[00:00:00]

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**Dorothy Hale:** He cheerfully pleaded. She kept on him a moment through her glasses and through his own, a certain pleasant pointedness.

 “Ah no, you’re not! You’re not in the least, thank goodness! If you had been we shouldn’t so soon have found ourselves here together. I think," she comfortably concluded, "you trust me."

**Jim Phelan:** “I think I do!—but that’s exactly what I'm afraid of. I shouldn't mind if I didn't. It's falling thus in twenty minutes, so utterly into your hands.

I dare say it's the sort of thing you're thoroughly familiar with, but nothing more extraordinary has ever happened to me.

This is Jim Phelan, Director of the Project Narrative at The Ohio State University, and I'd like to welcome you to the Project Narrative podcast. In a typical episode, a narrative theorist selects a short narrative to read [00:01:00] and discuss with me or another host. Today, I'll be talking with Dorothy Hale, who has selected the first chapter of Henry James's *The Ambassadors*, which was published as a novel in September 1903 after its previous appearance as a serial narrative in the North American Review. Dorothy Hale is a professor in the graduate school at the University of California, Berkeley, where she has held the Rachel Anderson Stageberg Chair in English. Dory has made important contributions to two fields within the larger territory of narrative studies: the Anglo-American novel and the theory of the novel.

To mention just a few of Dory's significant publications, she's the author of *Social Formalism: The Novel in Theory from Henry James to the Present*, which won the Narrative Society's Perkins Prize for the Best Book on Narrative, published in 1998. Dory is also the author of *The Novel and the New Ethics*, published in 2020. [00:02:00] In addition, Dory has done prodigious work as an editor and an authorial guide in the volume, 800 pages in the volume, *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1900-2000*. So, Dory, is there anything you'd like to tell our listeners before you read the first chapter of *The Ambassadors*?

**Dorothy Hale:** Well, I would just mention that it was such an instructive exercise for me to practice for today because I realized how much I read as a literary critic interpreting the text rather than mimicking, you know, or performing the voices, so. But I look forward to us trading off on the dialogue and see how that might change it up for us.

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah, thanks. I'm, I'm looking forward to playing Strether, so... however, however poorly I did that, but I, it's an opportunity, so thank you for that. Okay.

**Dorothy Hale:** Thank you for jumping in with me.

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah, sure, okay.. Now, here's Dorothy Hale reading the first chapter of *The* [00:03:00] *Ambassadors* by Henry James.

**Dorothy Hale:** Strether's first question when he reached the hotel was about his friend. Yet, on his learning that Waymarsh was apparently not to arrive till evening, he was not wholly disconcerted.

A telegram from him bespeaking a room "only if not noisy", reply paid, was produced for the enquirer at the office, so that the understanding that they should meet at Chester rather than at Liverpool remained, to that extent, sound. The same secret principle, however, that had prompted Strether not absolutely to desire Waymarsh's presence at the dock, that had led him thus to postpone for a few hours his enjoyment of it, now operated to make him feel he could wait without disappointment. They would dine together at the worst, and with all respect to dear old Waymarsh, if not even, for that matter, to himself, there was little fear that in the sequel [00:04:00] they shouldn't see enough of each other. The principle I have just mentioned as operating had been, with the most newly disembarked of the two men, wholly instinctive - the fruit of a sharp sense that, delightful as it would be to find himself looking, after so much separation, into his comrade's face, his business would be a trifle bungled should he simply arrange for this countinence to present itself to the nearing steamer as the first note of Europe. Mixed with everything was the apprehension already on Strether's part that it would at best throughout prove the note of Europe in quite a sufficient degree. That note had been meanwhile, since the previous afternoon, thanks to this happier device, such a consciousness of personal freedom, as he hadn't known for years, such a deep taste of change and of having above all for the moment, nobody and nothing to consider, as promised [00:05:00] already, if headlong hope were not too foolish, to color his adventure with cool success. There were people on the ship with whom he could have easily consorted, so far as ease could up to now be imputed to him, and who, for the most part, plunged straight into the current that set from the landing stage to London.

There were others who had invited him to a tryst at the inn, and had even invoked his aid for a look round at the beauties of Liverpool. But he had stolen away from everyone alike, had kept no appointment, and renewed no acquaintance, had been indifferently aware of the number of persons who esteemed themselves fortunate in being, unlike himself, met, and had, even independently, unsociably alone, without encounter or relapse, and by mere quiet evasion, given his afternoon and evening to the immediate and the sensible.

They formed a qualified draft of Europe, an [00:06:00] afternoon and an evening on the banks of the mercy. But such as it was, he took his potion at least undiluted. He winced a little truly at the thought that Waymarsh might be already at Chester. He reflected that, should he have to describe himself there as having got in so early, it would be difficult to make the interval look particularly eager. But he was like a man who, elatedly finding in his pocket more money than usual, handles it a while, and idly and pleasantly chinks it before addressing himself to the business of spending. That he was prepared to be vague to Waymarsh about the hour of the ship's touching, and that he both wanted extremely to see him and enjoyed extremely the duration of delay.

These things, it is to be conceived, were early signs in him that his relation to his actual errand might prove none of the simplest. He was burdened, poor Strether, it had better be confessed at the [00:07:00] outset, with the oddity of a double consciousness. There was detachment in his zeal and curiosity in his indifference.

After the young woman in the glass cage had held up to him across her counter the pale pink leaflet bearing his friend's name, which he neatly pronounced, he turned away to find himself in the hall facing a lady, who met his eyes as with an intention suddenly determined, and whose features, not freshly young, not markedly fine, but on happy terms with each other, came back to him as from a recent vision.

For a moment, they stood confronted, then the moment placed her. He had noticed her the day before, noticed her at his previous inn, where, again in the hall, she had been briefly engaged with some people of his own ship's company. Nothing had actually passed between them, and he would as little have been able to say what had been the sign of her face for him on [00:08:00] that first occasion as to name the ground of his present recognition.

Recognition at any rate appeared to prevail on her side as well, which would only have added to the mystery. All she now began by saying to him, nevertheless, was that having chance to catch his inquiry, she was moved to ask, by his lead, if it were possibly a question of Mr. Waymarsh of Milrose, Connecticut - Mr. Waymarsh, the American lawyer.

**Jim Phelan:** "Oh, yes."

**Dorothy Hale:** He replied.

**Jim Phelan:** "My very well known friend. He's to meet me here, coming up from Malvern, and I suppose he'd already have arrived. But he doesn't come till later, and I'm relieved not to have kept him. Do you know him?"

**Dorothy Hale:** Strether wound up. It wasn't until after he had spoken that he became aware of how much there had been in him of response, when the tone of her own rejoinder, as well as the play of something more in her face, something more, that is, than its apparently usual restless [00:09:00] light, seemed to notify him.

"I've met him at Milrose, where I used sometimes a good while ago to stay. I had friends there who were friends of his, and I've been at his house. I won't answer for it that he would know me," Strether's new acquaintance pursued, "but I should be delighted to see him. Perhaps," she added, "I shall, for I'm staying over."

She paused while our friend took in these things, and it was as if a good deal of talk had already passed. They even vaguely smiled at it, and Strether presently observed that Mr. Waymarsh would, no doubt, be easily to be seen. This, however, appeared to affect the lady as if she might have advanced too far.

She appeared to have no reserves about anything. "Oh," she said, "he won't care!" - and she immediately thereupon remarked that she believed Strether knew the Munsters, the Munsters being the people he had seen her with at Liverpool. But he didn't, it happened, know the Munsters well [00:10:00] enough to give the case much of a lift, so that they were left together as if over the mere laid table of conversation.

Her qualification of the mentioned connection had rather removed than placed a dish, and there seemed nothing else to serve. Their attitude remained nonetheless, that of not forsaking the board, and the effect of this in turn was to give them the appearance of having accepted each other, with an absence of preliminaries practically complete.

They moved along the hall together, and Strether's companion threw off that the hotel had the advantage of a garden. He was aware by this time of his strange inconsequence. He had shirked the intimacies of the steamer and had muffled the shock of Waymarsh, only to find himself forsaken in this sudden case, both of avoidance and of caution.

He passed under this unsought protection and before he had so much as gone up to his room, into the [00:11:00] garden of the hotel, and at the end of ten minutes had agreed to meet there again as soon as he should have made himself tidy, the dispenser of such good assurances. He wanted to look at the town and they would go forth with look together.

It was almost as if she had been in possession and received him as a guest. Her acquaintance with the place presented her in a manner as a hostess, and Strether had a rueful glance for the lady in the glass cage. It was as if this personage had seen herself instantly superseded. When in a quarter of an hour he came down, what his hostess saw, what she might have taken in with a vision kindly adjusted, was the lean, the slightly loose figure of a man of the middle height, and something more perhaps than the middle age; a man of five and fifty, whose most immediate signs were a marked, bloodless, brownness of face, a thick, dark mustache of characteristically American [00:12:00] cut, growing strong and falling low, a head of hair still abundant but irregularly streaked with gray, and a nose of bold, free prominence, the even line, the high finish, as it might have been called, of which had a certain effect of mitigation.

A perpetual pair of glasses astride of this fine ridge, and a line unusually deep and drawn, the prolonged pen stroke of time accompanying the curve of the mustache from nostril to chin, did something to complete the facial furniture that an attentive observer would have seen catalogued on the spot in the vision of the other party to Strether's appointment.

She waited for him in the garden, the other party, drawing on a pair of singularly fresh, soft and elastic light gloves and presenting herself with a superficial readiness, which, as he approached her over the small, smooth lawn and in the [00:13:00] watery English sunshine, he might, with his rougher preparation, have marked as the model for such an occasion.

She had, this lady, a perfect plain propriety, an expensive subdued suitability that her companion was not free to analyze, but that struck him, so that his consciousness of it was instantly acute as a quality quite new to him. Before reaching her, he stopped on the grass and went through the form of feeling for something, possibly forgotten, in the light overcoat he carried on his arm.

Yet, the essence of the act was no more than the impulse to gain time. Nothing could have been odder than Strether's sense of himself as at that moment, launched in something of which the sense would be quite disconnected from the sense of his past, and which was literally beginning there and now. It had begun, in fact, already upstairs, and before the dressing glass that struck him [00:14:00] as blocking further, so strangely the dimness of the window of his dull bedroom, begun with a sharper survey of the elements of appearance than he had for a long time been moved to make.

He had, during those moments, felt these elements to be not so much to his hand as he should have liked, and then had fallen back on the thought that they were precisely a matter as to which help was supposed to have come from what he was about to do. He was about to go to London, so that hat and necktie might wait.

What had come as straight to him as a ball in a well played game, and caught, moreover, not less neatly, was just the air in the person of his friend, of having seen and chosen the air of achieved possession of those vague qualities and quantities that collectively figured to him as the advantage snatched from lucky chances.

Without pomp or circumstance, certainly, as her original address to him [00:15:00] equally with his own response, had been, he would have sketched to himself his impression of her as:

**Jim Phelan:** "Well, she's more thoroughly civilized."

**Dorothy Hale:** If -

**Jim Phelan:** "More thoroughly civilized than whom?"

**Dorothy Hale:** - would not have been for him a sequel to this remark, that was just by reason of his deep consciousness of the bearing of his comparison. The amusement at all events of a civilization in tensor was what familiar compatriot as she was, with a full tone of the compatriot and the rattling link, not with mystery, but only with dear dyspeptic Waymarsh, she appeared distinctly to promise.

His pause while he felt in his overcoat was positively the pause of confidence and enabled his eyes to make out as much of a case for her in proportion as her own made out for himself. She affected him as almost insolently young, but an [00:16:00] easily carried five and thirty could still do that. She was, however, like himself, marked and wan; only it naturally couldn't have been known to him how much a spectator, looking from one to the other, might have discerned that they had in common. It wouldn't for such a spectator have been altogether insupposable that, each so finely brown and so sharply spare, each confessing so to dents of surface and aids to sight, to a disproportionate nose and a head delicately or grossly grizzled, they might have been brother and sister. On this ground, indeed, there would have been a residuum of difference, such a sister having surely known in respect to such a brother the extremity of separation, and such a brother now feeling in respect to such a sister the extremity of surprise.

Surprise it was true was not, on the other hand, what the eyes of Strether's friend most showed [00:17:00] him, while she gave him, stroking her gloves smoother, the time he appreciated. They had taken hold of him straight away, measuring them up and down as if they knew how, as if he were human material that had already in some sort handled. Their possessor was in truth, it may be communicated, the mistress of a hundred cases or categories, receptacles of the mind, subdivisions for convenience, in which, from a full experience, she pigeonholed her fellow mortals with a hand as free as that of a compositor scattering type. She was as equipped in this particular as Strether was the reverse, and it made an opposition between them, which he might well have shrunk from submitting to, if he had fully suspected it.

So far as he did suspect it, he was, on the contrary, after a short shake of his consciousness, as pleasantly passive as might be. He really had [00:18:00] a sort of sense of what she knew. He had quite the sense that she knew things he didn't, and though this was a concession that in general we found not easy to make to women, he made it now as good humoredly as if it lifted a burden.

His eyes were so quiet behind his eternal nippers that they might almost have been absent without changing his face, which took its expression mainly, at least not its stamp of sensibility, from other sources, surface and grain and form. He joined his guide in an instant, and then felt she had profited still better than he by his having been, for the moments just mentioned, so at the disposal of her intelligence.

She knew even intimate things about him that he hadn't yet told her and perhaps never would. He wasn't unaware that he had told her rather remarkably many for the time, but these were not the real [00:19:00] ones. Some of the real ones, however, precisely, were what she knew. They were to pass again through the hall of the inn to get into the street, and it was here she presently checked him with a question.

"Have you looked up my name?" He could only stop with a laugh.

**Jim Phelan:** "Have you looked up mine?"

**Dorothy Hale:** "Oh dear, yes - as soon as you left me. I went to the office and asked. Hadn't you better do the same?" He wondered.

**Jim Phelan:** " Find out who you are? After the uplifted young woman there has seen us thus scrape acquaintance?"

**Dorothy Hale:** She laughed on her side now at the shade of alarm in his amusement.

"Isn't it a reason the more? If what you're afraid of is the injury to me, my being seen to walk off with a gentleman who has to ask who I am, I assure you I don't in the least mind. Here, however," she continued, "is my card, and as I find there's something else again I have to say at the office, you can just study it during the moment I leave you."

She left him after he had taken from her the [00:20:00] small pasteboard she had extracted from her pocketbook, and he had extracted another from his own to exchange with it before she came back. He read thus the simple designation, "Maria Gostrey", to which was attached, in a corner of the card with a number, the name of a street, presumably in Paris, without other appreciable identity than its foreignness.

He put the card into his waistcoat pocket, keeping his own, meanwhile, in evidence, and as he leaned against the doorpost, he met with a smile of a straying thought what the expanse before the hotel offered to his view. It was positively droll to him that he should already have Maria Gostrey, whoever she was, of which he hadn't really the least idea, in a place of safekeeping.

He had somehow an assurance that he should carefully preserve the little token he had just tucked in. He gazed with unseeing, lingering eyes [00:21:00] as he followed some of the implications of his act, asking himself if he really felt admonished to qualify it as disloyal. It was prompt, it was possibly even premature, and there was little doubt of the expression of face the sight of it would have produced in a certain person; but if it was wrong, why then he had better not have come out at all at this poor man, had he already and even before meeting Waymarsh, arrived. He had believed he had a limit, but the limit had been transcended within 36 hours. By how long a space on the plane of manners or even of morals, moreover, he felt still more sharply after Maria Gostrey had come back to him, and with a gay decisive, "So now!", led him forth into the world. This counted, it struck him as he walked beside her with his overcoat on an arm, his umbrella under another, and his personal pace board a little stiffly retained between forefinger and thumb, [00:22:00] this struck him as really, in comparison, his introduction to things. It hadn't been Europe at Liverpool, no, not even in the dreadful, delightful, impressive streets the night before, to the extent his present companion made it so.

She hadn't yet done that so much as when, after their walk had lasted a few minutes and he had a time to wonder if a couple of sidelong glances from her meant that he had best have put on gloves, she almost pulled him up with an amused challenge. “But why—fondly as it’s so easy to imagine your clinging to it—don’t you put it away? Or if it’s an inconvenience to you to carry it, one’s often glad to have one’s card back. The fortune one spends in them!" Then he saw both that his way of marching with his own prepared tribute had affected her as a deviation in one of those directions he couldn't yet measure, and that she supposed this emblem to be still the [00:23:00] one he had received from her.

He accordingly handed her the card as if in restitution, but as soon as she had it, she felt the difference and, with her eyes on it, stopped short for apology. "I like," she observed, your name."

**Jim Phelan:** "Oh,"

**Dorothy Hale:** he answered,

**Jim Phelan:** "you wouldn't have heard of it!"

**Dorothy Hale:** Yet he had his reasons for not being sure that she perhaps might. Ah, it was but too visible.

She read it over again as one who had never seen it. "Mr. Lewis Lambert Strether," she sounded it almost as freely as for any stranger. She repeated, however, that she liked it, "particularly the Lewis Lambert. It's the name of a novel of Balzac's."

**Jim Phelan:** "Oh, I know that,"

**Dorothy Hale:** ,said Strether. "But the novel's an awfully bad one."

**Jim Phelan:** "I know that too."

**Dorothy Hale:** Strether smiled. To which he added with an irrelevance that was only superficial:[00:24:00]

**Jim Phelan:** "I come from Woollett, Massachusetts."

**Dorothy Hale:** It made her for some reason, the irrelevance or whatever, laugh. Balzac had described many cities, but he hadn't described Woollett, Massachusetts. "You say that," she returned, "as if you wanted one immediately to know the worst."

**Jim Phelan:** "Oh, I think it's a thing that you must already have made out. I feel it so that I certainly must look it, speak it, and as people say there, act it. It sticks out of me, and you knew surely for yourself as soon as you looked at me."

**Dorothy Hale:** "The worst, you mean?"

**Jim Phelan:** "Well, the fact of where I come from. There, at any rate, it is, so that you won't be able, if anything happens, to say I've not been straight with you."

**Dorothy Hale:** “I see”—and Miss Gostrey looked really interested in the point he had made. "But what do you think of as happening?" Though he [00:25:00] wasn't shy, which was rather anomalous, Strether gazed about without meeting her eyes, a motion that was with him in talk, yet of which his words often seemed not at all the effect.

**Jim Phelan:** "Why that you should find me too hopeless."

**Dorothy Hale:** With which they walked on again together while she answered as they went that the most hopeless of her country folk were in general precisely those she liked best. All sorts of other pleasant small things, small things that were yet large for him, flowered in the air of the occasion, but the bearing of the occasion itself on matters still remote concerns us too closely to permit us to multiply our illustrations. Two or three, however, in truth, we should perhaps regret to lose The torturous wall, girdle long since snapped of the little swollen city, half held in place by careful civic hands, wanders in narrow file between [00:26:00] parapets, smoothed by peaceful generations, pausing here and there for a dismantled gate or a bridged gap, with rises and drops, steps up and steps down, queer twists, queer contacts, peeps into homely streets and under the brows of gables, views of cathedral tower and waterside fields of huddled English town and ordered English country.

Too deep, almost for words, was the delight of these things to Strether, yet as deeply mixed with it were certain images of his inward picture. He had trod this walk in the far off time at twenty five, but that, instead of spoiling it, only enriched it for present feeling and marked his renewal as a thing substantial enough to share.

It was with Waymarsh he should have shared it, and he was now accordingly taking from him something that was his due. He looked repeatedly at his [00:27:00] watch, and when he had done so for the fifth time, Miss Gostrey took him up. “You’re doing something that you think not right.” It so touched the place that he quite changed color and his laugh grew almost awkward.

**Jim Phelan:** "Am I enjoying it as much as that?"

**Dorothy Hale:** “You’re not enjoying it, I think, so much as you ought.”

**Jim Phelan:** "I see."

**Dorothy Hale:** He appeared thoughtfully to agree.

**Jim Phelan:** "Great is my privilege."

**Dorothy Hale:** "Oh, it's not your privilege. It has nothing to do with me. It has to do with yourself. Your failure's general."

**Jim Phelan:** "Ah, there you are."

**Dorothy Hale:** He laughed.

**Jim Phelan:** "It's the failure of Woollett. That's general."

**Dorothy Hale:** "The failure to enjoy," Miss Gostrey explained, "is what I mean."

**Jim Phelan:** “Precisely. Woollett isn’t sure it ought to enjoy. If it were it would. But it hasn’t, poor thing, any one to show it how. It’s not like me. I have somebody.”

**Dorothy Hale:** They had stopped in the afternoon [00:28:00] sunshine, constantly pausing in their stroll for the sharper sense of what they saw, and Strether rested on one of the high sides of the old stony groove of the little rampart.

He leaned back on the support with his face to the tower of the cathedral, now admirably commanded by their station, the high red brown mass, square and subordinately spired and crocketed, retouched and restored, but charming to his long sealed eyes and with the first swallows of the year, weaving their flight all around it.

Miss Gostrey lingered near him full of an air, to which she more and more justified her right of understanding the effect of things. She quite concurred. “You’ve indeed somebody.” And she added: “I wish you would let me show you how!”

**Jim Phelan:** "Oh, I'm afraid of you!"

**Dorothy Hale:** He cheerfully pleaded. She kept on him a moment through her glasses and through his own, a certain pleasant pointedness.

 “Ah no, you’re not! [00:29:00] You’re not in the least, thank goodness! If you had been we shouldn’t so soon have found ourselves here together. I think," she comfortably concluded, "you trust me."

**Jim Phelan:** “I think I do!—but that’s exactly what I'm afraid of. I shouldn't mind if I didn't. It's falling thus in twenty minutes, so utterly into your hands.

I dare say it's the sort of thing you're thoroughly familiar with, but nothing more extraordinary has ever happened to me.

**Dorothy Hale:** She watched him with all her kindness. “That means simply that you’ve recognised me—which is rather beautiful and rare. You see what I am." As on this, however, he protested with a good humored head shake, a resignation of any such claim.

She had a moment of explanation. “If you’ll only come on further as you have come you’ll at any rate make out. My own fate has been too many for me, and I've succumbed to it. I’m a [00:30:00] general guide—to ‘Europe,’ don’t you know? I wait for people, I put them through, I pick them up, I set them down. I’m a sort of superior ‘courier-maid.’ I’m a companion at large. I take people, as I’ve told you, about. I never sought it—it has come to me. It has been my fate, and one's fate one accepts. It's a dreadful thing to have to say in so wicked a world, but I verily believe, such as you see me, there's nothing I don't know. I know all the shops and the prices, but I know worse things still.

I bear on my back the huge load of our national consciousness, or, in other words—for it comes to that—of our nation itself. Of what is our nation composed but of the men and women individually on my shoulders? I don't do it, you know, for any particular advantage. I don’t do it, for instance—some people do, you know—for money.”

Strether could only listen and wonder and weigh his chance.

**Jim Phelan:** "And yet, affected as you are then to so many of your [00:31:00] clients, you can scarcely be said to do it for love."

**Dorothy Hale:** He waited a moment.

**Jim Phelan:** "How do we reward you?"

**Dorothy Hale:** She had her own hesitation, but “You don’t!” she finally returned, setting him again in motion. They went on, but in a few minutes, though while still thinking over what she had said, he once more took out his watch, mechanically, unconsciously, and as if made nervous by the mere exhilaration of what struck him as her strange and cynical wit.

He looked at the hour without seeing it, and then, on something again said by his companion, had another pause. "You're really in terror of him." He smiled a smile that he almost felt to be sickly.

**Jim Phelan:** "Now you can see why I'm afraid of you."

**Dorothy Hale:** “Because I’ve such illuminations? Why they’re all for your help! It’s what I told you,” she added, “just now. You feel as if this were wrong.” He fell back [00:32:00] once more, settling himself against the parapet as if to hear more about it.

**Jim Phelan:** "Then get me out!"

**Dorothy Hale:** Her face fairly brightened for the joy of the appeal, but as if it were a question of immediate action, she visibly considered. “Out of waiting for him?—of seeing him at all?”

**Jim Phelan:** “Oh no—not that,”

**Dorothy Hale:** said poor Strother looking grave.

**Jim Phelan:** “I’ve got to wait for him—and I want very much to see him. But out of the terror. You did put your finger on it a few minutes ago. It's general, but avails itself of particular occasions. That's what it's doing for me now. I’m always considering something else; something else, I mean, than the thing of the moment. The obsession of the other thing is the terror. I'm considering at present, for instance, something else than you."

**Dorothy Hale:** She listened with charming earnestness. “Oh you oughtn’t to do that!”

**Jim Phelan:** “It’s what I admit. Make it then [00:33:00] impossible.”

**Dorothy Hale:** She continued to think. “Is it really an ‘order’ from you?—that I shall take the job? Will you give yourself up?” Poor Strether heaved his sigh.

**Jim Phelan:** “If I only could! But that’s the deuce of it—that I never can. No—I can’t.”

**Dorothy Hale:** She wasn't, however, discouraged. "But you want to, at least?"

**Jim Phelan:** "Oh, unspeakably!"

**Dorothy Hale:** “Ah then, if you’ll try!”—and she took over the job, as she had called it, on the spot.

“Trust me!” she exclaimed, and the action of this, as they retraced their steps, was presently to make him pass his hand into her arm in the manner of a benign, dependent paternal old person who wishes to be “nice” to a younger one. If he drew it out again indeed as they approached the inn this may have been because, after more talk had passed between them, the relation of age, or at least of experience—which, for that matter, had already played to and [00:34:00] fro with some freedom— affected him as incurring a readjustment. It was at all events perhaps lucky that they arrived in sufficiently separate fashion within range of the hotel door. The young lady they had left in the glass cage watched as if she had come to await them on the threshold.

At her side stood a person equally interested, by his attitude, in their return, and the effect of the sight of whom was instantly to determine for Strether another of those responsive arrests that we've had so repeatedly to note. He left it to Miss Gostrey to name, with the fine full bravado as it almost struck him, of her “Mr. Waymarsh!” what was to have been, what— he more than ever felt as his short stare of suspended welcome took things in—would have been, but for herself, his doom. It was already upon him even at that distance—Mr. [00:35:00] Waymarsh was for his part joyless. End of chapter one.

**Jim Phelan:** Great, Dory. Thank you. I think you, you underestimated your abilities.

You're, you're an excellent reader.

**Dorothy Hale:** Thank you. I may have, I feel I put too much enthusiasm into it because I love it so much.

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah, no, I think that's, you know. It's not possible to be too enthusiastic about it. But, not everyone is, right?

**Dorothy Hale:** Exactly.

**Jim Phelan:** So, maybe we'll start there, with James' reputation as being so difficult and off putting for so many.

**Dorothy Hale:** Yes. Well, you know, that's why when you invited me to think about this project, I really wanted to choose something from James because his difficulty is so demanding and so off putting too many readers, and I know I myself have really profited from reading critics who came before me and, being initiated, as it were, in the Jamesian style, and the more I learned about the categories of [00:36:00] style and the categories of narrative that are at play in James's work, the more I appreciate, what his accomplishment is. So, I thought maybe we could talk more about that today.

**Jim Phelan:** Sure, yeah. So, you know, one of the things that, you know, we could get into maybe is that there are these, sort of narrative resources we could say that he's drawing on, right? And obviously one of them is his, you know, the complexity of the narration. And, and here I think there's a couple of things about it, there's a certain, you know, complexity of syntax at the sense level. But even more than that, and maybe we could start here, there's a complexity of a kind of layering of perspectives and voices and so on.

So, you know, maybe we could get into some of the ways in which you see that playing out in this chapter.

**Dorothy Hale:** Yeah, absolutely. And, and certainly, the Jamesian point of view is perhaps the signature effect. And of course, you know, as you well [00:37:00] know, and, and we've discussed, it's so influential for modernists who follow James and, again, even into our, current moment.

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah, and you know, Percy Lubbock and others pick it up and say, okay, this is the way to do it, you know, and, and becomes a kind of a technique and a way of telling that everybody seems to have to respond to in some way or other.

**Dorothy Hale:** Right. And it carries with it then as the tradition develops and continues the Jamesian tradition of point of view, a number of values that we can talk about later. But first, let's, as you suggest, let's try to describe how it works, right? Because, it, it's very subtle, I think, and one of the effects is that James most wants is that we're in Strether's consciousness, that we're seeing the action from Strether's point of view.

But what does that mean exactly, right? Why didn't he just use a first person narrator? And that, of course, is something that [00:38:00] James explicitly addresses in his preface to *The Ambassadors*, because he felt that could have been an option. But as he says in the preface, he didn't want the sheer fluidity of self revelation.

He didn't want an "I" perspective addressed to somebody, right? That was then had a rhetorical confine or context.

**Jim Phelan:** Right, right.

**Dorothy Hale:** That's why he developed this third person way of representing consciousness, right? So we still have the narrator and we have the narrator in play and there are certain moments we could look at where the narrator offers his own perspective or adjustment to what's happening, and then there are other effects where we feel that Strether is in his own moment, processing the consequences and the meaning of what's happening, reflecting on it.

**Jim Phelan:** Right. I mean, the double, the doubleness of a narrator and a center of consciousness, right, really is, [00:39:00] in some ways, more flexible than the straight character narrator, right?

I mean, the character narrator addressing a particular narratee, or even if it's a generalized narratee, you get a sense of a, kind of a strict constraint of a rhetorical, you know, telling situation. And with what James does here, is he gets a lot of the advantages of that because of the way he can take us inside Strether's thoughts and even his, give us his voice, right, his language. Like, you know, old dear Waymarsh, or dear old Waymarsh, right? That's, that's Strether, but then we also get, you know, the narrator who can step out of that and address his generalized narratee. And it's interesting, I think, that he gives us, he has the narrator say "I" in the first paragraph, right?

So it's almost as if he... I think he wrote the preface after, but it's almost like he's saying, "See?" You know, if you come to it, you read the [00:40:00] preface and then you, you come to the first paragraph, you say, oh, okay, yeah.

**Dorothy Hale:** Yeah, and then the way James, in this particular work, he does it differently in other works, but in this particular work, the way he deliberately develops a kind of consonance between the narrator and the character. So yes, we get the inflection of Lambert Strether's thinking and diction and idiom, but we note that it's actually shared with the narrator. There is, you know, a strong distinction between the two, right? And one of the effects of this, it seems to me is that a certain kind of way of taking the world and judging it and reflecting and thinking about its meaning is actually being modeled for us in a very complex and fascinating way.

So, the point is that I would want to say that the signature effects, stylistic effects [00:41:00] of Jamesian difficulty aren't just there, you know, for the sake of tour de force, you know, representation, formal representation, but are always being pulled back for the thematic value, and that kind of complete coherence is what makes me so satisfied when I read James.

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah, I like that very much because it also, it adds another layer to the thinking about, you know, what we might just technically describe as free indirect discourse, right? And we can say, okay, so here's the narrator, you know, giving the indirect thought, or indirectly giving the thought of, of Strether, but what you're pointing out is the way in which, okay, the blending is not just, you know, not the sort of standard thing of narrator characters, because narrator character are themselves so similar in the way they you know, process the world, so the free indirect discourse is even more like going, we can't untangle this, right?

**Dorothy Hale:** And, and I... yes, I think that's exactly right. And then, when you [00:42:00] do get those distinctions, when the narrator pulls back for a minute, and when he says something like, you know, poor Strether, he suffered from a double consciousness, let me just tell you right off the bat.

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah, right, right.

**Dorothy Hale:** And makes a couple of other generalizations about Strether in the chapter.

But, when he does that, we feel that it's in the spirit of what Strether might say, not somebody else.

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah.

**Dorothy Hale:** And I think that, again, this gets actively modeled for us in the action of the scene as well. So, that incredibly dense kind of, Baroque almost, description of Strether pausing, right?

So, there's nothing really that's happening in the action, we stop, he's stopping for a moment and looking at his overcoat pocket, as a pretense. And then, we have two or three pages of mirrored... of apprehension, mirrored apprehension, what Strether thinks of Maria, what Maria thinks of Strether, and with the narrator on top of it saying, you know, if one were [00:43:00] watching Maria attentively, one would see that she thought this about Strether.

So, do you see you have the positioning of the narrator as a consonant, you know, force.

**Jim Phelan:** And it gets that flex- you know, again, goes back to the flexibility of this technique because he can, you know, he can leave Strether, not only for himself, but he can also then, you know, reveal about, reveal things about Maria, what she's thinking, and so on. And I think, you know, one of the, one of the important effects of that is, What that means for us as readers, right?

So, so often we are sort of limited to Strether, but not always, right? And we get these kinds of things where James uses the narrator to tell us more than Strether seems to be, you know, fully conscious of or aware of in the moment.

**Dorothy Hale:** And, and crucial to that effect is the gentle irony here, right?

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah.

**Dorothy Hale:** So that's a sign of the distance that the narrator has, [00:44:00] that third person perspective that he has on Strether. But I come back to that phrase from that tour de force scene I was just describing, when the narrator says, this is what Maria might have seen with a vision, quote unquote, kindly adjusted, and I love that because the narrator can be ironic, right? You don't, to be kind, it raises the question, what does it mean to be kind? What does it mean to be generous to somebody in apprehending them, to responding to them, right? That's one of the themes of this chapter and the, and the novel as a whole, and to be kind doesn't necessarily mean just to be empathetic or sympathetic or, you know, always justifying the other person. You can be totally ironic, you can see the person's limits, you can see that this is a character who's fussy, who, you know, is hesitant, who, has a kind of a little bit of an inferiority complex, right?

You can see all those things, and yet you can kindly, you know, embrace those and not just, you know, dismiss them.

**Jim Phelan:** Right, rather than [00:45:00] taking them as, okay, well, I'm going to be superior because of that, or just continue to mock or whatever.

**Dorothy Hale:** Yeah, exactly. So the degree of irony, I think, is, again, in terms of the narrator character relationship.

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah, and I think, I mean, just to go a little further in the same direction, I think it's like, you know, enacting in the narration, right, the kind of thing that he's recommending, sort of as an ethical stance, right? I mean, just that, I'll show you how it... uh, what it means to, you know... even before, I'll show you what it means, how complex it is to have your vision, you know, kindly adjusted.

How many things that you can take in, and yet, then, you know, treat with this kind of kindness or gentle irony or, you know, all these things.

**Dorothy Hale:** Absolutely. Yeah, no, I think that you put it extremely well.

**Jim Phelan:** And this gets back to the point about the difficulty, right? It's not, you know, the point you were making, right, it's [00:46:00] not difficulty for its own sake or, or, you know, look, watch me do all this stuff, it's like, got a purpose here and I'm trying to do something with my audience.

**Dorothy Hale:** Yeah. And then, so that after we get that established, which to me is the germ, you know, that the, sort of the main focus, the signature of the paragraph... I mean of the chapter, excuse me- once we get that in our sights, then we still need to deal with all the other kind of Jamesian signature syntactical moves.

And some of those, again, famous, right, that other critics have, you know, so usefully identified for us, right? Anyone who works on James knows this. But nonetheless, the complexities and interest of them bear repeating, and so, in addition to point of view, we have syntax that stress negation, syntax that are couched in the hypothetical, and syntax that establish something that's a [00:47:00] polarized relation and then complicate that.

I mean, that's just to say three of the things we can say.

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah, why don't we just work through a few examples of, of those.

**Dorothy Hale:** Yeah, let, let's look at that but let me just connect it to the irony thing, the gentle irony, just because I think you have this project, which is formed as a question, as you just said.

How do you respond to someone with a vision kindly adjusted, how do you do that? Well, first of all, you try this: one, to have a certain kind of openness and lack of satire. But then more difficulties ensue, right? Because you're not sure that you're judging correctly, and I think James in those syntactical moves that I just mentioned really foregrounds the difficulty of knowing whether you're right or not, and whether you made a guess and what the risks are of that.

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah, great. Yeah, so maybe we could just, you know, do a few examples, right?

**Dorothy Hale:** Yeah.

**Jim Phelan:** Think [00:48:00] about the negation.

**Dorothy Hale:** Yeah, the negation is all over and, as you know, you and I were talking about the other day, the Ian Watt essay from long ago does an excellent job of talking about that in the first paragraph of the chapter.

So, we could see things just in that first paragraph, which again, training us right from the start where we're told that Strether is not wholly disconcerned, right? And he's not absolutely, right, you know, another formulation. Later we're told that Maria Gostrey has no reserves, right?

So, we could talk a little bit about, you know, what, why that? Why, why phrase that in the negative?

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah. I mean, I think, I mean, just not wholly disconcerted is, is a good one to, to think about, right? Because, he's a, you know, again, we, we'd read a little bit more and we'd realize, okay, he's sort of expecting that Waymarsh would be there, and then he's a little [00:49:00] surprised. Okay, he's not, and then we get the reaction, right: not wholly disconcerted.. .

**Dorothy Hale:** And it gets that ambivalence in, right?

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah.

**Dorothy Hale:** That is going to be a double consciousness, that...

**Jim Phelan:** Exactly right.

**Dorothy Hale:** Yeah. That and, and so again, it's that complexity and thickness of emotional response, right? He's a little disconcerted, you know, he's supposed to see Waymarsh, but he's not wholly disconcerted.

**Jim Phelan:** He's not, yeah, he can't go all the way to, oh, he's pleasantly surprised, right? Which, you know, the part of him is pleasantly surprised, but when, you know, he, but he also does want to see Waymarsh.

I mean, he does, you know, he repeats that to Maria later and so on.

**Dorothy Hale:** Yes.

**Jim Phelan:** So, so it gives that kind of, you know, you're saying like the fine kind of discrimination that the negation kind of allows.

**Dorothy Hale:** Yes.

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah.

**Dorothy Hale:** Yeah. And it also allows for the complexity of something, right, and fine distinction, but it also shows what the expectation is, you know, I love that. You know, [00:50:00] that so the positive state would be that he was disconcerted, right? And then it's taking something that you're assuming that you know about, like, oh, Europe, I'm revisiting Europe, but oh, now there's Maria Gostrey, you know, that's something new, right?

Something that you have an assumption about, and then you kind of shade it rather than, you know, having a new term for it right off the bat.

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah, yeah. And then, you know, one of the nice points that Watt makes about the negation is that we might not initially think this, but it heightens the idea of the subjectivity, right?

Because it's, you know, sort of... just picking up on what you were saying there, this is an internal operation, right, that's being, uh, you know, communicated, right? And it's the operation of the mind, right? And, you know, Watt's line is something like, you know, there are no negations in nature, but only in the human consciousness, right?

**Dorothy Hale:** Yeah, that's great. I love that line. And then he also points out, um, in terms of, you know, [00:51:00] the time and space of the narration, right? So it's worthwhile to state this, that by setting things up through these syntactical moves that, stress the operation of consciousness, that James is deliberately backgrounding or fading out more objective sources of reference, right?

So you wouldn't say, oh, you know, like, he's confounding expectations that would necessarily come from situating this encounter in a specific place, under specific circumstances. I said that too elaborately, but, what I mean is that, you know, what the whole novel is about, you know, and what James talks about in the preface is that once he decided to set it in Europe, you know, so what does this mean in terms of the new, the new experience that will come to this man from Woollett?

He said, one of the things I had to deal with is the, you know, the cliche [00:52:00] that when you go to Paris, bad things happen to you and you'll get, you know, corrupted.

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah.

**Dorothy Hale:** And that's, again, a very Jamesian move that we even see in this first chapter, where he'll take something that seems banal and then he'll load a possible significance onto it.

He says, Strether says to Maria, for instance, you know, he'll say, nothing more extraordinary has ever happened to me. Now, they're making just pleasantries, and anyone reading the chapter is going to think that that's funny and, you know, not true, it's a hyperbole. But in some ways, as we go forward, it's going to be true, right?

So again, it's the revitalization of the banal that you can, you know, see new possibilities in it, and a weightier truth might prevail.

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah, yeah, no, that's good. And actually, maybe that makes a good segway to talking a little bit about the dialogue, right?

**Dorothy Hale:** Yes, yeah.

**Jim Phelan:** Which is, sort of carries a lot [00:53:00] of, sort of the action of this.

I mean, we obviously have a lot of, we could say the... there's internal action, in all the processing going on. But in terms of external action, you know, it's just, oh, they go for a walk, right? And they talk, right? But that talk is really loaded, right?

**Dorothy Hale:** Absolutely. And again, in so many different registers. So again, this is, you know, one, a couple of things to say. One: what I love about James and when I teach this novel, my students say, you know, is he flirting with her, you know, and they're kind of appalled like, here's a guy from Woollett, Mass who's, you know, in the first few minutes is, you know, seems insecure or punctilious, both of those things, and he's flirting with her right off the bat.

**Jim Phelan:** Right, right.

**Dorothy Hale:** And they always like to say, this is what I meant about the objective reference, the students like to say- would, would that be permitted back then? As if, you know, there [00:54:00] was something essential about a time and place and the banners, you know, came from that. And you can see in Maria's response to Strether, you know, she'll say anything, right?

She's, you know, according to Strether, she, she has no constraints. So you get this feeling that, in the dialogue, it's working, first of all, at different levels, you know, that there's kind of a safety to it, that it seems so playful between them that it might not mean anything at all. But, what the narrator, this gets us back to the narrator, what he keeps emphasizing is that something profound is happening right here.

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah.

**Dorothy Hale:** So it's, it's true and not, you know, not true. That's like, kind of a classic Jamesian move to make.

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah. You know, the idea that Strether had a limit, he thought he had a limit, right? And he's now past it in 20 minutes.

**Dorothy Hale:** Right, and could I say that also touches on the other thing that I love so much about this chapter and about James, which is the handling of time.

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah.

**Dorothy Hale:** So, as you said, you know, in terms of [00:55:00] the actual action, we could clock this, you know, the whole thing. He did go up to his room and, you know, look at him. So, you know, that added some time, but the time with Maria, we have two different conversations, you know, very brief, and yet, because we're in Strether's consciousness and he's going thinking backward about the ship, and thinking forward, like, I'm supposed to go to London and get that hat, and analyzing and discriminating his experience as it's unfolding, even though the objective action happens very quickly, you feel, I feel as a reader completely suspended in time. And that's the point that Watt makes as well, but I think he says really persuasively that the reader becomes disconnected from time and space,

location in the narrative and we can kind of occupy the thickness and, and duration of the mental experience.

**Jim Phelan:** Right. Yeah. And, and, but yet at the same time, if we want to, you know, reread, [00:56:00] we can say, Oh, James has, he's got this all planned out, right? You know, he has his temporal map, that's underlying this performance in which the temporality becomes suspended in a way.

**Dorothy Hale:** Yes, and very much indicated by the punchline at the end of the chapter, and I love those Jamesian punchline, right? Waymarsh had no joy or was joyless, whereas Maria was full of joy. So, he gives us those zingers and we feel that narrative control from James and that, that can get us into, well, I'll just signal this, some people, you know, rightly point out that we've talked about the consonants of the narrative voice, but people sometimes rightly point out that James, in other ways, narratively, in his composition and his control over the narrative, seems almost too much in control that he, using his characters and their dialogue for a formal purpose, [00:57:00] for aesthetic unity that seems almost to violate the character's autonomy.

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah. So what I would talk about is sort of the mimetic thematic relations like that, that this charge would be that he, the synthetic, even though it's, you know, presented as this mimetic thing, the synthetic is actually taking over and confining the, you know, the mimetic, representation of the characters, right?

Yeah, so, I mean, I think that's another interesting thing to get at in the way in which, you know, it seems to me that he's really good at both, right? I mean, that he makes it work, right? I mean, I feel like these are, you know, living beings, right, not puppets, you know, like Thackery puppets. I don't know, what's your take?

**Dorothy Hale:** Yes, well, no, that to me gets at, you know, in terms of the project that I took on and the novel on the new ethics. That's at the heart of, of one of the theoretical things that interests me that's an inheritance from James. And it's the both and,[00:58:00]

and the way I would put it, you know, just to tweak what you said is he is so expert at making the characters seem autonomous and as if they should have, you know, to use an expression that someone like Faulkner and other people will pick up on, free will, they seem so individual and so autonomous that then his elaborate composition and narrative effects that you were just mentioning, seems a violation of the very characters that he's created.

I think that that's one of the James ethical narrative dilemmas or structures, let me put it that way, that other writers after him inherit and try to work out and ameliorate.

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah, I mean, do you see, how do you see it working in this chapter? I mean, there's a lot of things going on, right, we can think about, you know, sort of synthetically, right?

He's, he's setting things up, this is the, you know, Strether's first question, right, the [00:59:00] first three sentences are gonna, that's gonna have a, a kind of residence, and this is Strether, he's coming over here, he's going to be different, he's going to be open, he's got to find out all this kind of stuff, right?

We were talking the other day, we mentioned it's like Hamlet, you know, the who's there of Hamlet, a kind of a keynote for the whole thing, right? So you could say, well that's, you know, that's synthetic, and maybe it's overdone. I don't know, what do you think?

**Dorothy Hale:** First of all, I would look at two things.

The first thing I would look at is the Jamesian repetition, the turn of the screw, to use another, you know, phrase of his. Notice how everything is paralleled, right? It's a repetition with a difference. Even to the point, one of my favorite details of this chapter is the woman in the glass cage, right? The innkeeper, you know, or whatever she is.

She's even paralleled with Maria, right? So, you know, everything is connected to everything else and is anticipating the larger thematics and, and outcomes later. So we [01:00:00] have Strether responding to Maria and having guilt about that because, he is in fact engaged, to someone named Mrs. Newsome back in Woolett.

**Jim Phelan:** Right. Who has a kind of shadowy presence in this, in this chapter, right? I mean, that, you know, the thinking.

**Dorothy Hale:** When he breaks off and he says, you know, if it wouldn't have been that he would have had to compare Maria to whom, he has Mrs. Newsom in mind, right? So that triangle is going to be played out later in the novel with Chad Newsom and Madame de Vionnet and, Amy Pocock, and then even with Strether, with not only Mrs. Newsom and Maria, but then Maria, Strether, and Madame de Vionnet, because Strether falls for Madame de Vionnet. So, but at the very beginning we have the lady in the glass cage being superseded, is the word, by Maria Gostrey. I mean, so that kind of control, on the one hand, we see.

**Jim Phelan:** And then we have, I [01:01:00] mean, also pretty clearly, we have the triangulation of Waymarsh and Strether and Maria, right?

Like, he's feeling partly, he's feeling a little guilty, like, I should be taking this walk with Waymarsh, right?

**Dorothy Hale:** Absolutely. So, all these triangles are very systematically set in motion. So, to the degree that we feel that, you know, that we feel that perfect narrative control- I think that's the opposite of Lambert Strether having the value, and the value that's being thematized here of letting yourself go, of being open, of seeing what will happen, right?

If that's the value, that's the way you change and transform and transcend your limits, as it were, if that's the value of character, then we have the aesthetic, machine almost working, you know, not allowing that kind of, vulnerability whatsoever.

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah. I think, too, maybe we could, you know, go back to one of the points you made [01:02:00] earlier and, and could tie it to some of this. Where, you know, one of the, in thinking about Maria, because one of the traditional ways to begin thinking about it, which is, would be connected to a kind of idea of James as synthetic designer, is the kind of opposition between Woollett and Europe, right?

The Puritans and the more free living, especially when they get to Paris, right? And yet, so here's Maria, how did she complicate that in a way, right?

**Dorothy Hale:** Yeah. Well, um, you know, and again, this is, this would for me, take us back to what we were talking about in terms of, Jamesian syntax.

So if we looked at negation, if we've looked at repetition, I love that Maria is, of course, American, right?

**Jim Phelan:** Mm-Hmm , right.

**Dorothy Hale:** And so then you get the shading and complication, as in not wholly disconcerted, because we have to think of Maria as both the [01:03:00] note of Europe that Strether feels, Oh, now her companionship has made me feel I'm in a more civilized world, but she's also American.

So he hasn't, in fact, really gotten to Europe yet, technically. So then we're asked to think about what are the qualities of Europe? What are the things that, you know, that are pleasing him and that seems so new to him? And then that opens the possibility of change and transformation and what degree, you know, where do you get qualities once you open yourself up?

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah, right. And so what looks like a stark sort of binary becomes, again, layered in the way that James layers everything.

**Dorothy Hale:** Exactly. And again, it's a version of that negation, because if you set up two things that are different, America and Europe, but then you start saying, well, you know, they're similar and different in this way.

**Jim Phelan:** Not wholly American, not wholly European, sort of.

**Dorothy Hale:** Yes, yeah, and it's interesting because it's hard to find absolutely new terms, do you see? [01:04:00] That, that's what I think is really important, and it goes back to that idea that I think James is working on that we come into a situation with preconceived notions.

And I, I don't know if at this point it would make sense for me to bring in the James Baldwin monster.

**Jim Phelan:** Yes, yes. Yeah, well, yes. Go ahead. Yeah, because that, that'll get it some more of the ethical that we've been talking about, but maybe we could center that even further. Yeah.

**Dorothy Hale:** Yeah, yeah. So, when I teach Henry James, when I teach *The Ambassadors* in particular,

I teach it along with a interview by James Baldwin from 1986. And my students are always shocked, and, you know, I understand why, to learn that Baldwin admired Henry James to the point of calling him his stylistic master. And aside from what he learned from James about style, he says he also praises James [01:05:00] for, and especially *The Ambassadors* for the ethical vision that James has.

And specifically Baldwin says in this 1986 interview that "*The Ambassadors* represents american identity in the sense of the failure of Americans to see," and this is his phrase, " through to the reality of others." Americans fail to see through to the reality of others. And he glosses this: "Woollett must learn to see Madame de Vionnet."

So what he means by that is that the Puritan sensibility, Strether comes to Europe without a question that Chad has fallen prey to a woman of the streets, right, vulgar, corrupt woman, right? He has these stereotypes of gender and sexuality that he's convinced about. And as Baldwin points out, the whole point of the novel is that Strether has to change his mind about Madame de [01:06:00] Vionnet.

And Baldwin adds, you know, " It's the same way that Americans don't see me when they look at me." So he explicitly makes the comparison of the gendered, you know, subalter to the racial outcast. So, you know, once you start thinking about that, and that value system in terms of *The Ambassadors*, then I think that ethics of otherness becomes very important, both in terms of character relations and also in terms of the narrative stance that we were talking about.

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah. No, that's really good. And, you know, and we can, I think we can see it, it's all starting right here, in this chapter and, you know, and we don't, didn't read the whole novel or, you know, but just to think about, well, you know, what does it mean for Strether to see Madame de Vionnet, and what does it mean for him. It has real consequences, right?

He comes, he's engaged, by the end of the novel, you know, that's over, right? And then Maria offers [01:07:00] herself, right? And he says, no, right? I mean, you know, we might talk about that a little bit in relationship to Baldwin and, and just anything else you want to bring in, yeah?

**Dorothy Hale:** Yeah. Well, well, first of all, Baldwin absolutely addresses that, and he says two things about that in his interpretation. He says, "To live costs something, you must pay the price to live." So what he means by living is that kind of risk, is that kind of openness, is that kind of vulnerability, like letting yourself go, drifting, the world is all before me, you know.

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah. And it picks up on what, you know, James highlights in the preface about Strether's speech to Little about, about living, right?

**Dorothy Hale:** Yes.

**Jim Phelan:** But Baldwin is now taking it in this other direction or adding something to it.

**Dorothy Hale:** And he also, by the way, he makes a comparison with *Giovanni's Room*, where he says the main character there, David, refuses to [01:08:00] live, right, he goes back to his shell, he protects himself. So, to live costs something and you must pay the price. And then he also says, I didn't, I don't have a quote for this, but he says, you must go back to the land, the people that produced you. So Baldwin takes that upon himself as well, it's kind of very complicated situation, I think, but it's a way of him understanding the end that, that Strether to have really lived is to have risked, and to have risked is to have changed and that you're not supposed to get anything material from that, you're supposed to have paid the price of your experience and go back to the people that produced you and kind of face the music.

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah, well, I mean, you know, maybe giving Baldwin the last word is a good move.

Yeah. But, let me, let me just say, anything else that you'd like to get to that we didn't?

**Dorothy Hale:** No, I mean, I think we've, talked about, all the things that are most important to me, and I just hope that we've been [01:09:00] able to convey how tightly knit the whole, first chapter is, and that what might seem off putting or perplexing or you get lost, that's also part of the experience, right? That James wants us to be unmoored, wants to experience that we don't know how to read it, and then have to learn, and he's helping to train us.

**Jim Phelan:** Yeah. Terrific. Okay. Thank you so much, Dory. This was great.

**Dorothy Hale:** Oh, thank you.

**Jim Phelan:** I really had a lot of fun.

**Dorothy Hale:** So did I. It was really a pleasure. Thank you so much for the opportunity, Jim.

**Jim Phelan:** Okay, good. I want to thank our listeners, and say we'd appreciate your feedback, which you can send to us at email address, projectnarrative@osu.edu, or on the Project Narrative Facebook page, or to our Twitter account, which is @PNOhioState. And I'll just end by saying you can find more than two dozen additional episodes of the Project Narrative Podcast at our website or on Apple Podcasts. [01:10:00]