

# “The Jolly Corner”: Henry James’s Spiritual Triptych

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Described as “rich and multitudinous” by Richard Hocks and “ambiguous and elliptical” by David Galloway (6; 276), “The Jolly Corner” is Henry James’s universally acclaimed variant of the traditional doppelgänger story, wherein a divided man meets his other self and is changed forever by the encounter. Inspired in part by the commercial success of Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde* (1886) and Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), James’s tale about an aging man’s overwhelming sense “of loss and regret” while visiting the old house of his youth has been interpreted many ways since its initial publication as a Christmas ghost story in *English Review* in December 1908 (Gorra 187). For instance, Adeline R. Tintner argues that because “it was not unusual for James to go to Poe” for inspiration late in his career, “The Jolly Corner” draws heavily on two of the Gothic master’s most architecture-centric works, both published in 1839: “The Fall of the House of Usher” and “The Haunted Palace” (194). Other critics have pointed out the many subtle allusions to Sophocles’s *Oedipus the King* sprinkled liberally throughout James’s enigmatic tale. There are references to self-blinding, for example, as well as father–son conflict, a symbolic crossroads, and the search for one man’s “social

identity” upon his return to the city of his birth after a decades-long absence (Shear 547). Still others, both scholars and lay readers alike, have suggested that another well-known Greek myth offers a fitting template for at least some of the tale’s action; and that is the story of Theseus, Crown Prince of Athens, and his pursuit of the Minotaur in the maze, a grotesque fellow prince who must be slain before Theseus can live a normal life. There are also veiled allusions to such turn-of-the-century notables as J. P. Morgan, Theodore Roosevelt, John Singer Sargent, and Edward Steichen in this elegant account of a remorseful expatriate who struggles to come to grips with what he has missed out on—“the whole show” as he puts it—by turning his back on America when he was young and moving to Europe for three decades (James, “Jolly” 698).

James’s manifold narrative “with levels psychoanalytic, cultural, and mythic” contains a number of enriching Biblical allusions as well (Hocks 114). For instance, Jason Rosenblatt points out how “the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew is projected with special clarity” in the story, specifically Christ’s parable about the wise virgins who patiently trimmed their lamps and waited for a better future (282). There is also an implied reference to iconic Christian statuary in James’s best known *doppelgänger* story (he wrote others), since a number of critics have remarked how its famous closing scene—wherein the unconscious protagonist is cradled in the lap of his “feminine confidante” (Bell 285)—is clearly suggestive of the classic *Pietà* image in which a grieving Mary, after the Deposition from the cross, cradles the body of Christ in her lap. In keeping with such resonant Christian iconography, James’s lengthy tale about one man’s psychic suffering is organized and presented in what amounts to a prose triptych. That is to say, it is a three-chapter narrative that at once emulates and evokes traditional Christian triptychs. This organizational structure is appropriate as well as enriching since the middle-aged protagonist of the story, a troubled American named Spencer Brydon, undergoes what amounts to a Passion episode while in the haunted temple of his ancestors, a looming estate house that stands empty and unfurnished “on the jolly corner” of his childhood block in lower Manhattan (James, “Jolly” 698).

In *A Small Boy and Others* (1913), the first volume of his three-volume autobiography, James details his lifelong love of art and art galleries. For instance, in one vivid reminiscence from his formative years, this son of a prominent clergyman writes of a trip to “Bryan’s Gallery of Christian Art” at Broadway and Thirteenth Street in New York, where he viewed several old examples of “triptychs, of angular saints and seraphs, of black Madonnas and obscure Bambinos” (208). Years later, during his decades of living and traveling in Europe, he viewed many more Christian triptychs in, for example, the Louvre and London’s National Gallery, not to mention those masterpieces of that art form housed in the great cathedrals of his adopted continent.

Regardless of the artist’s chosen medium, a traditional Christian triptych is always “made up of three parts, usually with a central portion and two wings, often made so that the wings close over the centre” for protection as well as ease of transportation (Murray and Murray 544). These three sections serve to symbolize the Holy Trinity, and the parts of the work are customarily of unequal width and height. The first one, always on the viewer’s left, is smaller and narrower than the middle section because the initial panel or wing only sets up or introduces the main panel and its dominant subject matter. Conversely, the central section is broader and oftentimes far taller than the two flanking panels since it goes into much greater detail, often contains more figures, and features more activity in the foreground and background than the other two sections. Then the third panel, smaller like the first, offers the viewer what amounts to the dénouement of the painting—or the bas-relief or the stained glass window—since its purpose is to reconcile and conclude the piece.

A common subject for a Christian triptych is, of course, some momentous event in the life of Christ or the Apostles. If the middle panel presents, say, the Crucifixion as its central image, then the smaller panel to the viewer’s left might offer Christ presiding over the Last Supper or praying in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before His death, while the panel on the right might contain an image of the resurrected Christ, perhaps the Ascension as witnessed

by the Disciples. Among some of the most famous examples of Christian triptychs are *Saint Peter the Martyr* (1429) by Fra Angelico, housed in the Museo di San Marco in Florence; *Triptych of the Last Supper* (1464–67) by Dieric Bouts, which hangs in the Louvain Cathedral in Belgium; and *The Elevation of the Cross* (1611) by Peter Paul Rubens, housed in the Cathedral of Our Lady in Antwerp. “These hinged panel paintings were one of the most popular forms of altarpiece art from the medieval era on,” and whether mounted permanently behind the altar of some great European cathedral or folded and carried from parish to parish, they “served to inspire and educate Christian congregations with Biblical art from the Old Testament and the Gospels” (“Triptych”).

In the opening paragraph of chapter 1 of “The Jolly Corner,” in what serves metaphorically as the first small panel of James’s spiritual triptych, Brydon, a “highly cultivated” man of leisure (Benet 519), has recently returned to New York City after a self-exile in Europe that lasted for “more than thirty years—thirty-three, to be exact” (James, “Jolly” 697), a subtle allusion to the “exact” age of Christ when He endures His Passion, when He is betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, arrested, tried, scourged, crucified, placed in the tomb, and then resurrected three days later on Easter morning. Even though Brydon is well into his fifties when he returns to New York City, a much older age than now, this specific reference in the opening lines of chapter 1 provides the first of many allusions of varying subtlety to the final hours of Christ. What is more, at the age of thirty-three Jesus was not considered a young man by His Biblical contemporaries, for according to most New Testament scholars, given the much shorter life spans of people in first-century Israel, Jesus would have been seen as middle-aged at the time of His Passion and death.

Consequently, when He first begins His public ministry at the ripe age of thirty years, Jesus was already getting a late start as a traveling preacher, which, by the way, was not the profession His family had wanted for Him. It was expected that, like a good son, He would follow in the footsteps of His father and become a carpenter in Nazareth, His home village. In short, then, given the life-span differentials be-

tween the first century and the early twentieth, Brydon and Jesus are in about the same midlife periods when they undergo their similar crises of faith and resolve, crises that they both deliberately precipitate. And chapter 1 of James's "final fable" about "the rival reality of the un-lived life" serves (Bell 276), just as does his first panel in a traditional Christian triptych, to set up the action or the event that will be depicted in much greater detail in the long middle chapter of the story, a dense and extended narrative that is filled with "scriptural allusion and reference" as well as "those wonderfully ambient sentences that only James could write" (Rosenblatt 282; Humma x).

After three years of preaching in Galilee and the surrounding region, Jesus, a middle-aged man who is still unmarried and childless, decides to return to Jerusalem, the city of His forefathers and the capital of His faith. According to tradition, He has not been there in some time, and He makes this long-awaited pilgrimage in order to fulfill His destiny and undergo His Passion. Hard upon His arrival, He begins to speak out publicly against those in positions of power and influence. Jesus denounces, for instance, scribes, Pharisees, and members of the Sanhedrin, labeling such leaders as little more than "blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel" (Matthew 23:24). He declares that these men in control of Jerusalem have been poor stewards, for they have overseen the ruination of the capital city of David and Solomon: "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it" (Luke 19:41). But even worse, these leaders have allowed the great Temple on the Mount, the most sacred site in all of Judaism, to be corrupted by the pursuit of earthly treasure and profit.

This consecrated structure is now, in the early decades of the first century AD, overrun with moneychangers, profiteering men who have turned its holy ground into a place of rank buying and selling. An angry Jesus announces to the people, "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Matthew 21:13). When the city authorities, both religious and secular, become upset with His inflammatory pronouncements, He retreats eastward to the Garden of Gethsemane on the slopes of

the Mount of Olives, where He spends the bulk of the night praying and soul-searching, hoping amid the elemental darkness that the cup of suffering will be passed from Him and that He can somehow escape His coming trial by torture: "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44). So in a moment of extreme self-doubt and stark irony, Jesus begs to escape the coming crisis that He has intentionally precipitated by His long-delayed return to Jerusalem and His disruptive actions inside the Temple. He asks passionately, ardently, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (22:42).

The opening chapter of "The Jolly Corner," only a few pages in length, serves to introduce a similar spiritual crisis that Brydon has "precipitated" in his own life by returning to New York City after an absence of not just a few years but more than thirty (703). Relishing his life of cultured ease in faraway Europe—with no plans whatsoever for a repatriation to America—this prodigal son was compelled by the death of his last brother to sail back to the city of his ancestors in order to sign legal documents pertaining to inheritance. Once that simple task with the attorneys is accomplished, this last member of the Brydon dynasty had intended to return straightaway to his beloved Old World and there spend the remainder of his years with his fellow sophisticates and Europhiles. "How could anyone," he asks early on in chapter 1, "of any wit [want] to live in New York?" (704). However, just for the sake of nostalgia, the aging *bon vivant* decides to pay a visit to the grand house in which he was born and spent the first two decades of his life. But that one visit morphs into many, and Brydon soon becomes completely "obsessed with a metaphor" (Yeazell 171). Thus, he begins to roam the empty estate house night after night, postponing his planned return to Europe to do so: "It was what in these weeks he was living for" (James, "Jolly" 709).

This "obsession," what he calls his "secret thrill," gains so much control over him that he "sometimes came twice in the twenty-four hours" (709), hoping thereby to trigger a vision of his doppelgänger, the ghostly embodiment of the corporate American—a robber baron perhaps—whom he would have become had he remained in

New York City for those missing thirty-three years and followed in the footsteps of his businessman father. This was the traditional corporate lifestyle for which the young Brydon had been groomed and apprenticed from birth but had rejected outright with some vehemence, upon reaching maturity:

“What would it have made of me, what would it have made of me? I keep for ever wondering, all idiotically; as if I could possibly know! I see what it has made of dozens of others, those I meet, and it positively aches within me, to the point of exasperation, that it would have made something of me as well. Only I can't make out what, and the worry of it, the small rage of curiosity never to be satisfied, brings back what I remember to have felt, once or twice, after judging best, for reasons, to burn some important letter unopened. I've been sorry, I've hated it—I've never known what was in the letter.” (706)

As a result, even though he is repulsed by the clamor and the “ugliness of the city he has known since his youth” (Tambling 213), and even though he roundly condemns the American robber-baron class—his version of the moneychangers—for their huge profits, Brydon nevertheless is consumed with finding out whether he would have become one of “the Morgans, Rockefellers, and Carnegies” (Nixon 808), had he not followed what he now laments as “my perverse young course” (James, “Jolly” 706). In short, Brydon is a cloven man, “uncentered” and out of place amid “American consumer culture” with all of its noise, bustle, and turn-of-the-century “swagger” (Leithauser 21; Agnew 206; James, “Jolly” 698). Yet this man of refinement and ease is strangely “fascinated by the power behind the American scene” (Tintner, *Twentieth-Century* 13).

In chapter 2 of the story, which functions as the large middle “panel” of James's elegant prose triptych, Brydon begins—in grave earnest—to explore every room, floor, landing, and stairwell of his beloved ancestral home on the corner of his old block: “He walked there on the crisp November nights, arrived regularly at the evening's end” (James, “Jolly” 710), and he always goes there only after he has

eaten his late evening meal, quietly exiting a tony restaurant or the dining room of his club to make his way there on foot. As such, Brydon consumes a symbolic last supper every night before undergoing his emotional “passion” (724 *passim*), while locked deep inside “the great gaunt shell” of his old estate house (702), a neglected mansion that now stands unfurnished and unlit in a neighborhood that has over the years become both “dishonored and disfigured” (701). For him, it “was as easy to do this after dining out as to take his way to a club or to his hotel” (710).

As the “refined, hypersensitive” Brydon (Pollin 236) scours the mazelike house “night after night, carrying a sputtering candle” (Edel 621), he is in stealthy pursuit of his all-American double, the great capitalist success story—“He has a million a year” (James, “Jolly” 731)—whom he could have become, had he not relocated to Europe for over three decades and there lived what he now considers to have been a “selfish frivolous scandalous life” of Old World ease and comfort (707), all courtesy of Gilded Age capital that he did not lift a finger to earn. Significantly, he does the bulk of his clandestine searching amid “the upper rooms” of the old estate house (713 and *passim*), a choice of wording that clearly evokes the iconic “upper room” or the Cenacle in which Jesus spent his final evening with the disciples and there consumed what would prove to be his Last Supper (Luke 22:12):

And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. (22:14–16)

James likewise emphasizes several other high places—landings, balconies, overlooks—in the four-story brownstone, as Brydon, elevated and isolated, struggles through a “psychic crisis” over exactly who and what he really is as well as what qualities and talents he may have kept “dormant in his own organism” during his thirty-three years of self-exile in Europe (Tuveson 271; James, “Jolly” 699):

"If I had waited . . . then I might have been, by staying here, something nearer to one of those types who have been hammered so hard and made so keen by their conditions. It isn't that I admire them so much . . . it's only a question of what fantastic, yet perfectly possible development of my own nature I mayn't have missed." (James, "Jolly" 706–07)

And so in chapter 2 of the story, these elevated places of mental anguish, of spiritual suffering, serve to evoke the hill of Calvary. For instance, on the fourth floor landing "high above he was still perched" (720), and thus Brydon gazes "far down" from this high "station" night after night in hopes of catching a glimpse of his elusive American doppelgänger (713; 719), a dynamic man "of wealth and force and success" who moves confidently in and out of the shadows below (700): "*He* isn't myself. He's the just so totally other person. . . . But I do want to see him. . . . And I can. And I shall" (708). At one point while in this raised place of spiritual anguish, Brydon even stands for several moments with "his hands held off" to either side, his eyes closed, and his head "bent" forward in a pose that subtly but tellingly suggests the very "attitude" of a crucified man (719).

In this "gossamer-like" story so laden with memories and misgivings (Stern xviii), Brydon more than once describes his ancestral estate as a "consecrated" structure (James, "Jolly" 698 and *passim*). Therefore, the old mansion standing on the corner of what used to be one of New York City's most distinguished avenues is like a sacred temple to him, a site of transcendent pilgrimage and "mystical" experience (710). Indeed, this divided man practically worships "the mere sight of the walls, mere shape of the rooms, mere sound of the floors, mere feel, in his hand, of the old silver-plated knobs of the several mahogany doors, which suggested the pressure of the palms of the dead" (704). Exuding the concentrated "human resonance" of three generations of his family as well as "the impalpable ashes of his long-extinct youth" (703; 704), the run-down condition of the Brydon family mansion and its near derelict setting call to mind the decline of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in the early

decades of the first century AD and how, at Christ's last visit there, it had become the favorite haunt of the moneychangers and the dove sellers: "And he went into the temple" in order to cleanse it of the profiteers "and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought" (Luke 19:45).

Of course, Brydon's grand family temple—a place of "histories" and "relics"—is dedicated not to Jehovah but to American business and free enterprise (James, "Jolly" 700). The estate was built by his successful grandfather seventy years earlier, but then it was remodeled, enlarged, and "consecrated" by his even more successful father (698 and *passim*). Thus, in essence, it is like a second temple to Brydon. Yet this old house that conjures up so many "stirred memories" will soon meet the same fate as the once great temple of Herod (712). Besieged not by Roman soldiers but by turn-of-the-century "forces of transition" (Cox and Gilbert ix), the jolly corner mansion is slated to be demolished for the sake of urban renewal—"But I hope you don't mean they want you to pull this to pieces!" (James, "Jolly" 703)—and then a modern skyscraper can be built on the site. "They might come in now," Brydon sighs at one point, "the builders, the destroyers—they might come as soon as they would" (723). These words of architectural farewell, uttered so late in the long middle chapter of the tale, recall Christ's prophecy about the coming destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem:

And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. (Matthew 24:1–2)

That dire prophecy, mocked at the time by the powerful, comes to pass when the Romans under General Titus sack and destroy the Second Temple in AD 70 and then lay waste to all of Israel.

After many weeks of nocturnal searching for his American doppelgänger—"the ghostly possibility of the businessman he might have been" (Nixon 811)—Brydon decides that he will stay away

from the “consecrated” house on the jolly corner for three straight nights, thereby evoking the three days that Jesus spends in the garden tomb after His Crucifixion. At the end of this highly symbolic absence, Brydon returns to the estate in hopes of baiting a final confrontation with his other self, that “dominating Faustian self” of his nightmares and fancies (Fadiman 643). And it is on the highest floor of the old house that Brydon comes to one of the small “upper rooms,” where he is convinced that his all-American double, an “evil, odious, blatant” robber-baron type (James, “Jolly” 725), has taken refuge, causing Brydon to declare proudly, “I’ve hunted him till he has turned.” He then describes his cunning adversary as “the fanged or the antlered animal brought at last to bay” by his many weeks of determined “stalking” (714; 711).

However, much like Christ in the garden, Brydon is abruptly seized by a crippling self-doubt, so that in “the next moment he had broken into a sweat” (715). There is no blood mingled with his perspiration, of course, but the man’s sudden dread is palpable and profound. Realizing that “his curiosity” has placed him “in peril,” he begins “panting” in the darkness, trembling as well (724; 718). Thus, Brydon asks that the cup of suffering be passed from him also. Thus “recoiling” from the very confrontation that he has sought with his robber-baron shadow (722)—the “ideal of American masculinity” (Collister xii)—Brydon pleads instead to be allowed to avoid the horror of meeting “the ghost of his unrealized self” (Levine 186), that intimidating avatar of what he would have evolved into had he not chosen a carefree “life of unspecified dissipation in Europe” (Rawlings 277).

This dapper, monocle-wearing “man of culture and imagination” (Hughes 177), but of no real accomplishments, lingers for an agonizing moment in front of the closed door beyond which awaits the object of his long quest, the root cause of all of his “passion” in the old house (James, “Jolly” 724 and *passim*). Still, at the very moment of knowing, Brydon’s courage fails him, and so, drenched in sweat, he backs away from the supernatural encounter that he has long wanted. He decides for the sake of “discretion” that he will leave unrevealed the ruthless entity who lurks just behind that closed

door: “I spare you and I give you up. . . . I retire, I renounce—never, on my honour, to try again. So rest for ever—and let *me!*” (719). Giving up this “morbid obsession” at last (706), Brydon, exhausted and shamed, turns on his heels and hurries down four flights of stairs, planning to rush out into the street to find safety in noise, light, and other people: “He would have blessed that sign of life; he would have welcomed positively the slow approach of his friend the policeman, whom he had hitherto only sought to avoid” (720).

After this “descent” from his high place of agony (720)—a symbolic Deposition of sorts—when he is mere feet from the front door and the safety that waits just beyond it, Brydon asks, “wasn’t he now in *most* immediate presence of some inconceivable occult activity? It was as sharp, the question, as a knife in his side” (723). This imagined injury to Brydon’s flank echoes the last wound suffered by Christ on the cross: “But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water” (John 19:33–34).

Then just as Brydon sighs with relief and steps toward the door of deliverance, a “grey glimmering” mist begins to coalesce out of the chill November air, “a cold silvery nimbus that seemed to play a little as he looked—to shift and expand and contract” (James, “Jolly” 724). Blocking the means of his intended “escape” (723), this living vapor begins to assume “the very form toward which, for so many days, the passion of his curiosity had yearned. It gloomed, it loomed, it was something, it was somebody, the prodigy of a personal presence” (724). Once it is fully formed into his long-sought double, this assertive other Brydon, “spectral yet human, a man of his own substance and stature” (724), begins to advance boldly “as for aggression” (725). And so the weaker Brydon, the “sensitive expatriate” self (Bell 276), falls back, retreating before “the roused passion of a life larger than his own, a rage of personality before which his own collapsed, he felt the whole vision turn to darkness and his very feet give way. His head went round; he was going; he had gone” (James, “Jolly” 725–26).

In chapter 3 of James’s “famously ambiguous tale” (Claggett 198) about a conflicted American heir who spends the better part of his

life “dodging the question” of who and what he really is (James, “Jolly” 697), Brydon awakens gradually—very much like a man “emerging from [a] tomb” (705)—to find that his head is cradled in the lightly perfumed folds of the flowing dress of Alice Staverton. An unmarried woman of his own class and generation, this embodiment of “a slim mystifying grace” is a close friend from his old New York days (700), their mutually “remembered Eden” (Toibin x), and she has become his constant companion ever “since his repatriation” many weeks before (James, “Jolly” 697). Brydon describes her as “this disposition [a word play on Deposition] and this resource, this comfort and support” (697). As he slowly regains mental clarity after enduring his dark night of the soul, he tells this “pious” confidante who cradles him in her lap that he must have actually expired in the house of shadows and then somehow been brought back to life (700), resurrected as it were: “‘Yes—I can only have died. You brought me literally to life. Only,’ he wondered, his eyes rising to her, ‘only in the name of all the benedictions, how?’” (727).

An elegant, patrician woman who always has “the scent of a garden” about her (700), Alice, a lifelong New Yorker, becomes Brydon’s own Mary Magdalene, his faithful attendant and “the cornerstone” of his new life to come (Burlison 100)—after his resurrection and a concomitant “revelation” (James, “Jolly” 709 and *passim*). Mary, a native Galilean just like Jesus, never once doubted or abandoned her teacher and friend during His Passion. Therefore, on Easter morning as a reward for her devotion and her faith, she was the first to bear witness of the Resurrection of Christ, for she had come to the garden tomb to anoint His body with various “sweet spices” (Mark 16:1), only to find that “he is risen, as he said” (Matthew 28:6). So, as James’s “reverential” doppelgänger story comes to its “redemptive” conclusion (Rosenblatt 283; Hocks 82), Alice’s “refreshing fragrance” provides an olfactory allusion to the woman who came to the garden tomb at sunrise with her alabaster jar of ointments and spices in order to perform one last service for the fallen Christ (James, “Jolly” 726). In similar fashion, “the golden glow” (726), which bathes Brydon and his companion on the morning after his own “passion” (724 and *passim*), represents the redeeming

light of “beatitude” and peace (727), for they both realize that his “inner turmoil and division” have been exorcised forever (Hutchison 171), as this tortured man has at last come to terms with his choices in life: “It had brought him to knowledge, to knowledge—yes, this was the beauty of his state [and] he had only to let it shine on him” (James, “Jolly” 726–27). In short, through spiritual suffering and nightly passion, he “discovers that it is not too late for him to become the financial giant that he might have been” (Tintner, *Twentieth-Century* 12).

If Brydon, late of the Old World, can be interpreted as something of a Jamesian Christ figure for the Gilded Age—a “mocked” and “ravaged” man who begs for the cup of agony to be passed from him (James, “Jolly” 724, 731), then James’s decision to present this long “parable of loss and regret” in the form of a Christian triptych serves to intensify and deepen a three-part narrative of suffering that is already rich with “spiritual implications” as well as New Testament “reverberations” (Gorra 187; Rosenblatt 282; Sullivan 10). As the short chapter 3 comes to its gentle and luminous end, Brydon, having finally cleansed his ancestral temple, has become whole and is healed for all time by his fully immersive baptism in darkness the night before: “He could but wonder at the depth and duration of his swoon” (James, “Jolly” 728). With the morning sun upon his face and with a saintly woman “of impregnable stability” by his side (Wagenknecht 204), Brydon is now ready to walk out of the tomb-like house for the last time and give up his life of European leisure in order to preach his newfound “gospel of achievement” in the great city that he had previously scorned and condemned as some fallen Jerusalem (Tuveson 275).

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