fidelity to the plot, or the particular way the author describes that story. Please see also Footnotes 4 and 5 in the introduction.

²⁵ The lighting of Isabel's bedroom in the finished film differs from the direction in the screenplay, which reads "*Isabel's bedroom dark except for a vague radiance thrown in from the club's court . . . she can make out the dim shapes of furniture, the gleam of the mirror*" (Jones 18). This change serves no visible purpose other than to highlight the inherently voyeuristic nature of the scene.

²⁶ See Appendix A.

²⁷ Akin to this is an observation made by Edward Rosier: "The years had touched her only to enrich her; the flower of her youth had not faded, it only hung more quietly on its stem. She had lost something of that quick eagerness to which her husband had taken exception—she had more the air of being able to wait. Now, at all events, framed in the gilded doorway, she struck [Rosier] as the picture of a gracious lady" (339-340, emphasis added).

²⁸ See Appendix B.

²⁹ See Appendix C.

³⁰ Nancy Bentley argues that the inclusion of the violence is in fact Campion's retention of James' discussion of social and moral issues. According to Bentley, it is precisely "the social traps and masochism that James intimates in metaphor and dialogue [that] Campion represents through the sight of physical force and its threat," as the actors themselves "supply the ultimate visual proof of the cruelty that is nourished, even tolerated, in this world" (143). Consequently, these brief interludes in which Campion has taken the implications of the text to a higher notch merely serve to encapsulate in action what James has hinted at beneath his words.

³¹ See Note 5 in Chapter One.

³² “What kept Ralph alive was simply the fact that he had not yet seen enough of his cousin; he was not satisfied. There was more to come, he couldn’t make up his mind to lose that. He wished to see what she would make of her husband—or what he would make of her. This was only the first act of the drama, and he was determined to sit out the performance” (365).

³³ “[Isabel] never found out what [Caspar Goodwood] had come [to Rome] for; he offered her no explanation; there could be none but the very simple one that he wanted to see her. In other words, he had come for his amusement” (454).

³⁴ Mrs. Touchett comments to Isabel on the visibility of Merle’s observation of the girl: “she told me that she was watching you only in order to interpose [between Isabel and Osmond]” (310).

³⁵ When this scene is reproduced in the film, it takes place in the stables, where the stable bars not only represent a literal cage, but also filter the light in such a way that Isabel is barred and striped in shadow even as she talks about her liking for her cage.

³⁶ According to documented box-office receipts on Yahoo!.com, *Portrait of a Lady* grossed \$3,684, 143 in the U.S., *Washington Square* \$1,849, 757, and *Wings of the Dove* \$13,718,385.

³⁷ Although it was one of his most popular works, James once remarked of *Washington Square* that he found it “too simple and unvarnished a narrative” (Edel *Conquest* 398).

³⁸ As James tells his reader (admittedly, through the biased view of Doctor Sloper), “Catherine was decidedly not clever; she was not quick with her book, nor, indeed, with anything else” (17). He later comments that “Doctor Sloper would have liked to be proud of his daughter, but there was nothing to be proud of in poor Catherine. There was nothing, of course, to be ashamed of, but was not enough for the Doctor, who was a proud man, and would have enjoyed being able to think of his daughter as an unusual girl” (18).

³⁹ In her essay “Prospects of Entertainment: Film Versions of *Washington Square*,” Julie Rivkin comments on the difficulties of adapting a novel whose heroine is admittedly dull: “Washington Square poses what would seem like an immediate impediment to cinematic translation in the person of its protagonist—a young woman characterized as neither beautiful nor clever. A mobile and engaging Isabel Archer, a Kate Croy who remains always in the line of one’s vision . . . are easily imagined on screen. But Catherine Sloper—placid, dutiful, and above all undemonstrative—seems an unlikely prospect for cinematic adaptation” (147). Going on, she remarks that not only is Catherine “plain,” but she is “resolutely opaque and uncommunicative to those who surround her . . . such hermeticism might be a boon to a narrator who can ‘go behind’ and tell us what she would never express, it would seem to offer little to the cinematographer” (147).

⁴⁰ Rivkin suggests that the two well-known adaptations of the novel (William Wyler’s 1949 *The Heiress* and Agnieszka Holland’s 1997 *Washington Square*) handle the problem in the following manner: “In some ways the two films part company so absolutely that it is hard to bring them back to a single point of comparison. But returning to our initial focus on the ‘uncinematic’ Catherine, the Catherine so contained in her knowledge, so undemonstrative as she lives through emotional cataclysms, we arrive at a certain common observation. By making Catherine demonstrative, either in revenge or love, the two films offer a kind of implicit tribute to the power of James’ silent figure” (168). Hence, in *The Heiress* Catherine (Olivia de Havilland) verbally castigates her dying father for his treatment of her, ultimately sitting outside of the house embroidering as he dies; while in *Washington Square* a sobbing Catherine (Jennifer Jason Leigh) runs after the departing Morris through the rain, finally falling flat on her face in the muddy street.

⁴¹ Robin Wood argues against viewing *The Heiress* as a more refined adaptation of *Washington Square*: “It was inevitable that Agnieszka Holland’s film would be compared (generally unfavorably) to *The Heiress*; it seems to me that the comparison usefully illuminates Holland’s achievement, highlighting *Washington Square*’s far greater detail, density, and complexity. Doubtless its superiority is due in great part to the fact that it was adapted directly from James’ novel, where Wyler’s much more celebrated film was drawn from an already greatly simplified (and melodramatised) play” (12).

⁴² “[Aunt Penniman] flattered herself that a drama would now be enacted. Combining as she did the zeal of the prompter with the impatience of the spectator, she had long since done her utmost to pull up the curtain. She, too, expected to figure in the performance, to be the confidante, the Chorus . . . it may even be said that there were times when she lost sight altogether of the modest heroine of the play in the contemplation of certain great scenes which would naturally occur between the hero and herself” (76).

⁴³ Karen Chandler comments that the book revolves around the process whereby Catherine “comes to understand how her father, aunt, and lover use her as an object in their own machinations” (171).

⁴⁴ As James writes, “it may be thought the Doctor was too positive . . . but, as he said, he had his impression; it seemed to him sufficient, and he had no wish to modify it. He had passed his life in estimating people (it was part of the medical trade), and in nineteen cases out of twenty he was right” (95). Similarly, when he meets Mrs. Montgomery, the “Doctor gave her his esteem as soon as he had looked at her,” deeming her “a brave little person, with lively perceptions, and yet a disbelief in her own talent for social, as distinguished from practical affairs—this was his rapid mental resume of Mrs. Montgomery” (99).

⁴⁵ James represents Sloper as a connoisseur of things visual: “he made the grand tour of Europe, traveled in considerable splendor, and (as was to have been as was to have been expected in a man of his high cultivation) found so much in art and antiquity to interest him, that he remained abroad, not for six months, but for twelve” (173). Similarly, Sloper’s collections at home reflect these same impulses, as Morris realizes when spending time in Sloper’s study, time he passes by “often spen[ding] an hour in turning over the curious collections of its absent proprietor” (173).

⁴⁶ The remainder of the passage is as follows: “As such a person was to dress the part, to walk, to look, to speak, to in every way to express, the part, so all this was what Kate was to do for the character she had undertaken, under her aunt’s roof, to represent . . . Densher saw himself for the moment as in his purchased stall at the play, the watchful manager was in the depths of a box and the poor actress in the glare of the footlights. But she *passed*, the poor performer—he could see how she always passed; her wig, her paint, her jewels, every mark of her expression impeccable” (206).

⁴⁷ In explaining the genesis of this choice, Amini remarks “out came my video collection: *Double Indemnity*, *The Postman always Rings Twice*; *Out of the Past*; *The Killers*. I wasn’t as interested in the style of these movies as the way they showed the darker side of love. Like James’ *The Wings of the Dove*, these films started with two people besotted with each other and then charted the corruption and disintegration of their relationship until its bitter end. They were the opposite of the traditional love stories, where people were kept apart at the beginning and ended up comfortably re-united by the end. The more I watched these films the more I saw Kate and Merton as prototypes of these later noir lovers. In all the storylines a weak man falls for a stronger woman and conspires with her to get rid of the obstacle in their way. They corrupt each other in the process and he only redeems himself at the end by seeing her for what she is and breaking up with her. The noir heroine, like Kate, loses the two things she was prepared to kill for: money and love. These were all characters who were heroes, villains, and victims, at the same time” (vi-vii).

⁴⁸ In discussing the changes made in the process of adaptation, Philip Horne comments “Softley’s opulent *Wings of the Dove* takes all sorts of modernizing liberties with James’ plot at a local level, setting it amid the social instabilities and freedoms of 1910 rather than the Victorian solidities and restrictions of 1901 (when James started the novel). It changes most of the details it doesn’t altogether discard. The script retains no more than half a dozen lines from the dialogue in the novel; almost no situation is the same . . . to so bohemianise and eroticise the milieu, with a Kate who can kittenishly curl up on Densher’s bed, is to lose the pressure of bottled-up sexual passion in the novel” (46).

⁴⁹ In a 1997 interview given to Annie Nocenti of *Scenario*, Softley remarked “A lot of the [film script] writing is subtext. We talked about it, we pared it down, we rehearsed it beforehand with the actors, thinning quite a lot of it out. And Hossein was perhaps the most eager in paring down his own script. In getting rid of the words in order to get to the truth. He’s a very cinematic writer. He knows that the end product is a movie, not words on a page” (53).

⁵⁰ “Henry James is in essence inscrutable . . . I explain to myself his bewildering style thus: he is attempting the impossible with it—a certain very particular form of the impossible; namely to produce upon the reader, as a painting produces upon the gazer, a number of super-imposed, simultaneous impressions. He would like to put several sentences on top of each other so that you could read them all at once, and get all at once the various shadings and complexities, instead of getting them separately as the mechanical nature of his medium compels” (Crowley 616). In my opinion, such tendencies make James uniquely fit for film. The difficulty is in finding a way to tell visually what James does in multi-layered sentences, but once one grasps that lighting, sound, costuming, dialogue, and camera angles can all be brought into play, the task becomes much easier.

⁵¹ For a detailed and careful discussion of James' text and its corresponding visual imagery on film, Anthony J. Mazella's essay "'This Web of Subtle Complexities': The Hossein Amini-Iain Softley Film Adaptation of *The Wings of the Dove*" is an excellent and thorough resource.

⁵² James himself characterizes this scene in the following way: "what Kate Croy pays, heroically, it must be owned, at the hour of her visit alone to Densher's lodging" (13).

⁵³ Of this concern, Joy Gould Boyum remarks "One problem with determining the 'essence' of film is that it's not only an art (like poetry or music or painting), but also a medium like print—and one that, among its other uses, can serve to record the other arts. . . . But the art with which film (or at least narrative film) clearly shares most—from its use of plot, characters, setting, dialogue and imagery through its manner of expressing theme to its tendency to manipulate space and time—is literature. And so it follows that the effort to assert film's uniqueness involves distancing it from no art so much as the one to which it seems so intimately related" (12-13).

⁵⁴ This same pivotal positioning occurs elsewhere in James' texts, perhaps most noticeably in "Daisy Miller," where James positions Winterbourne as what Brian MacFarlane terms the "central reflector," making Winterbourne the conduit through which all information regarding Daisy is passed to the reader.

⁵⁵ As I noted in the Introduction, for the purposes of this thesis, I have used the extent to which a film reproduces James' observations and biases rather than those of the director as my criterion for successful adaptations.

⁵⁶ I would suggest that the study of the adaptation will eventually lead us back to literature, rather than away from it; as Boyum remarks, "what work would seem as essential to the intelligibility (or at least to the fullest and most meaningful grasp of the nature and quality) of an adaptation as the literary work on which it is based?" (62). In a discipline where intertextuality is critical, it is only natural that the student of adaptation will also turn to an in-depth study of the work from which said adaptation was derived.

Appendix A: Shot List of Isabel's Fantasy Sequence

1. **Medium long** shot of Isabel kicking the door closed after Goodwood.
2. **Closeup** on Isabel touching her face.
3. **Closeup** on Isabel's dress as she moves toward the wall near her bed. The camera **pans upward** to show her face and upper torso, **pulling back** simultaneously to become a **medium** shot.
4. **Tracking shot** as Isabel moves to her bed. The camera **zooms** in, providing a **close-up** on Isabel's face as she rubs it against the fringe. The camera then **pans down** as Isabel sits on the bed, then **pans** to her hand on the bed, which is seized by Goodwood as he pulls her down and kisses her neck. The camera **pans** to Goodwood, then **pans** slowly down the length of Isabel's body, where it reveals Warburton kissing her knee.
5. **Close-up** on Goodwood as he kisses Isabel's hand. The camera **pans** as he moves his face to hers, closing in on their faces and revealing Ralph, who is lying on the bed watching Goodwood and Isabel.
6. **Subjective shot** from Ralph's point of view; a **close-up** on Isabel and Goodwood as Goodwood kisses her. Goodwood retreats from the frame and Isabel's face becomes its focus. She opens her eyes and looks at Ralph.
7. **Subjective shot** from Goodwood's point of view, a **close-up** on Isabel and Ralph and she realizes Ralph is watching the sequence.
8. **Medium** shot from behind Isabel and the three men—as a result of the previous two subjective shots, the audience is implied as the locus from which this **subjective shot** is taken, which shows the backs of the actors. The camera **pans upward** as Isabel and the men rise, then **pans to the left**, where Goodwood seizes Warburton by the lapels as the two men dissolve.
9. **Medium** shot of Isabel from the front, which **zooms** inward to become a **close-up** as the light fades.

Appendix B: Comparison of Novelistic Text, Screenplay, and Shooting Script

Portrait of a Lady: The Textual Basis (393-395)

**Dialogue is bolded. That dialogue which has “transferred” to the screenplay is bolded, italicized, and underlined.*

She was about to follow Pansy, but he remarked that he wished she would remain; he had something to say to her. Then he walked about the drawing-room a little, while she stood waiting in her cloak.

“I don’t understand what you wish to do,” he said in a moment. **“I should like to know—so that I may know how to act.”**

“Just now I wish to go to bed. I’m very tired.”

“Sit down and rest; I shall not keep you long. Not there—take a comfortable place.” And he arranged a multitude of cushions that were scattered in picturesque disorder upon a vast divan. This was not, however, where she seated herself; she dropped into the nearest chair. The fire had gone out; the lights in the great room were few. She drew her cloak about her; she felt mortally cold. **“I think you’re trying to humiliate me.”** Osmond went on. **“It’s a most absurd undertaking.”**

“I haven’t the least idea what you mean,” she returned.

“You’ve played a very deep game; you’ve managed it beautifully.”

“What is it that I’ve managed?”

“You’ve not quite settled it, however; we shall see him again.” And he stopped in front of her, with his hands in his pockets, looking down at her thoughtfully, in his usually way, which seemed meant to let her know that she was not an object, but only a rather disagreeable incident of thought.

“If you mean that Lord Warburton’s under an obligation to come back you’re wrong,” Isabel said. **“He’s under none whatever.”**

“That’s just what I complain of. But when I say he’ll come back I don’t mean he’ll come from a sense of duty.”

“There’s nothing else to make him. I think he has quite exhausted Rome.”

“Ah no, that’s a shallow judgment. Rome’s inexhaustible.” And Osmond began to walk about again. **“However, about that perhaps there’s no hurry,”** he added. **“It’s rather a good idea of his that we should go to England. If it were not for the fear of finding your cousin there I think I should try to persuade you.”**

“It may be that you’ll not find my cousin,” said Isabel.

“I should like to be sure of it. However, I shall be as sure as possible. At the same time I should like to see his house, that you told me so much about at one time: what do you call it?—Gardencourt. It must be a charming thing. And then, you know, I’ve a devotion to the memory of your uncle: you made me take a great fancy to him. I should like to see where he lived and died. That indeed is a detail. Your friend was right. Pansy ought to see England.”

“I’ve no doubt she would enjoy it,” said Isabel.

“But that’s a long time hence; next autumn’s far off,” Osmond continued; **“and meantime there are things that more nearly interest us. Do you think me so very proud?”** he suddenly asked.

“I think you very strange.”

“You don’t understand me.”

“No, not even when you insult me.”

“I don’t insult you; I’m incapable of it. I merely speak of certain facts, and if the allusion’s an injury to you the fault’s not mine. It’s surely a fact that you have kept all this matter quite in your own hands.”

“Are you going back to Lord Warburton?” Isabel asked. “I’m very tired of his name.”

“You shall hear it again before we’ve done with it.”

She had spoken of his insulting her, but it suddenly seemed to her that this ceased to be a pain. He was going down—down; the vision of such a fall made her almost giddy: that was the only pain. He was too strange, too different; he didn’t touch her. Still, the working of his morbid passion was extraordinary, and she felt a rising curiosity to know in what light he saw himself justified. “I might say to you that I judge you’ve nothing to say to me that’s worth hearing,” she returned in a moment. “But I should perhaps be wrong. There’s a thing that would be worth my hearing—to know in the plainest words of what it is you accuse me.”

“Of having prevented Pansy’s marriage to Warburton. Are those words plain enough?”

“On the contrary, I took a great interest in it. I told you so; and when you told me that you counted on me—that I think was what you said—I accepted the obligation. I was a fool to do so, but I did it.”

“You pretended to do it, and you even pretended reluctance to make me more willing to trust you.

Then you began to use your ingenuity to get him out of the way.”

“I think I see what you mean,” said Isabel.

“Where’s the letter you told me he had written me?” her husband demanded.

“I haven’t the least idea; I haven’t asked him.”

“You stopped it on the way,” said Osmond.

Screenplay (not shooting script)

74. *The fire out, and only a few lights in the great drawing room. Isabel draws her cloak around herself, mortally cold.*

OSMOND: I don’t understand what you wish to do.

ISABEL: I wish to go to bed. I’m very tired.

**Osmond has arranged a pile of cushions on a vast divan, but Isabel has dropped into an armchair.*

OSMOND: I think you’re trying to humiliate me. You’ve played a very deep game. You’ve managed it beautifully.

ISABEL: What is it that I’ve managed?

OSMOND: You have kept this whole matter quite in your own hands.

“He was going down, down: the vision of such a fall made her almost giddy. The working of his morbid passion was extraordinary.”

ISABEL: Will you tell me in the plainest words of what is you accuse me?

OSMOND: Of having prevented Pansy’s marriage to Warburton. Are those words plain enough?

ISABEL: On the contrary, I took a great interest in it. When you told me you counted on me I accepted the obligation. I was a fool to do so, but I did it.

OSMOND: You pretended to do it. Where is the letter you told me he had written?

ISABEL: I haven't the least idea.

OSMOND: No, you destroyed it.

TRANSCRIPTION:

Osmond: I don't understand what you wish to do.

Isabel: I wish to go to bed. I'm very tired.

Osmond: I think you're trying to humiliate me. You're playing a very deep game. You've managed it beautifully.

Isabel: What it is that I've managed?

Osmond: You've kept this matter quite in your own hands.

Isabel: Will you tell me in the plainest words of what it is you accuse me?

Osmond: Of having prevented Pansy's marriage to Warburton. Are those words plain enough?

Isabel: On the contrary, I took great interest in it. When you told me you counted on me, I accepted the obligation. I was a fool to do so, but I did it (slaps her).

Osmond: You pretended to do it. Where's the letter you told me he'd written?

Isabel: I haven't the least idea (slaps her in the middle of "idea").

Osmond: No? You destroyed (slaps her) it.

Appendix C: Shot list of Osmond's violence

- 1) **Closeup** of Isabel's hands removing her gloves.
- 2) The camera pans upward from her hands to her face.
- 3) Osmond crosses between Isabel and the camera
- 4) **Closeup** of Isabel's face
- 5) **Closeup** on Osmond's back and head as he walks away, Isabel visible in the background, camera is stationary as they move away so that at the end of the shot it is no longer a closeup but a **medium long shot** of the two of them
- 6) **Medium shot/dolly shot** following Osmond and Isabel's movement, camera continues to pull back so that at the end of the shot it is a **medium long shot**
- 7) **Closeup** of Isabel's head and torso
- 8) **Closeup** on Osmond's head and back, he turns around
- 9) **Closeup** on Isabel
- 10) **Closeup** on Osmond
- 11) **Eyeline match/moderate high angle shot** Eyeline match is to Isabel from Osmond, camera rushes toward her as Osmond moves at her. The shot is not at such a high angle that Isabel appears tiny, but it is high enough so that we feel Osmond standing over her.
- 12) **Closeup** on Isabel
- 13) **Closeup** on Osmond
- 14) **Closeup** on Isabel
- 15) **Closeup/dolly shot** on Osmond, camera tracks him as he moves toward Isabel again
- 16) **Closeup** on Isabel, Osmond sits down and his back appears in the frame
- 17) **Closeup** on Osmond
- 18) **Closeup** on Isabel
- 19) **Closeup** on Isabel's hands holding her gloves and Osmond's hand closing over her glove
- 20) **Closeup** on Isabel
- *21) **Closeup** on glove
- *22) **Extreme closeup** on Osmond's face, grimace of anger
- *23) **Extreme closeup** on Isabel as the glove hits her near the eye
 - * While not **continuous**, or appearing to be a single shot, these shots occur so in such quick succession that they are registered more as an impression than as an actual clear perception
- 24) **Closeup** on Osmond
- 25) **Closeup** on Isabel

- 26) **Closeup** on glove as it leaves Isabel's lap, camera remains on empty space in her lap as the sound of the second slap cuts Isabel's voice off
- 27) **Closeup** on Osmond
- 28) **Closeup** on Isabel as the glove hits her for the third time

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