

## Chapter I

# Turning Place into Biography: “The Birthplace”, Literary Tourism and Narrative

In “The Birthplace”,<sup>1</sup> the critical point of view against tourism as a commercialized shadow of a true literary pilgrimage is embodied in the protagonist. For him, resolving the opposition of involvement in a commercial entertainment economy, on the one hand, and of the true, unspectacular, and silent absence of real traces of the celebrated writer in his birthhouse, on the other, becomes a matter of life or ruin. Mediation involves a reconsideration of the form in which truth can be communicated, and of the object of discourse: Gedges’ background agenda changes from historical truth to the spirit of Shakespeare. In the following, I will connect the change of his self-conception, from a didactic teller of truth to a living, performing testimony to the spirit of Shakespeare, with the structures of touristic encounters as conceptualized in tourism studies. I first relate the narrative frame to the key touristic concepts of tourist guide and sacralization. I then propose to read the story’s view of tourism as reflecting the stereotypical in terms of a certain literary genre, biography or a life’s story, which is woven not just into the signifying structure of the birthhouse but also implied in how James frames his protagonist. Lastly, I demonstrate how the reflection of the story upon its own conditions of fictionality and authorship points to a specific link between literature and literary tourism.

The subject of “The Birthplace” is a typical tourist attraction, Shakespeare’s birthhouse. James, in fact, does not once mention Shakespeare by name, but he gives enough hints to make the connection clear. He is referred to in the capitalized personal pronoun, “He”, which is usually reserved for the Lord, and is further hinted at by the name of the place the married couple come from when they move in at the birthhouse to become its caretakers. That name, Blackport-on-Dwindle, is a linguistic joke on Stratford-on-Avon, the residence of the Shakespeare birthhouse. In terms

1. James’s story first appeared in 1903 in the volume *The Better Sort*, along with first publications of “The Beast in the Jungle” and “The Papers”. In this interpretation I will use the Library of America edition, HENRY JAMES, JR, ‘The Birthplace’, in: DENIS DONOGHUE, editor, *Complete Stories 1898-1910*, New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1996, pp. 441–495. In this chapter, this text will be quoted by page numbers in parentheses.

of tourism, we are thus confronted with one of its specific kinds, literary tourism. In the course of our interpretation we will encounter a variety of features characteristic of this kind of tourism.

One of those is the recurrent touristic phenomenon, the stock feature of tourist attractions like the birthhouse: the guide. James’s story features a protagonist who becomes a guide, named Morris Gedge. His being a guide provides him with certain opportunities for self-education (he’s to be, after all, the authority in the house), but also with specific problems arising from his position. His acquired knowledge gets into conflict with the stories he has to tell. He realizes that the stories he is expected to tell the tourists do not represent historically authentic facts – especially the stories he is supposed to tell about young Shakespeare’s home. Not even the furniture is authentic. His awakened sense of personal integrity begins to collide with his role as a guide. To keep his job, he cannot openly question the legitimacy of the place itself. He is forced to hide his own thoughts until he meets kindred spirits in an American couple, being in all aspects exceptional tourists. As a lucky chance, their communication establishes a relationship so trustful that he is able to voice all the doubts he had held back. But by trying to follow that policy towards the ordinary tourist he falls flat on the face. He finds himself at odds with the representative of the house’s board of trustees, whom Gedge and his wife owe their position to. How Gedge achieves the balance of the conflicting demands between job, life, and wife, on the one hand, and his personal, intellectual integrity on the other, is staged in a Jamesian *coup de main*, a direct speech performance for the relevant party (the Americans returned) by Gedge, who plays a role he himself has invented (that of priest to the sacred shrine) in Jamesian self-reflexive fashion. James thus, on the level of representation, solves the opposition between true knowledge and false touristic consciousness in “that mystic, that ‘chemical’ change wrought in the impression of life by its dedication to an æsthetic use” he speaks of in the New York preface to this story.<sup>2</sup> Gedge can be seen as a reflection of the author, and in the nascience of an author suggesting the principles of authorship as James conceived of them. We discover a double *doppelgänger* in Gedge reflecting James reflecting Shakespeare.

### 1.1 Framings: “The Birthplace” in the Tourist Grid

*The Holy of Holies of the Birthplace was the low, the sublime  
Chamber of Birth [...] (455)*

In “The Birthplace”, the attractiveness of Shakespeare’s birthhouse is framed in terms of the “sacred”. The religious register, however, is only connoted by the cultural meaning of the word, which invokes the literary

2. HENRY JAMES, JR, ‘Preface to the NY Edition: The Altar of the Dead, The Beast in the Jungle, The Birthplace, The Private Life, Owen Wingrave, The Friends of the Friends, Sir Edmund Orme, The Real Right Thing, The Jolly Corner, Julia Bride’, in: LEON EDEL, editor, *Literary Criticism*, Vol. 2, New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1984, p. 1252.

heritage of a national scope (and establishes an order among nations as they pertain to the cultural scope of Western readers). The literary sacred entails a specific form of tourism which, in “The Birthplace”, is represented in the problems it poses for the tour guide and the tensions between the “pilgrims” and their “priest”. We will proceed from a sociological perspective on tourism to fence in the problem.

Although tourism research does its best to keep to scientific standards of conceptualization, it has been, with respect to the core functions of tourism, liable to accept the sacred in its literal meaning. Concurrent with the degree of anthropological awareness, the sacred tends to circumscribe a structural center in the account of the social and cultural significance of tourism. Although in the contextualization of tourism within culture (that is, as an array of social *symbolical* practices) anthropological theories of tourism are closest to our project of relating tourism and literature, the concept of the sacred as the focal point of all symbolical practices is not so helpful in assessing the cultural circulation of textual representations.<sup>3</sup> James’s story, however, uses the religious connotations in an ironic perspective, and proposes a different, a narrative-discursive theory of the mechanics of tourism.

This section will try to get at the implicit theory by examining two issues that feature prominently in tourism theory, the tourist guide on the one hand, and the sacralization or enshrinement of tourist attractions on the other. The two terms will be interrogated as to their use and function in the development of James’s story. Before we address the surplus value James gains by his ironical stance towards the sacred we will look more closely to the role of the tourist guide. James’s handling of his protagonist relies on certain stock features of the role, so we shall probe the psychological potential in the structural problems of the role, refining the structural description as we see how James gets beyond it in his dramatization.

### Impersonating the Tour Guide

The role of the tour guide provides the frame for the central problem in “The Birthplace”. James, in his protagonist, has developed the major aspects of what Eric Cohen analyzed as the structure and dynamics of the role of the Tourist Guide, and what Fine and Speer have shown to be the function of the guide’s performance for the enshrinement of the tourist sight.<sup>4</sup> While Cohen, in his taxonomy of the Tourist Guide, emphasizes the increased importance of what he terms the Professional Guide and his communicative and interpretative activities in contrast to the “Original Guide” (the native pathfinder in unchartered territory), Fine and Greer closely analyze the tour guide performances in a setting which is in many respects similar to James’s Shakespearean birthhouse, but also different in important features. We will, then, use the theoretical vocabulary of the

3. See also the detailed discussion below on p. 22.

4. ERIC COHEN, ‘The Tourist Guide: The Origins, Structure and Dynamics of a Role’, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 12 (1985), pp. 5–29; ELIZABETH C. FINE and JEAN HASKELL SPEER, ‘Tour Guide Performance as Sight Sacralization’, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 12 (1985), pp. 73–95.

tourist guide to explain the structural frame in which James places his protagonist.

As we have already hinted at, in "The Birthplace" the narrative unfolds about the protagonist's problem of managing different and conflicting demands. As his expert knowledge is growing (supported by his 'nightly prowls'), he has to question the authenticity of the place and the stories being reiterated (see the citations below, p. 43). As he communicates this dilemma to his wife, she points out the effects of doubting, especially with respect to their employers, the managerial body of the house administration.

"On the attraction" —he took her up—"of the Show?"

He had fallen into the harmless habit of speaking of the place as the "Show"; but she didn't mind this so much as to be diverted by it. "No; on the attitude of the Body. You know they're pleased with us, and I don't see why you should want to spoil it. We got in by a tight squeeze—you know we've had evidence of that, and that it was about as much as our backers could manage. But we're proving a comfort to them, and it's absurd of you to question your suitability to people who were content with the Putchins." (456)

The 'Putchins' are the Gedges' predecessors who made them familiar with the task, and whose limited horizon Gedge certainly surpasses. Isabel Gedge here maintains her position that she is not willing to give up their smug little new home. In this phase, Morris Gedge suffers from the dilemma that he can't communicate to anybody, not even to his wife, his perceptions. A little later in the above conversation we encounter the following exchange:

[...] "Do you know what I sometimes do?" And then as she waited too: "In the Birthroom there, when I look in late, I often put out my light. That makes it better."

"Makes what——?"

"Everything."

"What is it then you see in the dark?"

"Nothing!" said Morris Gedge.

"And what's the pleasure of that?"

"Well, what the American ladies say. It's so fascinating." (458)

And later:

"You think too much. It's bad for you." He turned away with his chronic moan. But it was without losing what she called after him.

"I decline to let the place down." And what was there indeed to say? They *were* to keep it up. (465)

Gedge keeps to his responsibility as good as he can. "They insisted on your committing yourself. It was the pound of flesh—They would have it; so under his coat he bled." (465) The 'pound of flesh' is, of course, a reference to Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, where Shylock requests the redemption of his pledge, a pound of Antonio's flesh, which he will not get, as little as Gedge's employers get his soul.

In the next phase, after having met his American soulmates, Gedge comes up with a solution: he starts telling the tourists about his doubts.

That solution has to remain temporary, because it provokes Their opposition: "They" being both the tourists and the administrative Body. Gedge then, has to acknowledge the economic demands of his wife and his employer, on the one hand, and, on the other, the internal demands of the guide role as to professional expertise and knowledge transmission.

### *The Role of the Tour Guide*

In Cohen's anthropological taxonomy of tour guide roles, James's Morris Gedge fits into the category of the Professional Guide. In contrast to the Original Guide, the pathfinder in the peripheral regions of tourism, the Professional Guide is typical for the well-developed touristic regions.<sup>5</sup> The central task of the Professional Guide, according to Cohen, is the interpretation of the tourist attractions to his party.<sup>6</sup> In James's story, accordingly, the interpretation of the birthplace to the tourists is Gedge's most important task, and it is the source of his main problems.

Although all of the role strains Cohen lists for the tourist guide turn up in "The Birthplace",<sup>7</sup> the narrative development is guided by the conditions inherent in the act of interpretation rather than group dynamically induced clashes of personality. The tension, which in Cohen's account results from the guide's intermediary position between his employer and the tourists, and between the tourists and the 'natives', is configured in "The Birthplace" as the guide's conflict with his employer and the tourists on one side and the knowledge, the truth about the significance of the place on the other. Gedge's dilemma, however, turns critical in terms of the economic dependency, that is, in terms of the relationship between employer and employed. His isolation becomes complete when his wife doesn't empathize with his individual concern about truth, as she revels in touristic falsehoods and sets their good life against her husband's epistemological apprehensions. Gedge's two responsibilities crash: the care for his family conflicts with the duty towards truth, i.e. the value and validity of the knowledge he has gained and the sense of personal identity it supplies.

A similar configurational shift occurs to another of Cohen's role strains, the problem of relative authority of the guide over the members of his party. In Cohen's account, the client is often of higher social status than

5. The Professional Guide is typical for travels "composed of institutionalized types of tourists, especially organized mass tourists, on-routine tours in the central sectors of well developed tourist systems. Professional guides operate mainly in urban areas, museums, and institutions, and historically, ethnically or culturally important regions." COHEN, 'Tourist Guide', p. 20.
6. In terms of the development from Original to Professional Guide, "the most important change takes place in the communicative component: from mere selection of sights and information to more sophisticated interpretation." (COHEN, 'Tourist Guide', p. 21) Within Cohen's taxonomy of the four components of instrumental, social, interactive, and communicative tasks, interpretation is the function prevailing in importance over selection and information (and fabrication) within the communicative component (COHEN, 'Tourist Guide', pp. 15f).
7. "In addition to the endemic intra-role strain [between inner-directed and outer-directed components of the guide's role], tourist guides also suffer from different kinds of external role-strain. The tourist guide's is a boundary role — he occupies an intermediary position between the employer, usually a travel company and the tourists in his party [...]; and between the latter and the natives of the sites visited." (COHEN, 'Tourist Guide', pp. 22f)

the guide; in the language of marketing: the client is king. But the guide has temporary authority over the client, an authority resulting from the dynamics of the tourist group. According to Cohen, the undefined state of this authority may "may well turn into personal power contests, with no clear guidelines for their resolution."<sup>8</sup> In "The Birthplace", there is indeed a conflict between the tourists and the guide, but not as a personal power conflict (for James's protagonist is much too well mannered), but rather in the contradictory demands of the tourists, who at the same time require adequate information, and expect their preconceptions to be confirmed. Gedge has to mediate between the tourists' expectations and his task to impart knowledge to them, which becomes critical as soon as the expectations don't live up to the truth anymore (for the tourists: truth doesn't live up to their expectations). As Gedge desperately states to his wife:

"It isn't about Him—nothing's about Him. None of Them care tuppence about Him. The only thing They care about is this empty shell—or rather, for it isn't empty, the extraneous, preposterous stuffing of it." (457)

In Cohen's terminology, the demands of the communicative part of the guide role, information and interpretation, get into conflict with each other. Interpretation, in Cohen's view, connects the tourists' expectations to the visited place. "[The mass tourist's] choice of the tour has been, at least partly, conditioned by preconceptions and expectations, and it is the guide's task, through interpretation, to relate to these the visited sites."<sup>9</sup> Information, in contrast, is targeted at the communication of facts. As Cohen emphasizes, information as "the dissemination of correct and precise information"<sup>10</sup> is identified as the main task in much of the literature on tourist guides, and is certainly close to the professional conceptualization of the guide role as academic lecturer.<sup>11</sup> Cohen himself has a sceptical view of the possible attainment of the necessary objectivity, since the information given is often ideologically tainted, either by the tourism establishment or political authorities.

James dramatizes this conflict between the received knowledge that Gedge has learned from his predecessor and the tourists expect to be told, and the true knowledge Gedge acquires through his critical meditations on the birthplace. This conflict is sharpened by another of the guide's predicaments mentioned by Cohen, his authority and legitimacy as guide, which depends on his display of competence defined by the amount and accuracy of communicated knowledge. What Gedge manages better than expected is his performance of knowledge, as his wife's remarks cited above testify (see above p. 16). However, Gedge's knowledge becomes increasingly threatening to the show. In James's account, the conflict inherent in knowledge itself is the heart of the matter: knowledge becomes dysfunctional at the same

8. COHEN, 'Tourist Guide', p. 23

9. COHEN, 'Tourist Guide', p. 16

10. COHEN, 'Tourist Guide', p. 15

11. Cohen at a later point in his article mentions the tacit definition of the professional guide by professional organizations as academic lecturer COHEN, 'Tourist Guide', p. 22

time as it has a legitimating function; Gedge, once he dares to intimate his doubts about the authenticity of the place to the tourists, displeases them and has to take a rebuke from his employers.

In the story, which is about the personal development of the guide, the alternative of quitting or lying addresses another of Cohen's key role strains, the relationship between the guide's self and his role. It results from "a degree of acting, which sometimes finds expression in insincerely subservient conduct or even in the outright deception of clients through 'fabrication'", and leads to the guides' possible "alienation from their role".<sup>12</sup> In James's story, this is the psychological side of the conflict between information and interpretation:

He was splitting into halves, unmistakeably—he who, whatever else he had been, had at least always been so entire and, in his way, so solid. One of the halves, or perhaps even, since the split promised to be rather unequal, one of the quarters, was the keeper, the showman, the priest of the idol; the other piece was the poor unsuccessful honest man he had always been. (460)

Gedge's impression that his personality is split into a public and a private part is due to the uncommunicability of his own critical recognitions of the inauthenticity of the place. It is the outcome of the dysfunctionality of knowledge. Ironically, the solution James proposes to the dilemma is exactly what Cohen names as the problem, acting. For Gedge, acting becomes the medium where the question of truth can be transcended; Gedge has to be true to the performance (the laws of style) rather than to the facts.

#### *The Performance of the Tour Guide*

Before showing in detail how James stages this performance, I will consider how performance has been accounted for in the touristic anthropology of the tour guide. In a close analysis of tour guide performances at a regional landmark, a turn-of-the-century house once belonging to the founding father of the little Texan town of New Braunfels, Elizabeth Fine and Jean Haskell Speer focus on the *effects* of the tour guides' performances. The setting is somewhat similar to Shakespeare's birthplace, in that both houses are representative as houses, housing the relics of a representative personality. The connotations of representativity, however, are different in each case. In the Shakespeare house the semantic field connoted by the already connoted individual, Shakespeare, is that of literature and its (inter-) national or even universal significance. In the Lindheimer Home in New Braunfels, Texas, the relevance is much more representative of the historical epoch as such, using the founder of the town only as a means of departure for representing local culture and historical quaintness.

That difference of connotative scope implies a difference in the guide's position. Gedge is invested, as we will see below more closely, with the cloak of a priest, although ironically. His authority draws on the shrine's national significance, and he is as deeply serious as the literary giant warrants; the

12. COHEN, 'Tourist Guide', pp. 23f.

birthhouse is, in Fine and Speer's terminology, a high cultural sight (while their own object of study is a regional or local sight). In contrast, the guides at the Lindheimer Home in Texas wear historical costumes, so the whole setting becomes emphatically a scene. Fine and Speer describe how the effectivity of the guides' performances is determined by how successfully an intense experience is produced; most effective is the telling of dramatic stories. "Experience" here, however, translates into a communal, ritual experience, which is different from a private or psychically internal experience usually connoted by 'aesthetic'. I will return to their concept, which largely derives from Victor Turner's research on ritual, below, in the discussion of the differences between the anthropological concept of the sacred and James's ironical handling of religion. The point here is that although Fine and Speer use an anthropological frame which is possibly debatable, their description of how to create the experience resonates with James's story. "One type of performance at the Lindheimer Home which promotes communal creativity is the enactment of intense, dramatic stories which bind the hostess and tourist in an imaginative world."<sup>13</sup>

In the story, the intensity or effectivity of Gedge's performance is responsible for the touristic relevance, not a concurrence with the discursive regime of truth.<sup>14</sup> Fine and Speer, with the folklorist Richard Bauman, locate in the speech performance of the guide a potential to "elicit the participative attention and energy of his audience, and to the extent that they value his performance, they will allow themselves to be caught up in it."<sup>15</sup> This account of the apprehensive power of oral performances is corroborated by James' protagonist: Gedge's forceful style connotes at once the Jamesian performance of fictional writing and the (fictional) performance of the representational power of fiction.

To sum up, James, in his story, addresses key problems of the role of the tour guide. The role's specific strains, as outlined by Cohen and incarnated by James in Gedge, include his economic dependency on his employer, the problem of authority over the group, and the alienation of his self from his role. Moreover, in providing the solution to Gedge's problem, James also employs a specific trait of the guide's role: his performance, as analyzed by Fine and Speer.

How useful are these accounts of touristic anthropology for an analysis of James's story? Cohen's approach doesn't lead us further than to Gedge's dilemma of choosing between truth or lie. Since Cohen positions the group dynamics resulting from the tour guide's performance not in the communicative sphere (of interpretation, information) but in the 'social' sphere (of the psychology of group management), his approach cannot answer for the connections between interpretation and performance. Fine and Speer, on the other hand, do provide a conceptualization of the performance with respect to its effect, regarding the genre and the semantics produced. As their focus conceives of the performance in terms of ritual, their approach doesn't help too much, however, in clearing the status of Gedge's perfor-

13. FINE and SPEER, p. 85.

14. For an example see the quotation of Gedge's performance on p. 37 below.

15. RICHARD BAUMAN, *Verbal Art as Performance*, Rowley/MA: Newbury House, 1977 quoted in FINE and SPEER, p. 85.



mance in James’s story. There, the performance signifies as the shift from a discourse based on truth value (information, in Cohen’s terms, being at the base of the interpretation) to a performance discourse (performative effectiveness replacing the truth value as basis of the interpretation of the touristic object). Gedge’s performance doesn’t represent so much the difference between a private immersion in literature and communal experience in ritual, as we would have to conclude with Fine and Speer, but rather the solution to the problem of ‘how to tell the truth’ when the literal, scientific discourse of criticism doesn’t reach its communicative destination anymore. Gedge has become a literary author, choosing his means. The performance is thus only one instance of a more general approach to the forms of speech, in writing and in speaking, as a “dedication [of life] to æsthetic use”.<sup>16</sup> It amounts to a theoretical statement by James about authorship, about the relation of fiction and truth, and the function of literature. We will treat this in more detail in the third major section of this chapter.

What can be gained by reading James through the anthropological conceptualizations of the tourist guide and his role? Foremost, the tour guide as role offers an interface between tourism and literature. The psychological problems that are endemic to the role of the tour guide, within the tourist system, provide James with a basis for narrative construction. The generic dilemma, which we have identified as Gedge’s problem of either telling the truth or lying, is solved by James in a fashion that implies a different conceptualization of what is at stake in tourism. James has Gedge resort to the strategy of an author of fiction, of telling the truth through what in other discursive contexts may resemble lies. What counts is not the factuality of things referenced to in performance, but the deeper sense it conveys. Which is to a great extent in the style of the performance, and more generally, in the (artful) deployment of narrative strategies of literature. In James’s story, we can witness the performance of framing the touristic object, in a double sense: we watch Gedge’s performance, which is rendered in direct speech, and we observe James’s positioning of this performance to its greatest effect in the narrative. We may thus read Gedge’s becoming a successful performer as symbolizing the emergence of an author.

In “The Birthplace”, the framing of touristic attractions is presented as a discursive performance, a dimension of tourism that MacCannell in his break-through semiotic approach to tourism has first started to explore. However, in “The Birthplace” this dimension is more precisely staged as belonging to a fictive genre. It is in front of the actual “relics” that the tourists need fiction. They do not just need a marker, for which an ironic account might serve as well, they need empathic stories. Gedge’s performance tells the story of the place his own way, which resonates with the way the tourists have read other attracting stories about it. It is the story of an individual becoming an author. We recognize shades of Shakespeare in Gedge (and maybe those of James somewhere, too). The equivalence in this repositioning of Gedge’s stories is ironically reflected in the fact that he himself has become an attraction (indicated by the return of the American couple). To say that Gedge’s performance ‘replaces’ the Birthhouse as an

16. See above, note 2 on page 14.

attraction would be stating it strong, but may be justified by the narration's focus on Gedge's development. The economic benefits Gedge has generated and is offered a share of at the end make obvious that the attraction of the place thrives on the performance of stories in a parasitical fashion – as similarly stories thrive on attractive places, will prove to be the topic of the second part of this study. The remainder of this chapter concerns itself with the kind of stories Gedge tells, in the genre of biography – but before that, we focus on the other issue in the anthropology of tourism, the relation of tourism and the pilgrimage to sacred sites/sights.

### The Sacred Shrine and the “Pilgrims”

Much of the literature on tourism, especially the non-quantitative and non-economistic literature, resorts to the vocabulary of religion to explain the social significance of tourism. In part, this reflects the historical ancestry of tourism in pilgrimage. In a different part, it reflects the anthropological tendency to take the sacred as the general category for symbols and their use, as the glue keeping a society together.

In “The Birthplace”, James recurs to a religious vocabulary, not only in describing the particular tourist attraction as a shrine, but also calling its guide a ‘priest’, setting Shakespeare on a par with god by referring to him as “Him”, and by calling the visiting tourists ‘pilgrims’ and invoking their incongruous demands as part of a religious ritual. James thus ironizes the religious connotations about Shakespeare's birth house.

James' irony and the anthropological conceptualization of tourism as sacred practice stand, of course, on different grounds. The position of James' narrator derives from his ‘critical mind’, that is, ritual is viewed as something unrefined, lacking the control and involvement of consciousness. For the anthropologists, ritual, transferred to modern conditions, comprises the practices that transcend discursivization. Within theories of tourism, the approach is most clearly modernized by MacCannell, as he emphasizes that tourism is a “ritual performed to the differentiations of society”,<sup>17</sup> but there are more straightforward (i.e. less self-reflexive) uses of the ritual concept in the anthropology of tourism. We have already encountered Cohen's approach to the tour guide, where his identification of the Professional Guide relies on the distinction between center and periphery; for Cohen, “center” is an anthropological concept denoting a spiritual dimension, and he uses it in a collection of other articles. In the same vein are the influential concepts of Victor Turner, who described ritual as inducing *communitas*, a state where social differentiations collapse (and which resembles Bachtin's carnivalesque); Fine and Speer's conceptualization of the tour guide's frame of performance is heavily indebted to Turner, as are some of Cohen's concepts of tourism.<sup>18</sup>

17. DEAN MACCANNELL, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, New York: Schocken Books, 1976, p. 13.

18. ERIC COHEN, ‘A Phenomenology of Tourist Experiences’, *Sociology*, 13 (1979), pp. 197–201 proposes a list of touristic modes of which one item is the existential mode in which the tourist searches for a spiritual center “elsewhere”, a notion which takes up VICTOR TURNER, ‘The Center Out There: Pilgrim's Goal’, *History of Religions*, 12 (1973), pp. 191–230.

We must keep in mind the two different approaches to the terminology in our analysis of how the sacred achieves certain effects and distinctions in James’s story and how far irony actually carries. The two approaches have in common, however, the implied relevance of the religious. For the anthropologists, the significance of sacred symbols is determined by the actual value they have or represent for the society under scrutiny. In Western civilization, this has been superseded by a process of secularization in which a plurality of highest values has seem to become the dominant mode; that is to say, cultural values, the notion of culture, has replaced the religious as source of most valuable symbols and has also deconstructed its own claims for universality.<sup>19</sup> James’s ironicization of the religious represents a stage in the process; the force of irony still requires the remembrance of the value of religion, but also its availability for shifting its value, in this case upon a double-edged adoration of literature.

Value, then, is the central anchor to which the vocabulary of the sacred adheres. In “The Birthplace”, value is ascribed to the author whose birthplace the Gedges administer. The author is not named, but references to him are always in the capitalized form of the personal pronoun: He, Him, His. The capitalization and the avoidance of mentioning the name of the author creates a *Leerstelle*, a blank, which is to be filled with value. The capitalization suggests as this value the ‘religious’ value of Him, the Lord, whose name in the Jewish tradition has also been the object of avoidance.

In the course of the story, the unambiguous value of Him splits into the value of Him as an author (and as a symbol of value) on the one hand, and as the object of touristic authentication in the house of birth on the other. James keeps the reader on Gedge’s side, who champions the value of the former and deplores the value of the other but who is forced by his job to withhold his opinion. He meets his fate<sup>20</sup> in the guise of the American tourists who revisit the house after opening hours in order to avoid the guided tours that serve biographical fictions as fact. The experience of their mutual understanding tempts Gedge to risk his job uncovering the false front of authenticity of the stories traditionally told about the birth house.

The dialogue between the American and Gedge establishes their common ground upon the recognition of the positive value of the sacred. The high-cultural value is indicated by orthography: during their mutual exchange of scepticisms about the birth place (Gedge’s claim that “there *is* no author” (472)), the capitalization of the personal pronoun “He” is upheld. Gedge and the American identify with the true value by distinguishing themselves from the tourists; not so much as a group, but rather as the

ERIC COHEN, ‘The Sociology of Tourism: Approaches, Issues and Findings’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 10 (1984), pp. 373–392 uses the pilgrimage paradigm in a different taxonomy.

19. NELSON H. H. GRABURN, ‘Tourism: The Sacred Journey’, in: VALENE SMITH, editor, *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1977, pp. 17–32 positions tourism on the sacred side of a basic opposition between the sacred and the profane, mapped upon the modern distinction between leisure and work – which in turn is similarly conceptualized in VICTOR TURNER, ‘Variations on a Theme of Liminality’, in: *Secular Ritual*, Assen: Van Gorcum, 1977, pp. 36–52. One extreme point of the deconstruction of cultural value is Bourdieu’s concept of cultural value as “cultural capital”, see PIERRE BOURDIEU, *La distinction : critique sociale du jugement*, Paris: Editions du Minuit, 1979.
20. “it seemed to him that his fate was being literally pulled down on his head” (470)

protractors of a false discourse and consciousness. I see this distinction epitomized in Gedge's statement (after he declared that there is no author), "But They've killed Him." (473) 'They' here means the tourists, but it is also frequently used in the story by Gedge and his wife to refer to their employers, always in a capitalized form. The pitting of a capitalized third person plural pronoun versus a capitalized third person singular pronoun in a nutshell represents the conflict at stake: how can Gedge be loyal to both authorities? The statement, then, points to the misrecognition of Shakespeare's value (that's what's left of him). They couldn't have literally killed him (he's already dead). In the dialogue between Gedge and the American the statement has been prepared as a step in their recognition as followers of the same creed, so that to answer the question we have to reconstruct the semantic support of this statement. The basic line is that 'They', instead of reading his work, read stories about Him, and these stories occupy their imagination more than his stories. We may recast this opposition as different constructions of individuality: Gedge and the American propose the concept of the exceptional author as a model of individuality, while 'They' construct Shakespeare's individuality as complying with a normative biographical pattern. The model of individuality embodied by the Author implies a non-ironic meaning of the sacred, whereas the tourists' behavior shows signs of a ritualistic behavior that can only be referred to ironically.

Let's turn to the text to make this distinction clearer.

And as the young man had not been aided to this cognition of him as new, it already began to make for them a certain common ground. The ground became immense when the visitor presently added with a smile: "There was a good lady, I recollect, who had a great deal to say."

It was the gentleman's smile that had done it; the irony *was* there. "Ah, there has been a great deal said." And Gedge's look at his interlocutor doubtless showed his sense of being sounded. It was extraordinary of course that a perfect stranger should have guessed the travail of his spirit, should have caught the gleam of his inner commentary. That probably, in spite of him, leaked out of his poor old eyes. "Much of it, in such places as this," he heard himself adding, "is of course said very irresponsibly." *Such places as this!*—he winced at the words as soon as he had uttered them. (468)

Gedge here has not told any of the usual stories, aware already that the visitors are not the usual tourists. The American's remark has hit the heart of his worries so neatly that he forgets all the self-restraint usually exerted before the chance sympathetic visitor. A restraint that has motivated his "splitting into halves", a few pages earlier, into a "priest of the idol" and "the poor unsuccessful honest man he had always been" (460). This is why he winces at the words he hears himself adding, having recognized the crucial step on his way out of his schizophrenic isolation. The significance of this scene is bound to the semantics of the conversation. It is what Gedge holds back that enables the dialogue, and becomes the first topic among the kindred spirits. It is the touristic discourse that is not begun, that opens discursive space for its other, the high-cultural discourse on the author. The touristic discourse is imagined as a wall that has to open for

the discussion of authentic facts. Before that, the new acquaintances talk about their own role in relation to the touristic discourse and its character. The quotation above continues:

There was no wincing, however, on the part of his pleasant companions. “Exactly so; the whole thing becomes a sort of stiff, smug convention, like a dressed-up sacred doll in a Spanish church—which you are a monster if you touch.”

“A monster,” said Gedge, meeting his eyes.

The young man smiled, but he thought he looked at him a little harder. “A blasphemer”.

“A blasphemer.” (468)

The American compares the behavior of tourists to the religious behavior of particularly superstitious catholics.<sup>21</sup> Here the religious is categorized as false consciousness. Tourists mistake the author for a god whose relics in the shrine are untouchable by critical questioning. In this way, the American and Gedge constitute their common ground as an enlightened position of the critical mind, where the true value of non-conventional, individual thinking relies on the negation of the false value of conventionalism.<sup>22</sup> The meeting of the two individuals and their understanding doesn't seem to constitute the danger of a new conventionalism for James; after all, Gedge does not successfully operate on his newly gained critical position. Rather, to succeed in bringing it through, he will have to take a different course than that of direct argument. Because the true value cannot be understood by the conventional, it seems to be safe from becoming conventional itself, and yet remains visible through a self-conscious display of the conventional, as in Gedge's final performance.

James's decision to frame the touristic system in terms of the sacred enables him to limit the problem of the effects of truth on his protagonist. He makes of the touristic system a strong, religious bond, unaccessible to revision. The tourist system usually reacts to critical evidence in a different way: the sight loses its reputation. In James's story, the sight loses some of its attraction after Gedge has started to voice his criticism. There, however, it is the performance of the guide that is made responsible for the financial fall-out, not the leaking of the information. The guide fails in pleasing the tourists, i.e. performing the rite, which becomes the center of touristic experience. We have already touched upon, and will discuss it further below, in what way this kind of rite differs from the anthropological conception.

Next in their dialogue, the American and Gedge further define their difference from the tourists through the relationship to facts. After they have settled that Gedge has no intention to insist upon the myths, the American explains what is interesting to him.

21. Insincerity and superstition are the chief attributes of Americans' view of Continental catholicism, as for Italy is described by PAUL R. BAKER, *The Fortunate Pilgrims: Americans in Italy, 1800–1860*, Cambridge/MASS: Harvard University Press, 1964, pp. ch. 7. Spain is even more “continental” in this respect.
22. The formulation does not preclude positioning Gedge and the American, within the religious logic, on the side of a rationalist protestantism. I just chose to take the distance to a more secular extreme.

"I'm interested," he explained, "in what, I think, is *the* interesting thing—or at all events the eternally tormenting one. The fact of the abysmally little that, in proportion, we know."

"In proportion to what?" his companion asked.

"Well, to what there must have been—to what in fact there *is*—to wonder about. That's the interest; it's immense. He escapes us like a thief at night, carrying off—well, carrying off everything. And people pretend to catch Him like a flown canary, over whom you can close your hand and put Him back. He won't *go* back; he won't *come* back. He's not"—the young man laughed—"such a fool! It makes Him the happiest of all great men." (469)

In defining his interest in the lack of knowledge rather than its plenitude, the American echoes Gedge's own considerations earlier in the story, when he prowls the empty birth chamber at night, the "Holy of Holies", which "was empty as a shell of which the kernel has withered, and contained neither busts nor prints nor early copies; it contained only the Fact—the Fact itself (...)" (455), and where Gedge's meditations sow the seeds of doubt (on the link of fact and place). The means to "catch" Shakespeare are missing in the birthchamber: busts, prints, copies; the material objects about which the discourse of authenticity weaves its tracing stories. The American and Gedge do have a different approach; instead of accepting the mutual confirmation of stories and objects they keep the tracing and the objects separate; they question the methods by which the objects are made to appear in the stories on critical grounds. For that they use their imagination. The American adores the imagination that Shakespeare exhibits in removing all traces of his personal existence. Leaving behind nothing but his work, which is the product of his imagination. It is finally this product of his imagination that is responsible for his status as a celebrity.

The tourists are not without imagination either. But they use it, from the authorial perspective, on the wrong object. The imagining of a person has blotted out the products of this person's imagination, other imaginary people. Gedge poses the alternative as such when he states that "... there *is* no author; that is for us to deal with. There are all the immortal people—in the work; but there's nobody else." (472) The person "Shakespeare" is nothing but an imaginary reconstruction, as imaginary as Shakespeare's characters. The difference between the latter and the tourists' Shakespeare is the scope of imagination. As Gedge answers the American wife's questions:

"... And don't They want also to see where He had His dinner and where He had His tea?"

"They want everything," said Morris Gedge. "They want to see where He hung up His hat and where He kept His boots and where His mother boiled her pot." (470f)

Shakespeare's existence boils down to a domestic stereotype. This is, I claim, the answer to the question posed above: how the tourists have killed him. They ignore all the interesting possibilities of imagining human fate laid out in Shakespeare's work and reduce Him to an object of stereotypical biography, tangible and authenticated in the material objects of the Birthplace.

This sheds some new light on the difference between the sacred in the anthropological sense and the sacred in James’s narrative deployment. James splits the religious into a true and a conventional sacred. As can be seen in the pivotal dialogue between Gedge and the American, the literary religion rests on the acknowledgement of expressive individualism while the conventionality of tourism is performed like a superstitious rite. This is, however, not James’s last word. It is only his point of departure. The story is not so much about the truth but about what to do with the truth. Gedge ends up lying, but lying self-consciously with style, a style that harbors truth. We will return to the author in the third part of this chapter. Before that we will more closely inspect what the tourist wants. The tourists want a stereotypical biography. The domestic elements mentioned in the last piece of dialogue quoted above serve as a connective link to the tourists’ notion of domesticity, which also concerns their own households. One could say, then, that Shakespeare’s birth house as tourist attraction reinforces notions of the domestic as part of a shared humanity, of everybody’s life, as stock elements of a typical biography.

The anthropological notion of tourism as a pilgrimage to the center of culture is, on the one hand, exemplified in the Birthhouse, which reflects the status of high culture in a modern society as central to the value system. In this respect, the anthropological notion resonates with James’s notion of the value of literature. On the other hand, what James makes the tourists expect does not fit into the anthropological theory. The sacred objects are not at all sacred, they are not even sacralized in the sense of the object of a pilgrimage. They are turned into the part of a story that reproduces a typical biography. The point here is that the paradigms of authentication are different in literary tourism from those in pilgrimage. The objects refer to an individual, an individual in historical time, the author. He is not an object of pilgrimage in the sense of the religious, but rather a version of the individual as the tourist himself is. Both for the high-cultural tourist – as an individual experiencing the moves of the imagination of the works of the great author, on the one hand, and accepting the value of the experience of literature as culturally constitutive, on the other, – and of the not so high-cultural tourist that expects to see the traces of a life much like his own. The authentication of the traces of the individual are thus, in contrast to religious relics, a matter of either strictly historical methods or of the performance of the guide.

One could argue, according to MacCannell, that Shakespeare tourism is a “ritual to the differentiations of society” in the particular form of the individual; it corroborates and reinforces the social institution of the individual. Shakespeare’s biography becomes exemplary, producing the paradox of the representative: the very reason for being representative, his outstanding achievements, are forgotten in the process of making him exemplary. Yet the anthropological explanation cannot account for the discursive nature of the typicality of the individual’s life story, its framing in the genre of biography.

## 1.2 Creating Value: Telling a Typical Biography, Constructing a Life

In “The Birthplace”, the Shakespeare house is the site of the biographical reconstruction of Shakespeare as an individual, as well as the site of the warden’s conversion, of whose uneventful life the story renders the change, presenting to the reader an example of how life can be transformed (and whose life is transfigured, as well, for the time of the reading process). The tourists who make the pilgrimage to the sacred shrine experience a change in their lives, too, of which they tell other people afterwards – in that way Gedge acquires a reputation for his own style of performance, a reputation of which the Americans on their return make him aware. For the tourists, the place gains significance in the frame of a biography, as each part of the house is mapped on an exemplary pattern constructed by Shakespeare’s life story.

For both Gedge and the tourists, Shakespeare is the catalyst of experience, in becoming an object of their desire. Gedge’s study of Shakespeare runs into an educational quest which soon exceeds the guide role’s requirements for knowing the appropriate facts. This creates a set of successive problems. In his late educational career, Gedge first detects the truth in the experience of the absence of the supposedly present. He then has to confront the conflict between his individual development and his life/wife, on the basis of economic survival. This produces a new stage of conflicting exclusions/inclusions, the re-inclusion of his isolated self into a different “society”, that of the Americans. Which is, however, not yet the solution to the problem he has with the tourists’ expectations.

For the tourists, Shakespeare is only the form of the experience of the presence of the authentic. The effect of authenticity, as the result of authenticating the story through the sight or object (and vice versa), is highlighted in “The Birthplace” as producing merely an *effect* of truth. The relationship between truth and authenticity is intricate; although epistemologically they can be identified (if knowledge is true it is authentic, as something is authentic when the knowledge about it is true), the authentic in tourism, as experience, is basically an effect of the MacCannellian procedure of matching a marker and a sight where the marker is not effectively questioned as to its own truth (only to its ability to authenticate). James doesn’t frame the problem as the disreputation of the Birthhouse itself, which would be the predicted effect in case of the doubtful truth of the marker. Rather, he emphasizes the expectations of the tourists, who want to experience the sight by the marker. As a result, the specific discursive conditions of the authenticating process come to the fore.

In the following I will show how the birthplace is conceptualized as the center of two biographical expositions. It serves as the protagonist’s catalyst for integrating his self in fulfilling his vocation; for the tourists, it emerges as the scene to be authenticated by the telling of a sentimental biography.



## Life and Value: Becoming a Cultural Critic

In moving from their unconspicuously dwindling existence in Blackport-on-Dwindle to the place where the greatest English author was born, the Gedges face the most important change in their lives. For the husband, the place is important in a way different from his wife. Morris Gedge wants to get serious with Shakespeare, and with Shakespeare criticism. So, in due course he educates himself better than is good for his assignment, and recognizes the doubtful factual grounding of the reputation of the birthplace. Isabel Gedge, in contrast, desires the picturesque homeliness and financial security of the housekeeping job. As their different interests start to collide, Morris finds himself responsible for solving the conflict. As the sense of individual identity he acquires by expertship becomes threatened by isolation, he feels himself excluded from social communicability and reduced to role playing – until the American couple enters who provide the biographically deranged Gedge with the hope of inclusion. Which turns into another threat of exclusion, however, solved at the end by treading a thin line between exclusion and inclusion.

I will first explain how Gedge’s critical sense of the place emerges through the experience of absences and presences. The sense of self gained in that process will be further observed in the conflict with its antagonist, his wife’s economical thinking. In a third take, we’ll contextualize that conflictual relation in terms of the systems theoretical concept of the exclusion and autonomization of the individual.

*The Birth Chamber: Absence – Presence*

Gedge develops his personal relation with the birth house during his habitual nightly prowls. His behavior follows a model of a more reflective kind of touristic perception, one that suggests a romantic communion with the place. The house itself takes part in Gedge’s education, “the place acted on his imagination” – as, lurking in the dark, he hopes “to surprise some secret, of the *genius loci*” (454). He is a model literary tourist: his romantic relation to the place fosters an awareness of critical problems.

Integral to that education is the incorporation of high-cultural values; and in that sense, Gedge becomes a cultural critic. His task requires comprehensive knowledge about Shakespeare, and as a former teacher, he takes the job seriously. His observation of visiting tourists, for instance, is described as an educational experience making up for the lack of traveling; James thus reflects back the tourists’ look upon themselves and points to the importance of the attitude rather than the fact of being at the other place.<sup>23</sup>

Gedge masters the requirements of information transmission easily, but doesn’t stop there. He acquires a full appreciation of Shakespeare’s work and, as a critical scholar, develops a sceptical attitude towards the

23. “Types, classes, nationalities, manners, diversities of behaviour, modes of seeing, feeling, of expression, would pass before him and become for him, after a fashion, the experience of an untravelled man. His journeys had been short and saving, but poetic justice again seemed inclined to work for him in placing him just at the point in all Europe perhaps where the confluence of races was thickest.” (459)

traditionally asserted factuality of certain objects on exhibition. His doubts are taking shape on his nightly patrols – when he is completely on his own, neither in the tourists’ society nor his wife’s. Here

[i]t was not till months had elapsed that he found how little they [the things on display] had to tell him, and he was quite at his ease with them when he knew they were by no means where his sensibility had first placed them. (455)

In continual contact with the objects supposedly intimate to Shakespeare, Gedge revises their significance.

The moment of resignification is associated with the so-called birth chamber, the room where Shakespeare’s birth purportedly took place. The birth chamber is the only room in the house that is empty. Here, Gedge has a conversion experience.

The Holy of Holies of the Birthplace was the low, the sublime Chamber of Birth, sublime because, as the Americans usually said—unlike the natives they mostly found words—it was so pathetic; and pathetic because it was—well, really nothing else in the world that one could name, number or measure. It was as empty as a shell of which the kernel has withered, and contained neither busts nor prints nor early copies; it contained only the Fact—the Fact itself—which, as he stood sentient there at midnight, our friend, holding his breath, allowed to sink into him. He *had* to take it as the place where the spirit would most walk and where he would therefore be most to be met, with possibilities of recognition and reciprocity. He hadn’t, most probably—*He* hadn’t—much inhabited the room, as men weren’t apt, as a rule, to convert to their later use and involve in their wider fortune the scene itself of their nativity. But as there were moments when, in the conflict of theories, the sole certainty surviving for the critic threatened to be that He had not—unlike other successful men—*not* been born, so Gedge, though little of a critic, clung to the square feet of space that connected themselves, however feebly, with the positive appearance. (455f)

The characterization of the room as sublime, and pathetic, invoke a specific relation of the place to the ‘marker’ (in MacCannell’s terminology) and the imagination. In James’s model, the object (the place, the sight) cannot be connected to the story about it (the marker) without the use of imagination. This is what Gedge, in his final performance in the story, shows us, and it is epitomized in the Birth Chamber, where there are no objects, but only empty space. It nonetheless exerts a sublime influence. Which, as it defies naming, numbering, or measuring, is a reversion to the pure imaginary. This is reinforced by the phrase “empty as a shell from which the kernel has withered”. Which nonetheless contains something: the Fact (mark the capitalization), which is a fact *post facto*. It is actually an imagined fact, but the one which is, from the perspective of ‘theory’ or of historical reconstruction, probably the most ‘true’ (as it accounts for the continuous deferral of linguistic grasping, of the historical consciousness being always ‘late’). Allowing this fact of birth to ‘sink’ means to let it completely dissolve in imagination.

The Birth Chamber, on the other hand, as it doesn't provide much of the objects one can falsely declare as authenticating traces, is the place which, in its emptiness, provides the most adequate furnishing of *the fact*, which is that He had not not been born. The absence of 'facts', so to speak, allows for a presence of the 'Fact'. Which is signified, as well, by the presence of Shakespeare's 'spirit', qualified by the declaration that this is independent of the actual treading of the floor by Shakespeare in his later life. The Fact thus becomes the pure fact of Shakespeare's existence; and its purity is tantamount to the primacy of the imagination in filling out its significance. The 'spirit' is thus emblematic of the imaginative inspiration of the sensitive individual – in reconstruction but also in gaining insight (this is, I think, the significance of the later 'reciprocity' between Gedge and Shakespeare).

The Birth Chamber is not only the place where one can imagine Shakespeare to be born, it is also the birth place of Gedge's new personality. Gedge's thoughts before he is characterized as "little of a critic" disclose that he is so only in his current self-estimation. He doesn't know it yet, but he is a critic already, as a little later (on the same page) his wife testifies.<sup>24</sup>

The double negative of Shakespeare's birth is, however, incised by the doubly negative qualification "unlike other successful men", which provokes the question: in what sense could these other successful men not have been born? Birth here acquires a metaphorical meaning, that of a special presence, which is linked to the special nature of Shakespeare's success. Success is the recognition by others, and Shakespeare's success is built upon the texts he has written and that have survived his death. In that sense, the emphatic metaphorical meaning of birth comprises some of the meaning James conveys in his New York Edition preface to the story, "that mystic, that 'chemical' change wrought in the impression of life by its dedication to an aesthetic use"<sup>25</sup> – which can be applied to Gedge as much as Shakespeare and points to the reflection of one in the other. Shakespeare owes his success, in that reading, to his life's dedication to an aesthetic use, which sets the tenor of the metaphoric birth as denoting an aesthetic rebirth, a renaissance. And Gedge will be subject to that, as well.

The birth chamber epitomizes the whole problem of the birth house: there is nothing that one can know about Shakespeare's life, except his works. To be ignorant about Shakespeare's life, then, is to honor Shakespeare most: to take Shakespeare for what he produced. That explains why Gedge "rejoiced, as the winter waned, in his ignorance" (456) about the truth status of the stories he has to tell. And his feeling of the "positive appearance", the presence of Shakespeare's spirit, the *genius loci*, cannot be expressed directly, not in terms, at least, of Shakespearean biography. That sets the frame, in any case, for the solution to Gedge's problem of what stories he should tell the tourists – after discussing the critical the "truth" doesn't work. But why should Gedge, then, want to tell the truth? Before answering that question, we'll have to consider more of the opposing forces.

24. "She denied it, for hadn't she, in the first place, been present, wasn't she still present, at his pious, his tireless study of everything connected with the subject?" (456)

25. JAMES, 'Preface to "The Birthplace"', p. 1252.

Within the economy of the story, the Chamber of Birth has a privileged position. It is not only the scene of the most important changes in the story (Gedge's recognitions, but also his exchange with the Americans), it also encapsulates the semantics of the story. James basically holds that a significant experience doesn't depend so much on the effect of perceptual objects but on the activity of the imagination – which is indicated by terms such as 'sublime', 'pathetic', 'sink', 'holding your breath', and 'fascinating'.

### *Life and Wife*

While Morris Gedge expands his intellectual horizon, his wife cherishes the domestic blessings of their little warden's house.

These nightly prowls, as he called them, were disquieting to his wife, who had no disposition to share in them, speaking with decision of the whole place as just the place to be forbidding after dark. She rejoiced in the distinctness, contiguous though it was, of their own little residence, where she trimmed the lamp and stirred the fire and heard the kettle sing, repairing the while the omissions of the small domestic who slept out; she foresaw herself with some promptness, drawing rather sharply the line between her own precinct and that in which the great spirit might walk. (454)

In contrast to her husband's predilection for the dark and empty, Isabel Gedge prefers the light and hubbub of the kitchen (center of *their* home), and to keep surfaces clean and sealed instead of probing behind for deeper meaning. In other passages, she also keeps an eye on their financial security. What they agree upon in their disputes is that he is romantic while she is realistic. This is unproblematic as long as the two values are not in conflict, which they predictably come to be. Isabel doesn't want to hear of his doubts, she thinks he's excessive in his criticism and prefers the harmless myths to the critical stance. She also senses that the critical stance will, once uttered to the tourists, endanger their occupation and their new home. She urges him to continue with the routine (see also above p. 16).

The same is suggested by the American's wife, at the end of their first meeting. James establishes, for the female part of his cast, a value system different from the high cultural critical values that Gedge and the American represent. The women value 'life' higher than critical knowledge. They seem to give higher priority to the tangibility and security of the things you have than to the leaks and voids of meaning that stir curiosity and the imagination.

In the end, the two value systems aren't incompatible; it is rather that they have to be combined in the right way to create a happy ending. When Gedge comments on his performing style: "It's too beastly easy, you know", he doesn't mean that he has become immoral but that he sees the performance as a way to express himself; not speaking in the critical objective discourse doesn't mean to give up personal integrity or truth.<sup>26</sup> But before

26. We might, with HENRY McDONALD, 'Nietzsche Contra Derrida: Two Views of Henry James's "The Birthplace"', *Henry James Review*, 11 (1990), p. 145, interpret the value of 'life'

arriving at this salvation point, Gedge has to go through all stages of the dilemma.

As noted above, Gedge, after his first hunches of the doubtful truth value of the stories he has to administer, begins to regret the lack of opportunity to communicate his expertise. As a tour guide he is supposed to be accurate in the information he gives, and his 'professional' honor is at stake. We have already referred to the conceptual underpinnings of the guest role (above 1.1). His professional efforts produce something in excess: Gedge's individuality. At first that involves the acquisition of a critical understanding of his job, but also of 'theories'; finally it makes him the author of his own fate/job. To view individuality as excess (excessiveness is what Gedge's wife perceives as a constant danger, at first in his excessive criticism of the stories (lack of 'realism'), then in overdoing the performance (excessive 'romanticism')) is to emphasize the dysfunctional attributes of individuality with respect to the functional system in which the individual has to perform. The functional system in this case is the economic system, on which the operations of the house are based and to which the Gedges are coupled in terms of their financial situation. The relevance of the economic system for the Gedges is directly related to the status of Gedge's critical insights: that they are part of his "job". Opposed to that, for example, is the American couple, who are characterized as well-to-do and are, first of all, clients (the client is king and doesn't have to make allowances). In that frame, the Americans' suspension of the asymmetry of the relationship between their humble servant Gedge and themselves by addressing him as equal is all the more effective. In short, the significance of the economic system is realized in the story as the demands Isabel Gedge makes on her husband. But it is not only the economic system that the individual has to tackle.

### *Inclusion and Exclusion*

In the encounter with the Americans Gedge takes the opportunity to vent the hitherto repressed: the truth about the place. The realization of this conversation here signifies communication as inclusion (the inclusion of what has been excluded, Gedge's "insights", and what they connote, Gedge's individuality). With Luhmann's conceptualization of individuality, we are able to contextualize the significance of inclusion with reference to social structure rather than individual psychology.

The relations of the individual to society have been described by Luhmann as that of a general exclusion.<sup>27</sup> This is the case in a highly differentiated society where there are many functional systems and the individual has to choose and to be chosen for inclusion in the communication with specific functional systems. That pertains to, for instance, being addressed

as a specific Nietzschean tinge in James's self-perception as author, as the expression of an "active morality". Our emphasis here is, however, on the discursive moves of the text rather than the mindset of the author.

27. NIKLAS LUHMANN, 'Individuum, Individualität, Individualismus', in: *Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik: Studien zur Wissenssoziologie der modernen Gesellschaft Band 3*, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1993, pp. 149–259; NIKLAS LUHMANN, *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1997

as an employee in a firm or at a university, as well as a client by the local authorities, as citizen in the political system, or as consumer in the "cultural" subsystem. With respect to the self-representation of the individual, the economic version of the individual's biography, the career, becomes preeminent (because of the need of the individual to offer points of inclusion to the society).<sup>28</sup>

Gedge's career as a guide points to the problematic aspects of the status of the individual. He has to mediate the conflicting demands of two functional systems that are interlocked in his role as tourist guide: the economic system (or the economic interface of the tourist system) and the system of humanistic science with its historical-critical methods and 'theories'. While the former is encoded in terms of revenue, the latter is based on truth.<sup>29</sup> As a 'critical mind'<sup>30</sup> and tour-guide, Gedge is bound to the protocols of a historical truth, while as a caretaker of the tourists and the sight he is bound to the rationale of keeping up tourist morale and ensuring the margin of profit for keeping up the house. Now, that isn't a problem as long as one is realistic, as Mrs. Gedge testifies; being realistic means to keep up multiple 'personalities' as changing conditions demand. But obviously, one part of the equation is the romantic self-reflection of the individual, which is supposed to be an organic whole, but which transcends the social conditions of the individual. That concept takes the principal exclusion, and the resulting segmentation of the individual person in various roles, as a deficiency to be overcome. In other words, what cannot be addressed by the economic system's (i.e. the board's) communications with Gedge – the doubt on the truth of the house's authenticity – counts as an exclusion for Gedge. What is so excluded can be included in the communication with the Romantic American, Mr. Hayes, but that in turn leads to the threat of another exclusion: the discharge from the position as caretaker of the house. The inclusion as critic is clearly marked as a matter of individuality, in contrast to the economic inclusion.

We have to consider, then, the individual as ideology. As Luhmann states: "Gerade der Ausschluß des Individuums aus dem Sozialsystem Gesellschaft ermöglicht dann seinen Wiedereintritt als Wert in die Ideologie."<sup>31</sup> James dramatizes the paradoxical situation which this ideological value of individuality forces itself upon the individual. He pitches the inclusion into one subsystem (the tourist-economic system) against the inclusion into another subsystem (the system of historical research based on the value of truth). Gedge, like his real-life model remembered by James as a man "who coming to his office with infinite zest, had after a while desperately thrown it up,"<sup>32</sup> embraces the tour guide role in complete identification. When he

28. GIANCARLO CORSI, 'Die dunkle Seite der Karriere', in: DIRK BAECKER, editor, *Probleme der Form*, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1993, pp. 252–265; LUHMANN, 'Individuum, ...', pp. 149–259.

29. See, especially for the latter, LUHMANN, *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft*, pp. 339ff, and NIKLAS LUHMANN, *Die Wissenschaft der Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992, stw 1001.

30. McDONALD, pp. 133–48 points to James's concept of 'critical mind' as applicable to what Gedge has acquired in his studies.

31. "The exclusion proper of the individual from the social system 'society' allows its subsequent re-entrance into ideology as value." LUHMANN, 'Individuum, ...', p. 159

32. JAMES, 'Preface to "The Birthplace"', p. 1252

feels the conflicting demands of each subsystem, he is unable to 'play a role' in each; instead, he views the problem as a matter of identification with either one or the other. Behind this is the concept of a liberal and humanistic education which aims at the wholeness of a human being. James here shows where the standard, played through in all its consequences, leads to – into the said almost schizophrenic feeling of failure to integrate one's personality, of "splitting into halves". As long as Gedge is excluded from the system in which he can communicate his insights, he is excluded from himself. In terms of communication, then, his problem is the failure to be addressed in the discursive space he addresses himself in.

As inclusion implies the acceptance of one's communication, signalled by a response in kind, Gedge's connection with the Americans in the exchange of critical insights amounts to the inclusion into a "system." The significance of that connection derives precisely from the prior sense of isolation, in Gedge's productions of a discourse that found no valid addressee but himself. We have described this in detail above. What follows the connection, though, is the renewed disillusionment as to the nature of this inclusion. It is only a temporary, specific, local inclusion, which is not generalizable or structural. Gedge's attempts at generalization, in becoming critical and ironical with the tourists, ends with the economic system of tourism striking back. His communications, for this subsystem, are dysfunctional. James, however, pits the failure in the tourist system against the hope to find a nonexclusionary way to function within this system without giving up the humanistic value system. This hope carries the reader through the text, and James keeps up the suspense if and how Gedge's endeavors will be crowned by success.

Gedge's solution is to have the cake and eat it, too. He will become an author. The form of his creation responds to the kind of tourism that takes place at the Birthplace.

### A Life's Meaning: Tourism and the Expectations of the Typical

How can literary tourism be distinguished from other kinds of tourism? First of all, Shakespeare's birthhouse is, as James states in his New York Edition preface to the story, "a great place of pilgrimage, a shrine sacred to the piety and curiosity of the whole English-speaking race".<sup>33</sup> We have noted the religious overtones above (see section 1.1), now we take a more detailed measure of the specific discursive nature of this touristic religion.

What are the tourists interested in? In James's story, we see their interest from the point of view of the presenter. As we have already mentioned above, he complains to his American intimates that the tourists require certain stock descriptions of domestic life, "where He had His dinner and where He had His tea" and "where He hung up His hat and where He kept His boots and where His mother boiled her pot." (47of) Moreover, there are the objects Gedge finds increasingly inauthentic.

The exhibitional side of the establishment had struck him, even on arrival, as qualifying too much its character; he scarce knew what

33. JAMES, 'Preface to "The Birthplace"', p. 1252

he might best have looked for, but the three or four rooms bristled overmuch, in the garish light of day, with busts and relics, not even ostensibly always *His*, old prints and old editions, old objects fashioned in His likeness, furniture "of the time" and autographs of celebrated worshippers. (455)

As indicated above, Gedge is uncomfortable with the lack of imagination which the profusion of objects and the stereotypical expectations suggest. What he finds, in the end, is a hole in the tight-knit supplemental relation between the expectations and the objects, and that is in the activity of storytelling. He will perform on the supplemental relation of the narrative pieces to their respective locations, each of them implying a guide who points to the place and tells the appropriate part of the story.

As we follow the assorted themes of the stock description – dinner, tea, hat, boots, mother – we get the impression of a story that we know. It is the story of everyday existence, familiar to us from our own everyday existence. This is, I think, the specific link established by the narrative connection of place and discourse: it presents, here and now, in *familiarity*, the place and Shakespeare.

The objects are, in contrast, representative of the non-familiar, of the mediated relationship of scholarly reconstruction, which in the context of their appearance (in the dawning of Gedge's doubt) makes good sense. In the touristic display, they are used to give an 'objective image' of Shakespeare, either in visual representations (busts, prints), or as samples of his work metonymically significant in the chronological closeness to Shakespeare and thus more authentic (early copies). But there are also objects more directly related to the institution of tourism as sign practice: the furniture "of the time" is even one step removed from direct relevance and signifies just abstract (historical) "time"; the autographs of "celebrated worshippers" refer to nothing else but the representative importance of the institution itself, metonymically constructed by the representativeness of its visitors (who, in a further metonymic transference, symbolically bestow that importance upon the touristic visitors following in their steps).

The early copies are metonymic in the materiality of the printed matter. Time is the medium in this strategy to authenticate the prints; the marks on the paper are not by Shakespeare himself, of course, but by an institutional printing setup which is nearer to him in time than to us. A different though related metonymization takes place in the notion of the visual, aesthetic category of the picturesque, which is a quality of the house genuinely *not* related to Shakespeare (as the American answers his wife's question about the worth of the place if that author hadn't really existed, that "the place is charming in itself." (470)) The picturesqueness of the house is mentioned throughout the story and is part of the attraction for staying there (decidedly so for Mrs. Gedge). The picturesque aesthetics, in connection with architecture, involves a quality of 'quaintness' that refers to the temporality of existence, to a different time in the past. It sets up a mild distance to the ordinary.<sup>34</sup> The picturesque metonymizes, on the level of experience, the extraordinary of the perceptual aspect with the extraordinary

34. Rather than discussing the definition of the picturesque in the context of its source in



of the writer Shakespeare. We will get deeper into the picturesque in the next chapter on James's literary travel essays, but also in the next section on Gedge as author.

To return to the objects at hand, it is the representative, 'serious', objective objects that will not be presented in Gedge's final performance. Rather, he links elements of the place with a more specific narrative. As he leaves out the busts, prints and early copies, he avoids the question of authentication. Instead of a metaphoric mode of representation (how the busts show Shakespeare, the prints represent Shakespeare, the early copies stand for Shakespeare's 'work') we are offered a metonymical mode of presentation where parts of the interior of the house are linked to narratemes of a fictional character. In a way, I repeat now this metonymical gesture by quoting at length James's presentation of Gedge's performance. Gedge starts his performance as an answer to the question of how he "had managed", not yet directly posed by the Americans (on their return to the Birthplace after eighteen months) but somehow in the air, which he addresses by giving a sample of his performance.

"We stand here, you see, in the old living-room, happily still to be reconstructed in the mind's eye, in spite of the havoc of time, which we have fortunately, of late years, been able to arrest. It was of course rude and humble, but it must have been snug and quaint, and we have at least the pleasure of knowing that the tradition in respect to the features that do remain is delightfully uninterrupted. Across that threshold He habitually passed; through those low windows, in childhood, He peered out into the world that He was to make so much happier by the gift to it of His genius; over the boards of this floor—that is over *some* of them, for we mustn't be carried away!—his little feet often pattered; and the beams of this ceiling (we must really in some places take care of *our* heads!) he endeavoured, in boyish strife, to jump up and touch. It's not often that in the early home of genius and renown the whole tenor of existence is laid so bare, not often that we are able to retrace, from point to point and from step to step, its connection with objects, with influences—to build it round again with little solid facts out which it sprang. This, therefore, I need scarcely remind you, is what makes the small space between these walls—so modest in measurement, so insignificant in aspect—unique on all the earth. *There is nothing like it,*" Morris Gedge went on, insisting as solemnly and softly, for his bewildered hearers, as over a pulpit-edge; "there is nothing at all like it anywhere in the world. There is nothing, only reflect, for the combination of greatness, and, as we venture to say, of intimacy. You may find elsewhere perhaps absolutely fewer changes, but where shall you find a *presence* equally diffused, uncontested and undisturbed? Where in particular shall you find, on the part of the abiding spirit, an equally towering eminence? You may find elsewhere eminence of a considerable order, but where shall you find *with* it, don't you see, changes, after all, so few, and the contemporary element caught so, as it were, in the very fact?" His visitors, at first

Gilpin, or of the sublime as canonically conceived by Burke, we take these concepts as used by James in their rather generic sense.

confounded, but gradually spellbound, were still gaping with the universal gape—wondering, he judged, into what strange pleasantry he had been suddenly moved to break out, and yet beginning to see in him an intention beyond a joke, so that they started, at this point, almost jumped, when, by as rapid a transition, he made, toward the old fireplace, a dash that seemed to illustrate, precisely, the act of eager catching. "It is in this old chimney corner, the quaint inglenook of our ancestors—just there in the far angle, where His little stool was placed and where, I dare say, if we could look close enough, we should find the hearthstone scraped with His little feet—that we see the inconceivable child gazing into the blaze of the old oaken logs and making out there pictures and stories, see Him conning, with curly bent head, His well-worn hornbook, or poring over some scrap of an ancient ballad, some page of some such rudely bound volume of chronicles as lay, we may be sure, in His father's window-seat." (482f)

Clearly, Gedge here impersonates a well-known role, hinted at by the ironic use of the word 'pulpit-edge'. But his priestly invocation of the place's unique identity is only one aspect of the larger discourse underlying his performance before pilgrims. More important, both to the tourists and to us, is the way he links the objects to Shakespeare. The latter is introduced to the audience as the (self-consciously announced) fiction of a little boy, doing what a little boy does in a house. Along with the guide, the tourists (and the readers of the text) are established as observers of a scene, with the house as a backdrop. At certain points, these scenes from a boyhood are linked to the later celebrity of the grown-up.

In James's literary execution the focality of description gradually slips into fiction, since, at the beginning, it is linked directly to the presence of touristic perception, narrating either habitual actions (passing as we pass) or actions connecting now and then in terms of perception (peeking at the world that we can see, too – it is 'the world' that connects us with Him; patting the floor in analogy to the noises the tourists make when walking there, with the difference of being a child's feet), then initiating the imaginary jump with the image of the boy jumping up the beams at the ceiling. This shift into fiction is orthographically indicated by the de-capitalization of the personal pronoun whose initial capital had been the sign of Shakespeare.<sup>35</sup> This very fiction serves, in Gedge's next move, as the basis for the claims he makes on the eminence of the place.

Our attention is directed to the way Gedge observes the reactions of his listeners. James stages the production of literature as the author's following of the reader's movements his text incites. On the level of representation, Gedge's performative actions (e. g. the surprising transition to the chimney piece) metonymically reproduce on the level of body movements the moves in his discourse, with a view to the possible effect. We will return to this aspect in the next section. In the rest of the cited paragraph Gedge deepens

35. The decapitalization marks also the changed relation to Shakespeare, he becomes more human in relation to Gedge, who is becoming himself an author. I want to thank Thomas Claviez who in personal communication brought this moment of decapitalization to my attention.

the fiction, further conceives of “the unconceivable child” as in the process of becoming the later famous person. The chimney place thus emerges as the domestic location of education.

Gedge continues his performance in a further passage, more closely analyzed below, in the Birth Chamber. The Birth Chamber, as we have seen, is the center of significance of the house (and “The Birthplace”). In it, both the life of the author and the reputation of the house originate. But it is not only the origin of Shakespeare’s biography, but also that of Gedge’s new identity, the source of and the solution to his problem. Gedge’s recognition that the birth chamber is an ‘empty shell’ requiring the supplementary exertion of the imagination translates, in his late performance, into the general application of the imagination to all objects. They become the material of the artful application of stock patterns of the biography. Part of the immediacy of Gedge’s exhibition is *discursively* produced, and not just a result of the *performative* metonymization of the perceptive directness of the body movement in time and space. The here and now is a discursive construct, and the here and now is the target of any authentication process.<sup>36</sup> The ‘art’ in Gedge’s performance grows from the style in which he induces presence by linking discourse and object.

So far, we have looked at the discursive strategies to link the materiality of the place to its cultural significance in the touristic situation. One strategy is to establish metonymical relationships between the objects and Shakespeare in terms of time (contemporaneity) or presence, to catch “the contemporary element”; the other strategy is to form a fictional story out of these relationships. It is the latter that very directly implies a semantic dimension, linked to its implication of a genre. The genre is biography, and the semantics is the semantics of individuality. In biographical framing, the little boy is made to contain all the potential for his later achievements and fame. The actual interior of the house becomes the projection screen of an imaginary biography — not the whole biography, but the part of it which makes the birth house the attraction it is. It is the origin, the beginnings of the biography that define the larger meaning of the birthplace.

It makes sense, then, that the preeminent place in the house (and in “The Birthplace”) is the birth chamber. Here the “combination of greatness and intimacy” is most clearly distinguishable. The birth situation refers to intimacy itself; it is one of the situations in life with the least public access; a birth scene can rarely be watched, or only in one’s own private, intimate involvement into one; the emptiness of the birth chamber thus stands for the mediation of this scene by imaginary processing, as one of the cultural secrets that it was at James’s time. Thus the link to the intimate succeeds either through the status of the birth as the intimate experience per se or the visitors’ remembrance of their own intimate experiences in this respect (rather those of giving birth than being born). The “biographical” is just the effect of linking the intimate with greatness, of connecting private with public signification. Fictionalizing allows for the establishment of a space which is encoded as private or intimate, to be distinguished from and then merged with the public significance. Consequently, the

36. We will return to that issue of presence in our chapter on *The Ambassadors*.

biographical does not limit itself to the use of generic traits of biography but also the experiential resources of the individual tourist. It is everybody's childhood that is projected onto Shakespeare, the little boy. Thus the little boy becomes doubly exemplary, as the link to his later representativity of the cultural whole, but also in his having been a middle class child like everybody.

The religious vocabulary in the story points to another significance of the birth chamber, referring to the birth of Christ. There is no birthplace of Christ, to be sure, His birth took place in a transient location. There is a similarity in the pattern, however, between pilgrimages to the Holy Land and Shakespeare's birth house. Visiting Palestine, the tourist authenticates stages of Christ's biography, which is at the core of the New Testament. Visiting Shakespeare's birthplace, the tourist visits but one stage of Shakespeare's biography, but one charged with a special meaning. Both scenes of nativity don't “have,” on their respective scale, the place itself, it is an empty space. In Bethlehem, on the larger scale of biblical sites, the place of Christ's birth cannot be known. In Stratford-on-Avon, in the Birthhouse, with all the objects signifying the connection to Shakespeare in time, the connection to his birth is made in an empty room. At the origin of the biographical imagination is an empty space, then, which we may join to the difficulty of remembering our own birth. But rather than that, I'd like to point to the literary function of this lack, which in James's story is to highlight the necessary use of the imagination to make sense of “facts.”

Literary tourism, moreover, is not religious pilgrimage – although in James's story they might be taken for close relatives. They are, in a way. Both Christian pilgrimage and some more “serious” kinds of tourism establish an authenticating relation of place and text. The text of the pilgrims is, of course, the bible, and the place they travel to contains one of the elements of the world the bible refers to, in the form of a relic. The relic is similar to the objects in Shakespeare's birthhouse, as it establishes a link which is metonymical because of its materiality, contiguous to the time and place of the text. The text of the tourists is not just one text. There are different sorts of texts with different sorts of tourism. Historical tourism, for instance, takes historical texts and looks for the places mentioned there, making those places refer to the historical events just like pilgrims make relics refer to the bible – with the difference of the cosmology behind it. The difference between historical tourism and pilgrimage may be debatable (one can see in the bible one of the first instances of a historical text), but in literary tourism it is beyond question.

In literary tourism, the texts are not directly linked to the place, but to the author, who in turn becomes the text to be authenticated. There is a double relationship between place and text in literary tourism, that between the texts *by* the author and those *about* the author, the latter establishing his cultural significance. This double relationship we have already met in James's story as the measure distinguishing the initiated (interested in the literary texts mainly, the productions of the author, and their quality as source of greatness) from the tourists (interested in the biographical facts of the author). This double-edged relationship to texts in literary tourism constitutes its particularity, which allows for precisely this *double entendre*.

Literary tourism could be defined as a visiting of the places of the lives of authors (as is the usual meaning), but also as a tourism where places referred to in literature are visited. It is the latter with which this study will concern itself in the following chapters – but the former is what is generally understood by the term.

In a double sense, in “The Birthplace”, the author is the producer of the attraction. Shakespeare is an author, and as an important author attracts the visitors to his birthplace. Gedge, on the other hand, becomes an author in his own right, and gains a reputation just by the way he makes the place attractive. The American couple have returned to see what is behind his reputation.

The young man, though still looking at him hard, felt sure, with this, of his own ground. “Of course, you’re tremendously talked about. You’ve gone round the world.”  
 “You’ve heard of me in America?”  
 “Why, almost of nothing else!” (487)

Gedge has become as famous, not as Shakespeare himself, but as famous as the tourist attraction he is only serving as a guide for. His performance has gained a reputation as a special performance, in the manner a literary text gains a reputation as a special experience. We take now a closer look at Gedge, the author.

### 1.3 Authorship and The Work

Gedge’s replacement of “Shakespeare” as attraction is a significant shift in the story. In fact, “Shakespeare” is replaced by Shakespeare incarnated in Gedge. This may sound a little far-fetched, but we do for heuristic purposes champion the hypothesis. We will back it up by the evidence gathered so far and some more. Shakespeare as *the* English-language author is a convenient short-cut for the concept of the author in general, and one to which Henry James certainly meant to pay a tribute in his story, “The Birthplace”.

I will not go as far as to say that the line of replacement includes James himself (replacing himself for Shakespeare). However, in describing why Shakespeare is so distinguished, James, in his foreword to the 1907 edition of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, puts forward his own ideas about literary creativity. Calling *The Tempest* “the rarest of all examples of literary art”,<sup>37</sup> James establishes Shakespeare as an exemplary writer, as the model and the scale of what is possible in literature.

As we have seen in the section about the value of Shakespeare, there are different approaches to Shakespeare. In “The Birthplace”, these are the tourists’ interest for the biography, and the cultural critics’ interest for the Work. In his introductory essay on Shakespeare, James clarifies the issue at hand. In this essay he points to the conflict as being about the appropriate interpretation of the biographical void Shakespeare has left us

37. HENRY JAMES, JR, ‘William Shakespeare: Introduction to *The Tempest*’, in: LEON EDEL, editor, *Literary Criticism, Vol. 1*, New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1984, p. 1208.

– the bone of contention being Shakespeare’s motivation for stopping to write plays after *The Tempest* (that is how James puts it) some years before retirement to Stratford-on-Avon. The reconstructions of this motivation have been, for James, generally too much inconsiderate of his work, in so far as they explain it by a lack of energy or as a business decision (enough money made). James, on the other hand, cannot believe that the creative spirit has left Shakespeare, nor could have been anything but the prime force in his life’s decisions. Since Shakespeare, the man, has been kept in hiding by Shakespeare, the artist, one can only guess at what “the man” might have been like. James, although he declares his preference to admit the lack of knowledge, fills up that void to a certain extent with “the artist”, hypothesizing how the artist and the man are related, and so explains why Shakespeare is the exemplary author.

James’s judgement of Shakespeare may help us in answering the crucial question: what is the significance of Gedge’s conversion in the frame of James’s story? How does it relate to the “moral” of the story? And, what is the moral of the story?

Gedge’s conversion produces a different relationship to knowledge, and an awareness of how knowledge is conveyed. Gedge at first learns to critically gather knowledge about Shakespeare in order to be an expert for the tourists. But then he learns that the knowledge is used for something else than just to know. He learns that those that employ him and those he has to serve as guide want a “show”, which is something in excess of the pure transmission of the information. After the first interview with his employer, Grant-Jackson, he reports to his wife.

“Did he call it,” Mrs. Gedge inquired, “the ‘Show?’”

“Of course he did. The Biggest on Earth.”

She winced, looking at him hard—she wondered, but only for a moment. “Well, it *is*.” (478)

As we have seen above in the description of his role (section 1.1), the tour guide is often viewed as being an authoritative expert but at the same time of a capacity to entertain the party. The point I wish to make here, on the basis of James’s handling of the role conflicts, is that there is no conveying of knowledge without “entertaining”, short of, that is, providing a story, or an “interest.” Linking the place to the facts is, as James has it, an act of the “imagination” (as we showed above in the section on absence and presence, p. 30). So, the last section of “The Birthplace” shows Gedge as having successfully mastered the art of putting up a show. “Show” here involves the specific skills required for Gedge’s performance. His manipulation of the audience, his juggling with the levels of discourse, his inconceivably slipping into fiction, his ironical playing out of discursive levels one against the other (in, for instance, the self-reflexive announcement of his strategy of make-believe), these all are attributes that well fit the description of an author, in the Jamesian sense. We don’t even have to resort to the vocabulary of the deceptive appearances that link Gedge’s and Shakespeare’s masquerades, although the parallels certainly exist. When Gedge leads the Hayeses into the Birthroom to continue his performance, the Americans become, as all tourists, addressees of manipulation.

He missed a little, in truth, the usual round-eyed question from them—the inveterate artless cue with which, from moment to moment, clustered troops had, for a year, obliged him. Mr. and Mrs. Hayes were from New York, but it was a little like singing, as he had heard one of his Americans once say about something, to a Boston audience. He did none the less what he could, and it was ever his practice to stop still at a certain spot in the room and, after having secured attention by look and gesture, suddenly shoot off: “Here!”

They always understood, the good people—he could fairly love them now for it; they always said, breathlessly and unanimously, “There?” and stared down at the designated point quite as if some trace of the grand event were still to be made out. This movement produced, he again looked round. “Consider it well: *the* spot of earth——!” “Oh, but it isn’t *earth!*” the boldest spirit—there was always a boldest—would generally pipe out. Then the guardian of the Birthplace would be truly superior—as if the unfortunate had figured the Immortal coming up, like a potato, through the soil. “I’m not suggesting that He was born on the bare ground. He was born *here!*”—with an uncompromising dig of his heel. “There ought to be a brass, with an inscription, let in.” “Into the floor?”—it always came. “Birth and burial: seedtime, summer, autumn!”—that always, with its special, right cadence, thanks to his unfailing spring, came too. “Why not as well as into the pavement of the church?—you’ve *seen* our grand old church?” The former of which questions nobody ever answered—abounding, on the other hand, to make up, in relation to the latter. Mr. and Mrs. Hayes even were at first left dumb by it—not indeed, to do them justice, having uttered the word that produced it. They had uttered no word while he kept the game up, and (though that made it a little more difficult) he could yet stand triumphant before them after he had finished with his flourish. Then it was only that Mr. Hayes of New York broke silence.

Of course, there is still a difference between the Hayeses and “normal” tourists, which doesn’t keep Gedge, however, from following his course: they do not say anything, that is, they don’t give the cues Gedge’s performance has become attuned to. However, the performance itself works even without the cues (“though that made it a little more difficult”). Their mode of reception has already achieved categorial status as that of a “Boston audience”, a reference to high cultural attitudes.

Gedge’s conversion becomes obvious in the sentence “They always understood, the good people—he could fairly love them now for it.” Instead of an educational relation, which has as its object (in the double sense) the change of the touristic misunderstandings into enlightened understanding of the fact (against “stupidity” in terms of knowledge to be supplied and received), Gedge now establishes a conspirative relation with the tourists, attracting their attention in his imaginative pursuits. Suddenly calling out “Here!”, after having attuned the common attention to his bodily presence, speculates on the existence of imagination on the part of the tourists, a speculation which is proven successful in the resulting answer, the question “There?” Gedge thus establishes a quasi-dialogical relationship with his

audience, 'quasi' in the sense that Gedge is still in control of the course of the dialogue. His control is one of the performance as discourse, as a language game, as is hinted at in "that always, with its special, right cadence, thanks to his unflinching spring, came too." It is a "formal", rhetorical aspect of language which is highlighted here, rather than the contentual, argumentative level. "Cadence" implies music, rhythm, poetry, literature. Language here is conscious of the effects of its presentation. That points to the literary author, but also to a theory of the author as relying on "his unflinching spring," which adds the extra, intuitive dimension to critical discourse. It is the dimension of Gedge's 'style'. But it also entails the belief in the knowledge of the audience, of the reader as a partner in dialogue, conceived as a game of communication.

Another aspect of this establishment of literature as the blueprint for communication games is its fictionality. In the passage immediately cited above, this appears on a different level than in the passage formerly cited (on p. 37). Whereas in the latter we notice an orthographical index ("He" becomes "he"), in the former (the quote just above) the fictionalization of the addressee of the performance indicates the representation of fictionality as such. Gedge just imagines he has the tourists there – the actual Hayeses, being a "Boston audience", do not react in the typical manner. We have a doubling of fictionality here, the fictional character himself imagines fictional characters he interacts with. As the author/narrator of "The Birthplace" ("Henry James") imagines the effects of his writing, of staging Gedge, on the reader, Gedge himself imagines his interlocutors to produce his "text."<sup>38</sup> The reader takes a position structurally analogous to the Hayeses, who are addressees of a dialogic performance without taking part in the dialogue – likewise, the reader is the addressee of the fictional text, and taking part in the fictional scene through the agency of the narrator, who acts as the mediating or focalising agent.<sup>39</sup> Apart from the structural analogy, the reader and the Hayeses have already an identical position with respect to Gedge's performance, as witnesses. This position is established by the gap in time between sections VI and VII (the performance section), which puts the reader in the same position as the Americans, who want to know how Gedge has survived (the reader knows a little more and thus wants to know how Gedge has survived the rebuke of Mr. Grant-Jackson). The solution is conveyed in Gedge's performance in direct speech, while the Hayeses witness the same act, as spectators "who had uttered no word while he kept the game up." (486) Thus, on the positional level of the witness/reader, the difference between James, the author, and Gedge, the author, is figuratively annulled; to the extent, precisely, that the presence of the narrator allows for.

The difference between Gedge's earlier and later performances lies in an awareness of style and the employment of fictionality. How do mastership and fictionality relate? When asking the Hayeses after their first experience

38. Behind that, one might assume a reader-oriented theory of literary production.

39. The concept of focalising was introduced by Genette in 1972 and refers to the instantiation of perspective in narration (GÉRARD GENETTE, *Figures III*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972). See also RUTH RONEN, *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press,



of his new style of performance how they liked it, the following dialogue ensues.

Mrs. Hayes, he thought—if their answer were important—laughed a little nervously. “Oh, you see.”

Once more he looked from one to the other. “It’s too beastly easy, you know.”

Her husband raised his eyebrows. “You conceal your art. The emotion—yes; that must be easy; the general tone must flow. But about your facts—you’ve so many: how do you get *them* through?”

Gedge wondered. “You think I get too many——?”

At this they were amused together. “That’s just what we came to see!”

“Well, you know, I’ve felt my way; I’ve gone step by step; you wouldn’t believe how I’ve tried it on. *This*—where you see me—is where I’ve come out.” After which, as they said nothing: “You hadn’t thought I *could* come out?” (488)

For Gedge, authoring a performance is “too beastly easy”; the adverbial attribute’s reference to the kingdom of beasts invokes the ‘natural’, and positions the source of creation in the unconscious. The reference to the unconscious is related here to the concept of genius as source of authorship, as Mrs. Hayes in an earlier passage acknowledges (“You’ve really a genius!” (484)). Gedge himself is surprised at his discovery of his genius, also termed “facility”: “The charming woman before him acknowledged his ‘genius’ as he himself had to do. He had been surprised at his facility until he had grown used to it.” (485) In Gedge’s “genius”, its discovery and development, lies the difference between his later performance and the earlier. But what became of the earlier dilemma between “show” and “critical mind”? Why does this new practice seem to be a solution?

In the quote above Mr. Hayes provides a hint for the answer. He speaks of art “concealed”, and thus opens another dimension behind the flow of style, which is art. This notion of art concerns the facts that Gedge still manages to “get through”. The ‘facts’ are the results of the critical activity Gedge has developed in studying Shakespeare and has been able to communicate to Mr. Hayes but not the tourists. As Gedge describes his manner of “getting them through”, we might wonder what it is that he “tried on,” what his cautious progress aims at. Does he want to slip in the “facts” so that they don’t disturb the general flow? Or to integrate them into the flow so that they become part of the show? Put differently, is there a continuous second level of understanding, a *double entendre*, underlying the performance, instead of the representation of Gedge’s epistemological problems? In fact, Gedge does both. The relation of facts to fiction is, characteristic for the literature of realism, multivalent. In the beginning of the dialogue quoted on p. 37, he announces his performance as one of “construction” and keeps this self-reflective strand as a by-line, which becomes, as a stylistic device, itself ironized in “we must really in some places take care of *our* heads!” (482)<sup>40</sup> This self-reflexive “attitude” in the style of the performance allows

40. This phrase doesn’t only ironize, it also establishes this by-line as the discursive equivalent to corporeal presence, thus integrating the observer into discourse.

for a double-edged relation of fact and fiction, in which the latter serves as clearing device on the one hand, and as a medium for self-deconstruction on the other. “Self-deconstruction” here means the formation of a level of understanding that takes the fictional as pure appearance, as some kind of superfluous surface, in that it destroys its own plausibility and thus, in the negative, points to a realm of epistemology where matters are far less certain than is claimed by the semantic referentiality of a story. We see that in the oxymoronic phrase in Gedge’s fictionalization of the child: “if we could look close enough, we should find the hearthstone scraped with His little feet—that *we see the inconceivable child* gazing into the blaze of the old oaken logs and making out there pictures and stories, see Him conning, with curly bent head ...” (483; my emphasis), which is itself an instance of extreme cunning on the part of James.<sup>41</sup> This strategy of integrating stumbling-blocks disturbing the causal smoothness of the fictional discourse finds another example on the interactive level of the performance in the passage quoted on p. 43 where Gedge poses two questions in a row upon which the narrator adds: “The former of which questions nobody ever answered—abounding on the other hand, to make up, in relation to the latter.” (486) This establishes the performance as a text to read since the interaction, although part of the performance, intentionally is made to fail – but not to an extent that it stops, which would throw the focus on the interaction as such, but as a “slip” which only becomes detectable in a reiteration over the interactive pattern as if it were a text. Which is what the Hayeses, immediately following the passage, are described as doing, in not taking part in the interacting (they were “left dumb by it”), and thus are set up as “readers”, not interactors like the tourists. Here we meet a second level of understanding, a *double entendre* possible for the *cognoscenti*.

Gedge’s (and James’s) achievement is the production of this very play of language. It obtains a formation of its object different from the critical, scientific discourse of ‘the real’. It reflects and emphasizes the imaginative component in every discursive construction of the world. Instead of arguing about the doubtful nature of stories told and expected about the birthplace, which failed before the touristic audience, Gedge now tries to regenerate the parameters of his own fascination with the place. The result is a certain “presence,” which he achieves by his performative rhetorics and which echoes the beginning of his job, “the sweetness of the preliminary months”; which “had been great, great too, although almost excessive as agitation, was the wonder of fairly being housed with Him, of treading day and night in the footsteps He had worn, of touching the objects, or at all events the surfaces, the substances, over which His hands had played, which his arms, his shoulders had rubbed, of breathing the air—or something not too unlike it—in which His voice had sounded.” (448) It is almost as a turn of the screw that Gedge repeats in his performance the literary strategies that James used to describe Gedge’s fascination. This kind of presence points to the task of the author, his art, but also his “facility”, his vocation, to create

41. James makes the reader conceive of Gedge as conceiving the unconceivable child, along with Gedge’s audience who does the same, thus effecting a volatile junction of the story and the story in the story.

a simulacrum of an experience. It leads, moreover, to the specific rendering of place that is characteristic of travel essays; here the author establishes a narrator as fictional author, constituted by the renderings of perceptual – aesthetic – experience.

In “The Birthplace”, tourism appears as evolving from the concern with an author, focused on literature itself. The *genius loci* of the birth chamber, being indicative of the author’s ‘spirit’ as of his personal presence (especially because it is such an intense absence), is an inversion of the procedures of literature to present a place through its *genius loci*.<sup>42</sup> Their common relation is that between author and place. In literary texts, the representation of the *genius loci* points to the presence of the author at the place, especially in narrative texts where the genius appears on the rhetorical level rather than that of the narrative (in the configuration of focalization and perception). In “The Birthplace”, the absence of the author is literalized in the birth chamber, which is the metonymy of the literary text in which the author is not present but his spirit speaks through the text. As the author’s presence (not his spirit) speaks obliquely through the literal text in the rhetorical configuration of perception, in the birth chamber the presence of the (absent) author is itself not literal: as Gedge’s reflections indicate, men rarely involve in their life “the scene itself of their nativity” (456). Rather, that scene becomes a symbol of reference for thinking about existence, the meaning of existence (maybe in terms of its origin), a question that is addressed in James’s preface to the story as the dedication of life to aesthetic use.

The birth chamber is metonymical to textuality with respect to the imagination that is required to make the place meaningful. It is the the activity of the viewer/reader that provides the necessary supplement to the text or place to become a place or text of significance. For Gedge, that significance lies in the spirit of the author, for the tourists it is in the exemplarity and experience of Shakespeare’s biography. Their common denominator is the individuality of the personal life. In “The Birthplace”, then, we can detect the key terms of the relation of literature and tourism: individuality as a matter of perception but also of a generic, autobiographical concern. The place is a marker of presence, coded in the register of perception (as experience); but it is also a significant marker in the story of the self, be it the educational story of Gedge, or the identificational biographics of the tourists, or more general, in the autobiographical significance of both reading and touristic experience for the reader and the tourist. We will now turn to a more direct relation of individual expression and literature as configuration of perception in Henry James’s travel literature.

42. ALEXANDER GELLEY, *Narrative Crossings: Theory and Pragmatics of Prose Fiction*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987, pp. 19ff analyzes a topological aspect in narrative fictions that configures the perceptual level in fictions. He draws on research on the romantic use of *genius loci* by GEOFFREY H. HARTMAN, ‘Romantic Poetry and the Genius Loci’, in: *Beyond Formalism: Literary Essay 1958–1970*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970, pp. 311–336; LEO SPITZER, ‘Milieu and Ambiance’, in: *Essays in Historical Semantics*, New York: Russell & Russell, 1968. – chapter 6, pp. 179–316.

