Dennis Tredy, Annick Duperray and Adrian Harding, eds. *Henry James and the Poetics of Duplicity*.

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Henry James and the Poetics of Duplicity is a compilation of critical essays addressing the issue of duplicity in the Jamesian oeuvre. In the editor’s preface, Dennis Tredy, quite eloquently and most perceptively, distinguishes between the various aspects of duplicity encountered in James’s work. Duplicity, he argues, was for James “a multi-purpose representational tool” which more often than not enabled the author to create texts fraught with semantic undecideability operating at different and diverse textual levels (ix). As a rhetorical strategy, therefore, according to Tredy, duplicity can be taken to mean a) deceit or manipulation, a technique which is consistent with James’s use of non-disclosure and the unsaid, b) deceit and doubling, as in the textual tool of “double consciousness,” which inevitably leads to double readings of James’s texts, and c) the actual doppélganger, an effect which, according to the editor, is not limited to the ghostly tales but rather extends in order to include doubles for the author himself. According to Tredy, traces of duplicity can be detected in James’s non-fiction as well, including his autobiographical works. Duplicity in these instances manifests itself on occasions on which James seems to have altered “truths” or “facts” as, for example, was James’s notorious rewriting of Notes of a Son and a Brother, a rewriting which caused a
major family scandal for which the author apologized defending, however, his “subjective” view of family affairs. This duplicitous aspect of James’s fiction and non-fiction is the subject-matter of the essays included in this volume which is divided in five parts.

In Part I, entitled “Duplicitous Subtexts,” Jean Perrot and Sergio Perosa, in their respective essays, aim to uncover the literary sources underlying some of James’s major texts. In particular, Jean Perrot, quite convincingly, argues that the “private source” of James’s The Turn of the Screw is to be found in Misunderstood, a story by Florence Montgomery published in 1869. Perrot not only demonstrates how the subtext influenced the narrative structure of James’s tale, but he also points to the ways in which Montgomery’s story affected James’s thematic and rhetorical choices throughout his career. In a similar manner, Perosa traces the unexpected connections between James and Shakespeare. Even though Perosa’s argument may seem far-fetched, it is, nevertheless, well-argued and remarkably well researched and supported. In this section of the volume, therefore, duplicity may be seen to operate not only as a textual device but as an effort on the part of James to conceal his literary sources and “cover his tracts” as Tredy also points out (xvi).

Part II of the volume is entitled “Duplicitous Characters.” The six chapters included in this section deal with instances of duplicity performed by major protagonists in James’s fiction. Thus, Thomas Constantinesco explores the inherent traces of duplicity as lying and manipulation in “The Lesson of the Master” in a resourceful essay, while Agnès Pokol-Hayhurst focuses on the same techniques employed by the major characters in The Golden Bowl (1903). The latter essayist, quite skillfully, employs psychoanalytical and sociological theories to further address the issue of “morality” in James’s narrative in order to demonstrate its complex and multi-faceted dimension. In a most complex essay, Richard Anker attempts to explore manipulation and deceit on the part of James’s characters in a number of texts between the late 1880’s up to the late 1890’s. The essayist also compares James’s narrative techniques and devices to theories developed by Nietzsche in The Genealogy of Morals (1887). Even though Anker’s is a most ambitious undertaking, the essayist’s argumentation
occasionally becomes obscure to the point of obstructing understanding while, in my opinion, the Nietzschian notions of “productive duplicity” and “bad conscience” clearly needed further elaboration in order to become relevant to James’s work. The following essays by Keiko Beppu and John Holland also address instances of deceit and lying in “The Liar,” “The Middle Years” and “Nona Vincent” in very articulate and well-structured essays. The final essay in this section by Angus Wrenn draws a remarkable comparison between James’s “The Private Life” (1892) as well as some ghostly tales of the late 1890’s and the sociological theories of Emile Durkheim, one of James’s contemporaries. A very innovative study, Wrenn’s essay draws on the notion of “psychic dualism” (92) and quite elaborately, but, also very convincingly, establishes the connections between major characters in James’s works and Durkheim’s theoretical notions. Wrenn, quite perceptively, underlines the potentially similar connections between James’s tales and the novels of R. L. Stevenson and Oscar Wilde which are also exercises in doubling, as he points out.

Part III of the study is entitled “Duplicitous Representation” and focuses on James’s so-called “Major Phase” which includes the author’s dense and often hard to decipher texts of the late 1900’s. Thus, Eric Savoy, in a most elaborate essay, aims to establish the connections between the novelist’s play with doubling and deceit in both the earlier and later works of fiction and the philosophical theories of Kierkegaard. Another ambitious project within the volume, Savoy’s essay occasionally becomes obscure and impenetrable but, is, nevertheless, well-argued and original in its approach. Rebekah Scott, Madeleine Vala and Victor Geraldo Rivas-Lopez provide their own remarkable interpretations of James’s use of duplicity as a representational tool in their respective essays. Rivas-Lopez, in particular, quite boldly and most admirably, approaches The Sacred Fount (1901), one of James’s admittedly most obscure and complex works, in order to demonstrate the ways in which duplicity in James worked as a multi-layered narrative technique operating simultaneously on the dramatic, the psychological and the symbolic level.
Interestingly, Part IV of the volume focuses on the non-fictional work by James including his late travel writings, his Prefaces for his collected works of the New York Edition as well as his autobiographies *A Small Boy and Others* (1913), *Notes of a Son and Brother* (1914) and *The Middle Years* (1917). The essays included in this part address the issue of duplicity as both deceit and lying on a more personal level. Paula Marantz Cohen, for example, in a most interesting essay, views James’s failure as a London playwright elaborating on the Victorian notion of “Self-Help,” as developed by S. Smiles, and drawing upon similar ideas expressed by James’s brother William, in order to argue that James resorted to duplicity as a vehicle for productivity rather than self-pity or delusion. In the next essay, Mhairi Pooler attempts to bring together James’s fiction and non-fiction focusing on the differences rather than the similarities of the two aspects of James’s work in an effort to demonstrate the ways in which duplicity operates as a major device in both. In an important essay, Collin Meissner directs the reader’s attention to the tension often experienced by James between his aesthetic affiliations and his professional aspirations unraveling, thus, the duplicitous play between art and business that the author managed to balance so skillfully. Meissner’s essay is a significant contribution to this study as it successfully draws our attention to the realistic division between art and the world of the market so acutely experienced by the writer especially due to his “disavowed” American identity. James’s “Americanness” is also the topic of the last essay in this part of the study by Madeleine Danova. In a remarkably articulate essay, Danova explores the ways in which James revisits American identity/ies in *The American Scene* (1904-5).

Part V of the study is entitled “Duplicitous Judgments” and aims to steer the reader’s attention towards James’s evaluation and opinion of other writers and artists. Thus, in a well-researched essay Miraslawa Buchholtz adapts theories of duplicity to exemplify its underlying workings in two biographies by James: *Hawthorne* (1879) and *William Wetmore Story and His Friends* (1903). In the following essay, Tomoko Eguchi, quite eloquently, establishes the aesthetic affiliations between James, Alphonse Daudet and John Ruskin but, in my opinion, overlooks the critical—and rather duplicitous, for that matter—relationship between
the author and Walter Pater whose views shaped the Aesthetic Movement of the late nineteenth century. The last essay in the volume is written in French not by a Jamesian scholar, but, rather, by the psychoanalyst Johanna Larsy. Larsy’s contribution is, in fact, very significant, sadly, though, only to the readers fluent in the French language, because it reports Larsy’s employment of James’s “The Pupil” (1891), and the duplicitous techniques she unveiled in it, as a therapeutical tool which enabled her to achieve significant progress with one of her patients. Larsy’s essay, thus, manages to bridge the gap between reality and fiction, between the written text and the “tabula rasa” of a patient’s troubled mind.

In conclusion, the essays included in the present study are an important and original contribution to Jamesian scholarship. Even though, in some of them, the theoretical standpoint is complex or ill-explained, the originality of the respective works counteracts their obscurity. An important omission, in my opinion, is constituted by non-reference to James’s duplicitous relationship with two important literary figures of his time, namely Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde. Recent scholarship has established this connection and reference to it would be an invaluable addition to the volume as a whole.

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