Sounds Strangely Familiar: John Banville's Jamesian Pastiche

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In Michiel Heyns's *The Typewriter's Tale* (2005), James's amanuensis likes to "amuse herself" while taking dictation by "trying to predict the outcome of his rumination." Despite having succeeded "only once, when the elusive word turned out to be *thing*," she persists in trying to "pre-empt" her employer's "perversity." His similes are invariably "the opposite of what she anticipated," and a passage from "Julia Bride" proves no exception. The heroine gazes up at Murray Bush "from as far below as"—what? "A mountaineer all strainingly shading his eyes against the vertiginous slope of Mont Blanc?" "An adventurer beneath some tower sung in legend in which a golden-haired princess is incarcerated?" No, she gazes as through from "the point at which the school-child, comma, with eyes raised to the wall, comma, gazes at the particoloured map of the world. Full stop" (Heyns 2).

While Frieda's vague interrogatives appear to die in the air, James's sentence has a commanding rhythm; the two pauses build intrigue before the image unfolds, culminating in a fermata. This passage illustrates a popular perception: that James's sound is inimitable, that no-one could turn a cadence as he himself would. To attempt to do so, moreover, is to guarantee a parodic effect. Thus Benjamin Markovits argues that "it would be impossible, of course, to 'do' late

James; even if you could, the likely effect would be satirical rather than serious" (199). Similarly, William Skidelsky notes that "James's style—especially his 'late' one—has often been parodied … but no-one, as far as I know, has ever seriously tried to imitate it."[1] The extant parodies range from the well-known, such as Max Beerbohm's "The Mote in the Middle Distance" (1912) and "The Guerdon" (1925) and Theodora Bosanquet's "Afterwards" (1915), to the comparatively obscure, such as the parodies of *The Sacred Fount* surveyed by T.J. Lustig (25). As defined by Linda Hutcheon, such parodies are "ironic … adaptation[s]" (170), with an "overt and defining" relationship to James's texts (3). They are also very different entities from the text under consideration here, John Banville's *Mrs. Osmond* (2017). A sequel to *The Portrait of a Lady*, tracing Isabel's meandering return to Italy and confrontation with Osmond, Banville's novel also ventriloquises James's style with both seriousness and success.

The first chapter begins as follows:

> It had been a day of agitations and alarms, of smoke and steam and grit. Even yet she felt, did Mrs. Osmond, the awful surge and rhythm of the train's wheels, beating on and on within her. It was as if she were still seated in the carriage window, as she had sat for what seemed impossibly many hours, gazing with unseeing eyes upon the placid English countryside flowing away from her endlessly in all the soft-green splendor of the early-summer afternoon. (Banville 3)

We recognise the tangible physicality of the language, the parenthetical introduction of the protagonist, and the leisurely arrival of the final sentence at the "two most beautiful words in the English language" (qtd. in Wharton 128). When compared to the opening of "The Mote in the Middle Distance," the difference is readily apparent:

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[1] A possible counterpoint to the argument that late James is inimitable is W.H. Auden's *The Sea and the Mirror: A Commentary on Shakespeare's The Tempest*. In letters to Bernard Spencer, Auden described the sections of the poem written from Caliban's perspective as "a pastiche of James," "who was the great representative in English literature of what Shakespeare certainly was not, the 'dedicated artist' to whom art is religion" (xxxi-ii). The Jamesian style ventriloquised is undeniably late, to wit the rendering of "As you from crimes would pardon'd be, / Let your indulgence set me free' as '*the indulgence for which in his epilogue your personified type of the creative so lately, tamely pleaded. Imprisoned, by you, in the mood doubtful, loaded, by you, with distressing embarrassments, we are, we submit, in no position to set* anyone *free*" (27). Despite being framed as pastiche rather than parody, I contend that Auden's Caliban doth protest too much, and that the effect of James's circumlocutions issuing from Shakespeare's earthly creature is likely, in Markovits's words, to be "satirical rather than serious."

> It was with the sense of a, for him, very memorable something that he peered now into the immediate future, and tried, not without compunction, to take that period up where he had, prospectively, left it. But just where the deuce had he left it? The consciousness of dubiety was, for our friend, not, this morning, quite yet clean-cut enough to outline the figures on what she had called his "horizon" …. (x)

While Banville reproduces the distinctive sound of James's syntax, Beerbohm simply enumerates his mannerisms. These include his use of qualifications and the fronting of pronouns ("for him"), his illogical contortions (taking up the future where it has been prospectively left), his colloquialisms ("the deuce") and his quarantining of individual words ("horizon") within inverted commas, as though they might contaminate the rest of the sentence. Synecdoche is Beerbohm's main parodic technique, whereby "the parts (the traits) are taken for the whole (the totality of the original oeuvre)" (Milly, qtd. in Dyer 57). James's corpus contains many examples of these traits, but also any number of unremarkably straightforward sentences. By piling all of these characteristics into a few lines, Beerbohm suggests that James is no more than the sum of his idiosyncrasies. His influence, in this text, is like an egg bulging within a snake's body, whereas in *Mrs. Osmond* it is thoroughly digested and absorbed.

If Banville's engagement with James is more than simply parody, how, then, should it be categorised? In an interview, Colm Tóibín conspicuously avoided the most obvious definition, saying "I'm not finding it a pastiche. I'm not finding any false notes. It seems to me to be a genuine thing" (159). As indicated by Ingeborg Hoesterey, pastiche has a "dual structural profile" (*Pastiche* 83); it refers either to "an entity constructed of many imitative parts of varying provenance" (O'Donnell 154), or to "the extended imitation of the style of a single …. writer" (Sanders 5). Since the second definition is patently applicable to *Mrs. Osmond*, Tóibín's reluctance to use the term could have one of two causes. Either he (mis) understands it as synonymous with parody, whose humorous deformations are invoked in the reference to "false notes," or he sees it as something of a critical dirty word. Such negative connotations spring from Jameson's dismissal of pastiche as "blank parody," a diluted, postmodern version of a modernist form. According to Jameson, pastiche shares in parody's

> imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter. (17)

What is lost, for Jameson, in the devolution to pastiche is the possibility of access to the past (Brooker 111). Lacking the "critical distance" and "historical sensibility" necessary for parody, postmodernism "can only play with a degraded historicism" (Duvall 376).

More recently, critics including Hoesterey, Richard Dyer and Margaret Rose have done important revisionist work on pastiche, demonstrating its potential to reengage historicity with affect (Dyer 138) and to carry an "ethical/aesthetic thrust" (Hoesterey, "Genre Mineur" 86). Meanwhile, in James studies, David McWhirter and John Carlos Rowe have indicated the potential of postmodernist responses such as Donald Barthelme's to dispel "the stultifying aura of sanctity and reverence that had grown so thick around the modernist Master" (McWhirter 173), reassociating him with "a post-World War II cut-up and mimic, a literary clown" (Rowe 9). Furthermore, for Rowe and Gerald Graff, Barthelme's "deprivileging of literary claims to authority" is anticipated by James's own "radical subjectivism," which insight bridges the divide between "modernist seriousness and postmodernist play" (Rowe 8). Notwithstanding these critical recoveries, pastiche's stigma as a "minor, secondary" mode has proven adhesive in popular culture (Dyer 59). This is evident in the reviews of *Mrs. Osmond*, which were predominantly hostile towards its imitative qualities. Surveying these reviews will establish the nature of popular objections to *Mrs. Osmond* in particular, and to pastiche in general. I then make the case for the critical significance of Banville's engagement with *The Portrait* in terms of instruction, subversion, and pleasure, recuperating author at the same time as genre, before considering pastiche's theoretical implications.

In a review entitled "The impossibility of imitating Henry James," Charles Finch reaches the same conclusion as the fictional Frieda Wroth: that the particular music of James's prose is invulnerable to counterfeit. Thus by "opting for straight pastiche," Banville "fails" more "severely" than his contemporaries who wrote biographical fiction about James. The opposite argument suggests that a successful imitation is indeed possible, but is itself tantamount to failure. This is because James is, to misquote Ben Jonson, "of an age, not for all time"; thus to successfully imitate a nineteenth-century novelist is to fail as a twenty-first-century one. Such is the position of Jeffrey Eugenides and Helen Elliott, who hear James's sound as though it were the puff of a steam train: "ruminative and slow as the age he lived in" (Eugenides) but straightforward anachronism in 2017 (Elliott). A third objection is that any imitation is doomed to be incomplete, for James is more than his style. According to Eugenides, "a writer

isn't only what he writes, he's also what he leaves out, the intrinsic pattern of his noticing and attention. These things are as distinctive as a fingerprint and yet leave no mark." For anyone familiar with debates within adaptation studies, this argument savours of essence criticism; the pastiche, like an unsuccessful adaptation, fails to satisfactorily reproduce the core of the original. Therefore Banville can echo James's sound, but he cannot capture the Portrait-ness of *The Portrait*, the "heart of the artichoke hidden under the surface details of style" (Stam 15). This can be countered by the observation that James's essence, core, or heart is, by Eugenides' own admission, invisible. It is also subjective in the extreme, being located in the reader, not the author.

The final argument is that pastiche is a waste of the author's own style. Thus Eileen Battersby expresses incredulity that "an author with an international reputation as a literary stylist [would] expend his powers on impersonating the very difficult, often sonorous prose and syntax of a writer he clearly admires." This tends rather to elide the differences between James the first, James the second, and James the Old Pretender, sonority and difficulty being more characteristic of the late novels than the mid-period *Portrait*. Nor is Banville's "reputation as a literary stylist" singular and unchanging. He shifts in register depending on whether he writing historical fiction (*Kepler*, 1976), biographical fiction (*The Untouchable*, 1997, about a thinly-veiled Anthony Blunt) or a work of literary fiction like *The Sea* (2005). Moreover, the works published under Banville's pseudonym, Benjamin Black, are interpretable as pastiches of the crime-writing genre, especially *The Black-Eyed Blonde* (2014), an imitation of Raymond Chandler. Such an appetite for generic play is evident in *Mrs. Osmond*, which is, of course, a sequel as well as a pastiche. As a commercial form, the sequel is an unexpected way to respond to a writer of James's cultural cachet, and such perceived incongruence may also inform the adversarial reception outlined above. It is, however, a logical milestone in Banville's career-defining experimentation with genre.

In pursuing the argument that Banville's sequel has three primary effects—to instruct, to subvert, and to give pleasure—it will be crucial to differentiate between knowing and unknowing readers. As defined by Linda Hutcheon in the field of adaptation studies, an unknowing reader is oblivious to a text's status as an adaptation. The result need not be a "failed or insufficient reading" (Sanders 6), but it inevitably differs from the experience of the knowing reader, who is able to recognise an adaptation "as such and to know its adapted text" (Hutcheon 121). The paratext to *Mrs. Osmond* turns any prospective

reader into a knowing one; it includes a quotation from *The Portrait* as an epigraph,[2] while the blurb rehearses the novel's climax: the discovery of Osmond's "shocking, years-long betrayal" (Banville). If the reader has not already identified Banville's title as the married name of Isabel Archer, these other paratextual details ensure that the novel is received as a sequel. But what of Dyer's definition of pastiche as "a kind of imitation that you are meant to know is an imitation" (1)? Whatever Banville might have meant, there will inevitably be readers who recognise that the text is a sequel but not that it is a pastiche. This is because they lack foreknowledge of the style being imitated, not having read *The Portrait* or any other work by James. For such readers, *Mrs. Osmond* is less a pastiche than a primer, maximising the instructive potential to which this essay now turns.

While Seymour Chatman champions "the usefulness of parody for stylistic demonstration" ("Parody and Style" 27), parody's pedagogical qualities are diluted by its reliance on synecdoche, which means that demonstration frequently lapses into caricature. Although Banville happens upon similar characteristics to Beerbohm, the effect is radically different, demonstrating how "the intention inferred" determines whether "the same techniques" produce parody versus pastiche (Dyer 48). Whereas "The Mote in the Middle Distance" is limited to five paragraphs, *Mrs. Osmond* extends to nearly four hundred pages, a vast canvas that testifies to Banville's seriousness of intent. This makes the novel a rich and as-yet-untapped resource for the analysis of Jamesian style. Like Beerbohm, Banville happens upon James's quarantining, singling out individual words as if, Stuart Kelly remarked in *The Scotsman*, "they were held in tweezers." Thus Isabel, on first coming up to town, feels "dulled and dazed, like one who after a long illness is taken out for a supposedly invigorating 'spin'" (Banville 10). What Kelly treats as an affectation of Banville's was, of course, one of James's signatory mannerisms, seen in the description of Pansy Osmond's dress as "too short for her years, though it must already have been 'let out'" James, *Portrait* NYE 251). Kelly is right, however, to criticise Banville's "reams of alliterations," which are apparent in his opening description of "agitations and alarms, of smoke and steam and grit" and which re-infect the novel at intervals throughout (Banville 3). If this indicates pastiche's capacity to "deform the style of its

[2] "'Deep in her soul – deeper than any appetite for renunciation – was the sense that life would be her business for a long time to come.'—*The Portrait of a Lady*" (Banville).

referent" (Dyer 56), it is, in fairness, a rare false note from a voice that is otherwise highly attuned to James's.

Like *The Portrait of a Lady*, *Mrs. Osmond* contains arresting transitions from the abstract to the concrete; whereas James's Isabel is dismayed to find "the infinite vista of a multiplied life" reduced to "a dark narrow alley with a dead wall at the end" (*Portrait* NYE 456), Banville's experiences her break with Osmond as possessed of "such violent abruptness that her nerves still vibrated from the blow, like the tines of a tuning fork" (15). The image of a "blow" in connection with a relationship whose abuses are scrupulously non-physical elicits a corresponding vibration, a sympathetic shudder from the reader. For James, in turn, the image of a dark cul-de-sac connotes a veiled sexual threat, contributing subtly to the Palazzo Roccanerra's atmosphere of dread. The dialogue is, then, an instructive one, demonstrating how James exploits the transition from abstract to concrete to convey latent menace.

As Michael Wood comments in the *London Review of Books*, Banville "does a little Jamesian work with adverbs: "she miserably said," "she inconsequently murmured," "Osmond thinly smiled.'" One of James's favourite candidates for the split infinitive is the word "beautiful," as seen when a butler in *The High Bid* is asked "to whom do you beautifully belong?" (567). Similarly, in *The Portrait*, Henrietta Stackpole complains at finding Isabel "not the same as she once so beautifully was" (*Portrait* NYE 140), while for Ralph Touchett, Isabel's legacy is his father's "compliment … on your so beautifully existing" (244). Later in the novel, Osmond accuses Isabel of having "played a very deep game," and "managed it beautifully" (rather than "beautifully managed it") (514). The echoes of the former phrases make Osmond's syntax seem appropriately conventional, and sharpen our sense of his criticism.

James's use of the romance languages as linguistic seasoning has aged rather less well than other elements of his style, and has proven an irresistible target for parodists. Thus Arielle Zibrak provides a handy checklist for anyone suspicious that they may be "in a Henry James novel," of which number twenty is "English is your first and only language but, *comme cela se trouve*, you frequently employ French to communicate sarcasm." This is a direct quotation from James's Madame Merle, whose facility with the language almost persuades Isabel that "she's a Frenchwoman" (*Portrait* NYE 193). (Conversely, Amy Gemini's superlative borrowings fail to convince Osmond that Ned Rosier is indeed "simpaticissimo" (*Portrait* NYE 567). In *Mrs. Osmond*, similar Italianisms cluster, understandably, in the speech of Giancarlo, the major-domo of

Osmond's Florentine villa, who describes his employer as "the signor barone," and Francis Boott as Osmond's "amico Americano" (Banville 263). Other foreign loan words are scattered throughout the novel, as they are in *The Portrait*. But while the listicle format adopted by Zibrak makes her synecdoche even more concentrated than Beerbohm's, the expansiveness of *Mrs. Osmond* means that the more mannered elements of James's style are thoroughly attenuated.

For readers unfamiliar with James, Banville acts, then, as a cicerone, drawing back the curtain and indicating the defining features of *The Portrait*'s style. As outlined above, these include James's treatment of isolated words as though "vaguely contagious" (Wood), his skilful juxtaposition of abstract and concrete, his idiosyncratic use of adverbs, and his penchant for foreign vocabulary. This taxonomy serves to position future readers, injecting an element of familiarity into what might otherwise be a disorienting stylistic encounter. This line of argument does, however, veer dangerously close to the vexed conflation of adaptations with study aids. Under this reckoning, the value of the adaptive text depends on its "educational usefulness" to future consumers of its source (Cardwell 39). Eileen Battersby leans into this attitude, concluding her review of *Mrs. Osmond* with the following diagnosis: "if Banville succeeds, and he should, in making readers return to Henry James, this lively enterprise will prove a useful and generous gesture." This reduces *Mrs. Osmond* to 'Henry James lite' valuable only insofar as it readies readers minds for 'the real thing.' But as will now be demonstrated, *Mrs. Osmond*'s pedagogical usefulness is only one aspect of its effect. It has an equal and opposite capacity to supplant readings of James, thereby proving as subversive as it is instructive.

The first element of Banville's subversion lies in his appropriation of pivotal scenes from *The Portrait*. Scattered throughout Banville's novel are numerous prose summaries of crucial moments in James's; of these, the précis of Isabel's climactic confrontation with Osmond is perhaps the most sustained. James's catalyst is, of course, Isabel's wish to visit her dying cousin, a journey to which Osmond objects in the most eloquent terms:

> "I've an ideal of what my wife should do and should not do. She should not travel across Europe alone, in defiance of my deepest desire, to sit at the bedside of other men. Your cousin's nothing to you; he's nothing to us. You smile most expressively when I talk about *us*, but I assure you that *we*, *we*, Mrs. Osmond, is all I know. … You are nearer to me than any human creature, and I'm nearer to you. It may be a disagreeable proximity; it's one, at any rate, of our own deliberate making. You don't

> like to be reminded of that, I know; but I'm perfectly willing, because—because—" And he paused a moment, looking as if he had something to say which would be very much to the point. "Because I think we should accept the consequences of our actions, and what I value most in life is the honour of a thing!" (James, *Portrait* NYE 571)

Osmond's speech is a splendid piece of oratory, drawing on every technique in the rhetorical book in attempt to arrest Isabel's momentum. These include parallelism ("should and should not"; "you"/"us"/"we"; "nearer to me"/"nearer to you") and direct address ("you smile most expressively"; "*we*, Mrs. Osmond, is all I know"). The apparently spontaneous moments are, we suspect, equally studied; the slight stammer of "because—because" and the ensuing pause lends weight to Osmond's final judgment. The words themselves are similarly calculated, wilfully and pruriently misunderstanding Isabel's deathbed vigil. Osmond then opposes the image of Isabel "sit[ting] at the bedside of other men" to the sanctity of her being "Mrs. Osmond," which reminder affects her as though it were "the sign of the cross or the flag of one's country" (James, *Portrait* NYE 571).

Banville's Osmond is constrained by the limitations of indirect speech, but manages to express much of the same sentiment:

> [He] declared her to be committing a shameless and scandalous breach of the rules of right behaviour, those rules by which he, and she, too, or so he had thought until now, had determined life should, and could only in any decency, be lived. He did not seek to deny the pass their union had come to—there were depths of hypocrisy to which even he would not descend—or to pretend the damage done to it could be mended. Yes, they had suffered, and were suffering, and likely would continue to suffer—but that which cannot be cured must be endured, and courageously and uncomplainingly accepted. For it was imperative, he declared, to accept the consequences of our actions, even those in which we were grotesquely mistaken, for by that only—and here he grew paler and intenser still—only by that are we to value the most valuable of all we possess, which is *the honour of a thing*. (Banville 277-78)

The alliteration of "shameless and scandalous" and "rules of right behaviour" gives Osmond's reported speech the same premeditated quality as was noted in *The Portrait*. This effect is bolstered by the use of qualifications ("he, and she, too, or so he had thought"), discourse markers ("yes, they had suffered"), repetition ("and were suffering, and would continue to suffer"), parallelism

("for that only … only by that") and performative flourishes ("and here he grew paler and intenser still"). Free indirect discourse in Banville's novel thus becomes an effective simulacrum of direct speech in James's, a resemblance that coheres when we turn from form to content. *The Portrait*'s "ideal" becomes *Mrs. Osmond*'s "rules," while "a disagreeable proximity" is converted to "the pass their union had come to." These variations on a theme from *Portrait* culminate in direct echoes of James's phrases, namely "the consequences of our actions," "value [the] most," and "the honour of a thing."

By Dyer's reckoning, the intimacy of Banville's mirroring demonstrates how pastiche "embraces closeness: it accepts the possibility of being seduced, penetrated, dependent or ventriloquised, without seeing this as a significant and anxiety-producing loss of autonomy" (179). In this construction, pastiche is impressively magnanimous, acceding to its passive position without a peep of revisionary response. Such a reading would suggest a willing forfeiture of artistic agency on Banville's part, his only concern to acquaint the novice with the landmark moments in his source. Banville's cartology of *The Portrait*'s landscape is not, however, without its dangers. For what if the reader then decides that *Mrs. Osmond* is all the James they (n)ever need? In that case, the text of *The Portrait* is symbolically overwritten. Indeed, Banville's italicisation of "*the honour of a thing*" seems to anticipate such an outcome, flaunting his appropriation of James's words. In short, the proximity between James's text and Banville's risks that the reader's encounter with *The Portrait* will be placed on indefinite hiatus. In this scenario, pastiche is not, then, the faithful hound dogging the footsteps of the Master. It is more akin to an invasive species, overpowering and endangering the indigenous text.

Banville's second act of subversion concerns his technique of "discrepancy," which creates a slippage between form and content (Dyer 58). Here, the pastiching writer describes "something [the pastiched writer] could not have written about." The result is that "the style stands out qua style because it no longer belongs naturally, effortlessly, of course-ly, to the subject matter" (Dyer 58). The most intriguing example of discrepancy is Banville's treatment of sexuality. It is not that James" "could not have written about" Isabel and Osmond's brief honeymoon period, rather that he could not have written about it so explicitly. Banville describes Isabel's sexual awakening in the following terms:

> She had a vague notion of herself enveloped in a sort of sea-mist, inside which an essential aspect of her would remain untouched, unbreached, unbroken; instead, he had turned out to be not the mist but the sea itself, a violent element surrounding her on all sides and pressing irresistibly upon the shell of her very being … a deep part of herself, an essential part, a part as polished and impenetrable as a pearl …. What she discovered, with an awful thrill, was that nothing could be kept from him, that he would have everything of her, and the surprise and the shock of it were the swooning completeness of her surrender, the moaning abjection with which she prostrated herself before him. (267)

The most arresting element of this passage is its central metaphor of a "polished … impenetrable … pearl," which admits both symbolic and literal interpretations. Its breach is at once the figurative violation of Isabel's core selfhood, and a physical depiction of cervical contact. Readers turning from this frank recollection of Isabel's "moaning abjection" might find Goodwood's kiss, in *The Portrait*, something of a damp squib. It is no more than "a flash of lightning; when it was dark again she was free" (James, *Portrait* 622). But this is, of course, the 1881 text; when James revised the passage for the New York Edition of 1908 he made it considerably more explicit. The kiss, now, is

> like white lightning, a flash that spread, and spread again, and stayed; and it was extraordinarily as if, while she took it, she felt each thing in his hard manhood that had least pleased her, each aggressive fact of his face, his figure, his presence, justified of its intense identity and made one with this act of possession. (James, *Portrait* 627)

As Gorra points out, James "could not have written [this] in 1881" (328). He was enabled by the twenty-seven-year fissure, towards the end of which he girded his loins with *The Wings of the Dove* and *The Golden Bowl*. In the former, Merton Densher's "hallucination of intimacy" with Kate Croy is undeniably masturbatory (315), while the latter's image of Amerigo's "narrow strait" proceeding through Charlotte's "tightened circle" describes the literal moment of penetration as much as the abstract "seal" of their "pledge" (180). James's revisions to *Portrait* are emboldened by these late works. The lightning that served merely to illuminate Isabel's "very straight path" in 1881 is now undeniably orgasmic, a sensation "that spread, and spread again, and stayed," while the subsequent double-entendre figures Goodwood's "hard manhood" less as an abstract insistence and more as a physical pressing. Compared to this, Banville's passage might be more accurately described as a development

than a discrepancy. It extends and intensifies the kind of imagery James was using in the 1900s, and, in doing so, reveals how "frankly sexual" that imagery was itself (Gorra 328).

Banville's frankness serves, incidentally, to liberate Isabel's lost son, who in *The Portrait* existed solely to testify to the consummation of the marriage, but who in *Mrs. Osmond* creates an enduring, irresolvable vacancy. Banville's evocation of the Osmonds" initial passion also subverts the stubborn reading of *The Portrait's* ending as Isabel's flight from sexual possession. In this interpretation, the Osmonds' union is implicitly a sexless one, relegating Isabel, as Ralph feared, to "keep[ing] guard over the sensibilities of a sterile dilettante" (James, *Portrait* NYE 373). Banville's depiction of "swooning surrender" finds a parallel in *The Portrait*, where Isabel recalls having "so ardently given herself" to Osmond, and insists that his "charm" "had not passed away; it was there still; she knew precisely what it was that made Osmond delightful when he chose to be" (457-8). Those who (re)read *The Portrait* in the wake of *Mrs. Osmond* are thus primed to imagine Isabel's desire for Osmond outlasting the failure of the marriage. Indeed, Banville suggests that Osmond is fully cognisant of "*her* passion," and uses it to shore up "*his* power," awakening her hunger before leaving her "trembling in frustration and shame" (267-8). Such prurience enables a critical rereading of *Portrait*, which refuses to reduce Isabel's final choice to the tired formulation of duty (to Osmond) versus lust (for Goodwood). Banville's intimate rendering of the Osmonds' marriage, while more explicit than even the late James could countenance, is not, at the last, an imposition. Rather, it excavates *The Portrait*'s latent content, and intervenes in our attempts to understand its ending.

The subtle interplay between Banville and James's handling of sexuality brings us to the final aspect of pastiche's effect: to give pleasure. It is self-evident that these pleasures are inaccessible to the unknowing reader, for as Hoesterey asks, "how can one assess and aesthetically enjoy the conceit of the successor if one cannot perceive the play of differences vis-à-vis the original" (*Pastiche* 93)? Some of the most enjoyable conceits in *Mrs. Osmond* are its in-jokes, references to James's life and works that only readers familiar with those life and works can hear. James's friends Constance Fenimore Woolson and Francis Boott are referred to in passing, as though they existed on the same ontological plane as his characters, while Isabel's fear that she is "the carrier of … an obscure hurt" invokes the mysterious medical complaint that fascinated James's biographers (Banville 166). The texts summoned include *The Wings of the Dove* ("could she

ever entirely be again what she had been before?"; 92), *The Ambassadors* ("that night of the party at Gloriani's house" 156) and, most playfully, *The Golden Bowl*. The Countess Gemini struggles to recall the proprietor of "Fawns, that enormous and perfectly hideous mansion owned by that very rich American" (351), allowing the knowing reader to supply the name of Adam Verver. For Colm Tóibín, who incorporated scenes of inspiration for those same three novels in *The Master*, such inclusions enable "a private moment with two or three readers," but are wisely limited for fear of becoming "self-indulgent." Tóibín imagines a democratic contract with the reader, a promise that his book "would contain a world without you feeling, 'I'm not qualified to read this'" (158). And perhaps such a contract remains unbroken in *Mrs. Osmond*, for why should the unknowing reader suspect that Fawns is anything other than Banville's construction? But when Madame's Merle's "gaze fixed itself as upon a mote in the middle distance," the reader intimate enough with James's style to recognise its parodies tastes a pleasure heightened by exclusivity (Banville 326). They feel part of an intended audience, a coterie of taste. This hints at the smugness that haunts pastiche, whose pleasures might evaporate the instant they became more readily accessible.

Such a recognition crystallises what has been apparent throughout the essay: that while pastiche may be predicated on authorial intention, readers, and reading orders, are crucial to its effect. This makes the form theoretically interesting, suggesting a way of nuancing of one of postmodernism's central tenets. This is Roland Barthes' assertion that "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author" (148). Pastiche both enshrines the pastiched author and restores the intentionality of the pastiching one, for "the notion of meaning to" is integral to its definition (Dyer 2). However, the author restored through the act of pastiche is a radically different entity to Barthes' "Author-God," the "final signified" whose discovery "explain[s]" the text (147). Since pastiche is a transactional endeavour, functioning differently for knowing audiences than for unknowing ones, it relies on the reader for the production of its effect. In its instructive capacity, it either establishes expectations about Jamesian style or is measured against direct experience of that style. In its subversive one, it can affect either how *The Portrait* is read, or whether it is read at all, while its pleasures are also contingent on readerly foreknowledge. While resurrecting the author, pastiche thus avoids an equal and opposite "death of the reader" by activating their critical engagement.

In the face of Barthes's "persistent binaries" (Brooker 112), pastiche insists, then, that we can have it both ways, maintaining the author without surrendering Barthes' hard-fought readerly agency. And, now that we are looking, such a conclusion is anticipated in one of Banville's opening tableau. Isabel, dining at Pratt's, exchanges glances with a fellow diner, whose "stout appearance, bearded and balding" leads us to suspect that this is none other than James himself (17). While he leaves before they have chance to speak, Isabel admits that "definitely, mysteriously, she did miss him, now that he was gone" (20). This suggests a nostalgia that is in keeping with Barthes' later admission: "in the text, in a way, I desire the author: I need his figure … as he needs mine" (*Pleasure* 27). But consider what 'James' leaves behind him, propped by a jug on his vacated table. A "folded newspaper": a surrendered text (Banville 21). It is a message offered from author to reader: take it, and make of it what you will.

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