

Lambert Strether's position in *The Ambassadors* is, in my view, a metafictional allegory for James's techniques of authorial perspective. As Donald Stone notes, "It was James's contribution to fiction that [...] he not only codified the subjective nature of the novelist, but transformed the hero of fiction into a limited [...] observer."<sup>170</sup> James effectively expresses his authorial consciousness in a novel that courts a more complicated delegation of positional plays between reader, author, and subject. Thus, I disagree with William Stowe's assertion that *The Ambassadors*' theme of "how life can and ought to be lived" presents problems for which neither the novel's subject nor author "has a solution, problems that challenge the reader to [sic] reexamine the very valuation of European experience which the texts seems also to be promoting."<sup>171</sup> Considering James's formal virtuosity, it becomes clear that James has more to express to the reader than the "valuation of European experience."<sup>172</sup> Indeed, I hope it has been made clear over these last pages that "the solution" for how "to live" is fixed in Jamesian aestheticism. James broadcasts a double perspective that simultaneously engages the aesthetic along the social fissures of modernity, producing "masterpieces of presentational technique"<sup>173</sup> to cite Malcolm Bradbury. Because the author can stage himself through the consciousness of the fictional subject, there is, of course, a tendency to deploy the observer-protagonist figure. Strether, after all, belongs to a broad company of observer characters in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century fiction, and one needs only consult the works of other American masters such as Hawthorne and Poe to recognize the wealth of similarities.<sup>174</sup> As my study here is limited to James and *The Ambassadors*, regretfully, I could not dedicate more time to laterally compare visual technique across the canon American Literature.