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Closure In Fiction And Film: Strategies Of Ending In Howard Hawks's "his Girl Friday", Henry James's "the Ambassadors", Orson Welles's "citizen Kane", And James Joyce's "a Portrait Of The Artist As A Young Man"

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CLOSURE IN FICTION AND FILM:
Strategies of Ending in Howard Hawks's His Girl Friday,
Henry James's The Ambassadors, Orson Welles's Citizen Kane,
and James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Graduate Studies
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Abstract

This thesis explores closure in two novels, Henry James's The Ambassadors and James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, and two films, His Girl Friday directed by Howard Hawks and Citizen Kane directed by Orson Welles. The specific study of closure in films is necessitated by the almost total absence of research in this area. Although study of closure in prose narratives is historically more extensive, the study of closure in the two novels under discussion has previously been undertaken within narrow parameters. Rather than invoking a rigid model of the closural process, this thesis draws upon a range of approaches to closure to argue for the importance of a set of interrelated issues which can constitute a framework within which the endings of the four chosen works are analyzed. This methodology involves a sensitivity to the ways in which various types of patterns are resolved, but also includes a recognition of the inherently problematic nature of closure. The thesis distinguishes between closure as a process which develops over the course of the work as a whole and the ending as a specific textual segment in which the preponderance of closural 'signals' becomes particularly urgent. The importance of patterns developed over the course of the work and the various means of retrospective patterning used to evoke a strong sense of symmetry will both be investigated. Such concerns are complemented by issues particularly reflective of the problematic aspects of closure such as the tension between formal circularity and the linear, forward momentum of narrative elements.

His Girl Friday's position as the first work to be explored in the thesis reflects the fact that it has the most straightforward closural argument of the four works, contrasting with the more modernist, self-reflexive endings of The Ambassadors, Citizen Kane and, particularly, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. While allowing for the distinctive aspects of novels and films, it is hoped that, by examining the closure of narrative fictions in these two media, a sharpened sense of the fundamental issues involving narrative closure will emerge.

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Introduction

Theoretical Framework

Perhaps one of the most fascinating features shared by the fiction film and the novel involves the intricacy with which the various textual strands of individual works are resolved. On the broadest level, the specific issue of how works of narrative art attain resolution, how their various formal and/or narrative patterns are culminated, is inextricably linked to larger issues of artistic form. Hence it is no exaggeration to say that the subject of how narrative works end has always, at least indirectly, been an important one to critics, readers, viewers, filmmakers and authors, and that the tradition of closure scholarship is as old as literary scholarship itself. Yet, the very way in which the issue of closure is bound up with other theoretical concerns has led to a situation in which the intrinsic interest of closure has often been overlooked. And while, in recent decades, the study of literary closure has been a recognized area of specialized scholarship, there is still much room for exploration on the theoretical and applied levels.

This thesis will explore closure in two novels, Henry James's The Ambassadors and James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, and two films, His Girl Friday directed by Howard Hawks and Citizen Kane directed by Orson Welles. While allowing for the distinctive aspects of the novel and the film, it is hoped that, by examining the closure of narrative fictions in the two media, a sharpened sense of the

fundamental issues involving narrative closure will emerge. In the following introductory pages I will articulate the basic conception of closure being adopted for the purposes of this study and delineate the set of issues which will form the framework within which the closure of the four works will be examined.

There are several reasons why a study of the closural process in literary and cinematic narratives is required. The specific study of closure in films is necessitated by the almost total absence of research in this area. Despite the fact that cinema studies have been radically influenced by many of the same theoretical discoveries which have revolutionized literary studies (structuralism, post-structuralism, various narrative theories, feminism, etc.), the study of literary closure has not really had an extensive impact on cinema studies. Yet, there is a rich potential for cross-fertilization between the study of literary closure and the study of cinematic closure, especially with respect to the specific examination of narrative fictions in different media.

Neglect of the study of film closure is particularly surprising in the light of how much, as viewers, we invest in that process. An obvious example of the 'spell' of film endings involves our reluctance to divulge an ending if we are telling someone about a film that we have seen but they have not. And any cinema studies teacher can attest to the palpable disappointment of their students if the outcome of a film is intentionally or inadvertently disclosed prior to the film

being shown, or if a projector malfunctions in the final minutes of the screening of a film. Filmmakers themselves are obviously aware of our investment in endings. For instance, at the end of Henri-Georges Clouzot's Les Diaboliques words flash up on the screen admonishing viewers to keep the ending of the film a secret from friends who have not yet seen the film.

The extent of the study of closure in prose narratives offers a striking contrast to the situation in cinema. Throughout the course of Western literary tradition writers and critics alike have concerned themselves with issues involving how works end. More recently, closure as a formalized study has an identifiable history. In the foreword to a special issue of Nineteenth-Century Fiction devoted to the study of literary closure, published in 1978, Alexander Welsh claims that "much discussion of the subject was spurred by the publication of Frank Kermode's lectures on The Sense of an Ending in 1967..." (1). Writing three years after this testimonial, Marianna Torgovnick, in Closure in the Novel (1981), similarly states that "Frank Kermode's fine The Sense of an Ending has probably been more responsible than any other work for initiating renewed critical interest in narrative endings" (7), and that "Kermode's work on endings reflects a general and theoretical interest in the pattern-seeking tendency of the human mind" (7). Notwithstanding the undoubted influence of Kermode's book on subsequent closure studies, The Sense of an Ending can be seen as one of a number of books to emerge in the late sixties, including Barbara Herrnstein

Smith's Poetic Closure (1968), which either focused on the theoretical implications of how works end, or on the ending as a particularly important textual segment.

In her own Closure in the Novel Marianna Torgovnick undertakes close analyses of several novels from the perspective of a theoretical framework shaped by her concern with such issues as the relationship of a novel's end to the overall shape of the fiction, the author's and the reader's perspective on the end of the novel, the relationship between author and reader during closure in terms of the degree to which the reader is attuned to the author's message, and the degree of authorial self-awareness during closure. Whether or not one subscribes either to Torgovnick's theoretical framework or to the observations in her individual analyses, her work exemplifies the range of concerns encompassed by the study of closure.

Two other works specifically focused on the subject of closure are John Gerlach's Toward the End: Closure and Structure in the American Short Story (1985) and D.A. Miller's Narrative and Its Discontents: Problems of Closure in the Traditional Novel (1981). Like Torgovnick, Gerlach is sensitive to the degree to which the issue of artistic resolution is inextricably linked to broader questions of structure and form. D. A. Miller rightly draws our attention to the problematic nature of closure which he regards as particularly attributable to the tension created between the inherent lack of finality of the narratable and the impulse

during closure to bring the narrative to rest.

In addition, there are a number of other critical works that contain insights pertinent to the discussion of closure, despite the fact that their immediate focus is not on that subject. One such work is Meir Sternberg's Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction (1978), which engages in an enquiry of considerable value to our understanding of closure as a process which unfolds in time and which develops over the course of a recipient's experience of a work. Another is Peter Brooks' Reading For The Plot (1984), which brilliantly analyzes the degree to which readers of fiction invest in the development and resolution of patterns of plot.

Even such a brief survey of the historical and methodological range of scholarship on how works of literary art attain resolution reveals one of the main challenges to the prospective scholar of closure, which is that relevant discussions of closure often arise in contexts which are not directly focused on how specific narrative works end. Moreover, the variety of scholarly contexts within which endings are discussed suggests the existence of a range of conceptions of closure and reminds us that closure is susceptible of study from a number of different perspectives. For instance, on the basic descriptive level, it is possible to see closure as involving the culmination of various formal patterns, such as recurrent linguistic motifs, or the culmination of specifically narrative patterns, such as plot sequences, the outcome for characters and the resolution of

other narrative patterns such as those described by Miller in Narrative and its Discontents: "narrative closure may coincide with the end of a quest, as in a story of ambition, or with the end of an inquest, as in a detective story" (4).

Already implicit in even the most basic conception of closure is an understanding of it as a process, as an activity experienced by a reader or viewer over time. From this perspective, questions relating to the manner in which a recipient is manipulated by closural strategies are of particular importance. More specifically, such a study would focus on the arousal of expectations concerning how the work will end, the means employed to effect the gratification or thwarting of such expectations, and the creation and resolution of the kind of tension associated with a viewer's experience of suspense about how the ending will turn out.

Closure is also examinable from the standpoint of the conscious craftsmanship of an artist. From this perspective, what is of particular importance is the author's deployment of strategies for bringing the work's various narrative and formal strands to a resolution in a manner which reflects his or her own intentions. As Marianna Torgovnick has argued, "an ending is the single place where an author most pressingly desires to make his points- whether those points are aesthetic, moral, social, political, epistemological, or even the determination not to make any point at all" (19).

As Torgovnick's remarks suggest, the ending of a text constitutes the author's last opportunity to manipulate our

attitudes about the work's structure, themes, characters, etc. Yet, it seems to me that the very urgency of the situation makes the author most vulnerable during closure. By virtue of being the place in the text where numerous textual patterns are drawn together, the ending is also the place in the text where the author's rhetorical manoeuvring is potentially most exposed. During closure the author depends on certain conventions but also may want to de-emphasize their conventionality. The ending of the text thereby becomes an interesting textual segment in which the artifice of certain closural conventions such as circularity and coincidence is thrown into sharp relief. For example, at the end of His Girl Friday a series of plot coincidences betrays the working mechanisms of the closural argument. In a more subtle manner, at the end of The Ambassadors, James attempts to deflect attention from the conventionality of certain closural devices, such as circularity, through his focus on Strether, a central consciousness who is himself experiencing a sense of finality and of his Paris adventure having come full circle.

In Closure in the Novel Marianna Torgovnick also addresses the issue of the authorial persuasion of the reader. In order "to describe the relationship between author and reader during closure" (16) she distinguishes between a complementary ending where a reader "accepts- more or less uncritically- both the ending itself and whatever meaning (or lack of meaning) the author wishes to convey" (17) and an incongruent ending "when the author must actively coax his

reader into accepting an ending" (17). Implicit here is an understanding of the importance of recipient manipulation during the closural process. However, the "relationship" Torgovnick describes here does not seem particularly reciprocal, depending as it does on the reader's immediate or eventual acceptance of the author's meaning. In the following chapters I want to focus not only on how we are being manipulated during closure but also on the capacity of the reader or viewer to resist such manipulation.

The study of closure would not be as fascinating were it merely to involve the detection of pattern resolution. The complexities of ending often resist patterning, or patterns being resolved at the end of the work can be at crosspurposes. In the following passage Arnold E. Davidson offers one possible explanation for the problematic nature of closure in narrative fictions:

Essentially, any narrative ending necessarily throws into focus the contradictory nature of the two main ends served by narrative. The novel is mimetic; we expect to encounter in fiction versions of the world in which we live. The novel is also a literary form; we expect the vision of life reflected in the text to be mediated into a work of art. These two impulses or ends- to portray and to pattern- are most in conflict at the work's conclusion. (4)

As the brief preliminary characterization of closure in

the foregoing pages makes clear, there is considerable range with respect to the facets of the closural process that can be studied. Underlying different approaches to closure have been different models of the closural process, or different assumptions about the strategies or elements which are most salient during closure. Rather than invoke a rigid model of the closural process, I want to draw upon the range of approaches to closure that have developed and to argue for the importance of a set of interrelated issues which can constitute a framework within which the endings of my four chosen works can be analyzed. Such a methodology will involve a sensitivity to the ways in which various types of patterns are resolved, but will also include a recognition of the inherently problematic nature of closure. And rather than analyze closure from either a strictly recipient response or authorial perspective, this study will draw on aspects of both perspectives in an effort to establish a more inclusive vision of the closural process.

Some of the specific objectives of this introduction include distinguishing between closure as a process which develops over the course of the work as a whole and the ending as a specific textual segment in which the preponderance of closural 'signals' becomes particularly urgent, highlighting the importance of patterns developed over the course of the work, and investigating the various means of retrospective patterning used to evoke a strong sense of symmetry. And such concerns need to be complemented by issues particularly

reflective of the problematic aspects of closure. For example, while the endings of all four works signal retrospective patterning by provoking the recipient to circle back from the ending to the beginning, the end of the work also foregrounds a tension between such circularity and the linear, forward momentum of narrative elements. Such a situation illustrates the problem of arresting narrative lines that deal with experiential development, and the related problem of what might be called 'projecting beyond the end', of anticipating an actual narrative outcome without portraying it. It will also be necessary to discuss the way in which an ending can evade or fail to deal satisfactorily with certain textual issues or tensions which are thrown into sharp relief at the end of the work.

In all four of the works to be discussed, the closural process is very complex. But none of the four works has received extensive attention with respect to the intrinsic interest of closure. And, while their endings have sparked critical debates to varying degrees, the assumptions about closure underlying such debates do not tend to acknowledge that closure is a complex, multifunctional process. In the cases of The Ambassadors, Citizen Kane and A Portrait in particular, the tendency among critics has been to discuss the ending of each work in terms of a key pattern or critical problem which, while undoubtedly important, needs to be seen in relation to other issues and patterns. Indeed, these controversies tend to keep the terms of the debate on the

closure of these works within narrow confines, seldom yielding a sufficiently strong sense of the intricacy of the closural process.

In the case of Citizen Kane, what might be called the 'Rosebud' controversy has involved debate about the significance of the identity of Rosebud for our understanding of the film's central character and subject, Charles Foster Kane. The ending of Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man has engendered vigorous debate about the outcome of the central protagonist, Stephen Dedalus, and such debate is particularly centered on the question of whether his anticipated self-exile at novel's end is an unironic herald of his artistic success or an ironic harbinger of his fall. As with Citizen Kane and A Portrait, there is a controversy surrounding the ending of The Ambassadors. Yet, again, this controversy is almost exclusively focused on a conception of ending which involves the narrative outcome for characters and particularly centers on the appropriateness of Lambert Strether's decision to leave Paris at the end of the novel. Notice that in the case of all three of these works, critics have mainly been concerned with a conception of ending involving the outcome for characters. Yet, as I shall try to show, such a closural element must be contextualized within a more intricate framework which relates character outcome to a broader spectrum of closural issues. In particular, in the case of all four works, the closural process not only includes the culmination of narrative patterns, but also involves the

resolution of formal patterns.

His Girl Friday's position as the first work to be explored in the thesis reflects the fact that it has the most straightforward closural argument of the four works. More precisely, the film works toward a 'happy ending' involving the reunion of the two main characters, Walter Burns and Hildy Johnson. While the film's ending has engendered some debate with regard to whether the reunion of Hildy and Walter is appropriate, such discussion again hinges on a conception of closure involving character outcome. But part of what I want to show is that the film's closure does not merely involve the outcome for characters and only partly depends upon the resolution of plot. The movement towards closure in the film is also accomplished through the alignment between plot elements as a sequence of actions and other modes of organization such as the movement towards goals, and the resolution of conflict.

With respect to the closure of The Ambassadors, analyzed in the second chapter of this thesis, debate has tended to focus on the final dialogue between Strether and Maria Gostrey and has been primarily concerned with the moral issue of whether Strether is justified in declining Maria's offer of a comfortable refuge and in leaving Paris. Although such moral issues are important, they must be contextualized within the full spectrum of the novel's closural dynamic, which not only concerns the fate of Strether but also involves the importance of retrospective patterning, patterns of reversal and the

complex relationship between such patterns and Strether's behaviour as someone trying to make his experience cohere, to orchestrate his own sense of an ending.

Critical discussion of the ending of Citizen Kane, the third work to be studied, has centered on the controversy involving the revelation of Rosebud, Charles Kane's childhood sled, which some critics see as the key to understanding Kane's character. But again, there is a need to situate discussion of Rosebud within a broader context. For a full understanding of the complexities of the ending, the revelation of Rosebud and its relationship to the mystery of Kane's character must be seen in relation to the operation of retrospective patterning at the end of the work, and to the importance for the film's closure of Citizen Kane's problematic generic status and its complex relationship to the classical Hollywood paradigm.

As we shall see in our final discussion of closure in Joyce's A Portrait, the contrast between Hugh Kenner's ironic and Richard Ellmann's unironic reading of Stephen's outcome is not only emblematic of the diversity of critical interpretations of Stephen's fate, but also suggests the degree to which Stephen's outcome has been central in discussions of the novel's ending. While Kenner's and Ellmann's arguments about Stephen are reinforced by assumptions about the novel's structure, their positions are also indicative of the degree to which issues relating to formal closure tend to be subordinate, in discussions of the

novel's ending, to issues relating to Stephen's outcome. But on a general level, the critical emphasis on the autobiographical connection between Joyce as author and his protagonist Stephen, while certainly not without interest, has had the dual result of arbitrarily circumscribing our notion of the complexity of Joycean intention and of deflecting attention away from the importance of the reader's role during closure. In a full investigation of the novel's closure the debate regarding Stephen's outcome must be contextualized within the novel's broad range of closural strategies, including a pattern of structural rise and fall and the recapitulation, in the diary, of virtually all of the novel's recurrent motifs.

Interestingly, one of the works which points the way toward a less limited approach to closure in narrative does not deal directly with narrative fiction at all. In Poetic Closure Barbara Herrnstein Smith points out that the reader's sense of closure at the end of a work is a function of the reader's perception of the work's structure. One of the features of Smith's methodology which is particularly pertinent to the study of narrative closure is her realization that the study of the closural process in a work involves a scrutiny of the overall structure of the work. Smith's approach seems compatible with that of Meir Sternberg. In Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction Sternberg argues:

Qua time-art, the continuum of the literary text is

necessarily grasped in a continuum of time in that its verbal signs . . . are communicated not simultaneously but successively. It is true that the reader can comprehend the full meaning of the work only when he has turned the last page; but this does not mean that he remains inactive till then . . . (70)

The meaning of a literary work, on all its levels, is not confined to the fully warrantable conclusions we reach at the terminus, but is made up of the sum-total of expectations and effects, trial and error included, produced throughout the eventful, tortuous journey. (71-72)

Sternberg's remarks here emphasize that the assimilation of textual meaning is an ongoing process and suggest that the reader's progress throughout the text is a successive, linear journey. Also implicit in Sternberg's position is the notion that, rather than being a textual phenomenon operative only in the final pages of a text or the final moments of a film, closure is a process which develops over the course of the work as a whole. That closural strategies which influence our sense of the ending are operative at the very outset of a work is confirmed by the fact that we often experience expectations of how the work will end very early in the text. Perhaps the most straightforward instance of this fact will be in the analysis of His Girl Friday, where the film's 'happy ending' is prepared for right from the outset of the work. More

particularly, the accomplishment of getting the couple back together is anticipated from the very outset of the film through a careful manipulation of the viewer's responses and by a strict regulation of the parameters within which our curiosity will operate, for instance in terms of a definite sense of hierarchy among the plot lines such that the adventures of the central couple remain prominent throughout the film. Similarly, with respect to Citizen Kane, the fact that so many viewers regard the revelation of Rosebud as the film's climactic moment, and experience Rosebud's climactic nature in both intellectual and emotional terms, suggests that the closural significance of Rosebud is not merely a product of localized elements at the end of the work but the culmination of manipulative strategies operative from the work's beginning.

It seems to me that one of the strengths of Sternberg's discussion is its re-affirmation of the interplay between author, text and recipient in the articulation of textual meaning. More specifically, Sternberg's study is richly suggestive with regard to the importance for closure of the relationship between the manipulation of time structures, the arousal and gratification of curiosity, the strategic deployment of delay and the creation and resolution of suspense. But notwithstanding the importance of examining closure as a process which develops over the course of an entire work, the ending marks the point at which the nature and purpose of the closural strategies are confirmed and the

degree of their interrelation is revealed. In an apt phrase, John Gerlach has referred to the "convergence of closural signals" (40) at the end of a work. What is important to emphasize, I think, is the way such a convergence functions to influence the recipient's retrospective understanding of the work as a whole, initiating the kind of "reading back from the end" (29) which Peter Brooks discusses in Reading For the Plot.

Defining the ending of the work as the point in the text where closural signals become particularly insistent allows us to use the particular focus on a specific textual segment delineated as the 'ending' as a means to facilitate an understanding of the closural process as a whole. Some possible manifestations of intensified closural signals include the recommencement of music in the final moments of His Girl Friday, which is used to punctuate an abrupt emotional turn in the interaction between Hildy and Walter and which leads in turn to their reconciliation. A similar closural signal is the crescendoing, climactic music just prior to the revelation of the rosebud sled in Citizen Kane. In my discussion of Joyce's A Portrait I will operate on the assumption that the diary defines itself as the ending by virtue of the change in narrative voice which acts to reinforce the sense of the diary as a discrete, final unit of the text.

Admittedly, though, more modernist works like The Ambassadors, Citizen Kane and A Portrait challenge simple

responses with respect to the reader's ability to detect precisely when the work is ending. In The Ambassadors the "ending" of the novel is so artfully embedded in the structure of the work that it becomes very hard to identify and separate a definite turning point which might demarcate the exact place in the text where the various closural strands are being drawn together. The last two chapters may arguably be identified as such a turning point, due to the high preponderance of "closural signals" contained therein. Such signals of resolution include the particular urgency of Strether's own sense of his European experience as arriving at a culmination and a pattern of references which emphasize his mortality.

Since A Portrait and Citizen Kane are both works which dramatize the difficulty of closing the text, it is not surprising that they both foreground the challenge of actually demarcating their endings. Citizen Kane juxtaposes a series of closural gestures in a manner which makes the viewer aware of the actual process of closure. Mention has already been made of the revelation of the Rosebud sled, the climactic nature of which is suggested by the swelling of the music on the soundtrack. But the film does not end with the revelation of Rosebud's identity, and a return to the 'No Trespassing' sign suggests another closural gesture involving the circular return back to the same sign from the beginning of the film. Even the intertitle announcing 'The End' proves anticlimactic and does not end the film proper, since it is followed by a series of outtakes which introduce members of the film's cast.

Similarly, A Portrait juxtaposes various closural gestures, including the epiphany that ends chapter four, the final chapter, the diary as a whole, and the epiphanic language which is apparent in the final diary entries- thereby making us aware as readers of the means we deploy to resolve a work.

One of the main functions of closural signals is to prompt the reader's or viewer's retrospective patterning. In all four of the works, closural signals are utilized to evoke a sense of symmetry, either by conveying a sense of culminating patterns or by provoking circularity, particularly with respect to connections back to the beginning of the work. In Citizen Kane, for instance, there is the return to the 'No Trespassing' sign and the connection back from the final revelation of Rosebud to the earliest mention of Rosebud as a word uttered by disembodied lips. The end of His Girl Friday anticipates both the couple's remarriage and a second honeymoon which will mirror the first in its devotion to covering a big news story. At the end of A Portrait the diary summarizes virtually all the novel's central themes and patterns, thereby signaling complex connections back from the ending to the beginning of the work.

Henry James's The Ambassadors is of particular interest in this respect. Strether is himself retrospective and making a conscious summary of the novel's trajectory. Also pertinent here is the way that Strether as a character in the text engages, at work's end, in recollections which stimulate the reader's retrospective awareness of the novel's geometrical

symmetry. Note, for example, this description of Strether's last visit to Chad's apartment:

He [Strether] stopped short to-night, on coming at last to sight of it; it was as if his last day were oddly copying his first. (xxxv, 362)

On one level, Strether's own consciousness here of the symmetrical connection between the ending and the beginning of his European adventure constitutes an illustration of his tendency to compartmentalize his experience. On another level, Strether's retrospection provides James with a means of guiding the reader's memory back to certain situations at the novel's beginning which, over the course of a lengthy work, may well have been forgotten.

Another of the closural strategies which involves the delineation of connections back from the ending to the beginning of the work is reversal. In the four works to be studied, reversal often operates to evoke a sense of both symmetrical connection and difference between beginning and end. In The Ambassadors, for instance, Strether completely reverses his position with respect to Chad, from wanting him to leave Paris to insisting that he stay. The reversal here not only reinforces other retrospective connections between the ending and the beginning but also suggests that a measurable distance has been traversed in terms of Strether's experience and attitudes. Similarly, His Girl Friday charts a reversal of fortunes for Hildy, who begins the film about to marry Bruce and disassociate herself from Walter, and ends up

disassociating herself from Bruce and planning to remarry her former husband. On a more subtle level, in Citizen Kane the camera movement up the fence to the 'No Trespassing' sign at the beginning of film is reversed at the end of the film, with the camera moving down the fence to the same sign.

To further complicate the study of closure in any given work, it must also be kept in mind that the recipient's sense of closure is in part defined by strategies which are not unique to the work at hand, but which reflect the work's position within such broader contexts as genre, or other culturally learned patterns of interpretation. Such an approach is of particular use in the study of film closure given that the question of authorship in film is itself problematic. As Stuart Kaminsky points out, "a consideration of any film should recognize: (a) that it is the creation of a person or a group of persons reflecting the contribution of that person or persons (authorship); and (b) that the film does not exist in a cultural vacuum; that it must, of necessity, have roots in other works which surround it or have appeared before it (genre)" (7). Kaminsky's remarks here are directly applicable to film closure and suggest how the closural argument of a film like His Girl Friday depends not only on closural strategies specifically devised by the film's creators, but also on what might be thought of as intertextual closural strategies. As David Bordwell suggests in Narration in the Fiction Film, "our expectations are funded by knowledge of other films in the tradition. We motivate transtextually"

(44). The ending of His Girl Friday therefore needs to be understood not only in terms of our response to authorial closural strategies but also in terms of the film's situation within broader contexts, particularly classical Hollywood cinema and screwball comedy. His Girl Friday suggests a model of closure which may be defined and understood within the larger context of closural patterns prevalent in Hollywood cinema.

As we shall see, Citizen Kane's problematic generic status and its problematic relationship to the Classical Hollywood paradigm (as exemplified, for instance, in terms of the way classical circularity is pushed to an extreme) impact directly on its more self-reflexive closure. Citizen Kane is a good example of a film that relies on genre conventions but often thwarts the expectations they arouse. Many Hollywood films achieve a strong sense of closure through a kind of generic overlap, whereby the culminations of several distinct generic patterns are mutually reinforcing. In His Girl Friday, for example, a strong sense of closure is achieved through the combination of a quest and the resolution of romantic conflict. But in Citizen Kane the film deliberately subverts the potential closural impact associated with certain classical strategies such as generic patterns, and, in doing so, makes us more aware of the degree to which our expectations while watching a Hollywood film are traditionally shaped by such patterns.

Our understanding of the closure of The Ambassadors and

A Portrait will also depend on our familiarity with strategies and patterns which these two works share generally with other narratives and specifically with other novels. More particularly, both works undertake a modernist revision of many traditional closural strategies. In The Ambassadors closural concepts such as circularity and coincidence are used in fresh ways, and James even alludes playfully to the traditional closural device of providing the solution to a mystery. Similarly, an understanding of the closure of A Portrait depends on a familiarity with a concept like the Bildung pattern which Joyce is modifying for his particular closural needs.

As mentioned earlier, closure study does not merely entail the detection and analysis of pattern resolution. Our sense of the ending as the point in the text where various formal and narrative strands are tied together must be balanced by an appreciation of the ending as a textual segment which may foreground tensions between patterns or be resistive to closural patterning. Perhaps the best study of the theoretical significance of this dual role of ending remains that of Frank Kermode. In The Sense of an Ending he argues as follows:

Men in the midst make considerable imaginative investments in coherent patterns, which, by the provision of an end, make possible a satisfying consonance with the origins and with the middle. That is why the image of the end can never be permanently falsified. But they also,

when awake and sane, feel the need to show a marked respect for things as they are; so that there is a recurring need for adjustments in the interest of reality as well as of control. (17)

Implicit in what Kermode says about the concordance between the beginning, middle and end is the importance of circularity and of the relationship between formal coherence and the 'containment' of textual energies. Yet his remarks about human skepticism suggest his sensitivity to the problematic nature of the attempt, during closure, to reconcile the desire for coherence, form and symmetry with the desire for experientially valid evocations of human experience.

His remarks are also pertinent to the issue of the role of the reader or viewer. The ending of the work is the point in the text where the problematic nature of closure is most clearly revealed, either through tensions between patterns with conflicting significance or through so-called 'loose ends' in the textual fabric- elements which resist patterning. As readers/viewers it is only at the end of the work that we receive confirmation of the extent to which closural strategies have been working in conjunction to advance a closural argument, a sense of how we should understand the work as a whole. However, at the same time, the ending will contain elements which point up the weaknesses and inner contradictions of the closural argument. Perhaps worth emphasizing here is the somewhat paradoxical nature of the

synecdochal relationship of the ending to the rest of the work. On the one hand, the ending is only a part of the work. But during closure it bears a disproportionately important role in the dynamic of communication between text and recipient. In a sense, the ending stands in relation to the rest of the work as microcosm to macrocosm. But the ending's inordinate 'burden of responsibility' is bound to be problematic: the ending may contain specific elements which do not harmonize with the general sense of the work being evoked, or the ending may fail to accommodate the implications of what seemed to have been important previously established patterns.

One of the sources for Kermode's approach is surely Henry James. Consider, first, the following statement from the Preface to Roderick Hudson: "Really, universally, relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily appear to do so." (James, Theory 171-72). Obviously, what James has particularly in mind here is the importance of conscious artistic craftsmanship involving the ability to fully anticipate and appropriately resolve the 'shape of the fiction' that one has created. By implication, the ending of a text becomes of particular importance in terms of reader persuasion, since it is by manipulation of our sense of the work's ending that the author is attempting to influence our understanding of the work as a whole. Also suggested, in James's use of words like "geometry" and "circle", is the importance of closural strategies which

function to elicit a strong sense of design and formal coherence. But James also realizes that "human relations stop nowhere", are resistant to being contained within formal patterns. James wants a sense of formal coherence during closure, but not at the expense of experiential authenticity. The basic implication of James's comment is that closure is inherently problematic: by virtue of being the place in the text where numerous textual patterns are drawn together, the ending is also the place in the text where the author's rhetorical manoeuvring is potentially most exposed. In works purporting to constitute a model of human experience, the question of interest becomes: to what degree and with what success has the author, during closure, balanced the claims of offering an organized structure with the claims of imitating experience?

In His Girl Friday the very degree of manipulation operative in evoking a strong sense of closure threatens to expose the ending as contrived and experientially inauthentic. During closure the film attempts to be both predictable and surprising, and the inherent predictability of the film's comic mode necessitates, at the end of the film, the deployment of complex strategies to create surprise and to heighten tension. Moreover, additional tension arises at the end of the film in relation to the closural emphasis on both retrospection and projection, on attempting to achieve a sense of formal finality without evading the implications of the couple's future.

In The Ambassadors it is the rich but contradictory interplay of traditional narrative structuring and innovative modernist capturing of subjectivity which is foregrounded at the novel's close, especially in the final dialogue between Strether and Maria Gostrey. And since formal closure in The Ambassadors is inextricably linked with Strether's perception of finality, the strong sense of closure on the formal level actually serves to throw the ontological ambiguity of the ending into sharper relief. The final dialogue in The Ambassadors between Strether and Maria provides a 'summary' not only of the novel's closural strategies but of the kinds of ambiguities that such strategies engender.

The ending of Citizen Kane deliberately points up the contrast between the completion of a narrative pattern and its experiential significance. The contrast between the film's formal symmetry and its thematic emphasis on experiential flux bears striking resemblance to the contrast enunciated by Frank Kermode between the consolations of artistic form and the baffling contingency of human experience. From one perspective the cumulative effect of retrospective patterning seems to provide the viewer with a sense of the work's coherence. Yet, at the end of the film a parallel is suggested between the instability of the Rosebud pattern and the instability of more formal patterning. Citizen Kane extends its critique of the 'consolations' of the pattern-making we commonly associate with artistic closure to include those patterns which, at first glance, seem reflective of the film's formal coherence.

By foregrounding the degree to which we are susceptible to the narrative interest of the Rosebud quest (even upon returning to the work in the light of Rosebud's explanatory inadequacy) and to the activity of making formal connections, the film self-reflexively dramatizes the allure and fraudulence of a strong sense of closure.

For the reader the encounter with the ending of A Portrait requires a constant process of readjustment as the inadequacy of our conceptual frameworks for understanding Stephen and for understanding the text as a whole is foregrounded by the nuances of textual complexity. A more radically self-reflexive aspect of the ending of A Portrait is its questioning of the necessity of grounding retrospective patterning in a concern for the outcome of a central protagonist. Paradoxically, it is through our initial investigation of the ambiguities of Stephen's own sense of an ending that we become aware not only of the ending's potential to engender linguistic connections back from the diary to the beginning of the text but also of the capacity of such connections to take on an intrinsic interest not necessarily connected with the issue of Stephen's fate.

Another of the specific implications of James's own emphasis on human relations appearing to stop involves the potential artificiality of culminating narrative lines involving the ongoing momentum of human experience. Three of the works to be explored also illustrate the related phenomenon of anticipating an actual narrative outcome without

actually portraying it. At the end of His Girl Friday we do not actually see Hildy and Walter get married, though their reunion is anticipated, and indeed, such a reunion is a convention of both the screwball genre and the romance paradigm. The ending of The Ambassadors does not confirm that Strether does return to America, and, similarly, at the end of A Portrait (according to the diary), Stephen is poised for exile but has not necessarily left Ireland.

One of the formal issues raised at the end of A Portrait involves the simultaneous temptation and difficulty for the reader of projecting a particular continuation of the story beyond the actual termination of the plot. The situation at the end of A Portrait is similar in this regard to the ending of The Ambassadors. In A Portrait the conflict between repetition and termination raises issues to do with the Bildung pattern, both as it applies specifically to Stephen and as it applies to the reader's attempt to grapple with formal issues relating to the inevitably ambiguous termination of a novel about a character in a state of flux.

A related matter involves the extent to which an ending will repress or evade the implications of certain of its textual elements. As Rachel Blau Duplessis has argued: "Any resolution can have traces of the conflicting materials that have been processed within. It is where subtexts and repressed discourses can throw up one last flare of meaning; it is where the author may sidestep and displace attention from the materials that a work has made available" (3). Duplessis's

description testifies to the potential for endings either to contain elements which elude authorial control or to raise issues which the author, during closure, does not satisfactorily address.

As the unanswered question of Molly Malloy's fate indicates, His Girl Friday closely regulates the parameters within which knowledge will be sought. We are being persuaded during closure to concentrate on answers to pre-established questions, in particular the questions of whether Hildy and Walter will reunite and whether or not Earl will be reprieved. It will be argued that in evading the issue of Molly's fate, the ending is evading the implications of a darker subtext in His Girl Friday. Similarly, in the case of The Ambassadors, the final dialogue between Strether and Maria puts into sharp relief the degree to which the possible implications of Maria's 'story', including her capacity for a unique perspective on the events of the novel, have been evaded and remain subordinate to Strether's own story.

In the passage from the preface quoted above James's own stress on the word "appear" is suggestive of his awareness of the authorial sleight-of-hand which comes into play during closure, when highly conventional and even contradictory strategies must be used in such a way that the reader is not even aware of their status as strategies. The ending of the work foregrounds the fictionality of the work, or, put another way, reveals the status of the work as an artificial construct. An example of this would be the proliferation of

coincidence at the end of His Girl Friday. But there is also a sense of coincidence, albeit more sophisticated, at the end of The Ambassadors. James brilliantly deflects attention from the coincidental nature of certain symmetries between the beginning and ending by having Strether be conscious of them himself.

Already implicit in this introductory discussion, is the sense that the closure of Citizen Kane has a modernist aspect which somewhat sets it apart from His Girl Friday and links it more closely with The Ambassadors and, particularly, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. Citizen Kane can be seen not only as a film with an interesting ending but as a film about closure. The film simultaneously critiques classical closure while embodying many of its typical features. In particular, Citizen Kane is using the Rosebud pattern to underscore that, as viewers of classical Hollywood films, we expect both a straightforward, forceful resolution to pre-established patterns and a satisfaction of our curiosity with respect to the expectations such patterns raise. The film thereby foregrounds the artifice inherent in classical conventions of closure. The film extends its closural critique beyond the parameters of classical style to include a profound meditation on the epistemological ambiguities of artistic form.

What makes the closure of The Ambassadors and A Portrait particularly comparable is the degree to which they both feature protagonists articulating an end to a phase of their

own experience. In addition, both Strether and Stephen engage in the kind of retrospection which mirrors the reader's own retrospective patterning of the works. But to an even more radical degree, the author of A Portrait intended to pose a deliberately problematic ending, one that would challenge the reader to engage in a very self-conscious process of interpretation. As one of the masterpieces of modernist literature A Portrait reveals a highly self-reflexive approach to closure involving a critique of traditional closural strategies and a juxtaposition of such strategies in a way which foregrounds their inability to account fully for the complexities of the novel's ending. Put another way, the ending is highly self-reflexive in that, in our engagement with it as readers, we become sharply aware of how we use closural strategies in an attempt to 'contain' an ending, and of the inadequacy of such strategies in the face of textual complexity. The ending of A Portrait will thus provide our most extreme instance among the four chosen works of the inherently problematic nature of closure.

Given the potential for conflict among closural strategies, and given that the ending can contain elements which subvert the 'ends' of a work's closural argument, the following chapters will initiate close readings which emphasize the heterogeneity rather than the homogeneity of endings. The best statement on the corrective need for such a project has been made by D.A. Miller in Narrative and its Discontents:

Although most of twentieth-century narratology pivots on the priority of ending, or narrative closure, it also takes nothing so much for granted. The accounts of traditional narrative offered by the Russian Formalists, Jean-Paul Sartre, Frank Kermode, Roland Barthes, Gérard Genette, Julia Kristeva, and Charles Grivel have enormously varied ambitions, but they all rely on the common assumption of an a priori "determination of means by the ends" . . . Everything in a narrative exists in view of the hidden necessity determined by its final configuration of event and meaning. While this assumption has given us several illuminating studies of the novel . . . it has some clear limitations. Once the ending is enshrined as an all-embracing cause in which the elements of a narrative find their ultimate justification, it is difficult for analysis to assert anything short of total coherence. One is barred even from suspecting possible discontinuities between closure and the narrative movement preceding it, not to mention possible contradictions and ambiguities within closure itself. (xii-xiii)

The following chapters will not only offer analyses which highlight the importance of the culmination of narrative and formal patterns, but will also be alert to the "contradictions and ambiguities within closure itself". What will emerge, it

is hoped, is a vision of the ending of specific works as the locus both for the rich interplay of closural strategies and for the various tensions which characterize the closural process.

Chapter One

Closure in Howard Hawks's His Girl Friday

While critical studies like Alan Friedman's The Turn of the Novel (1966), Frank Kermode's The Sense of an Ending (1967), and Marianna Torgovnick's Closure in the Novel (1981) are among the works which provide a theoretical context for the study of closure in literary fiction, the student of film closure is unable to draw upon an analogous body of writings. In the specific case of the study of closure in His Girl Friday one is additionally challenged by the fact that the film's closure has not been discussed as an issue of intrinsic interest. The various notions of closure which critics of the film implicitly hold must therefore be deciphered from discussions of other facets of the film. For example, in Film Art: An Introduction David Bordwell's and Kristin Thompson's references to the film's ending arise in the context of their discussion of the film's status as a classical Hollywood film, and in Hollywood Genres Thomas Schatz's remarks about the ending of His Girl Friday arise indirectly from his discussion of the genre of screwball comedy. Yet, the necessity of considering these other contexts leads to an awareness of the degree to which the closure of His Girl Friday is a complex process involving the interrelation of a number of elements.

In His Girl Friday, strategies of closure which manipulate the viewer emotionally work in conjunction with other kinds that suggest design or formal coherence. Our perception of the cooperative interrelation of the closural

strategies underscores the role of the ending to confirm the nature of the closural argument being advanced. Specifically, the final moments of His Girl Friday confirm that the film has been building towards a 'happy ending' from the outset and, in particular, has been attempting to encourage our acceptance of the reunion of Hildy and Walter as morally and formally appropriate. Not surprisingly, given the ending's role in prompting the viewer's retrospective understanding of the work as a whole, a concept of circularity is a useful one for gaining insight into the closural function of ending, both in terms of formal structure and in terms of the film's operation within a comic mode.

Yet an examination of the film's ending also reveals that, during closure, the 'line of communication' between film and viewer is not as straight or as straightforward as it seems. On the broadest level, the evocation of a strong sense of closure entails certain risks and dangers which the film does not always successfully negotiate. The very degree of manipulation operative in evoking a strong sense of closure threatens to expose the ending as contrived and experientially inauthentic. Although, during closure, the film attempts to 'have it both ways', to be predictable and surprising, the tension of irreconcilable aims remains. And additional tension arises in relation to the closural emphasis on both retrospection and projection, on attempting to achieve a sense of formal finality without evading the implications of the couple's future.

Such tensions are particularly vivid with respect to the situation of Hildy at the end of the film. From the perspective of the film's closural argument Hildy is a character of particular interest since it is she who must undergo a transition in her outlook before her reunion with Walter can be effected. Yet, at the same time, the relative complexity of her character manifests itself in ways which foreground both the experientially inauthentic aspects of the film's conclusion and the artificial aspects of the screwball pattern which the film as a whole enacts. The characterization of Walter is largely shaped and delimited by his role in the plot. He is virtually a one-dimensional character whose raison d'etre is to win back Hildy at all costs. Yet, Hildy, too, is far from fully developed. Her character is more complex than Walter's and reveals a richness and diversity at odds with the film's mechanical resolution. Such a 'comic' resolution also fails to deal satisfactorily with the film's darker subtext involving Walter's capacity for cruelty, the bitter cynicism of the reporters and the victimization of Earl and Molly.

Even the most basic and seemingly factual description of the ending of His Girl Friday suggests that how we experience the final moments of the film is largely a product of the effects of strategies of manipulation developed over the course of the work. In other words, even the most seemingly objective description of the ending is affected by how we have been shaped as viewers. For example, consider the assertion that the ending of His Girl Friday is punctuated by two key

plot developments: the arrival of the reprieve for Earl and, more importantly, the reconciliation of Hildy and Walter. Such a claim, however straightforward, already reflects how we have been preconditioned not only to expect and desire these actions, but to anticipate them within a definite hierarchy of importance, such that the reconciliation of Walter and Hildy takes precedence over the arrival of the reprieve for Earl. Clearly, one of the primary closural functions of the ending is to confirm the purpose of strategies of manipulation cumulatively developed over the course of the work.

The cumulative effect of closural strategies in His Girl Friday is not only to shape the ending of this specific work, but to provide the viewer with a model of closure which may be defined and understood within the larger context of closural patterns prevalent in Hollywood cinema. Not only is His Girl Friday confirmed through its ending as belonging within the larger context of classical Hollywood cinema, but the ending of the film serves to highlight any areas where the work departs from the conventions typically associated with the classical paradigm. One of the interesting aspects of His Girl Friday is the way in which the ending of the film foregrounds its problematic relationship to screwball comedy. As will be discussed in a later chapter on Citizen Kane, the ending of a work may invoke traditional closural expectations in the viewer, only to subvert their significance by altering or denying the validity of the preset model for how the work "should" conclude.

Closure in His Girl Friday can be seen as working within a context characterized by the conventions of classical cinema and screwball comedy. In Film Art, Bordwell and Thompson argue that "classical Hollywood cinema often constructs a narrative around characters with definite traits who want to achieve specific goals: the clash of these characters (via contrasting traits and conflicting goals) propels the story forward in a step-by-step process of cause and effect" (235). Suggested here is a model of classical closure which hinges on the attainment of goals and the resolution of conflict. What becomes immediately apparent is the extent to which the ending is describable in terms of the model: the film's ending marks the resolution of conflict between Hildy and Walter, between Walter and the crooked politicians, and within Hildy herself as she decides between Bruce and Walter and the ways of life each represents. The ending of His Girl Friday also sees the attainment of goals on the part of several characters: Walter wins a reprieve for Earl and wins back Hildy, and Hildy's original goal (to marry Bruce) is abandoned in favour of a goal which is compatible with Walter's aims (she will remarry Walter and remain a journalist).

There is considerable overlap between the closural function of classical attributes and the film's status as a genre film. Indeed, as a genre film, His Girl Friday reveals a more compressed, schematic version of classical attributes. In the above quotation, the emphasis on "clash", "contrasting" and "conflicting" clearly underscores the importance for

classical closure of conflict and its resolution. Such an emphasis is similar to that of Thomas Schatz, who argues that "In the genre film... the predictability of conflict and resolution tends to turn our attention away from the linear, cause-and-effect plot, redirecting it to the conflict itself and the opposed value systems it represents" (30).

In His Girl Friday, the importance for closure of conflict resolution is further heightened by the fact that the genre at issue is screwball comedy, with its strong emphasis on gender antithesis. Not only does the film's central conflict arise between a female and a male (Hildy and Walter), but the particular issues being explored are those of sex role identification. In choosing between Walter and Bruce, Hildy is making a choice between a traditionally male career and traditional female domesticity, and between a male who treats her as females are "supposed" to be treated in her society and a male who treats her as a colleague. On one level, the patterning of the film around apparently uncomplicated goals and straightforward conflicts is easy to interpret as representative of the schematic nature of the classical "happy ending" typical of Hollywood films. Yet, as we shall see, the orchestration of such a "happy ending" is incredibly complex, and far from straightforward.

One aspect of complexity in His Girl Friday involves the way in which the ostensibly happy ending is prepared for from the very outset of the film. In his description of "the plot structure of a genre film" (30), Thomas Schatz delineates the

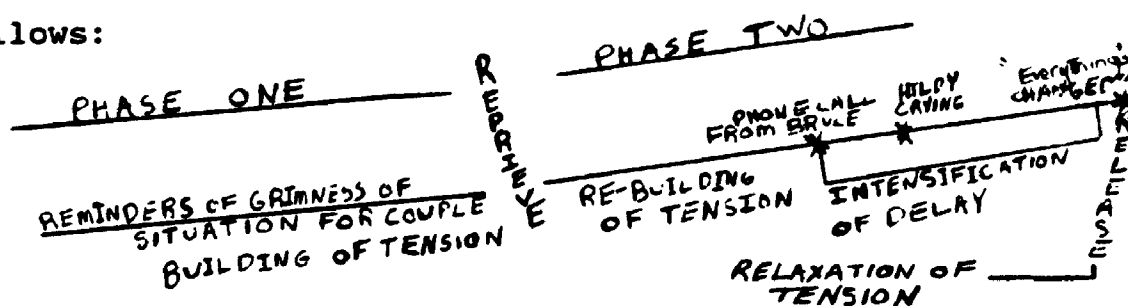
following phases: establishment of dramatic conflict, animation of conflict, intensification of conflict "... until the conflict reaches crisis proportions" (30), and "resolution of the crisis in a fashion which eliminates the physical and/or ideological threat and thereby celebrates the (temporarily) well-ordered community" (30). Schatz's model of the plot structure of a genre film suggests one of the reasons why strategies of circularity are so important to the closure of His Girl Friday, since it is these very strategies which elicit a sense of retrospective structure and cohesion. Narrative closure in His Girl Friday depends only partly upon the resolution of plot, for as Schatz implies, the movement towards "ending" in a film is also accomplished through the alignment between plot elements as a sequence of actions and other modes of organization (movement towards goals, resolution of conflict, etc.).

On the most basic level, what we are observing and experiencing at the end of the film is the culmination of two distinct but interrelated plot lines referred to by Bordwell and Thompson in Film Art as the "romance" and "crime-and-politics" (235) lines of action. In Narration in the Fiction Film, David Bordwell underscores the importance of such a double causal structure to the closure of His Girl Friday:

Usually the classical syuzhet [story action] presents a double causal structure, two plot lines: one involving heterosexual romance (boy/girl, husband/wife), the other line involving another

sphere- work, war, a mission or quest, other personal relationships. Each line will possess a goal, obstacles and a climax... In most cases the romance sphere and the other sphere of action are distinct but interdependent. The plot may close off one line before the other, but often the two lines coincide at the climax: resolving one triggers the resolution of the other. In His Girl Friday, the reprieve of Earl Williams supercedes the reconciliation of Walter and Hildy, but is also the condition of the couple's reunion. (157-58)

Given the film's double causal structure it is not surprising that the ending of the film is punctuated by two closural phases. Such is the schematic nature of closure in His Girl Friday that it may be visually represented as follows:



As the diagram suggests, the building of tension which leads to the disclosure that Earl will be reprieved is followed by a rebuilding of tension which leads to the revelation that Hildy will stay and that the couple will remarry. And, as we might expect, there is both a greater buildup and a greater sense of release during the second closural phase. In the first closural phase the sense of

crisis prior to the attainment of the goal is heightened not only by the recapture of Earl but also by the fact that Hildy and Walter (Earl's champions) are handcuffed prisoners of the mayor and sheriff, who have just sent out the order that Earl be shot on sight. With the sudden arrival of the reprieve the goal of this line of action is attained. A strong sense of reversal is punctuated by the way in which the position of power and control previously enjoyed by the mayor and sheriff reverts to Walter and Hildy. This reversal of fortunes is emphasized verbally when Walter says, "You two birds ought to get twenty years apiece" - a phrase that the Mayor had hurled at Walter and Hildy only a moment before. The relative subordination of the Earl Williams plot is clearly suggested by the fact that it is Hildy and Walter and not Earl who enjoy the immediate consequences of the reprieve's arrival.

Shortly thereafter, the exit of all the characters but Walter and Hildy paves the way for the final important dialogue between the couple. But just when Hildy is ready to capitulate and stay with Walter, Walter encourages her to go back to Bruce. Walter's action here serves to heighten tension, delaying closure at the precise moment when it seemed inevitable. This parallels the situation in phase one, where the moment of release follows immediately after a point of high crisis, when there seems no escape for Hildy and Walter. In phase two a sense of reversal is created through a surprise plot twist: Walter seems to be denying the entire momentum of the film's closural drive towards his happy reunion with

Hildy. We not only have the existence of a final obstacle, paralleling the situation in phase one. We also have a good example of the use of surprise to deflect attention from the predictability of the ending.

At the end of the film, the question of Earl's reprieve is answered first, with a direct statement by Pettibone: "Here's the reprieve." There follows a suspenseful delay before the more important question of the couple's reunion is answered. At the beginning of the film, the importance of the question of Earl's reprieve is suggested in an equally direct statement by Duffy: "Tomorrow morning Earl Williams dies and makes a sucker out of us." Duffy's statement here is also significant in that it constitutes a deadline. According to David Bordwell:

The deadline proper is the strongest way in which story duration cooperates with narrative causality. In effect, the characters set a time limit to the time span necessary to the chain of cause and effect...Moreover, appointments and deadlines stress the forward flow of story action: the arrows of the spectator's expectations are turned toward the encounter to come, the race to the goal.

(Classical Hollywood Cinema 45)

Given the greater importance of Walter's goal vis-a-vis Hildy, there is an even further intensification of the sense of time pressure Walter is under in winning her back. In the film's opening scene, Walter learns that Hildy is planning to

marry Bruce the next day, and his look of shock suggests the impact of this news on him. In the restaurant scene the sense of urgency is heightened when Walter learns that Hildy and Bruce are planning to take a train in a matter of hours. Significantly, it is at the end of the restaurant scene that we receive the most specific enunciation of Walter's goal, when he says over the phone to Duffy: "Hildy's coming back- I don't know how yet, but I promise you she is." The promise here is as much to the viewer as it is to Duffy.

In the moments just prior to the arrival of the reprieve, we receive a succession of reminders of the grimness of the situation, not for Earl, but for Walter and Hildy. They are handcuffed, they must endure the gloating of the mayor and sheriff, and, to Walter's rhetorical question, "We've been in worse jams than this, haven't we?" Hildy replies, "Nope". When the reprieve arrives, Earl is not even present to enjoy it. The handcuffs are removed from Walter and Hildy, and the gloating of the mayor and sheriff turns immediately to condescension towards them. At the beginning of the film, the placement of Duffy's announcement as an interruption of the conversation between Walter and Hildy suggests that the main importance of the Earl Williams question will be its utility in Walter's schemes. When Duffy introduces the Earl Williams situation, the general importance of sexual relationships has already been suggested (initial interchange between Hildy and Bruce; indication of a past relationship between Hildy and Walter). But as befits the primary importance of the question

of the relationship between Hildy and Walter, there is a delay both in the articulation of details about the relationship and in the development of the basic sexual conflict. Exemplary of the importance of delay as a strategy here is the way that Walter keeps interrupting Hildy so that her news that she is engaged is deferred until the end of the scene, a deferral underscored in her own remark: "At last I got out what I came here to say."

The closural importance of tension is most evident just at that point when Hildy announces her desire to stay and finish the story on Earl Williams. Instead of encouraging her to stay, Walter urges her to go to Bruce. According to Gerald Mast, Walter is here punishing Hildy for her errors of self-deception and is provoking her to a "conscious and verbal realization that she is a newspaperman and a woman at the same time" (Howard Hawks 238). But on the more fundamental level of viewer manipulation, Walter's actions are important because they delay the outcome (by literally consuming film time), thereby heightening viewer tension concerning the outcome. As Barbara Herrnstein Smith states:

We enjoy, it seems, teasing our tensions, deferring the immediate fulfillment of our appetites and expectations. What we gain thereby is a local heightening of tension which, it might be supposed, makes the eventual resolution all the more satisfying. It is also true, however, that the experience of tension is not necessarily

unpleasant, but, on the contrary, may be of itself a source of pleasure, especially if the promise of eventual resolution is secure. (3)

At the end of His Girl Friday the viewer is, in a sense, being teased and played with in a way which parallels Walter's handling of Hildy. Like Hildy we are ready to capitulate to the outcome we and she have been prepared for - the reunion of the couple. But, having been manipulated into anticipating this outcome, the pleasure of anticipating it is heightened by having the outcome delayed.

In the foregoing pages much of the discussion testifies to the closural importance of patterns of circularity and reversal. At the beginning of His Girl Friday Hildy enters the newspaper office intending to leave Walter and ends up leaving with him. At the beginning of the film, Earl's execution seems imminent, but at the end of the film his reprieve has been gained. While such patterns contribute to the sense of formal coherence at the end of the film they also constitute, with their emphasis on the successful negotiation of crises, a crucial component of the closure of a work in the comic mode. Indeed there is a strong degree of overlap between the formal and the comic function of such patterns since they not only reinforce the sense of structural symmetry at the end of the work but also emphasize the attainment of the kind of 'happy ending' associated with the classical paradigm.

In addition to its emphasis on circularity, the ending of His Girl Friday reveals several other features associated with

comic resolution. In The Happy End of Comedy Zvi Jagendorf provides a brief description of comic ending:

Like all things in drama, comic endings are reached through struggle. The critical tradition, beginning with Aristotle, and the post-classical commentators on Terence expressed this struggle in terms of the metaphor of tying and untying, or more specifically to comedy, the rhetorical triad of protasis, epitasis, and catastrophe (the growing action, the height of bustle, and the sudden turn of events).

(18)

Jagendorf's description here is certainly pertinent to the dynamic of closure in His Girl Friday. Consider, first, the application of Jagendorf's perception of the role of "struggle" to the comic ending. While, in general, the relationship between Hildy and Walter is shown to be marked by struggle, the plot is organized around the struggle of Walter to win Hildy back and to gain Earl's reprieve, and the struggle within Hildy which manifests itself as a simultaneous attraction to and repulsion from Walter and the newspaper milieu. And such emphasis on "struggle" is also suggestive of the degree to which the "comic" resolution of a film like His Girl Friday involves the resolution of various forms of conflict: the conflict between Hildy and Walter, the conflict within Hildy between two opposing alternatives - life with Bruce and life with Walter - and the conflict between Walter and the obstacles which must be overcome before Hildy is won

and Earl's reprieve is granted.

Jagendorf's awareness of the importance to comic structures of what he calls "the growing tension, the height of bustle and the sudden turn of events" is equally applicable to His Girl Friday. Both the question of whether Earl will be reprieved and the question of whether Hildy and Walter will reunite are not definitively answered until late in the film and until a pitch of tension, confusion and uncertainty has developed. And Pettibone's unexpected arrival with the reprieve which directly clarifies Earl's fate and facilitates the couple's reunion is certainly the catalyst for a sudden turn of events. The metaphor of tying and untying mentioned by Jagendorf thus becomes doubly apt in a comedy of remarriage like His Girl Friday: although the film's 'happy' ending is anticipated from the outset, it is not until late in the film that the various plot twists unravel in such a way as to accommodate the couple's retying the knot of marriage.

In His Girl Friday the attainment of what Jagendorf calls "the height of bustle" is facilitated by Walter's willingness to go to any extent to reach his goals and by the time pressure under which these goals are striven for. From early in the film Walter is identified as a character who will go to almost any lengths to keep Hildy from leaving. For example, during the restaurant scene he has himself called to the phone. Having just learned that Hildy and Bruce are leaving for Albany on the four o'clock train, Walter phones Duffy to ask whether there is any way that the train could be prevented

from leaving. When Duffy facetiously suggests that "we could dynamite" the train, Walter's reply, "Could we?", indicates that, for at least a moment, he takes the proposal quite seriously. Walter's indefatigability, his willingness to go to increasingly outrageous lengths to keep Hildy with him accounts for much of what Maurice Charney has called, in an apt expression, the "snowballing" (82) action of comedy, its accelerating drive towards a crescendo of chaos and confusion. And the conflict between Walter's struggle to keep Hildy and her struggle to leave with Bruce accounts for much of the film's comic tension.

Clearly the ending of His Girl Friday exemplifies many of the elements traditionally associated with the resolution of a comic work. In particular, the conventional aspect of closure in the film is reminiscent of the closure of Shakespearean romantic comedy with its emphasis on the resolution of sexual conflict between a central couple; the importance of overcoming obstacles (Walter must overcome external obstacles and obstacles internal within Hildy); the importance of comic reversal and a recognition scene in which the couple discovers their mutual love and the obstacles to the consummation of this shared feeling have been successfully removed; and the ratification of the romantic union through the marriage or anticipated marriage of the couple.

The very number of comic closural strategies accounts, in part, for the film's strong sense of closure. And the way in which specifically cinematic contexts (classical and

screwball) can in turn be situated in the more inclusive context of the comic mode suggests how film draws on and 'popularizes' formulae developed over centuries. And as we have already noticed, these strategies tend to be anticipated from the very outset of the work. Yet, as we have also seen, the inherent predictability of the comic mode necessitates, at the end of the film, the deployment of complex strategies to create surprise and to heighten tension. Interestingly, this problematic aspect of comedy was noted at the very outset of theorizing about comedy. In the Poetics Aristotle writes that the practitioners of comedy "first plot the fable on a base of probabilities, and then find imaginary names for the people-" (6).

Aristotle is evidently sensitive to the predictability of comedy. Indeed he intimates that such predictability is an integral feature of comedy and one which distinguishes it from tragedy: "when [tragic] poets write what the audience would like to happen, they are in leading strings. This is not the pleasure proper to tragedy, but rather to comedy . . ." (6). Yet, while an integral feature of comic structures is that their end is anticipated by their beginning, that same feature, if ineffectually handled, can occasion a sense of boring predictability in the work as a whole and in the ending in particular. As we have already seen, in the case of His Girl Friday viewer manipulation toward a 'happy ending' is operative from the very outset, yet as the end approaches, the creation of tension and delay functions to minimize the

obviousness of such manipulation. As we shall also see, the accumulation of plot twists toward the end of the work functions similarly to offset the predictability of the comic resolution.

Aristotle's remarks here also provide a suggestive context for specific discussion of the problematic nature of His Girl Friday's 'comic resolution'. In particular, he realizes that, given the predictable nature of the comic plot, the attributes and motivations of characters may be 'tailored' to the needs of that plot. With respect to His Girl Friday's romantic comedy, such a situation reveals itself on one level in the way in which characters like Hildy and Walter are animated in terms of their opposing goals: where Walter's character is largely definable in terms of his desire to win Hildy back, Hildy's character is, to a great extent, definable in terms of her inner conflict involving a tension between her avowed intention of leaving Walter and the newspaper business in order to marry Bruce, and her underlying desire to return to the milieu which she claims to no longer care for.

Yet, despite the potential interest of Hildy's inner conflict and its resolution, the terms of this conflict are loaded from the outset by the emphasis on the inadequacy of Bruce as an appropriate partner for her. It is at the end of the film that the experiential inauthenticity of the close correlation between character traits and plot functions becomes most evident. In particular, the ending foregrounds the ambiguous relationship between the status of marriage as

a closural convention and its experiential appropriateness for the characters. And it is as the ostensibly comic circle is being closed that its failure to 'contain' the darker elements of the text becomes strikingly apparent.

Since so many of His Girl Friday's closural ambiguities involve the failure of circular structures to contain and reconcile contradictory textual elements, a closer scrutiny of such closural emphasis on circularity provides a means of delving more deeply into these ambiguities. Consider the following statement by John Gerlach:

Antithetical markers of closure indicate that boundaries have been established, so that new territory (in its metaphorical sense) need not be explored. Circularity, a return to any aspect of the beginning, through verbal or situational echo, is one form of antithesis. More broadly defined, antithesis is any opposition, often characterized by irony, that indicates something has polarized into extremes...Antithesis suggests symmetry, balance, and the tightly bound tension of a permanent opposition. I use the term in the broadest sense, as a description of the reader's awareness of the limits of some aspect of a work, in space, in time, or in a character's attitude. If the story passes from positive to negative or vice versa, from down to up, if a character changes from hating to loving something or someone, the movement

from the extreme of one pole to the other carries what I term antithetical force. (10)

Gerlach's points help to explain the strong sense of closure at the end of His Girl Friday. The ending of the film evidences both the repetition of earlier plot elements (giving a sense of finality and conclusion) and the repetition of these elements with substantial alterations of context (offering a sense of measureable progress and the completion of a process within set boundaries). Though Gerlach's comments arise in the context of a discussion on closure in the short story, they are equally applicable to the principles of closure in film. As temporal processes, both the viewing of a film and the reading of a story tend to be brief in comparison to the reading of a novel, and both are frequently undertaken in one sustained sitting. Hence, creators in both media can rely upon the reader/viewer's ability to retain recollection of the beginning of the work, and an ending which foregrounds references back to the beginning can achieve a doubly strong sense of finality and concordance.

At the beginning of the action proper, Hildy enters the newspaper office with Bruce, intending to tell Walter of her proposed marriage to Bruce, and at the end of the film she exits the criminal courts pressroom intending to remarry Walter, having rejected Bruce. Hildy therefore begins the film about to marry one man and ends the film about to remarry the other. And, at the beginning of the film, Hildy is determined to disintegrate her relationship with Walter, but ends up

reintegrating herself with him. Furthermore, at the end of the film, the couple will not only marry but remarry, and their second honeymoon, like their first, will be devoted to journalism. As well, as Walter heads out the door ahead of Hildy, leaving her to carry all her luggage, so there is every reason to infer a return to the status quo in their relationship: Walter will not treat Hildy as a "lady" but as a newspaperman.

The circularity here can be seen as a link back from the final reconciliation of the couple at the end of the film to their first encounter in the film in Walter's office, since it is during the initial encounter that we learn that they have been married and that their first honeymoon was spent covering a strike. As well, Walter's propensity at the end of the film to forge ahead of Hildy and to let her carry her own luggage recalls several of his gestures during their first encounter: he neither invites her to sit down nor offers her a cigarette, and, at the end of the first scene, he strides off ahead of her as they go to meet Bruce.

Shortly after the discussion which ensues after the reprieve's arrival, Hildy and Walter are left alone in the pressroom. Hildy begins at once to reminisce about a similarly tight spot that she and Walter had been in before. Interestingly, Hildy's remarks hint that the escape to which she alludes marked their initiation as sexual partners. Again, we have the suggestion of a circular link between sexual initiation and sexual reinitiation, and also important is the

connection in both encounters between work/play and sexual adventure/journalistic adventure. Her reminiscing here recalls Walter's recollections in the restaurant scene, and, in both cases, the anecdotes deal with a mixture of romance and journalism, business and pleasure. That it is Hildy who is now reminiscing in such a manner signals her readiness to capitulate to Walter, even before she has consciously undertaken it. The reference leads us to recall the earlier situation but also indicates a reversal in attitude on the part of Hildy.

The closural importance of the final phone calls cannot be overestimated. Consider, first, the final phone conversation between Walter and Duffy. Significantly, it is Duffy to whom Walter finally announces "Everything's changed-Hildy's coming back". In the film's first interchange between Duffy and Walter, Duffy gives Walter the news about Earl Williams which Walter in turn utilizes in his stratagems to win back Hildy. Later, at the end of the restaurant scene, it is to Duffy that Walter makes the announcement that anticipates the actual outcome:"Hildy's coming back", a statement which anticipates the precise wording of Walter's final message to Duffy. Our recollection is again being directed in a way that encourages us to make connections between ending and beginning, but also encourages us to measure the 'distance' traversed.

Obviously, the sense of strong closure in His Girl Friday is inextricably linked with the evocation of a strong sense of

unity, symmetry and interconnectedness. Consider, in this regard, the following statement by Marianna Torgovnick: "When the ending of a novel clearly recalls the beginning in language, in situation, in the grouping of characters, or in several of these ways, circularity may be said to control the ending" (13). This observation is equally applicable to a film like His Girl Friday. The ending functions to confirm the validity of hypotheses about the outcome which start to develop at the very outset of the work. Such hypotheses include both the viewer's general notions regarding the comic nature of the work and more specific anticipations of the reprieve for Earl and the reunion of Walter and Hildy. And the way in which the ending confirms the viewer's initial expectations of a 'happy ending' has a powerfully circular effect which combines anticipation and retrospection: what the film's ending retrospectively confirms is the accuracy of the viewer's anticipations at the beginning of the work.

Such an emphasis on circularity relates to the notion of closure as enclosure and self-containment. Clearly, one of the functions of circularity is to confirm close connections between the beginning and end, and to satisfy pre-established expectations. Yet, built into this situation is a degree of predictability which may well be at odds with sustaining viewer interest and curiosity. In particular, the ending attempts to negotiate a 'happy ending' which validates the viewer's anticipation of comic resolution without seeming boringly inevitable. From a critical standpoint, much of the

interest generated by study of the film's ending arises from the way in which closural strategies often function in diametrically opposed ways. Not surprisingly, given such a clash of closural intentions, tensions and unresolved problems characterize the ending of this film.

The following brief description of the film's ending by David Bordwell exemplifies the film's tendency to combine repetition and predictability with the unexpectedness of plot twists:

His Girl Friday closes on a brief epilogue of Walter and Hildy calling the newspaper office to announce their remarriage. They learn that a strike has started in Albany, and Walter proposes stopping off to cover it on their honeymoon. This plot twist announces a repetition of what happened on their first honeymoon and recalls that Hildy was going to marry Bruce and live in Albany. As the couple leave, Hildy carrying her suitcase, Walter suggests that Bruce might put them up. (Narration 159)

The events Bordwell describes illustrate the operation in the film of an economy of means whereby certain events double as signals to retrospection (they repeat or echo earlier situations in the film), and as a way of catching the viewer unaware. As well, such plot events enact the kind of 'repetition with difference' discussed earlier. The reference to the strike not only recollects what happened on their first honeymoon, but also signals the renewal of Walter and Hildy's

former mode of existence together. Moreover, the emphasis on remarriage provides a doubly significant means of measuring the film's "progress", since it not only constitutes a definitive shift on Hildy's part away from Bruce towards Walter, but also signals that, as Stanley Cavell points out, Hildy is divorcing herself from her divorce from Walter (164).

It needs to be emphasized, as well, that the "plot twist" mentioned by Bordwell is not an isolated phenomenon. Indeed, there is a preponderance of plot twists in the final moments of the film, including the unexpectedness of Pettibone's return, the aforementioned way in which Walter urges Hildy to go to Bruce just as she is ready to stay with Walter, and the revelation that Bruce is again in jail, this time for having counterfeit money. Indeed, such is their frequency that it is possible to argue that the mechanism of the plot twist becomes a predictable pattern and that what remain unexpected for the viewer are the specific circumstances of each 'surprise'. One explanation for the recurrence of plot twists at the end of the film relates to the film's utilization of classical and generic patterns and its operation within the comic mode. Given the closural importance of the ending in terms of confirming viewer expectations, the ending is the point of greatest potential predictability. Hence, there is a proportionately strong need, during closure, to avoid dullness and redundancy. Classical Hollywood's frequent recycling of stock narrative and generic formulae dictated the development of closural strategies which would function to resolve

conventional patterns while retaining viewer curiosity.

In his description of Hildy's "tearful surrender to Walter at film's end" (166), Thomas Schatz pinpoints the extent to which the film's conventional "happy" ending is deliberately muted:

It is this surrender, of course, the moment when antagonism miraculously yields to the forces of love, that resolves their sustained confrontation. But "resolves" hardly seems to be the right word, since this particular marital battle is destined to continue indefinitely. The film ends without a prolonged clinch or a kiss. The two embrace momentarily (in a medium two-shot; under the only music played throughout the film) and then start out the door on another assignment and another honeymoon- with Hildy carrying the suit-case. (166)

The particular version of the classical Hollywood ending which involves marriage is, by virtue of how often it recurs, most in danger of appearing cliched, and the treatment of the ending as described above can certainly be seen as an attempt to lessen its obviousness. But beyond the question of how the ending operates to deflect attention from its own conventionality, there is a more fundamental issue at stake here, involving the potential for tension between the conventional and mimetic functions of a closural gesture. As Schatz realizes, the traditional closural convention of marriage hardly seems to "contain" the energies mobilized

throughout the film. While acknowledging the degree to which the couple's anticipated remarriage fulfills the formal demands of the screwball genre, it is still possible to detect a contradiction between the function of marriage as a formal device and its function as an experientially appropriate outcome for the couple.

However, the detection of such a contradiction hinges on the assumption that the film is susceptible to analysis in terms of experiential verisimilitude. From one perspective such an assumption seems untenable. While all genre films operate on the basis of some degree of connection between the generic world and human reality, the flights of fancy which typify, say, the musical and horror genres suggest that the popularity of films in these genres does not depend on a strong connection between film and reality. Similarly, while a screwball comedy like His Girl Friday involves interaction between recognizably human characters, the complexity of those characters is rigidly constrained, particularly by the basic resolution-of-conflict premise which typifies the genre. In His Girl Friday the very predictability of the film's screwball mechanics (remarriage of central couple, elimination of individual who poses a threat to the couple's reunion) reinforces the notion of His Girl Friday as a film which is not primarily about the interaction between a specific couple but which is using the conflict between these two characters to enact patterns central to the screwball genre.

Yet, the ending of His Girl Friday can legitimately be

investigated with respect to the degree to which the demands associated with the culmination of various types of patterns (generic, classical, comic) puts a strain on the viewer's sense of experiential plausibility. The film's ending foregrounds the degree to which the closure of highly patterned genre films fails to accommodate the nuances of human behaviour. And, by extension, the kind of closural inconsistencies perceivable at the end of His Girl Friday provide an example of the extent to which classical Hollywood 'realism' actually avoids or trivializes the contingencies of human experience because of its dependence on paradigmatic structures like conflict resolution.

We can start to unravel these inconsistencies by returning to the issue of the "plot twists" which punctuate the film's ending. According to Bordwell and Thompson, "The cause-and-effect logic of the film illustrates yet another principle of classical narrative: closure...No event is uncaused. (Even Pettibone's arrival is no *deus ex machina*, for we know that the governor is under pressure to decide about the case)" (Film Art 236). Yet, while the fact of Pettibone's initial arrival is not improbable, the reason for his decision to reject the mayor's bribe and to return is not explained. His return is an instance of an action necessitated by the dictates of the closural argument (that Walter and Hildy belong together) and the precise timing of the return (see diagram) points up the manipulateness of the ending and the degree of contrivance in the film as a whole.

More importantly, Pettibone's unexplained return exemplifies the tendency for the experiential authenticity of characters' actions to be strictly secondary to the function of these actions in a patterned structure. Indeed, as instances of coincidence multiply in the final moments of the film, the very ability to evaluate critically actions in terms of human motivation becomes difficult. As mentioned earlier, just as Hildy reveals herself to be ready to capitulate to a reunion with Walter, Walter alleges that he wants to do something noble for once. Having bid Hildy farewell, Walter appears to be sending her off to Bruce. However Hildy's departure is prevented by the ringing of the phone, which turns out to be a call from Bruce. By having set in motion the machinations that led to Bruce's third trip to jail, Walter would be able to anticipate that Bruce would call Hildy. However, there is no way that Walter could count on the phone call occurring at the precise moment when Hildy is exiting. The prevention of Hildy's exit here recalls the coincidence earlier in the film when shots are fired at the precise moment Hildy is about to bid farewell to the newspaper game. Such coincidences underscore the collusion between Walter's goals and the objectives of the closural argument, but also raise doubts about the possibility of seeing Hildy as a character with choices.

As Hildy converses with Bruce, it becomes obvious to Walter that Hildy is learning incriminating information against him and he begins to exit. It would seem that Walter's

desire to escape the consequences of his schemes overrides his commitment to Hildy. But just as Hildy's departure was prevented by the ringing phone, Walter's exit is prevented by Hildy's crying. On one level, these prevented departures could be construed as instances of parallelism (the repeated action of going back to one's partner) which subtly reinforce the notion of the couple's appropriate reconciliation. But the phone call and Hildy's crying can also be seen as strategically timed actions crucial to the closural argument in that they 'prevent' either Hildy or Walter from completing the exit which would obviously make their reconciliation impossible. Interestingly, a phone call and someone breaking into tears are actions which serve an identical narrative function. The blurring of the distinction here between the human and the mechanical suggests that while readily understandable in terms of their manipulative objectives, the film's closural strategies are difficult to interpret in terms of their experiential significance.

Hildy's emotional outburst and her ensuing speech are exemplary of this interpretive difficulty. As Hildy begins to cry, a gentle strain of music wells up on the soundtrack. Given the conspicuous absence of background music throughout the film, the commencement of the music in the final moments seems intended to signal a definitive turning point in the film and to underscore the importance of Hildy's emotion. The remarks that Hildy makes while in the throes of this emotion are worth quoting in full: "I thought you were really sending

me away with Bruce. I didn't know you had him locked up. I thought you were on the level for once and that you were just standing by and letting me go off with him without doing a thing about it... I thought you didn't love me." Obviously, in terms of closural strategy, these remarks can be taken as signalling Hildy's conscious articulation of her rediscovered love and need for Walter. But, insofar as such an explanation does not exhaust their suggestiveness, the remarks become illustrative of the inability of the closural strategies to account for the ending's full complexity.

Consider, for instance, Hildy's opening remark: "I thought you were really sending me away with Bruce." One implication of the remark is that, even after having rediscovered her own inclination to stay with Walter, Hildy would go back to Bruce if Walter bid her to. Another implication here is that Hildy's "choice" is strictly delineated in terms of having to choose between one man or another. This implied self-effacement, however, is not in keeping with the sense of Hildy's self-assertiveness emphasized throughout the film. The rest of Hildy's speech at this point in the film is also fraught with contradiction: "I thought you were on the level for once and that you were just standing by and letting me go off with him without doing a thing about it ... I thought you didn't love me." Looked at closely, this statement equates not having been double-crossed by Walter with not being loved by Walter. Again, this implied image of Hildy as a passive victim of Walter's schemes is at

odds with the image of her in the rest of the film as a competent, energetic news journalist, capable of outwitting those around her. It is worth noticing as well that Hildy's emotional outburst takes place after she discovers the double-cross. Theoretically, Hildy's words indicate that she should be happy that Walter has tricked her; however, the tone with which she utters her remarks seems to indicate that she is experiencing a profound sadness or, at best, emotional exhaustion.

In His Girl Friday, inconsistencies and contradictions on the level of specific dialogue are emblematic of a more fundamental rift revealed at the end of the film between the structural function of closural strategies and the behavioural importance of those same strategies. Our perception of such a rift has far-reaching implications. Consider, for instance, the issue of marriage and its ambiguous status at the end of the film. At the ending of a traditional Hollywood film, marriage would function both as a cinematic convention and as a ratification of conventional societal mores. In His Girl Friday, however, the anticipated marriage of Walter and Hildy symbolizes an escape into unpredictability and unconventionality.

As we have already seen, the prospect of the remarriage of Walter and Hildy is de-emphasized at the end of the film. In Pursuits of Happiness, Stanley Cavell offers a reading of the film's ending which emphasizes the qualitative differences between conventional marriage and the form of marriage which

Walter is offering to Hildy:

We do not know that the pair are going off together unmarried; probably they do not, as we see them leave, know either. The speculation is pertinent. It is a premise of farce that marriage kills romance. It is a project of the genre of remarriage to refuse to draw a conclusion from this premise but rather to turn the tables on farce, to turn marriage itself into romance, into adventure, which for Walter and Hildy means to preserve within it something of the illicit, to find as it were the moral equivalent of the immoral. (186)

Cavell's remarks here can be seen as one way of dealing with the contradictory nature of the ending of His Girl Friday - the film ends with the highly conventional trope of marriage, but it is marriage of an unconventional sort. Cavell even raises the possibility that the couple will defy convention and not remarry at all. However, whatever form the reunion of Walter and Hildy takes, it inevitably leaves several questions unanswered at the end of the film. For example, a contradiction remains between the resolution of conflict on a structural level and the resolution of conflict as a mode of behaviour on the part of Walter and Hildy. Clearly, the very possibility of narrative throughout the film has depended on the ongoing and perpetual conflict between the couple. Indeed, this conflict, with its verbal sparring, war of wits, and competitiveness, has been a crucial component of

what has made their lives exciting. While the closural argument has primarily hinged on the resolution of conflict between these two characters, there has been no real change in their personalities or situations and therefore no real reason to project the possibility that their second marriage will be any more lasting than their first. As Gerald Mast points out, "The endings of [Hawks'] films imply that the future union of the couple will be as antagonistic and competitive as their strange courtship" (The Comic Mind 251). Mast here is alert to the problematic nature of the future relationship between the couple, and his remark seems to raise the possibility of a "union" which does not survive the renewal of antagonism between them. Indeed, what is to prevent a solipsistic repetition of the whole cycle of distintegration and reintegration which His Girl Friday depicts? What safeguards the reunion which ends the film against the same pressures that dissolved the union of Walter and Hildy in the first place?

As well as not offering an explanation of how the conflict between Walter and Hildy has been successfully subsumed into a happy remarriage, the ending of His Girl Friday contains other contradictions. The film offers lip service to the narrative device of having Hildy "choose" between two opposite types of men, and the ending of the film turns upon Hildy's finally making this choice. Yet, as Robin Wood notes, this final choice is not plausible:

The flaw in His Girl Friday resembles that in

Bringing Up Baby: the choice offered Hildy is much too narrow to be acceptable, the surrender to irresponsibility too easily made, the alternative too glibly rendered ridiculous (given the alternatives the film offers, the only morally acceptable ending would be to have Hildy walk out on both men; or to present her capitulation to Walter as tragic). (77)

John Belton offers an alternative explanation of Hildy's choice at the end of His Girl Friday; where Wood finds Hildy's choice is too circumscribed, Belton claims that Hildy's lack of choice is structurally inevitable:

Robin Wood faults His Girl Friday because the choice Hawks offers Hildy between a home in Albany with Bruce Baldwin (Ralph Bellamy) and a return to the newspaper business with Walter Burns "is much too narrow to be acceptable." Hawks, however, never really offers Hildy a choice. From the moment she enters the paper's newsroom and walks through it to Walter's office, she is powerless to reverse the process that her appearance there sets in motion. (27-28)

Though Belton is ostensibly challenging Wood in this passage, both interpretations are valid and are made possible because of a fundamental inconsistency in the work under discussion. The structural emphasis on a simplistic dichotomy between Walter and Bruce has precluded the possibility of

finding Hildy's interactions with these characters to be behaviourally plausible. Indeed, as Wood acknowledges, the very characterization of Bruce has hinged on his eventual expendability. Yet, Wood's ultimate desire to read the ending of His Girl Friday strictly in terms of the morality of characters' behaviour is thwarted by the fact that, as Belton points out, these characters are really only actants in a carefully contrived, manipulative plot structure, the culmination of which is more driven by the need to gratify audience expectations than by any impulse towards behavioural veracity.

Another of the ways in which behavioural veracity is subverted at the end of His Girl Friday involves an almost complete lack of any measurable character development. Change in the film occurs only on the structural level through the use, as discussed earlier in this chapter, of strategies which combine a sense of narrative repetition and difference. The characters in the film, however, are associated with various traits or tendencies at the outset of the film and never vary substantially from these preset patterns of behaviour. Even Hildy, the most fully fleshed out character in the film, fails to undergo any truly significant transformation. Gerald Mast inadvertently foregrounds this aspect of the film's outcome with regard to Hildy:

Feminist critics and social moralists may again be upset by the film's "comic" resolution, for, as in Twentieth Century, the film celebrates a woman's

accepting her slavery and her subservience to a man; she makes no linear progress but returns in a repetitive circle to exactly where she was before.
(Howard Hawks 239)

Mast makes this statement within the context of arguing that His Girl Friday is a "comedy of romantic education" (Howard Hawks 211), basing this assertion upon the fact that Hildy makes "progress" by discovering that it is Walter with whom she belonged all along. Yet, Mast does not deal with the contradiction inherent in the fact that Hildy is never offered any real alternative or any viable choices within the film, which might have truly lead to "education", character development, and linear progress.

Just as the ending of His Girl Friday offers an apparent choice of options to Hildy (where there is no real choice) and delineates only an apparent progress for this character, the film also prevaricates by appearing to be moving towards a state of full knowledge concerning key narrative issues. Yet, as David Bordwell indicates:

The classical ending may be a sore spot in another respect. Even if the ending resolves the two principal causal lines, some comparatively minor issues may still be left dangling. In His Girl Friday, Earl Williams is reprieved, the corrupt administration will be thrown out of office, and Walter and Hildy are reunited, but we never learn what happens to Molly Malloy, who jumped out a

window to distract the reporters. (We know only that she was alive after the fall.) One could argue that in the resolution of the main problem, we forget minor matters, but this is only a partial explanation. Our forgetting is promoted by the device of closing the film with an epilogue, a brief celebration of the stable state achieved by the main characters. Not only does the epilogue reinforce the tendency toward a happy ending; it also repeats connotative motifs that have run throughout the film. (Narration 159)

As the unanswered question of Molly Malloy's fate indicates, His Girl Friday closely regulates the parameters within which knowledge will be sought. We are being persuaded during closure to concentrate on answers to pre-established questions, in particular the questions of whether Hildy and Walter will reunite and whether or not Earl will be reprieved. The quest for knowledge in the film is only apparent, since the arousal and fulfillment of viewer expectations is so strictly circumscribed.

Moreover, it could be argued that in evading the issue of Molly's fate, the ending is evading the implications of a darker subtext in His Girl Friday. As pathetic, victimized characters, Molly and Earl are part of a darker, more cynical subtext in the film which has its immediate sources in the original play The Front Page, upon which His Girl Friday is based, and in the first film version of that play, directed by

Lewis Milestone. As cumulatively developed over the course of the film, this subtext presents a world characterized by political corruption, the ruthless pursuit of power (and the corollary exploitation of the weak), the callous atmosphere of the newspaper game, unemployment, and so on. The "happy" ending of His Girl Friday is totally at odds with the cynical milieu in which the resolution occurs. In addition, Hildy's connections to the film's subtext are a potent source of her relative complexity and a key to an understanding of why the closural strategies fail to accommodate this subtext. The cumulative effect of such aspects as Hildy's sympathy for Molly and Earl, her sensitivity to the cruelty of the journalists ("gentlemen of the press"), her ability to act independently, etc. combine to make the viewer challenge the simple and pat either/or premise upon which the closure hinges. Paradoxically, we have a situation in which Hildy is the more interesting, more complex character, but it is with the manipulative machinations of Walter that the film has been in sympathy. In light of the conjunction between the structural emphasis on manipulation, and the manipulateness of a character such as Walter, Hildy's subservience to Walter at the end of the film is particularly unsettling.

One of the results of the analysis of such inconsistencies at the end of His Girl Friday is that a clearer sense of the film's problematic relationship to the genre of screwball comedy begins to emerge. According to Thomas Schatz:

The cultural conflicts in genres of integration [including screwball comedy] are revealed through the doubling of the principal characters - that is, through their opposed relationship, usually expressed as romantic antagonism. With the integration of their opposing attitudes into a cohesive unit (the married couple, the family), the conflicts are resolved and basic communal ideals are ritualized. But the cultural contradictions that inhibit integration throughout these films - between spontaneous individual expression and social propriety, for example - cannot be resolved without severely subverting the characters' credibility and motivation. (32)

Clearly, for Schatz, the notion of conflict resolution involves ideological compromise and the ratification of communal, societal ideals. Yet, the ending of His Girl Friday does not sanction compromise either in Hildy herself, between Hildy and Walter, or in terms of societal values. As we have already seen, choice for Hildy is rigidly dichotomized as an either/or scenario allowing for no other option between the two extremes of Walter or Bruce. In terms of the relationship between Walter and Hildy, while Hildy relinquishes or represses domestic impulses, Walter gives up nothing - he only returns, with a vengeance, to treatment of Hildy as a "newspaperman", letting her carry her own suitcases as the film closes. Given that there has been no change on Walter's

part, it is difficult to envision that Hildy will have any occasion to develop her sensitive side, other than in her capacity as a journalist. In From Reverence to Rape, Molly Haskell sees His Girl Friday as belonging to a select group of Hollywood comedies in which "the battle of the sexes is a battle of equals" (130). Haskell also suggests that Hildy is superior to Walter Burns and the other male characters in the film (125). Haskell's position here is predicated on the assumption that Hildy is perceivable as a coherent personality, whereas the film's ending shows such an assumption to be problematic insofar as a split emerges between Hildy's public and private personae. On the one hand, Hildy exhibits attributes which enable her to be the equal of any male in the pursuit of the traditionally male profession of journalism. With respect to her romantic relationship with Walter, however, she is characterized as a traditional, subservient female.

In terms of the question of the ending's ratification of social compromise in His Girl Friday, further inconsistencies are revealed. The end of the film seems to be emphasizing Walter's personal victory in luring Hildy away from Bruce and back to journalism - their remarriage will be more of a celebration of their idiosyncratic lifestyle than a surrendering to social stability. Indeed, the very characterization of Bruce (as necessarily expendable) and the fact that he is indeed rejected by Hildy seem to characterize the film's attitudes to such values as traditional domesticity

and conventional female roles.

On the surface, the ending of His Girl Friday offers the usual screwball reconciliation of the couple through the conventional device of marriage. However, the closure of this film does not entirely meet the requirements for screwball comedy as delineated by various critics of this genre. According to Wes D. Gehring:

Despite the general superiority in the genre of the female over the male, with her apparent antisocial approach to the traditionally male-dominated courtship ritual, the game still has the most conservative of goals: the heroine's madcap manoeuvres are often used to capture a male and break him - or save him- from any real antisocial rigidity. This is best summed up with the term marriage, or the promise of marriage (sometimes remarriage), which ends the screwball comedy, reaffirming one of the most traditional institutions in Western society. (107)

The ending of His Girl Friday does not fit this schema on several levels: Hildy does not display "superiority" over Walter (the reverse is true), and the marriage at the end of the film seems to celebrate Hildy's being saved not from "antisocial rigidity" but from the rigidity which the film associates with traditional domesticity.

The screwball comedy as described by Thomas Schatz also fails to fully accommodate an understanding of the ending of

His Girl Friday:

Are we to assume that the screwball couple's madcap social behaviour and mutual antagonism will magically dissolve once they are wed? ... To avoid these questions and to minimize the sense of rupture, these genre films synthesize their oppositions through some formal celebration or social ritual: a Broadway show, a betrothal, a wedding, and so on. In this way, they don't actually resolve their conflicts; they reconstitute them by concluding the narrative at an emotional climax; at precisely the moment when the double principals acquiesce to each other's demands, the suggestion of living "happily ever after" tends to mask or gloss over the inevitable loss associated with each character's compromise. What is celebrated is the collective value of their integration into an idealized social unit. (32)

Several of the points which Schatz makes in this statement are indeed applicable to His Girl Friday. The conflict between the two principal characters is in fact glossed over by a focusing upon their decision to remarry. The emotional satisfaction of this moment deflects audience attention from the improbability of such a pat solution and from the "inevitable loss" which Hildy will experience by a return to a life with Walter. Also glossed over by the ending of His Girl Friday are the various darker strands of the

film's subtext. As mentioned earlier, one of those strands involves the victimization of characters such as Molly and Earl. Since Hildy, on a number of occasions in the film, is shown to have a kinship with these victims, her capitulation to Walter at the end of His Girl Friday symbolizes more than just a personal surrender. Indeed, notwithstanding Schatz's emphasis on mutual compromise, Walter loses nothing at the end of the film but only regains what once belonged to him. His Girl Friday's conclusion thereby colludes with the selfishness Walter exhibits throughout the rest of the film. Nor does the reunion of the couple at the end of His Girl Friday celebrate any sort of "idealized social unit." The ending of the film seems intended to ratify the validity of a union which combines work and play. Yet, that such activities will take place in the specialized atmosphere of the newspaper milieu poses the problem of the relationship of that milieu (with its associated cynicism, power struggles, and callousness) to the broader social fabric. The values of traditional marriage (which Gehring and Schatz suggest are the values celebrated at the end of a typical screwball comedy) seem directly at odds with the newspaper milieu as it is depicted in His Girl Friday. The closure of the film attempts to suggest to the viewer that the couple will "live happily ever after", but the darkness of the newspaper setting and the incompletely suppressed subtext of the film mitigate against a full movement towards the conventionality and stability which these critics claim to be the hallmark of closure in screwball

comedies.

Coming as it does at the end of the Thirties, the era associated with classic screwball comedy, and at the beginning of the Forties, an era associated with a darkening of tone in Hollywood films, His Girl Friday not surprisingly exhibits an odd duality at its end. On the one hand, as we have seen, a tremendous amount of the film's closural energy is devoted to the deceptively simple task of getting the couple back together. Yet, in its final moments, the film seems to be displaying an awareness of the more facile dimensions of its simplistic closural argument. Many of the closural problems in His Girl Friday, as discussed throughout this chapter, may in fact arise from the imposition of a screwball convention (remarriage as a way of ending the film and resolving conflict) upon a film which has many elements which are not characteristic of that genre. The result, in the case of the ending of His Girl Friday, is an inescapable sense of bifurcation between its closural argument and the full complexity of its ending.

Chapter Two

Henry James's The Ambassadors

One of the dominant strands in the history of the critical reception of The Ambassadors involves the controversy surrounding the novel's ending. Yet, this controversy is almost exclusively focused on a conception of ending which involves the narrative outcome for characters. In particular, critics have tended to interpret the ending of the novel as it relates to Strether, emphasizing the moral significance of his rejection of Maria Gostrey. F.O. Matthiessen not only typifies this tendency, but is also one of the critics who has influenced the boundaries within which the debate has been circumscribed. Referring to "the negative content" (38) of Strether's renunciation, Matthiessen argues as follows:

He has come at last, as he says, to see Mrs. Newsome, and we know by now how much is involved in that word. But he leaves Paris and Maria to go back to no prospect of life at all ... The burden of The Ambassadors is that Strether has awakened to a wholly new sense of life. Yet he does nothing at all to fulfill that sense. Therefore, fond as James is of him, we cannot help feeling his relative emptiness. (38-39)

As the moral tone of the above quotation indicates, Matthiessen offers a negative and judgemental interpretation of Strether's behaviour at the end of the novel. This interpretation is echoed by other critics, including Yvor

Winters, who is even more determined to evaluate Strether's behaviour towards Maria on moral grounds:

Strether's ultimate scruple - to give up Maria Gostrey, so that he may not seem in Woollett to have got anything for himself from a situation in which he will seem to his friends in Woollett to have betrayed his trust, and in spite of the fact that Miss Gostrey could scarcely have been regarded as in any sense a bribe - this scruple, I say, impresses me very strongly as a sacrifice of morality to appearances: there might, conceivably, have been more Christian humility in considering the feelings of Maria Gostrey and in letting his reputation in Woollett go by the board. The moral choice, here, appears to be of the same strained and unjustifiable type as that of Fleda Vetch, or as that of Isabel Archer. (334)

Like Matthiessen, Winters rests his critical interpretation of the novel's ending solely on the question of the morality of Strether's conduct in the final chapters of the novel, giving a harshly negative judgement against Strether (and by implication against James as well). Interestingly, even those critics who interpret the ending of The Ambassadors as essentially comic still frequently rest their critical arguments upon the specifics of Strether's behaviour. Typical of such an apparent alternative is the position of Ronald Wallace, who, in Henry James and the Comic

Form, argues as follows:

Floundering in generic uncertainty, critics have been unable to agree on the quality of Lambert Strether's education or the meaning of the conclusion of the novel. Does Strether learn anything or nothing, and if he learns anything, exactly what is it? Is the conclusion Strether's renunciation of all happiness and his return to the pathetic dominance of Mrs. Newsome, or is it positive affirmation, and if so, what does it affirm? (119)

Wallace's own strategy here is to reject the critical tradition that has insisted upon a negative, even tragic, interpretation of Strether's choice at the end of the novel. It is interesting to note that Wallace does not change the grounds upon which the critical interpretation is made, but still bases his argument upon an understanding of the ending which turns on the question of Strether's behavioural motivations. The importance which critics have almost universally given to the moral questions arising out of the ending of The Ambassadors certainly must be considered in any discussion of closure in this novel. In addition, the vast array of interpretations of the novel's moral issues (ranging from comic to tragi-comic to tragic) suggests the inherent moral ambiguity of Strether's final actions. Yet, despite the wealth of moral interpretations of the ending, insufficient attention has been paid to the structural aspect of this

novel's closure or to the problematic relationship between experiential and structural elements that is foregrounded at the end of The Ambassadors. I propose, through a close examination of the narrative structure and formal closural patterns of the last two chapters of the novel, to analyze aspects of closural ambiguity which operate at a deeper level than the "moral ambiguity" of the novel, and which have their source in James's own attempts, during closure, to balance the distinct claims of formal coherence and experiential authenticity.

A critic who does speak to the interconnection between formal and experiential in James's approach to closure is John Gerlach. In Toward the End: Closure and Structure in the American Short Story, Gerlach writes:

James's theories about endings for all lengths of fiction, elaborated in the notebooks and prefaces, were striking in their novelty. James argued, as had none of his predecessors, that endings revealed the artificiality of fiction. 'The whole of everything is never told; you can only take what groups together,' he claimed in his notebook. Fiction may have endings, but life does not. He put the point even more forcefully in his preface to Roderick Hudson: 'Really, universally, relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily

appear to do so.' The logical extension of this view is that closure can be achieved satisfactorily without recourse to resounding finality, without having all aspects of the story converge at the end, neatly rounded off with the death of the protagonist. The beginning, middle, and end might conceivably be detached from the flow of events recounted in the story; form could be separated from content. This view seems in line with the twentieth century short story, particularly as written by Anderson, Faulkner, and Porter, for whom the circle drawn for the story does not always circumscribe the implied events. (80)

While Gerlach correctly emphasizes James's own sensitivity to the way in which endings reveal the artificiality of fiction, it is arguable whether Gerlach's description of satisfactorily achieved closure is the logical extension of James's view. What Gerlach overlooks are the problematic implications inherent in James's simultaneous sensitivity to formal coherence and experiential authenticity. At the end of The Ambassadors, James's desire for a strong sense of closure on the formal level manifests itself in a number of patterns, including the circularity which Gerlach rightly emphasizes. Yet, James's strategies notwithstanding, there are unresolved tensions at the end of The Ambassadors which reflect the fact that closure will inevitably be problematic. Thus, James's use of such traditional closural

strategies as circularity and coincidence are undercut by the nuanced complexity of James's own detailed rendering of Strether's consciousness. It is this rich but contradictory interplay of traditional narrative structuring and innovative modernist capturing of subjectivity which is foregrounded at the novel's close, especially in the final dialogue between Strether and Maria Gostrey.

One way of understanding James's closural technique in The Ambassadors is to examine the way in which the author resolves the problem of maintaining unity within a long, extended work of fiction. The structure of The Ambassadors, intricately elaborated as it is over an extended length, naturally requires a complex network of closural mechanisms for its completion. The challenge for James thus becomes one of utilizing closural strategies without drawing attention to the artificiality of such mechanisms. The "ending" of the novel is thus so artfully embedded in the structure of the work that it becomes very hard to identify and separate a definitive turning point which demarcates the drawing together of the various closural strands. The last two chapters of the novel may arguably be identified as such a turning point, due to the high preponderance of "closural signals" contained therein. Closural signals manifest themselves in three distinct but interrelated patterns: circularity, Strether's own sense of finality, and premonitions of Strether's old age and eventual death. In each case, James simultaneously draws on and transforms these traditional closural patterns and

mechanisms, using them to give a sense of finality to the novel, but also exploring their versatility by absorbing them into Strether's own consciousness of closure. Filtered through a subjective, perhaps unreliable (and certainly highly sensitive) consciousness, and through the indeterminacy of human language, the closural strategies at work in The Ambassadors lack the finality that they might possess in a more traditional, less complex novel.

Notwithstanding James's departure from tradition, it would be wrong to see his treatment of closure as involving a total rejection of conventional strategies for ending a work. Richard Chase, for example, makes much of James's rejection of a "happy ending" for The Ambassadors: "We gather, too, from James' notebooks that the insistent public demand for happy endings clamoured in the author's mind and that once again this 'vulgar' demand was not to be satisfied by making Strether marry Maria" (137-138). James does reject a traditional "happy" ending (though such would not necessarily be as unproblematic as Chase presumes), but his rejection of traditional closural strategies is not as complete as Chase implies. For example, James uses circularity (a conventional closural strategy), but ingeniously achieves it through Strether's own propensity for retrospection. Consider, for instance, the following passage from the beginning of Chapter XXXV of The Ambassadors, which describes Strether's last visit to Chad's apartment:

Present enough always was the small circumstance

that had originally pressed for him the spring of so big a difference - the accident of little Bilham's appearance on the balcony of the mystic troisième at the moment of his first visit, and the effect of it on his sense of what was then before him. He recalled his watch, his wait, and the recognition that had proceeded from the young stranger, that had played frankly into the air and had presently brought him up - things smoothing the way for his first step... It was as if his last day were oddly copying his first. The windows of Chad's apartment were open to the balcony - a pair of them lighted: and a figure whose cigarette-spark he could see leaned on the rail and looked down at him. It denoted however no reappearance of his younger friend; it quickly defined itself in the tempered darkness as Chad's more solid shape.

(333)

Note, first, the way in which circularity in this passage is directly linked to Strether's own sense of recollection, as emphasized by the verb "recalled", and by the statement that "it was as if his last day were oddly copying his first". Interestingly, this last example also reflects the subtlety of James's use of the conventional closural mechanism of coincidence, for it is here presented as a form of deja-vu on the part of a character who has throughout the novel been very sensitive to the presence of coincidence and perceived

patterns of repetition.

Through his exploitation of the reader's sympathetic identification with Strether, James is able to manipulate selectively the reader's own retrospection of events in the novel. The way in which Strether's recollection takes him back to the earliest balcony scene guides the reader's own sense of circular return. Specific details of the description of Strether's first visit to Chad's apartment are echoed in a number of ways. There is, for example, the emphasis on its being a third floor apartment and, as in the initial episode, there is specific reference to the "window" and "balcony" as important points of vantage on both the moral and perceptual levels. There is also, of course, a re-echoing of the basic situation involving a youthful figure who is not only leaning over a rail, but is in both cases smoking a cigarette.

Such a description of Strether's last visit to Chad's apartment contributes to a sense of finality at the end of The Ambassadors not only because it creates a pattern of circularity, but also because it is the last in a sequence of such visits; this pattern is in fact consciously recognised by Strether himself. At the beginning of Book Eleventh, James tells us that "He [Strether] spent a long time on the balcony; he hung over it as he had seen little Bilham hang the day of his first approach, as he had seen Mamie hang over her own the day little Bilham himself might have seen her from below" (281). The grammatical structure of this passage, with its repeated variations on the word "hung", reinforces Strether's

own perception of a sequence of repeated events and situations. Strether's sense of chronological process is also exemplified in his tendency to list the examples of balcony scenes in sequential order.

While such patterns of circularity and sequencing are obviously crucial to the attainment of a strong sense of closure, the mediation of such patterns through a central consciousness is highly problematic. Both the evocation of coherence and its subversion can be understood partly in the light of the following passage from John Gerlach:

Antithetical markers of closure indicate that boundaries have been established, so that new territory (in its metaphorical sense) need not be explored. Circularity, a return to any aspect of the beginning, through verbal or situational echo, is one form of antithesis. More broadly defined, antithesis is any opposition, often characterized by irony, that indicates something has polarized into extremes ... Antithesis suggests symmetry, balance, and the tightly bound tension of a permanent opposition. I use the term in the broadest sense, as a description of the reader's awareness of the limits of some aspect of a work, in space, in time, or in a character's attitude. If the story passes from positive to negative or vice versa, from down to up, if a character changes from hating to loving something or someone, the movement

from the extreme of one pole to the other carries what I term antithetical force. (10)

Looking back to the earlier quoted description of Strether's last visit to Chad's apartment in the light of Gerlach's comments, one can clearly see how James orchestrates a sense of formal circularity. On the most general level, Gerlach's emphasis on reversal is illustrated by the way in which Strether's ambassadorial purpose comes full circle; he has come to Paris to persuade Chad to return to Woollett, and ends by insisting that Chad remain with Madame de Vionnet in Europe. More specifically, Strether's last visit to Chad's home is described in terms of such basic antitheses as first/last (he consciously contrasts his "first" and "last" visits there) and retrospection/projection (he recalls his first visit, projecting from the memory of it all of the events which that first visit set in motion).

Although the ending of The Ambassadors contains many of the conventional closural elements which Gerlach describes, these are subverted by striking disparities between the drive for formal coherence in this novel and its emphasis upon experiential ambiguity. Worth noting in Gerlach's comments is the emphasis on terms such as "symmetry", "balance" and "permanent opposition". These elements are evident in the closing chapters of The Ambassadors, but their very prevalence foregrounds the manner in which they are undercut by James's attempts to capture the nuances and contingencies of human interaction and subjective consciousness. This tension is

exemplified in several instances throughout the final chapters of the novel, most strikingly when Chad is walking Strether back to his hotel late at night, after Strether's last visit to Chad's apartment. We are told that, "They lingered on it as they had lingered in their walk to Strether's hotel the night of their first meeting... They were face to face under the street-lamp as they had been the first night..." (339). This passage, as well as directly recalling the earlier event of Strether and Chad talking under the street-lamp on the night of their first meeting, indirectly arouses associations of Strether's perpetually unsuccessful attempts to penetrate Chad's outer demeanor and obtain a sort of immutable knowledge of the younger man's motivations. The language with which James describes that first conversation foreshadows the ambiguous and ever-shifting relationship between the two throughout the novel:

Chad raised his face to the lamp and it was one of the moments at which he had, in his extraordinary way, most his air of designedly showing himself. It was as if at these instants he just presented himself, his identity so rounded off, his palpable presence and his massive young manhood, as such a link in the chain as might practically amount to a kind of demonstration. (99)

Such a passage typifies the way in which James's interest in the difficulty of human communication is connected to the larger issues of the indeterminacy of language and the

problematic nature of authorial voice. It is difficult to determine whether the language here applies more directly to Chad or to Strether. For instance, is a particular phrase like "most his air of designedly showing himself" primarily descriptive of a tendency on Chad's part to project a certain image of himself in a calculative manner, or does it reflect Strether's own subjectivity, his tendency, perhaps unfounded, of ascribing to Chad a high degree of calculation?

Even if we consider the passage mainly as a record of Strether's impressions, the ambiguity of his viewpoint is conveyed. There are words and phrases here which indicate Strether's desire to unify his impressions into a coherent vision, for example; "designedly", "rounded off", "palpable", "link in the chain", and "demonstration". Set against these, however, is the use of such qualifiers as "his air of", "it was as if", "as might practically amount to", and "a kind of", which counteract the force of Strether's anxiety to attain a totally coherent vision of experience. Scenes at the end of the novel which recall and echo earlier events therefore do not merely give a sense of finality and structure to the novel, but reinforce and repeat the ambiguity and contradictions (especially of Strether's perceptions) which have existed throughout. Traditional elements of narrative closure here (circularity, reversal, repetition) function ironically - they do not offer a measure of stability, but serve to foreground the artifice inherent not only in Strether's attempts to codify perceptions, but also in James's

own strategies for formally ending a treatment of human relations.

Another manifestation of this same contradiction involves what might be referred to as Strether's own language of finality, and such language reveals itself in a number of different ways. As with the examples of circularity cited above, there is a sense of James achieving a sense of finality largely through Strether's own pre-occupation with closure. In chapter XXXV, Strether's express purpose in seeing Chad is not only "to say good-bye" (334) but to deliver his appeal for Chad to stay with Madame de Vionnet, which Strether refers to as "my last word of all to you" (335). During his conversation with Chad, Strether reports that he has been to see Madame de Vionnet "to say good-bye" (335), and describes his response to the Pockocks' ultimatum as "my last word, which I shall write in the morning" (336). On one level, such language serves a straightforwardly closural function in that it strengthens the sense of structural cohesion at the end of the work. The series of set-piece scenes involving Strether's last visits to Madame de Vionnet, Chad and Maria Gostrey provides signals of formal closure which are underscored by Strether's own consciously closural mindset. Yet, as the ending of the novel makes clear, Strether's own yearning for coherence is highly suspect, and our doubts about the validity of his final vision reflect more generally problematic aspects of closure in the work as a whole.

We can start to get a clearer sense of the ambiguities of

Strether's own preoccupation with closure if we consider the connection between his desire to "choreograph" his last steps and the parallel tendency which he exhibits at the beginning of the novel, of trying to consciously arrange his first steps. Consider, for example, Strether's reluctance at the beginning of the novel to have Waymarsh be the first "note" for him of Europe (17). Evidently, such a "note" would not accord with Strether's own predetermined sense of what the experience of his arrival in Europe should entail. Later, as Strether is about to promenade with Maria, we learn the following: "Nothing could have been odder than Strether's sense of himself as at that moment launched in something of which this sense would be quite disconnected from his sense of the past and which was literally beginning there and then" (20). Beyond the general emphasis here on Strether's self-consciousness, the passage specifically underscores the way in which Strether renews his feeling of having begun. Moreover, Strether's desire to give logical structure to the flux of experience actually leads him to attempt a compartmentalizing of time, a rigid 'bracketing' of his experience into clearly demarcated phases.

As Strether begins his walk with Maria he renews his sense of beginning yet again:

This counted, it struck him as he walked beside her with his overcoat on an arm...this struck him as really, in comparison, his introduction to things. It hadn't been 'Europe' at Liverpool, no- not even

in the dreadful delightful impressive streets the night before- to the extent his present companion made it so. (23)

One could certainly multiply the number of examples of such behaviour on Strether's part in the opening chapters of the novel. The very way in which Strether is led to revise his sense of having begun reveals that, although he is a character who formulates pre-conceptions about his experience, his experience perpetually transcends the boundaries within which he attempts to enclose it. Towards the end of the novel, at the beginning of chapter XXXV, we learn that Strether "was to delay no longer..." (332). Since, as Ruth Yeazell points out, the novel has been "one long delaying action" (21), such an announcement of the intended cessation of delay certainly acts as a formal closural signal. However, Strether's habit of constantly revising his anticipation of having begun leads us to question the validity of his insistence, at the end of the novel, that his experience is finished.

The novel's last two chapters not only convey Strether's own strong sense of having achieved a final vision: they also provide further evidence that challenges the stability of Strether's conclusions. In chapter XXXV this double thrust manifests itself in the way that Strether, even while trying to give coherence to his experience, reveals a fear of further complicating knowledge. Consider, for instance, James's description of Strether's demeanor during his conversation with Chad: "He was as grave, as distinct, as a demonstrator

before a blackboard, and Chad continued to face him like an intelligent pupil" (336). The quotation here indicates Strether's desire for logic, for a tidy, demonstrably coherent version of experience. Such a yearning on Strether's part even leads him to recoil from confronting the implications of any 'facts' that will not fit into his systemic view of experience: "Strether wanted no more facts-he only wanted to justify, as it were, his question" (336). And Strether explicitly admits this fear of complicating knowledge during his final conversation with Miss Gostrey: "That is I have no ideas. I'm afraid of them. I've gone with them" (344). Clearly, there is a suggestion here that a rejection of further accumulation of experience is the only way he can construct a coherent vision. Yet, since his fear of ideas and their moral and emotional implications had earlier led to his reluctance to understand the true nature of the relationship between Chad and Madame de Vionnet, then his sense of full understanding at the novel's end is certainly open to question.

The ambiguities of Strether's preoccupation with consistency are further revealed in a passage from the novel which, despite its importance, has often been overlooked by critics:

There was literally a minute- it was strange enough- during which he grasped the idea that as he was acting, as he could only act, he was inconsistent. The sign that the inward forces he

had obeyed really hung together would be that- in default always of another career- he should promote the good cause by mounting guard on it. (334)

On one hand, Strether again reveals himself to be preoccupied by how "the inward forces" hang together. However, in this instance, he is struck by a feeling that these forces signify another possible conclusion. By Strether's own admission, then, his behaviour amounts to a compulsion to act inconsistently. Even if we argue that Strether experiences this sense of profound doubt only momentarily, we are still left with a strong suspicion that Strether's outlook is capable of wavering even at this late stage in the novel.

Given Strether's own degree of self-consciousness, it is not surprising that he attempts to imaginatively envision the meaning of his Paris experience:

He found on the spot the image of his recent history: he was like one of the figures of the old clock at Berne. They came out, on one side, at their hour, jiggled along their little course in the public eye, and went in on the other side. (342)

The passage above conveys a fitting "image" of both Strether's sense of finality and its problematic aspects. While the phrase "on the spot" reflects Strether's need to compartmentalize his experience into distinct phases, the reference to "the image of his recent history" underscores Strether's desire for an immutable knowledge not threatened by time or by the accumulation of new experience. The references

to coming "out" and going "in" certainly evoke symmetrical reversal, and in combination with the stress on the repetitive, cyclical workings of the clock, reflect Strether's need for a harmonious vision. But such descriptive language is equally capable of conveying a sense of solipsism, of a lack of any real progress in Strether's development. Moreover, Strether engages in a very self-referential act of imagination here, with this image of himself betraying no sense of interaction between his "figure" and that of any others.

Strether's imaginative summation of his experience evokes a richly suggestive parallel between his own sense of finality and authorial closure, one which also foregrounds the problematic nature of closure at both levels. The notion of creating an image of history, with its suggestion of transforming the fluidly chronological into the immutably spatial, reflects the author's attempt, during closure, to give artistic form to the flux of experience. The hint of the mechanical, almost puppet-like behaviour of Strether suggests the paradoxical circumscription of the freedom of characters within predetermined narrative patterns. And the allusion to "the other side", to an area removed from our perception, reflects the impossibility, elsewhere acknowledged by James, of ever showing the whole of a fictional action.

We can get a better sense of the specific application of such points by turning to an important passage in the "Project of Novel by Henry James", the lengthy preliminary synopsis of The Ambassadors which James sent to his publishers. The

immediate context for the passage below is James's discussion in the "Project" of the "moment of hesitation" (Complete Notebooks, 575) that Strether experiences in the face of Maria's tacit offer of marriage:

He shows her that he has it- that is, that he sees he can marry her on the morrow if he will- at all events on the morrow of his return to America, or (since she in that case will follow) on the morrow of that; is, as I say, everything that is pleasant and appreciative about it- everything but what he would be if he assented or accepted. He can't accept or assent. He won't. He doesn't. It's too late. It mightn't have been, sooner-but it is, yes, distinctly, now. He has come so far through his total little experience that he has come out on the other side- on the other side, even, of a union with Miss Gostrey. He must go back as he came- or rather, really, so quite other that, in comparison, marrying Miss Gostrey would be almost of the old order. Yes, he goes back- and to other things. We see him on the eve of departure, with whatever awaits him là-bas, and their lingering, ripe separation is the last note. (Complete Notebooks, 575)

Note the emphatic nature of James's language here, especially in the descriptions of Strether's fate: "He can't accept or assent. He won't. He doesn't...He must go back...". Already in

the "Project", James is confronting the issue of how to achieve appropriate termination for a narrative which has concerned experiential processes which inherently lack finality. James's strategy, both in the "Project" and in the novel as completed, is to suggest the projection of certain story elements beyond the actual plot. A passage in the novel contains a striking echo of James's own insistence in the "Project" that Strether must leave Paris:

He must do both things; he must see Chad, but he must go. The more he thought of the former of these duties the more he felt himself make a subject of insistence of the latter. (332)

On a basic narrative level, such an insistence on Strether's necessary departure serves to emphasize that Strether does leave even though we don't actually see him go. Such a projection beyond the end is reinforced through references to Strether's anticipation of apparently irrevocable actions which he will perform after his farewell to Chad, such as writing his "last word" (336) to Sarah and buying his train ticket. However, James rigidly controls the degree to which we do project beyond the end. The author emphasizes that Strether will leave, that he will marry neither Maria nor Mrs. Newsome, but leaves us in doubt concerning what will happen to Strether when he returns to America. Moreover, the urgent insistence on what Strether "must" do strongly contrasts with the aura of mystery concerning the outcome for other characters such as Madame de Vionnet, Chad and Maria Gostrey. And even relatively

minor issues, such as the fate of Mamie and Little Bilham (whether individually or as a potential couple) and the relationship between Waymarsh and Sarah Pocock, are left open-ended.

The urgency with which Strether's return to America is anticipated in both the "Project" and the novel itself should not lead us to overlook important differences between the fiction and its blueprint. In the context of the "Project" the narrative "voice" is straightforwardly authorial, as James merely describes what will befall his main character. In the related passage in the novel the issue of voice is more complex. Even though Strether is again being referred to as "he", the statements about him are reflective of the workings of his own consciousness. In The Ambassadors, James has the doubly difficult task of concluding a work which has not only involved a central consciousness, but a consciousness prone to doubts and self-deception. As well, since formal closure in the novel is inextricably linked with Strether's perception of finality, the strong sense of closure on the formal level actually serves to throw the ontological ambiguity of the ending into sharper relief.

Exemplary of this predicament is the pattern of references in the novel's penultimate chapter which emphasize Strether's advanced age and world-weariness. For instance, we are told that, as Strether ascended the steps of Chad's apartment he "drew breath on each landing" (333). Shortly after, Strether is ruminating over the degree to which Chad's

affairs have become his own, and his musings lead him to feel his own age: "It made him feel old, and he would buy his railway ticket- feeling, no doubt, older- the next day" (334). Moreover, Strether does not only think of himself as old but senses that Chad's perception of his age is reflected in the latter's deferential treatment of him: "If he had just thought of himself as old Chad was at sight of him thinking of him as older: he wanted to put him up for the night just because he was ancient and weary" (334). One way of interpreting these references is to regard them as premonitions of death, as a poignant hint that Strether will not live long after his return to America. From one perspective, such premonitions contribute to a sense of closural finality: they reflect James's tacit realization that only by suggesting a cessation of Strether's consciousness can the notion that Strether's experience has been "total" be taken seriously. From another perspective, such premonitions as ascribed to Strether himself suggest that he is engaging in the ultimate act of self-projection, anticipating the ultimate 'end' of his own experience.

Perhaps the most interesting difference between the novel's ending as sketched in the "Project" and the ending as it appears in completed form concerns the fate of Maria Gostrey. While the "Project" envisions at least the hypothetical possibility of Maria going to America, we are not really encouraged to speculate about her at the end of the novel. It is as if Strether's sense of finality constrains not

only his own behaviour but also hers. The complex implications of this situation make the final dialogue between Strether and Maria worth pausing over. The final dialogue is not an epilogue in what James described in "The Art of Fiction" as the detested and simplistic nineteenth-century manner of "appended paragraphs" (8). But it does provide a 'summary' not only of the novel's closural strategies but of the kinds of ambiguities that such strategies engender.

One of the closural strategies which is foregrounded during the last exchange between Strether and Maria is circularity. For Marianna Torgovnick the final dialogue exhibits the importance of the device on both the structural and thematic levels.

In the first meeting between Strether and Maria, which opens the novel, Maria leads the way and gives Strether guidance... In their final conversation, Strether sees most clearly, anticipates meanings, and verbally leads the way. Most significantly, he leads the way to a statement of the morality that prevents their marriage, a marriage which would have given The Ambassadors an entirely happy, conventional, and popular ending.

(138)

Implicit in this description is the importance of spatial return. Just as the final balcony scene returns Strether to a familiar setting, so the final dialogue with Maria is the last in a series of such scenes which have been, for Strether,

conscious markers of his evolution. In addition, Torgovnick regards the structural reversal from 'first' to 'last' as having thematic significance: she sees a reversal in the positions of the two characters such that Strether now takes the more aggressive role in leading them to shared insight.

Another critic who is aware of the closural importance of structural circularity is Sister Corona Sharp. In The Confidante in Henry James, she points out that the "last scene of the novel is given to Strether and his faithful confidante. Their relation has come full circle. They recall their first days together. James once more evokes the charm of her home..." (78). While Sister Corona shares Torgovnick's emphasis on the structural and thematic appropriateness of the situation, both critics overlook the potential for irony in the way in which James closes the circle in the final dialogue. A more insidious implication of this circularity is suggested by Philip M. Weinstein. In Henry James and the Requirements of the Imagination he challenges Strether's position that his self-justification at the end of the novel (which includes his rejection of Maria's hinted marriage offer) hinges on his sense that he has not indulged in any motives of self-interest:

It is, however, a position ultimately untenable, for if Strether is right in seeing that the betrayal of Mrs. Newsome's embassy is warranted only through disinterest, he remains unjustified in entering Maria Gostrey's life, profiting greatly

from her, and then discarding her when he has had his fill (161).

From Weinstein's perspective, the relationship between Strether and Miss Gostrey has come full circle in a more disturbing way than either Sister Corona or Torgovnick considers. At the end of the novel, Strether reveals himself as capable of doing to Maria what he has just forbidden Chad to do - profit by a woman, then leave her. This darker perspective on Strether's exploitation of Maria is underscored by another ironic twist on the novel's circularity. When, early in the novel, Strether inquires of Maria how people such as him repay her, she replies "You don't" (26). That the novel can indeed be seen to have come full circle in terms of her prophecy raises questions about the extent of Strether's self-knowledge at novel's end, but also suggests the need to consider the closural importance of Maria's own story.

There is clearly a range in the critical assumptions concerning Maria's role as a ficelle. For critics such as Torgovnick and Sister Corona, Maria retains, through to the end of the novel, her subordinate role as Strether's 'faithful' friend, as a good listener who will help him achieve insight about his situation. For Weinstein, Maria is capable of being a psychologically complex character with intrinsic interest and with the capacity to be hurt by the repercussions of Strether's decisions. Such contradictory assumptions are mirrored by contradictions within James's own conception of Maria as ficelle. In the Preface to The Portrait

of a Lady, James cites Henrietta Stackpole and Maria Gostrey as instances of "the light ficelle" (13), and he also claims that these characters are "but wheels to the coach; neither belongs to the body of that vehicle, or is for a moment accommodated with a seat inside" (13). Similarly, in the Preface to The Ambassadors, James describes Maria as follows:

She is the reader's friend much rather- in consequence of dispositions that make him so eminently require one; and she acts in that capacity, and really in that capacity alone, with exemplary devotion, from beginning to end of the book. She is an enrolled, a direct, aid to lucidity; she is in fine, to tear off her mask, the most unmitigated and abandoned of ficelles. (12)

While such descriptions leave little doubt regarding the subordinate, mechanical narrative function of a ficelle such as Maria, James complicates the situation by arguing further that:

The 'ficelle' character of the subordinate party is as artfully dissimulated, throughout, as may be, and to the extent that, with the seams or joints of Maria Gostrey's ostensible connectedness taken particular care of, duly smoothed over, that is, and anxiously kept from showing as 'pieced on', this figure doubtless achieves, after a fashion, something of the dignity of a prime idea... (13)

But James leaves the "after a fashion" unexplained. Throughout

The Ambassadors the focus on a central consciousness involves the delineation of Strether's story through Strether's own impressions, including his impressions of what other characters are experiencing. Strether's story thereby dominates by virtue of the fact that the various plot strands in the novel are filtered through his consciousness. Yet, paradoxically, James's ability to sustain our interest in the novel's central consciousness partly depends on the vivid depiction of the characters with whom Strether interacts. Foregrounded at the end of The Ambassadors is the basic contradiction between James's focus on a central consciousness and his interest in the intricacies of human interaction. More specifically, in the final dialogue between Strether and Maria there is evidence that Maria not only retains an alternative perspective on Strether's experience but that her own story has its own potential intrinsic interest.

Many critics merely overlook the implications of the contradictory nature of a *ficelle* such as Maria. Typical of this tendency is the position of Ellen Leyburn: "Part of what makes her [Maria] so excellent a ficelle is that she is so interesting a person in herself; and James makes her the more interesting by showing under the light of her 'restless irony' hints of something altogether more sober" (104). But can a *ficelle* character ever be said to have intrinsic interest? There is an obvious contradiction here which is most in evidence at the end of the novel, where the complexity of Maria's character seems to transcend her function as a mere

narrative device. While F.O. Matthiessen does acknowledge the potential artificiality of the ficelle, his criticism of James is itself reflective of Maria's problematic position at novel's end:

Another aspect of the structure- and its most artificial- is the role of ficelle conceived for Maria Gostrey. She exists only as a confidante for Strether, only as a means of letting him comment on his experience. Consequently, as James himself noted, she had a 'false connection' with the plot which he had to bend his ingenuity to make appear as a real one. But his device of having her fall in love with Strether and hope wistfully to marry him does not achieve such reality. (38)

Note the paradox in Matthiessen's own description of Maria. She mixes the passivity of a ficelle, of being a good listener for Strether, and the active capacity to fall in love. Matthiessen refers to the "device" of having her fall in love as if the narrative function of such an action could be divorced from its emotional and psychological dimensions. Yet, underlying such specific contradictions is the more fundamental conflict between Maria as an individuated character and Maria as a narrative strategy, and such a conflict is particularly foregrounded in the final conversation between Maria and Strether.

One point of entry into the ambiguities of this final conversation has to do with its problematic nature as a

'dialogue'. On the simplest level, a fictional dialogue presumably involves conversation between two characters, an exchange between two distinguishable voices. However, by virtue of her subordinate role as *ficelle*, Maria's has not been an equal 'voice' in their running conversation throughout the novel. Because their interchanges have been almost exclusively centered on Strether's predicament, they frequently seem more monologic than dialogic. As Ruth Yeazell has argued: "the late Jamesian novel threatens to engulf its minor characters in its major ones, to make much of its dialogue seem a peculiarly solipsistic communing of self with self" (71). This critic also addresses the impact of this situation as specifically applied to Maria:

Speaking as Strether and Maria do sounds oddly like thinking out loud - as if the long sentences of private meditation, with their elaborate series of qualifiers and their complex subordination, had here been broken down into their component parts, and divided up between the two speakers. By a process of association, at once verbal and emotional, one friend expands, qualifies or completes the assertion of the other, even as the meditations articulate a like process within a single mind. If Maria Gostrey is that 'most unmitigated and abandoned of ficelles,' as James calls her in his Preface, her abandon is thus not so much moral as ontological: as the 'lively

extractor' of Strether's 'value' and the 'distiller' of his 'essence' she almost loses her own. (70)

In speaking of "ontological abandon", with its suggestion of the sacrifice of one's identity for the sake of another, Yeazell has detected the essential passivity of a character like Maria. To see Miss Gostrey as moving from aggressive encouragement of Strether to passive acceptance of his vision (as Torgovnick does) is really to invoke a false distinction, since both Maria's 'aggressiveness' and her 'passivity' are in Strether's service.

At the same time, it is worth pausing over Yeazell's claim that Maria "almost" loses her own identity. While it would be inaccurate to see Maria as aggressively self-expressive at the end of the novel, she does represent a perspective that is neither fully nor comfortably able to be absorbed into Strether's own. Whatever doubts we may entertain about Maria's full status as an individual character, there is no doubt that the separateness of her 'voice' from Strether's own is emphasized in their final exchange. Strether begins his final report to Maria with the news that Chad is "distinctly restless" (341), but, uncharacteristically, she turns the conversation toward her own concerns, a manoeuver which is highlighted by the use of italics:

'You've excited me,' Miss Gostrey smiled. 'I'm distinctly restless'.

'Oh you were that when I found you. It seems to me

I've rather got you out of it. What's this,' he asked as he looked about him, 'but a haunt of ancient peace?'

'I wish with all my heart,' she presently replied, 'I could make you treat it as a haven of rest.' On which they fronted each other, across the table, as if things unuttered were in the air. (341)

Maria reveals certain attributes of a character not reducible to her role as a ficelle. The language of the above passage suggests that Maria has her own needs and desires, and experiences in a very real way the threat of loneliness. The painful irony of her situation is that her fate is dependent on another character whose insights are tenuous and who may even be deluding himself. Hence, while Torgovnick speaks confidently of Strether's enunciation of "the morality" that both characters must live by, the final dialogue is imbued with the sense, generally apparent in the final chapters, of the ambiguity of Strether's wish to be "deterrent and conclusive" (343). Not surprisingly, it is Maria herself who draws the important distinction between objective truth and Strether's subjective convictions: "It isn't so much your being 'right'- its your horrible sharp eye for what makes you so" (345).

Reference was made earlier to the segment from the final dialogue in which Strether finds an "image of his recent history" (342). The context for this is a passage richly suggestive of the clash of perspectives we are exploring:

She waited, she watched, she served him and amused him, and it was perhaps with this last idea that she soon reminded him of his having never even yet named to her the article produced at Woollett. 'Do you remember our talking of it in London- that night at the play?' Before he could say yes, however, she had put it to him for other matters. Did he remember, did he remember- this and that of their first days? Hē remembered everything, bringing up with humour even things of which she professed no recollection, things she vehemently denied; and falling back above all on the great interest of their early time, the curiosity felt by both of them as to where he would 'come out'. They had so assumed it was to be in some wonderful place- they had thought of it as so very much out. Well, that was doubtless what it had been- since he had come out just there. He was out, in truth, as far as it was possible to be, and must now bethink himself of getting in again. He found on the spot the image of his recent history; he was like one of the figures of the old clock at Berne. They came out, on one side, at their hour, jiggled along their little course in the public eye, and went in on the other side. He too had jiggled his little course - him too a modest retreat awaited. He offered now, should she really like to know, to name the great

product at Woollett. It would be a great commentary on everything. At this she stopped him off; she not only had no wish to know, but she wouldn't know for the world. She had done with the products of Woollett - for all the good she had got from them.

(341-42)

On the simplest level, Miss Gostrey's mention of the mystery object made at Woollett and her specific recollection of moments shared with Strether underscores the closural significance of retrospection, of their relationship having come full circle. The mention of the mystery object is of particular importance in terms of circularity since it specifically echoes a situation from early in the couple's relationship. When the subject of the article produced at Woollett first arises, it is prophetically revealed that its identity will remain a secret:

But it may even now frankly be mentioned that he in the sequel never was to tell her. He actually never did so, and it moreover oddly occurred that by the law, within her, of the incalculable, her desire for the information dropped and her attitude to the question converted itself into a positive cultivation of ignorance. In ignorance she could humour her fancy, and that proved a useful freedom.

(48)

The way in which these references to the mystery object from early and late in the novel echo one another is doubly

circular: in the passage at the end of the novel the reminder that Strether never was to tell Maria the identity of the mystery object reaffirms the prophecy of the earlier passage, and, in both cases, there is an emphasis on the fact that Maria ends by not wanting to know the solution to the mystery. And the failure, yet again, to disclose the identity of the object also hints at James's rejection of the traditional closural device of providing the solution to a mystery.

The aforementioned passage from the final dialogue between Strether and Maria is also emblematic of the way in which the ending foregrounds the tension between the existence of Maria as a *ficelle* whose main function is to elicit responses from Strether and her existence as a character with her own story, her own stake in Strether's outcome. The passage begins by evoking an image of Maria ministering to Strether's culinary needs. While Maria's actions partly suggest the role of protagonist's helper which characterizes the *ficelle*, her "aid" to Strether transcends that associated with the *ficelle*- her actions are not strictly concerned with eliciting impressions from Strether and the description of the interaction between Maria and Strether over their meal emerges as a touching human vignette where both individuals are equally vivid participants.

The grammatical structure of the beginning of the quotation similarly reflects this tension between Maria's status as *ficelle* and character. The initial emphasis on references to her in terms of verbs of action ("she waited",

"she watched") underscores her status as a self-possessed character entirely capable of undertaking actions on her own initiative. On one level, the following phrase "she served him and amused him" is reflective of how Maria's actions are typical of the ficelle in that they have the protagonist as their perpetual object. Yet, from another perspective, Maria's attentive care of Strether denotes a genuine affection which seems to transcend her role as ficelle, and the further emphasis on action verbs here even suggests that she is dominating the situation with her wit and sophistication.

The conflict in the passage between Maria's status as ficelle and as character also manifests itself in a tension between an emphasis on the kind of synchronicity of thinking on the part of Strether and Maria which betokens a shared past and an emphasis on their respective possession of alternative versions of the past. For example, the reference to "the curiosity felt by both of them as to where he would 'come out'" suggests the existence of a shared attitude. The symbiotic nature of their relationship is further emphasized in the reference to how both Strether and Maria "had so assumed it was to be in some wonderful place- they had thought of it as so very much out." These examples of synchronous thinking suggest Maria's role as ficelle- in facilitating Strether's ruminations her own distinct identity is downplayed to the point where her "thoughts" seem indistinguishable from his own. But we are also told that Strether recalls "things of which she professed no recollection, things she vehemently

denied", and the vehemence of her denial here can be seen as a measure of her self-determination and of the uniqueness of her own experience.

Maria's reminiscing suggests the possibility of alternative approaches to retrospection, to how an experience is summed up. With respect to their specific reference to the issue of the mysterious object, Strether's belief that the identity of the object would be "a great commentary on everything" is born of the same urge that leads to his articulation of an "image" of his experience. But Maria's refusal to know the identity of the object challenges Strether's interpretive strategies and reminds us of the subjectivity of any recapitulation of events. Moreover, Maria's own wilful "cultivation of ignorance" is ambiguous. On one hand, it may parallel Strether's own expressed fear of further facts at novel's end, thereby suggesting her desire to impose her own shape on their shared history. On the other hand, it may betoken that Maria is more open than Strether to a play of the imagination and not as obsessed as he is about fixing the meaning of certain experiences.

Similarly ambiguous is the sentence "She had done with the products of Woollett- for all the good she had got out of them." While the statement can be read simply as a further allusion to the mystery object, it takes on more subtle implications if Maria is implicitly including Strether among the products of Woollett. If such is the case, the statement not only provides a glimpse of her own capacity for self-

interest in her realization that she will not profit from her relationship with Strether, but also suggests that Strether is not the only one who exercises an ability to control the outcome of the relationship and that Maria, by having done with the products of Woollett, is consciously acknowledging the termination of her involvement with Strether, not merely acquiescing to Strether's own terms for the closure of their relationship.

Predictably, this ambiguous clash of voices reaches its climax in the final lines of the novel. Maria has just admonished Strether on the distinction between being 'right' and his "horrible sharp eye" for what makes him so. Strether retorts in turn:

'Oh but you're just as bad yourself. You can't resist me when I point that out.'

She sighed it at last all comically, all tragically, away. 'I can't indeed resist you.'

'Then there we are!' said Strether. (345)

One of the puzzling questions which this passage raises concerns the identity of the "it" which Maria sighs away. Does "it" refer to their situation together? If so, Maria would seem to be acquiescing to an acceptance of her fate as inextricably bound by Strether's final decision. But Maria could also be referring to Strether's self-assured notion of what is 'right'. In that case, we are left with a stronger sense of how Strether's decision to leave adversely affects her, and a stronger sense of her as harbouring thoughts which

do not necessarily accord with Strether's own.

Also of interest here is the way in which Maria picks up on Strether's claim that she can't resist him when he points out the validity of his moral stance. Her reply "I can't indeed resist you" could be read, simply, as her agreement with his observation. Since the two frequently reveal an almost telepathic ability to 'catch' and finish each other's thoughts, such a reading would operate on the assumption that Miss Gostrey is merely leaving part of what she means unspoken. Her intended statement could thus be transcribed as 'I can't indeed resist you when you point that out.' But Maria's statement could also be seen as an ironic recontextualization of Strether's intended meaning of the word "resist". While Strether is maintaining that she can't resist him in his capacity for making fine moral distinctions, she is, perhaps, maintaining that she can't resist him as an individual for whom she feels affection, as a potential marriage partner. Taken in this way, her statement takes on a much more defiant tone: she clings to her sense of her own needs in the face of his articulation of 'the morality' that, at least according to Strether, they must both live by.

Such ambiguities are reflected in the antithetical critical responses which are engendered by Strether's final statement which he utters in the novel's last line: "Then there we are!". According to Marianna Torgovnick:

The novel fittingly ends with what David Lodge calls 'the language of heightened cliché'.

Strether concludes with the words, 'Then there we are!', an idiom used at many other points in the novel, when 'where he was' was obscure to Strether even when, in his dealings with little Bilham and Miss Barrace, Chad and Marie de Vionnet, he most thought he knew. The rightness of his final pronouncement (and Maria's frank accession to it) contrasts vividly with the equivocating, misunderstood, or (on Strether's part) dogged uses of the expression earlier in the novel. (139)

Torgovnick goes on to argue:

At the end of the novel, in his final conversation with Maria, Strether no longer mechanically takes stock of his experiences or blindly determines 'where he meant to stay'. He responds as he feels he must to the flow of events. Mentally lively and emotionally agile, he is Maria's equal in this conversation, without denying his innate moral seriousness. The contrast supports the reading of the novel that finds Strether, at novel's end, a more mature, sensitive, self-aware man than he had earlier been. 'Where he is' at novel's end is obscure neither to Strether, nor, once the concordances between the ending and body of the novel have been perceived, to the reader... (140-141)

Torgovnick's position here is reflective of her tendency to

downplay the existence of contradictory ambiguities at the end of The Ambassadors. She sees the novel as a Bildungsroman in which Strether's transformation from confusion to insight is an unequivocally positive accomplishment (though not necessarily yielding 'happy' results), and she detects no falseness in Maria's position vis-a-vis Strether and the morality he espouses.

It should be clear by now, however, that strong evidence exists for a counter-reading of the ending, one that is perceptive to the way the ending foregrounds an unresolved clash of voices. One approach to such an alternative is contained in the following remarks by Ruth Yeazell:

'Then there we are!' says Strether in the last line of The Ambassadors; but his desire 'not, out of the whole affair, to have got anything for myself' makes 'there' a very uncertain location indeed. 'To what do you go home?' asks Maria Gostrey twice. 'I don't know,' Strether can only reply. 'There will always be something.' Like so many Jamesian novels before it, The Ambassadors closes with a gesture of renunciation: we know that Strether is deeply changed, but we are told only what he will not do—that he will not stay with Maria in Paris, and that he will not marry Mrs. Newsome in America...The Ambassadors and The Wings of the Dove project undefined futures. (100-101)

Whereas Torgovnick regards the "there" to which Strether

refers as both spatially and morally appropriate, Yeazell is sensitive to the implications for indeterminacy which Strether's final statement carries. It may also be argued that the "we" of Strether's final statement is equally ambiguous, since his capacity to speak authoritatively for both himself and Maria is much in doubt. The feeling of arrested movement evoked by the novel's ending is indeed problematic. On the one hand, projection beyond the ending is discouraged. Strether himself seems disinclined to envision his options once he leaves Paris. And, although the "Project" hypothetically considers schemes of Maria going to him in America, the ending as written seems the equivalent of a cinematic freeze-frame, richly suggestive of implications, but evading a definitive delineation of the future. But, on the other hand, projection beyond the ending on the part of the reader is inescapable, for Strether's departure will have potentially painful consequences for him and for others such as Maria.

The capacity of the ending to sustain contradictory readings is suggested in the following lengthy passage from Ronald Wallace's Henry James and the Comic Form. The passage is worth quoting in full because of its pertinence to a number of the issues we have been discussing:

But to see the end of the novel as tragic renunciation is to misread both Strether's vision and the form. Within the comic structure Maria Gostrey is merely the comic confidante James insists in the preface that Maria is 'the reader's

friend much rather' than Strether's, 'and she acts in that capacity, and really in that capacity alone'. She 'has nothing to do with the matter...but everything to do with the manner' of the novel. To feel sorry for Miss Gostrey is to forget that she is not really part of the 'matter' of the book.

Strether's final dialogue with Maria is far from renunciation, unless it be the renunciation of a return to a narrower vision. Maria asks,

'To what do you go home?'

'I don't know. There will always be something.'

'To a great difference,' she said as she kept his hand.

'A great difference- no doubt. Yet I shall see what I can make of it.'

She sighed it at last all comically, all tragically away.

The tragedy is Miss Gostrey's, the comedy is Strether's. (131)

Like many critics, Wallace argues from the assumption that the ending of The Ambassadors is exclusively concerned with issues relating to Strether's fate and he treats Maria's outcome only insofar as it relates to that of Strether's story. From the perspective of Strether's story Maria's outcome is tragic: while Strether has gained an expanded vision Maria has lost Strether. In the context of Wallace's

interpretation the tragic implications for Maria do not upset the comic balance because they are experienced by a ficelle, someone crucial to the "manner" but not the "matter" of the book.

But as we have already seen the ending of the novel raises the question of whether Strether's outcome is only discussable from the perspective of Strether's story. Yet, while Maria's 'voice' in the novel's final dialogue is not reducible to her function as ficelle the implications of her story remain open to interpretation. And the situation with regard to Maria is made doubly ambiguous by virtue of the fact that the very status of her story remains indeterminate. There is an unresolved tension at novel's end between the strictly structural function of Maria as ficelle and the possibility of seeing Maria as a more fully developed character who is part of the "matter" of the book and whose fate is interpretable, like Strether's, in moral and experiential terms.

A description of the ending of The Ambassadors is even more complex than any rigid dichotomy between strong formal closure and experiential openness would suggest. To some degree, a close parallel exists between the central protagonist's quest for coherence and the author's obsession with consummate form. In The Negative Imagination, Sallie Sears has captured the essential importance of this parallel for the novel's closure:

His [James's] characters repeat the process their author engages in: they construct imaginary worlds

with their 'visiting' minds, worlds that are the objectification of their desires but that are also unreal and doomed to collapse when brought into conjunction with the 'facts'. The facts are always that things are different from what a given character had wanted. The basic pattern of James's work is the creation and collapse of the fiction, its failure. (127)

In the case of both Strether and James, a desire for order serves in part to point up the disparities between imaginary constructs and the multivalent facticity of existence. At the end of The Ambassadors the consolations of James's form are tenuous at best. The overlap between authorial closural strategies and Strether's own preoccupation with closure does not reinforce a doubly strong sense of cohesion. Rather, the instability of Strether's own closural gestures on the experiential level foregrounds the artificiality of closure on the formal level. And the way in which Maria's problematic status is foregrounded at novel's end suggests that the ambiguity of interaction between Strether and Maria on the experiential level is mirrored, on the formal level, by the clash between the narrative engendered by the central consciousness and the narratives of those with whom he interacts. Beneath the surface poise achieved at the end of the work lurks a darker vision: we are made aware of the difficulty of attaining self-awareness, the potential for self-interest to confuse and complicate human

intercommunication and the impossibility of achieving anything but a tentatively cohesive sense of experience.

Chapter Three

Orson Welles's Citizen Kane

Given the fact that Citizen Kane is one of the most widely discussed films, it is not surprising that its ending has elicited considerable critical attention. However, in the case of Citizen Kane debate about the film's ending has tended to center on a particular issue involving the revelation of the identity of Rosebud in the final moments of the film, and such debate has usually formed part of the dialogue on the meaning of the film as a whole. For some critics, the revelation of the identity of Rosebud at the end of the film is seen as a key to an understanding of the mystery of Kane's character. For example, in A Ribbon of Dreams Peter Cowie claims that the Rosebud sled "conjures up for him [Kane] memories of a childhood innocence far removed from the 'Chicago, New York, and Washington' to which he was so brusquely introduced by Thatcher" (34). And Cowie goes on to argue that "because 'Rosebud' does not, as one would expect, turn out to be the name of a girl, it stands as a token of Kane's unhappy relations with people in general" (35).

In his seminal essay on Citizen Kane David Bordwell accepts the position that Rosebud has an identifiable meaning but characterizes the significance of Rosebud in slightly different terms than Cowie. He also challenges the notion that our ability to identify this meaning provides us with the key to a full understanding of Kane's life: "The sled isn't really the cheap Freud some (including Welles) have claimed; although

it stands for the affection Kane lost when he was wrenched into Thatcher's world, the sled is clearly not to be taken as the 'solution' of the film" ("Citizen Kane", p.11). For others, the disclosure of Rosebud's identity not only serves to heighten the mystery of Kane; the deliberate inadequacy of Rosebud as an explanatory key is also seen as a crucial feature of the film's critique of cinematic modes of enquiry. While the revelation of Rosebud is certainly an important component of the film's ending, critical discussion concerning it has only related indirectly to the issue of the film's closure. Ironically, despite the concentration of critical interest on Rosebud, scant attention has been paid to the full complexity of the film's closure which needs to be understood in terms that situate discussion of Rosebud within a broader context.

One such context involves the film's closural self-reflexivity. As critics have noted, the film as a whole is self-reflexive. In his aforementioned essay on the film David Bordwell suggests that in its juxtaposition of both the public and private sides of Kane's personality and in its deployment of both realistic and expressionistic styles, Citizen Kane is not only a strikingly modern investigation of human consciousness but is also about the central tension in cinema between documentary objectivity and formalist subjectivity. In his study of contemporary international cinema, The Altering Eye, Robert Kolker situates Citizen Kane historically as a crucial precursor of the kind of modernist experiment with

traditional conventions which often involved the conscious foregrounding of artistic artifice and which produced a number of cinematic movements after the first world war: "The German expressionists defied the conventions of 'realism' developing in American cinema, turning the image into an artifice of madness. The French avant-garde in the twenties and early thirties continued the process of response to the conventions; and, with the appearance of Citizen Kane in 1941 and the development of film noir in the mid-forties, Hollywood created its own internal subversion of the dominant forms" (7). Yet, while there has been extensive discussion about Citizen Kane's juxtaposition of styles and narrative modes, the film's closural self-reflexivity has received little direct attention. Citizen Kane is not just a film with an interesting, controversial ending, but it is a film about closure.

In The Classical Hollywood Cinema David Bordwell notes that "The Classical Ending, both as resolution and epilogue, tends to usher in the narration as self-conscious and omniscient presence..." (83). While Bordwell's observation implies that all Hollywood endings are self-conscious or self-reflexive to an extent, the ending of Citizen Kane simultaneously critiques classical closure while embodying many of its typical features. For example, while the film structures its narrative around the mystery of Rosebud's identity it also foregrounds the artifice of the 'solution to a mystery' ending. The direct relationships between the film's

general self-reflexivity and its closural self-reflexivity are suggested in the following comment by James Naremore:

Citizen Kane brings its own workings under scrutiny, questioning the whole process of popular entertainment, including the "image making" of the movies. From the beginning, when "Rosebud" is introduced as a cheap means of spicing up a newsreel, until the end, when Thompson confesses to the futility of searching out the meaning for a single word, Kane casts doubts on its own conclusions. (98)

Naremore's point here is not only pertinent to the "conclusions" engendered by Rosebud but also to the conclusions which relate to the apparent consolations of artistic form. Just as the revelation of Rosebud's identity seems initially to be a talismanic discovery which unlocks the secret of Kane, so the ending's emphasis on formal coherence seems to offer the consolation of artistic form in the face of the confusion of life. And, just as the validity of Rosebud is called into question, so also are the operations of classical circularity and retrospective patterning. But, as we shall see, Citizen Kane extends its closural critique beyond the parameters of classical style to include a profound meditation on the epistemological ambiguities of artistic form.

Certainly Citizen Kane offers a critique of classical closure's dependence on the attainment of full knowledge and its organization around key patterns. Also examined are the

importance and limitations of viewer manipulation and the inevitability and instability of retrospective patterning, particularly as achieved through circularity. In his essay "Orson Welles, Beginning to End: Every Film an Epitaph", Paul Arthur refers to Citizen Kane's juxtaposition of closural gestures: "Not content to offer a single gesture of closure, one grand exit, Welles elected to repeat the opening form while again shuffling a stack of possible epitaphs" (45). He also refers to the way in which Welles "mocked and turned conventional expectations of closure inside out", accomplishing this "through an excess of what were, after all, standard Hollywood cues for completion" (46).

Such a strategy has the result of foregrounding the artifice inherent in classical conventions of closure. With respect to the revelation of Rosebud a quest pattern is completed but the validity of this pattern is called into question by virtue of the fact that this pattern is completed only for the audience- Thompson, whose task it had been to "find out about Rosebud", fails in his quest and renounces its validity. Within the context of formal closure, the way in which classical circularity is pushed to an extreme (both in terms of the sheer number of connections back from the ending to the beginning of the work and in terms of the extent to which it becomes possible to make connections not tied to the subject of Kane) underscores the artificiality and instability of retrospective patterning. Yet, as we might expect, the film's attempt to critique classical strategies of ending from

within the context of classical closure is highly problematic. For example, the film's critique of Rosebud depends on the evocation of a strong sense of closure at the point when the identity of Rosebud is revealed, since the artificiality of Rosebud can only be highlighted if its manipulative appeal is first registered. However, there is critical disagreement about whether the viewer is manipulated to perceive Rosebud as even temporarily climactic, and such debate reflects the general difficulty of developing an argument on the film's ending which is able to account for all of its closural complexities. More broadly, the fact that the ending's apparent rejection of the consolations of classical closure is achieved through the deployment of classical strategies of ending reflects the film's attempt to reconcile seemingly contradictory positions with respect to closure.

The following passage from Noel Carroll's "Interpreting Citizen Kane" provides a useful point of departure for gaining a sense of those aspects of the Rosebud debate which are pertinent to the issue of the film's closure:

Citizen Kane is a film that has engendered a classic conflict of interpretation. That is, there are at present two leading views of its thematic point, and these two views appear, on the surface, to be incompatible. These two interpretations can be called the enigma interpretation, on the one hand, and the Rosebud interpretation, on the other. Each interpretation is quite simple, and, I shall

argue, their simplicity is important to the function they actually play in Citizen Kane. The enigma interpretation says that Citizen Kane illustrates the point that the nature of a person is ultimately a mystery; a person is all things to all persons, and, correspondingly, a multiplicity of selves. The Rosebud interpretation says that Kane's personality is finally explicable by some such notions as those of "lost childhood" or "lost innocence". (51)

As Carroll realizes, the crux of the debate hinges on acceptance or rejection of the Rosebud revelation as a significant key to the film's meaning. Proponents of Rosebud tend to take at face value the strong sense of closure attributable to the culmination of a pattern involving the quest for Rosebud: the dramatic revelation of the identity of Rosebud as the young Kane's sled is seen as a confirmation that the key to the meaning of Kane's character lies in the events of his childhood. On the other hand, those critics who downplay or fully reject the importance of the revelation of Rosebud tend to emphasize the way in which this strong sense of closure is critiqued by other closural elements within the context of the ending.

In "A Rose is a Rose is a Columbine: Citizen Kane and William Styron's Nat Turner," Bruce M. Firestone advances a position on the Rosebud mystery which is exemplary of those critics who regard the revelation of Rosebud as crucial:

Welles's central device for this study [of the real Kane] is the rosebud mystery. Kane's dying word, which crystallizes the film's narrative movement, stands for the elusive private man which the newsreel fails to capture. "It's a gimmick, really" Welles has remarked, "and rather dollar book Freud." But through the quest which the shadowy journalist Thompson undertakes to uncover its meaning, elements of the private Kane begin to emerge. Thompson never really discovers the meaning of rosebud, but we do. Whatever it was that drove Kane, whatever it was that made him seek love yet fail so miserably in his efforts to give it, is somehow tied up with this sled he lost as a youth. The loss- of his mother, of his childhood, of love itself- influenced his entire career, and his life can only be understood in the light of that experience. Welles's "dollar book Freud" roots an entire publishing empire in the snowy landscape and rickety sled of little Charlie Kane. (120)

Although Firestone is emphatic in his stress on the importance of Rosebud, his position here is problematic. For Firestone, our discovery of the identity of Rosebud does not merely provide a useful piece of information about Kane, but constitutes a discovery with virtually talismanic significance insofar as Rosebud provides the key to an understanding of Kane. Yet, rather than specifying what this key signifies,

Firestone posits a range of possible meanings for Rosebud, all of them centered on the issue of human loss. But Firestone's emphasis on the "rosebud mystery", however open to debate on a thematic level, is reflective of the manipulative power of that pattern. Even if we reject the position advocated by Firestone and others that the Rosebud revelation is a key to the mystery of Kane's character, its function as the culmination of a quest pattern remains an important, albeit contentious, element of the film's closure.

The fact that so many viewers regard the revelation of Rosebud as the film's climactic moment suggests that the closural significance of Rosebud is not merely a product of localized elements at the end of the work but the culmination of manipulative strategies operative from the work's beginning. At first glance, however, the disorienting nature of the film's opening sequence might seem to suggest that classical manipulativenness is being avoided altogether. As the film opens, the first shot (the 'No Trespassing' sign) erects an immediate barrier to the viewer's easy access to the film. As numerous critics have noted, however, the camera proceeds to trespass, and a series of dissolves begins to take us progressively closer to a gothic castle with an illuminated window in its upper reaches. But, typical of the film as a whole, there is a constant frustration of the viewer's expectations and assumptions. For example, the direct progress of the dissolves toward the castle is qualified by one shot in which the mansion with its lighted window is reflected upside

down in water. A similarly disturbing effect of viewer disequilibrium arises from the way in which one exterior shot of the light in the window being extinguished is followed by a shot from within the room with the light returning on.

As the opening sequence unfolds viewer disorientation certainly continues. For instance, in the shot of the cottage and falling snow, the camera pulls back to reveal that what we have been seeing is an object in a man's hand. Yet, rather than abandoning classical procedures, the opening of Citizen Kane merely pushes them to an extreme. Like many Hollywood films our curiosity is initially aroused in a very unfocused way and only gradually becomes centered on particular patterns. For instance, as we have already found in His Girl Friday there is considerable delay before the general questions which arise from our stimulated curiosity become crystallized around key patterns. Similarly, in a detective-mystery like The Maltese Falcon our general questions about the possible import of the story told to Spade by 'Miss Wonderly' only gradually evolve into the focus on Spade's investigation of his partner's death and his search for the falcon. In Citizen Kane we are initially led to ask a myriad of questions about what we are seeing without being provided with the kind of explanatory context which would facilitate the formulation of answers. And, as with The Maltese Falcon, the viewer's curiosity only gradually becomes focused on a pattern involving the solution to a mystery.

From the perspective of this strategy of gradual

clarification, the extreme close-up of a mouth whispering the word "Rosebud" is particularly important. On one level, the shot of a disembodied mouth further contributes to the disorienting surreality of the sequence. On another level, however, such a shot provokes our curiosity about the speaker, and the extremity of the closeup coupled with the fact that "Rosebud" is the first and only word spoken in the sequence combines to suggest Rosebud as the fulcrum around which our curiosity can be organized. The absence of direct reference to Rosebud during the 'News on the March' sequence delays the clarification of Rosebud's structural function, thereby creating suspense. It may even be that during the 'News on the March' documentary we forget about Rosebud, especially in the light of our immersion in the relatively approachable documentary (in comparison with the surreal, disorienting opening sequence). Yet, with Rawlston's directive to Thompson to "find out about Rosebud" there is a centering of the viewer's curiosity around a key pattern, Thompson's quest. Significantly, the establishment of the quest coincides with the commencement of more typically classical narrative linearity, as Thompson embarks on a series of encounters with characters from Kane's past, either indirectly as in his encounter with Thatcher through the latter's diary, or through direct interviews with Bernstein, Leland, Susan and Raymond.

As Thompson embarks on his quest the viewer is frequently reminded that the reporter's specific purpose is to find out about Rosebud. When he is rebuffed by Susan during his first

attempted interview with her, Thompson reports to Rawlston by phone that "She won't talk...about Rosebud or anything else", and he asks the El Rancho waiter whether she ever mentioned Rosebud. Thompson enters the Thatcher Memorial with the express purpose of looking for any reference to Rosebud in Thatcher's diary, and after being unsuccessful he asks of Thatcher's portrait "You're not Rosebud, are you?". Later, he raises the question of Rosebud with both Bernstein and Leland, who offer their own comments on the word's possible significance.

Such references to Rosebud throughout the film serve to highlight the importance of Thompson's quest as the dominant pattern upon which our curiosity is attached. Significantly, as the film draws towards the revelation of Rosebud there is a higher concentration of such references. For instance, of the flashbacks arising from the testimony of various characters, only Raymond's (the final flashback) contains a direct reference to Rosebud. On the thematic level, it is of course highly ironic that the character whose relationship with Kane was so impersonal and whose attitude towards his boss is so cynical should be a witness to such private moments in Kane's life. On the structural level, the accumulation of references to Rosebud just prior to the revelation of the sled reasserts the importance of the quest and intensifies our experience of the revelation as dramatic and climactic.

In the final moments of the film a number of strategies operate to reinforce previously established tendencies of

manipulation. The slow craning camera movement over the debris provides a suspenseful delay of revelation which parallels the way in which the structural function of Rosebud is only gradually revealed at the beginning of the film. The 'seeking' quality of the camera is even more exhilarating and given enhanced importance because of the fact that we have already learned that Thompson has failed in his quest and doesn't find out the identity of Rosebud. It would seem that our position of privileged insight is being foregrounded. As the camera moves in on the object in the furnace the visual revelation of Rosebud is punctuated by the kind of crescendoing music usually associated with a climactic revelation.

Such closural features as the termination of a quest, the closeup on the sled and the climactic music combine to promote the possibility that Rosebud is the key to the mystery of Kane's life. Indeed, if Citizen Kane had ended at this point one might be tempted to characterize the film as a textbook instance of classical closure. However, as I intimated earlier, attention must be paid to the contextualization of Rosebud within the full sequence of shots which constitute the ending of the film. Such a process reveals that at the end of the film there is a deliberate subversion of the "answer" which Rosebud seems to represent. In fact, the revelation of Rosebud is 'contained' within a context which actually serves to raise doubts about its importance.

The way in which the ending juxtaposes elements with seemingly contradictory closural functions is illustrated by

the conversation among the journalists just prior to the disclosure of Rosebud's identity. During this conversation Thompson admits that he did not find out about Rosebud and emphatically rejects an interpretation of Rosebud as the key to Kane's personality. In the light of Thompson's skepticism, the revelation of Rosebud can be seen, on a basic level, as foregrounding the viewer's privileged perspective: while Thompson will, by his own admission, fail in his quest to identify Rosebud, we will be granted the answer to the question that motivated that quest. At a deeper level, this evocation of a sense of the viewer's "superiority" to Thompson can be seen as ironic: since the shots which follow the revelation of Rosebud work to erode any sense of Rosebud's special explanatory significance, we are left with a sharpened awareness of the importance we as viewers place on the satisfaction of our curiosity and on the acquisition of even simple solutions to narrative problems. Moreover, the way in which Thompson provides an explanation that in effect exonerates him from the need to succeed in his quest raises the possibility that he is giving a defensive answer about why he didn't unravel the Rosebud mystery. Looked at in this light, Thompson's 'excuse' becomes a further cautionary reminder to the viewer regarding the degree to which the discovery of truth is shaped by our subjective outlook, and the film can be seen to be about the human tendency to be self-serving and highly biased with respect to the formulation of 'knowledge'.

A similar duality arises with respect to remarks made by the woman reporter who also contributes to this discussion. When the word "Rosebud" is mentioned she asks "What's Rosebud?". When she is told that "Rosebud" was Kane's dying word she makes the following comment: "If you could have found out what that 'Rosebud' meant, I'll bet that would have explained everything." In one respect the way in which this journalist mimics Rawlston's position functions as a reminder of the original impetus behind Thompson's quest. On another level, however, the fact that she is totally unacquainted with the background to Thompson's quest (she is originally unaware of what Kane's last word was despite the media attention paid to it) and that she has not had the benefit of Thompson's interviews underscores the tenuous frailty of her conviction that a man's last word automatically has talismanic significance. The undercutting of the importance of Rosebud as some kind of talismanic revelation is facilitated through images which constitute visual correlates to the verbal skepticism already expressed by Thompson. Such visual imagery is in fact operative at the very moment that the identity of Rosebud is revealed: the way in which the word on the sled is obliterated by flames even as it is being revealed is richly suggestive. From one perspective the written word on the sled is reminiscent of the word "Rosebud" as uttered by the disembodied lips near the beginning of the film and as whispered by Kane at the end of his frenzied destruction of Susan's room. In all of these instances, the way in which the

linguistic status of Rosebud is emphasized reminds us of the degree to which the acquisition of knowledge is dependent on language. At the same time, the way in which this word emerges as either a solitary, uncontextualized utterance or as a name on a sled soon obliterated by flames suggests the frailty of language as the expressive medium of human knowledge.

Moreover, the manner in which Rosebud literally goes up in smoke underscores the fact that a single key to the mystery of Kane is ungraspable. That the ending has not provided such a key is perhaps most forcefully indicated by the return to the 'No Trespassing' sign. Yet, such an echo of the 'No Trespassing' sign from the beginning of the film should not be mistaken for a simplistically nihilistic message. The film distinguishes between our inevitably doomed attempts to find out the definitive meaning of a person's life through one explanatory key and the sense of appropriating meaning through the articulation of patterns which we actively create and which will reflect our own subjectivity. And by evoking a sense of structural return to the film's beginning, the image of the 'No Trespassing' sign reminds us of the need to test the validity of any knowledge gained about Kane in the light of a re-viewing of the film. As Bordwell and Thompson suggest:

Just because we have learned what Kane's dying word meant, do we now have the key to his entire character? Or is Thompson's final statement correct- that no one word can explain a person's life? It is tempting to declare that all of Kane's

problems arose from his loss of his sled and home life as a child, but the film also suggests that this is too easy a solution. It is the kind of solution that the slick editor Rawlston would pounce on as an "angle" for his newsreel. (109)

These critics realize that the ending of Citizen Kane deliberately points up the contrast between the completion of a narrative pattern and its experiential significance. For example, while the Rosebud mystery is, strictly speaking, solved, the fact that we know the identity of Rosebud does not necessarily help us to a clearer understanding of Kane. However, what is clearly revealed is the degree to which classical closure frequently depends on the resolution of narrative patterns (such as a quest) for its sense of "strong" though not necessarily experientially profound closure.

To see the ending of Citizen Kane in such a way obviously hinges on the assumption that the revelation of Rosebud is experienced, however temporarily, as an outcome which provides a strong sense of closure. However, this line of argument is open to challenge from two related perspectives. One of these has to do with the film's generic status while the other involves a critical perception that the validity of Thompson's quest is undercut from the very outset of the film. These lines of argument combine to suggest that the revelation of Rosebud is never even temporarily climactic, though, as we shall see, such a position is not completely incompatible with the discussion of Rosebud thus far. The issue of Citizen

Kane's generic status has not been extensively discussed among critics, and critical interest in the impact of genre on the film's closure has been scant. In the following passage from Film Art, Bordwell and Thompson offer one of the few sustained analyses of the film's problematic generic status:

After a few minutes of the film have gone by, the viewer can form more specific expectations about pertinent genre conventions. The early "News on the March" sequence suggests that this film may be a fictional biography, and this hint is confirmed once the reporter, Thompson, begins his inquiry into Kane's life. The film does indeed follow the conventional outline of the biography, which typically covers an individual's whole life and dramatizes certain episodes in the period. Examples of this genre would be Anthony Adverse (1936) and The Power and the Glory (1933). (The latter film is often cited as an influence on Citizen Kane because of its complex use of flashbacks.) The viewer can also quickly identify the film's use of conventions of the newspaper-reporter genre. Thompson's colleagues resemble the wisecracking reporters in Picture Snatcher (1933), Five-Star Final (1931), and His Girl Friday (1939). In this genre, the action usually depends on a reporter's dogged pursuit of a story against great odds. We are therefore prepared to expect not only Thompson's

investigation but also his triumphant discovery of the truth. In the scenes devoted to Susan, there are also some conventions typical of the musical film: frantic rehearsals, backstage preparations, and most specifically, the montage of her opera career, which parodies the conventional montage of singing success in films like Maytime (1937). More broadly, the film evidently owes something to the detective genre, since Thompson is aiming to solve a mystery (what is "Rosebud"?) and his interviews resemble those of a detective questioning suspects in search of clues.

Note, however, that Kane's use of genre conventions is somewhat equivocal. As a biographical film, Kane is more concerned with psychological states and relationships than with the hero's public deeds or adventures as in Anthony Adverse. As a newspaper film, Kane is unusual in that the reporter does not get his story. As a mystery film, Kane answers some questions but suspends some too. Citizen Kane is a good example of a film that relies on genre conventions but often thwarts the expectations they arouse. (72-73)

On one level, the film's juxtaposition of conventions from a variety of genres parallels its juxtaposition of numerous closural gestures. Yet, the relationship between genre and closure in the film runs even deeper. Many Hollywood

films achieve a strong sense of closure through a kind of generic overlap, whereby the culminations of several distinct generic patterns are mutually reinforcing. In His Girl Friday, for example, a strong sense of closure is achieved through the combination of the resolution of a quest and the resolution of romantic conflict. However, in Citizen Kane, the resolution of the Rosebud pattern is not reinforced by the parallel development and culmination of other generic patterns.

Indeed, the film deliberately subverts the potential closural impact associated with certain generic patterns. Take, for instance, the film's relationship to fictional biography. As Bordwell and Thompson suggest, the film does manifest some of the conventions of this genre. But a Hollywood biography usually builds towards an ending which culminates in either the death of the biographical subject or a climactic moment of achievement for him or her. In Citizen Kane, the potential climactic import of Kane's death is undercut by the way in which Kane's death is posited as a given from the outset. Perhaps even more untypical of the biographical film is the sense of anticlimax which predominates after the election defeat, contributing to what critics have noted as a definite sense of the film winding down. Where many Hollywood biographies fulfill a Horatio Alger-type pattern involving the protagonist's rise to success, Kane's final years are typified by his fall from the pinnacles of material success to loneliness and self-imposed imprisonment at Xanadu. Interestingly, this sense of the film

as a whole winding down is mirrored twice within the film-- first at the end of the newsreel, when there is a sound as if someone has pulled the plug on a running projector, and at the end of the montage involving Susan's opera career, when a similar sound reinforces the notion of her complete exhaustion.

Similarly, though Bordwell and Thompson touch upon Citizen Kane's use of some of the conventions of the musical, the film eschews reliance on any of the fundamental structuring patterns associated with that genre. Indeed, as these critics realize, Citizen Kane deliberately mocks certain of this genre's conventions. Whereas many Hollywood musicals culminate in the successful mounting of a show, Susan's opera career is unequivocally a failure, and is not a subject of primary concern during the film's final moments. Also, a strong sense of closure in many musicals is reinforced by the way in which a climactic performance coincides with the successful romantic resolution between hero and heroine. Here again Citizen Kane deliberately plays against generic convention: Kane and Susan are from different spheres-- they are not both involved in the world of music, but Kane is experiencing this world vicariously through Susan, and rather than providing a source of harmony, Susan's singing becomes a source of bitter conflict between her and Kane, a harbinger of the dissolution of their relationship.

One of the issues raised by the foregoing discussion involves the extent to which such ironically used generic

elements work from the outset of the film to diminish any sense, however temporary, of strong resolution at the end of Citizen Kane. In other words, if the film launches a critique of generic patterning from the outset, the closural impact of the one generic pattern it does sustain (the Rosebud mystery) will be gradually implicated in the film's critique of genre, and its closural force will thereby be diminished, perhaps extinguished entirely. However, this position ignores the undeniable historical significance of Rosebud as a critical issue. Even critics who reject Rosebud's explanatory powers have had to come to terms with the manipulative seductiveness of the Rosebud mystery. Surely the film is using the manipulative power of the Rosebud pattern to make one of its most interesting points: that, as viewers of classical Hollywood films we are conditioned to expect both a 'tidy', forceful resolution to pre-established patterns and a satisfaction of our curiosity with respect to the expectations such patterns raise. And, more broadly, Citizen Kane mocks the acuteness of our desire for the consolations of artistic patterning by pointing up our readiness to invest interest in the Rosebud pattern despite the presence, throughout the film, of signals which challenge its validity.

A perhaps more serious charge with regard to whether we do find the culmination of the Rosebud mystery even temporarily climactic relates to the film's status as a newspaper film. The most sustained analysis of this aspect of the film is undertaken by Robert Carringer. In "Rosebud, Dead

or Alive: Narrative and Symbolic Structure in Citizen Kane," he suggests that the ending can be seen in terms of the resolution of a conflict characteristic of the newspaper drama:

The plot dynamic of newspaper drama in this tradition is the conflict between the boss journalist, who demands sensationalism that gets results no matter what the consequences, and the underling, who inevitably gets caught up in the human implications of his story...If we have pursued Kane from the superficial vantage point of Rawlston, the appearance of the sled will be a solution and an explanation: the old egomaniac was really a sentimentalist after all, doting on mother and a childhood toy at the moment of his death. But the joke will be on us, though we don't know it. All along, the method of pursuit continually served to undermine Rawlston's shallow premise. (Carringer, "Rosebud, Dead or Alive" 189-191)

Carringer's general insistence that the Rosebud quest is invalidated from the outset is shared by a number of other critics including James Naremore, who argues that "The three opening sections of the film have helped to initiate the search for 'Rosebud', but they are filled with so many ironies and opacities that they threaten to undermine the search before it is started" (75). What is unique about Carringer's position is his way of seeing Thompson's final rejection of

Rawlston's outlook as exemplary of a generic convention of the newspaper film. However, if the ending obeys this convention of the genre it violates another: as mentioned earlier, Bordwell and Thompson point out that Citizen Kane is atypical of the newspaper film in that Thompson does not get his story on Rosebud.

The ending's ambiguity on the generic level reflects both the difficulty of settling upon a definitive characterization of the closural function of Rosebud and the difficulty of determining its relationship to classical closure. Following Carringer's proposal, Thompson's dismissal of Rosebud would constitute a resolution of conflict between his position and that of Rawlston. Certainly conflict resolution is one of the most prevalent mechanisms operative in classical closure. Similarly, the revelation of Rosebud resolves a quest pattern, another common feature of classical closure. Yet, rather than being mutually supportive of a strong sense of closure, these two patterns are in an antagonistic relationship in a way that suggests a parallel between the suspect status of Rosebud as a "gimmick" for the 'News on the March' documentary and Rosebud as a "gimmick" for providing the film with classical patterning. The argument that the manipulateness of classical closure is being critiqued is by no means invalidated. Either Rosebud's status as a gimmick is gradually realized by the viewer (depending on our sensitivity to the pattern of disconfirmation which parallels the Rosebud quest), or it is realized more suddenly at the end of the work when

the Rosebud revelation gives way to the shots which serve to undercut its validity. There is indeed an important theoretical issue raised here in terms of the differences between first and subsequent viewings. To what extent are those critics who argue gradual disconfirmation being influenced in their alertness to this pattern by their experience of the work as a whole? In other words, to what extent has their very ability to extrapolate this pattern (and argue its ongoing importance) actually been made possible by a reading back from their experiences of the film's ending?

Our discussion thus far has operated within a context shaped by critical debate about Rosebud. Indeed, as suggested earlier, discussion of Citizen Kane's closure has tended to be confined within such a context. Yet, for a full understanding of the complexities of the ending, the critical issues relating to Rosebud must be related to the emphasis on retrospective patterning at the end of the work. A point of departure for such an enquiry is offered by Leonard Leff. In "Reading Kane" he engages in one of the few detailed readings of the film's ending:

From its opening credits and first sequence, with its persistent advancing camera, Citizen Kane raises and frustrates the reader's expectation of coming to know Kane. Our consistently revised assumptions, however, permit us to experience and learn the work's very object lesson, the danger of closing on the text. This strategy of reader

education continues to the end of Citizen Kane. In Xanadu's Great Hall, a frustrating search behind us, we believe with Thompson that no word can explain a man's life; as the camera retreats from Thompson and his colleagues and we see the clutter that Kane has left behind, we recognize that Rosebud is indeed "a"- not "the"- missing piece to a jigsaw puzzle. But a dissolve to the cellar changes the camera's direction, from withdrawal to advancement. Above the boxes and crates, we move forward, apparently toward something. The camera probes, the music builds, and suddenly the sled and its emblazoned name appear before us. Robert Carringer warns us against accepting the sled as "the principal insight into Kane", while Joseph McBride argues that the shot of the sled "does in fact solve nothing". If not "the principal insight," however, "Rosebud" is an insight. And although it may not unlock the psychology of Kane's character, it provides a referent for the film's first spoken word and grants us at least nominally what for almost two hours we have longed to know.

Irrespective of "meaning," the shot of the sled gives many viewers a rush; it does something to them. With the roll on the timpani and the swelling ritardando, we experience a long-delayed pleasure that we perhaps had assumed, especially

given the film's lack of convention, would be denied us. The shot of the sled is particularly felicitous because it seems just compensation for the disappointments and frustrations that we have endured. It may not "solve" anything of major significance in Kane's life, but it gives the film- and us- a sense of closure (19).

Leff's description here accurately pinpoints the tendency of viewers to experience the manipulative force of the revelation of Rosebud even in the face of Thompson's skeptical remarks. Of particular interest is his observation of how "the shot of the sled gives many viewers a rush", "irrespective of 'meaning'." As Leff realizes, Thompson's quest is an example of a pattern the completion of which can be experienced as consoling, despite its lack of interpretive validity. But Leff is also aware that at the end of Citizen Kane the consoling effects of such a "rush" are quickly superseded by elements which mock the viewer's temporary sense that the disclosure of Rosebud has special significance. He continues:

Indeed, the shot of the sled concludes with a fade out, leading us to expect a title card that reads "The End." But a fade-in returns us to the exterior of the mansion, where black smoke rises from the furnace chimney. With a dissolve we are immediately before the chain link fence, and as the music becomes eerier, more somber, we follow the camera down to the "No Trespassing" sign. Draining the

excitement of the shot of the sled, this anticlimactic sequence seems to introduce a more restrained voice into the narrative. Let us consider, moment by moment, the film's proffered solutions to the Kane enigma: Thompson argues inexplicability. To formalist critics, the audience's euphoria on discovering at least the identity of Rosebud means nothing in the light of the recognition that the audience is back where it began. Yet the experience of having the ostensibly conclusive answer to Kane's character superceded by the unsettling image of the sign draws attention to our wish for compact solutions to complex problems. The act of knowing, we come to realize, is a temporal process, based on assumptions ever subject to question, challenge, and revision (19).

Leff's remarks are worth quoting at length because he so aptly sums up the way in which the film's ending juxtaposes the completion of a quest with elements which draw attention both to the artificiality of the quest as a narrative construct and to the manipulation of the viewer inherent in classical cinematic practice. Yet, like many critics of Citizen Kane, Leff overlooks a feature of the ending which further complicates the film's already intricate closural dynamic: the very shots which function to undercut Rosebud contain 'signals' which encourage the viewer to make the kind of connections associated with retrospective patterning.

Mention has already been made to the way in which the 'No Trespassing' sign at the end of the film echoes back to a similar shot at the film's beginning. Another obvious manifestation of circularity occurs when the word on the sled becomes visible as the sled is thrown into the furnace. The revelation of Rosebud encourages us to recall the initial reference to Rosebud, thereby leading us to make a link between the ending and the beginning of the work, particularly to the opening sequence at the point when the word "Rosebud" is first uttered. The sense of circular return is further reinforced in that at both the beginning and end of the film, the linguistic status of "Rosebud" is underscored: at the beginning "Rosebud" is revealed as a spoken word, while it is disclosed as a written word at the end. Such retrospection also hinges on a sense of symmetrical reversal. Not only does the end of the work recall the beginning, but the word spoken by Kane at the end of his life refers to a toy associated with his childhood. More particularly, the sled which is put into the furnace at the end of the film recalls not only the glass bibelot with its cottage in the snow, but also the first shot of young Charles, sledding in the snow at home.

From one perspective, the cumulative effect of such retrospective patterning provides the viewer with a sense of the work's coherence. Elements of the ending not only suggest connections with the film's beginning but serve to confirm the existence of an intricate skein of patterns. For example, mention has already been made of the ongoing references to

Rosebud throughout the film, and to the function they serve in anchoring the viewer's attention on the search for Rosebud. But distinct from their role in foregrounding Thompson's quest, these references contribute to a sense of the work's binding cohesion. The final reference to Rosebud not only takes the viewer back to the beginning of the film, but confirms the importance of the Rosebud references as a pattern operative in the work as a whole. Retrospective patterning hence not only provokes the viewer to circle back from the ending, but by confirming the prominence of certain patterns leads us to a sense of the work as a whole.

Moreover, the example of Rosebud is characteristic of the way in which the ending, besides confirming the importance of certain patterns, also serves to reveal a sense of the interconnection among patterns. As mentioned, the revelation of "Rosebud" as a word on the sled not only links back to the word uttered by the disembodied lips in the film's opening sequence but to "Rosebud"'s status as a word arising in Thompson's conversations with his interview subjects. But, of course, Rosebud's particular application to the sled harkens back to the prominence of the sled in the first sequence from the Thatcher flashback. Our first glimpse of Charles playing on his sled, Charles using the sled to hit Thatcher, the haunting shot of the sled buried in the snow, the dissolve to the scene in which Charles is given a new sled for Christmas—all of these images become charged with added significance in the light of the revelation at the end of the film. At the

same time, the way in which the revelation of Rosebud takes us back to the beginning of the film suggests a direct link between Rosebud as sled and the glass object associated with Rosebud in the opening death-bed sequence and alluded to at several key points in the film.

Such a sense of exfoliating patterns is also exemplified by the way in which the ending's concern with Rosebud relates to its concern with death and finality. In recalling Kane's utterance on his deathbed, the disclosure of Rosebud reminds us of the connection between Rosebud and death. At the end of the film this sense of a retrospective connection is underscored even before the actual revelation of the sled. As mentioned earlier, prior to the revelation Thompson and several journalists gather for a conversation about Kane's dying word "Rosebud", a conversation which alludes back to the initial discussion among the journalists which launched the Rosebud quest. Earlier in the film, after the 'News on the March' documentary, the journalists discuss the need for the documentary to be given a gimmick, a new structuring device, even though the film within the film possesses an apparently finished form. There is a parallel here between the newsreel which seemed finished (the last shot of the documentary announces "The End") but which the journalists contemplate revising, and the film as a whole which seems closed at several points but which re-opens.

The end of the film stimulates retrospection in a way that provokes the viewer's recognition not only of patterns

but of their interconnection. That the immediate context for the revelation of Rosebud is the incineration of objects amassed at Xanadu after Kane's death recalls the first reference to Rosebud and also suggests the connection between Rosebud and death at the beginning of the film. And, just as the Rosebud references at the end not only take us back to the beginning but to a sense of their status as a pattern throughout the work, so too, with the retrospective importance of death: the emphasis on death at the end of the film reinforces the link between ending and beginning, and confirms for the viewer that a pattern of references to death extends from the beginning to the end of the work. For instance, the opening sequence, with its surreal rendering of Kane's death, gives way to the 'News on the March' sequence, which both begins and ends with Kane's death. At the beginning of the newsreel, Kane's death is announced and a brief "clip" from Kane's funeral is shown. At the end of the documentary, the words "Kane is dead" are exhibited on a marquee as the sonorous voice of the narrator booms: "Then, as it must to all men, death came to Charles Foster Kane."

Further references to Kane's death arise in the context of Thompson's interviews. As in the case of Rosebud (where a sense of pattern expands into a sense of the enchainment of patterns), this pattern relates in turn to other types of finality in Kane's life and to other types of finality in the film as a whole. In "Fiery Speech in a World of Shadows: Rosebud's Impact on Early Audiences," Robin and Scott Bates

suggest the interconnection of such patterns:

His marriage to Emily Monroe Norton, a president's niece (shot against the White House) ends with the death of Emily and the child; his marriage to Susan (shot against the Chicago Opera House) ends in divorce; his "lightning political career" ends in the love nest scandal; the career overall ends in economic ruin (the rings shrink and disappear) and impotent old age. The newsreel itself conforms to this pattern: the blaring of News on the March that ends the newsreel peters out as the film runs out of the projector. (12)

The fact that the immediate context for the above quotation is the 'News on the March' documentary suggests that beyond its general summary function, the newsreel also provides a synopsis of the way in which patterns of various forms of finality are interconnected in the film as a whole. The pattern of references to Kane's death relates to a general preoccupation in the film with death, exemplified by the death of Emily and of Kane's son, and by the way in which both Leland and Bernstein are conscious of their own mortality. As Bates and Bates imply, the pattern of references to death is related to the recurrent emphasis in the film on other forms of finality, including those evident in the social sphere (the ruinous end of Kane's business and political careers, his two divorces, the termination of his friendship with Leland) and on the structural level, where a parallel exists between the

end of the film and the end of the documentary within the film.

In addition, the film's closural symmetry is further emphasized through the way in which the story of Kane's life is plotted. Obviously, the biographical story from which the plot selects potentially involves the full chronology of Kane's life from his birth to his death. But the film eschews chronological linearity, choosing instead to begin with Kane's death and to end at a point in time soon after Kane's death, with the catalogued contents of Xanadu providing numerous reminders of Kane's recent demise. Such chronological circularity is also emblematic of what could be called the 'ashes to ashes' paradigm, the pattern which represents the circularity of man's fate with respect to the way in which birth leads inescapably to death.

In the light of the way in which such retrospective patterns provoke seemingly endless formal connections, some critics have described Citizen Kane in terms of a rigid form/content dichotomy. One such critic is Peter Wollen. In his introduction to a special "Citizen Kane" issue of Film Reader he argues as follows:

Finally, there are the prologue and epilogue. Here the major time phenomenon is symmetry. The film begins with a series of shots dissolving into each other- the dissolve establishes an element of continuity in screen time, lacking with the cut; it is rarely used to signify a purely spatial change

in the field of vision- beginning outside the fence of Xanadu, passing the No Trespassing sign, then approaching the house, high up, as though with a crane shot. The end is similar, though not quite identical, as we leave Xanadu, again in a series of dissolves, pass the No Trespassing sign, and end outside the fence once more. Symmetry, of course, is a figure which combines order with repetition: the same shots are repeated, but in inverse order. In fact, the whole of Kane is marked by symmetry- the crane shots in and out of El Rancho, for instance, or, perhaps more subtle, the way in which the sequence of Kane's rage, the destruction of Susan Alexander's bedroom, is book-ended by two quasi-inserts: the screeching cockatoo and the empty series of receding mirror images.

In an essay "On the Problems of Symmetry in Art," Dagobert Frey observes that "Symmetry signifies rest and binding, asymmetry motion and loosening, the one order and law, the other arbitrariness and accident, the one formal rigidity and constraint, the other life, play and freedom." Without necessarily seeing the question in such clear-cut terms, one can nevertheless see a tension in Kane between the formal symmetry of the film and the themes of the irreversibility of biographical time and the shifting perspectivism which led

Borges to his description of it as a "labyrinth without a center." In fact, Kane reflects the old contrast between the order, permanence and certainty of art and the disorder, transiency and uncertainty of life. (14)

Wollen's discussion is pertinent in a number of ways to the subject of the film's closure. His remarks on the symmetry between the film's ending and beginning complement our own discussion of the closural importance of retrospective patterning. Wollen's antithesis between the formal symmetry of the film and its thematic emphasis on experiential flux bears striking resemblance to the contrast enunciated in Frank Kermode's The Sense of an Ending between the consolations of artistic form and the baffling contingency of human experience. And Wollen goes so far as to suggest that while Citizen Kane's 'content' is largely dispensable, ("The truth is that the 'content' of Citizen Kane cannot be taken too seriously" [15]), it is by its form that it is distinguished and has exerted an influence on film history. Yet the evidence of the film's closure suggests a less simplistic situation. What Wollen's position does not take into account is the relationship between two distinct kinds of pattern-making which are thrown into sharp relief at the end of the work. On one hand, the ending simultaneously foregrounds the revelation of Rosebud and ironically comments upon the kind of quest pattern that the search for Rosebud signifies. On the other hand, the ending signals the kind of intricate connections

between the ending and the rest of the work which we associate with formal coherence in a work of art. However, it would be wrong to assume that the ending of Citizen Kane is positing a contrast between facile patterns associated with Hollywood conventions like the quest for a goal and more artistically complex manifestations of formal symmetry. Instead, a parallel is suggested between the instability of the Rosebud pattern and the instability of more formal patterning. Citizen Kane extends its critique of the 'consolations' of the pattern-making we commonly associate with artistic closure to include those patterns which, at first glance, seem reflective of the film's formal coherence.

The parallel between these forms of closural pattern-making also extends to the manner in which they are critiqued. As we have discovered, the build-up to the revelation of Rosebud is followed by an undercutting of this revelation which in turn casts doubts upon the interpretive validity of the quest pattern. In the case of the Rosebud pattern there is apparent fulfillment of a strong sense of closure followed by a defeat of that expectation, leading the viewer to re-examine the grounds upon which such expectation is based. Similarly, while our sense of closure arising from retrospective patterning is initially strong, the instability of this form of closure gradually emerges. We begin to realize the contradictory implications of patterns which, while providing a nominal sense of structural coherence, actually mock the notion of concord in terms of their ideological implications.

The pattern of references to death is characteristically self-contradictory. As suggested earlier, the fact that the film's final scene at Xanadu recalls the initial presentation of Kane's death there contributes to a sense of symmetrical connection between beginning and ending. Yet, as Robert Carringer has perceived, rather than consoling us, such symmetry has a solipsistic quality expressive of futility in Kane's life and the futility of attempting to elicit some sort of ultimate knowledge about Kane:

The linear, open-ended biographical forms of Franklin and Dreiser reflect their underlying themes, the unlimited capabilities of the self and the infinite diversity of American experience. Gatsby and Kane are both set chronologically after the deaths of their American protagonists, and their closed retrospective forms are circular, beginning with accomplished tragedy, tracing their way backward to early hopes and forward again to hopes frustrated and to ultimate defeat, and finally back to the starting point. (Carringer, "Citizen Kane", 321)

Obviously, on the experiential level, Kane as a character can only die once. But the way in which his death is 'replayed' in various contexts (the surreal death-bed scene; the 'documentary' footage from his funeral, etc.) underscores the artifice of pattern-making by reflexively foregrounding the degree to which the raw material of Kane's life has been

patterned into artistic structures. A parallel is therefore suggested between the way in which Rawlston pitches Rosebud as a necessary 'gimmick' for the film within the film and the way in which the Rosebud quest and other patterns are resorted to in order to give coherence to the film as a whole.

Similarly, the circularity of references to 'No Trespassing', on one level enhances a sense of symmetrical form, further accentuated by the neat sense of reversal between beginning and end. At the beginning of the film the camera starts on the 'No Trespassing' sign and then moves up the fence (as if to posit Kane's privacy and then immediately attempt to invade it). At the end the camera moves down the fence to the sign as if to acknowledge the impossibility of penetrating the mystery of Kane. But again, the pattern here has a 'content' which suggests the defeat of our attempt to penetrate the mysteries of Kane's inner character. The very way in which we are led to make symmetrical connections between the beginning and end of the work actually serves to underscore the fact that the formulation of such connections is not synonymous with the discovery of firm insights about Kane.

The questionable significance of formal patterning is, paradoxically, made even more prevalent by virtue of its very complexity. Consider, for instance, the shots leading up to the revelation of Rosebud. The haste with which critics have tended to overlook the implications of these shots is reflective of the degree to which the actual revelation of

Rosebud has absorbed scholarly attention. After Thompson and the other journalists have dispersed, the camera looks down from a very high angle on the accumulated mass of Kane memorabilia. There follows a dissolve to a closer view, still at a high angle. The camera then begins to move, slowly craning over the piles of mementos. When the camera finally comes to rest the sled is visible, but so are several other objects: a portrait of Charles as a boy standing next to his mother, a photo of Kane in early middle age (this item is propped in a box along with other items which are unidentifiable except for two stuffed children's toys), and a stack of newspapers. These objects are arranged in a roughly circular configuration. The sled is at the top of the circle, followed clockwise by the portrait of Kane and his mother, the box of items including the photo and the toys, and the newspapers.

The camera's slow but steady trek over Kane's possessions is certainly one of this sequence's most striking features. On one level, the camera's action here functions to create suspense through delay: as the camera moves, our curiosity as to its destination intensifies and our anticipation of an imminent revelation is punctuated by the 'mysterious' tone of the accompanying music. Thus, these moments in the film function as a microcosmic encapsulation of the film's overall manipulative strategy- to arouse our expectation of discovering the identity of Rosebud, but to delay the satisfaction of that expectation, a pattern typical of all

narrative. On another level, such camera movement at the end of the film constitutes an emphasis on the camera's probing curiosity, its drive to penetrate barriers, to reveal, a tendency further emphasized by the additional forward motion of the camera as it advances for a closeup on the burning sled.

Such an emphasis constitutes a further instance of symmetrical connection between the film's beginning and ending. The camera's seeking quality here recalls the initial series of dissolves in the film's opening sequence which ignores the apparent obstacle of the 'No Trespassing' sign and draws us closer and closer to Xanadu's lighted window. More specifically, the forward motion of the camera directly echoes the camera movement at the beginning of Thompson's quest as it passes through the 'El Rancho' sign and (via a cleverly concealed edit) down through the glass roof of the nightclub. But the sense of symmetry here has a solipsistic quality. Just as the symmetrical repetition of the 'No Trespassing' sign at the beginning and end of the film suggests the impossibility of penetrating the ultimate mystery of Kane, so the repetition of the camera's probing movement only serves to underscore our lack of progress over the course of the film in deciphering the meaning of Kane.

At first glance, the composition of the objects in the above mentioned tableau seems to support the notion that Kane's childhood experiences provide the key to how his life unfolded. The portrait of Kane with his mother not only

recalls the specific rupture of Kane's relationship with her as evoked in Thatcher's diary, but also completes a series of references in the film to Kane's relationship with her. The way in which a photo of the adult Kane is propped next to some childhood toys provides a visual correlate for the connection between Kane's childhood and his adult life. And, the placement of the sled in relationship to other objects which recall Kane's youth underscores the apparent primacy of Kane's childhood crisis. Yet, the very fact that these further instances of retrospective patterning multiply the viewer's sense of formal connections suggests the indeterminacy and openness to interpretation of such pattern-making. This indeterminacy is also suggested by the allusions of the tableau, like the ending as a whole, back to the beginning of the work in such a way that we are prompted to move forward through the text again, noting new connections between individual motifs and entire patterns. For example, the photo of Kane with his mother evokes Kane's childhood, but it actually first appears as an image in the 'News on the March' documentary. It therefore serves to recall not only the film's network of associations involving Kane's childhood but also the pattern involving media images of Kane. The stack of papers generally recalls Kane's newspaper career as it manifests itself in a number of scenes, and it alludes to a specific pattern (within the larger network of media imagery) involving newspapers, exemplified by the montage of newspaper headlines announcing Kane's death in 'News on the March', the

'love nest' headline involving Kane's affair with Susan and the newspaper montage chronicling Susan's singing career.

In Mindscreen Bruce Kawin talks about the way in which Citizen Kane again and again draws the viewer back into the labyrinth of its structure:

Neither the technical excellence of this film nor the aura of daring that surrounds its makers is sufficient to account for a phenomenon I have noticed in myself and in others who have seen Citizen Kane repeatedly: its ability to involve the viewer in its mystery no matter how many times one has seen it. This is not just a question of Rosebud, whose revelation is simply that point in the film where the snake takes a healthy bite of its own tail. The mystery is inseparable from the narrative structure itself, which fills the audience with a sense of mystery the more it pretends to explain things, giving its central character the feel of a system as incomprehensible as one's own life. (23-25)

Kawin's notion of an "incomprehensible system" not only applies to the film's central character but also aptly evokes the film's closural ambiguity. The very intricacy of the formal connections signalled during the film's ending precludes the possibility of a definitive reading of the text. And, while Kawin's remarks here are primarily intended as a compliment to the film's manipulative power, we are now able

to appreciate the darker, solipsistic side to its organization. By foregrounding the degree to which we are susceptible to the narrative interest of the Rosebud quest (even upon returning to the work in the light of Rosebud's explanatory inadequacy) and to the activity of making formal connections, the film self-reflexively dramatizes the simultaneous allure and fraudulence of a strong sense of closure.

One of the darker implications of the film's closural ambiguity has to do with a possible connection between Kane and the viewer in terms of nostalgia. Given Kane's propensity to utter the word "Rosebud" at decisive moments in his life (after his demolition of Susan's room in the wake of her exit; on his death-bed) it seems likely that Kane himself is attempting to use "Rosebud" as a means of organizing and understanding his own experience. His attempt to explain his life in terms of a talismanic word can be seen as analogous to the way in which the viewer tests ways (the Rosebud quest, formal patterns) of making the film cohere. Just as in life our attempt to retrieve the past hinges on the delineation of pattern (e.g. our perception of a 'chain of events') so, in art, our desire for meaning hinges on the perception of artistic patterns. As the film suggests, however, both forms of retrospective patterning are provisional, subject to further complications and ultimately defeated.

Just as the film has juxtaposed different perspectives on Kane, thereby underscoring their relativity, the ending's

juxtaposition of different closural gestures points up the profoundly provisional nature of artistic closure. At first glance, Citizen Kane's closure seems to contrast the superficiality of the Hollywood ending with the consolations of more formal closure. But, as we have discovered, the consolations of formal circularity and the patterning associated with a narrative quest are shown to be equally ephemeral. We are being encouraged to go back into the film (echoing the nostalgia at the heart of *Rosebud*) with no guarantee that such re-entry into the text will provide solutions. Pertinent to the mood of pessimism created by such a vision of closure is the following observation by Dudley Andrew:

"Rosebud", a glass ball, a sled...our dissatisfaction with these is our refusal of metaphor, of the single sacred signifier capable of clarifying the full life of a man...Thus the film collapses under its own success, leaving us to meditate on the unrepresentable, on the mystery or emptiness of life. (153)

Andrew goes on to argue: "And so in both its outward appearance and its inner soul, Citizen Kane (like all his [Welles's] films) demands our admiration, evokes our astonishment, only to leave us with a feeling of emptiness and fraud." (154) The pessimism of the film's closural strategy ties in with the thematic pervasiveness of death, loss and epistemological uncertainty. But Andrew's remarks about the

curious self-cancelling quality of the film have a particular significance for closure with respect to the way in which the film has used the strategies of classical closure (the resolution of the quest for Rosebud; the emphasis on circularity and retrospective patterning) in order to point up both the fragility of classical closure and the general instability of artistic form.

Chapter Four

James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

Toward the end of "The Portrait in Perspective", his influential essay on James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Hugh Kenner offers the following summation of the position that he has been advancing.

Stephen, then, is ultimately an idealistic perfectionist whose unfulfillable hunger is for God. He leaves a country which seems wholly secular, a Church which seems thoroughly enmeshed in matter, determined, if there be not true priests, to be his own priest. This constant spiritual and theological basis is perfectly consistent once we become aware of it. And while the final chapter is to image painstakingly the spiritual pride and autonomy that are to come to comprehensive grief in Ulysses, this same chapter, precisely because it is an attempt to finish off temporarily a book that on its own terms cannot be finished, makes heavy reading. The insufferable Stephen of the final chapter is explicable on the assumption that Joyce is preparing his bridge into Ulysses; but the moral difficulty of accepting the Portrait as satisfactorily finished off in its own right imposes an intolerable strain on the reader. It is painful to be invited to close the book with an indigestibly Byronic hero stuck in our throats.

We are compelled to take Stephen seriously so that Ulysses may have its desired tragic effect (also, one may whisper, because Joyce had known a time, to which he here does homage, when he himself had been wrapped in an identical pride), but to take him seriously is very hard indeed. (59)

Because they contain a number of widely held critical assumptions about A Portrait's ending, Kenner's remarks here provide a useful point of departure for an exploration of the novel's closure. His characterization of A Portrait as "a book that on its own terms cannot be finished" reflects a critical tendency to see the novel's ending as a source of interpretive difficulties, especially with respect to Stephen's situation at novel's end. Kenner's remark also typifies the extent to which critical solutions to such difficulties have involved evaluation of the ending through contexts external to the novel proper. On the broadest level such contexts include the tendency to evaluate critically the ending of A Portrait as a prelude to Ulysses, or as a stage in the evolution of Joyce's spiritual and aesthetic autobiography. Kenner's remark deals explicitly with one such context, the evaluation of Stephen's outcome in A Portrait in relation to his outcome in Ulysses. Since Kenner is a proponent of the view that Joyce has treated his protagonist's outcome at the end of A Portrait ironically, he is led to see the evidence of Stephen's personal and artistic failure when he is encountered in Ulysses as fully anticipated by Stephen's presumptuous articulation of his own

artistic destiny at the end of A Portrait.

Kenner also deals implicitly with the other common external context invoked to 'explain' the ending of A Portrait - the autobiographical connection between Joyce as author and Stephen as character. In the context of Kenner's ironic reading of the ending, Stephen, in his guise as a Joycean alter-ego, is specifically seen as a failed version of the successful artist. In other words, where Stephen proves to be unsuccessful in his attempt to fulfill his own prophecy of becoming an artist (he emulates Icarus rather than his chosen mentor Daedalus) Joyce as author of A Portrait succeeds, and one of the marks of Joyce's success, in this view, is his ability to render with critical detachment an artistic version of his own apprenticeship.

It should be emphasized, however, that the ending is equally susceptible of an unironic autobiographical reading. One of the most influential proponents of such a position is Richard Ellmann. In the following passage from "Two Faces of Edward" Ellmann discusses Stephen's outcome within the context of the novel's overall structural movement:

Then, at the end of the penultimate chapter, the soul discovers the goal towards which it had been mysteriously proceeding- the goal of life. It must swim no more but emerge into air, the new metaphor being flight. The last chapter shows the soul, already fully developed, fattening itself for its journey until at last it is ready to leave. In the

final pages of the book, Stephen's diary, the style shifts with savage abruptness to signalize birth. The soul is ready now, it throws off its sense of imprisonment, its melancholy, its no longer tolerable conditions of lower existence, to be born. By making his book the matrix for the ontogeny of the soul, Joyce achieved a unity as perfect as any of the Edwardians could achieve, and justified literally his description of the artist as like a mother brooding over her creation until it assumes independent life. (202-203)

For Ellmann, Stephen's own prophecy of his destiny at the end of part IV, which he reconfirms in the final diary entries, is to be taken at face value as anticipating Joyce's own successful attainment of an artistic vocation. In addition, Stephen's preparations for departure as evidenced in the diary entries are taken to anticipate his actual exile from Ireland in the manner of Joyce himself. And the fact that the final section of part V, the diary, is, on the narrative level, a product of authorial effort on Stephen's part tends, in this view, to provide evidence to support Stephen's image of himself as a budding artist.

Unlike Kenner, who implicitly contrasts Joyce's artistic triumph in producing A Portrait with Stephen's own artistic failure, Ellmann sees the character of Stephen as an unironic surrogate for Joyce, a precursor of the artist's specific act of self-exile and of his general destiny. At the same time,

there are a number of crucial similarities between these two critical positions on the ending of the novel which typify the parameters within which discussion of the closure of A Portrait has tended to operate. Both prioritize Stephen's situation at novel's end, but look at the ending in terms of contexts external to the novel proper. Kenner projects the narrative line involving Stephen's evolution beyond A Portrait to Ulysses. Ellmann emphasizes the parallel between character and author as exiled artists: Knowledge of the artist's biography reinforces the critic's projection of Stephen's outcome beyond the actual conclusion of the novel.

Another point of contact is that both critics share a sense of Joyce's mastery of artistic unity, though, for Kenner, it is not until encountering Ulysses that the reader becomes fully aware of the intention of Joyce's design. More specifically, in both cases an argument about the structure of A Portrait underlies an emphasis on Stephen's outcome. For Kenner the structural rhythm of the novel involves a pattern of building toward a climax of epiphanic insight at the end of each chapter, followed by an undercutting of the epiphanic mood at the beginning of the subsequent chapter. For example, Stephen's "outhurst of profane joy" (171) involving the vision of the girl on the beach and his vision of his artistic calling "to recreate life out of life!" (172) at the end of chapter IV is ironically undercut at the beginning of chapter V through a number of references, such as the "watery tea" (174), the "yellow dripping" (174) and the memory of "the dark

turfcoloured water of the bath in Clongowes" (174), all of which bring Stephen and the reader back to a sense of the sordid squalor of Stephen's environment. Anticipating the perpetuation of this cycle, Kenner reads the optimism of Stephen's final words in the diary (with their suggestion of artistic flight) as inevitably subject to ironic deflation, and he finds confirming evidence of this "fall" in Stephen's abject state at the beginning of Ulysses.

For Ellmann the novel enacts a biographical pattern involving the physical and spiritual development of the protagonist. Hypothetically, the trajectory of such a pattern, dependent as it is on the chronological unfolding of a life, could extend until the end of the protagonist's death. Ellmann deals with the potential open-endedness of such a pattern through his emphasis on the way in which the biographical pattern is in turn shaped and constrained by a pattern involving the attainment of a goal, which in this case involves Stephen's attainment of insight into his own artistic vocation. Where Kenner ties Stephen's outcome to a pattern of structural 'rise and fall', Ellmann sees Stephen's development supported on the structural level by metaphorical patterning, particularly with respect to the emphasis at the end of the novel on flight, and also by the abrupt stylistic shift announced by the diary which Ellmann sees as signalling Stephen's spiritual birth.

The contrast between Kenner's ironic and Ellmann's unironic reading of Stephen's outcome is not only emblematic

of the diversity of critical interpretations of Stephen's fate, but also suggests the degree to which Stephen's outcome has been central in discussions of the novel's ending. While Kenner's and Ellmann's arguments about Stephen are reinforced by assumptions about the novel's structure, their positions are also indicative of the degree to which issues relating to formal closure tend to be subordinate, in discussions of the novel's ending, to issues relating to Stephen's outcome. On a general level, the critical emphasis on the autobiographical connection between Joyce as author and his protagonist Stephen, has had the dual result of arbitrarily circumscribing our notion of the complexity of Joycean intention and of deflecting attention away from the importance of the reader's role during closure. For example, in Kenner's remarks above, he intimates that "the moral difficulty of accepting A Portrait as satisfactorily finished off" can only be resolved by resort to Stephen's outcome in Ulysses. The dual assumptions underlying such a position are that Joyce did not intend to pose a deliberately difficult ending for A Portrait and that a full understanding of Joyce's intentions with respect to the ending of A Portrait is only possible through consideration of the relationship between A Portrait and Ulysses. Ironically, in his concern for the importance of Joycean intention, what Kenner overlooks is the possibility that the author of A Portrait intended to pose a deliberately problematic ending, one that would challenge the reader to engage in a very self-conscious process of interpretation.

Therefore, while Kenner is right to observe an 'inconclusive' quality to the ending of the novel he is wrong to attribute such a quality to the fact that the ending of the novel is merely prefatory to Ulysses.

One of the ways to facilitate such an investigation is by drawing attention to the reader's role in attempting to 'close' A Portrait. In "The Reader's Role in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" Charles Rossman comments on the heightened intensity of the reader's role at the end of the novel:

The question of assessing the perspective [on Stephen] engages readers most relentlessly, of course, during the last half-dozen pages of the book, Stephen's diary, where Stephen is presented to us in his own voice— straight, unmediated, without overt narrative context, and with no dramatic foil. Joyce has chosen to end his portrait of Stephen by giving us the budding artist raw, thus heightening ambiguity and increasing the reader's necessary involvement. We are ultimately left, once we become conscious of our own role as readers, not so much with the question 'What are we to think of Stephen?' as the more self-reflexive questions: 'How can we read alertly enough to get a sufficient perspective on Stephen?' or 'What context should we assess Stephen within?'. (34)

While Rossman is correct in perceiving the intensified

nature of the reader's role during closure, he still operates on the assumption that our interpretation of the ending will be concerned solely with issues involving character outcome. Like Kenner and Ellmann, Rossman emphasizes the priority of Stephen's outcome and develops an argument about that outcome which subsumes an argument about the novel's structure, in this case its dependence on a Bildung pattern. And while Rossman is right to regard as important questions concerning the reader's perspective on Stephen, he does not appreciate the full extent of the novel's closural self-reflexivity. Our detection of closural ambiguities about Stephen's outcome leads to more fundamental questions about formal closure. As the reader confronts the ambiguities of Stephen's own attempt to 'close' a phase of his own experience, he or she thereby gains insight into the difficulty of closing the text on a formal level. The problem for the reader of getting a 'fix' on Stephen at the end of the text is paralleled by the problem of establishing a definitive 'sense of an ending' for the work as a whole.

As one of the masterpieces of modernist literature A Portrait reveals a highly self-reflexive approach to closure involving a critique of traditional closural strategies and a juxtaposition of such strategies in a way which foregrounds their inability to fully account for the complexities of the novel's ending. Put another way, the ending is highly self-reflexive in that in our engagement with it as readers we become sharply aware of how we use closural strategies in an

attempt to 'contain' an ending, and of the inadequacy of such strategies in the face of textual complexity. Admittedly no single model can hope to accommodate the complexities of the novel's ending. Indeed, as we shall see, the novel's ending challenges the very notion that its complexities can be 'contained' within a given system of patterning. Yet, one means of confronting the complexities of closure which does justice to both the self-reflexive qualities of the ending and to the importance of the reader's role is by perceiving the analogy between Stephen's closural activity and that of the reader.

The reader's experience of the ending of A Portrait is a very complex one, given that it involves both an evaluation of Stephen's own sense of an ending and an engagement with the ambiguities of formal closure. Once we perceive the relationship between Stephen's sense of an ending and our own, it becomes necessary to juggle two different but related perspectives involving two distinct, but related sets of ambiguities. From one perspective the diary reveals the ambiguity of Stephen's attitudes and responses at the end of the novel. The reader perceives that, like most diarists, Stephen is keeping the diary in an attempt to make coherent sense of his own experience. The diary's specified chronological sequencing is an obvious manifestation of Stephen's desire to impose order on his experience. Yet, the diary entries also reveal Stephen to be emotionally and intellectually inconsistent in his thinking and evasive of

many of the implications of his own experience. As we shall see, two particularly useful concepts for evaluating the ambiguities of Stephen's sense of an ending involve the concept of retrospection (his preoccupation with the past) and the concept of projection (his ostensible 'openness' to the future).

From another perspective, the reader's evaluation of the ambiguities of Stephen's sense of an ending leads us to confront the ambiguities of closure on the formal level. Again, the concepts of retrospection and projection will prove useful: while our detection of ambiguities concerning Stephen's own tendency to retrospection enables us to perceive the ambiguous character of the retrospective patterning signalled by the novel's ending, the ambiguity of Stephen's anticipation of his own outcome at novel's end has its parallel on the formal level in the problematic termination of the Bildung pattern which constitutes such a crucial component of the novel's structure. While a parallel is suggested between Stephen's construction of frameworks for understanding his own experience and the reader's adoption of strategies for understanding the novel's closure, such a parallel should not be mistaken for a simplistic identification between Stephen and the reader in this respect. As we become more consciously aware of the ambivalence of Stephen's behaviour at novel's end, we become more self-consciously aware of the inadequacy of traditional closural strategies on the formal level. Just as Stephen is revealed to be unable to 'contain' his

experience within his own created worldview, so the reader is made aware of the provisionality of traditional closural strategies. A rich parallel is thereby sustained between Stephen's problematic articulation of his own sense of an ending and the reader's grappling with the ambiguities of textual closure.

Paradoxically, the more vigorously we engage with the problem of attaining what Rossman calls a "sufficient perspective" on Stephen at novel's end, the more our interpretive strategies involved in this process are called into question. More particularly, by confronting us with the complexities of the diary, Joyce challenges us to address our own reliance on a conception of closure which prioritizes the narrative outcome for a central character. In other words, the more closely we scrutinize the ambiguities of Stephen's situation at the end of the novel, the more aware we become of the possibility that interpretation of the novel is not exclusively tied to the evaluation of Stephen. Like the ending of Citizen Kane, the ending of A Portrait reveals itself to be as much about the ambiguous dynamics of fictional closure as it is about the ambiguities of the outcome of a fictional character.

The penultimate diary entry dated 26 April reveals the contradictory nature of Stephen's closural gesture. At the beginning of this entry in which Stephen is ostensibly defining his independence we learn that his mother is packing his clothes for him. In the last two sentences of the entry

Stephen confronts his destiny in grandiloquent terms: "Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (252-253). The first sentence of this statement reveals Stephen's apparent openness to new experience and to the unpredictable. Although the second sentence is equally forward looking it betrays Stephen's need to exercise control over the future. At the point of his writing in the diary, Stephen anticipates the accomplishment of the "encounter" referred to here, and his determination to chart new terrain as an artist is exemplified by his desire to create the as yet "uncreated" conscience of his race.

Stephen's situation in the diary invokes a richly suggestive analogy with the reader engaged in the experience of textual closure. At the end of the novel, poised on the brink of his future, Stephen attempts to give patterned shape to his own previous experience and to confront the problem of the potential indeterminacy of his future. There is, of course, a direct relationship between these two gestures: Stephen's means of dealing with potential future uncertainty is by projecting the successful completion of the pattern of artistic apprenticeship which he has already developed to help him 'explain' the trajectory of his experience thus far. The way in which Stephen envisions a fixed shape for his own future parallels the critical difficulty for the reader of projecting the post-textual outcome of an evolving

consciousness.

At the same time, however, Stephen's language suggests a determination to remain open to experience, to 'welcome' the unexpected. In his excellent essay on Stephen's diary Michael Levenson has described Stephen's own resistance to closure:

Stephen himself has consistently worried over endings, from his early concern that "he did not know where the universe ended" (17) to his moment of anxiety during a late conversation with Cranly: "Stephen, struck by [Cranly's] tone of closure, reopened the discussion at once" (243). The refusal of closure represents a powerful motive for Stephen; his succession of rebellions can be seen as attempts to avoid closed forms, to "reopen discussion." (1020)

In the passage quoted above, the critic's reference to a "succession of rebellions" suggests the principle of a linear series. As a number of other critics have noted, A Portrait is organized in part on the basis of a principle of repetition which manifests itself in a number of ways: recurrent motifs, the recurrence of specific words in specific descriptive passages, the novel's structural rhythm of building towards epiphanies at the end of chapters followed by deflation of the epiphanic mood at the beginning of the following chapter, and the general linearity of the temporal structure which involves an evolving portrait of Stephen from his infancy to early adulthood. While it might be argued that the novel's scenic

construction and its rejection during the narrative proper of a specified time frame weakens the sense of chronological sequence, temporal linearity is nonetheless present, and becomes particularly heightened in the diary, with its sequential and specifically dated entries which provide a contrast to the less explicit time scheme of the rest of the novel.

If we return to our initial juxtaposition of statements by Kenner and Ellmann we can see that both ironic and unironic readings of the ending assume a degree of 'openness'. For Kenner, A Portrait opens out to Ulysses via character continuity and the projected continuation of a rising/falling structural pattern. For Ellmann there is the chronological projection inherent in an autobiographical work- Stephen will leave Ireland (as did Joyce) and will become a successful writer (as did Joyce). Both Kenner and Ellmann are, in their separate ways, dealing with two of A Portrait's most problematic features: the termination of patterns involving repetition, and the relationship between formal/structural elements and aspects concerning Stephen's outcome. As mentioned earlier, Kenner's argument about Stephen's outcome relates to his perception of a pattern of structural rising and falling: a series of epiphanies at the end of each chapter, followed by undercutting at the beginning of the subsequent chapter. The end of part V is obviously problematic from the perspective of this pattern. Kenner goes outside of the context of the novel for insight into the continuation of

the series. Ellmann confronts the fact that biographical development is potentially open-ended by emphasizing the attainment of a goal, in this case "the goal of life" and the completion of the soul's development.

The conflict between repetition and termination raises issues to do with the Bildung pattern, both as it applies specifically to Stephen and as it applies to the reader's attempt to grapple with formal issues relating to the inevitably ambiguous termination of a novel about a character in a state of flux. As Levenson again points out, the diary form, with its emphasis on a day-by-day recording of events, has a built in emphasis on repetition at odds with the Bildung pattern: "the conventions of the Bildungsroman cannot be assimilated to the pattern of serial repetition. The Bildungsroman presupposes some principle of development which in turn presupposes some concept of an end" (1021).

One of the underlying assumptions in most discussions of the Bildung pattern in A Portrait is that by the end of the novel Stephen's character has attained or is on the verge of attaining a fixed identity. Such an idea is implied in the passage from Hugh Kenner's "The Portrait in Perspective" quoted earlier and is stated more directly by Kenner in a passage from his essay "The Cubist Portrait" :

At the end, when Stephen's development ceases, when he has very nearly acquired the shape that can't be changed, then he is troubling, and behind the device of the diary entries we may sense, a little,

Joyce determined to withhold judgment.

It is a terrible, a shaking story. It brings Stephen where so many other potential Joyces have been brought, into a fixed role: into paralysis, or frustration, or a sorry, endlessly painful coming to terms. (110)

In the passage above, Kenner, in his reference to Stephen's acquisition of a 'shape that can't be changed' is deliberately echoing a remark made to Frank Budgen by Joyce when the latter was at work on Ulysses: "I have just got a letter asking me why I don't give Bloom a rest. The writer of it wants more Stephen. But Stephen no longer interests me to the same extent. He has a shape that can't be changed" (105). For Kenner, such evidence of the eventual stagnation of the Stephen character in Ulysses reinforces the view that the end of A Portrait is prophetic of such an outcome for Stephen.

Yet surely Kenner overlooks the degree to which Joyce at the end of A Portrait challenges the aspect of inherent predetermination underlying the Bildung pattern. Although the pattern is used as one of the novel's principles of organization, the ending foregrounds the provisionality of any attempt on the part of either Stephen or the reader strictly to delimit Stephen's outcome.

Joyce's exploitation of this pattern in order to point up its assumptions can easily be mistaken for an uncritical use of such a pattern. For instance, in "Gender and Narrative Voice in Jacob's Room and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young

Man", Karen Lawrence writes:

Joyce accepts the central notions of identity and vocation in the Bildungsroman: Stephen Dedalus has a calling. A Portrait moves in the direction of a goal (even if Stephen's aspirations are ironically deflated at times and we may question the greatness of his ultimate destination). Moments of revelation mark the stages of Stephen's journey toward identity, moments when he feels that the prophecy of his name coincides with events in the real world. The basic idea of growth and development, however problematic, is, nevertheless, ultimately accepted (31-32).

What Lawrence overlooks here in particular is the self-reflexive nature of the ending. As mentioned, Joyce does 'accept' the Bildung pattern insofar as he uses it as a principle of organization, which does arouse certain expectations on the part of the reader. But Joyce not only calls into question the notion of Stephen's attainment of his goal, but even leaves in doubt the question of whether Stephen effects the exile which he seems to deem necessary to his artistic success. As Levenson reminds us, the assumption that Stephen has departed is often made prematurely: "In careless paraphrases it is sometimes said that the novel concludes with Stephen's exile from Ireland; in fact, of course, it does no such thing. In the last scene before the diary begins, Stephen tells Cranly of his decision to leave, but a month later he is

still in Dublin, writing his journal" (1019).

One of the formal issues raised here involves the simultaneous temptation and difficulty for the reader of projecting a particular continuation of the story beyond the actual termination of the plot. The situation at the end of A Portrait is similar in this regard to the ending of The Ambassadors. Just as Strether declares his intention of leaving Paris at the end of that novel, Stephen declares his intention of leaving Ireland. In both cases individual characters have determined upon actions which suggest the continuation of plot along a specified trajectory. Such ventures not only assume that external events beyond the character's control will not arise to force a change in the character's direction, but also assume that the character himself will not revise his determination to pursue a particular path. Yet, in both novels, the central characters have exhibited an openness to experience which, by definition, involves substantial and sometimes sudden oscillations in outlook. In the course of A Portrait we see Stephen swerve quite abruptly during his experiential odyssey; for example, from his preoccupation with the fleshly delights of the whores of Nighttown, to the awakening of his religious zeal climaxing with the communion epiphany, to his espousal of a more secular artistic calling. Any critical attempt to envision a fixed, immutable shape to Stephen's character ignores the preestablished evidence of his capacity to change.

Just as the reader's encounter with Stephen's projection

beyond the ending leads to an investigation of the formal implications of the termination of narrative patterns, so Stephen's retrospection prompts consideration of the closural importance of retrospection with respect to the novel's form. On the most obvious level, Stephen's tendency to recall the past in the diary is suggested by the retrospective format of the diary form. In the manner of other diarists, Stephen uses the diary to commune with the past, to retrospectively analyze his own experience. In a series of dated, chronologically sequential entries, Stephen notes both incidents from his recent past and the thoughts and feelings occasioned by such incidents.

Given the nature of the diary format there is already a sense in which Stephen's observations are at one remove from the events related. This sense of distance is compounded by Stephen's attempts to view himself and others at a distance, a tendency again announced in the opening diary entry: "Long talk with Cranly on the subject of my revolt. He had his grand manner on. I supple and suave" (247). Yet, it would be wrong to mistake such distance for unequivocal critical detachment on Stephen's part. His description of the talk is an evaluative rather than a neutral description. And his evaluation is coloured by his somewhat dismissive view of Cranly's paternalistic "grand manner" and his egotistical estimation of his own verbal dexterity. Already with the first diary entry there is an intimation of the complexity of self-evaluation, with virtually every entry revealing evidence

of Stephen's powerful imagination, but also of his using the diary to reconfirm his own preconceptions, to evade certain implications of his own experience rather than to fully confront even potentially distasteful self-discoveries.

In the second diary entry we receive ample evidence of the degree to which Stephen's observations are shaped by his subjectivity, and of his ability to be simultaneously investigative and evasive in his analyses. Picking up on his observations in the first entry, Stephen defines Cranly's genealogy in religious terms, seeing Cranly's parents as Elizabeth and Zachary, Cranly as John the Baptist, and himself, by implication, as Jesus Christ. While Stephen's forging of such associations certainly bespeaks the power of his imagination, he fails to confront the nature of the threat to his secular objectives which the priest-like Cranly represents. Nor does he acknowledge either the extent of his own egoism in imagining himself as no less a figure than Christ, or the ironic implications of the extent to which his thinking is still shaped by religious iconography.

The ambiguity of Stephen's outlook in the diary is similarly evidenced by the contradictory range of his impressions about E. C. . For example, the diary entry for 23 March reads as follows: "Have not seen her since that night. Unwell? Sits at the fire perhaps with mamma's shawl on her shoulders. But not peevish. A nice bowl of gruel? Won't you now?" (248). The vividness with which Stephen evokes this hypothetical scenario certainly betokens a keen imagination.

Yet, as in the above instance concerning Cranly, Stephen does not scrutinize all of the implications of his own observations. He does not, for example, acknowledge the depths of his own bitterness about her even though his descriptive language bristles with sarcasm. And while his reference to "mamma's shawl" is perhaps suggestive of the beloved's over-dependence on maternal devotion he does not entertain the possible applicability of such a connection to his own situation.

Stephen's contradictory attitude toward the beloved is similarly revealed in the diary entry for 11 April: "Read what I wrote last night. Vague words for a vague emotion. Would she like it? I think so. Then I should have to like it also" (251). The tone of the entry is initially condescending toward the beloved, since the implication of Stephen's thinking is that the beloved would not be capable of detecting the vagueness of his previous entry. But in the final sentence of the entry Stephen's tone abruptly switches from condescension to what seems like a far more generous acceptance of her literary limitations and of the inevitability of his own feelings for her. Towards the end of the entry for 15 April Stephen seems to be making a breakthrough in terms of his perception of the injustice and irrelevance of much of his previous attitude towards her: "Yes I liked her today. A little or much? Don't know. I liked her and it seems a new feeling to me. Then in that case, all the rest, all that I thought I thought and all that I felt I felt, all the rest

before now, in fact..." (252). But Stephen stops short of full self-analysis in a way which again exemplifies his confusion at novel's end: "O give it up, old chap! Sleep it off!" (252).

On one level such evidence of Stephen's confusion would seem to support a critical position which adopts a negative judgement of Stephen at the end of the novel. But surely this situation has implications which are not just about judging Stephen, but which provide a means for Joyce to explore, through Stephen, the dynamics of interpretation, including the way in which we perpetually adjust and redefine the strategies we use to make sense of our experience. In the diary entry for 15 April Stephen experiences a dawning recognition of the beloved as a person, as a unique individual and not merely as a type or "figure of the womanhood of her country" (221). The corollary to this discovery, which Stephen does not fully follow through, is that such a re-appraisal of the beloved hinges on an acknowledgement that his conceptual framework for understanding his experiences had failed to account for certain facets of that experience. Similarly, for the reader, the encounter with the ending of A Portrait requires a constant process of readjustment as the inadequacy of our conceptual frameworks for understanding Stephen and for understanding the text as a whole are foregrounded by the nuances of textual complexity.

One of the ways this process of readjustment reveals itself on the formal level is with respect to the difficulty for the reader of ascertaining a textual segment which could

definitively be construed as the 'ending' of the text. Certainly in the discussion thus far we have been concentrating on the particular closural importance of the diary. Yet, in our engagement with the ending of A Portrait, the detection of ambiguities concerning Stephen's situation leads to the discovery of even more fundamental ambiguities on the formal level. For instance, while there is strong evidence to suggest that Stephen is using the diary entries in part to articulate his own sense of an ending, there is no guarantee that Stephen intends his diary entries to be a close to the text of A Portrait. The absence of any prefatory information which would provide an historical context for the diary entries raises the possibility that the entries provided constitute a fragment of a more extensive diary text. The reader is therefore left in doubt concerning whether the final diary entry given in the text of A Portrait is the final entry of the diary. The specific question of the relationship between textual part and textual whole with respect to the diary is reflective of a series of such situations. For example, the diary itself is in turn the last of four sections within chapter V, and chapter V is the last of five chapters. Hence, any exhaustive attempt to establish the closural importance of the diary would require consideration of the diary in its relation to other sections of chapter V, chapter V in its structural relations with the other four chapters, and the diary in its relation to the rest of the novel.

Complicating the situation for the reader is the fact

that A Portrait problematizes the relationship between Stephen's closural activity and the closure of the novel on the formal level. For example, in Kenner's ironic reading of Stephen's fate, Stephen is blind to the implications of the pattern of 'rise and fall' whereby his ecstatic sense of his own destiny is doomed to be undercut. Yet, it is equally possible to emphasize the symbiotic relationship between the closure of the novel as an artistic structure and Stephen's own closural strategies. Indeed, Stephen's tendency to see the trajectory of his life in terms of a Bildung pattern is compatible with Richard Ellmann's emphasis on Joyce's use of such a structure and of the autobiographical parallels between character and creator.

Similarly, for Hans Gabler, there is a degree of mutual reinforcement between Stephen's desire to escape Ireland and an emphasis on exile on the structural level. In "The Seven Lost Years of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man", Gabler sees the dominant closural emphasis at the end of A Portrait in terms of the focus on exile throughout chapter five: "Both physically and spiritually, in the end, his departure into exile is represented as an unbroken outward movement sweeping through the entire fifth chapter" (49).

For Gabler, the first section of chapter V, with its emphasis on Stephen's wandering, has special structural importance:

This wandering movement, at the same time, is a narrative representation of Stephen's leaving his

home and family and finding the theoretical basis for his art. The first section of the chapter takes him halfway into exile. (47)

Stephen's own emphasis in the diary on exile can therefore be seen as the textual culmination of a pattern in chapter V, which in turn marks the termination of a pattern which evolves throughout the novel.

For Gabler and Ellmann the ending accomplishes the closure of patterns which not only harmonize with Stephen's own sense of an ending but also reinforce the autobiographical nature of that ending. It should be noted, however, that there is common ground between these positions and that of Kenner with respect to the way in which an understanding of structural closure remains grounded in an understanding of Stephen's position at novel's end. Yet, a more radically self-reflexive aspect of the ending of A Portrait is its questioning of the necessity of grounding retrospective patterning in a concern for the outcome of a central protagonist. Paradoxically, it is through our initial investigation of the ambiguities of Stephen's own sense of an ending that we become aware not only of the ending's potential to engender linguistic connections back from the diary to the beginning of the text but also of the capacity of such connections to take on an intrinsic interest not necessarily connected with the issue of Stephen's fate.

The way in which the reader can be led towards a conception of the novel's closure less dependent on the

question of the protagonist's outcome can be particularly illustrated with respect to the issue of circularity. On one level, the intensification of Stephen's retrospection is an authorial means of stimulating the reader's retrospection. As we might expect, such circularity is particularly operative in the diary. As mentioned, by reprising virtually all of the novel's major themes and motifs, the diary prompts the reader to make connections back to earlier points in the text where such textual elements are being foregrounded. According to Anthony Burgess the diary entries which close A Portrait "look back to the very opening, the baby Stephen coming to consciousness in flashes of discrete observation. This is right: the cutting of the physical omphalic cord is matched by the cutting of the spiritual. 'Welcome, O Life!' says Stephen, going forth 'to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race.'" (68). Implicit in Burgess' comment is the realization that such circularity often involves the operation of reversal or antithesis, in this case exemplified by the movement from physical to spiritual.

For Burgess the evidence of formal circularity is used to underscore the notion of Stephen enacting an ultimately positive self-directed prophecy. Yet, the circular movement here is equivocal with respect to its possible significance to Stephen's outcome. While the notion of rebirth as applied to Stephen's prophecy has potentially positive implications, the repetitious movement from birth to rebirth has an aspect of redundancy which raises the possibility of a character locked

into a cycle of false starts, rather than a character whose destiny is assured.

There is a similar ambiguity in another of the novel's circular reversals. In the penultimate diary entry we are told that "Mother is putting my new secondhand clothes in order" (252). The sense of Stephen leaving his family which is expressed here recalls and reverses the scene in part I in which his parents leave him at Clongowes Wood College. On the one hand, the reversal could betoken that Stephen has attained a new level of maturity and independence from his parents by the end of the novel. Yet, as we have already seen, Stephen, however unwittingly, remains obsessed with figures of maternity, and his continued dependence on his mother not only harkens back to her prominence in the scene of leave-taking at Clongowes, but suggests a strong degree of continuity between the dependent child and the would-be artist.

An even more subtle example of circular return arises in connection with an aspect of the first diary entry. In the process of describing his long conversation with Cranly Stephen writes: "Attacked me on the score of love for one's mother. Tried to imagine his mother: cannot" (247-248). Stephen's failed attempt to imagine the mother of an acquaintance recalls his unsuccessful attempt to imagine Wells's mother in chapter I: "He tried to think of Wells's mother but did not dare to raise his eyes to Wells's face" (14). In both instances, Stephen exhibits a curious fixation on a mother figure, and at novel's end he seems no closer to

coming to terms with this aspect of his psychology than he was in his childhood. As well, in both cases, Stephen's inability to invoke an image in his mind of these mothers indicates that, as imaginative as he is, even his imagination has definite limits.

Already implicit here is a strong sense of the capacity of the ending to elicit retrospective connections back to the beginning of the work. Indeed, as we move forward through the diary, the reader simultaneously has a sense of going back full circle to the beginning of the text. The diary refers to many of the characters who have interacted with Stephen, with particular emphasis on key figures from earlier in chapter V, such as Stephen's mother and father, Cranly, Davin and Lynch, the Dean of Studies, and of course, the beloved. There is also, in the diary, a recapitulative emphasis on the main themes, images and motifs which have evolved through the novel. For example, the diary culminates the theme of exile in its references to Stephen's desire to depart ("Away! Away!" 252), his sensitivity to the "spell of arms and voices" (252) as he is "making ready to go" (252) and, of course, the explicit statement of his intention to undertake the role of the exiled artist. On one level, such a reprise of various textual elements suggests that the diary is serving the common closural function of providing a summary of the novel's main concerns.

Yet, as mentioned, there is the possibility for the reader to make connections which Stephen does not undertake.

The most obvious example is with respect to the triumvirate of interrelated themes involving Irish nets which are also culminated here. Despite Stephen's avowed emphasis on exile, on escape from Irish nets, he is obsessed by them. Take, for instance, the diary's preoccupation with language. On the most general level the importance of language as communication is evidenced in the references to Stephen's "talk" (247) with Cranly, and his "discussion" (248) with his mother about religion. His continued preoccupation with the political implications of language is revealed by his outburst in the diary entry for 13 April: "That tundish has been on my mind for a long time. I looked it up and find it English and good old blunt English too. Damn the dean of studies and his funnel! What did he come here for to teach us his own language or to learn it from us? Damn him one way or the other!" (251). The linkage between language and religion is suggested by Stephen's discussion with his schoolmate, Ghezzi, which begins "in Italian and end[s] in pidgin English" (249). After this discussion Stephen is led to ponder that "his [Ghezzi's] countrymen and not mine had invented what Cranly the other night called our religion" (249). In Stephen's diary entry of 14 April in which he describes the encounter between John Alphonsus Mulrennan and the old man who first speaks Irish then English, the issue of language is related both to the issue of the confused Irish identity and to Stephen's private fear of figures of Irish paternalism.

Yet another Irish net in which Stephen remains thoroughly

enmeshed at novel's end is religion. For example, at the outset of the diary Stephen associates Cranly and his parents with religious figures. In the diary entry for 24 March Stephen makes extended reference to the discussion on religion with his mother. In the entry for 3 April Stephen records having met Davin "at the cigar shop opposite Findlater's church" (250), a statement which juxtaposes the secular and sacred. In the entry for 26 April Stephen not only describes his mother's religious demeanor but also, perhaps unwittingly, adopts it himself: "She prays now, she says, that I may learn in my own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels. Amen" (252). And, in the final entry, Stephen's invocation of aid from Daedalus is uttered in a beseeching, very prayerful manner.

The diary reveals a similar summary emphasis on family. There is, for example, the prominence in the diary of Stephen's mother and of mother figures in general. As discussed earlier, Stephen attempts to visualize Cranly's mother and cannot; later, he equates Cranly and his parents with John the Baptist and his parents. In the entry for 23 March, Stephen's imagined scenario involves the beloved, covered by "mamma's shawl" (248). And, in the aforementioned discussion with his mother recorded in the entry of 24 March, Stephen describes religious figures in terms of a family dynamic: "Jesus and Papa" (248), "Mary and her son" (248).

The diary also summarizes the novel's emphasis on paternal figures. For example, Cranly is depicted as a

paternalistic, priest-like figure who poses a threat which is both ideological and sexual but which Stephen does not fully understand. In the diary entry for 3 April where Stephen records his father's encounter with Davin and himself, the description emphasizes the father's threat as he tries to persuade Stephen to pursue a particular career. Stephen's observation "more mud, more crocodiles" (250), relates this instance of perceived parental pressure back to the parable of mother and child, thereby suggesting the link between the maternal and paternal as threatening forces.

Examination of these three patterns certainly does not exhaust the complexities of the diary. But they typify several important aspects of the novel's closure. The evidence of Stephen's obsession with the 'nets' of language, family and religion certainly casts doubt on Stephen's insistence that self-imposed exile will enable him to fly by these nets. Obviously the reader can make connections which have a bearing on how we judge Stephen quite distinct from connections made by Stephen. Even further, though, by engaging with the diary, we become increasingly aware of its capacity to generate linguistic echoes and cross-references which exemplify the limitless play of language and are not strictly tied to the issue of judging Stephen. For example, the pattern of references to the 'mother' figure evident in the diary echoes back to an intricate web of references to various maternal figures, including the moocow in the novel's opening sentence, Dante, Eileen, the Virgin Mary, the whores of Nighttown, E._

C., etc. And since each of these figures is associated in turn with a network of other patterns (Dante with religion and politics, for example), the diary dramatizes the inexhaustibility of the interpretive process. Even more radically than in Citizen Kane we are led back to the beginning of the work, only to be led through the process of re-reading and re-interpreting.

The capacity of the signifiers in the diary to generate a limitless process of interpretation suggests the ambiguity of the diary's summary function. On one level, as we have seen, the diary does recapitulate the novel's major themes and motifs. But the diary provides a 'summary' neither in the sense of offering evidence for a definitive interpretation of Stephen or for the meaning of the text as a whole. The range and complexity of what is summarized in the diary set up a virtually limitless process of retrospection which is not ultimately tied to or limited by the specific issue of Stephen's outcome. The depth and extent of the diary's summary function challenges the reader to decipher the complexity of the retrospective echoes operating on the linguistic level, many of which are very subtle. For example, the emphasis on exile at the ending links back to the reference to the "road" (7) in the novel's first sentence and to the recurrent references to geography and travelling in chapter one. The many references to "mother" and "father" echo back to the inauguration of those related motifs in chapter one, as do the references to politics and religion. Even the reference to a

"heifer" (248) in the diary entry for 22 March links back to the reference to the "moocow" (7) in the novel's opening sentence.

Also important with respect to the way in which the novel's ending reopens a sense of textual complexity is what might be called the transformational nature of the linguistic motifs. For example, just as Stephen's mind transforms Cranly's parents into Elisabeth and Zachary, thereby linking two systems of images (parental and religious), so the reader can make connections whereby one chain of motifs interlinks with another. For example, within the diary itself, the figure of the female takes a number of forms, including the beloved, the mother, the figure of the madonna and a heifer. Each of these manifestations relates back to separate image patterns which are introduced at the novel's beginning, but also relates back to the way in which these various forms of a specific image will be interwoven within the text.

On one level such indications of formal circularity could be interpreted as evidence for the kind of ironic interpretation of Stephen advocated by Kenner: where Stephen's outcome remains "unfinished", the ending of A Portrait resonates with signals of formal cohesion. Where the possibility of Stephen's artistic career remains dubious, the formal coherence of A Portrait is a testimony to Joyce's undoubted artistry. Yet, at a deeper level, the intricacies of reader retrospection during closure seems to be more about the very provisionality of artistic coherence. Rather than offer

a clarification or resolution for the kinds of ambiguities which arise as we attempt to retrospectively evaluate Stephen's own retrospection, the ending offers an intensified sense of the epistemological problems of 'fixing' textual meaning. Pertinent here in a new context is our earlier discussion of the tension between repetition and termination. The very richness of the diary as a summary engenders the possibility of the reader making virtually limitless connections back from the end of the novel to its beginning. Yet, as we engage in this seemingly limitless process of retrospection we may reasonably ask at what point should the process of establishing circular linkages cease? Similarly, if the process of reading involves a forward momentum followed by an attempt to retrospectively understand the work as a whole, the complexity of A Portrait's ending raises the question of the potentially ceaseless nature of this forward/backwards interpretive drive. A sense of the novel's unity is only achieved if we resist the capacity of the ending to reopen the interpretive process.

The ending's capacity to generate seemingly limitless retrospection also problematizes the notion of authorial intentionality. On the one hand, the reader's ability to trace complex networks of linguistic patterns provides evidence of the meticulous craftsmanship for which Joyce is justly famous. Yet, once Joyce has made us aware of the limitless play of language in the novel we become increasingly aware of the degree to which our own verbal dexterity and exercise of

memory become operative in the creation of textual meaning. Yet, by challenging the extent to which Stephen's situation at the end of the novel should influence the parameters within which the play of interpretation should operate, the ending of the novel provokes us to an awareness of the grounds upon which our interpretations of textual meaning are based.

The novel's ending also foregrounds as ambiguous the related issue of narrative voice. As mentioned earlier, Charles Rossman claims that in the diary Stephen is "presented to us in his own voice" in a manner which is unmediated by authorial intrusion. But, as we have found, the diary generates textual associations not comprehended by Stephen and even encourages the reader to make retrospective associations not tied to the process of interpreting Stephen. The diary thereby emerges as a terrain of competing voices where the line of demarcation between the protagonist's voice, the narrator's voice and authorial voice is ambiguous.

What emerges is a strong sense of the ending's dialectical nature as it simultaneously encourages us to detect connections between the novel's ending and beginning, and makes us aware of the impossibility of definitively closing the text. A pattern of particular interest in the diary with respect to this dialectical aspect of the novel's closure involves the juxtaposition of antithetical signifiers. Note, for instance, the way in which the first entry of the diary introduces a network of opposites: mother and father; the "pepper and salt suit", parents and child; and sexuality

and religion. In the brief entry for 22 March the basic male/female dichotomy manifests itself in the juxtaposition of the "greyhounds" with the "heifer" (248) and there is also an implicit play on the cow/bull and wild/domestic pairings which figure so often in the novel. Similarly, in the entry for 5 April Stephen forges an imaginative link between the "swirling bogwater" (250) and "delicate flowers" (250) and in the entry for 16 April there is a matrix of such pairings, including white/dark, roads/ships, alone/kinsmen and exultant/terrible youth. Finally, in the diary's penultimate entry, there is the reference to Stephen's "new secondhand clothes" (252).

On one level such a pattern of antitheses recalls the strategy involving the pairing of opposites like 'hot and cold' and 'light and dark' which are initiated at the beginning of the novel. Note, for example, the repetition of the 'cold and hot' antithesis in the following passage from early in chapter one:

To remember that and the white look of the lavatory made him feel cold and then hot. There were two cocks that you turned and water came out: cold and hot. He felt cold and then a little hot: and he could see the names printed on the cocks. That was a very queer thing. (11)

More broadly, this facet of the diary is emblematic of the way in which the activity of making retrospective linguistic connections so often involves a phenomenon of bifurcation, whereby the very attempt to trace the development of a given

pattern of motifs inevitably necessitates consideration of how that pattern relates to others, engendering a theoretically endless process of interpretation and pattern-making.

In Joyce, Bakhtin, and Popular Literature R. B. Kershner argues that:

The major interest Stephen's figure holds for us is in the peculiar, conflicting set of languages and ideologies he encompasses...The clearest demonstration of this 'in Portrait is Stephen's journal, with its allusive fragments, disseminated topics, and vast variation in styles. Criticism has by and large avoided examining Stephen's journal entries as a whole: in their multitude of self-consciously competing voices they attest to fragmentation more clearly than to any coherent personal direction for the young man. And this may be the greatest sign of health we see in Stephen. His journal is witness to the dialogical vitality of his consciousness. (300-301)

Kershner's view of the diary here is to some extent compatible with our own. There is a variety of tone in the diary which bespeaks a range of often conflicting attitudes on Stephen's part. For instance, the diary exhibits the comic irony of Stephen's perception that he and Lynch are like two "lean greyhounds" (248) in their pursuit of the nurse; the unalloyed bitterness of his recollection of the tundish discussion with the dean of studies; his capacity for adolescent jealousy in

some of his observations on the beloved; his frequent resort to sarcasm and his equally frequent flights of romanticism. In addition, the particular pattern of antitheses which culminates in the diary could be used as evidence to further substantiate Kershner's claim about the dialectical nature of Stephen's consciousness. Yet, the pattern is not only applicable on the level of character but is also emblematic of the interpretive difficulty of definitively closing the text of Joyce's novel. While the diary prompts retrospective patterning, the potential for uncovering new links and interconnections among networks of textual elements assures that our retrospective patterning of the novel continues indefinitely.

The closure of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man is radically self-reflexive. By focusing within the text on a character who is himself attempting to achieve the sense of an ending to a phase of his experience Joyce suggests an analogy between that character's closural gesture and the reader's own negotiation of textual closure: while Stephen attempts to make his experience meaningfully cohere the reader makes a similar attempt to attain textual coherence. And just as the ending of the novel presents Stephen's final failed attempts to constrain his own experience within the parameters of a particular interpretative framework, so the ending ultimately resists being constrained within traditional strategies of interpreting closure. In Teller and Tale in Joyce's Fiction John Paul Riquelme claims of A Portrait that "Part of the

work's richness and appeal is a verbal texture so variable that it deflates all attempts at reduction to a simple pattern" (54). At the end of A Portrait, meaning is generated not through pattern-making alone, but through the interplay between pattern and contingency. Stephen obviously ignores or remains unaware of numerous aspects of his experience that might qualify or challenge his own sense of an ending. In our own evaluation of the novel's ending we rightly become increasingly sensitized to ambiguities in Stephen's outlook. Yet, our temptation to feel in any way superior to Stephen is undermined by our realization that, in our own development of a sense of the novel's ending, we remain in an analogous relationship with Stephen: only by deliberately closing ourselves off to further textual complexities can we 'close' the text. The provisionality of Stephen's outcome parallels the provisionality of artistic coherence. The reader is simultaneously made aware of both the necessity and ultimate frustration of pattern-making in the pursuit of artistic meaning.

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