

Although the strains of fin-de-siècle world weariness are evident enough, the short stories are also punctuated by vitality and intensity. As the editors note, Dowson took special care about matters of style, and his language reflects the craftsman's attention to detail. Deft use of adjectives makes the scenes and portraits of individuals vivid: "The air was heavy with the smell of flowers, full of soft vibrations—the *frou-frou* of silken skirts, the rustle of posturing fans" (112). Dowson was drawn to the moments that come in the plot just after the denouement, when the intensity of the climax still lingers but the characters' fates have been determined and can no longer be changed. A dominant theme is that the main character is compelled to recognize how wrong it would be to traduce erotic love for the sake of a conventional marriage. What distinguishes the stories from tawdry romance are the turns toward renunciation, toward accepting the emptiness and sterility of bourgeois norms. In "Statue of Limitations" a man spends too long abroad, surviving "doggedly on quinine and hope," only to commit suicide on the return home rather than face the woman he had hoped to win with his acquired capital. Whatever is left of chivalry is yielding to the power of money. In "An Orchestral Violin" the virtuoso consumes a fleeting recollection of the girl who once had saved him from the street and who had been his dearest companion: "Over the memories it has excited I have smoked a pleasant cigar—peace to its ashes!" (71). The most experimental text, "The Dying of Francis Donne: A Study," works with free indirect discourse to take the narrative to the very brink of death.

The editors have collated such editions and manuscripts as survive. The preface is balanced and does not attempt to overstate Dowson's significance, while pointing to issues that remain pertinent today, such as the deformations created by artificial social norms and the difficulties that arise when gender roles are being renegotiated. The endnotes could be a bit more informative in places, since not every reader will be comfortable with French passages and settings. But on the whole the editors and the press are to be commended for bringing Dowson's short prose to our attention in this elegant volume.

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A New Reading of "The Wings of the Dove"

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Edward Wasiolek

Despite the title of this volume of fewer than one hundred pages by a Japanese professor of English Literature at Shinshu University Nagano, Japan, there is little new in the volume. It reads like a study guide, proceeding in a systematic reading of passages through the novel, with commentary on key scenes and principal characters. Although the readings are by and large

unobjectionable, they retrace largely known grounds. There is a consistent and genteel approval of James and his craft, but little awareness of the acrimonious debate that *The Wings of the Dove* has occasioned. The novel has been called by some the best of James and by Maxwell Geismar in *Henry James and the Jacobites* "singular, fantastic, baroque and Byzantine in its values and in its form alike, a silly melodrama." The author's access to criticism on James was largely restricted to some major works on James (Leo Edel is not mentioned), and no access to the periodical literature. These are severe restrictions, and one wonders what motivated this work and who was the intended audience. Still, one stands in awe at a Japanese making his way through James's torturous method, and writing about it in a reasonable, if not always idiomatically correct, way. The linguistic bridges the author traverses, not only across languages so distant from one another but also across James's English and standard English, are formidable. Native speakers are driven to exasperation by James's style and method in his so-called later phase, of which *The Wings of the Dove* is part. I cannot imagine that James gets better in foreign translation.

It is the constant circling about a personage or situation and the deliberate distancing of the reader from direct statement that can try the patience of even the most devoted reader. The first volume of *The Wings of the Dove* is sheer torture. To be sure, James justified this procedure by an appeal to the complexities of sensibility and consciousness. When he is at his best, his endless circlings can take us to an astonishing labyrinth of delicacies of sensibility and consciousness. James shows us, as an example, how an exquisite aesthetic sensibility, as in the character of Gilbert Osmond in *The Portrait of a Lady*, can at the same time, by way of that aesthetic sensibility, be cruel and corrupt. And James also shows us how someone as good, intelligent, and mature as Isabel Archer can be blind to such corruption. It is not that a corrupt person can be, at the same time, both cruel and sensitive to beauty. It is the very sensibility that can be both. In the best of James every understanding is a call to further understanding; every insight grounds for further insight.

But this is not so in *The Wings of the Dove*. Seven hundred pages of circling around a rather simple and sordid situation is an exercise of a method going nowhere. When we abstract the essentials of this drama from the biomass of wordage, not much is left except for a mixture of greed and cruelty expended on a beautiful dying girl. It simply stretches probability or even common sense that Densher would give up the money for the abstract love of a dying and then dead girl. We are never shown in any persuasive way that Densher experiences the emotional changes that are posited about him. Nor is the object of so much analysis and reflection, Millie, ever convincingly presented. Although we are led to believe in the celestial purity of Milly, the purity is stated but not shown. She seems at times merely a necessary proposition in the deadly game of Densher, Kate, and Mrs. Landau. Nor is the "love" of Densher and Kate presented in any convincing way. James was never able to write about love as believable passion.

The best he can do here, even though the novel hinges on Milly's love for Densher, is to give us a few polite and choreographed scenes of courtship. We are a half century since the James' "mania" in the sixties and see him now as a writer of some excellent works and some bad works. This is a bad work.

I don't see what this small study contributes to the history of criticism on James, and perhaps it was not intended to do so. If, as it seems, the study is intended as a guide for Japanese students in the study of English literature, then it may serve this purpose. We are not told, by way of bibliography or comment, whether there exists other works on James in Japan and how this study modifies or amplifies these works. The volume holds little of use for the English reader, but commentary on how or if James has been received in Japan would have been of interest to English and American readers. We know that he has not been well received in Europe and that, when Russian readers are asked about him, they invariably confuse him with his brother, William James.