

*Original Paper*

Encoding the Circumambient Psychological Moment: Clause  
Relations, Parallel Structures and Alliteration in Henry James'

“The Ambassadors”

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**Abstract**

Henry James' “The Ambassadors” might be termed an Impressionist Suspense Novel in that the action of the novel centers on the shifting impressions and groping for hidden meaning in the mind of its main character, Lambert Strether. The subtle changes in Strether's struggle for understanding are registered in a series of intense encounters with Chadwick Newsome, and his lover, Madame Marie de Vionnet and are communicated to the reader in the complex syntax of James' prose. This article will examine James' use of four linguistic devices to render character portraits and signal shifting impressions: clause relations, parallel grammatical structures, lexical repetition and replacement, and serial alliterative modifiers.

**Keywords**

Henry James, clause relations, lexical repetition and replacement, parallel grammatical structures, alliteration, complex noun clause, stylistics

**1. Introduction**

Henry James' “The Ambassadors” (1903) is a novel of suspense, but what hangs in the balance is not life or death, as in the typical suspense, but the outcome of a noble bet made by two middle-aged characters. The outcome of this bet will determine whether the remainder of their lives is to be spent in dignity and fulfillment or disgrace, in the case of one character, and penury in the other.

The two middle-aged characters in question are: Lewis Lambert Strether, a 55 year old magazine editor who returns to Europe after a long absence at the behest of his wealthy fiancée and patron, Mrs. Newsome, with a very specific mission: to persuade her son, Chadwick, to break from his lover. She is

the second character, Madame Marie de Vionnet, a sophisticated and cultured divorcee who is deeply in love with Chadwick. Despite Strether's initial firm resolve to view her in the light that Mrs. Newsome does, as a "ferociously interested person", and to deal with her as such, Madame de Vionnet eventually captivates him. What also effects a great change in Strether's perceptions of the affair he has been sent to end is the change he observes in Chadwick himself. Under Madame Marie de Vionnet's influence Chadwick has become much more polished and urbane, and this, together with Strether's growing admiration of Madame Marie de Vionnet herself, transforms Strether's attitude towards the affair.

The noble bet made by the two characters is that Chadwick will stay in Paris and marry Madame Marie de Vionnet, thereby honoring the gift of cultural enrichment she has bestowed on him, and vindicating the great risk Strether has taken in renegeing on his commitment to his patron and fiancée Mrs. Newsome.

"The Ambassadors" has been called an Impressionist novel because much of the drama and action occurs within the mind and perceptions of its lead character, Strether. The vivid impressions made on him by the artistic and cultural beauty of Paris and of Madame Marie de Vionnet's person and milieu form a key part of the action in that they precipitate what is the central event of the novel, the change in Strether's perceptions of the affair and the shift in his loyalties. This article will examine a set of linguistic devices used throughout the novel by James to enhance the impact on the reader of Strether's impressions during key dramatic moments in the story. The linguistic devices are clause relations, parallel grammatical structures, lexical repetition and replacement, and serial alliterative modifiers.

## 2. Literature Review

One defining feature of Henry James' late period, which included 1903's "The Ambassadors", is what has been termed "difficulty". Chatman has described this as "abstractness" (Chatman, 1972 in Moss, 2014, p. 14). Moss (2014) argues one source of the difficulty is syntactic complexity characterized in part by a high concentration of subordinate clauses (2014, p. 75). One purpose of this syntactic complexity is to "simulate the process of the mind, the manner in which an individual apprehends or perceives an idea—and to engage the reader in that process" (Menikoff, 1971, p. 436). Cross (1993) points to the "constant flicker and spill of meaning" (Cross, 1993, p. 1) in James' sentences and suggests that complex sentences compel the reader to share characters' unsettled thought processes. Trotter (1993) stresses that the difficult syntax characteristic of James became a defining feature of the Modernist writers he so influenced and argues.

A speaker or writing aiming at optimal relevance will try to ensure that his or her utterance can be interpreted without too great an expenditure of effort. However writers sometimes go out of their way to make things more difficult. For example, a periodic sentence structure, which withholds the main constituent and requires that subordinate or dependent constituents be held in the mind until its belated appearance, places a considerable burden

on the reader's short-term syntactic memory and thus achieves its effects at great cost (Trotter, 1993, p. 69).

Trotter's finding echoes Watt's (1960) analysis of the first paragraph of *The Ambassadors* in which delayed specification of referents was found to play an important role.

Cross (1993) emphasizes clause relations as an important source of meaning, using the term "doubling" to refer to sentences in which "a proposition is expanded or contradicted in second and subsequent main clauses" (Cross, 1993 in Moss, 2014, p. 76). Regarding "The Ambassadors" in particular, Cross found that long clausal and phrasal constructions were used for single grammatical functions within the sentence (Cross, 1993).

Leech (2008) argues that such unusual linguistic usages typically serve a stylistic purpose called "foregrounding" which he defines as "a deviation, or departure, from what is expected in the linguistic code" (Leech, 2008, p. 3). Leech and Short (2007, p. 81) underline the importance of such anticipatory structure in James' ability to "pin down the psychological moment in the full complexity of its circumambient conditions". Short (1996) stresses that "If a part of a poem is deviant, it becomes especially noticeable, or perceptually prominent" (Short, 1996, p. 11). One important technique of foregrounding according to Short is repetition and parallelism including alliteration and assonance, and Short argues that parallel items tend to be linked in the reader's mind (Short, 1996 in Moss, 2014, p. 19).

Eastman (1984) defines "parallel structures" as "a principle of expressing similar thoughts in duplicate grammatical structures" and stresses that "it can be applied to structures of all ranks" (Eastman, 1984, p. 210). As an example, he offers the following example: I wanted *to cry out, to complain* in courts of law, *to lead* an indignant army.

Winter (1994) defines "clause relations" as the "sequential relations between clauses, both inside the grammatical domain of their sentences and immediately outside this domain, whose sequence may be further signaled by conjunctions, lexical repetition and replacement of the clause (Winter, 1994, p. 46).

Winter gives the following examples:

- 1) The symbols *seem easy to the point of glibness*. So does the skepticism that repeatedly informs them.
- 2) No Russian *wants to conquer the world*. Some Americans *do*, on the best crusading grounds.
- 3) *The bee didn't get tired—it got dead*.

### 3. Method

The current study applies what Leech and Short (2007) call a "multilevel approach to style" (p. 26) to investigate how James' linguistic and syntactic choices generate stylistic variants, "alternate conceptualizations of the same event" (p. 27). In particular, the use of clause relations, lexical repetition and replacement, parallel structures, alliteration and assonance are analyzed to ascertain how these

linguistic and syntactic choices contribute to signaling the shifting perceptions and alliances of the characters.

#### 4. Findings and Discussion

In this section a series of key passages from the novel is presented to demonstrate James' use of the target linguistic and syntactic devices and to analyze how they contribute to character and plot-development and shifting psychological dynamics between characters.

##### 4.1 Parallel Structures: *So finely Brown, so sharply Spare*

James' use of multiple modifiers often creates complex noun phrases and clauses and the effect of these can be either to signal an equivalent intricacy of shifting impressions in a complex social situation, or a humorous incongruity between complex descriptive structure and ridiculous character behavior or situation. In the opening chapter of Book 1 we meet three of the main characters, and James' liberal use of complex noun phrases and clauses, serial modifiers, parallel structures and clause relations conveys with an economy of words a range of subtleties in the interpersonal dynamics and character quirks that bring the characters vividly to life. Figure 1 shows extracts from this opening chapter dealing with use of devices in character descriptions with type of device identified.

**Figure 1. Book 1 Linguistic Devices**

Character Description	Type of Device
He was burdened, poor Strether with the oddity of a double consciousness. There was <b>detachment</b> <i>in his zeal</i> and <b>curiosity</b> <i>in his indifference</i> (p. 56).	Parallel Structure
She had, this lady, a <i>perfect plain propriety</i> , an <i>expensive subdued suitability</i> (p. 59).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Parallel Structure</li> <li>●Serial Modifiers</li> <li>●Alliteration</li> </ul>
each <i>so finely brown</i> and <i>so sharply spare</i> , each confessing <b>so</b> to <i>dents of surface</i> and <i>aids to sight</i> , to a <i>disproportionate nose</i> and a <b>head delicately</b> or <b>grossly grizzled</b> , [that] they might have been brother and sister (p. 60).	Parallel Structure

In each of these passages parallel structures are used. In the first, paradoxical character traits belonging to Strether are described. Typically "zeal" is characterized by a strong focus and attachment to some particular purpose, course of action or viewpoint, but here this trait is countered by an equally salient diametrically opposed character trait, Strether's habitual detachment and second-guessing of himself. Similarly curiosity and indifference are virtual antonyms. Taken together these two word-pairings suggest a character often at cross purposes with itself, a quality that will play out in myriad situations

and encounters as Strether struggles to find some coherent course of action that will honor his commitment to Mrs. Newsome while doing justice to Madame Marie de Vionnet. The second passage gives the sense of a painter rendering a portrait with a few quick evocative strokes, an effect heightened by the rhythm and stress pattern. The description features a pair of adjective triplets with the first two in each triplet, “perfect, plain” and “expensive, subdued” followed by an adjective converted to noun with the same suffix, “propriety”, and “suitability”. The alliteration of hard consonant “p” in “perfect, plain propriety” and the strong stress on each word also captures the attention, and the rhyme of the final suffix adds to an overall rhythmic and even musical quality. The lady in the description is Maria Gostrey, an unmarried 33-year-old American expatriate who gives the following humorous description of her occupation:

I’m a general guide—to “Europe”, don’t you know? I wait for people—I put them through.  
I pick them up—I set them down. I’m a sort of superior “courier-maid”. I’m a companion  
at large. I take people about (p. 65).

Maria and Strether hit it off straightaway, Maria recognizing in Strether a kind and decent man who is somewhat adrift in life. The third and most elaborate passage has a complex pattern of parallel structure and alliterative multiple modifiers and establishes numerous connections and similarities between the two. “So finely brown and so sharply spare” describes their physical appearance with lexical repetition of “so” and with parallel structure of adverb then adjective. “So” again appears but syntactical variation is introduced with a change in position “confessing so to—” and again parallel structure, “dents to surface” and “aids to sight”. These latter two phrases, particularly “dents to surface”, carry a metaphorical connotation as well with the “dents” in question suggesting a hint of both carrying similar “battle scars” sustained in the course of their lives. In the final parallel structure, the past participle “grizzled” is modified by a pair of opposing adverbs, “delicately or grossly”, the latter adding alliteration with the “gr” sound shared with “grizzled”. The sense of the word “grizzled” here is likely “grey”, and “grossly grizzled” sounds humorous when “grey” is substituted for “grizzled”. Taken together the passages in this section establish a strong affinity in the reader’s mind between these two characters whose friendship will bring them together at key moments in the novel, and whose final meeting closes and brings closure to the novel.

The third character introduced in Book 1 is Waymarsh, Strether’s stolid and somewhat stodgy travel companion. Waymarsh is a humorous figure in that he utterly lacks any of Strether’s “double-consciousness” or self-deprecation, and is in fact a rigid and unyielding American who does not feel any need whatsoever to adapt himself to his new environment. Indeed, he is quite out of his element in Europe, and one gets the sense of a passive-aggressive curmudgeon suffering himself to be ushered through a distasteful chore rather than a traveller opening himself to stimulating discoveries:

He struck his visitor as *extremely*, as almost *willfully uncomfortable*; The **discomfort** was  
**in a manner contagious**, as well as also **in a manner inconsequent** and *unfounded*...On

their first going up together to the room Strether had selected for him Waymarsh had looked it over in silence and with a sigh that represented for his companion, **if not the habit of disapprobation, at least the despair of felicity** (pp. 69-70);

This passage is densely concentrated with lexical repetition and parallel structures. The parallel adverbs “extremely” and “willfully” are both attached to adjective “uncomfortable”. The “uncomfortable” adjective is repeated with a slight modification as noun “discomfort”, and the phrase “in a manner” is also repeated with additional adjectives “inconsequent” and “unfounded”. Finally the similar phrases “if not the” and “at least the” are used with parallel structures “habit of disapprobation” and “despair of felicity”. Taken as whole this description, composed of a series of parallel structures and amplified by this structural symmetry, gives a detailed and amusing impression of Waymarsh as being quite stubbornly unwilling to adapt, or as Strether later terms it, “float in”, the unfamiliar European environment. His hostility extends even to his hotel room. The reader’s sense of humorous incongruity between Waymarsh’s usual “handsome, fine silent” bearing and his aura of pitiful helplessness when forced to endure “the ordeal of Europe” is further sharpened in the following passage:

[Strether] found his own part in their relation auspiciously enlarged by the smaller touches of *lowering the lamp* and *seeing to a sufficiency of blanket*. It somehow ministered for him to indulgence to feel Waymarsh, who looked unnaturally *big* and *black in bed*, as much tucked in as a patient in a hospital (p. 74).

The parallel gerund phrases, particularly the complex phrase “seeing to a sufficiency of blanket”, emphasize the humor in the scene, which centers on the elaborate coddling the normally strong and silent (and one presumes, self-reliant) Waymarsh is reduced to requiring to calm and reassure him. The humorous disparity is underscored by the alliterative “big and black in bed”, which conveys the impression of a sprawling, giant lump of a man. The alliteration mirrors the alliteration in the earlier “lowering the lamp and seeing to a sufficiency of blanket”. This overall humorous impression culminates with Waymarsh’s reaction when Strether hints that they may separate for part of their travels: “Waymarsh took it—silent a little—like a large snubbed child. ‘What are you going to do with me?’” Waymarsh’s comical helplessness carries over to the next morning, when his friend stands outside the door of his room to check on him:

(Waymarsh) laid upon his friend, by *desperate sounds through the door* of his room, *dreadful divined responsibilities in respect to beefsteak and oranges* (p. 77).

The alliterative pair of complex noun clauses in italics is perhaps the best example of the humorous mismatch between elaborate syntax and absurd character behavior. The sentence opens with the figurative weight of Waymarsh’s massive, helpless frame poised to collapse on Strether, and for such a strong solid man to be so close to prostration, the reader imagines a comparably terrible burden as the cause of the crisis. As in much of James’ complex syntax, he withholds the main constituent of the sentence until the very end. The reader works his way through the long subordinate constituent and,

finally, reaching the end of the sentence, comes to learn that the root of the crisis is that he needs his standard morning breakfast of beefsteak an orange.

The final example in this extended comic set-piece involving Waymarsh's struggle with the "ordeal of Europe" occurs after he finally summons his courage to venture out of his hotel room into the streets of Paris with Strether for companion and Maria for guide. While Strether is enjoying the stimulation of Paris and "the full sweetness of the taste of leisure",

Waymarsh himself adhered to an ambiguous dumbness that might have represented either  
**the growth of a perception or the despair of one** (p. 80);

In parallel structure "**th—of a—, or the—of—**" the initial phrase's "growth of" is replaced with "despair of" and then "perception" is replaced with "one". This lexical repetition and replacement allows James to convey with a spare economy of words the humor of Waymarsh's "ambiguous dumbness" of exterior concealing two diametrically opposed internal possibilities, flowering of perception or enduring density.

#### 4.2 Alliterative Modifiers: *Quaint and Queer and Dear and Droll*

Strether begins the trip to Europe firmly committed to viewing everything through his fiancé and patron, Mrs. Newsome's eyes. Over time, however, as he sees different aspects of Chad's community of friends in Paris, their immersion in the artistic and cultural wealth of Paris and their dedication to preserving a connection to art and culture even to the detriment of their economic well-being, all of these impressions begin to work a spell on him and do their part in spurring his crossover to Chadwick's camp. One of his earliest glimpses of this elevation of artistic riches over material needs is his encounter with the bohemian and would-be painter, Little Bilham. James renders Strether's impressions of the living conditions and effervescent celebration of art among Bilham's circle of like-minded friends as a free-ranging inventory of details in which the accumulation of alliterative adjectives and parallel grammatical patterns leaves the reader with a rich appreciation of its impact on Strether:

this **reckless** repast, and the *second ingenuous* compatriot, and the *faraway makeshift* life, with its jokes and its gaps, its *delicate* **daubs** and its *three or four* **chairs**, its *overflow of* **taste** and **conviction** and its *lack of nearly* **all else**...the *delicate* **daubs** and the *free* **discriminations** involving **enthusiasms** and **execrations**...they were *red-haired* and *long-legged*, they were *quaint* and *queer* and *dear* and *droll* (p. 147);

The use of alliteration (reckless repast, delicate daubs, enthusiasms and execrations, quaint and queer, dear and droll) lends this catalogue of impressions a rhythmical and musical quality that enhances their force, while the parallel structure (its *overflow* of **taste** and **conviction** and its *lack* of **nearly all else**;) interrupts the stream of sensory details with an ironic glance at the material poverty surrounding the aesthetic riches and bodily deprivation amid the intellectual ferment. This scene marks the first of several in which Strether's encounters with Chadwick's friends in Paris awakens in him the possibility

that there may be treasures for Chadwick in Paris that more than compensate him for what he may lose if he defies his mother.

Another important scene where a similar flood of impressions continues this awakening in Stether occurs at the beginning of Book 6 when he first visits Madame de Vionnet's at her home. Here Stether gets the first full taste artistic and cultural beauty in a private home, and he is fairly dazzled by what he encounters:

The court was large and open, full of revelations, for our friend, of *the habit of privacy, the peace of intervals, the dignity of distances and approaches...intense little preferences and sharp little exclusions, a deep suspicion of the vulgar and a personal view of the right...the consciousness, small, still, reserved, but none the less distinct and diffused, of private honour...filled all the approaches, hovered in the court as he passed, hung on the staircase as he mounted, sounded in the grave rumble of the old bell, as little electric as possible* (pp. 235-237).

Again with the onrush of sensory impressions James conveys to the reader the accumulated power of everything that Stether sees, and by presenting it in a steady series of parallel structures (in the preceding excerpt, the lexical repetitions are shown in bold and the replacements are shown in italics), form reinforces content. Stether perceives in these first moments not only charm and grace, but also a moral sensibility underlying it all that inspires him with respect and even awe. In the conversation that ensues, to this respect for Madame de Vionnet is added a personal empathy with her that all but cements the shift in his loyalties.

She had somehow made their encounter a relation. And the relation profited by a mass of things that were not strictly in it or of it; **by the** *very air in which they sat, by the high cold delicate room, by the world outside and the little splash in the court, by the First Empire and the relics in the stiff cabinets, by matters as far off as those and by others as near as the unbroken clasp of her hands in her lap and the look her expression had of being most natural when her eyes were most fixed* (p. 239).

This elaborate series of parallel structures, lexical repetition and replacement further impresses on the reader the powerful hold Madame de Vionnet manages to gain over Stether's imagination and sympathies in this first encounter. The succession of sensory details incorporates sense of touch (the very air in which they sat, the high cold delicate room), sound (the little splash in the court) and sight (the relics in the stiff cabinets) as well as a sense of history (the First Empire). Finally James turns from the wide-ranging survey of the surrounding exterior living area (concluded with "as far off as") to the inner terrain of Stether's response to Madame de Vionnet's body language and looks (the unbroken clasp of her hands in her lap and the look her expression had of being most natural when her eyes were most fixed). This passage marks a turning point in the novel when Stether moves to the opposing camp and begins to work against his original mission.



### 4.3 Clause Relations in Dialogue

Finally, James uses clause relations in a series of dialogues at key moments in the novel. The earliest such dialogue occurs when Strether first confronts Chadwick with the demand he has been sent to deliver. Strether is still searching for the reason why Chadwick has defied his mother for so long. He alludes to the general assumption held by Mrs. Newsome, her family and even himself as to the reason why:

“But our suppositions don’t matter”, he added, “**if you’re actually not entangled**”.

Chad’s pride seemed none the less a little touched. “**I never WAS That**—let me insist. **I always had my own way**”. With which he pursued: “**And I have it at present**”.

“Then what are you here for? **What has kept you**”, Strether asked, “if you **HAVE** been able to leave?”

It made Chad, after a stare, throw himself back. “**Do you think one’s kept only by women?**” His surprise and his verbal emphasis rang out so clear in the still street that Strether winced till he remembered the safety of their English speech. “**Is that**, ‘the young man demanded’, **what they think** at Woollett?” At the good faith in the question Strether had changed colour, feeling that, as he would have said, he had put his foot in it... “I must say then you show a low mind!” (p. 172)

This is the first sharp pushback Strether gets from Chadwick and the result is that he feels somewhat embarrassed and ashamed by what he has allowed himself to suppose about Chadwick’s motives. In this back and forth between the two men, lexical repetition and clause relations allow Chadwick to take Strether’s own words, repeat them with incredulity at what they imply about his (and Mrs. Newsome’s) unseemly assumptions, and heighten the force of the rhetorical punch he lands at the end. First he takes the clause “if you’re actually not entangled” and replaces “entangled” with an outraged “*that*” then he takes the clause “What has kept you?” and replaces “what” with an equally outraged “*by women*”. Finally he asks “*Is that* what they think in Woollett?” putting the whole weight of his scorn on the one word “*that*”, encompassing the entire preceding series of assumptions in that word and disposing of them summarily. The combined force of this series of clause relations leaves Strether chastened and he begins reexamining everything he had supposed about Chadwick’s motives.

One final important scene near the end of the novel contains two effective uses of lexical repetition and clause relations. The scene occurs in Book 12 chapter 2. With the signs suggesting that Strether has begun to waver in his commitment to pushing Chadwick to break with Madame de Vionnet and return to America, Mrs. Newsome sends her daughter Sarah to Paris to take over. Sarah gives every indication of loathing Madame de Vionnet, refuses to concede that either Madame de Vionnet herself or her influence on Chad are admirable and lets Strether know in no uncertain terms that Mrs. Newsome is finished with him. Madame de Vionnet asks Strether to meet her at her home. The encounter drives

home to Strether the pitifully tenuous position Madame de Vionnet believes her bet on Chad has placed her in.

With this sharpest perception yet, it was like a chill in the air to him, it was almost appalling, that a creature so fine could be, by mysterious forces, a creature so exploited...He presently found himself taking a long look from her, and the next thing he knew he had uttered all his thought. "You're afraid for your life!"

It drew out her long look, and he soon enough saw why. A spasm came into her face, the tears she had already been unable to hide overflowed at first in silence, and then, as the sound suddenly comes from a child, quickened to gasps, to sobs. She sat and covered her face with her hands, giving up all attempt at a manner.

"**It's how you see me, it's how you see me**"—she caught her breath with it—"and **it**" as *I AM*, and **as I must take myself**, and of course **it's no matter** (pp. 482-483).

With this outburst Madame de Vionnet reveals to Strether the full depth of her fear and despair at the possible ending of her relationship with Chadwick. The rhythmic succession of "it" clauses are uttered through sobs broken by continual catching of breath, and with each lexical replacement (*it's how you see me, it's as I am, it's as I must take myself, it's no matter*) the sense of hopeless resignation deepens. A bit later in the same scene Madame de Vionnet acknowledges the deception she and Chadwick had practiced on him in concealing from him how far their relationship had progressed.

"We've thrust on you appearances that you've had to take in and that have therefore made your obligation. Ugly or beautiful—it doesn't matter what we call them—you were getting on without them, and that's where we're detestable. We bore you—that's where we are. And we may well—for what we've cost you. All you can do NOW is not to think at all. And I who should have liked to seem to you—well, sublime!"

He could only after a moment re-echo Miss Barrace. "**You're wonderful!**"

"I'm *old* and *abject* and *hideous*"—she went on as without hearing him. "**Abject above all. Or old above all.** It's when one's old that it's worst. **I don't care what becomes of it—let what WILL; there it is. It's a doom—I know it; you can't see it more than I do myself.**

Things have to happen as they will (p. 484).

Strether's sincere "You're wonderful" is abruptly taken up by Madame de Vionnet who replaces "wonderful" with "old", "abject", and "hideous". Then she lingers for a moment over which of her defects is worse, "**abject above all. Or old above all**". Then she glances at her dim future and discards it with disgust, with two subordinate clauses: "I don't care **what becomes of it.** Let **what will**". With this succession of short, choppy clauses, James enables Madame de Vionnet to demonstrate both her despair and a kind of resilient readiness to deal with whatever disgrace comes of her dilemma.

## 5. Conclusion

The aim of this article was to explore the use of certain linguistic devices in Henry James' 1903 novel "The Ambassadors". The linguistic devices discussed in the article were lexical repetition and replacement, clause relations, parallel grammatical structures, and serial alliterative modifiers. Examination of a series of extracts from the novel found that recurrent use of serial parallel grammatical structure and alliterative modifiers were used to capture the reader's attention by adding rhythm and repetitive consonant sounds to James' descriptions of characters. Parallel grammatical structure were also used in the novel to give a sense of cohesion and symmetry to Strether's free-ranging inventories of external scenes (Madame de Vionnet's home) and descriptions of character subtleties (Little Bilham's bohemian lifestyle, Strether & Maria's character), connecting the external space with the internal qualities of the resident of that space. Complex noun phrases and clauses were used to humorous effect by creating an incongruity between elaborate syntax and absurd descriptive content. Topics for further research include a more systematic corpus linguistic study of James' body of work and exploring corpus stylistics approach to his works.

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