

A POSSIBLE SOURCE FOR ELEMENTS IN *THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY*

One of the many valuable services of Professor Oscar Cargill's book *The Novels of Henry James* is to summarize efficiently the sizable body of criticism showing that James used literary and real-life sources for many of his fictional characters and situations. We are reminded, for example, in the chapter on *The Portrait of a Lady* that Isabel Archer derives in part from two George Eliot novels, from earlier Jamesian heroines, from James's beloved cousin Minny Temple, and from aspects of the personality of James himself when he was younger. Further, Gilbert Osmond, we are reminded, may owe something to a couple of Eliot characters and to James's real-life Italianate American friend Frank Boott. Professor Cargill also points out possible literary sources for some of the general plot situations in *The Portrait of a Lady*.¹

Feeling sympathetic with much of this type of criticism, I should like to support it, if I may, by suggesting a real-life situation, undoubtedly known to James, which he may have transmuted into part of the plot of *The Portrait of a Lady*. I refer to the manner in which Caspar Goodwood leaves Rome, accompanying the mortally sick Ralph Touchett as a kindness to Isabel Archer Osmond, the object of Goodwood's hopeless love. Ralph decides to take the train from Rome, presumably via Paris, home to Gardencourt forty miles from London. The

1. OSCAR CARGILL, *The Novels of Henry James* (New York, 1961), pp. 78-92. For Boott, Italy, and James, see LEON EDEL, *Henry James: The Conquest of London: 1870-1881* (Philadelphia and New York, 1962), *passim*. Edel suggests that Boott's daughter Lizzie, who spent all but the first year of her first nineteen years in Italy, was the model for Gilbert Osmond's daughter Pansy in *The Portrait of a Lady* (EDEL, *James*, pp. 109-11).

two men—with Henrietta Stackpole, to be sure²—hope to « travel northward... as soon as the first mild weather would allow it ».³

Now, during his first visit to Rome, in 1869 — or if not at that time, then surely when he returned to live there for several months at No. 101 Corso in 1873 and 1874 — Henry James met Louisa Ward Crawford Terry,⁴ the widow of Thomas Crawford the American sculptor who had left his home at Villa Negroni in Rome to die at the age of forty-four in London of eye and brain cancer in 1857 (just twenty years before Ralph Touchett's death⁵). Louisa had remarried four years later. When James met her, she was the wife of Luther Terry,⁶ an American painter long resident in Rome and an old friend of the Crawford family there.⁷ James later became a

2. Miss Stackpole probably owes something to the sculptress Harriet Hosmer (1830-1908), the Massachusetts-born anatomical student who in 1852 went to Rome to study sculpture, working there under John Gibson from 1853 to 1860. Thomas Crawford, about whom I write later in my text above, was offended by her freedom of action. William Wetmore Story, another American sculptor in the circle which included Crawford, also found the behavior of this redoubtable *scultrice* too free and easy; see HENRY JAMES, *William Wetmore Story and His Friends* (2 vols.; Boston and New York, 1903), I, 255. James met Miss Hosmer at the sumptuous Palazzo Barberini apartment of the Storys; see Edel, *James*, p. 93. It is strange that Nathaniel Hawthorne when he met Miss Hosmer in Rome in May, 1858, should have judged her more liberally and fairly than did his younger contemporaries.

3. HENRY JAMES, *The Portrait of a Lady*, ed. by LEON EDEL, Riverside Edition (Boston, 1956), p. 406.

4. See LEON EDEL, « Introduction » to *Roderick Hudson* by HENRY JAMES, Harper Torch-books (New York, 1960), p. xi; and EDEL, *James*, p. 92.

5. Ralph dies in 1877 if we accept the persuasive chronology presented in M. E. GRENANDER, BEVERLY J. RAHN, and FRANCINE VALVO, « The Time-Scheme in *The Portrait of a Lady* », *American Literature*, XXXII (May, 1960), 133.

6. For the best brief account of Luther Terry, see LOUISE HALL THARP, *Three Saints and a Sinner: Julia Ward Howe, Louisa, Annie and Sam Ward* (Boston, 1956), pp. 271-74.

7. Letters in my possession prove that Crawford knew Terry at least as early as the summer of 1853. From Villa Negroni in Rome on July 2, 1853, Crawford wrote his wife, then vacationing with their children at Interlaken: « I am grateful to Terry for his kindness and attention to you all on the road ». On August 7 of the same year he wrote, « Thanks, dearest

casual friend of Francis Marion Crawford, the novelist-son of Louisa and her first husband. F. Marion Crawford had been born in Bagni di Lucca and was later to live, write, and die in Sorrento.⁸ In his *Notes of a Son and Brother*, James writes of him as « my eminent friend » and « The most endowed and accomplished of men ».⁹ But it was probably from the Terrys in their Palazzo Odescalchi apartment¹⁰ that James learned of Luther Terry's Goodwoodlike act of kindness to Thomas Crawford. The sculptor was mortally sick in Rome in January, 1857. When he decided to go to Paris for medical aid, his friend Terry offered to accompany him. As Crawford wrote his wife, then vacationing in America (rather like the independent Lydia Touchett), « You will be glad to learn that Terry has made up his mind to go as far as C[ivita] Vecchia with me and maybe to Paris, as he says he always gets ill in Rome about Feb[ruary] ». Crawford continued, « I shall be very glad to have his company certainly though I shall be dreadfully bored if I discover that Terry only gives me his company because many persons desire that I should not go alone ».¹¹ Crawford sounds a little like a naive Ralph Touchett, who in February more candidly responded to Miss Stackpole's gene-

lou, for transcribing Terry's art notices ... Terry is a very sensitive fellow ... I hope he may return to Rome with an Eldorado in his purse and a wifey to keep it in order for him. I shall be glad to thank him in person for his kindness to you all during the journey ». For a general account of Terry's relationship with the Crawford family, see my *Thomas Crawford, American Sculptor* (Pittsburgh, 1964), pp. 145, 172, 177, 179-81, 184, 186.

8. For an excellent brief sketch of Francis Marion Crawford, see REGINA SORIA, « Rome in F. Marion Crawford's Novels », *Italica*, XXXIII (December, 1956), 280. The most complete survey of F. M. Crawford's fiction is in ARTHUR HOBSON QUINN, *American Fiction: An Historical and Critical Survey* (New York, 1936), pp. 385-403.

9. HENRY JAMES, *Notes of a Son and Brother*, in his *Autobiography*, ed. by FREDERICK W. DUPEL (New York, 1956), p. 531.

10. The Palazzo Odescalchi is located in the Piazza dei Santi Apostoli, opposite the Palazzo Colonna; see EDEL, *James*, p. 89. Isabel Archer's Palazzo Roccanera may be partly based upon the Palazzo Antici Mattei, off the Via Botteghe Oscure; see R. W. STALLMAN, *The Houses That James Built and Other Literary Studies* (East Lansing, 1961), p. 9.

11. Thomas Crawford to Louisa Ward Crawford, Rome, January 13, 1857, in my possession; quoted in part in my *Crawford*, p. 179.

rous offer to help him north from Rome, « I notify you then that I submit. Oh, I submit ».¹² Crawford too submitted, writing to his wife ten days later from Paris, « The good Terry has made up his mind to pass at least a month in Paris, and so concluded to come on all the way with me ».¹³ Another slight similarity is the fact that Ralph at first demurs, saying, « I shall have people [servants] with me »,¹⁴ while Crawford, in the report from Rome to his wife about Terry, added, « I take the Venerable St. Giuseppe [his most faithful servant], who is much pleased to be getting the trunks all packed... ».¹⁵ Further, we later read that Ralph « arrived more dead than alive » and that his mother Lydia, « who had just returned from America », was with him at the Touchett estate outside London.¹⁶ As for Crawford, he had a paralytic attack in Dijon, on the way to his destination;¹⁷ and his wife, who had been summoned from America, soon joined him in Paris, at which time Terry naturally dropped from view as thoroughly as but longer than does Goodwood, who after Ralph's death returns with a proposal infinitely quicker and more dramatic than Terry's much later one to Louisa in Rome.

There are minor comparisons as well between characters and situations in *The Portrait of a Lady* and the lives of Crawford, Louisa, and Terry. Crawford was an expatriate of as long standing as Gilbert Osmond, but he had a personality and a genius twenty times as worthwhile.¹⁸ Louisa, once one

12. JAMES, *The Portrait of a Lady*, p. 407.

13. Thomas Crawford to Louisa Ward Crawford, Paris, January 23, 1857, in my possession; quoted in part in my *Crawford*, pp. 179-80.

14. JAMES, *The Portrait of a Lady*, p. 407.

15. Crawford to Louisa Crawford, January 13, 1857.

16. JAMES, *The Portrait of a Lady*, p. 436.

17. GALE, *Crawford*, p. 179.

18. I have shown in « Roderick Hudson and Thomas Crawford », *American Quarterly*, XIII (Winter 1961), 496-504, that James probably used certain aspects of the personality and career of Thomas Crawford for part of his characterization of Roderick Hudson. In addition, I show in « James' THE NEXT TIME », *Explicator*, XXI (December, 1962), 35, that certain traits of Crawford's son F. M. Crawford were probably in the mind of James when he wrote his short story « The Next Time ».

of « The Three Graces of Bond Street »¹⁹ in New York City (along with her sisters Julia Ward Howe²⁰ and Annie Ward Mailliard, who like Isabel's two sisters crossed the Atlantic Ocean to visit their newly married sister once she was ensconced in Rome), had all the lithe charm, intelligence, wilfulness, and spiritual strength of Isabel; further, exactly like Miss Archer, she was an heiress who braved family objections to marry as she chose and then to settle in Rome.

Obviously James's purpose in producing *The Portrait of a Lady* was not to write veiled biography but instead a highly imaginative novel. And so there are many differences between possible source and finished fiction. Isabel made a miserable marriage to an effete snake, whereas Louisa married an artist who was consideration itself both as husband and as father and who earned great fame in a short lifetime. And Goodwood undoubtedly will suffer delays perpetual after the close of the novel, while Terry did not. Still, Luther Terry like Caspar Goodwood considerably helped from Rome a man who later died in London; and he did so partly because he knew that it would please a gentle woman.

ROBERT L. GALE

19. THARP, *Three Saints and a Sinner*, p. 3.

20. James used Julia Ward Howe as the model for his picturesquely ugly central character in his short story « The Beldonald Holbein »; see *The Notebooks of Henry James*, ed. by F. O. MATTHIESSEN and KENNETH B. MURDOCK (New York, 1947), pp. 290-91.