



Bridgewater State University

## Virtual Commons - Bridgewater State University

---

Honors Program Theses and Projects

Undergraduate Honors Program

---

5-12-2015

### Leading Women: Henry James and Feminism in *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Bostonians* and *The Golden Bowl*

Emily Boockoff

Follow this and additional works at: [https://vc.bridgew.edu/honors\\_proj](https://vc.bridgew.edu/honors_proj)



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#), and the [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Boockoff, Emily. (2015). Leading Women: Henry James and Feminism in *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Bostonians* and *The Golden Bowl*. In *BSU Honors Program Theses and Projects*. Item 85. Available at: [https://vc.bridgew.edu/honors\\_proj/85](https://vc.bridgew.edu/honors_proj/85)  
Copyright © 2015 Emily Boockoff

This item is available as part of Virtual Commons, the open-access institutional repository of Bridgewater State University, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

Leading Women: Henry James and Feminism in *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Bostonians* and *The Golden Bowl*

Emily Boockoff

Submitted in Partial Completion of the  
Requirements for Commonwealth Honors in English

Bridgewater State University

May 12, 2015

Dr. John Kucich, Thesis Director  
Dr. Ellen Scheible, Committee Member  
Dr. Elizabeth Veisz, Committee Member

Table of Contents

Introduction: Henry James and the Women in His Life..... 3

Chapter 1: Portrait of a Lady, with Mentors..... 10

Chapter 2: *The Bostonians* and the Complication of Marriage..... 21

Chapter 3: Finding Fulfillment in *The Golden Bowl*..... 33

Works Cited..... 46

Henry James is a controversial nineteenth-century British-American author. He is often misunderstood because he kept his private life very private. His family moved back and forth from England to the northeastern United States, following his father, who was an intellectual following the religion of Swedenborg. Throughout all of these travels, James began to procure a collection of places and relationships that would eventually shape his work as he began writing. He would grow to critique important topics throughout his writing, such as the social hierarchy, conventional marriage, divorce and feminism. James had many close friendships with women ranging from authors to actresses to housewives. The period of his writing also happened to be around the height of the nineteenth-century feminist movement, especially in the United States. During this time women were expressing their opinions and ideas through conventions, protests and conversations mainly working towards receiving the right to vote in the United States. Many of the novels and short stories James wrote present his view of feminism through the development of the female characters, as well as the situations that arise from the relationships these characters are a part of. In some of his most pivotal novels, *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Bostonians* and *The Golden Bowl*, James enters the conversation of feminism. He utilizes a variety of relationships, including mentorship, marriage and friendship, to encourage the ideals of strength and equality in his female characters. As he critiques the idea of feminism as mainly expressed through protests for political rights or the ability to perform roles reserved for men, James presents the idea of independence for women as the internal fulfillment of their personal desires that is evolved through social interactions and relationships.

The late nineteenth-century held a very different idea of feminism than present time. Women in England were granted the right to vote in 1918. Before 1920, woman in America were not able to vote. Leading up to this there were many different social and political movements.

The Seneca Fall Convention in 1848 helped to start the careers of many feminist activists in America at the time. In 1870 women could keep their property in England. (PBS) This was seen as a big deal because previously divorce was hardly even an option, never mind women keeping what property they owned. Women were also making their needs known in other, more subtle ways. Writers such as Edith Wharton and Charlotte Perkins Gilman were pushing the boundaries of social norms and what a woman's place in society was. These efforts have given women a lot more freedom in present day America and England. Feminism is a much more open and national topic than it was when James was writing. Not to say it was not a hot topic at the time James was writing, but the topic was new to society and the movement was just beginning to catch on. James joins the movement and conversation utilizing his novels in order to discuss what feminism is to him, an internal journey of fulfillment rather than solely a political struggle.

There are many critics who have joined the conversation surrounding James and feminism. Feminism is a very broad topic, so there are many different conversations relating to feminism such as his views on the suffrage movement, divorce, social hierarchy and many more. One of the main critics is Alfred Habegger, author of *Henry James and The Woman Business*. Habegger has written many articles, along with his book, discussing many of James's different novels, letters and friendships with women. Although his view changes, many of his articles generally support the idea that James did support women. Another main scholar is Leon Edel, author of *Henry James: A Life*, which is a five volume biography of James. Throughout the biography Edel discusses many of the friendships James has with women and often alludes to their incorporation into James's novels, such as Minny Temple and Edith Wharton. Edel is very interested in how these relationships add to the women Henry James has created within his writing. One other important scholar who often joins the conversation is Leslie Petty. Although

Petty did not write a lot on James, she has one article titled "The Political Is Personal: The Feminist Lesson of Henry James's *The Bostonians*" that really turns the conversation around on *The Bostonians*. Petty finally analyzes *The Bostonians* as a feminist novel, which is not something that was easily done when it came out. In this way she presents herself as a new critic, with a new opinion into the conversation of Henry James and feminism, whereas many of the other critics are older. All of these critics have set up an ongoing conversation about Henry James and feminism that I will be contributing to through analyzing some of his novels, and the relationships he sets up between women in those novels. This conversation surrounds the women in his life, his views on the political movements positive and negative as well as his treatment of his female characters. Most of these discussions have been separate thus far. To contribute to this growing conversation I will be doing a close reading of three of James's novels incorporating the women who influenced him in real life in order to discuss how he contributed to feminism through his belief of a woman's personal desires.

As said before, there are critics who do not believe James could be considered a feminist. I believe that through analyzing multiple novels he has written, it does show he supported the women's movement even if he did not outwardly express it. James was conservative, and he did not outwardly express his opinions on controversial issues to many. Although he did not have a common view of feminism for the time period, his view was still supportive. He focused on true fulfillment and independence of women and did not always agree with other more radical approaches such as the large protests going on in cities like Boston and London. This became the topic of one of these novels I will be analyzing, *The Bostonians*. James received the most backlash from feminists after writing this novel because he does critique the feminist political and suffrage movement. However what many critics do not analyze is the relationships between

his main characters, or the personalities of the women in his novels. I believe the women he includes in his novels demonstrate their own individual paths towards independence, which is his view on what feminism truly is.

In this paper I will be analyzing three of James's most pivotal novels, *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Bostonians* and *The Golden Bowl*. These novels are pulled from the beginning, middle and end of his writing career. This way they show a progression of his opinion and view on feminism. The first chapter outlines *The Portrait of a Lady* and how mentorships help to guide the main character, Isabel, to where she is supposed to be in life. Her mentors provide her with strength and the ability to mold her own opinions and beliefs, which she could not always do in the beginning. The next chapter discusses *The Bostonians* and the different types of marriage seen within the novel. These types of relationships begin to demonstrate James's idea that feminism is about the fulfillment of personal desire. They also demonstrate the kinds of people who are actually against feminism, rather than those that just have differing opinions as to what it is. The last chapter, and the final novel James wrote, is *The Golden Bowl*. *The Golden Bowl* focuses on a female rivalry, as well as friendship, and how these types of relationships allow women to grow and find their own desires. Maggie, one of the main characters, wants to be a housewife, while her friend Charlotte loves to travel and explore life. James analyzes how both of these views can contribute to the feminist movement, because both women are pursuing what they wish to have. Here James reaches his final conclusion as to what feminism means, the fulfillment of personal desire.

Henry James made it a point to surround himself with intelligent and creative companions. Many of the friends James visited and wrote to were women, ranging from fellow authors and actresses to his sister, Alice. The women he talked to allowed him to develop an

appreciation and personal view towards feminism. Although James kept in touch with many women, three stand out as lasting companions and influences in his life; Mary (Minnie) Temple, Alice James, and Edith Wharton. Each friendship with these ladies took on its own personal and individual relationship. The influence of these relationships helped shape James' view of feminism as a male entering into this controversial conversation.

James had a particularly close relationship with his Minnie Temple. Temple was James' first cousin and, as Leon Edel argues, "Henry James was in love, but it was a love of an inner sort" (77). Temple was intelligent and charming; "she attracted young men who could not be satisfied by a pretty face alone" (75). She had tuberculosis, so as James began to travel abroad he and Temple often could only communicate through letters. As a mentor, James was fiercely protective of Temple and the small legacy she would leave. Alfred Habegger compared the original letters of Minnie Temple to those published by Henry James in his memoir *Notes of a Son and a Brother*. Habegger found that James' "omissions and alterations were far more extensive than anyone could have dreamed" (159). Temple was a very free and flirtatious spirit who corresponded with many male and female friends. In *Notes of a Son and a Brother* James cautioned readers that Temple's letters were "essentially not love-letters." To James it was okay for Temple to have friendships with many men, but to the society during James's time this was seen as peculiar. Although protective of how Temple acted, her spirit invigorated James and acted as a creative outlet for him. First as the muse for Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady*, followed by numerous other writings, it is clear Temple "became a legend to [James] during the long years between the time of her death in 1870 and the closing years of his own life" (LeClair 37).

Alice James, Henry James' sister, was one of his closest family members aside from his brother, William. Alice died at a young age and was sick for a good part of her life. One of her most notable qualities was her resistance towards the female role in society. Having a sister with such strong opinions about the treatment of women in society gave James an early stepping stone towards forming his own opinion on feminism through writing. Alice often wrote about her opinions of how women were treated to various friends and family members. In one letter to her Aunt Kate, also close with Henry James, Alice states "the most I can ever hope to do in this world is stay out of the way" (The Death and Letters of Alice James). Alice also was in a Boston marriage with a woman named Katherine Loring. As Alice's health continued to decline James began to take care of her, along with Katherine, shortly before Alice's death in 1892 (PBS). Katherine and Alice's relationship was always a point of conflict between Alice and James. Despite this, James genuinely cared for Alice and respected her opinions and decisions, although he did not always agree with them. Even after her death, Alice continued to influence Henry, specifically when he discovered her diary that discussed her life as well as her opinions on inequality and social standing. Even though this surprised Henry, he only had praise for his sister and her opinions (Fromm). Through their relationship, Alice helped Henry realize he could discuss his opinions on feminism and gender through writing, just in a more subtle manner.

Edith Wharton and Henry James possessed a very special relationship as fellow authors. They understood each other in a way that others did not, although they did not become close friends until 1900. Wharton admired James for many years before they were able to meet and "what endeared her to James was that she possessed also a civilized mind and an artist's style" (Edel 579). Both critiqued each other's work, as well as respected it. Wharton was one of James's most opinionated and independent female friends, although she stayed in a marriage that

James did not agree with. He felt that her husband was not an intellectual, and often held her back and interfered with her ability to improve as an author. However, whenever they visited each other, Wharton “clearly took command” (581) and James allowed her to do so. She consistently held her own throughout their close friendship, which was difficult to do with someone as intellectual and opinionated as Henry James. Through her strong demeanor and intellectual ability, she molded James’s final viewpoint of female independence.

## Portrait of a Lady with Mentors

One of James's earlier novels, *The Portrait of a Lady*, was published by James in 1881, 11 years after the death of Minny Temple, the muse for Isabel Archer. Throughout the novel, Isabel encounters numerous mentors, some who stay to guide her and other who teach her specific lessons and leave. Although many of these mentors are female, her most influential mentor is her cousin Ralph. Isabel is said to be Minny in the imagination of James. She is what Minny was and could have become if she lived past 27 years old. Isabel's close mentorship with Ralph mirrors that of Minny and Henry. All the mentorships throughout the novel contribute to James's thoughts on feminism. Strong mentor-mentee relationships through female-female pairs, or male-female pairs contribute to developing a strong and independent woman, similar to his cousin Minny. Each mentor Isabel encounters affects her in a different way and allows her to continue her journey as a woman deciding what she truly wants out of life. .

For the purpose of this argument, a mentor is an individual who guides another individual, their mentee, through critical stages of life. Sometimes, although not often, these relationships can be reciprocal as the role of mentor and mentee shifts and changes. I am focusing on the mentors females rely on in James' books, discussing how women expand and develop through the influence and guidance of both men and women in their lives. Cross gender mentorships can have a "risk of romantic and sexual involvement" which is why both parties "must define the boundaries of intimacy" (Schwiebert). It is not possible for a romantic partner to be a mentor because they put emotions and personal feelings before the mentorship. With these boundaries set, though, cross-gender mentorships can be very effective. A mentor is not someone a character or person tries to imitate, but rather collect ideas from as they find out who they are meant to be in life. A mentor does not have to be an innately good person; some mentors

teach lessons to their mentees before allowing their true, selfish intentions to show. This does not mean a lesson was not taught, it just means that the stage of mentorship is over once this happens. The mentor-mentee relationship often mirrors that of a parent-child, familial relationship, but not as constricted. The mentors are free to express what they wish and feel without having to guard themselves, like a parent often has to do with a child. A mentorship is a voluntary relationship, unlike parenthood. The voluntary nature of this relationship provides the mentor with the ability to suggest what they wish and think is best to the mentee without as much familial repercussion. Not every blood-related familial relationship is a mentorship, but many mentorships can be seen as a family-based relationships. Marco DiRenzo, Christy Weer and Frank Linnehan have researched these relationships and come to the conclusion that “the presence of a family-based role model offers synergistic effects that enable protégés to more fully capitalize on the vicarious learning and guidance provided by their mentors” (43). Family-based, close relationships offer more to the mentee than a distant, less attainable mentorship, which is why many successful mentorships become a familial model. James utilizes this process of mentorship to demonstrate female empowerment is not necessarily a social or political discussion, but sometimes a personal, introspective one.

Mrs. Touchett served as the first woman mentor that changed the course of Isabel’s life. She is an older woman who is able to have a house, husband and child, but she is also able to travel and do as she wants. She is lucky enough to have money of her own to spend, and believes that all women should be able to do as they wish. Without Mrs. Touchett as a mentor, Isabel may not have been able to escape a life of simple domesticity. James utilizes Mrs. Touchett as Isabel’s savior from America and a life of total simplicity and boredom. Mrs. Touchett does what she wants, traveling Europe and often living apart from her husband. In the beginning this is all

Isabel wants; “to go to Florence...[she] would promise anything” (27). Mrs. Touchett could not only give her this opportunity, but mentor her through etiquette and relationships as Isabel grew up. When first meeting, Mrs. Touchett tells Isabel “if you will be very good, and do everything I tell you, I will take you [to Florence]” (27) and Isabel tells her she cannot promise that. Mrs. Touchett still ends up taking Isabel abroad, because Isabel is “fond of her own way,” (27) a trait that resonates with Mrs. Touchett. At this moment their mentorship begins. As a mentor she provides a character that Isabel does not necessarily aspire to be, but can learn from. Isabel quickly realizes Mrs. Touchett “doesn't expect one to like her. She doesn't care whether one does or not,” (47) often demonstrating a harsh and insensitive attitude relating to a stereotype of maleness. While Isabel appreciates and likes Mrs. Touchett because of this, she does not wish to inherit these qualities. Isabel is very sensible and sensitive, yet still strong and independent similar to her mentor. This stark contrast shows the personality difference in types of strong, independent females. This could be seen as a suggestion from James that stereotypical, gendered personality traits should not affect the way a female is perceived. Mrs. Touchett is also the matriarch of her immediate family and the only one living by the end of the novel. Her husband and son, Ralph, are barely capable of moving around their house, Gardencourt. This makes Mrs. Touchett the only member of her immediate family capable of living, traveling and practicing her independence whenever necessary. As a result of this, Isabel finds her time at Gardencourt boring; however she realizes she is “less advanced in life and less enlightened by experience than Mrs. Touchett” (60) and should embrace Mrs. Touchett’s sense of independence whether in Gardencourt or Florence. Mrs. Touchett also seems to affect Isabel’s opinion of marriage for many years, stating “I should be sorry to play her such a trick” (44). This view of marriage as a trick, as well as viewing Mrs. Touchett’s relationship, influences Isabel to believe in marriage as

a roadblock. Isabel, in turn, tells other people, including many suitors “I don't wish to marry...I shall probably never do so” (160).

As a mentor the most important thing Mrs. Touchett teaches Isabel is to be cautious in marriage and not rush into any relationship. Mrs. Touchett is not in love with her husband. He does allow her the freedom to travel as she wishes; Mr. Touchett is not a cruel man, but it is clear if she had the choice she would not be married. She spends half her time away from Gardencourt in Florence or traveling Europe and America. From the beginning Mrs. Touchett notices Isabel is a similar type of person who does not wish to be held down by anything, including marriage. James acknowledges, though, that in this world it is difficult for a woman to not be married. Mrs. Touchett is there to remind Isabel that there is more to life than men, but also marriage does not have to be a trap. A woman does have the ability to redefine marriage based on her own terms, as Mrs. Touchett has done. She is also there to keep the spirit Isabel has intact, even if that means getting into arguments based upon manners towards men. Mrs. Touchett is not there to make sure Isabel does not marry, but to influence her to make the right decision if she decides to marry.

Henrietta Stackpole is a mentor from America, Isabel's homeland. When introduced, she is considered truly American, always sticking up for her country over any of the European opinions. This is in contrast to many of the other characters like Isabel and the Touchetts, who think very highly of Europe compared to America. Henrietta is close in age to Isabel, but a force towards whomever she comes into contact with, making her an acceptable mentor for Isabel. Henrietta tries to teach Isabel to stick up for herself and speak her mind even if it is an unpopular opinion. This often contrasts to the guidance of Isabel's other mentors who try to teach her proper European etiquette. Isabel seemingly often does not pay attention to the path Henrietta is

trying to take her down. Although Henrietta is respected by Isabel, she is also very dramatic which Isabel recognizes. When talking about marrying a European Henrietta says “if you marry one of these people I'll never speak to you again,” while Isabel responds “before making so terrible a threat you had better wait till I'm asked” (168). When Isabel allows Madame Merle to guide her into a marriage with Osmond, Henrietta was the first person to tell Isabel that “she liked [Osmond] no better than [Isabel's] other admirers” (303). Since she did not like Isabel's other admirers this certainly is not much of a compliment. The main difference with Henrietta as a mentor, compared to Isabel's other mentors, is that she speaks her mind and is also an avid women's rights activist. She provides a totally different path of guidance for Isabel away from societal conventions. As *The Portrait of a Lady* progresses, it seems as though Isabel is also a mentor for Henrietta. This shows a mentor-mentee relationship can be reciprocal. Henrietta meets Mr. Bantling and decides to marry him, after telling Isabel all the negative aspects of marriage. Henrietta is aware Isabel is in an unhappy, loveless marriage yet Isabel does not discourage Henrietta. Discouraging Henrietta would display more of a friendship than a positive mentorship. These mentorships allow the characters to learn from each other's advancements and also mistakes. Henrietta is also shown as a more forceful mentor figure. Instead of guiding Isabel, she often pushes situations onto Isabel. Casper visits Isabel multiple times because “Mrs. Stackpole let [him] know” where Isabel was and even tells him she “would be willing to see [him] (155) even though this is grossly untrue. As a mentor she means well, but instead of allowing Isabel to make her own decisions, Henrietta attempts to make them. This is a more hands on type of mentorship, expanding further upon the mother-daughter undertone in many female-to-female mentorships. As a women's rights advocate, Henrietta also wants what is best for Isabel. To her it seems as though Isabel and Casper could be a good, supportive couple.

Although she does not always support the decisions that Isabel makes, she continues to try and give her empowering alternatives even as Isabel pushes her away. The evolution of Henrietta as a mentor to Isabel shows James's evolution of a women's rights activist and the idea that what matters in the end is fulfillment of each individual woman.

Madame Merle is seemingly a strong, powerful female character. At first, she seems to be another mentor to Isabel. James utilizes Madame Merle to demonstrate the possibility of a fake, disguised mentorship and length some people will go to if it means fulfilling their own needs. Her manipulation demonstrates that James does not believe all strong female characters are strong mentors, or even good people. Madame Merle appears to be "a woman of strong impulses kept in admirable order" (179) to Isabel. Immediately Isabel is drawn to her personality and outward sense of confident independence. Madame Merle is about keeping up appearances she believes "a large part of [herself] is in the clothes [she] choose to wear" (205). This is a demonstration of what James hates about society at the time, especially where women are involved. Madame Merle stands for a very materialistic and empty way to succeed in life as a woman. James is interested in the inner self and how females grow through the development of their mind and aspirations. Madame Merle stands as a representative of what James hates about a social, feminist approach. Isabel ends up married to Osmond because of Madame Merle's influence as a mentor. Marriage is often still expected in society, especially as a woman of high status. Although through this Madame Merle does create a new goal and path for Isabel, it is based on the detrimental goals society imparts on a woman. This displays how not all female "mentors" are true, good intentioned mentors because they are female. As usual, to Madame Merle mentorship is just an external disguise rather than a significant, important bond in the life of a female. Madame Merle is driven by material interests and quickly drags Isabel into this life

and away from her aunt. James seems to criticize this externally possessive way of living, especially as Madame Merle states “One's self—for other people—is one's expression of one's self; and one's house, one's furniture, one's garments, the books one reads, the company one keeps—these things are all expressive.” (205). Material things such as furniture and dresses should not dictate how a female is perceived, as Isabel replies “My clothes may express the dressmaker, but they don't express me” (206). Although Isabel did not catch on at first, she eventually realizes Madame Merle is not the type of person she should allow to influence her. Madame Merle exploits Isabel on a daily basis using her in order to get closer with Osmond as well as gain more material items and trips. When Isabel realizes Madame Merle's motives she tells her “I think I should like never to see you again” and Madame Merle agrees quietly stating “I shall go to America” (572). This is the first time Isabel truly frees herself from the negative influences around her. Her ability to grow and lead up to this moment demonstrates that although she did not always listen to her other mentors, such as Mrs. Touchett and Henrietta, she has gained a lot of knowledge and inner strength from their advice and help. Isabel's consistent sensitivity shines through even while Madame Merle controls and plays with her.

There are many other figures that cannot stand as sustainable mentors for Isabel. These include Caspar Goodwood, Lord Warburton and Gilbert Osmond. As said before when describing a mentor, they cannot have any interest of love for one another. Even if Isabel did not truly love these men, they love her. Romantic ideas and emotions conflict the idea of an actual empowering mentorship. First, Caspar Goodwood chased Isabel because he had an odd obsession with her. He did not come to Europe to help her or guide her; he came for his own selfish reasons and made that clear from the start. Caspar states in a letter to Isabel “[y]ou will remember that when you gave me my dismissal at Albany, three months ago, I did not accept it. I

protested against it...I had come to see you with the hope that you would let me bring you over to my conviction” (101). Casper is adamant on changing Isabel’s opinion on marriage and relationships, at the time. He wants her as his wife, and in order to do so he must convince her to change the opinions he believes she has against marriage. Isabel asks him again, and again to leave and stop writing and he never does. Somehow, Caspar always ends up showing up again. This is also different from the positive mentors in Isabel life because they leave when she no longer wants them there. After the falling out Isabel has with Ralph and Mrs. Touchett over her marriage, they leave her alone until she comes back to them. Mrs. Touchett travels the United States while Ralph stays at home deteriorating. Even then he does not request Isabel until the time is right for both of them. Caspar appears in Isabel’s life when he needs to beg for her love. This selfishness makes him a completely unsuitable mentor. He also takes what he wants such as when he kisses Isabel, “she felt his arms about her and his lips on her own lips. His kiss was like white lightning...But when darkness returned she was free” (604). Casper tried to trap Isabel instead of free her mind and allow her to develop in the way she wished. If anything, these interactions disturbed and damaged Isabel’s progress, especially with Caspar’s inability to realize no means no.

Similarly her husband, Gilbert Osmond, could not be a mentor to Isabel. She sees him as a possible option before they get married because of the appearance he puts forth. Osmond is very high cultured, although he no longer has much money. Isabel, at first, sees him as someone she can possibly learn about high culture and class from. In all reality, though, Osmond stands for a very manipulative and exploitative type of male as well as human. He believes in a certain way to raise and treat females, unfortunately for Isabel as well as his daughter, Pansy. Osmond stands in the way of Isabel and does not listen to her. Unlike Isabel’s other true mentors who

allow her to be herself. Mrs. Touchett still brings Isabel abroad after Isabel said she cannot promise to always listen. Henrietta still talks to Isabel after she gets married, even though she highly disagrees with it. Osmond believes the worst of Isabel even telling her the tasks he wishes to complete “won't be easy, with you working against me” (485). The real damage he inflicts as a negative role model is towards his daughter Pansy. He believes she is “a little convent-flower” (262). Whenever she acts up, instead of mentoring her through her mistakes, he sends her to the convent to think about her actions. Pansy is a teenage, not a five year old, yet Osmond gives her the respect someone would give an uncooperative child. Osmond is broodingly jealous of every male that has shown an interest in Isabel, including Ralph. Ralph is an incredibly positive mentor towards Isabel yet all Osmond can say is that Isabel is visiting a dying Ralph “to take a revenge on [Osmond]” (549). These mentors are destructive to Osmond's goal of destruction. He cannot control Isabel if she has actual ideas of independence and ownership of herself floating around in her head. When Isabel goes to see Ralph as he is dying, Osmond tells her “If you leave Rome today it will be a piece of the most deliberate, the most calculated, opposition” (549). Even in their last encounter he cannot seem to support her. At this time it is abundantly clear to Isabel that Osmond cannot be a helpful mentor or even a loving spouse, he is the exact opposite. He wishes to own the females in his life so they can provide him with a life, but he will not give the same support and possible happiness in return.

As the authorial figure in the novel *Portrait of a Lady*, Ralph stands out as the male entering a world many believe to be strictly female. Ralph is a demonstration that James emphasized the qualities and characteristics of a human, not their gender. As Isabel's cousin, Ralph acts as a mentor and counterpart in sensitivity. Unlike the other male characters in the novel, such as Osmond and Casper, Ralph is driven by emotion and heart which makes him a

strong influence in Isabel's life. Ralph, although occasionally able to travel, has always been in an "enfeebled condition," (36) deteriorating more every year. Marriage is not an option for Ralph because of his poor health. This makes him ineligible to be a romantic partner, but eligible to be a very helpful mentor. Possibly because of this ingrained mindset, unlike so many others, Ralph did not want Isabel to get married unless her marriage was set in a foundation of love. He had his father give Isabel a small fortune because "[i]f she has an easy income she'll never have to marry for a support. That's what [he] want[s] cannily to prevent" (187). Many men of this time would mock a woman who did not marry, no matter what the reason. Instead, Ralph supported Isabel in her quest and believed in her more than any of the other mentors did. Unfortunately, to be a single woman in nineteenth-century society was not so simple. Ralph, as a mentor, has such good intentions that he does not see differences in gender. Isabel still cannot be truly free if she is not married, because she is still a woman. Ralph looks at Isabel as an intellectual rather than an object and helps her foster this. When first meeting her he states "'you apparently have a great passion for knowledge... you strike me as different from most girls'" (46). Ralph acts as a distant authorial figure, unlike Isabel's other more hands-on mentors.

The way Ralph acts towards Isabel mirrors James's wish to "worship Minny from a quiet and discreet...distance" (Edel 77). In the novel Ralph's main objective is to always mentor the independence and passion in Isabel, rather than extinguish it as Osmond does. This is something James wanted to foster in Minny Temple. He could not foster it as much as he wished to because of their distant and separate schedules. Since Temple did die so young and was sick for many years, she did not get to live the life she wished to live. James utilizes Isabel to give Temple the life she could have had if she did live. Instead of imparting the pain of tuberculosis onto Isabel,

James imparts it onto his own authorial figure, Ralph. This allows Isabel to continue living a life and also affecting the lives around her. This includes the life of her step-daughter, Pansy.

The empowerment of a female mentor-mentee relationship is strengthened as the mentee becomes the mentor. This happens when Isabel becomes Pansy's step mother. Pansy is a scared young girl ruled by a very demanding and expectant father. Although she may never possess the strength Isabel does, Pansy begins to feed off of Isabel's presence and influence. Pansy believes she "shall always obey" (326) Osmond; this is how he raised her, he is all she knows. Still, Isabel is able to somewhat infiltrate this bond and help Pansy grow. Isabel "saw the poor girl had been vanquished" (569) by the end of the novel. Pansy is arguably why Isabel goes back to Osmond and Rome. She is not as strong as Isabel and cannot advocate for herself against her father. Pansy is the one good commitment that came out of Isabel's relationship with Osmond. James is not saying a male cannot be a proper mentor to a female, but the character of Osmond is not suitable as a mentor for his daughter, Pansy, especially as a parent. Pansy is not meant to be "a little convent-flower," (262) yet her father calls her that and sends her to the convent for his own enjoyment. Her father uses this as a form of control over her, not to impact her in any positive manner. Isabel comes into Pansy's life to strengthen her and help her be the best woman she can become. James makes it a point to create round characters that are different from each other and often modeled off of the women in his life. Pansy is not meant as a stand in for an independent female but rather a young girl that needs the influence of an independent mentor. By utilizing Isabel as a mentor when she has always been a mentee, James is continuing the cycle of these relationships and the influence they have on females.

*The Bostonians* and the Complication of Marriage

As James moves past *The Portrait of a Lady*, his views regarding these mentorships and feminism expand and change. Between 1880 when *The Portrait of a Lady* was published and 1884 when James began to write *The Bostonians*, the feminist movement really began to take off politically. This provided James with a new and interesting topic to analyze and critique. In the United States large scale protests were becoming more frequent. At the end of 1869, fifteen years before writing *The Bostonians*, the American Women Suffrage Association was formed (PBS). Although this can be seen as many years before he decided to begin writing *The Bostonians*, the conventions and protests that came after became more widespread and well known as the time passed. These movements became so large and impactful, that just seven years after *The Bostonians* was published, the first state in the United States gave women the right to vote. James wanted to write a novel focused around the feminist movement and the impact it had on females as well as society. It is debated how well *The Bostonians* supports the feminist movement. As Leslie Petty says, “far from seeing in it any fictional resemblance to their activities...many contemporary suffragists and other feminist activists dismissed James’s novel entirely” (377). Although this was the view at the time, many critics like Petty have begun to analyze *The Bostonians* as a feminist novel that supports the movement through a focus on personal freedom and intimate relationships, while critiquing the often rigid expectations of the political feminist movement.

During this period James addresses the rallies, speeches and conformity of the political feminist movement contrasted with the social hierarchy women are a part of. He begins to focus not on political rights but on fostering the freedom of choice women have contrasted with the internal conflict of what is expected of them by others. James continues to utilize the concept of

mentors, but his focus shifts to the marriage-based relationships that are a part of the novel.

These relationships demonstrate the power this type of bond can have over a woman, either propelling her forward or pushing her back. *The Bostonians* begins to examine the influence a marriage-based relationship can have on promoting or demolishing the independence of a woman.

*The Bostonians* focuses around the character of Verena Tarrant and Olive Chancellor. Olive is a passionate reformist who takes an interest in developing Verena into one early in the novel. Both women take an immense liking to each other, entering into a Boston marriage. A Boston marriage is seen as a long-term relationship between two women who are very close to each other and unmarried. The women were generally independent of anyone else and relied on each other only for mutual love and support. Conflict arises as Verena begins to show interest in marriage. Basil Ransom, Olive's cousin, falls in love with Verena and aggressively pursues her, which Olive despises. Verena has many other suitors, also, which develops a constant struggle between Olive and the movement versus Verena's suitors and marriage. In the end Verena does end up with Basil Ransom, a seemingly controversial decision James makes. However Verena can also be seen as what James wished his sister, Alice James, could have had in life, a variety of options to choose from.

Alice was a very strong woman, with many opinions. More importantly for the purpose of the novel, she was in a Boston marriage with a woman named Katherine Loring. Alice is often written off because of the mental health issues she suffered through most of her life. However, she is a very smart and capable woman who was just not healthy enough to stand on her own two feet. In this way she can be seen as similar to Verena, while Katherine is Olive. Katherine was the caretaker for Alice after Alice's parents died. Specifically, after the death of Alice's father,

“in a state of collapse, [she] had been taken in by Katherine Loring” (Edel 284). A few years later in 1884 Alice moved to England in order to be taken care of by both Katherine and Henry. This is the exact time James began writing *The Bostonians*. With the arrival of Katherine into Henry’s life, Edel says “one might say that the figure of Olive Chancellor in *The Bostonians* had appeared upon the novelist’s very doorstep” (288). The situation between Olive and Verena closely mirrors that of Katherine and Alice. By marrying off Verena in the end, James is possibly alluding to what Alice’s life could have been like if she did not have the health issues. This is similar to what he does in *The Portrait of a Lady* with his representation of Minnie Temple. Unfortunately, Alice died six years after the *The Bostonians* was published. James solidifies her essence within his novel, though, as he does with many of his close family and friends.

The idea of mentorship is still seen within *The Bostonians*, aside from the idea of marriage. In *The Bostonians* if any character could be considered an outside mentor to the women, it would be Mrs. Birdseye. Unfortunately, Mrs. Birdseye serves a very smart and caring older lady, but an ineffectual mentor. She is very supportive of the feminist movement as a reformist, but her old age tends to get in the way of her ability to give good advice. Olive looks up to Mrs. Birdseye very highly, stating “[s]he is one of our celebrities. She is the woman in the world, I suppose, who has labored most for every wise reform...she was one of the earliest, one of the most passionate, of the old Abolitionists” (James 19). Mrs. Birdseye believed she could convert men into feminism, and instilled this view into Olive and the other younger feminist abolitionists. In this way she is an ineffective mentor because instead of allowing any difference of opinion, she often needs to be seen as correct. Her passion and idealism gets in the way of her ability to respect individual differences. These differences are important in female mentorship because, in the view of James, feminism is about propelling women forwards through their own

ideas of fulfillment, rather than holding them to a generalized set of standards. The minute Mrs. Birdseye saw Verena, she “rested her dim, dry smile upon the daughter, who was new to her, and it floated before her that she would probably be remarkable as a genius...[t]here was a genius for Miss Birdseye in every bush” (30). Mrs. Birdseye loved taking on new women into the movement; it was her passion to make other women believe in what she believed about the movement. This does not give the females she attempts to mentor a fair chance to learn, though, because there are so many of them that Mrs. Birdseye attempts to look over. In her old, wise age she is seen as a mother of their movement. Her relationships with the women are focused on what they can do for her in order to make their feminist movement a continued success. Although Mrs. Birdseye is incredibly caring, she sees the women she takes in as beneficial, rather than people she can improve in order to make them happier. James is highly critiquing the political feminist movement in this way. Although he is very affectionate towards developing the character of Mrs. Birdseye, he also makes it clear that she is not the most effective type of person up until her death. Her passion for reform made her think everyone else had a similar passion, including Basil. Mrs. Birdseye died with the belief that she mentored Basil into supporting the women’s movement, stating “he will be proud to have helped” (387). Although she is a strong, caring woman, she could never effectively mentor Olive or Verena because of her jaded belief towards the movement.

On the other hand, in contrast to most of the other female characters in the novel including Mrs. Birdseye, Olive Chancellor’s sister Adeline, strongly believes in the standards of conventional marriage. Unfortunately, she cannot seem to get another man to marry her. She serves as the type of character who is actually a detriment to the feminist movement. James utilizes her as a foil to Verena to show that Basil has other options of marriage that he could

pursue if he did not have true feelings for Verena, a supporter of the movement. Women like Adeline push the movement back because of their old school ideas, ways and values. Adeline is a widow, but is also only in the middle of her life and wishes to remarry. Adeline believes men like Basil “expressed her own ideas about everything so vividly” (150). She believes her sister Olive is “very dreadful” (75) in continually arguing about politics and her feminist movements, instead of what really matters, which is men. Adeline will condemn Olive’s feminist reforms against marriage to anyone who will listen. Although she is not a main character, Adeline is a good demonstration of an old-school nineteenth-century woman who does not wish conventional marriage would ever change. She enjoys the chase and the thought of being with someone else. Adeline even makes strong advances towards Basil: “she wrote him little notes every other day...proposed to drive him in the Park at unnatural hours” (152) and committed many other bold acts just so she could try and obtain a conventional husband. She continues to do these even when Basil remarks that she is “neither very fresh nor very beautiful, so he could not easily have represented to himself why she should take it into her head to marry” (151-52) him. Although Adeline, unlike many other characters, attempts to stick to a conventional marriage she is rejected by Basil for no longer being young or pretty enough, and also being manipulative. Basil represents the conventional husband in *The Bostonians*. He is everything a feminist or unconventional wife, such as Olive, would hate. Adeline criticizes her sister’s motives because she is one of the many women who genuinely do not want a positive female change within the century. These women enjoy being housewives who appease their husbands and are afraid of a possible transformation. This representation, though, does not detract from the characters like Olive who do fight towards gender equality and against conventional marriage rules. James does an excellent job laying out different characters that represent many opinions during the

nineteenth-century transformation. Adeline is the one female who acts as a foil to most of the others women within the novel because of her negativity towards any type of female movement.

Verena Tarrant is the most controversial character in *The Bostonians* because she is stuck between supporting the feminist movement, but also wanting to marry. She fights for equal rights, not just in marriage, but in life. Yet, she is married the entire novel. In the beginning this marriage is between her and her friend Olive Chancellor, but by the end of the novel she finds herself married to Basil Ransom. Verena has many suitors throughout the novel that would be good alternatives to Basil, who does not support her involvement in the feminist movement. One of the suitors is Henry Burrage, a rich lawyer. Mr. Burrage is “a handsome youth, with a laughing, clever face, a certain sumptuousness of apparel, an air of belonging to the “fast set”—a precocious, good-natured man of the world...” (118). James makes a point to describe the appeal of Mr. Burrage as a very eligible suitor for Verena. As they continue to talk it is shown that Mr. Burrage is also supportive of the women’s movement. He even goes as far as asking Verena “if she wouldn't at least appoint some evening when they might listen to her” (131) give one of her speeches. Throughout the novel he continues to pursue Verena, share her interests and learn more about her. Olive, of course, does not like this relationship either because she sees that it could possibly lead to marriage. Verena and Mr. Burrage do not marry because she had no passion towards him. This is what differentiates these suitors from Basil. Verena is not looking for marriage just to marry. Mr. Burrage is arguably the most eligible suitor in the entire novel, yet Verena realizes she has no interest in him as anything more than a friend. This is unlike one of her other suitors, Basil, who she has a genuine interest in and attraction to.

Basil provides a different view towards marriage in *The Bostonians*. He is a very controversial character and highly disliked by Olive, being the leading political feminist of the

novel. From the beginning Basil realizes Olive does not like him, and Adeline tells him the only reason Olive invites him over is “because she wanted [him] to know [Adeline]--she thought [Adeline] would like” (76) Basil. He believes in traditional marriage roles and traditional roles of women, which is what Olive despises the most. He is the traditional male that the feminist party is fighting against. This makes it even more heart breaking to some when Basil ends up with Verena. However, Verena ends marrying Basil because she has a true sexual attraction to him. It is very difficult for her to accept this, since this relationship is highly discouraged by many. Her marriage to Basil even bothers many critics, such as Alfred Habegger. He says Verena is a poor display of a female fighting for independence and against marriage because Basil “is right about Verena’s nature...and Verena’s final cave in” (Habegger 338). Basil made assumptions about Verena being weak to his advances when trying to pursue her, and those assumptions seemingly proved correct when she married him. Their relationship is based off of true feelings and attraction, which is what complicates these complaints.

Basil shows his affection towards Verena more than enough, even going out to Cambridge in order to see her again and win her affections. When Adeline questions Basil about Verena stating, “are you in love with that creature” (162), Basil just laughs; he knew from the start that he does love Verena. Both parties had multiple other eligible suitors, but they wanted each other. Verena loves the idea of independence, as she says, “you can’t tell [women] to go and mind their husband and children, when they have no husband and children” (James 261). On the other hand, the idea of marriage to Basil also intrigues Verena because “she knew him and she adored him” (301). This relationship is based off a natural, sexual attraction that all humans have. This mirrors the confusion of many women in the nineteenth-century attempting to figure out what independence truly is, and how they can fulfil their own desires effectively within

relationships. During these radical political movements many women were told that marriage is not independence, even though some of the main leaders in the movement, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, were married. Verena is an example of a woman during this time who is confused and unaware as to what she wishes to have. Marriage is still a valid option and Verena realizes the advantage of being married as an “immense interest” as well as an “eternal heartache” (301). However, Verena also believes that she is dedicated to the fight towards equality which means she cannot be married to Basil, who does not support the movement, as well as accepted into this movement in Boston. Verena decides to marry Basil, following her own sexual attraction and entering a relationship “so far from brilliant” (350) but, at the same time, what she wants to have. Verena’s attitude and position, especially at the end, upset many women of the nineteenth century, including those involved in the feminist movement themselves. As a writer in the “Women’s Journal” says, Verena is simply a “silly performer” (Habegger 341). I do not believe Verena is just a performer, though. She also displays the struggle many women face in the nineteenth-century, what path of life to follow when they have an interest in being a mother as well as a reformist. With so much attention focused on Verena and Basil, what is often ignored is the controlling, equally detrimental marriage-based relationship Verena has been in with Olive Chancellor for the majority of the novel.

Olive, Verena’s Boston-marriage partner, seems to be dead set against conventional marriage with the belief that “women are superior to men” (James 34). Olive is more opposed to marriage to a man, rather than the idea of a marriage itself. She does not believe in a conventional nineteenth-century marriage where the man is the sole caretaker. However Olive is already in a marriage herself, a Boston marriage with Verena. Beyond that, Olive takes the place of the dominant, controlling figure in this relationship, which is exactly what she speaks out

against. Olive, in the beginning, does not have the confidence to rely on only herself. She receives her strength from controlling another. The second Olive and Verena really began to talk “it was this glance that was the beginning; it was with this quick survey, omitting nothing, that Olive took possession of her” (77). This creates a very toxic environment for Verena, rather than a mentorship or even a supportive friendship. Although Olive’s feelings for Verena are not outwardly stated as deeper than friendship, there are instances where a Boston marriage can be seen. Towards the end Olive and Verena have a very intimate encounter, as Olive approaches Verena she “slowly, took her in her arms and held her long—giving her a silent kiss” (293). This also demonstrates who is usually controlling the relationship, Olive.

Olive is arguably the stronger of the two females, although her journey throughout the novel helps to lead her to her own independence, which she does not fully understand in the beginning. In the beginning of the novel Olive utilizes Verena as a crutch because she does not believe she can be as charming. Although Olive might really love and appreciate Verena, she is essentially using her for her own fulfillment. Olive is very smart but she does not feel like she can speak to crowds publicly and effectively, which Verena can. Olive is no better than Basil; both are using Verena to fulfil their own desires in different ways. However, Olive’s desires will help an entire movement while Basil’s desires are singular and selfish. Even though he is interested in the aspect of politics as Olive is, he has very closed-minded opinions. What makes Olive an interesting representation of a nineteenth-century woman is, in the end, she is okay with being alone. Olive is left by everybody, yet she still reminds them all “she had no intentions of quitting the game,” (307) the game against conventional marriage roles, against men like Basil Ransom. Olive ends up giving a speech at the end of the novel, finally finding her own voice in her “rush to the front” (349).

Verena is constantly afraid to lose Olive and ends up having to choose between Olive and Basil, “to give him up or to give up Olive” (301). Verena has never known the independence that comes without a commitment or marriage because the relationships in her life are so controlling. On the other hand, Verena’s fulfillment comes from relationships; she is a very social type of being. This is why she can speak to a crowd so proficiently, but cannot come up with the material that Olive can create. She consistently answers to someone, whether it is Olive or Basil. Olive also shows that the violent control of a relationship often shown by men can also be performed by women. Olive controls every single thing Verena does. She questions Verena, often about Basil, asking “shall you be--very much of the time--with Mr. Ransom?” (234) Through these questions, Olive expects Verena to listen and know the proper response to give Olive, like a doll or conventional housewife. When Verena does not listen, Olive acts out, sometimes “with a sudden violence” (289) towards Verena, no different than the men Olive condemns. James utilizes Olive as a tool of irony to demonstrate a woman who completely dominates the woman she loves. This is often the critique against males; however, here James is presenting the female version of this to contrast this often generalized opinion on many males. Both of these relationships demolish Verena, not because they are something she loves and wants, but because their influence is equally selfish in their own different ways.

Although the end of the novel can be viewed as sad since Verena “was in tears” (436), it can also be viewed as a bittersweet fulfillment. Both women end up with what they truly want. Some critics, such as Habegger, see Verena as upset at the end because she is now married, almost against her will. I believe that this is not what James meant. The entire novel focused on Verena having to choose between companionship and attraction. Verena is never against marriage, and cannot deny her attraction towards Basil; she is not being taken away against her

will. Verena can be seen as upset because she disappointed Olive, and in this one action their companionship is broken. Olive finally breaks out of her shell once Verena leaves. James makes it very clear that the end of this relationship does not ruin her. Olive's fulfillment comes from supporting her passion of feminist reform. Verena's fulfillment never came from that, it came from the relationships and real human connections she is a part of. James focuses on the fact that both females end up with what their desires truly are, which is his view of what feminism is.

In *The Bostonians* James is not speaking out against feminism, or the feminist movement. There are critics of James who argue *The Bostonians* cannot be seen as a feminist text. Alfred Habegger states "the male Jameses' two-generation struggle against nineteenth-century feminism and free love has endowed twentieth-century American readers with a gravely distorted picture of some of their most farsighted political forebears" (Habegger 341). In his time Habegger was arguing that the entire James family distorted the empowerment of feminism. This argument is seemingly solely based on "Basil's view of women" (339) and treatment of Verena. The female characters in *The Bostonians* all have their own personalities concerning marriage and relationships. Some, like Olive, are against marriage because they believe it is not considered 'feminist'. Others, like Verena, find fulfillment in the idea of a family. Mirroring a lot of this novel off of his sister Alice, it would make sense that James is dreaming of what her fulfillment would have been. Since he did not always have the best relationship with Alice's Boston partner, Katherine, James is imagining what Alice's life could have been like had she not been so sick and reliant on others the entire time. Verena is a demonstration of all the options James wishes Alice could have had. *The Bostonians* is a conversation of the options involving marriage, independence and relationships in the nineteenth-century, not an anti-feminist text.

Finding Fulfillment in *The Golden Bowl*

As James aged, his thoughts and writing style continuously evolved. Although he still often focused his writing around women and marriage plots, his ideas of where and how these women would end up continued to change. Around 1900, about 14 years after *The Bostonians* was written, James entered what critics say is his final phase of writing, his major phase. In this phase James wrote three of his most extensive and critically acclaimed novels before dying in 1916 (PBS). His writing style has evolved in complexity, and begins to focus on the description of the thoughts, feelings, and environments of the characters he creates. Rather than focusing on dialogue and brief description, James heavily relies on in depth, complex description. This also allows him to include his own view points as the author, rather than utilize a character as the authorial figure, as he does with Ralph in *The Portrait of a Lady*. One of the novels where he demonstrates this is *The Golden Bowl*. *The Golden Bowl* combines many of the stages of writing that James went through. The novel is set in England, but often references America and the differences of each location. It follows an unconventional marriage plot as well as social hierarchy and titles. In this novel it is clear James has continued to evolve his thoughts on topics previously brought up in both *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Bostonians*. In his previous stage, James focused on the political aspect of feminism through novels like *The Bostonians*. During this stage he continued to evolve his idea of female mentorship from *The Portrait of a Lady*, which can be seen through Olive and Verena's relationship. Instead of utilizing many mentorships, James begins to focus on only a few important ones. As James continues his thoughts in this last stage of writing, he seems to come to a conclusion about his idea of feminism most likely influenced by the females in his life, as well as his previous writing.

In *The Golden Bowl*, James utilizes competitive relationships between his female characters, to drive his theory of an evolving female independence and fulfillment. While doing this James acknowledges through Maggie Verver that independence is the fulfillment of desires, whether it is towards domesticity or away from it. James is acknowledging that the control of the domestic life can be a form of independence for females. Independence does not have to rely on complete freedom from any marital connections, or a political movement. It can start at home, or in any place the fulfillment of a female's wants and desires can be accomplished.

Around the time of *The Golden Bowl*, James was spending even more time with Edith Wharton than usual. Their relationship "seems to suggest...a directness, an openness and freedom-and truth" (598). This relationship allowed James to truly analyze Wharton as she is. Wharton was an unconventional Victorian novelist, often focusing on the struggles of unhappy females, and can be seen as a new woman novelist of her time. James and Wharton were very close to each other and often utilize each other to discuss what the other was writing. It would make sense that James models a character on Wharton, especially because she is so progressive for the time. Those familiar with Wharton's writing know that her lead females are often unfulfilled and attempting to find their desires without appeasing the needs of everyone else. One of Wharton's characters in *The House of Mirth*, Lily Bart, is arguably very much like Charlotte. Charlotte is a lead female in *The Golden Bowl* who is very independent, but also indecisive, similar to Lily. Lily, like Charlotte, cannot always decide what she wants out of life. There is a constant struggle between what her personal desires are and what society tells her each personal desire should be. This is also a topic of discussion in *The Golden Bowl* as Charlotte navigates her way through the game she and Maggie play. Charlotte loves the Prince and wants to be with him, but marries Mr. Verver. Lily Bart has many options for marriage, but throws them all away. In

the end Lily ends up dead and Charlotte is exiled, both unfortunate circumstances. *The House of Mirth* is composed only a few years after *The Golden Bowl*. Wharton, as many novelists are known for, tends to take parts of herself and instill them into her characters. James rendition of Charlotte is incredibly close to these characters of Edith Wharton. With how much time James and Wharton spent together it makes sense that one of his characters would be modeled after her, especially such a conflicted, independent female.

Charlotte is Maggie Verver's opposite in *The Golden Bowl*. As Hilary Schor says "if you took the edge out of Charlotte's irony...she might seem another Isabel Archer, challenging the world, asking it to meet her high expectations" (240). Charlotte, at least at first, is seemingly the heroine of this novel which makes it more difficult for Maggie to succeed as a leading female character. Her liveliness and curiosity drives people towards her, she is a more approachable and outgoing person. Charlotte is very aggressive from the start and clear about what she wants. Unlike Maggie, Charlotte believes in more than just a simple life of domesticity. Although she does not ever totally write off marriage or children, this kind of life does not fall into her path. After marrying Adam Verver, Maggie's father, Charlotte is no longer happy. One day she chose not to take her husband's carriage in the rain just because "it [made her] feel like [she] used to...when [she] could do as she like" (James 219). Charlotte values her ability to be independent and alone. Marriage, in her opinion, takes that away from her. Mr. Verver does not care for the parties and ability to travel that Charlotte seems to enjoy. Although Charlotte claimed to come back to England for Maggie's wedding, it is clear she came back for her relationship with the Prince. The entire time Charlotte pretends to be Maggie's friend in order to make her relationship with the Prince less suspect. Charlotte knows what she wants, and she uses this knowledge to further her agenda. James utilizes Charlotte as a "New Woman" type of character. During the

1890's new women were described as "intelligent, educated, emancipated, independent and self-supporting" (Diniejkko). James instils all of these qualities into Charlotte and also makes her middle class, another characteristic of a New Woman, in comparison to Maggie, who is rich. Charlotte is not the direct representation of a new woman, because she does conform to marriage which is something they did not believe in. I would argue that Charlotte can be considered a New Woman because, within the novel she is a "female heroine who [fights] against the traditional Victorian male perception of woman" (Diniejkko). This demonstrates how Charlotte is modeled closely to Edith Wharton.

Mrs. Assingham, as a friend and potential mentor, tries to take Charlotte under her wing the minute she arrives in London. She insists Charlotte stays at her house stating "I can't have her...alone at an hotel'" (James 29). Soon, though, the reader finds that Charlotte is just as sneaky with Mrs. Assingham, as she is with everyone else she interacts with. Charlotte hides the fact that she came back to England for the Prince, not Maggie, from Mrs. Assingham. Instead of being thankful for the shelter and guidance Mrs. Assingham provides, Charlotte turned on her creating an even more difficult situation for all the relationships she is a part of. The first setting Charlotte is introduced in is Mrs. Assingham's house. As previously mentioned, since Charlotte is not very well off socially or economically, Mrs. Assingham allows her to stay over her house while she is in England. As James does with many of his female characters in previous novels, both Charlotte and Mrs. Assingham seem to form a mentor type relationship together very early on. Charlotte seems to lack any form of actual family to learn from. Charlotte is able to have open conversations with Mrs. Assingham about what is going on while she is in England. As the novel progresses, though, it seems as though Charlotte is using Mrs. Assingham to get closer to the Prince. The first time Charlotte and the Prince see each other again is in Mrs. Assingham's

house and their relationship only progresses further from there. The moment Mrs. Assingham sees how they interact with each other, she tells her husband Charlotte “wants...to see the Prince again” and questions “what does she want it for” (49). This is a red flag in their possible mentoring relationship from the start, and Mrs. Assingham sees this. A mentor-mentee relationship is based on trust, any possible manipulation on the end of a mentor or mentee breaks this trust and therefore breaks the mentorship. This push away from mentorship makes sense in the respect that Charlotte is a type of New Woman. Her emphasis on self-sufficiency and independence would drive her towards getting what she wants on her own, rather than with the support of anyone else. Once Charlotte fully renews her relationship with the Prince, her relationship with Mrs. Assingham becomes less important. This bothers Mrs. Assingham who notices the peculiar change in dynamics. Their relationship, as well as any possible mentorship, ends at a party because Mrs. Assingham attempts to confront Charlotte about the Prince. Mrs. Assingham does not believe Charlotte’s behavior is appropriate, and does have some knowledge of the extra-marital relationship they are having. Charlotte, already against the help Mrs. Assingham could offer, does not wish to hear her opinion. Their conversation ends with Charlotte remarking “you forsake me at the hour of my life when it seems to me I deserve a friend’s loyalty...it’s least of all worthy of you to seem to wish to quarrel with me in order to cover your desertion” (192-93). Mrs. Assingham tries to help Charlotte finally tell the truth, but Charlotte turns this into a play of guilt using Mrs. Assingham’s kindness against her.

Charlotte’s push against Mrs. Assingham presents the fact that not all young females wish to have mentorships. Pushing a mentorship onto someone can be detrimental to any type of relationship. In this shift James seems to be commenting that although he believes mentorships to be important, they may not always be necessary. The focus of each individual woman, their

independence, and their fulfillment is what is important in terms of a feminist context. On the other hand, James does not support the fact that Charlotte committed adultery, even if it is towards her fulfillment. He is an advocate of strong morals, and the new women method does not always provide this. Framing Charlotte as a New Woman would explain his controversial distrust in her by the end of the novel. Mrs. Assingham could have helped Charlotte from making some pivotal mistakes, but that is not what Charlotte wants. James is demonstrating a type of independence presented through the New Woman phenomenon of the 1890's through allowing his female characters to have whatever relationships they wish to have. Charlotte seems to represent "women's desires for independence and fulfillment" (Diniejkko) which is a key aspect of the New Woman movement at the time. Although there is clear evidence through all his novels that a mentor relationship is beneficial, it is up to the female to decide if they want one; nothing is forced upon them.

James, in the beginning of *The Golden Bowl*, spends a lot of time focusing on the idea that Maggie is unsure of what she truly wants. Maggie spends a lot of *The Golden Bowl* attempting to figure out who she is, eventually realizing the Prince has always been what she has wanted. In this way Maggie is not a symbol of the New Women movement. Maggie seems to be not as strong as the other females in the novel. In comparison to the other females analyzed in James's novels, such as Isabel and Verena, Maggie really is not as strong. James does not make her a fighter, but she does represent the average wife that exists in abundance in real life. Maggie is a representation of the type of independence the everyday woman wants. She is not a bland type of person, as the Prince says "her exquisite colouring drops... They were of the colour of her innocence, and yet at the same time of her imagination" (8). The issue is that the Prince's narrative dominates most of the first book. In this way the Prince creates a sense of inability to

take Maggie seriously as a contributing member of society. He thinks of her as a five year old, occasionally painting a picture with a different color. In his opinion, what Maggie says and expresses to him is the equivalent of what his child would say to him.

As passive as the Prince truly is, he does not allow Maggie to show him what she wants or that she can be independent, in the way she wishes to be. Maggie wants to be the princess to her prince, who stays home to take care of her husband. She utilizes her designation as a princess more so to fuel her desire to be a wife in control of the domestic space her family is in, rather than a tool to increase her social status. Domestic life for Maggie is her independence, rather than complete social or political freedom. Characters such as the Prince and Charlotte underestimate Maggie because they believe this is a weakness instead of a form of independence. By the end of the novel, Maggie takes control of the situation and her entire life with the help of her mentor, Fanny Assingham. In allowing Maggie to take control of her situation, James is commenting on society's generalization to write off a female in support of a domestic life as against the feminist movement.

Maggie's friendship with Mrs. Assingham is very beneficial to her. Mrs. Assingham attempts to be a mentor, but ends up being more of an older friend to Maggie which is equally beneficially to a young female trying to discover herself. Maggie is a lot more outwardly timid and lost in comparison to her friend Charlotte, who Mrs. Assingham also attempts to mentor. This also makes her more open to the help and advice of others. In Book 2 of *The Golden Bowl* Maggie begins to form a much stronger relationship with Mrs. Assingham than in Book 1. It is clear from the beginning that Maggie trusts Mrs. Assingham since she started the relationship Maggie now has with the Prince; "she had *made* [their] marriage" (16). In Book 1 Mrs. Assingham is very influential to the Prince, and talks to him even more than she speaks

with Maggie. This allows Mrs. Assingham to obtain a more rounded view of the relationship the Prince and Maggie have. When Maggie begins to go to Mrs. Assingham in Book 2, she automatically begins improving as a person, in the ways she wishes to. Mrs. Assingham builds Maggie's confidence often using "figurative language [that] is largely mocking and actually serves to emphasize that the male characters are quite passive and powerless" (Phipps 240). James is not reverting from a male's ability to enter into this female movement of independence, but rather critiquing different types of males. Ralph in *The Portrait of a Lady* is able to improve Isabel, while the Prince and Mr. Verver do not do much of anything within *The Golden Bowl*. Mrs. Assingham's critique of the men helps raise Maggie's confidence in fulfilling her own personal desires.

Maggie is much more receptive to a constructive friendship with Mrs. Assingham than Charlotte is. In this way, James is still demonstrating his belief in the benefit mentors can provide to mentees. Further, by showing the personal success Maggie gets from this mentorship James is commenting on the pitfalls total independence, as well as the idea of a New Woman, can present. He allows each female to have a choice, but still seems believe in the power of mentorship to further fulfillment and personal growth. At their first dinner party together "in truth partly by [Mrs. Assingham's] help, intelligently, quite gracefully accepted, that the little princess, in Maggie, was drawn up and emphasized" (349). Mrs. Assingham tries to utilize her influence with Maggie to repair Maggie's marriage. This give and take of advice between the two helps to display a positive and evolving mentorship, working towards what Maggie wishes to accomplish, being the perfect princess to the Prince. The climax of this mentorship in the novel comes when Maggie realizes Charlotte and the Prince have a relationship of their own. This is when the conversations between Mrs. Assingham and Maggie become very deep, because

Maggie has nobody else to go to. She expresses to Mrs. Assingham that she is “bewildered and tormented, and that [she] has no one to speak to but [her]” (384) because she feels so betrayed by Charlotte and the Prince. James constructs this relationship coming to the realization that all Maggie truly has is her mentor. Everyone else in her life is jaded, dishonest, or in the dark. This relationship with Mrs. Assingham becomes important to propel forward her confidence and independence. Maggie’s form of independence and fulfillment is through a relationship caring for her husband, a life of domesticity. This is what Mrs. Assingham helps her achieve by the end of the novel as Charlotte is forced to depart for America again. James is not trying to create relationships with his female characters promoting total rebellion of gender stereotypes. He is attempting to create relationships of support so females can work towards what they believe their personal independence and fulfillment is.

The constant push, pull and manipulation of relationships and ideas of what independence is for women in *The Golden Bowl* causes a major rivalry between Charlotte and Maggie. Although not a mentorship, this type of female relationship creates an interesting dynamic that does allow both characters to grow. This rivalry is not seen at first. When Charlotte arrives she says it is because “I’ve been thinking of Maggie, and at last I yearned for her. I wanted to see her happy” (39). Both ladies are seemingly very friendly, but also use each other to further their own motives from the start. Charlotte uses Maggie as an excuse to see the Prince again after leaving him. Maggie uses Charlotte to give her father a wife, something she believes he needs now that she is married. Maggie expresses to her father “it used to be right that you hadn’t married, and that you didn’t seem to want to” (126) but now it is different because Maggie is married. This can also be construed as a misunderstanding between Maggie and Charlotte. Maggie’s idea of independence revolves around marriage, children and being in control of the

domestic sphere. Charlotte's idea of independence revolves around her ability to go to parties and travel freely, without the constraint of another person telling her what to do. The rivalry of these conflicting ideas is similar to the rivalry happening while James is writing *The Golden Bowl*. The women's suffrage movement that was happening focused on the belief that women should be able to take whatever jobs they want, have the ability to not marry and generally be able to create a new idea of life and independence for themselves. This was shown through the political protests shown in *The Bostonians*, but also through women like Maggie taking charge of their personal and social situations. Both parties did not always agree with the tactics of the other, although they were generally fighting for the same idea. James is demonstrating this conflict, through Maggie and Charlotte, while supporting the idea of independence in the domestic sphere as well as the new ideas of independence from anything viewed as a constraint for females. This rivalry is only subtly displayed at first as James continues to develop Maggie and Charlotte, leading up to their ultimate set of goals and differences.

As the novel progresses, James makes it clear in the second section that any friendship Maggie and Charlotte had is no longer intact, as each of them begins to realize the manipulation of the other. Instead their relationship turns into a series of tests in order to see who knows what, and who will win the men in the novel. In the first book Charlotte is in control, but the night that opens the second book is "the night when Maggie moves herself, like an overlooked pawn in a chess game, into an unexpected position, a position from which she can begin gathering useful which is also to say threatening—knowledge" (Schor 240). This metaphor describes the relationship Maggie has with Charlotte, a constant game. Maggie made a conscious decision to fight for what she wants, which changed the entire game Charlotte had already started to play. Charlotte and Maggie seemingly both want the Prince. Maggie, more so, seemingly wants to

fulfil her desire of being a wife more than her desire to love the Prince. As Gregory Phipps says “Maggie is certainly acting out of jealousy, as her passion for Amerigo only starts to ‘vibrate with a violence’ (p. 330) when she becomes aware of her competition with Charlotte” (243). Amerigo is a tool of fulfillment for both females, but in different ways, which engages the competitive spirit of both females. On the other hand, both want Mr. Verver in a more platonic way. Charlotte could possibly love Mr. Verver, but his oddly intimate relationship with Maggie always interferes. She feels wronged by Maggie who wants to monopolize both the Prince and Mr. Verver. This leads to Charlotte’s belief that her relationship with the Prince is not entirely wrong. Maggie is extremely close with her father, but she cannot successfully have such a close relationship with both her father and her husband as much as she may like to. Once Maggie finds out about Charlotte and the Prince, her pursuit of Charlotte becomes central to the novel. James utilizes this knowledge to help Maggie blossom into the strong, independent female figure that she has the potential to be. Maggie decides and chooses her own relationships and circumstances in this instance, picking her marriage over a relationship with her father. She goes as far as to convince him to go to America stating “‘your reputation *there*? You've given it up to them, the awful people, for less than nothing; you've given it up to them to tear to pieces, to make their horrible vulgar jokes against you with’” (493). This is the first grown-up decision Maggie seems to make, cutting the ties from her adolescent relationship in order to help her new marriage. This rivalry is not based on a pure hatred or dislike of each other, but instead a lack of similarities and difficulty understanding each other’s differences and progression in life. A pure hatred does not lead to development, but both Maggie and Charlotte grow from their rivalry. By the end of the novel Maggie won “the golden fruit” (566), the Prince, but “they were parting, in the light of it, absolutely on Charlotte's *value*” (564). Maggie learns to stick up for herself and develops a

backbone. On the other hand, Charlotte still gains the ability to possibly start a family with Maggie and her influence out of the way. Despite this growth, neither female seems truly fulfilled, though, which can be attributed through the symbolism of the actual golden bowl.

The golden bowl becomes the main focal point of the story symbolizing many of the cracked relationships. Both Maggie and Charlotte are attracted to this bowl even when they are told of its possible imperfections. Similarly, Maggie and Charlotte are attracted to broken relationships not only with each other, but with the passive male figures involved in their lives. Charlotte is originally told by the Prince that the bowl “has a crack” and “it's exquisite. That's the danger” (89). The Prince is describing the intertwined relationships in the novel with these few words. This is why even after her conversation with the Prince, Charlotte still has an attraction to the bowl. Later in the novel, Maggie uses the bowl as a pawn in her game with the Prince acknowledging it is cracked, and it shatters just as the Prince walks into the room. Maggie, Charlotte, the Prince and Mr. Verver have all been trapped in this golden bowl and when it shatters so do all of their relationships. At this time the Prince realizes Maggie knows about his relationship with Charlotte. This is symbolic of the shattered bowl because now all the relationships are shattered and the game cannot possibly continue. Charlotte and Maggie lived in this cracked existence for as long as possible, but as progressive women they needed to make a decision. This decision is symbolized by the bowl shattering and Maggie sending her father to America with Charlotte. This bowl also represents the males in the novel. Charlotte did not buy the bowl because of the Prince's influence and their connection to it, and Maggie bought the bowl for her father. This brings up the question in the end of who really is the stronger female. Some critics believe the end of the novel shows that Maggie has won. The Prince tells Maggie “I see nothing but you,” yet Maggie does not reply and only experiences the “pity and dread”

(567) of his eyes. Neither Maggie nor Charlotte ends up completely happy, although they do end up with some of their desires.

By ending the novel this way James is identifying the negative effects of these competitive, misunderstood female relationships. By working together, through the willingness to understand and positive mentorship, females can obtain their own independence and fulfillment. By leaving both female characters somewhat unhappy, but continuing to keep the male character passive, James is making a statement on what needs to change in the movement as a whole, as well as what he believes women deserve and should strive for. Women deserve their own individual fulfillment that is empowered by positive relationships. Without this it will be difficult for the movement to successfully continue to empower women while gaining them rights.

## Works Cited

- "A Henry James Timeline." *PBS*. PBS, n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2014.
- Boren, Lynda S. "'Dear Constance,' 'Dear Henry': The Woolson/James Affair-Fact, Fiction, or Fine Art?" *Amerikastudien* 27.4 (1982): 457-66. Web. 4 Dec. 2014.
- Diniejko, Andrzej. "The New Woman Fiction." *The Victorian Web*. 17 Dec. 2011. Web. 18 Mar. 2015.
- DiRenzo, Marco S., Christy H. Weer, and Frank Linnehan. "Protégé Career Aspirations: The Influence Of Formal E-Mentor Networks And Family-Based Role Models." *Journal Of Vocational Behavior* 83.1 (2013): 41-50. *PsycINFO*. Web. 15 Dec. 2014.
- Edel, Leon. *Henry James, A Life*. New York: Harper & Row, 1985. Print.
- Gloria Fromm. "Alice in Jamesland." *The Henry James Review* 10.2 (1989): 84-86. *Project MUSE*. Web. 25 Jan. 2013. <<http://muse.jhu.edu.libserv-prd.bridgew.edu/>>.
- Habegger, Alfred. *Henry James and the "Woman Business"* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989. Print.
- Habegger, Alfred. "Henry James's Rewriting Of Minny Temple's Letters." *American Literature: A Journal Of Literary History, Criticism, And Bibliography* 58.2 (1986): 159-180. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 4 Dec. 2014.
- Habegger, Alfred. "The Bostonians And Henry James Sr.'S Crusade Against Feminism And Free Love." *Women's Studies* 15.4 (1988): 323. *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 30 Apr. 2014.
- James, Alice, and Ruth Bernard. Yeazell. *The Death and Letters of Alice James*. Berkeley: U of California, 1981. Print.
- James, Henry. *Notes of a Son and Brother*. New York: Scribner, 1914. Print.
- James, Henry. *The Bostonians*. London: Penguin, 2000. Print.

James, Henry. *The Portrait of a Lady*. New York, NY: Signet Classics, 1995. Print.

James, Henry, and Virginia Llewellyn Smith. *The Golden Bowl*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983. Print.

LeClair, Robert C. "Henry James And Minny Temple." *American Literature: A Journal Of Literary History, Criticism, And Bibliography* 21.1 (1949): 35-48. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 4 Dec. 2014.

Petty, Leslie. "The Political Is Personal: The Feminist Lesson Of Henry James's *The Bostonians*." *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 34.5 (2005): 377-403. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 20 Apr. 2015.

Phipps, Gregory Alan. "Desire, Death, And Women In The Master-Slave Dialectic: A Comparative Reading Of Hegel's Phenomenology Of Spirit And Henry James's *The Golden Bowl*." *Philosophy & Literature* 35.2 (2011): 233-250. *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 1 Apr. 2015.

Schor, Hilary M. "Reading Knowledge: Curiosity In *The Golden Bowl*." *Henry James Review* 26.3 (2005): 237-245. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 1 Apr. 2015.

Schwiebert, Valerie L. Deck, Mary D. Bradshaw, Monica L. Scott, Pamela Harper, Melanie. "Women As Mentors." *Journal Of Humanistic Counseling, Education & Development* 37.4 (1999): 241. *Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection*. Web. 15 Dec. 2014.