



PSYCHOLOGICAL REALISM IN *THE WINGS OF THE DOVE* BY HENRY JAMES: POINT OF VIEW AND THE CHARACTERS KATE CROY AND MILLY THEALE



REALISMO PSICOLÓGICO EM *THE WINGS OF THE DOVE* DE HENRY JAMES: PONTO DE VISTA E OS PERSONAGENS KATE CROY E MILLY THEALE

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Abstract

Henry James is considered to be one of the greatest American writers as his literary production contributed to the consolidation of a truly American literature. Moreover, James was an influent literary critic. His studies of the art of fiction and, especially, the use of point of view entitled him to be called 'the master' by other writers. In this sense, this study discusses the use of point of view in one of James's most acclaimed novels: *The Wings of the Dove*. More

specifically, two main characters, Kate Croy and Milly Theale, are analyzed in order to understand how James's use of point of view built the comprehension of these characters.

Resumo

Henry James é considerado um dos maiores escritores norte-americanos já que sua produção literária contribuiu para a consolidação de uma literatura genuinamente americana. Além disso, James foi um influente crítico literário. Seus estudos a respeito da arte da ficção e, sobretudo, o uso do foco narrativo fizeram com que outros escritores o chamassem de o 'mestre'. Assim, este estudo discute o uso do foco narrativo em um dos romances mais aclamados do autor: *The Wings of the Dove*. Mais especificamente, foram analisados como o uso do foco narrativo constrói a compreensão de Milly Theale e Kate Croy, as duas personagens principais.

Entradas para indexação

KEYWORDS: English-American literature. Henry James. Novel. point of view. *The Wings of the Dove*.

PALAVRAS CHAVE: Literatura norte-americana. Henry James. Romance. Foco narrativo. *The Wings of the Dove*.

Texto integral

Introduction

American literature is considered to have a reasonably recent history as it dates from the period of the English colonization. Understandably, for a long time, American literature was very much influenced by the European art. According to Richard Ruland and Malcolm Bradbury (1991, p. 7), even today it is hard to "identify a separate space for American [literature] which makes it distinct from the arts of Europe". However, it is not hard to trace the moment when writers started to work in order to develop a new writing which could express the new continent's need.

The rise of the novel seems to have been one of the decisive aspects that promoted the development of American literature. As a matter of fact, it was not until the 1790s, after the impact of the French and American revolutions, that American writers developed interest in this type of fiction. The novel was systematically written in England, from early eighteenth century on, as a means of expression of the bourgeois mode of life. According to Ruland and Bradbury (1991, p. 82), its language is "prose, its heroes and heroines are familiar and recognizable and it deals with the concrete, the everyday, the material". In the United States, the novel went through several slow changes until it reached literary maturity in the

nineteenth century, along with the poem, the essay, and the modern short story (Ruland; Bradbury, 1991, p. 105).

Around the middle of the nineteenth century, a writer opened American writing to a “deeper art, art as a quest for knowledge of self and the wider world” (Ruland; Bradbury, 1991, p. 211). He was Henry James, who, with Mark Twain and William Dean Howells, helped shape American literature into the new Realism. James, who came from a distinguished family, was concerned, in Howells’ words, with a “finer art – a more precise and detailed art, an art responsive to social necessity” (Apud Ruland; Bradbury, 1991, p. 211). Understandably, Henry James’s literary production has been greatly valued for its contribution to the shaping of American literature.

Henry James was an American novelist, short story writer, influential literary critic and was gently known as ‘the master’. Born in New York in 1843, James spent a great part of his life in Europe, and in 1912 became a British citizen. Henry James belonged to a wealthy and literate family, and, since his childhood, had access to philosophical and language studies.

In what regards James’s work as a literary critic, scholars generally agree that *The Art of Fiction*, first published in 1884, is his masterpiece. *The Art of Fiction* was written as a response to Walter Besant’s essay, which James considered too narrow for its claim that, more than anything, a novel should be concerned with moral endeavor. For James, the novel is a legitimate art form, and should then be free from religious, moral, or social scruples. Such concerns, according to James, would limit the readers’ understanding and reflection about their reading experience. In *The Art of Fiction* James also throws some light on his beliefs concerning the writing of novels. In James’s view, “life, experience and truth” should be the building block for a novel to be considered significant. As for the ‘experience’ motif, James (1984, p. 46) claims that “the only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life”. In this sense, it is possible to affirm that James believes that a well-written novel depends on the writer’s ability to present his/her experience through convincing narratives.

It is no wonder that James’s fictional works did justice to these same ideas and beliefs. The Jamesian literary production is concomitant with a movement of the nineteenth century called Realism. According to Eric Haralson and Kendall Johnson (2009, p. 417), literary Realism was characterized by “authoritative and reliable narration, accessible language, linear plots generally set in the contemporary social world of their readers”. In a general sense, Realism refers to the representation of events, characters, and setting in such a way that the readers will consider them very close to the predominant understanding of empirical life. Above all, James was the first of the great psychological realists. Still according to Haralson and Johnson (2009, p. 417), James is considered to be a “transitional figure in the development of literary modernism”, since he aimed at conveying psychological realism through the detailed exposition of the character’s thoughts. As a consequence, James is seen as a remarkable innovator in what regards his approach to the psyche of the characters. Critics believe that James was also influenced by his brother, William James, a remarkable psychologist. Kristin Boudreau (2010, p. 4) argues that, as Henry James’s favorite medium was the

novel, which is a form that invites exploration of the subjective states, and most of his works look for answers for the riddles of existence, James's fiction would be closely related to his brother's object of study. On her side, Linda Simon (Apud Boudreau, 2010, p. 4) clarifies William James's idea of empiricism, which is similar to Henry James's ideas about the theory of fiction, by explaining that

"[William] James' rejection of scientific and philosophical systems was motivated, in part, by his desire to account for the importance of the complexity of feelings, perceptions, and states of being that comprised the protean self. One path to self-knowledge, he believed, involved close attention to one's responses to the intricacy and contingency of experiences. 'The deeper features of reality are found only in perceptual experience,' he wrote"

As for Henry James's idea that a novel should be based on the writer's experience, his choices of what to represent in his narratives would not be different. James came from a wealthy family and spent most of his life traveling from America to Europe. Therefore, it is no surprise that James found inspiration in the elite. His novels represent the complex manners of American and European upper classes, and bring characters that face challenges which usually result from the opportunities money provides. Apart from that, James's characters are defined by the social requirements of the society they belong to. In accordance with his beliefs regarding novel writing, James's literary production portrays characters in a non-idealized way and presented settings which are represented as much similar to reality as possible. In fact, many of James's novels and short stories can be read as warning narratives about the excesses of money.

It is possible to affirm that, at first, the Jamesian prose was straightforward and in accordance with the nineteenth-century fiction. Later, it became more complex and deeper in the sense of bringing insights into human motivation, imagery and allusiveness. It is to James's late phase that three of his most acclaimed novels belong: *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903), and *The Golden Bowl* (1904). In the past few years, critics have started doing more justice to James's literary production, and in doing so, *The Wings of the Dove*, which represents the transition to James's major phase, has received appropriate attention.

The Wings of the Dove is a tragic love story, which contrasts American honesty with British cunningness, along with issues of greed, conspiracy, love, and betrayal. The narrator tells the story of Milly Theale, a mortally ill young American heiress, who is deceived by a British couple, Kate Croy and Merton Densher. As Kate Croy is short of money, she is forced to live with her Aunt Maud Lowder, who seems to be able to help her ascend socially by marrying her well. Kate Croy, however, is in love with Merton Densher, a poor journalist, and does not have the approval of her aunt to marry him. In the meantime, Kate Croy is introduced to the terminally ill Milly Theale, and sees in her a chance of changing her own life. Kate Croy's plan is set: Merton Densher should make Milly Theale fall in love with him, so they would inherit Milly's fortune. By the time Milly Theale dies, the couple finds out that she had left her fortune to Merton Densher, but that the price was high. Merton Densher seems to have fallen in love with Milly and taken by remorse

promises to marry Kate Croy only if they renounce the heritage. The novel finishes with a devastating final line by Kate: "*We shall never be again as we were!*" (1993, p. 422).

In James's preface to *The Wings of the Dove*, he tells the reader about his inspiration to write this novel. Milly Theale is inspired in James's cousin, Minny Temple, who had died of tuberculosis very early in life. James claims that the book was his attempt to put her memory in the "beauty and dignity of art". In the preface, James reveals the essence of the novel, which consists of a

young person conscious of a great capacity for life, but early stricken and doomed, condemned to die under short respite, while also enamoured of the world; aware moreover of the condemnation and passionately desiring to "put in" before extinction as many of the finer vibrations as possible, and so achieve, however briefly and brokenly, the sense of having lived. (p. 1)

The Wings of the Dove helps endorse James's beliefs about the art of fiction. As a matter of fact, the building block of James's ideas - life, experience, and truth - perfectly fits this novel. It is possible to perceive that James's experience of both the New World and the Old World enabled him to construct characters and settings which expressed his contrastive view of both societies. Understandably, the "international theme" became a current characteristic of the Jamesian prose as he explored the clash of personalities and cultures. In his fiction, American characters are portrayed as pure, open people who have a more highly evolved moral character. Europeans, on the other hand, are portrayed as corrupted people, who carry the tradition of the Old World. P. K. Roy (2006, p. 77) argues that James's late novels would represent American innocence in contrast with European experience. In fact, this idea is also represented in *The Wings of the Dove*, which contrasts the "purity" of an American heiress, Milly Theale, with a "corrupted" European couple. As Haralson and Johnson (2009, p. 190) claim, in *The Wings of the Dove*,

James takes his characters' drama of consciousness, a staple of realist fiction, to its formal extreme in this novel because although the plot turns on characters' coming to know or finally seeing important facts (...) the reader never learns what those important facts are.

As one can notice, Haralson and Johnson highlight one of the most remarkable features of the novel: the representation of the characters' thoughts. In fact, in this novel the story is basically told and seen through the main characters' consciousness. As it is possible to perceive, James consciously makes use of various points of view to filter the story. As Evelyne Ender (2008) argues, this technique leads the reader to become a 'near witness' of the story. Therefore, it is no surprise that James carefully chose whose character's thoughts would be exposed in specific passages of the novel in order to omit important facts from the reader. Undoubtedly, this form of narration, which is a common aspect of James's mature fiction, defies the inattentive reader, since much is left for the reader's imagination. Based on the fact that James's use of point of view is one of his greatest contributions to literature, this study aims at analyzing James's magisterial use of multiple points of view regarding the two main characters: Milly Theale, the

protagonist who gives the title to the novel, and her antagonist, Kate Croy, whose actions are crucial to the entire development of the narrative. In this sense, the analysis of point of view concerning those two characters aims at understanding how James's choices of point of view would project the reader's participation in the text. Additionally, this study aims at understanding how point of view builds Kate Croy's personality, since she is the anti-heroine, but all her actions are well justified in order to induce the understanding of her situation.

Point of view in *The Wings of the Dove*

As mentioned above, Henry James was both a writer and a literary critic. In fact, James's uniqueness in fiction is attributed to different factors. Some critics believe that because he was both a literary critic and a writer himself he was more aware than most writers of his time of how fiction worked and what the means to develop it were. Other critics, such as Leon Edel (1963, p. 7), believe that James's undeniable importance comes from the fact that he was one of the first writers to create the cosmopolitan novel and make it a "rich study of men, manners, and morals on two continents".

Undoubtedly, many are the reasons for James to be considered one of the world's largest literary figures. In fact, for most critics, James's innovative use of point of view is still the main object of study. According to Ligia Chiappini (2002, p. 14), James believed that an ideal type of narration consisted of "[a] presença discreta de um narrador que, por meio do contar e do mostrar equilibrados, possa dar a impressão ao leitor de que a história se conta a si própria, de preferência, alojando-se na mente de uma personagem que faça o papel de refletor de suas ideias.". As is well known, James's beliefs later became an ideal narrative form for many subsequent theoreticians.

Clearly, James's use of point of view is greatly acclaimed, especially due to his approach to the psyche of the characters, which is considered to have anticipated the stream-of-consciousness technique. As Wayne Booth (1983, p. 23) argues, James's narrative technique usually employed one or more characters as the "center of consciousness" through whom everything could be seen and felt.

In James's late phase as a novelist, he found himself more and more interested in the narrative technique of showing rather than telling. According to Booth (1983, p. 8), since Gustave Flaubert's and especially Henry James's fiction, many authors have been interested in the 'impersonal' mode of narration, in which the reader has the impression that the story tells itself. This mode of narration allows the reader to see and experience the story more directly and induces the reader's reflection about what is shown as there is no authoritative narrator telling the reader what to think. In fact, James, who was a great admirer of Flaubert's fiction, gradually turned his own fiction into a great representative of the showing technique.

At this point it is important to make a remark about the moral implications of the use of the impersonal mode of narration. As Wayne Booth (1983, p. 378) claims, the impersonal mode of narration can lead to confusion and moral ambiguity, since the "psychic vividness of prolonged and deep views" may enhance the reader's sympathy for characters who do not have strong virtues. Booth (1983,

p. 378) goes on to say that showing the readers the thoughts of the characters through free indirect speech may force “us to see the human worth of a character whose actions, objectively considered, we would deplore”. On his turn, Franco Moretti (2009, p. 862) points out that the free indirect speech, which makes the narrator and the character lose their distinct voices, is technique that represents the mentality of the nineteenth-century bourgeois society: “a socialização cultural operou profundamente: das muitas vozes que havia restou apenas um nível intelectual médio em torno do qual oscilam as inteligências individuais de cada um dos burgueses”. As Moretti (2009, p. 858) goes on to say that this technique:

deixa um espaço livre à voz individual (e um espaço variável conforme as personagens e as circunstâncias: exatamente como sucede às pessoas de carne e osso no decurso da socialização); mas ao mesmo tempo mistura e subordina a expressão individual ao tom abstrato e suprapessoal do narrador.

As it is possible to perceive, there is a moral dimension in the author's choice of impersonal, noncommittal techniques (Booth, 1983, p. 388). Booth (1983, p. 378) argues that this moral dimension derives from the fact that the reader faces judgments – social, psychological, sexual, historical, political, or religious ones - so strongly forced upon him that it is impossible to simply pass them by. So, we can conclude that the use of an impersonal mode of narration not only enhances the knowledge the readers have about the character, but can also lead to moral confusion, since the characters are presented through the seductive medium of their own self-defending rhetoric (Booth, 1983, p. 389). In fact, the novel *The Wings of the Dove* is a great exemplar of this mode of narration employed by Henry James. In this novel, the characters are mainly not introduced from the narrator's perspective but rather from another character's perspective or, more importantly, from their own perspectives in order to allow the reader to have access to the necessary information to judge their actions.

Moretti (2009, p. 858) claims that the use of an impersonal mode of narration “deixa um espaço livre à voz individual” and, therefore, allows the reader to know the characters more deeply. As a matter of fact, the two characters to be analyzed in this work, Kate Croy and Milly Theale, are presented from this perspective. In this novel, the reader is able to perceive those characters basically from four different perspectives: the narrator's perceptions of these two characters; their dialogues; the other characters' perceptions about them and their own thoughts, which are built through free indirect speech.

Therefore, it is interesting to pay attention to how point of view interferes in the reading of *The Wings of the Dove*. Kate Croy, for example, is the anti-heroine who goes through financial difficulties and desperately needs to ascend socially in order to help her family. So, in order to better explore the social fragmentation represented by Kate Croy, James begins the novel with Kate's life story told through her own consciousness, which would allow the reader to better comprehend the difficulties she experiences. In this sense, the construction of Kate's perspective in the novel has the objective of showing the reasons for her actions. So, it is possible to affirm that her actions are supposed to be received with sympathy, since the reader has access to the sad story of her life.

As for Milly Theale's perspective, it is possible to perceive that the passages in which her consciousness is exposed to the reader only reinforce Milly's dove-like personality, since most of her actions are similar to a child's who is beginning to discover the wonders of life and, understandably, wishes to live her life to the full. In fact, Milly is a great exemplar of James's common representation of American people, who, in his fiction, are usually portrayed as good and naïve people deceived by the British cunningness. It is possible to affirm, therefore, that point of view helps reinforce Milly's extremely good personality, since we can notice how eager she is to live and enjoy the moments she has with her good friend Kate Croy. Interestingly enough, her thoughts are not exposed in moments in which this 'good girl' representation could be denied. For instance, in the passage that brings Milly's last words in a letter, her words are silenced by Merton and Kate. The couple simply decides not to read her final letter; therefore, neither the reader nor these characters come to know if Milly really became angry with them for having deceived her. We can then notice that this is a narrative pattern that leaves much for the reader's consideration and inference.

In short, James's *The Wings of the Dove* is a great exemplar of the realistic novel produced at the turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century, especially regarding the use of point of view in order to build psychological realism. As Franco Moretti (2009) claims, the realistic fiction aimed at representing the society of the time as it really was. It is possible to affirm, therefore, that through the use of various points of view, James was able to add human value to each character as he represented their feelings and thoughts carefully.

Point of view and the character Kate Croy

Kate Croy, who is a British impoverished woman, is confronted by two opposing living conditions: the richness of her distant Aunt Maud and the decadence of her father's family. In fact, Kate Croy's relationship with her decadent father is very much explored in the beginning of the novel, which allows the reader to understand how difficult it is for her to see her father perish without money and not be able to help him. Kate faces the difficult situation of giving up on her relationship with her father in order to be able to marry well, since abandoning her father is her aunt's sole condition to help Kate ascend socially. In this sense, it is possible to perceive the social fragmentation explored by Henry James, since Kate, who is an outsider, desperately tries to fit in her aunt's social group to the detriment of her family connections with her poor father and sister.

In the first chapters, where this character is introduced, the reader has access to Kate Croy's thoughts, feelings and doubts. In fact, the reader is confronted with her sad life: during a meeting with her father, Kate Croy starts to show her personality as she wishes to continue living with him instead of moving to her Aunt's house. During this meeting, they discuss the possibility of her living with to her Aunt and Kate states the following:

I'm perfectly honest in what I say, and I know what I'm talking about. (...) It's simply a question of your not turning me away—taking yourself out of my life. It's simply a question of your saying: 'Yes then, since you will, we'll stand together. We won't worry in advance about how or where; we'll have a faith and find a way.' That's all—that would be the

good you'd do me. I should have you, and it would be for my benefit. Do you see? (1993, p. 30)

As we can perceive, Kate Croy still believes in the power of family bonds in order to face this difficult situation. Her father, on the other hand, has a completely different opinion. Lionel Croy sees in his daughter a way of leaving poverty and treats her as if she were an 'asset' which, in the future, could bring benefits for the entire family. As he claims, he is only interested "in your doing what she [her aunt] wants. You shan't be so beastly poor, my darling, (...) if I can help it." (1993, p. 29). For Lionel Croy, being with her nuclear family would not bring positive perspectives for Kate:

We're not possessed of so much, at this charming pass, please to remember, as that we can afford not to take hold of any perch held out to us. I like the way you talk, my dear, about 'giving up!' One doesn't give up the use of a spoon because one's reduced to living on broth. And your spoon, that is your aunt, please consider, is partly mine as well. (1993, p. 26)

By the end of the chapter, Kate meets her poor sister Marian, who shows the same opinion of their father's: she wishes Kate to marry a wealthy man. As Marian discovers that Kate had considered the possibility of giving up on the chance of living with her aunt in order to be with their father, Marian becomes really upset and claims that "If you were to go to papa, my dear, you would have to stop coming to me" (1993, p. 41). Clearly, Marian and Lionel Croy do not like each other, which puts Kate in a difficult situation. Nonetheless, just like their father, Marian considers that it is Kate's 'duty' to live with their rich aunt and then be able to help the family. The chapter ends with Kate's reflection about what happened, especially in what regards her possible future suitors: Lord Mark, who admires her, and Merton Densher, a journalist, who she loves, but is not considered to be a suitable match for her. Kate obviously feels the pressure of having to marry a wealthy man, but she seems not to be willing to pay the price of marrying a person she does not love. Kate wonders if

Miss Condrips [her nieces] were offered her by fate as a warning for her own future—to be taken as showing her what she herself might become at forty if she let things too recklessly go. What was expected of her by others—and by so many of them—could, all the same, on occasion, present itself as beyond a joke; and this was just now the aspect it particularly wore. (1993, p. 43)

In this sense, it is possible to affirm that Kate Croy herself ponders on the difficulties of being a penniless single woman in the early twentieth century. Kate clearly faces the conflict of not being able to decide on her life by herself since she is a single lady: "she quite visibly lost herself in the thought of the way she might still pull things round had she only been a man"; "She loved it in fact the more tenderly for that bleeding wound. But what could a penniless girl do with it but let it go?" (1993, p. 21).

It is also important to pay attention to Kate Croy's role in the novel. She is, indeed, the character who puts the narrative into motion and the first to be introduced in the story. It is obvious, therefore, that she is one of the most important characters (if not the most important one) in the novel. In fact, James's choices on point of view allow the reader to understand Kate's family situation and

her dilemma very clearly, from the very beginning of the narrative. In other words, the fact that Kate Croy is the first character to be introduced in the narrative would contribute to create a certain empathy with her social fragmented situation.

As the narrative develops and Kate decides to move to her aunt's house, the reader discovers that Kate and Merton are still emotionally involved. Kate, who desperately tries to convince her aunt that Merton is a good suitor for her, sees in Merton's departure to America for some months a chance of persuading her aunt to accept him. In the meantime, Milly Theale, the protagonist, is introduced in the narrative. The reader comes to know that Milly Theale is a wealthy American heiress who is spending some months in Europe. Coincidentally, Milly Theale's friend, Susan Shepherd, knows Kate's aunt and they all decide to meet. As soon as Kate and Milly meet, they become close friends and the great conflict of the novel starts to be created once Kate notices that she can take advantage of Milly's poor health condition.

In what regards Kate and Milly's friendship, it is possible to affirm that they admire each other for what they do not possess in their own lives. Kate, for example, admires Milly's fortune and freedom, as we can read below:

such moments in especial determined in Kate a perception of the high happiness of her companion's liberty. Milly's range was thus immense; she had to ask nobody for anything, to refer nothing to any one; her freedom, her fortune and her fancy were her law; an obsequious world surrounded her, she could sniff up at every step its fumes. (1993, p. 119)

Milly, on the other hand, is completely taken by Kate's stories and ability to deal with people, since Milly herself "had settled that the extent of her goodwill itself made her shy" (1993, p. 117). As they become close friends, Milly invites Kate to go with her to a doctor's appointment, which is not shown to the reader. As they leave the doctor's office, Milly asks Kate for "absolute discretion" (1993, p. 150) and, since the reader has access to Milly's thoughts only, it is not clear if Kate understands the seriousness of Milly's illness. However, when Milly starts crying as she sees the beauties of London, the narrator claims that "Kate at all events understood" (1993, p. 151). It is possible to affirm, therefore, that as Milly's dialogue with the doctor is not narrated, the emphasis here is on Kate's acute perception of Milly's condition. Moreover, based on the analysis of Kate's personality, we can understand that this passage confirms Kate as a smart and attentive woman, because she is the person who ponders on and questions everything that happens around her.

As the story develops Kate decides to deceive Milly with Merton's help. However, Kate does not wish Milly to suffer and she gives good reasons why she and Merton should put the plan into practice. In fact, this is the moment in which Kate shows the complexity of her personality. Kate claims that she "shouldn't care for her if she hadn't so much" (1993, p. 219), but she also knows that Milly loves life, and that loving somebody would be the missing experience that would make Milly's life complete. Therefore, by deciding to deceive Milly in order to have her money, Kate paradoxically makes Milly's life worth living. In Kate's own words: "She at any rate does love life. To have met a person like you to have felt you become, with all other fine things, a part of life." (1993, p. 219). The narrative does

not have a positive end for Kate, though. It is true that Kate and Merton's plan did help Milly want to live, but at cost their own relationship:

"The great thing," (...) "is that she's satisfied. Which," she continued, looking across at him, "is what I've worked for."

"Satisfied to die in the flower of her youth?"

"Well, at peace with you." (...) "The peace of having loved."

He raised his eyes to her. "Is *that* peace?"

"Of having *been* loved," she went on. "That is. Of having," she wound up, "realised her passion. She wanted nothing more. She has had *all* she wanted." Lucid and always grave, she gave this out with a beautiful authority that he could for the time meet with no words. He could only again look at her, though with the sense in so doing that he made her more than he intended take his silence for assent. Quite indeed as if she did so take it she quitted the table and came to the fire.

"You may think it hideous that I should now, that I should *yet*"—she made a point of the word—"pretend to draw conclusions. But we've not failed." She was once more close to him, close as she had been the day she came to him in Venice, the quickly returning memory of which intensified and enriched the fact. He could practically deny in such conditions nothing that she said, and what she said was, with it, visibly, a fruit of that knowledge.

"We've succeeded." She spoke with her eyes deep in his own. "She won't have loved you for nothing." It made him wince, but she insisted. "And you won't have loved *me*." (1993, p. 383)

All in all, we can conclude that, in her rush to belong to this rich society, Kate chose the immoral path. As a consequence, the fact that Kate Croy deceived a dying girl would be reason enough for her to be considered a totally mean character. However, we have to consider that Kate tries to give up on their plan, but Merton is already too involved in the plan and with Milly to agree with Kate. On top of that, as Milly is advised to accept any form of happiness and Kate provides her with the opportunity to experience it in its most beautiful and strong form, that is, love, Kate can also be seen as the person who ends up by helping Milly live and experience her life to the fullest:

"Except of course that we're doing our best for her. We're making her want to live." And Kate again watched her. "To-night she does want to live." She spoke with a kindness that had the strange property of striking him as inconsequent—so much, and doubtless so unjustly, had all her clearness been an implication of the hard. "It's wonderful. It's beautiful." (1993, p. 317)

At this point of our discussion, it is important to call attention to the ways in which James manipulated point of view in order to build the wanted effects. One of the most interesting aspects of the novel is related to how James managed to make a person who deceives a dying girl be considered a heroine. As seen above, James organized point of view in this novel in order to allow the reader to become a close witness of Kate Croy's suffering with her decadent family, which, understandably, induces the reader's sympathetic understanding of this character. Moreover, since Kate's thoughts are not exposed in the moments in which she presents her 'honest'

reasons for deceiving Milly, the reader never comes to know if she is being completely sincere or simply a hypocrite.

Furthermore, it is necessary to consider the weight of morality that the analysis of point of view reveals in this narrative. In fact, Kate Croy is the most complex character, since she is the one who is willing to do whatever is needed to be with the one she loves and to help her family. In this sense, it would be possible to affirm that point of view allows Kate's character to go from a stage of complete evilness to one bordering on heroism. Nonetheless, considering the moral implications of her attitude and her actions and, most importantly, that the end of the story is not in her favor, it is possible to affirm that she cannot be interpreted as an entirely positive character either.

In conclusion, James's use of an impersonal mode of narration did create all the complexity embodied in Kate Croy, a character whose selfishness and immoral actions are justified by her social and family needs. In fact, it is possible to affirm that James was careful in deciding which narrative technique to use, especially regarding Kate Croy, whose actions would be probably deplored by readers if narrated with a different point of view.

Point of view and the character Milly Theale

Even though Milly Theale is the protagonist, she is introduced in the narrative only in the third chapter, which reinforces the importance of knowing Kate Croy's ordeal first, since James laboriously presents her life and thoughts in the very beginning of the novel. So, in the chapter that introduces Milly, the reader discovers that she is a wealthy young woman who, having lost all her family, wears black as a sign of her long mourning.

As the story develops, the reader notices that Milly is portrayed as a woman who wishes to experience the best life can give her while she has time to do so. In this sense, Milly's personality, can be compared to a child's, who is beginning to discover the wonders of life and, consequently, wishes to live everything she can as fast as possible. Her character is built on a contrastive perspective: externally she is covered by black clothes, but her deepest feelings are marked by the search for the simple and true things life can offer. This may be one of the reasons why Milly's character is so appealing to the reader as, similarly to Kate, she has also been through difficulties (she has lost all her family). Nonetheless, she still tends to believe that life has great wonders to offer her. The irony, however, lies on the fact that she has everything but the only necessary condition to experience life to the fullest: health.

Henry James's use of point of view allows the reader to understand how eager Milly is to live deeply. During a dinner in London, Milly's perceptions about what surrounds her allow the reader to see how surprised she is with what she sees:

She thrilled, she consciously flushed, and turned pale with the certitude—it had never been so present—that she should find herself completely involved: the very air of the place, the pitch of the occasion,

had for her so positive a taste and so deep an undertone. The smallest things, the faces, the hands, the jewels of the women, the sound of words, especially of names, across the table, the shape of the forks, the arrangement of the flowers, the attitude of the servants, the walls of the room, were all touches in a picture and denotements in a play; and they marked for her, moreover, her alertness of vision. She had never, she might well believe, been in such a state of vibration (...) (1993, p. 103)

Based on the previous passage, it is possible to affirm that her excitement for being in a dinner with so many people rises from the fact that she is an inexperienced naïve woman. Therefore, Milly is beginning to discover the wonders of life. This is, in fact, one of Milly's most remarkable features throughout the novel, which will lead her to be deceived by a person she thought was her friend.

When Milly Theale and Kate Croy meet at a dinner, Milly seems enthralled by Kate Croy, whom she often addresses as "the handsome girl" (1993, p. 102); "wonderful creature" (1993, p. 102). As it is possible to perceive, the first part of the third chapter already shows Milly's fascination with Kate, since Milly claims that Kate's kindness to her is much appreciated and unexpected. It is ironical, however, that Milly believes Kate, her deceiver, to be "wonderful creature" (1993, p. 102).

Milly's personality as a totally naïve person is, however, gradually deconstructed. Milly still carries her 'innocent' view of the world, since she admires Kate's vast network of friends and her stories. Nonetheless, Milly starts to show that she is also aware of what happens around her, as she perceives some issues regarding Kate's personality and, especially, about the fact that Kate dislikes Milly's good friend, Susan Shepherd. Consequently, Milly can be considered, from now on, as a more complex character, which is aware of what happens around her:

Susan Shepherd at least bored the niece—that was plain; this young woman saw nothing in her—nothing to account for anything, not even for Milly's own indulgence: which little fact became in turn to the latter's mind a fact of significance. (...) Kate wasn't brutally brutal—which Milly had hitherto benightedly supposed the only way; she wasn't even aggressively so, but rather indifferently, defensively and, as might be said, by the habit of anticipation. She simplified in advance, was beforehand with her doubts, and knew with singular quickness what she wasn't, as they said in New York, going to like. In that way at least people were clearly quicker in England than at home; and Milly could quite see, after a little, how such instincts might become usual in a world in which dangers abounded. There were more dangers, clearly, round about Lancaster Gate than one suspected in New York or could dream of in Boston. (1993, pp. 122-123)

Another passage that reinforces Milly's personality as an attentive person is when she is at a dinner at Lord Mark's house and he decides to show her a Bronzino's painting, which, according to him, really resembles Milly. In fact, this part of the chapter brings important revelations to the reader. When Milly sees the picture, she realizes that once that girl had a life and a story but that, now, she is "dead, dead, dead" (1993, p.143). The fact that Milly identifies herself with the painting can be read as the first moment in which Milly's mortal illness is made explicit to the reader. As we can read in the passage below,

She couldn't help that—it came; and the reason it came was that she found herself, for the first moment, looking at the mysterious portrait through tears. Perhaps it was her tears that made it just then so strange and fair—as wonderful as he had said: the face of a young woman, all magnificently drawn, down to the hands, and magnificently dressed; a face almost livid in hue, yet handsome in sadness and crowned with a mass of hair rolled back and high, that must, before fading with time, have had a family resemblance to her own. The lady in question, at all events, with her slightly Michaelangelesque squareness, her eyes of other days, her full lips, her long neck, her recorded jewels, her brocaded and wasted reds, was a very great personage—only unaccompanied by a joy. And she was dead, dead, dead. Milly recognised her exactly in words that had nothing to do with her. "I shall never be better than this." (1993, p. 143)

We could go as far as to state that this passage can be understood as Milly's epiphany in the novel, since the portrait works as a mirror of herself.

As the story develops, the reader discovers that Milly and Merton meet in one of his trips to America. However, these moments are never narrated, so the reader cannot know exactly what happened between them. As it is possible to perceive, once more Henry James carefully selected the moments that would be exposed to the reader, as Milly and Merton's first meeting is one of the most interesting events that are not narrated, this is one of the many moments in the novel which demand an attentive participation of the reader, since much needs to be inferred from what is 'in between the lines'. In fact, Milly shows that she really enjoys Merton's company, which suggests that she likes him. As a consequence, Kate decides to take advantage of Milly's interest in Merton in order to inherit her fortune.

As Milly's disease evolves, her perspective is less and less explored. The reader never discovers what Milly's disease is and her suffering is never explicit to the other characters nor to the reader:

"Did she receive you—in her condition—in her room?"

"Not she," said Merton Densher. "She received me just as usual: in that glorious great *salone*, in the dress she always wears, from her inveterate corner of her sofa." And his face for the moment conveyed the scene, just as hers equally embraced it.

"Do you remember what you originally said to me of her?" (...) "That she wouldn't smell of drugs, that she wouldn't taste of medicine. Well, she didn't." (1993, p. 378)

As mentioned above, much in the narrative is left for the reader's inference. So, for example, when Milly's disease achieves its final stage, the characters start to say that she "turned her face to the wall", as an indirect reference both to the final stage of her disease and to the fact that Milly discovered about Kate and Merton's plan.

It is important to consider that the narrative does not end with Milly's death, which reinforces Kate's importance in the novel. Kate's reference to this fact

is indeed interesting, as she reminds the reader that Milly died in peace and beauty:

"Our dear dove then, as Kate calls her, has folded her wonderful wings." (...)

It rather racked him, but he tried to receive it as she intended, and she evidently took his formal assent for self-control.

"Unless it's more true," she accordingly added, "that she has spread them the wider."(...) "For a flight, I trust, to some happiness greater—!" (1993, p. 394)

As it is possible to perceive, Milly is portrayed from the beginning of the novel as a wonderful creature. In fact, she dies as one, since James focused on her wish to live and not on her suffering and death. In this sense, Milly becomes an appealing character to the reader because of her tragic fate, that is, because she dies at such a young age, keeping the same angelical behavior from the beginning of the end.

Final Comments

As mentioned above, through the use of an impersonal mode of narration in *The Wings of the Dove*, Henry James shows the reader the characters' thoughts and different views of the same situation in order to stimulate the reader to reflect about what is shown. Not coincidentally, the interpretation of his literary works was a constant issue in James's own critical essays. In this sense, it is possible to understand why *The Wings of the Dove* is considered to be the first novel of James's mature phase: it is the first of his novels which deeply explores the mind and the consciousness of the characters in order to encourage the reader to build a profound judgment of the narrative.

Moreover, through this mode of narration, Henry James was able to present an issue that he considered relevant in his critical essays, namely, the psychological realism. In fact, this may be one of the reasons why Kate Croy is such a complex character. As the reader has access to her thoughts only in some situations, sometimes it is not possible to affirm if she is being completely honest or simply a hypocrite, for example, when she considers giving up on her plan of deceiving Milly.

As for Milly Theale, we can affirm that her character is basically the same all throughout the narrative: she begins as an innocent woman, who wants to experience all life can give her, and dies as a good girl. Understandably, Milly Theale follows the common portrait of American people found in most of James's literary works, that is people who are considered to have a more evolved moral character.

In this sense, the use of multiple points of view combined with an impersonal mode of narration become crucial to the development of the narrative, since they would project a certain reception of the novel. As Henry James argues in *The Future of the Novel* (1984, p. 103), the "vulgarization of literature in general"

can be attributed to the “reader irreflective and uncritical”. Understandably, James’s fictional works highly demand the reader’s participation. As J. Donald Crowley and Richard A. Hocks (2003, p. 446) point out, it is in *The Wings of the Dove* that James started making use of multiple, successive registers or “deputies” of consciousness, which were as fully innovative as his earlier mastery of the single viewpoint character. Indeed, this is a narrative technique that would later entitle James to be called the ‘master’ of the art of fiction.

Critics such as Percy Lubbock have praised James’s ability to refashion the novel into a complex literary work. According to Lubbock (1921, p. 187), one of the reasons for critics not having done sufficient justice to the Jamesian fiction may be because

it is an ingenious art; criticism seems to have paid it less attention than it deserves. But criticism has been hindered, perhaps, by the fact that these books of Henry James’s, in which the art is written large, are so odd and so personal and so peculiar in all their aspects.

Today, however, James’s contributions to the literary field are completely recognized, and he is considered to be one of the most influential literary figures to come out of America in early twentieth century (Roy, 2008, p. 1).

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