

The joy of in-betweenness: Henry James's *The Ambassadors*¹

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Abstract

With his numerous works, the well-known prolific American expatriate novelist and essayist, Henry James considerably contributed to enriching our perception of the transition process in the USA to modernism as an author witnessing both late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. After experiencing a long period of puritanical order and remaining stuck in the strictly established moral rules, American New England society was breaking its earlier conservative crust with the advent of the new century. James shed light on this transition process with many of his works such as *The Ambassadors*, *Bostonians* and *Transatlantic Sketches*. In this study, *The Ambassadors*, which can be seen as the projection of James's European experiences, is scrutinized with respect to the comparative representations of Paris and Woollett, and in a bigger scope, Europe and America. Spending most of his time by commuting between the Old and New World, James provided his readers with unique perspectives about these places in hereby-handled fiction through the eye of his protagonist, Strether. Drawing on the distinctions made between Woollett and Paris, this article examines how James reconstructs modern American identity hinging upon the two sides of Atlantic.

Key words: James and America, morality, Europe, artistic life, transformation.

Arada olmanın keyfi: Henry James'in *The Ambassadors* (Elçiler) eseri

Öz

Çok sayıda eseriyle, Amerika'nın sürgün roman ve deneme yazarı Henry James, hem 19. yy sonu hem de 20. yy başlarına tanıklık eden bir yazar olarak, ABD'de modernizme geçiş süreci hakkındaki algımızın zenginleşmesine önemli ölçüde katkıda bulunmuştur. Uzun bir süre püriten düzeni yaşayan ve katı bir şekilde kurulmuş ahlaki kurallara saplanıp kalmış olan Amerika'nın New England toplumu yeni yüzyılın gelişyle birlikte eski muhafazakar kabuğunu kırıyordu. James bu geçiş sürecine, *The Ambassadors*, *Bostonians* ve *Transatlantic Sketches* gibi birçok eseriyle ışık tutmuştur. Bu çalışmada, James'in Avrupa tecrübelerinin bir izdüşümü sayılabilecek olan *The Ambassadors* eseri, Paris ve Woollett, daha büyük ekseninde Eski Dünya ve Yeni Dünya'nın karşılaştırmalı temsilleri üzerinden ele alınıyor. Hayatının büyük bir kısmını Eski ve Yeni Dünya arasında gidip gelerek geçiren James, burada ele alınan eserinde okuyucularına, romanın başkarakteri, Strether'in gözünden, bu yerler hakkında eşsiz bakış açıları sunmaktadır. Woollett ve Paris arasında yapılan önemli ayrımlar üzerinden, James'in modern Amerikan kimliğini, Atlantik'in iki yakasına dayanarak nasıl yeniden inşa ettiğinin incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır.

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Anahtar kelimeler: James ve Amerika, ahlaklılık, Avrupa, sanatsal yaşam, dönüşüm.

Introduction

While forming its artistic and literary style, today's America was undoubtedly inspired by Europe and European artistic and cultural values. A great number of writers, poets, and artists more or less referred to the Old World in their works. In particular, after European arrivals in America, from late 15th and early 16th centuries and onwards, the literary and artistic world of the new continent grew by substantially feeding from European themes and styles.

Even though hundreds of years passed after this period of inspiration from Europe, in early twentieth century, the haunting impacts of Europe on modern American writers like Henry James were continuing. As an author who was born in the US but stayed for long periods of time in Europe, James reflected substantial cultural and moral elements of Europe in his works by comparing them with his homeland. In their comprehensive work on James, Paula-Andreea Onofrei et al. (2013) identified this deep and steady influence as an aesthetic inspiration divided into two phases; the London phase and the Paris phase. The London period, which began early in James's childhood, had a lasting effect on the author for a long time. As a child, "he felt admiration for the English school of art which was to last all his life" (p. 347). Paris, constituting the second phase, was a rich place of art and scenery. Paula-Andreea Onofrei et. al. (2013) commented that for James, Europe, was like an "enormous museum" promoting his creativity (p. 347).

Rome can also be included in the list of European cities playing an active role in shaping James's literary works: "...The Princio has a great charm; it is a great resource. I am forever being reminded of 'aesthetic luxury,' as I called it above, of living in Rome" (James, 1903, p. 199). James was also educated in London to tread in the path of knowledge and arts, and other European cities offered him numerous styles and patterns for inspiration and reflection. This source of inspiration and wisdom leads him to question and compare the existing standards and order in America with their counterparts in Europe.

Of all his works, *The Ambassadors* (1903) holds a special place with regard to presenting periphrastical comparisons via detailed descriptions of European cities (particularly Paris) and New England town, Woollett. They enable the reader to have a unique view of the factors leading to distinctions between the established European and emerging American social identities.

Upon the descriptions of France and Woollett, it becomes evident that the New World lagged far behind the Old one in terms of artistic life, individual freedoms and cultural richness. Woollett's depictions are very traditional and the Woollettian characters are depicted as quite conservative and dominant. The vehemence of Mrs Newsome's ultimatom to Strether demonstrates this; "Come back by the first ship" (James, 1909, p. 245).

Yet, on the other hand, Europe, especially Paris, is presented as attractive and full of aesthetic buildings, while Parisians are introduced as intellectual, enlightened, smart, golden-mouthed and open to external changes unlike Woollettians. The sole and biggest flaw for the author's voyeur, Strether, about Parisians, is that they are reckless in the moral sphere.

In these comparative vistas, while the New World represents strict Puritanical values and material philosophy, Europe stands for cultural and artistic values, plurality, novelty, openness to change and keenness for personal freedom. The distinctive characteristics of each place and their value apart, one

of the two is more vibrant and sophisticated according to James. As Sheliah Teahan (1996) argues “If James’s America was a blank page, his “Europe” is the text” (p. 31). For Teahan, James presents America as a new established state at the beginning of everything and far behind the developments and standards of Europe. Supporting Teahan, Sarah Wilson (2004) suggests that “Americans continue to have unparalleled access to a kind of cultural blankness” (p. 512).

In a way, this novel is a reflection of how James perceived Europe after America and compared it with his homeland through an emissary character called Strether. As a result of this comparative and critical approach, Paris as representing the European side seems to be favored by the author. Ali Taghizadeh (2011) notes that “In letters and politics, James preferred Europe to his homeland” (p. 21).

My main objective in this study is not to repeat or compile the extensive research on Henry James, but to follow the axiological (aesthetic and ethical) traces of Old and New World portrayals in his fiction in an attempt to explore their importance in reconstructing the Jamesian, inscrutable modern identity.

James’s voyeur and his transformation

In his *The Ambassadors*, James recounts the story of Lewis Lambert Strether, who is assigned by his betrothed, Mrs Newsome in Woollett, Massachusetts, with bringing her son, Chad back from Paris. Newsome wants her son to return and take over the business she plans to endow. On the other hand, evading a milieu surrendered by strict religious rules and the high working tempo in New England, Chad is loitering and living self-indulgently in Paris, which is a kind of life that stands in stark contrast with the focused, work-oriented and conservative life of the New World. Hence, as a pious Woollettian, Mrs Newsome, wants her son to be saved from this idleness and corruption.

James introduces Strether as an intellectual observer of Paris and Europe, thus lending him the ability to reconstruct his Woollettian identity. In this sense, he is often read as the authorial surrogate within the novel (Hutchison, 2005, p. 41). Displaying parallelism with the adventures of James, he tours across Europe and enjoys its beauties while not neglecting to reflect upon ethical norms of the continent. For Oscar Cargill (1961), indeed, no other novel by James can compete with *The Ambassadors* with respect to narrating his accumulation of past experiences. (p. 303)

Strether also gets in contact with different people representing cultural and social values that are opposite to Woollett’s. In this respect, he resembles the socially and culturally raw Newman in *The American*, who frankly declares the reason for his visit to Europe as “I have come to see Europe, to get the best out of it I can. I want to see all great things, and do whatever the clever people do” (James, 1877, p. 30). While at first he is enthusiastic to carry out the epistolary instructions given by his patron, Newsome, later, he starts to rely on his own insights as well as those of his guide and confidante, Maria Gostrey. Then, his incipient thoughts and feelings about Paris and Parisians change mainly because the city itself and its residents offer him an opportunity of education, “one of personal development” (Menton, 1994, p. 292). As a result of this change and transition in his preconceptions, he is indecisive as to whether to carry out his principal mission in Paris or not: Should he advise Chad to return or stay? In this respect, Quay Grigg (1980) describes the reversal of Strether’s advice to Chad as “difficult and slow” (p. 213).

James’s omniscient narrator, Strether, appears to be unsatisfied with Woollett at the very beginning of the novel because he is unwilling to hear anything from his boss, and fiancée, Mrs Newsome. He doesn’t

hesitate to express how enthusiastic he is to get out of Woollett and its people, the likes of Mrs Newsome. K. P. S. Jochum (1983) describes this psychology as follows:

Strether's emancipation begins quite early in the novel, in the Jardin du Luxembourg, again on the left bank, where he reads Mrs. Newsome's letters in the highly incongruous surroundings of "a penny chair" from which he observes "terraces, alleys, vistas, fountains, little trees in green tubs, little women in white caps and shrill little girls at play" (book II, chapter ii). Strether has escaped from the bank's office because it reminds him too much of the post office in Woollett, Mass., where the letters were mailed (p. 115).

In consequence of his having contacts with Chad's social circle in Paris, Strether notices that Parisian people and culture have renovated and improved Chad's interests and tastes with respect to aesthetics and ethics. That is why he initially postpones his plan to take him back to Woollett, and then totally quits his mission. From Taghizadeh's vantage point (2011), Strether's renunciation is closely related with the transcendence of his consciousness:

How his opinion of life changes in the Parisian culture, that is, how, contrary to his prevision, he loses his belief in the Woollettian "world of commonplace" and shares the Parisian "life of freedom," and how, as the result of such a radical change in his vision, he ultimately inverts his purpose (p. 218).

As if the mission was reversed, Chad contributes to transforming Strether's mindset, granting him an opportunity to align Parisian influences and free life with the firmly defined Woollettian puritanical codes. Strether closely observes to what extent Chad has absorbed Parisian cultural codes and depends on them, which, in Flaherty's words "vivifies Strether's point of view" (2014, p. 376).

The abnegation of the mission of ambassadorship implies the reversal of roles: Strether deems that if Chad turns back, he will be corrupted, which stands in vivid contrast with the view of Mrs Newsome. At this juncture, the location of corruption becomes blurred: Who and where, in fact, represent corruption? Is it Chad who standing for Paris or Mrs Newsome representing the New World? By shaking the rigid convictions of Woollett, James opens up a new space to question the meaning of corruption: he suggests that the already accepted ethical norms may be reinterpreted, even be falsified.

Even if not spelled out within the story, it is clear that Chad is a renegade who has intended to emancipate himself from the restrictive and conservative puritanical principles, or, as David L. Smith (2012) emphasized, the "paternalistic Woollett morality" (p. 3): he has moved to Paris. The person coming to fetch him also experiences the pleasure of personal freedom and reaches the conclusion that Chad is on the true path. Strether says to him "You will be a brute you know--you'll be guilty of the last infamy--if you forsake her." (James, 1909, p. 436) Here Strether emphasizes Madame de Vionnet's role in Chad's development and fears that he will be a "brute" when he leaves her by returning Woollett. In other words, she is the "soul of charm and refinement" (Cecil, 1967, p. 723). According to Parisian norms, indeed, she is neither a threat nor a corrupted person. Strether understands that

The absolute moral laws don't work as he expected; and the discovery that questions of right and wrong depend upon all the actual circumstances of a case (including the nature, personal history, social environment, religious and cultural traditions of the persons involved) is one of the discoveries Strether is making throughout the book (Bennett, 1956, p. 15).

Noticing the discrepancies between two worlds and partly appreciating the internal harmonies of Europe, Strether experiences a deep change during his enlightening and stimulating voyage and stay around Europe. Therefore, he believes that in Paris Chad is freer, more civilized, more mature and more intellectual man. Most of all, his stay in Paris comes to mean that he could actualize what Strether once

opted for: When he was young, he desired to live as he wished but could not do so, and now it is too late for him to live that way Putting emphasis on this aspect of Strether, Deans (1972) alleges, "Strether projects his own repressed sexual impulses onto Chad" (p. 242).

Thus, Jamesian observer concludes that Madame de Vionette, in her association with Paris, is not entirely threatening, tempting and perverse, but rather she lives in compliance with Parisian cultural and moral codes. However, his future brother in law, Jim, refuses such an idea: "I've liked my Paris, I dare say I've liked it too much." In response, Jim says: "Oh you old wretch!" (James, 1909, p. 277). Then, Strether tries to explain the situation in Paris by saying: "The case is more complex than it looks from Woollett" (James, 1909, p. 277). In a way, he makes an effort to justify his changed understanding of Paris. Yet again, Jim opposes him adding: "Oh well, it looks bad enough from Woollett!" (James, 1909, p. 277). Thus, Strether can't break Jim's prejudices about Paris which stem from the disparities between two spheres. In his "Strether's Babylon: Counterplot in *The Ambassadors*," James Walton (2009) touches upon this sharp distinction between Europe and America:

In the description of Strether's Paris we see the rigid, abstract typology undergoing a partial dissolution under the pressure of a sudden sense of "personal freedom" (17), a re-awakening to "the immediate and the sensible" (18), a "sharper survey of the elements of Appearance" (20). Such "spiritual" gifts as revelation, deliverance, and redemption arise for Strether from no transcendent source but from the "world" that revealed itself to James's Small Boy in the Galerie d'Apollon of the Louvre: "the world, in fine, raised to the richest and noblest expression." Opposed to this highly constructed world, or "universe of the imagination," is a brand of Puritanism—not Mather's—that has settled, in Perry Miller's words, for "an ideal of social conformity, of regulation and control," of "worldly caution and social conservatism": Puritan into "puritanical" (p. 295).

Reforming his Woollettian identity, he wins a position to judge the standards both in America and Europe. Strether has a perpetual guide or "constant counsellor", Maria Gostrey, an American living in England. She contributes to his ability to see Europe from the perspective of an insider. Beyer (2014) evaluates this cooperation between Strether and Maria as a "social capital" that Strether gains and uses to take distance in forming his own self. (p. 91) Besides Gostrey, Marie de Vionnet helps Strether question and reform his identity:

Where is your 'home' moreover now--what has become of it? I've made a change in your life, I know I have; I've upset everything in your mind as well; in your sense of--what shall I call it?--all the decencies and possibilities (James, 1909, p. 418).

New world versus old world

In *The Ambassadors*, James adopted a comparative and axiological approach to Old and New worlds, which enables his American readers some criterions to ponder where they culturally and aesthetically stand. In this treatment, Europe and European cultural elements, which from time to time resonate with romanticism, prevail over New England and conventional Puritanical religious attitude. While Woollett, Massachusetts stands for conservatism, morality, and patriarchy, Paris represents free thought, elegance, arts and knowledge. Taghizadeh (2011) deftly elucidates the reason for this comparison:

Throughout his career, James was conscious of the significance of the Civil War, and used his writing to help America develop a new sense of self. For doing this, he reexamined in his fiction the relationships of America with Europe. In many of his stories, he compared the true spirit of contemporary Americans with their European peers, and showed the active engagement of Americans with life in Europe, or of Europeans with life in America (p. 217).

One of the most striking examples of these distinctions is present even in the preface of the novel. James (1909) tackles with the mission of Strether and makes his first comparison:

The revolution performed by Strether under the influence of the most interesting of great cities was to have nothing to do with any betise of the imputably "tempted" state; he was to be thrown quite with violence, upon his lifelong trick of intense reflexion: which friendly test indeed was to bring him out, through winding passages, through alternations of darkness and light, very much in Paris, but with the surrounding scene itself a minor matter, a mere symbol for more things than had been dreamt of in the philosophy of Woollett (p. 9).

The imagination of Paris as a city harbouring things that can't be found in Woollett demonstrates that it is a more modern and colourful city than barren and empty Woollett. Furthermore, relying on Dreifus's judgement, this glittering city can be regarded as the capital city of the 19th century (2004, p. 45). The author uses two opposite terms above; "darkness and light" which will be determined in Paris. This in a way foreshadows that Strether will decide in Paris what is right and what is wrong or what means what. Kohan (1999) explicitly expounds this distinction between two sites:

James criticism, from the first, has considered the "international theme" by, in part, comparing American and European cultural values (mention frequently being made of James's comment that America lacks a tradition, or at least the institutions of a formal tradition) and translating America and Europe into their metaphorical significances. European "experience," "decadence," or "sophistication" and American "innocence," "naivete," or "energy" are the often-invoked rough heuristic identifications made to characterize the two worldwides that come into conflict in James's novels (p. 373).

The Old and New World not only represent geographical distinction but also stand for the characters who may be categorized as old and experienced and young and inexperienced respectively. Although Strether is in his 50s, he feels himself younger in Paris and has many things to learn and get from this city. The experiences Strether has across Europe bring a change in Strether's character for they indicate both imaginative and subjective engagement (Cosgrove and Mathees, 1980, p. 207). Since all the American characters but Strether are young, they are also inexperienced and unsophisticated compared with Europeans; thus, Europe becomes an impeccable site for them to reach maturity and knowledge. Drawing attention to this, Bethany Beyer remarks that "Representative of James's internationalist theme, it presents somewhat naive U.S. travelers who traverse the Atlantic to find continental "culture" – and often come away with unexpected insights and knowledge" (Beyer, 2014, p. 79-80).

Woollett, Massachusetts represents conservativeness, booming commerce, and growing wealth. In the light of the progress of capitalism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the US, James presents an American family who has embraced the spirit of this economic movement and taken a long distance in being an indispensable member of the capitalist world. Interestingly enough, the times James penned this novel corresponds to the period Max Weber was envisaging *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*. It was only two years later that Weber completed his work. What Weber emphasized is that the ethics of early reformists groups like the Protestants had a strong bond with Capitalist model of economy and working style. In *the Ambassadors*, the public of Woollett was both keen on their religion, traditional values and morality while also pursuing enthusiastically their worldly interests, just like the early Puritans or Protestants. What pushed Strether to Paris is to retrieve Chad to Woollett so that he can manage the commercial business of his family. In Woollett, business has flourished so much that an ordinary family may have a booming family business company. Besides, Chad's mother has no intention of making concessions about her commercial stand. As Beyer (2014) points out,

Even before their missions, the three ambassadors possess social and cultural capital in abundance. Mrs. Newsome's deputies, Strether and Sarah Pocock, are capital-rich in their home city of Woollett, Massachusetts, with comfortable surroundings and community ties (p. 82).

She both desires her family business to be maintained and their religious character to be protected against the wiles of Europe, especially Paris. Mrs Newsome, who believes that her son is attached to a wicked woman, Madame de Vionnet, in Paris, gives Strether instructions about how to perform his responsibility. In this sense, we see a "Puritanically American Newsome" against the "seductively Parisian woman," as Edel argues in his book on James (1985, p. 537).

Against the capitalist greediness of New England, Europe represents artistic life and aesthetic beauty. In their visit to theatre in England, Strether and Maria Gostrey encounter more flamboyant and modern theatres than the ones in Woollett. Theatre experiences in Boston and in England are amalgamated with the consciousness of the protagonist:

Miss Gostrey had dined with him at his hotel, face to face over a small table on which the lighted candles had rose-coloured shades; and the rose-coloured shades and the small table and the soft fragrance of the lady—had anything to his mere sense ever been so soft?—were so many touches in he scarce knew what positive high picture. He had been to the theatre, even to the opera, in Boston, with Mrs. Newsome, more than once acting as her only escort; but there had been no little confronted dinner, no pink lights, no whiff of vague sweetness, as a preliminary: one of the results of which was that at present, mildly rueful, though with a sharpish accent, he actually asked himself WHY there hadn't (James, 1909, p. 49).

Strether's discontentment clearly stems from the deficiencies of the Boston theatres he explores after experiencing the romantic atmosphere of smart decorations in England. The criteria of evaluating which theatre is more appealing are ascertained by looking at the other side of Atlantic. What's more, he ardently wishes there had been the same kinds of theatre and opera in Woollett as in Paris. In addition to the decoration, Strether goes on to exalt European theatre with respect to its characterization:

However, he viewed his job it was "types" he should have to tackle. Those before him and around him were not as the types of Woollett, where, for that matter, it had begun to seem to him that there must only have been the male and the female. These made two exactly, even with the individual varieties. Here, on the other hand, apart from the personal and the sexual range—which might be greater or less—a series of strong stamps had been applied, as it were, from without; stamps that his observation played with as, before a glass case on a table, it might have passed from medal to medal and from copper to gold (James, 1909, p. 51).

In European drama, Strether explores well-rounded, amusing characters instead of fixed types; thus, European drama is shown to be richer in terms of characterization. Indeed, this comparison harbours in itself the metaphoric reference to the multiplicity and pluralism of Europe. The metals in the last sentence such as copper and gold can possibly be used as metaphors for the presence of different and mutable people in society as well.

The aesthetic beauty of architecture in Paris also dazzles Strether who has lived under parochial rigidities of New England. He is bewildered by the balconies and façade of the hotels and houses in Paris: "...all the bright warm Paris afternoon, from the balcony that overlooks the Tuileries garden--these are as marked an example of the representational virtue that insists here and there on being..." (James, 1909, p. 17). Paris is introduced as somewhere warming the cockles of the heart and the balcony looks towards a garden, thus unifying the beauty. In the next chapter, the image of the balcony persists in different ways. While preparing to see Chad, "...he now looked up at the fine continuous balcony with a safe sense..." (p. 85). Horizontal houses are equipped with equally beautiful and continuous balconies.

James enjoys creating such kinds of scenery and visual portrayals. Tintner (1993) remarks that “for James, the pleasure of sight came before any other sensation.” (p. 2) In New England, however, we find no such elegant architectural descriptions. Basically, this stems from the loss of aesthetic value in architecture in the New World where high buildings were constructed. James largely draws on this issue in his *The American Scene*. According to Kovács (2011), “James is repelled by the crude skyline dominated by skyscrapers. He is stunned by the demolition of old New York for the purpose of vertical expansion.” He blames this kind of architecture stealing their “memory and identity” (p. 342). The protagonist of the book experiences a continuous process of an identity seeking and forming. Indeed, as Menton (1994) points out the whole novel revolves around searching for an identity (p. 286).

Beautifully depicted Paris with ostentatious institutions and social spaces enchant Strether and other Americans. He associates Paris with light: “We're all looking at each other—and in the light of Paris one sees what things resemble. That's what the light of Paris always seems to show” (James, 1909, p. 160). By introducing elements of proportion and relation, as Wilson (2004) claims, “James located a major shift in American consciousness (the stirrings of modernity) in the Civil War...” (p. 525).

Woollett, at the center of discussion, is a small and young town compared with old, historical Paris. The name of Woollett is even symbolic and comes to mean the opposite of Paris. Jochum (1983) uncovers the meaning of this town:

The name "Woollett" suggests "woolly" which may mean, according to the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, "rude," "barbarous," "uncivilized," but also "confused and hazy." In contrast, Paris is orderly and civilized, although its order is enigmatic and its civility a little decadent. Paris, nevertheless, is real and verifiable, Woollett is not. Hence, Mrs. Newsome, Woollett's first and foremost citizen and Strether's wife-to-be, is finally a threat rather than a fact. (p. 117).

The smallness and naivety of Woollett are also reflected in the cultural and social life of its residents who are unable to reach what Parisians can. In other words, “Americans continue to have unparalleled access to a kind of cultural blankness” (Wilson, 2004, p. 512). At the outset of modernism, they are portrayed as the people still stuck in the old Puritanical doctrines. People in Woollett enjoy themselves less than Parisian, as the dialogue between Strether and Mrs. Gostrey demonstrates:

Ah there you are!" he laughed. "It's the failure of Woollett. THAT'S general." "The failure to enjoy," Miss Gostrey explained, "is what I mean." "Precisely. Woollett isn't sure it ought to enjoy. If it were it would. But it hasn't, poor thing," Strether continued, "anyone to show it how (James, 1909, p. 27).

In terms of vividness of social life, the Parisian nightlife seems more attractive both to Chad and James's curious surrogate, Strether, whose acclaim is put within the text as;

The Paris evening in short was, for Strether, in the very taste of the soup, in the goodness, as he was innocently pleased to think it, of the wine, in the pleasant coarse texture of the napkin and the crunch of the thick-crust bread” (James, 1909, p. 88).

In no part of the novel, however, Strether expresses such kind of appreciation for the evenings or nights he had in Woollett.

While Woollett represents conventional style in apparel, Europe stands for smartness and elegance in clothing. James offers his readers many examples proving this. For instance, while Mrs Newsome wears a long dress covering almost the whole body, Miss Gostrey wears a shorter skirt and her throat is not covered:

There was much the same difference in his impression of the noticed state of companion, whose dress was "cut down," as he believed the term to be, in respect to shoulders and throat a broad red velvet band with and antique jewel- he was rather complacently sure it was antique- attached to it in front. Mrs Newsome's dress was never in any degree "cut down," and she never wore round her throat a broad red velvet band... (James, 1909, p. 49).

Taking into account the fact that the clothing style of an American was more conventional or conservative than that of a European woman who may wear a more fashionable and freer style, it can be put forward that women in the New World were more restricted than the ones in Europe in terms of religious concerns and public opinion.

As a result of critical reflections on the same issues on the two sides of the Atlantic, Strether who is well acquainted with the moral standards in Woollett and later explores the elasticity in Europe with religion and traditions, is dispatched to question the concept of freedom. In a way, James approaches evaluation of freedom as a conception of moral disagreement. This leads us to the inference that the more a community becomes moral and ethical, the less freedom remains for the people. Some like Cecil even assert that "James, through Stether, is urging his readers a life of bohemian and moral irresponsibility (1967, p. 720). Yet, this doesn't literally mean that James was against religious ethics or piety as in the case of his father, whose line of conduct to moralism is "entirely hostile." For his father, "moralism is the spiritual evil" (Diamond, 1997, p. 243). An experience in Paris and had a significant role in Strether's decision on which culture is more attractive and human-oriented;

Strether's experience in Paris, particularly his moment of vision by the riverside, allows him to respond to the moral dilemma in which he is enmeshed with an entirely new attitude. Rather than reconciling with New England outrage, Strether accepts the knowledge of Chad and Madame de Vionnet's affair for what it is: an opportunity to revise his categories of human behavior (Hutchison, 2003, p. 249).

As Hutchison (2003) claims, "The novel's protagonist, Lambert Strether, finds himself caught between New England dogmatism and Parisian aestheticism" (p. 231). Step by step, in the period of time he spends in Europe, the effect of New England dogmatism slides away, and he makes his choice in favor of Paris yet, the revelation of the illicit Chad-Madame relationship casts a pall of uncertainty over his perception of Paris, because comes to close to disapproving the nature of such an affair, just as an ordinary Woollettian would. The basic reason for this disapproval is, as Ohsima advocates, Strether imagines Paris as a place where aesthetic and moral sensibilities compromise the individual (quoted in Gargano, 1984, p. 69). Crews (1957) attributes Strether's dissatisfaction with revelation to his or James's "basic Puritan distrust of flesh" (39). After all, attaining a new sense of life by virtue of his experiences and voyeuristic trip, he feels ready to return home but not to Mrs Newsome. He has become a more sophisticated, elegant and urbanized man who has achieved what he could not in Woollett. By interweaving European and Woollettian codes, he has created a different and fastidious model of existence whose end can be characterized by ambivalence and hybridity in thought. This ambiguity and in-betweenness set the ground for the birth of James's literary art, for as Jochum (1983) urged "The reality of Paris has changed him for better or worse (p. 117)."

Conclusion

In view of the Woollettian (New World) and Parisian (Old World) aesthetic and ethical depictions, James, who enjoyed the advantage of being inbetween two continents, apparently opted for a freer society with a more elegant sense of aesthetic. In the period when modernism was sharply rising, he found many defects in Woollettian culture and moral vision, and found their better forms in Europe.

Thus, Europe both served as a mirror which reflected how James's Americans culturally and socially looked and also became the standard for them to critically evaluate the norms and values they held according to the parameters of the age. His mouthpiece, Strether, "has learnt how to dispose of Woollett in favor of Paris" (Jochum, 1983, p. 118).

James established his story drawing on a conservative woman and the mission she assigns to open-minded Strether. In spite of the fact that centuries were left behind after the arrival of first Puritans in America, their influences on people's lives and consciousness were still persisting intermittently. For this reason, James turned his face to the old world for inspiration. However, he didn't cling solely to the past but recreated it by heavily trusting the other side of Atlantic in a style peculiar to him. James underlined the importance of both appropriation in forming an identity via getting inspiration from the Old World and individual free will against the community pressure. In this respect, James suggests in arts and literature, confrontations and comparisons are necessary but man ought to be free to take personal responsibility free of outer impositions and constrainings just like in the case of Strether. His surrogate, Strether finds a different world in Europe which is incompatible with Woollett, however, he appropriates European cultural codes and reforms his identity. He returns home as a free spirit having both European and Woollettian aspects but not bound to them because he is ready to create his own as seen at the close of the novel. Thus, James harmonizes what is modern and conventional, moral and secular via Strether who manages to take the relief of Puritannical values and norms and adopts some aspects of modern and secular-based principles of *mondus vivendi* reigning in Europe.

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