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What Time is “The Next Time”?

Writing, Gender and Temporality in Some Short Stories by Henry James

Bryony Randall

- 1 Henrietta Stackpole, the “reporter in petticoats” of *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881) is surely one of Henry James’s most provocative and lively creations (*Portrait* 137), and, it seems, one of the most perplexing to her creator. In his 1908 preface to the New York edition of the novel, James voices what he assumes will be a question on the lips of his readers: “why [...] in the present fiction, I have suffered Henrietta (of whom we have indubitably too much) so officiously, so strangely, so almost inexplicably, to pervade” (53). The explanation he offers some time later is that Henrietta exemplifies “in her superabundance, not an element of my plan, but only an excess of my zeal,” so that Henrietta “*must have been at that time* a part of my wonderful notion of the lively” (55; my emphasis). With this hedged conclusion, the impression remains at the end of the preface that Henrietta—the character, we might recall, who is given literally the last word of dialogue in the novel—remains something of a mystery to the Master.¹
- 2 *The Portrait of a Lady* is, however, only one of a number of fictions by James featuring a professional woman writer. A significant minority of James’s many “little ‘literary’ tales” (*Complete Notebooks* 154) focus on women writers, and a cluster of four such tales were written, as Kristin King notes “during his relatively brief but tumultuous theater years, when he abandoned novel-writing for a more popular and, he hoped, lucrative market” (18). While all four of these tales—“Greville Fane” (1892), “The Death of the Lion” (1894), “The Next Time” (1895) and “The Figure in the Carpet” (1896)—will be discussed in the course of this essay, the focus is on the temporal complexities of “The Next Time.” As its title indicates, this story foregrounds temporality, both structurally and thematically. This essay suggests an imbrication of the text’s temporal aspects with its depiction of the relationship between gender and writing, embodied in the woman writer. While the text attempts to impose a hierarchical gendered distinction between different temporal

models, its narrative structure exposes the instability of these distinctions such that the story ends up confirming, even despite itself, the potency of the woman writer. Like Henrietta in *The Portrait of a Lady*, the woman writer in "The Next Time" is also "suffered" to "pervade."

- 3 Before embarking on this investigation of temporality in "The Next Time," it is worth placing it in the context of contemporary discourse about women writers. Anxiety about the significant increase in the numbers of women in the literary marketplace, usually articulated in terms of women's lack of genuine literary talent and thus their deleterious effect on literature in general, was ubiquitous at the turn of the last century. As writing became increasingly professionalised around this time, debates about the social, cultural and economic role of the professional writer became bound up with larger concerns about gender roles, as the New Woman became an established figure for ridicule and fear, as well as aspiration and admiration.² James himself made direct contributions to discussions about the role of the professional writer, most famously in his combative response to Walter Besant's "The Art of Fiction" in an essay of the same name, published in 1884. Numerous novels and stories centrally concerned with the question of writerly identity, and often explicitly engaging the question of gender, appeared around this time on both sides of the Atlantic—including, of course, this group of stories by James.
- 4 Nor are the stories unusual in their treatment of women writers. In a useful summary of some of the key elements of this group of stories, Hugh Stevens states that:

Henry James's *fin-de-siècle* tales of writers and the marketplace trenchantly portray the 1880s and 1890s reading public as voracious consumers of money-making trash. Contrasts between the "low" and the "high", the "popular" and the "select", "voluminous" and "artistic" writers, between the vulgar commercial success (usually written by a woman) and the "exquisite failure" (penned by a man) are humorously explored in Henry James's 1895 tale, "The Next Time" in which contempt is shown for *le gros public*. (Stevens 3)

- 5 It is worth qualifying this "contempt" somewhat. These texts were written at a time when, as has been widely noted, James had attempted something more "popular and [...] lucrative" (King 18), in turning to the theatre; as has also been widely noted his attempt failed miserably, so the contempt expressed in these stories for the public taste might legitimately be seen as intermixed with a small helping of sour grapes.³ But whatever the motivation for James's focussing on this particular topic, the alignment of women writers with lowbrow, commercial success is evident, and critical attention to "The Next Time" to date, such as it is, has largely focussed on its reflection of James's frustration with the literary marketplace in parallel with his disparagement of "successful" women writers. This essay adds two elements to the current critical landscape: consideration of the role of temporality, both thematic and structural, in these texts' gender politics; and reflections on the intersection of the role of temporality in the text with its depiction of writing as material and intellectual process.

"The Next Time"

- 6 In common with the three other stories in this cluster, "The Next Time" is a first person narrative delivered by an unnamed narrator, himself a writer. The narrative begins with one Mrs Highmore, a successful—that is, vulgarly commercial—novelist, and friend of the narrator's, approaching him to ask if he would review her latest novel, in which she has

tried to produce "something artistic, something as to which she was prepared not to care a rap whether or no it should sell" (186). She has modelled this attempt on the work of her brother-in-law, Ralph Limbert, who, conversely, had no commercial success, but a great "reputation." He was what she now longed to be (though, tellingly, she wants this "only once," of which more later) —"an exquisite failure" (186). We are also told in the first paragraph that the narrator's "acquaintance with him [Limbert] had begun, eighteen years ago, with [Mrs Highmore] having come in precisely as she came in this morning to bespeak my charity for him" (185). Thus, as the narrator explicitly notes from the outset, it is these two visits which set out the temporal frame of his own narrative: "this romance at any rate is bracketed by her early and her late appeal" (185).

- 7 The story is then structured as one large analepsis. It moves eighteen years back in time and focuses on Ralph Limbert's literary struggles—his attempts to make a career from writing, constantly thwarted by his apparent inability to write anything other than "exquisite failures." When Limbert first meets the narrator, he is engaged to Mrs Highmore's sister, and has written a few novels which brought him no money, but only "tributes that took up his time" (192). Limbert is eventually permitted to marry when one of his novels is serialised thanks to the intervention of Mrs Highmore with her publisher, thus guaranteeing a fixed income for a while at least. Thereafter, Limbert continues to produce novels which achieve critical but never commercial success—despite his stated desire to "cultivate the market" and "be popular" in order to support his wife and children. Limbert and his growing family eventually have to move out of London, living in increasingly straitened circumstances, until finally, inevitably, he dies of rheumatic fever.
- 8 The first section of the story begins "this morning" with Mrs Highmore's visit and ends in the present tense, with the narrator contemplating her manuscript—her attempt at an "artistic" novel. The section peters out into a series of rhetorical questions, both petulant and patronising:

What is she thinking of, poor dear, and what has put it into her head that "quality" has descended upon her? Why does she suppose that she has been "artistic"? She hasn't been anything whatever, I surmise, that she hasn't inveterately been. What does she imagine she has left out? What does she conceive she has put in? She has neither left out nor put in anything. I shall have to write her an embarrassed note. The book doesn't exist, and there's nothing in life to say about it. How can there be anything but the same old faithful rush for it? (189)
- 9 This summarizes the narrator's attitude to both Mrs Highmore's work and to the literary marketplace: the book cannot fail to succeed, precisely because it is just as inartistic, and lacking in quality, as all her previous successes. The narrator puts it this strongly: "the book doesn't exist." What Mrs Highmore produces is so vacuous as to have no substance at all, as literature. What's more, it is identical—a precise repetition—of all her previous work, with nothing left out, and nothing put in.
- 10 The striking use of the present tense makes for a complex temporal relationship between Mrs Highmore's text and the composition of the narrator's tale. The reader can reconstruct the main events of the story (the *histoire*) as having taken place in this order: Ralph becomes engaged to Maud Stannace; Mrs Highmore, his sister-in-law-to-be, asks the narrator to review Ralph's novel (the "early appeal" marking the narrator's entry into the diegesis); then there are the ups and (mainly) downs of Ralph's literary career; and his eventual death. Then comes the day of Mrs Highmore's "late appeal" to the narrator (which happens "this morning," narrated first), after which the narrator states that he takes "a private vow" to tell the story of Ralph Limbert. But it is only the first section of

his narrative which ends in the present tense. The story as a whole finishes in the standard past perfect of fictional narrative. Thus the story must in fact have been completed by the narrator after the moment which is signalled by the use of the present tense in the first section—unless, of course, he returned to this first section to revise it after having written the rest of the narrative out. These speculations on the composition habits of a fictional narrator may seem somewhat spurious, were it not for the fact that the reader is explicitly invited to imagine the narrator crafting the tale: “as I cipher up with a pen that stumbles and stops the figured column of my reminiscences” (185). The opening paragraph presents the narrator in the physical act of writing which is intensified with the shift to the present tense at the end of this first section.

- 11 What this points to is the attempt on the narrator’s part to assert control over Mrs Highmore, control that she eludes both in terms of form and content. She is the more powerful in terms of her financial success in the literary sphere, and her heft in the publishing industry (although these are not successes the narrator claims to admire, they are undeniable).⁴ What is more, as the narrator explicitly acknowledges, “this romance at any rate is bracketed by [Mrs Highmore’s] early and late appeal” (185); the tale is structurally defined by this repeated action. The narrator produces, then, his own version of Limbert’s literary career as a counternarrative to the one framed and controlled by Mrs Highmore and all she represents. This is reinforced structurally by the narrator’s apparently making his own story escape the frame—to write it *after* the visit from Mrs Highmore. But if, as the narrator says, the story is thus “rounded by those two occasions,” then it is necessarily contained by Mrs Highmore’s temporal frame. In addition, the temporal loop created by the emphatic use of the present tense—not used thus in James’s other tales in this cluster (and used infrequently throughout his oeuvre)—serves to undermine his attempt to escape Mrs Highmore’s frame. Her name should perhaps have been a clue—not only “high” but also “more,” this woman appears textually insurmountable. The reader remains in possession of this vivid image: of the narrator sitting, pen in hand, supposedly focussing on the narrative of his friend’s tragic genius but in fact distracted into agonized knots by the question of how to respond to Mrs Highmore’s non-book.

Time: The A and B Series

- 12 The terms “early and late” can now be used to engage Mark Currie’s recent observations about the capacity of fiction to challenge what philosophers and physicists often posit as a rigid separation between two models of temporality; namely, the difference between what are called the A- and B-series conceptions of time. As Currie explains:

The A-series represents a view of a sequence in terms of the past, the present and the future, while the B-series represents the time of a sequence as a block, in which the relations between events are understood as a series of times and dates in which events relate to each other in terms of *before* and *after*. [...] A-theory gives time *properties* (the properties of being present, past or future) while B-theory views time in terms of *relations* (of being earlier or later than). (17, 142)

- 13 Currie gives a meticulous account of the operations of these two series, the differences between theories of narrative fiction which take one or the other view of temporality, and ultimately suggests that “it is one of the great achievements of narrative fiction that it can act as a kind of warning to philosophy against the simplicities of distinctions such as that between the tensed [A-series] and untensed [B-series] conceptions of time” (18).

- 14 The intersection of temporal terminology and narrative structure in "The Next Time" offers a specific example of what Currie might have in mind here: namely, the lack of a rigorous distinction between the A- and B-series. In the A-series, events of the past and the future are "tensed in relation to the present, to now, which is thought of as having special ontological properties" (142). By contrast, in the B-series time is "a sequence of events all of which are equally real, and between which the only relations are those of *earlier than* and *later than*" (142). The narrative of "The Next Time" seems to be caught between these positions. As argued above, the text appears unable finally to escape the framework of Mrs Highmore's early and late appeal. This framework looks as if it is modelled on what might be called a B-series conception of time, presenting time in terms of *relations*. Yet the terms "early" and "late" can only be understood as earlier or later than something else, and as soon as one event is identified as "earlier than" another, then the event it is placed in relation to is implicitly marked as primary, the place from which the other "earlier" event is measured. They have hierarchical implications not present in the neutral terms "before" and "after." Thus these deictic markers can be read as attempts on the part of the narrator to re-locate Mrs Highmore's interventions in relation to the event(s) of Limbert's career, which is on the face of it the valued, primary concern of the narrator. And yet, as demonstrated above, it still remains framed by Mrs Highmore's interventions; in a kind of temporal loop or Möbius strip, Limbert's career is narratively contained by the temporal markers for which it in turn purports to provide the foundational temporal reference-point or origin. The ontological privileging of the present in the A-series conception of time is also evident in the text's emphasis on the present moment, in that passage which invites the reader into the same temporal location as the narrator in the act of writing. But that present moment is, of course, not that of contemplating Limbert or his work, but one which rather, and despite itself, focuses on Mrs Highmore's latest production. The supposed focus of the overt content of the work—Limbert's tragedy—is again undermined, and emphasized here by the striking and unusual use of the present tense.⁵ So the narrator's attempts to assert the A-series conception of time, with its insistence on the ontological primacy of the present is, paradoxically, destabilised precisely by the use of the narrative tense which would normally be assumed to assert this primacy. It is in this sense that "The Next Time" offers—despite itself, perhaps—a challenge to the supposedly rigorous distinction between the A- and B-series.

Relationality

- 15 While the narrative structure of "The Next Time" implies that there is no simple distinction between the A- and B-series conceptions of time, the vocabulary of the text (and of other texts in this group) continues to imply a contrast between these two models of time, and a significantly gendered one at that. For example, the description of Mrs Highmore's "appeals" as "early and late" can be read as an attempt to put her in a position of prematurity or belatedness in relation to Limbert, mapping on to the gender politics of the text which aim to underline the supposed inferiority of the woman writer. Indeed, there is another instance of these terms in the story and one which is explicitly connected to gender. Limbert's wife, the narrator observes, recognised and appreciated his (Limbert's) literary talents, "an assertion I make even while remembering to how many clever women, early and late, his work had been dear" (198). This seems a strange

locution. It can presumably be read as meaning simply "from early in his career" and "from late in his career," or in the distant past, and the not-so-distant past. But the fact that the women, clever though they be, are "early and late" again implies a kind of relationality which places these women in positions of prematurity or belatedness, rather than in the privileged position of absolute contemporaneity with the idolised Limbert.⁶

- 16 A similar, though not precisely identical, set of terms appear in the first story in this cluster, "Greville Fane" (1892), which offers James's most fully developed, and sympathetic (relatively speaking), portrait of a woman writer. This story also opens with a series of events which happen early and late—indeed early and "too late"—in relation to, in this case, the death of the woman writer:

Coming in to dress for dinner, I found a telegram: "Mrs. Stormer *dying*; can you give us half a column for to-morrow evening? Let her off easy, but not too easy." *I was late*; I was in a hurry; I had very little time to think, but at a venture I dispatched a reply: "Will do what I can." It was not till I had dressed and was rolling away to dinner that, in the hansom, I bethought myself of the difficulty of the condition attached. [...]

I came away early, for the express purpose of driving to ask about her. The journey took time, for she lived in the north-west district, in the neighbourhood of Primrose Hill. My *apprehension that I should be too late* was justified in a fuller sense than I had attached to it—I had only feared that the house would be shut up. There were lights in the windows, and the temperate tinkle of my bell brought a servant immediately to the door, but poor Mrs. Stormer had passed into a state in which the resonance of no earthly knocker was to be feared. A lady, in the hall, hovering behind the servant, came forward when she heard my voice. I recognised Lady Luard, but she had mistaken me for the doctor.

"Excuse my appearing at such an hour," I said; "it was *the first possible moment after I heard*."

"*It's all over*," Lady Luard replied. "Dearest mamma!" (433-434, my emphases)

- 17 The very beginning of this story is marked by play with temporal markers. That is to say, the very first paragraph states that the narrator is coming in "late"; he then comes away "early" from the dinner engagement for which he had arrived home "late" to dress, but despite this "early" departure, he fears he will arrive "too late." The instability of the terms "early" and "late" is evident here; or rather their significance only in relation to a time already implicitly established as the right time—that is, the correspondence of the event with the moment expected for it. What is more, the narrator disingenuously identifies a "first possible moment" which is not, in fact, such a moment; it is almost certainly several hours after the "moment" at which he heard that Mrs Stormer was dying. Even the description of Mrs Stormer as "dying" raises questions about temporality, since it is normally understood that one is either alive, or dead, and cannot be both, but the term "dying" implies a liminal, ambiguous state.⁷ The B-series conception of time is to the fore here, since the temporal markers are primarily ones of relationality (early, late), and the first-ness of a "first moment" is undermined. The demands of the present moment—given ontological primacy, of course, in the A-series—do not here appear able to coincide with the moment itself.
- 18 It seems, then, that women in these "women writer" short stories are associated with a relational model of temporality—the B-series—against which male narrators pit their A-series conception. Take, for example, the first few lines of the narrator's description of Greville Fane: "she was more than a dozen years older than I, but she was a person who always acknowledged her *relativity*. It was not so very long ago, but in London, amid the

big waves of *the present*, even a near horizon gets hidden" (436, my emphases). The first sentence implies that Greville Fane did not assert her superiority over the narrator because of her age (or on any grounds at all), while the second sentence appears to be referring to something quite different, namely the difficulty the narrator has in remembering events of only a few years previously. But the fact that both sentences use the vocabulary of temporality foregrounds the distinction between the temporal models they evoke. Once again, relationality is aligned with the female, and the ontological primacy of the present with the male—to the extent that "even a near horizon gets hidden."

Frequency, Iteration, Repetition

- 19 The ontological privileging of the present would imply a series of related, thus valued, temporal concepts, including the unique, the one-off, and the unrepeatable. The title "The Next Time" indicates, on the contrary, repetition. It signals Limbert's attempts and constant failures to succeed "The Next Time" (where "succeed" here is—in Limbert's own terms, eventually—to make money from writing). But—and indeed to risk further repeating—the whole text is structured by a repetition; the repetition of the scene of Mrs Highmore appealing to the narrator to write a review. Furthermore, the text which Mrs Highmore places before the narrator at her "late," second, appeal is a precise repetition of all her previous works, with nothing added and nothing taken away.
- 20 This description of Mrs Highmore's product as a precise repetition of what has come before resonates with the presentation of her literary productivity in terms of physical reproduction; a familiar trope, certainly, but one given particular emphasis here. Mrs Highmore's literary productivity is connected to her failure actually to reproduce: "as if her books had been babies (they remained her only ones) [she] had waited till after marriage to show what she could do, and now bade fair to surround her satisfied spouse [...] with a little family, in sets of triplets" (190). The books-as-babies metaphor continues throughout the story, not only in relation to Mrs Highmore but, in an explicitly gendered way, also to Limbert: "Poor Limbert, in this long business, always figured to me an undiscourageable parent to whom only girls kept being born. A bouncing boy, a son and heir, was devoutly prayed for [but] *The Hidden Heart* proved, so to speak, but another female child" (228). The fact that Limbert does produce actual children, and a number of them, serves to reinforce the implied relationship between Mrs Highmore's commercial success and her maternal impotence—the inverse of Limbert's position—and evokes long-familiar theories, which were reaching a peak around that time, about the malign effect of work, writing, and the work of writing, on women's reproductive systems. The vulgarity of Mrs Highmore's iterations is also expressed in a subsequent deployment of the reproductive metaphor, where her husband is described as having "warmed his rear with good conscience at the neat bookcase in which the generations of triplets were chronologically arranged" (199). This sentence, drawing attention to a taboo part of human anatomy, emphasises squeamishness about the body in general and, by implication, the female reproductive body in particular, imbricated as it is with distaste for iteration, repetition and frequency.⁸
- 21 There are other indications in the text of the lack of regard in which iteration is held, and Mrs Highmore is not always the perpetrator of this crime—indeed, sometimes it is she who detects it. For example, the narrator comes to the realisation that the main reason

Limbert has lost his position as editor of a "high-class monthly" is because of his, the narrator's, own column of "Occasional Remarks" (216). It appears that it is the high tone of these remarks to which the proprietor of the paper has objected—given "in too stiff doses" (216).⁹ But Mrs Highmore, who delivers the news of Limbert's sacking to the narrator, observes that "Your "Remarks" are called "Occasional," but nothing could be more deadly regular: you're there month after month and you're never anywhere else" (217). It is the iteration, as much as the content, of the narrator's column, which is the problem.

- 22 Mrs Highmore appears to agree that aesthetic value is attached to the singular, but this can be qualified. Describing her "late appeal" (which is where the narrative begins), the narrator explains that she

yearned to be, like Limbert, but of course only once, an exquisite failure. There was something a failure was, a failure in the market, that a success somehow wasn't. A success was as prosaic as a good dinner: there was nothing more to be said about it than that you had had it. [...] A failure, now, could make—oh, with the aid of immense talent of course, for there were failures and failures—such a reputation! (186).

- 23 "Of course" Mrs Highmore only wants the failure once, because of the value of the singular, perhaps; but also, presumably, because of the financial implications of repeated failures. Mrs Highmore does not value a transformed literary reputation so highly that she wants to leave her money-spinning days entirely behind her. By contrast, Limbert increasingly develops a reputation among editors as a man "it was well to have the first time: he created obscure apprehensions as to what might happen the second" (198). Obscure they certainly are, since no sense is given of what it is about Limbert's offerings that might generate this apprehension. The text simply states that they are something it is well to have "first," and since there can, in the world of ordinary temporality at least, only be one first, then Limbert is a man it was well to have only once. Again, repetition or frequency of any kind is represented as anathema to Limbert's literary genius. Depending on how one reads it, then, it is either ironic, or on the contrary inevitable, that the final part of the story describes Limbert's painfully prolonged downfall through the production of a series of texts each of which precisely reproduces the last in being total commercial failures—all "girls."

Anticipation and Retrospect

- 24 The title "The Next Time" implies repetition; it also implies anticipation. However, as already noted, this is an anticipation permanently thwarted. The title both orientates the reader towards an event in the future, and implies that this is an event (or a "time") which will never actually arrive. The phrase does not appear in the text itself until towards the end of the penultimate section when, finally, the narrator helpfully summarizes what is meant by it. It is, notably, Mrs Highmore who in fact coins the phrase, saying that Limbert will "try again, with that determination of his: he'll build his hopes on the next time." But as the narrator goes on to observe: "On what else has he built them from the very first? It's never the present for him that bears the fruit; that's always postponed and for somebody else: there has always to be another try. [...] the next time will disappoint him as each last time has done—and then the next and the next and the next!" (219-20). This "attachment" of Limbert's to the future is, thus, strangely fatal to his progress; rather than ever reaching a time in which his achievements coincide with

his aims, his "next times" will, as is clear from the narrator's final iterations—"the next and the next and the next"—always fail to be any different from any of the previous "times."

- 25 The final section of the story is, then, peculiarly protracted, and offers another instance of repetition. In many ways, nothing is added to our knowledge of the story after the end of the penultimate section. The narrator, having asserted that "the next time will disappoint him as each last time has done," goes on to offer confirmation of this prediction in the final section. The delineation of Limbert's gradual decline in this final section, including its repeated descriptions of the failures of his novels—apparently different from each other only in the titles—is all already implied in that phrase "the next and the next and the next." Thus the detailed description of each instance appears somewhat ghoulish, even sadistic. It does not matter if Limbert produces one or a hundred new novels, and thus dwelling on the details of his life (which kind of cottage he lives in, whether his mother-in-law is living with him or not, and so on) appears somewhat superfluous. And in the terms of the text, regularity is, as Mrs Highmore herself put it, "deadly." The effective temporal stasis of the narrative from this point on is emphasized by the fact that the narrator says, "I see it all foreshortened, his wonderful remainder—see it from the end backward, with the direction widening towards me as if on a level with the eye" (222). The end is already in place, and the text moves from a mode of anticipation to one of retrospect. Once again, it appears that Limbert's story has been entirely consumed by the B-series conception of time, explicitly now viewed from the narrator's "vantage point from which the discourse can be seen as a whole, not as a series of nows strung out in time, but as a structural unity in which all parts have an equivalent ontological status" (Currie 147). And yet, to return as inevitably as the text itself does to Mrs Highmore, the position from which the narrator sees it is one fixed by Mrs Highmore's interventions. In this final "level" vision of the dying days of Limbert's career, all hierarchy has disappeared: repetition, sameness, and equivalence become the governing temporal figures.

The Time of Writing

- 26 There are some further points of contact between "The Next Time" and other short stories in the cluster, discussion of which will enable a broader consideration of the temporality of writing. A close reading of the temporal terminology of these stories has shown James placing women in what we, following Currie, might call the B-series conception of time—early/late, relative; to limit their "ontological privilege" (143) or connection with the urgent, unique present. There is, however, a contrasting matrix of language about time in these stories which conversely associates male writers with being out-of-time, and locates female writers on the contrary firmly in the present. For example, Greville Fane is described as "not a belated producer of the old fashionable novel, she had a cleverness and a modernness of her own" (437). Thus when the narrator later admits that he had "long since ceased to 'keep up' with Greville Fane," the overt implication that he has simply not continued to read her books sits alongside an image of the narrator, himself also a writer, trying and failing to match her pace. Similarly, Ralph Limbert in "The Next Time" is unable to "temporise" (216), that is to hold back and "[t]o adapt oneself or conform to the time and circumstances" (OED); and thus when he attempts to catch the wave of literary fashion (or, in the terminology used here, identify

which way the "cat [is] going to jump" (216)), being unable to hold back, he "jump[s] too far ahead" (216). Paraday, the tragic genius of "the Death of the Lion" whose very name implies an out-of-time-ness (para-day; beyond the temporality of the daily) complains that "time isn't what I've lacked hitherto: the question hasn't been to find it, but to use it" (83). The problem is not the availability of time, but being able to inhabit time productively. Similarly, Limbert himself experiences no pecuniary benefit from his work, only "tributes that took up his time" (192). These male writers are unable to participate effectively in the present moment, despite the constant assertion of the ontological primacy of their texts.

- 27 As King comments, James's narrators in these short stories find that "it was *too late* for [...] resistance. Women were in the market to stay" (33, my emphasis). Just as Henry James cannot, apparently, fully explain the "mystery" of his foremost professional woman writer, even giving the excessive Henrietta Stackpole the last word in the novel in which she appears, so his narratives cannot prevent the participation of texts, and the process of writing, in multiple temporalities, including that of the dynamic literary marketplace. Gertrude Stein (once a pupil of James's brother William and a great admirer of Henry himself) evokes these multiple temporalities in a phrase which offers her usual combination of opacity and precision: "the time when and the time of and the time in that composition is the natural phenomena of that composition and of that perhaps every one can be certain" (497). The phrase "natural phenomena" is one with which sits uncomfortably with critical discourse, but certainly there are many times of a composition—the period of time it describes, the temporal structure it explicitly proposes in its vocabulary, and the temporalities it implicitly evokes or engages in its narrative structure. There is also the time in which a text is written, and that in which it is read, either by another or by the writer him or herself who is always, inevitably, a reader of his or her own texts. As Paul de Man reminds us, "the ambivalence of writing is such that it can be considered both an act and an interpretative process that follows after an act with which it cannot coincide" (152). The temporal complexity inherent in the very process of writing confirms the impossibility of the temporal identity of writing to itself. Thus these texts' attempts to assert control over their narratives is already compromised, not least by their privileging of the scene of writing. The temporal layering of the scene of writing is explicitly identified in "The Figure in the Carpet," the last in this cluster of stories: "pen in hand," says the narrator "this way, I live the time over" (303). Neither relationality, nor repetition, can be excluded even from the supposedly hermetic, ontologically privileged scene of the writer alone with his pen. Writing takes place in time, and times proliferate in writing.

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NOTES

1. For further discussion of Henrietta Stackpole and her role in the novel, see Mathews and Miller. Mathews notes that not only did James "suffer" Henrietta to "pervade," he actually "revised the novel to make her influence even *more* pervasive" (190). Miller goes so far as to suggest that in her disruption of normative categories of gender, and by implication "all the other categories of distinction," Henrietta is no less than "James's sexual counterpart, his altered ego" (210). Miller's reading of the novel therefore has more in common with Victoria Coulson's understanding of James's attitude to women than Alfred Habegger's. While Habegger ultimately concludes that "Behind James's narratives there is found the ancient theory that women are weaker than men" (26), Coulson paints a more ambivalent picture, emphasising James's "uneasiness toward dominant patterns of gender identity" and, indeed, his "long imaginative affiliation with women" (8). Despite the persuasiveness of Coulson's reading in relation to James's oeuvre as a whole, the texts discussed in this essay exhibit an undeniable sexism, if not misogyny, in their depiction of women writers.
2. For an overview of this context, see Randall (37-38); for extended discussions, see Cross, especially chapter 5, and Vicinus, *passim*.
3. One might turn to almost any biographical account of James for a description of James's theatrical failure; for the most recent, see Gorra (289-292).
4. On the shifting definition of "success" and "failure" and other cognate binaries in this text, see Álvarez-Amorós, and Diebel (54-56).
5. This constant swerving away from the ostensible focus of the narrative—Limbert's exceptional literary ability—is also noted by Diebel: "the writers' allegedly brilliant words are never described, much less reproduced on the page, and so their content and style remain a mystery" (56).
6. The terms "relational" and "relationality" are preferable here to "relative" and "relativity" for obvious reasons; while in philosophical and scientific discussion of the topic the Special Theory of Relativity is often adduced to support the B theory of time, the use of the terms in this essay should not be read as invoking the wider implications of relativity in its scientific sense. Interestingly, one of the very few published scholarly essays focussing solely on "The Next Time" focuses on "relativism", though in a quite different sense—that is, it employs a Bakhtinian model of literary relativism to explore the "lexical resemanticisation" that occurs when reading the story through the alternative frames of literary quality and literary pragmatism (Álvarez-Amorós 271, 274).
7. This is an issue explored at greater length and in more complex ways in James's 1902 novel *The Wings of the Dove*.
8. It is nevertheless worth recognising that elsewhere James's work reflects a more nuanced attitude to the female reproductive body, and even a critique of the taboos surrounding it—in, for example, *The Wings of the Dove*, *The Golden Bowl* (1904), and perhaps particularly in *What Maisie Knew* (1897).
9. Critics such as Álvarez-Amorós (275) and Bell (217-218) have noted a possible autobiographical source for this scenario in James's own dealings with the editor of *The New York Tribune*, who

apparently dismissed James for making insufficiently populist contributions. James summarised the predicament thus: "you can't make a sow's ear out of a silk purse" (quoted in Bell 218).

ABSTRACTS

Un nombre infime mais significatif parmi les nombreux « petits contes littéraires » de Henry James porte sur des femmes écrivains et quatre d'entre eux ont été écrits à quelques années d'intervalle au milieu des années 1890. Tout en faisant état des quatre nouvelles, cet article s'intéresse plus particulièrement aux complexités temporelles que présente « The Next Time » (1895). Comme son titre l'indique, la temporalité se place au premier plan que ce soit de manière structurelle ou thématique. Cette lecture montre l'imbrication des aspects temporels et des liens entre genre et écriture qui définissent la femme écrivain. Tandis que le texte s'efforce d'imposer une distinction hiérarchique genrée entre différents modèles temporels, sa structure narrative laisse entrevoir l'instabilité de cet ordre puisque la nouvelle finit par confirmer, et ce malgré elle, la valeur de la femme écrivain.

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