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YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

A LEVINASIAN JOURNEY: DESIRING TO BE THE OTHER;
REPRESSION AND BROKEN REVIVALS IN *THE*
AMBASSADORS AND *THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY*

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ÖZ

A LEVINASIAN JOURNEY: DESIRING TO BE THE OTHER; REPRESSION AND BROKEN REVIVALS IN *THE AMBASSADORS* AND *THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY*

SEMAHAN AVCI

Bu tez, Amerikan edebiyatının iki farklı dönemini ve yazarını inceler. Bunlardan biri Modern Amerikan edebiyatının temsilcisi Henry James, diğeri ise II. Dünya Savaşı sonrası Amerikan edebiyatı yazarı Patricia Highsmith'tir. İki dönem ve iki yazar ilk bakışta birbiriyle çok ilgili görünmese de onların bu çalışmada birlikte incelenmelerini sağlayan nokta, yarattıkları karakterlerin motivasyonları ve geleneksel olmayan cinsel kimliklerdir. Hem Henry James'in *The Ambassadors* (1903), hem de Patricia Highsmith'in *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955) romanlarında, “dik başlı evlatları” keşfetmek için gittikleri Avrupa'dan “hakiki yuvalarına” geri götürmek arzusu vardır. Bu görev, Avrupa'ya elçi olarak gönderilen iki ana kahraman olan Lewis Lambert Strether ve Tom Ripley tarafından gerçekleştirilecektir. Emmanuel Levinas'ın etiksel (ahlaki) perspektifi; başkasına yönelme ve başkasının yüzü ile olan karşılaşma gibi Levinasçı kavramlar bu çalışmanın temel argümanlarına kuramsal çerçeve oluşturacaktır. Öte yandan Queer Teori bu eserleri yorumlamada anahtar görevi görecektir çünkü aynı cinsten bireylere duyulan üstü kapalı ve baskılanmış arzu, burada tartışılan karakterlerin etik ya da etik olmayan davranışlarında harekete geçirici bir görev üstlenecektir. Bu tezde seçilen iki roman, içerikleri itibariyle queer yorumlamaya müsaittir ve etik kavramının davranışa nasıl yansıdığı açısından birbirleri arasındaki kontrast rahatça görülebilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Levinas, Etik, Modern Amerikan Edebiyatı, Henry James, başka, Patricia Highsmith, Queer Teori.

ABSTRACT

A LEVINASIAN JOURNEY: DESIRING TO BE THE OTHER; REPRESSION AND BROKEN REVIVALS IN *THE AMBASSADORS* AND *THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY*

SEMAHAN AVCI

This thesis examines two different periods and authors of American literature. One of them is Henry James, the representative of Modern American Literature, and the second one is Patricia Highsmith who is a writer of American literature Post-World War II. Although these two periods and writers do not seem to be very relevant to each other at first glance, the point that enables them to be examined together in this study is the motivation of the characters they create and the non-traditional sexual identities. In both Henry James's *The Ambassadors* (1903) and Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955), there is the desire to fetch “the wayward sons” from Europe, where they have left to explore. This will be done by Lewis Lambert Strether and Tom Ripley, the two main heroes sent to Europe as ambassadors. The ethical perspective of Emmanuel Levinas; Levinasian concepts such as directedness towards the other person and encounter with the face of other will constitute the theoretical basis for the focal arguments of this study. On the other hand, Queer Theory will serve as the key to interpreting these works because the implicit and suppressed desire for individuals of the same sex will play a stimulating role in the ethical or unethical behavior of the characters discussed here. The two novels chosen in this thesis are suitable for queer interpretation by their content and the contrast between them can be seen in terms of how the concept of ethics reflects on the behavior.

Keywords: Levinas, Ethics, Modern American Literature, Henry James, the other, Patricia Highsmith, Queer Theory

PREFACE

This thesis is the result of my life-long interest in people with non-traditional sexualities and identities. Examining this with another concern that has weighed on my mind for a long time, namely being an ethical human being in a dark world, has made me realize how important it is to see people as they are without judging them and being a better person as a result. At this point, I would like to thank my thesis supervisor Asst. Prof. Dr. Kudret Nezir Yunusođlu, who has a very welcoming and open-minded approach in providing me with an opportunity to express my thoughts and researches on this subject, which has a special place in my heart.

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INTRODUCTION

The influence of religion and the Bible has played a significant role in the American Puritan way of life and its formation since the beginning. As seen in Nathaniel Hawthorne's renowned novel *The Scarlett Letter* for instance, religion has become an undeniable tool in revealing how moral behavior is formed or how people are judged and stigmatized by religion. Religion has always been an indispensable constituent of American society and its literature as well. The Puritan influence on American literature since the beginning is described as;

“The Puritans, like Americans during the 1860’s and the 1990’s, saw themselves as a covenanted people, chosen to establish a model of universal reformation. In this typology of America’s mission, as articulated by Lincoln himself, the war is presented as a punishment inflicted upon a sinning people so that all might be redeemed. While Thoreau, dubbed “*The Last of the Puritans*,” bestows his blessing upon John Brown’s self-anointed role as an American Gideon, Howe sounds the apocalyptic jeremiad of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” and Stowe, in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, presents a christological Tom, succeeded by an antitypal George who carries into Africa “the lessons they ... learned in America,” which is to say the lessons of Puritan Protestantism, as listed by the author: “property, reputation, and education.” This is also the main theme of John William De Forest’s *Miss Ravenel’s Conversion from Secession to Loyalty* (seen by many as the first instance of American literary realism), in which the war is portrayed as a climactic fifth act in a drama of sacred history, starting with the Christian Revelation, followed by the Protestant Reformation, the War of American Independence, and the French Revolution, finally culminating in the struggle for universal freedom without distinction as to race or color.”

(Verney, 2013:2)

Puritan Americans have been guided by religion in their struggle to find answers on how to live their lives in a moralistic or ethical way and they have been directed towards religion to find solutions to their moral struggles. While this is also true for today, as with other things, it is known that change is inevitable, and religious perception and dogmatism have also evolved in American society. According to researcher Mauro Berghe:

“Over the past 50 years, America, which was already progressive from the start, has turned away from some remaining traditional values and replaced them with more modern ideas. America has become less and less secular and is supportive of some major cultural changes. Many Americans nowadays support gender equality, gay marriage and fluid gender identities. Moreover, they are relatively tolerant towards migrants, refugees, foreign cultures and diversity in general. However, these progressive tendencies are not supported by everyone. Research shows that openmindedness is closely linked to wealth, gender and education. Older, less educated males are more likely to hold traditional beliefs. In modern America there is a war going on between the supporters of post-materialist values and those of materialist values. These fast changes make conservatives feel like they have been left behind and become irrelevant. They have become frustrated with the system and start to lean towards populist ideas.”

(2018: 41)

Each nation has – one way or the other – some events in its history that made its ethical behavior questionable. Those events tested the nations’ behavior towards human beings. For Germany, that is Nazism or Hitlerism. For American history, it is slavery. It gives way to a discussion regarding the moral choices of the people in the 18th and 19th centuries since it is a morally questionable practice which involves the cruel treatment of other human beings. At this point, giving a reference to the part it played in America’s moral history becomes crucial. In *The Declaration of Independence*, it is stated that;

“We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with inherent and inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,”

(Jefferson, 1776)

Thomas Jefferson, who wrote this Declaration, owned slaves, and the fact that slave trade in America was a common practice at the time of this Declaration led to a criticism of this expression and its interpretation as an ironic and hypocritical statement. Since the beginning of a national literature and the autonomy of the country, ethical problems have featured in American literature due to the existence of slavery. The practice of slavery and its broad application in America during the 18th and 19th centuries resulted in the discussion of ethical issues and the moral status of those who carried out this unethical practice. In this way, ethical problems in American literature have begun to find a place for themselves in a more significant way. Slavery was a suitable theme to be focused on in showcasing the morality or the

lack thereof in relation to the behavior manifested in the treatment of human beings as advocated from different perspectives by Northern polemicists. In *A Concise Chronicle History of the African-American People Experience in America* written by Henry Epps, how the period was seen by the later abolitionists of the slavery is explained as;

“ "Antislavery men", such as John Quincy Adams, did not call slavery a sin. They called it an evil feature of society as a whole. They did what they could to limit slavery and end it where possible, but were not part of any abolitionist group. For example, in 1841, John Quincy Adams represented the Amistad African slaves in the Supreme Court of the United States and argued that they should be set free.”

(2012: 126)

On that theme, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* represents a moralistic view regarding the evil nature of slavery and what it meant for the people who justified this cruelty by the Gospel or by religious dogma. Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* on the other hand, deals with issues such as one's being away from societal prejudices and making decisions based on his own moral beliefs, choosing goodness over bad or wrong behavior. As a result, it can be argued that slavery was one of the most obvious and problematic aspects of American literature at the beginning, thus displaying the significance of ethical issues in the tradition.

In the periods that followed, Puritan America and its literary tradition produced works with more progressive subjects and perspectives. The introduction of literary criticism has taken these unequivocal points and comments into effect. Different interpretations have begun to find a more valid and distinctive place for themselves. Literary texts have started to be criticized in various different ways. Since some critics began to examine the aesthetic aspects of literature as well, it has been argued whether aesthetic considerations make a work good or bad in terms of artistry. The early writers of the Aesthetic movement advocated that art should have beauty instead of a moral or an ethical dimension. Others such as Nietzsche advocated the opposite by stating that;

“When the purpose of moral preaching and of improving man has been excluded from art, it still does not follow by any means that art is altogether purposeless, aimless, senseless — in short, l'art pour l'art, a worm chewing its own tail. "Rather no purpose at all than a moral purpose!" — that is the talk of mere passion. A psychologist, on the other hand, asks: what does all art do? does it not praise? glorify? choose? prefer? With all this it strengthens or weakens certain valuations. Is this merely a "moreover"? an accident? something in which the artist's instinct had no share? Or is it not the very presupposition of the artist's ability? Does his basic instinct aim at art, or rather at the sense of art, at life? at a desirability of life? Art is the great stimulus to life: how could one understand it as purposeless, as aimless, as l'art pour l'art?”

(1997: 65)

In order to make this relationship between literature and ethics clear, the first chapter deals with the ethical approach of Levinas as well as Henry James's and Patricia Highsmith's literary styles, the motivations of the characters they created and the reasons why they chose to write their works from a moralistic perspective.

The two American novels selected here will be discussed from a moral perspective. Therefore, it is important to give a background for the ethical aspect of this thesis. Ethical behavior has been discussed since the time of the Ancient Greek philosophers to the present age. Philosophers have made attempts to give answers about what is right or wrong for humanity throughout history. They have argued about whether people are inherently good or bad, why they choose right or wrong or act towards the other people in predetermined ways. As human nature is very complex, these questions are still debated. The values of human behavior or examining moral problems, rightness and wrongness of actions, varieties of good or desirable things, actions that are callow or commendable are the main concerns of the ethics.

There may be countless external factors that lead a person to be good, as well as factors that push him to evil. The behavior that comes from a human being and the circumstances that push him to that behavior can be completely varied. The sense of being caught in the middle of choices will be one of the issues discussed in this thesis. In other words, whether a person shapes his behavior according to the situation he is in and whether external factors push him into various behaviors according to the classification of the influences are among the topics that are focused

on. Bad behavior can be attained as a result of these factors, however, how justified it can be is related to the ethical evaluation of human behavior. Unethical or bad behavior such as murder, breaching the rights of the other people, theft etc. are always frowned upon in society and are seen as wrong. However, the factors that push people to these malicious behaviors can also be examined and can be debated within the works having an ethical dimension such as *The Ambassadors* and *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, which are discussed here. In this study, the matter of discussion is where the two selected works of the American literature stand on the ethical spectrum.

One's desire for the other person, which is among the biggest motivations of human behavior and the ethical behavior which is born out of it, will bring these two areas together in this thesis. Emmanuel Levinas made possible for us to adapt his ethical approach when he created his ethics for the other. His experience at World War II with the ordeal of Hitlerism and Nazism assisted and guided him in constructing his ethical approach about how the subject acts in a particular way towards the other rather than the experience of the self or the subject and especially how the subject can be transformed by the ethical approach. Ethics as proposed by Levinas is based on his own experiences of the war, it is a revelation of an ethical approach for transformation for the sake of the other. Perhaps this is the reason why Levinas is called "the other's philosopher." He is interested in the effort made for the other. The experience of the subject is valid, but it is the treatment for the other's experience and the other himself that gives it its real meaning.

In the second chapter, this thesis will start to deal with queer aspects of *The Ambassadors*, and the critical interpretation will attempt to reveal that the protagonist, Lewis Lambert Strether, has a repressed sexual identity. However why it comes into play in a particular context of Levinasian ethics is due to an effort to explain the way Strether is portrayed in *The Ambassadors* as a sexually repressed man. The other persons; namely, Chad Newsome and Little Bilham lead the transformation in Strether. They are credited for being the catalysts for the alteration in him. As with the discovery of his (queer) feelings for these two men, Strether gains a new point of view and he starts to act in favor of the other persons. So being

queer in terms of desire paves the way for ethical behavior from a Levinasian perspective.

Lambert Strether experiences a shift in the flow of the novel, and the two male characters are the others pioneering this change and transformation in him. The characters of Chad Newsome and Little Bilham in this novel put Strether into a queer standing. Strether is not a clear-cut queer character, maybe Oscar Wilde - at the time the novel was written - could have written such characters (indeed he did with secret clarity in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*). Neither Chad, nor Little Bilham are (openly) queer. Being queer in terms of identity and desires is incidental in the narration, causing other events and incidents. Those incidents showcase how being queer in terms of sexual identity and approaching to the other accordingly are the main causes in forming an ethical behavior in Strether. Although as the focal character, Strether, has the experience of the subject which is absolutely crucial for the narration of the novel (how much the queer experience transforms him is definitely discussed in this thesis), it is the other's experience and treatment that makes it possible to read this character in terms of a Levinasian perspective.

In relation to that, as *The Ambassadors* is a novel that is widely regarded as a Modernist work written by the early Modernist Henry James, and since Modernist literature puts emphasis on the subjectivity, Timo Müller argues that Modernist literature poses the argument that the experience of the self can be discussed mainly with regards to the others;

“There is a powerful strand in modernist fiction that does away with the identifiatory self of the nineteenth century and installs in its stead the self-as-object, analyzed more or less scientifically through a detached, objective narration and situated, explored, and validated only in its relations to other selves.”

(2009: 14)

Henry James affirms this argument as a modernist writer. Homoeroticism is the concept used in this study to interpret the relationship between the characters of *The Ambassadors*. It is a descriptive concept because it helps the reader to interpret the attraction between these characters in a more clear and concise way. Chad

Newsome and Little Bilham are, in a way, who Strether wants to be, or wants to be with. On the other hand, Strether does not intend to harm their alterity. He finds himself in their close proximity; he develops and evolves with them, and he finds his authentic self with them with regards to the moralistic perspective. The fact that they are same-sex characters makes queer reading more tangible and allows the queerization of the text, supplying the opportunity to interpret the text in this way.

In the third and the last chapter *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, Tom Ripley's predicament is much more complicated. This work is not an optimistic look at a character. The story revealed does not enable neither Ripley nor the other, Dickie Greenleaf, to prosper. However, the behavior pattern of Tom Ripley in *The Talented Mr. Ripley* can be illuminated in a way. Tom Ripley is not an unfeeling monster, but it is a fact that most of his bad deeds are done consciously; or it can be said that he is aware of the bad deeds he has done. The philosopher John Gray argues that;

“The Ripley novels have been read as Highsmith meant them to be read - as depictions of the triumph of evil - and many have found them disturbing for that reason. But there's nothing in what she tells us of him that suggests Ripley thinks of himself as evil. Instead he lives on the basis that good and evil have no meaning. It may have been this aspect of Ripley that Highsmith identified with most strongly. Often unhappy and angry at humanity, she may have envied the carefree amorality of her fictional alter ego. Yet it's this indifference to morality that makes the character of Ripley so disturbing to her readers - and, I believe, so instructive.”

(2013)

Ripley kills Dickie in cold blood, who is the object of his affection without any obstacles in his mind (see: conscience, being ethical in terms of behavior, etc.) and he suffers no repercussions for it. The other is an object to be eliminated for him. Tom Ripley not only demolishes Dickie Greenleaf's "alterity," but completely erases it from the face of the earth. It is obviously wrong to kill someone, but Ripley has got that in his head. Dickie is the heterosexual other, whereas Ripley is not heterosexual; moreover, and more importantly, he is not content or at peace with his sexual identity: he wants to erase this side of himself from the face of the earth as well.

All the same, the counter-arguments are aplenty, asking questions whether Tom Ripley is really a gay character, or is he an opportunist, an angry chancer who is always on the make? Does his situation force him to commit this crime and/or crimes since he finds himself having some unexplainable feelings for Dickie and that is what makes him do evil things? This is exactly the main point of contention since Tom Ripley would always have an obstacle, no matter how much he wants to reach the other, he would be rejected, he would experience things that he arguably should not be experiencing, he would be humiliated and this would eventually push him to destroy the other and take his place. Speaking of humiliation, as stated before, it is obvious that Tom Ripley is not at all pleased with his queer identity, he is ashamed of it and he tries to repress it. Would it be enough to explain the murders he commits or the several other bad acts he carries out and put them on a certain pattern? In the case of Tom Ripley, the main theme to be addressed is breaching the other's rights and violate the first rule of Levinas, which is "You shall not kill".

At this point, examining Levinasian ethics closely becomes crucial in making the ethical perspective of the novels discussed in this study more understandable. Therefore, in the initial part of the first chapter, the theoretical background of Levinasian ethics will take the center stage. In the parts that follow, we will focus on Henry James and the Modernization of literature, which will give way to the queerization of his texts and its relevance to the ethical approach will be discussed. Patricia Highsmith's motivations in creating her characters in queer subtexts and contexts will constitute the following part. These will lay the base for the thesis's focal points, which are queer desire and ethical behavior or lack thereof resulting from it.

CHAPTER I

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 Ethics Proposed by Levinas

Emmanuel Levinas was born in Lithuania in 1906. As a student, he went to Freiburg to study with Edmund Husserl and attended the seminars of Heidegger. The thoughts of Husserl and Heidegger would influence Levinas very much in the future but he would go on to create a relatively new world of thought for himself. In Strasbourg, France, he met another future philosopher Maurice Blanchot, whom would be his close friend. He wrote his thesis on the *Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology* in 1930 and became a French citizen. During the Nazi invasion, he was captured by the Nazis and imprisoned in a labor camp. His Lithuanian family was murdered. This ordeal would later lead him to form his philosophical approach concerning the other and the other's suffering.

Levinas inherited the Phenomenological approach from Edmund Husserl and added his insight and thoughts to it. One of the early Phenomenologists, who also influenced Husserl, Franz Brentano, described early Phenomenological approach as;

“Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) in-existence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction towards an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgement something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on. This intentional in-existence is characteristic exclusively of mental phenomena. No physical phenomenon exhibits anything like it. We could, therefore, define mental phenomena by saying that they are those phenomena which contain an object intentionally within themselves.”

(1995: 68)

Phenomenology lies at the heart of Levinas's philosophical approach. However, he does not exactly share the same view with Husserl, by whom he was

influenced at the beginning of his philosophical thought process. What differentiates Phenomenology from other approaches and how it was rediscovered by Husserl is described by William Large as follows;

“Phenomenology is a method of doing philosophy invented by Edmund Husserl. Although Husserl discovered phenomenology and his name is forever associated with it, it is perhaps better to characterize it as a ‘rediscovery’. Philosophy, unlike science for example, does not discover new theories, for its questions and problems are perennial. It can, however, go into periods of decline where the subject matter of philosophy appears only to be for philosophy itself rather than the world outside of it... Phenomenology is the demand for philosophy to return to its roots and its beginnings. This is not merely an historical demand, which can end up in an empty historicism, but experiential. What is the fundamental basis of our experience of the world, and how can we claim to know anything at all? Husserl’s answer to this question is subjectivity. The world only is because it is for someone. If the world did not appear to me as already meaningful then it would not be at all. The stone does not appear to the stone, or the supernova to the supernova. Things are only to the extent that they manifest themselves to someone.”

(2015: 19)

Levinas's thought began to expand the ideas of Husserl and Heidegger. He adapted them and provided them with something new. Ethics according to Levinas is the first philosophy, something that has definitely changed since Husserl’s Phenomenology. While Western philosophy has regarded the “self” as the basis for ethics since the beginning, for Emmanuel Levinas, morality always starts with a person-to-person relation. In other words, the subject’s relation to “the other” (person) brings about the basis of ethics. It is my responsibility towards the other, my obligation that defines “self’s duty to other” ethics, and by this, I can reach transcendence, a catharsis that brings about my self’s true realization. According to Levinas, it is true that I will never be able to change the alterity of the other, nor should I attempt to do it. However, by talking to the other I can show the answer to him. In a way, responding to the demand of the other person is not an option; responding to this demand is not a choice, it is already in me, this obligation is to answer a simple call like from the other as "Do not kill me". It should be stated that Levinas is not interested in the proposal of laws or ethical rules. The driving force behind Levinas's train of thought is not to discover the reality of morality, but to

make morality viable for transformation. When describing morality, Levinas states that there would be no morality without at least two people. If ethics is all about the other person, then it will come to fruition that the means by which two people communicate with one another is crucial to fulfilling a full moral knowledge. This is the root of Levinas's concern: Levinasian ethics finds the source of relationships among persons within interpersonal meaning. I have my responsibility and obligation to the other person, and on this account, I can only reach the love that enables my true awakening. As a result, like the morality of Aristotle and Kant, Levinas seeks goodness. Also, Levinas tries to investigate beyond the being. It is not about what is common between good things, but about what is absolutely unique about every person or thing. Levinas follows these unique things. To reach goodness, we should direct ourselves towards the other. For Levinas, the most appropriate face-to-face encounter requires a specific orientation. The other influences us differently from a worldly object or power. He also notes that we are experiencing an awakening when we realize that the other's face is no longer the face of the object. At that point Levinas's thoughts on substituting oneself for the other is very significant; in the introduction of *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, the uniqueness of the other's objectivity is argued for as:

“To acknowledge the imperative force of another is to put oneself in his place, not in order to appropriate one's own objectivity, but in order to answer to his need, to supply for his want with one's own substance. It is, materially, to give sustenance to another, "to give to the other the bread from one's own mouth. Thus substitution is conceived as maternal support for the material destitution of another. On the other hand, alterity is a force at the same time as this frailty and mortality, an approach at the same time as this involution and this weakness, an intervention in the world - a disturbance of its order - at the same time as a passage of transcendence beyond the world. To put oneself in the place of another is also to answer for his deeds and his misdeeds, for the trouble he causes and for his faults. It is even to be responsible for the very pain he causes me, at the limit for his persecution - the contestation he formulates against me for what I did not author or authorize. is to bear the burden of that persecution, to endure it and to answer for it. Thus substitution is conceived as the state of being hostage, held accountable for what I did not do, accountable for the others before the others. Substitution is not to be conceived actively, as an initiative, but as this materiality and this passive condition.”

(Lingis, 1998)

The self is "pledged" to its responsibility for the other. It does not and cannot expect anything from the other. As Levinas insists, we will always assume responsibility for the face-to-face interaction in order to join the call of the other. Answering to the call of the other is not just a response to the face. It might as well be a shoulder movement, a hand movement, a look, a touch of the other. What is important here is that, the self does not cause harm to the other's alterity.

According to Husserl, the subject is directed towards the objects in this world. Levinas states that the subject remains at its limits as a subject. Levinas argues that if the subject finds the object again when the subject is directed towards the object, then the object is lost. That's why Levinas disagrees with Husserl, and according to him, the other is always derived from the same, which means the loss of the other's alterity. Levinas inherited this philosophical approach and this conception from Husserl, but his interpretation of this approach gives way to an ethical perspective. It is possible to get rid of our own egos and put more emphasis on the experience and demand of the other person and to achieve love in this way, to achieve one's self-realization and to reach goodness. Levinas calls this as a truly human state:

"I will say this quite plainly, what truly human is -and don't be afraid of this word- love. And I mean it even with everything that burdens love or, i could say it better, responsibility is actually love, as Pascal said: 'without concupiscence' [without lust]... love exists without worrying being loved."
(Levinas, 1998)

For Levinas, when the other person calls me and summons me for my responsibility, no words are needed, I (should) already feel it. This responsibility, as will be mentioned, does not expect a response from the other, nor does it expect for the other to take responsibility in a reciprocal way. According to Levinas, speaking is very significant in this ethical approach. Since by speaking to the other, I can showcase my response to the other. As William Large argues;

"Without language there is no thought. Thinking needs speaking, but speech, as we have already seen for Levinas, is primarily ethical, because speaking about something already assumes you are speaking to someone. Language is not first

of all propositional but already an orientation towards the other. This inversion of propositional truth into declaration Levinas calls 'teaching'. I speak about the world because I am spoken to. Representation is a response to teaching. To think, then, to represent, as an activity, requires that my world is called into question by another's presence. Thought, rather than the condition, of ethics would be an acknowledgement of it. This means that we need to think about ethics in a completely different way. The ethics of which Levinas speaks is not the ethics of action, an ethics that deliberates about the right or wrong course, that calculates and weighs up intentions or consequences, but an original receptivity to the presence of the other in speech that cannot be reached by any epistemic route."

(2015: 89)

In fact, the origin of the language constitutes the answer to the other, it is provided and given as a result of the other person's call for the subject. With this answer, dialogues begin to be established.

Ethical approach derived from Phenomenology will include protecting the other person, keeping him, and placing him in his distinguished place. This is what Levinas advocated, ethical behavior may only come to fruition that way for him. In this way, the ethical approach will develop, and it will be established. Experience is the experience of the subject, that is a given, but more significantly it is the other's experience that is meaningful for the subject. The subject has his responsibility for the other person prior coming to this world. This is not acquired later. This is always present in the subject; my other source of orientation is my original ethical connection. According to Levinas one is indebted to the other in this way:

"The expression 'in one's skin' is not a metaphor for the in-itself; it refers to a recurrence in the dead time or the meanwhile which separates inspiration and expiration, the diastole and systole of the heart beating dully against the walls of one's skin. The body is not only an image or figure here; it is the distinctive in-oneself of the contraction of ipseity and its breakup. This contraction is not an impossibility to forget oneself, to detach oneself from oneself, in the concern for oneself. It is a recurrence to oneself out of an irrecusable exigency of the other, a duty overflowing my being, a duty becoming a debt and an extreme passivity prior to the tranquillity, still quite relative, in the inertia and materiality of things at rest. It is a restlessness and patience that support prior to action and passion. Here what is due goes beyond having, but makes giving possible. This recurrence is incarnation. In it the body which makes giving possible makes one other without alienating. For this other is the heart, and the goodness, of the same, the inspiration or the very psyche in the soul."

(1998: 109)

Therefore, acceptance has to be made, and what is more valid and important is to adopt and pay the debt to the other's face in terms of the a priori responsibility for him. This is a debt that needs to be paid; it is not possible to negotiate the responsibility. Levinas describes the face of the other as follows:

“The face is a living presence; it is expression. The life of expression consists in undoing the form in which the existent, exposed as a theme, is thereby dissimulated. The face speaks. The manifestation of the face is already discourse. He who manifests himself comes, according to Plato's expression, to his own assistance. He at each instant undoes the form he presents.”

(1991: 66)

The subject experiences various sensations in this world, feels them, enjoys them, lives in them, but none of them is like an encounter with the other. It leaves a disturbing effect on the subject. According to Levinas, there is a human to human, person to person relationship. That is why, Levinas states that people are interested in ethical questions. The face of the other says “Do not kill me.” This command of the other explained by Levinas as;

“[A]ccess to the face is straightaway ethical. . . . There is first the very uprightness of the face, its upright exposure, without defense. The skin of the face is that which stays most naked, most destitute. It is the most naked, though with a decent nudity. It is the most destitute also: there is an essential poverty in the face; the proof of this is that one tries to mask this poverty by putting on poses, by taking on a countenance. The face is exposed, menaced, as if inviting us to an act of violence. At the same time, the face is what forbids us to kill.”

(1985: 86)

The other's face is expressive, it is even comparable with a force. The self must act in accordance with its responsibility towards the other. As we respond to the call of the other, we already have been directed towards acting in favor of the other. Levinas interprets the responsibility for the other as an infinite phenomenon;

“How far does responsibility extend? It is already in act. To elucidate responsibility is to bring to light a bond in which one is already held, and where there is still a demand to be answered. Responsibilities increase in

the measure that they are taken up. They take form in an unendingly opening horizon, an infinity.”

(1998: 16)

According to Levinas, this encounter affects the subject more than any other thing in this world. I know that the other person is like me, he seems to be the master of his own conscious world. Thus, the experience of the subject is valid, but the other’s experience is now in effect. What is done should be done in a way that will ensure that the other's alterity is not distorted.

Since Levinasian ethics is focused for this thesis, and the ethical or non-ethical behaviors are discussed in the selected novels, Levinas’s main concerns for behaving in an ethical way towards the other becomes significant especially regarding the face of the other, directedness towards the other and how one should not harm the other in any way. Adapting it into literature makes this philosophical approach crucial in showcasing the main motivations of the characters and interpret them from an ethical standpoint.

1.2 Henry James and Modernism

Among the early Modernists, Henry James was one the names to accept literature as a work of art and to adopt Modernism in literature. The unreliable narrator thus entered the narration, which then allowed the reader to increase their understanding of the subjectivity in fiction. Readers have begun to perceive things in other ways than the ones told by the omniscient narrator. The realistic and omniscient narrator has then been abandoned, which has given way to the reader’s experiencing the consciousness of individual characters. Terry Eagleton states that;

“With James we have moved a step further: organic living can now only be a matter of that organic consciousness supremely epitomised by art, contemplatively totalising a world without inherent structure. The business of the artist is ‘ always to make a sense - and to make it most in proportion as the immediate aspects (of experience) are loose and confused. James’s work thus

represents a desperate, devoted attempt to salvage organic significance wholly in the sealed realm of consciousness - to vanquish, by the power of such 'beautiful', multiple yet harmoniously unifying awareness, certain real conflicts and divisions. In the form of the struggle for material acquisition, those conflicts generate the wealth which makes such privileged consciousness possible in the first place. But the bearer of such contemplative consciousness is thereby absent from concrete history, displaced from what he totalises; to 'know' (a crucial Jamesian term) is both supreme transcendence and impotent negativity."

(1976:141)

Henry James's works reflect a transition from the literature before modernism took hold to a narrative that highlights the experience of a more impressionist and non-objective subject. His narration has been interpreted as resembling the works of impressionist painters. The impressions of the subject on objects stand out. His main task was to determine the basis of consciousness. As many critics and readers are highly aware and as it is usually advocated, Henry James chose to tell the stories of characters who occupy greyer areas instead of the ones that are at the two particular ends of the moral spectrum. W. H. Auden once stated that that the characters in Henry James's fiction are;

"... concerned with moral choices; they may choose evil, but we are left in no doubt about the importance of choosing it."

(2002: 268)

Henry James's critical work, *The Art of Fiction*, discuss similar subjects. In his text, which is based on a lecture by Walter Besant, a critic of English literature, James sets up a counter argument for Besant's views. According to James, the idea Besant defends by stating that the author should only write what he knows about and that he should have a conscious moral purpose in his mind is simply wrong or open to debate. He argues;

"There is one point at which the moral sense and the artistic sense lie very near together; that is, in the light of the very obvious truth that the deepest quality of a work of art will always be the quality of the mind of the producer. In proportion as that mind is rich and noble will the novel, the picture, the statue, partake of the substance of beauty and truth. To be constituted of such elements is, to my vision, to have purpose enough. No good novel will ever proceed from a superficial mind; that seems to me an axiom which, for the artist in fiction, will cover all needful moral ground; if the youthful aspirant take it to heart it will illuminate for him many of the mysteries of "purpose."

(James, 1884)

With regards to that, writing a work of literary art with a concrete reason in mind is not an end to be reached, but a tool. The artwork should be measured not by how moralistic it is or how it is written with a concrete idea in mind, but by how much it represents art, how rich it is or how beautiful it is aesthetically. In addition, if the novelist wants to be moralistic, he should get rid of the stereotypes and narrow thoughts in the mind. It is the primary and dominant task of the novelist to stimulate readers.

On the other hand, another subject worth mentioning is that Henry James is a writer who is positioned as being in the middle of American and European minds and ways of living; not unlike many of his characters. He has a complex sincerity in his approach to being both American and European; that is being an innocent and inexperienced member of American society and being a member of sophisticated and cultivated nature of the Europeans. John Gardner argues that all fiction is a philosophical method to explain things in the world and that gives us clues about the ethical aspects of Henry James's fiction as well since Gardner claims that all fiction which is regarded as the most qualified has something to do with being philosophical;

“For the person who looks at fiction mainly from the point of view of the reader or critic, it is easy to get the idea that fiction is serious, thoughtful, or “philosophical” merely because—and merely in the sense that—some writers of fiction are intelligent thinkers who express their profound ideas through stories. Thus Henry James tells us about American innocence, Melville shows us how the quality of life is affected by the proposition of an indifferent universe, and so on. What literary critics claim is true: writers do communicate ideas. What the writer understands, though the student or critic of literature need not, is that the writer discovers, works out, and tests his ideas in the process of writing. Thus at its best fiction is, as I've said, a way of thinking, a philosophical method.”

(1978: 92)

This also applies to *The Ambassadors*. This work, seen as one of the great American novels and regarded as the most satisfactory one out of many his works

by Henry James himself, draws the reader on a journey of personal experience, takes and leads the reader to a narrative where sensations are more significant than physicality. This predilection, which was introduced by modernist literature through the stream of consciousness technique, shows itself completely in this work. By using the stream of consciousness, Henry James draws the reader closer to the inner world and thoughts of his characters. Consciousness of the characters stands out. There is no omniscient narrator who knows and hegemon of everything anymore; in his works, the reader goes on a journey into the consciousness of characters. In doing so, metaphors, observation, representation and discovery of something, especially things that are eye-opening play a major role. Things are not as they are, but as they are reflected by the narrator. Regarding the Modernist nature of Henry James's fiction, it is pointed out that;

“Judgments of Marcher aside, James's method of presenting his reader with the tortuous thoughts of a human being attempting to read the signs around him for a message or messages pertaining to his hopes and desires, results in a story in which we are invited to contemplate the idea of the individual consciousness poised in relation to its environment. It is in this respect that James is considered to be an important precursor of certain early twentieth-century Modernist writers, because the Modernists, like James, are considered to be writers who believe that reality is something that comes “to mean” not because of any intrinsic qualities of its own, but only through the application of our subjective interpretation upon it.”

(Dell' Amico, 1999)

Henry James was born in America, and yet he spent much of his life in Europe as an expat and became a citizen of England towards the end of his life. He exhibited his discomfort of being an American and not belonging to anywhere in his fiction on many instances. Terry Eagleton argues by quoting James himself about the conflict he found himself in with being an expat in Europe and his use of consciousness as follows;

“Yet the English social formation provided in the end no redemptive organic enclave for James. Professional house-party guest of the ruling class though he was for some twenty years, he found English life grossly materialistic and thought the condition of the upper class as rotten and collapsible as that of the French aristocracy before the revolution. Organic consciousness could find no locus but art itself, which alone could circumscribe the sprawling, tangled infinity of empirical relationships with its delicately delineating forms. James's later work represents the astonishing enterprise of rescuing and redeeming

inorganic material existence by ceaselessly absorbing its raw contingencies into the transmutative structures of consciousness, deploying to this end the complex interlacings of a syntax constantly threatened with dissolution by the heterogeneous materials it just succeeds in subduing. 'All the value of (Strether's) total episode (in *The Ambassadors*)', he writes, 'has precisely been that 'knowing' was the effect of it. 'Knowing' - consciousness itself - is the supreme non-commodity, and so for James the supreme value; yet in a society where the commodity reigns unchallenged it is also absence, failure, negation. In 'knowing', the world is appropriated and lost in the same act. This, finally, was the contradiction which even Henry James was unable to transcend.'

(1976: 145)

Since Europeanism, which can be briefly described as being open to novelty and being experienced in worldly things, was dominant in many domains in the world such as literature, life and politics, Henry James was also influenced by Europe and the Europeans and adapted this influence in his fiction and the characters he created in it. When the technique of stream of consciousness used by writers such as Virginia Woolf began to enter literature, it opened up new horizons to the reader. The inner world of created characters became more important, rather than the conclusive judgments presented or not presented, the impressions of a person's inner world, the traces left by the experience on the living person would now be more accessible. Subjectivity would be flowing together with the stream of consciousness, which would now lead to a literary experience away from stereotypes and interpretations in classical patterns. Modern literature had still many more ways to go, but it was clear that the developments in literary narrative would result in an even more interesting and exclusive journey for the reader.

1.3 Patricia Highsmith and Alternative Lives

It is universally known that being gay or accepting it is not an easy experience. Individuals on the spectrum of non-traditional sexual identity may always struggle with it and may be forced to fight against society's condemnation. Even though homosexuality is no longer classified as a medical condition or mental illness, society and various groups, whether religious or conservative, make this

situation more difficult for LGBT people. In dogmatic religions, homosexuality is met with condemnation, there is almost no dogmatic religion approving homosexuality or tolerating homosexuality. Being LGBT is viewed as a choice, a sinful lifestyle so they are discriminated against for choosing to live their truth. A famous preacher who struggled with his sexuality explains the relationship between homosexuality and church in terms of hypocrisy;

“Have you ever noticed that the only people who go on about "homosexuality is a choice" is heterosexual Christians. This is quite revealing. Firstly they come to this conclusion because they already view same sex orientation as a sin and therefore, like their own sin, they can choose to sin or not. Secondly they lack understanding because they have never had to choose their orientation. It came naturally to them at puberty as orientation did to me. Trying to explain orientation to these people is like trying to explain white male privilege to a white male. They have known nothing else and never experienced discrimination, inequality or harassment as a female or having black skin. It's like trying to explain the concept of water to a gold fish. And they are completely oblivious to the fact that every moment of every day they are acting on their heterosexual orientation. Gay people get it because we've lived it...and you never get hear gay people saying "I chose to be gay. You do sometimes get gay people saying they chose to be straight because they are now married but on deeper examination you realise they are actually "situational heterosexuals" as their orientation has not changed; just some behaviours.”

(Venn-Brown, 2015)

In conservative associations such as family protection groups, they constitute homosexuality as something being opposed to family life, an obstacle in the heterosexual matrix, and advocate that it should be hidden from children and must be treated and, if need be, be fought against.

Although the oppression the society places upon LGBT individuals exists even today, in the 1950s, when *The Talented Mr. Ripley* was written, it is known to have reached its peak in the USA. Sex was seen as a taboo in America. Marriage as an institution was very prominent; women were expected to protect their virginity before marriage. Men expected women to serve them. The term “50’s housewife” in many ways summarizes these years. Women were expected to marry, serve their husbands and look after their children. Being “normal” would require this. Everything except traditional and compulsory sexual identities was considered a perversion. Although a revolutionary study of the American sex life in 1953, published by Alfred Kinsey, reported that almost 10 percent of Americans were

homosexual, this was not something that could be revealed openly. No one in their right mind could have “come out” as LGBT in the sense of the term used today because homosexuality was seen as a perversion, it was categorized as a mental illness, an abnormality, and it should have been left out of the lifestyle of American society. In this period, electro shock treatment was put forward and applied to homosexuals to “prey the gay away” in them and clear them off from this perverted sexual conduct. Homosexual people were put in mental hospitals.

Since there was a glaring gap between the sexes, the situation of homosexuality was not at all pleasant or hopeful, and since being masculine was prominent and men were considered superior to women; the rights of homosexuals as human beings were next to none. Homosexuals at that time did not feel safe just because they had different sexual identities. In the 1950’s, a campaign called “Lavender Scare”, which was a witch hunt for the homosexuals under the leadership of Joseph McCarthy, was implemented, the rationale behind this hunt being the claim that homosexuals were considered at greater risk for blackmail in the Cold War period. Many of those people considered homosexual were arrested and put in prison.

Patricia Highsmith was born in Texas, United States in 1921. She had a very strained relationship with her mother who wanted to get rid of her when she was pregnant. She is known as having read Henry James in her youth and was also influenced by writers who dealt with moralistic themes such as Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Albert Camus. She wrote characters in homoerotic subtexts or sometimes in overtly homoerotic contexts, some of which were struggling with their sexuality and fighting internal homophobia while being involved in morally questionable activities. Her internalized homophobia due to her lesbianism manifested itself in her private writings;

“Highsmith herself led an isolated life, with few friends or lasting relationships. She was gay, but struggled with the prejudice of the time and her own internalised homophobia, writing in her notebooks that she didn't feel she could reveal her true self to others.”

(Shiple, 2014)

Patricia Highsmith did not feel confident or content as a closet lesbian and spent her life hiding that side of her, and this was reflected in her work. Since Highsmith is a writer who enjoyed juggling moralistic varieties together, Michael Bronski's views are very relevant regarding the morality aspect of Highsmith's fiction;

“Highsmith rejects the assumption that humankind has the potential and the will to act morally, upon which Western ethical systems are based, leading her to subversive insights. Among these is the discovery that people who live outside the prevailing social and moral systems are in a unique position to critique, expose, and undermine their underpinnings.”

(Bronski, 2000)

Most of her works include criminal themes, including violence, amoral behavior and even cold-blooded murders. Her characters are morally ambiguous, they are able to do a lot of varied things to achieve their ambitions. In an interview she states that;

“I can think of only one slight closeness, and that is that an imaginative writer is very free-wheeling; he has to forget about his own personal morals, especially if he is writing about criminals. He has to feel anything is possible. But I don't for this reason understand why an artist should have any criminal tendencies. The artist may simply have an ability to understand ... I would much rather be an entertainer than a moralizer, but to call murder not a social problem I think is ridiculous; it certainly is a social problem. The word existentialist has become fuzzy. It's existentialist if you cut a finger with a kitchen knife—because it has happened. Existentialism is self-indulgent, and they try to gloss over this by calling it a philosophy ... I once wrote in a book of mine about suspense writing, that a criminal, at least for a short period of time is free, free to do anything he wishes. Unfortunately it sounded as if I admired that, which I don't. If somebody kills somebody, they are breaking the law, or else they are in a fit of temper. ... Murder, to me, is a mysterious thing. I feel I do not understand it really. I try to imagine it, of course, but I think it is the worst crime. That is why I write so much about it; I am interested in guilt. I think there is nothing worse than murder, and that there is something mysterious about it, but that isn't to say that it is desirable for any reason. To me, in fact, it is the opposite of freedom, if one has any conscience at all.”

(Highsmith, 1981)

In a famous work of hers, *Strangers on a Train*, two characters who come across randomly are the ones who can go as far as making murder negotiations with one another in order to reach their desires. These may be among the motivations of

the people in real life according to Patricia Highsmith. Henry James may have created his characters in moral shades of grey, but some of the characters written by Highsmith can be read as outright evil. Regarding the general subject matter Highsmith concerned herself with, it is also argued that;

“Highsmith herself vacillated between caring and not caring about her categorization, but, citing Dostoevsky as her favourite author, always argued that it is possible to use crime to investigate issues of ethics and morality: “since she thinks everyone has at one time imagined himself committing a crime, if not actually doing so, crime could be ‘very good for illustrating moral points’.”

(Peters, 2003:190)

Highsmith liked to write about morally corrupt individuals. Several times it has been mentioned that she sees this desire to write that way as a clearer way to understand life along with the narrative of the stories of the characters that have morally ambiguous characteristics. As previously mentioned, Highsmith refers to writing evil characters as a result of the author freeing himself and his pen from the previously held conceptions about criminal life or the mentality and morality of a criminal. It would be wrong to say that Highsmith was not fascinated by murder. For her, this is more about reflecting the bitter facts in a dark world for the writer rather than forming a firm judgment about it. The feeling of guilt is present in humankind, and Highsmith chose to portray people who commit crimes with various motivations and moralistic connotations. The correlation between the authors and their works is not focused in this study but as mentioned above, it can be interpreted that Highsmith, who is an LGBT individual, especially in the 1950s, reflects the characters she created as being haunted by their ordeal as people of different sexual orientations and then revealed as simply being evil. Patricia Highsmith was concerned with the characters’ moral conflicts and created totally morally ambiguous characters. These characters often found place in the works with homoerotic subtexts and even in overtly homoerotic texts.

CHAPTER II

THE AMBASSADORS

2.1 *The Ambassadors* in Context

The Ambassadors is not a flat-out tale; therefore, it should not be interpreted as such. This book, which provides the reader with clues about the consciousness of the characters and all the conscious points of view, results in the characters seeing things from new perspectives and leaving the old stereotypes, feelings and logic behind in terms of relationships among people. Lambert Strether is one of these characters, who as a result of his journey from Woollett to Paris, no longer will be the old Lambert Strether. His open-mindedness to new things will lead him towards a path that encourages his mind to be preoccupied with new things, new points of view and fresh thoughts about the other person(s). According to the Henry James critic Eric Haralson;

“The Ambassadors is all about the process of learning to see from a new point of view, but this process is rarely straightforward.”

(2009: 27)

The Ambassadors is journey of awakening, a change and a transcendence of Strether (the subject) in face of the other, therefore it may as well be stated that “transformation” is the running theme in it. Seeing things from different points of view is the key in the story of Lambert Strether. The Henry James biographer Leon Edel points out the following regarding James’s usage of different points of view;

“The Ambassadors, published in 1903 but written between 1899 and 1901, exemplified both James's use of "point of view" (that is, the telling of the story through various angles of vision) and his method of alternation of scene. By the "point of view" method James was able to make the reader feel himself at one with the given character, and impart to him only as much of the story as that character perceives at any given moment; by alternating scenic action with his narrative of the reflective and analytic side of his personages, James created a novel unique in the history of fiction.”

(1960: 32)

Lewis Lambert Strether is the protagonist and the main concern of *The Ambassadors*. Fifty-five-year-old Strether is sent by Chad Newsome's mother and Strether's fiancée Mrs. Newsome, to fetch his son Chad from Paris, where he has embarked on an affair with a separated woman, Mme de Vionnet, with whom Chad has fallen in love. As this is unacceptable for Mrs. Newsome, she sends her fiancé Lambert Strether as an ambassador to bring Chad back to where he belongs to take over his father's business's advertisement department in Woollett, America. By all means, there is a more pressing matter; Mrs. Newsome intends to ensure that Chad marries his son-in-law's sister Mamie Pocock. However, the more the narration progresses, the more the reader can feel that there will be a twist and things will progress in rather an unexpected way since Strether begins to enjoy his time in Paris.

In terms of narrative, *The Ambassadors* has an extremely complex structure. It is as if during the dialogues, characters always say something but they try to express their feelings in a myriad of covert, veiled ways. The conversations are full of innuendo. During the dialogues, the reader will even feel a strong desire for the characters to express what they want to say in a more candid, plain and unequivocal manner. As mentioned earlier, since the narration is not straight forward, it is also somewhat hard to interpret the motivations of the characters in a comprehensive and transparent style. Given that the consciousness of the characters influences the narrative, and the events are seen to be reshaped by Strether's point of view, it is clear that Strether functions as the binoculars making the visions possible to be seen by the readers.

2.2 The Repression of the Self

In his book *Henry James and Sexuality*, Hugh Stevens interprets Henry James's fiction in terms of latent eroticism since it enables various interpretations of his works. (Stevens, 1998: 7) Notwithstanding the fact, another challenge about this is that since this erotic narrative is not clear-cut, the interpretation should be limited to finding out hidden meanings, symbols and metaphors within the texts.

Because there is no such thing as sexual depiction in Henry James's fiction, there is no explicit sexual scene in *The Ambassadors*, either. Strether's discovery of the relationship between Mme de Vionnet and Chad as a relationship of intimacy, for instance, causes Strether to blush and he interestingly feels like a little girl and that is tied to his not feeling secure in his masculinity;

“That was what, in his vain vigil, he oftenest reverted to: intimacy, at such a point, was like that—and what in the world else would one have wished it to be like? It was all very well for him to feel the pity of its being so much like lying; he almost blushed, in the dark, for the way he had dressed the possibility in vagueness, as a little girl might have dressed her doll.”

(James, 2011: 394)

Strether is reserved about sexuality, he has not been a masculine man in his entire life, and his sexuality and his latent homosexuality seem to have made him frustrated in terms of sexual relations. The dialogues are generally dominant in terms of sexual innuendo. On the other hand, homosociality too plays a compelling role in *The Ambassadors*, which is expressed with words such as *queer* and *stiff* evoking a homoerotic innuendo as in the part below;

“He looked across the box at his friend; their eyes met; something *queer* and *stiff*, something that bore on the situation but that it was better not to touch, passed in silence between them.”

(James: 120)

Homosociality is encountered within in *The Ambassadors* in a latent state. It enters the text with some indirect expressions, and the reader may sometimes have difficulty in catching these expressions. Strether, the character most obviously

associated with homosociality, is not aware of it most of the time. Eve Kosofski Sedgwick, who popularized the term “homosociality”, explains that;

“Homosocial” is a word occasionally used in history and the social sciences, where it describes social bonds between persons of the same sex; it is a neologism, obviously formed by analogy with “homosexual,” and just as obviously meant to be distinguished from “homosexual.” In fact, it is applied to such activities as “male bonding,” which may, as in our society, be characterized by intense homophobia, fear and hatred of homosexuality.”

(1985: 1)

As she points out, homosociality in society is something to be feared, as well as evoking hatred and disapproval. In *The Ambassadors*, this is also the case as it is neither approved nor felt properly by Strether and brings out the inner homophobia in him, a repression of desires is formed in him as well. In the narration, there are subtle references to being, feeling queer and not being ‘straight enough’ for more than just Strether’s character; however, it is glaringly obvious in the narrative of Strether. If his surname “Strether” is examined, it is as if Strether is trying to be “Straighter” than he actually is, however failing in it miserably. It is an obvious struggle for him to be accepted because being queer is associated with wickedness and evil for him.

In the flow of the novel, homosociality reveals itself when Strether has some perplexing and mindful observations regarding Chad’s young friend, Little Bilham, as he associates him with the serpent, which suggests evil, vice and wickedness. There is an association with the corruptive ways of Europe since Chad Newsome goes to Paris, finds his lover there and starts a free sexual relationship with her. Strether too at the very beginning thinks that Europe has corrupted Chad. However, it is obvious that as he cannot help himself, he is clearly affected, confused and astonished by Little Bilham’s existence, his serene ways and his coolness. Strether thus directs his attention to Little Bilham;

“The young man was his first specimen; the specimen had profoundly perplexed him; at present however there was light. It was by little Bilham's amazing serenity that he had at first been affected, but he had inevitably, in his circumspection, felt it as the trail of the serpent, the corruption, as he might conveniently have said, of Europe; ... He wanted to be able to like his specimen with a clear good conscience, and this fully permitted it. What had muddled him was precisely the small artist-man's way --it was so complete--

of being more American than anybody. But it now for the time put Strether vastly at his ease to have this view of a new way.”

(James: 115)

The encounter with Little Bilham plays a major role in transforming Strether. Little Bilham is a catalyst, a friend of Chad's, and Strether is influenced by his existence, which enters into his consciousness. He intends to like it, and he allows it into his consciousness. In the below part of the narration where Strether is very much regretful about his past despite not being all open and distinct about his repressed feelings. However, he encourages young Little Bilham not to waste his life as he has done, to know the value of his youth in particular as being young is very meaningful for him. It may be discerned from the part below in the novel which takes place in the sculptor Gloriani's garden that Strether mourns for the things he was not able to do when he was young;

“It's not too late for YOU, on any side, and you don't strike me as in danger of missing the train; besides which people can be in general pretty well trusted, of course--with the clock of their freedom ticking as loud as it seems to do here--to keep an eye on the fleeting hour. All the same don't forget that you're young--blessedly young; be glad of it on the contrary and live up to it. Live all you can; it's a mistake not to. It doesn't so much matter what you do in particular, so long as you have your life. If you haven't had that what HAVE you had?... Don't at any rate miss things out of stupidity. Of course I don't take you for a fool, or I shouldn't be addressing you thus awfully. Do what you like so long as you don't make MY mistake. For it was a mistake. Live!" . . .”

(James: 173)

All the feelings Strether could not find a way to express when he was young are refined, he obviously does not like possessing those feelings at all, yet ironically, he is somewhat regretful that he has not acted upon them. Sayo Saito discusses Strether's homoerotic relationship with Little Bilham and the sense of belatedness as below;

“Jonathan Freedman points out the similarities between this novel and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, but only clarifies Walter Pater's influence on these two novels. Haralson regards Strether's relationship with Little Bilham (one of Chad's friends) as the most important homoerotic bond “formed too late” and thinks that Strether's homoerotic feelings for Chad are indicative of

“autoeroticism” (Queer Modernity 127, 130). Haralson considers briefly the relationship between Strether and Chad, but “autoeroticism” focuses on Strether’s subjectivity... Kevin Ohi argues that the style of “belatedness” seen in Strether’s recognition is queer since it is similar to “closet”: at the moment when homosexuals come out as gay, they create their past identities.”

(2016: 163)

Since Strether is not alright with being perceived as queer in any shape or form, in his mind, there is something wrong with being perceived as being queer in nature. Undeniably, it is obvious that he thinks there is something queer (see: strange, weird) and wicked about himself since he suggests “He thinks us sophisticated, he thinks us worldly, he thinks us wicked, he thinks us all sorts of queer things...” (James: 61), and this queerness obviously *disturbs* him.

2.3 The Awakening

Ironically enough, at the beginning of the narration, the former Strether, before morally awakening, is rather condemning of Chad and Mme de Vionnet, refers to them offensively and disapproves of what Chad is doing to his mother by having an affair with a separated woman in Paris. As a matter of fact, Strether shares the same opinion with Mrs. Newsome since he too wants Chad to marry Mamie Pocock and even says once that he assumes "Mamie will save him!" (James: 82). Indeed, at the beginning of the narrative, as can be seen clearly from the dialog below, Strether is overtly judgmental as he condemns the attachment between Chad Newsome and Mme de Vionnet and carries the point of view of Mrs. Newsome regarding what kind of virtues a person should have. Accordingly, he assumes that condemnation of other persons is what one should do. And this is also true for Chad’s affair. He starts mentioning Mme de Vionnet with the offensive language as below;

“-*She's base, venal-out of the streets*"

-"I see. And HE--?"

-"Chad, *wretched boy?*"

-"Of what type and temper is he?" she went on as Strether had lapsed.

-"Well--the obstinate." It was as if for a moment he had been going to say more and had then controlled himself. That was scarce what she wished.

- "Do you like him?" This time he was prompt.

- "No. How CAN I?"

- "Do you mean because of your being so saddled with him?"

- "I'm thinking of his mother," said Strether after a moment. "He has darkened her admirable life." He spoke with austerity. "He has worried her half to death."

(James: 70)

Surely, considering the time period in which this novel was written, or the moral perspective of the time, it is no shock that a sexual relationship between a young man and a separated woman is called as an unvirtuous one. In accordance with that, the former Strether believes that "He wasn't there to dip, to consume--he was there to reconstruct..." (James: 95). Therefore, it can be said that Strether feels he has good intentions towards others in the initial parts of the narration. Thus, according to the former Strether, he is in Paris to correct the wrongs. However, the more the narration progresses; the more we witness the development and transcendence in Strether as he regards subsequently that Chad's relationship with Mme de Vionnet is a virtuous one and it did "good" to both Chad (and Strether.). Strether sees this change in Chad as;

"It was queer to him that he had that noiseless brush with Chad; an ironic intelligence...He had before this had many moments of wondering if he himself weren't perhaps changed even as Chad was changed. Only what in Chad was conspicuous improvement--well, he had no name ready for the working, in his own organism, of his own more timid dose. He should have to see first what this action would amount to. And for his occult passage with the young man, after all, the directness of it had no greater oddity than the fact that the young man's way with the three travellers should have been so happy a manifestation. Strether liked him for it, on the spot, as he hadn't yet liked him; it affected him while it lasted as he might have been affected by some light pleasant perfect work of art: to that degree that he wondered if they were really worthy of it, took it in and did it justice; to that degree that it would have been scarce a miracle if, there in the luggage-room, while they waited for their things, Sarah had pulled his sleeve and drawn him aside. "You're right; we haven't quite known what you mean, Mother and I, but now we see. Chad's magnificent; what can one want more? If THIS is the kind of thing--!"..."

(James: 270)

Strether's transformation starts with his first encounter with Chad Newsome at the opera. Strether visits Chad's house and notices a stranger on the balcony. Strether is introduced to this man and learns that he is called "Little Bilham." Bilham

is friend of Chad and taking care of Chad's house while Chad is traveling. Strether finds Bilham attractive and invites the young man to the opera. Bilham, however, does not show up. Instead another man arrives. Strether realizes that this new arrival is Chad Newsome. Chad has just returned from his travels as a changed man. After the opera, Strether tells Chad why he came to Paris. However, as he speaks, Strether becomes less confident in his attitude. Chad, once superficial and childish, now seems confident and more mature. His new personality influences Strether, who is wondering what caused Chad's transformation or why. Chad wants him to meet with his close friends, the mother and her daughter, who arrive a few days after Strether. There, Strether finally meets the real cause of the development in Chad at a party with Madam de Vionnet and her daughter Jeanne, but he does not see them long enough to form an opinion about them. Shortly after his arrival, he meets Chad's two friends, Little Bilham and Miss Barrace. They are full of appreciation for Chad, and Strether is then more offended by the certainty of his mission. When he finally meets Chad, he finds out that Chadwick Newsome is now really a changed man.

As an observer of faces and of the people wearing those faces, Strether's initial coming to face to face with Chad Newsome is rather intriguing since he first of all focuses on none other than Chad's face. It is as if from their first encounter, Chad's countenance makes a demand from Strether and summons Strether towards his responsibility for him in terms of acting in a rightful way. Moreover, Strether feels a sensation he cannot easily describe for Chad;

“They were in presence of Chad himself.... The fact was that his perception of the young man's identity--so absolutely checked for a minute--had been quite one of the sensations that count in life; he certainly had never known one that had acted, as he might have said, with more of a crowded rush. It had faced every contingency but that Chad should not BE Chad, and this was what it now had to face with a mere strained smile and an uncomfortable flush.”

(James: 122)

Enthralling enough, Strether's first encounter with Little Bilham is also momentous and includes focusing of Strether on the other's face. In addition to that, in this description, Strether compares Little Bilham to Chad and he wonders maybe Little Bilham is a changed version of Chad. However, he reaches a conclusion that

this is asking for too much of a similarity between the two young men since Little Bilham is too young to be a replica of Chad Newsome;

“This was interesting so far as it went, but the interest was affected by the young man's not being Chad. Strether wondered at first if he were perhaps Chad altered, and then saw that this was asking too much of alteration. The young man was light bright and alert--with an air too pleasant to have been arrived at by patching. Strether had conceived Chad as patched, but not beyond recognition. He was in presence, he felt, of amendments enough as they stood; it was a sufficient amendment that the gentleman up there should be Chad's friend. He was young too then, the gentleman up there--he was very young; young enough apparently to be amused at an elderly watcher, to be curious even to see what the elderly watcher would do on finding himself watched.”

(James: 93)

Later in the narration, when Strether takes a day trip to the French countryside, he inadvertently sees Chad and Madam de Vionnet coming down the river together on a small boat. At once, he comes to realize that their relationship is clearly an intimate one which involves sexuality. However, even though the relationship of Chad and Madame de Vionnet is sexual in nature, Strether believes that their liaison has developed Chad as a person.

As the narration progresses, and while Strether gets to know Paris, its people and observes the objects and people around him, and realizing that there is something which is not right with how things are perceived regarding Mme de Vionnet and Chad, he decides that he would give up on marrying Mrs. Newsome. In rejecting her, Strether serves in favor of Mme de Vionnet, Chad, and their relationship, thus reaching a transcendence of his own self. Strether fulfills his responsibility towards the other and gives up on himself, surrenders his own self by acting in favor of the “new and improved” Chad and Mme de Vionnet. Or rather as Levinas states;

“The individual person becomes free and responsible not by fitting into a system but rather by fighting against it and by acting on his own.”

(1991: 18)

There are other views regarding this transformation. Some critics do not agree that this is necessarily a “good” thing to occur. Jill Larson is among those critics and she argues that;

“Hence his aesthetic ideals seduce him away not only from Mrs. Newsome's rigid Victorian morality, but also from responsibility to others who live in time, in a flawed world, and in selfhood that is complex and not always malleable to expectations and norms. Levinas's well-known concept of the face of the other describes an ethical imperative: a self comes into existence only when it responds to an other summoning it to responsibility. Both Dorian and Strether struggle to heed this summons, but a fear of suffering and a desire for aesthetic consolation leads them to turn away from the face of the other and its appeal for recognition and compassion.”

(2004: 99)

Larson suggests that in choosing to fight for Chad and Mme de Vionnet rather than condemning them, Strether turns his face away from the other. On the contrary, the things are more complicated than they seem to be since Strether regards that their freedom and welfare are his moral mission, his obligation becomes a grand part of his moral awakening. The things he experiences in Paris change him, therefore he concludes that he has to act on his idea(s), do something for Chad and Mme de Vionnet, take responsibility for the others despite the orders he has received from Mrs. Newsome. He just does not sit back and watch things to unfold in a way that would detriment the other; he tries to correct the “wrongs” – as he perceives them as being wrongs – and he acts on his impulse that Chad Newsome and Mme de Vionnet should be free in what they are doing despite everyone else being against them. Veritably, it is a chain of events. Mme de Vionnet transforms Chad and improves him; in a roundabout way, Chad transforms Strether. Colin Messnier describes this positive influence as below;

“By showing the way Strether constructs reasons for his new conviction, James is able to highlight the degree to which all understanding is necessarily composed and therefore suspect. Strether reasons from Chad's improved appearance that the woman involved must be good, since "the product of her genius" appears so impressive...”

(1997)

All in all, Little Bilham's remark given at the beginning of Strether's awakening that “what Mme de Vionnet and Chad has together is a virtuous attachment” is the conclusion Lambert Strether draws upon at the end. In one of their last encounters, Strether states, regarding Chad, that, "he has helped me: so to feel it that that surely needn't surprise him.” (James: 90) Therefore, Strether himself

believes that what Chad did to him is a good thing for both Chad and for himself. As stated before, encounters with the other(s), namely Chad and Little Bilham, create a state of transcendence in Strether. He gets rid of his prejudices; he puts an end to judging other people. It is a journey for Strether in which he slowly changes his ways and leaves Woollet, Mrs. Newsome and their moral perspective behind. Therefore, throughout the course of the novel, Lambert Strether goes through a transformation, he transcends himself, he experiences an “ethical awakening.”

2.4 The Resolution for Strether

“Little Bilham looked him full in the face. “Because it’s a virtuous attachment.” This had settled the question so effectually for the time--that is for the next few days--that it had given Strether almost a new lease of life.”

(James: 90)

The above quotation from *The Ambassadors* is very significant as Little Bilham’s remark that what Mme de Vionnet and Chad have together is a virtuous attachment is the conclusion Lambert Strether draws upon – in not very so expected circumstances – in the novel. Strether changes his own conditioning and this is caused directly by the others. They have become his agents in reaching the conclusion to support Mme de Vionnet and Chad’s relationship, and as we bear witness, Strether is a changed man at the end of the novel and he goes to a great “difference.” (James: 433). E. M. Forster likens this “theme of change” to an hour glass;

“*The Ambassadors*, like *Thais*, is the shape of an hour-glass. Strether and Chad, like Paphnuce and Thais, change places, and it is the realization of this that makes the book so satisfying at the close. The plot is elaborate and subtle, and proceeds by action or conversation or meditation through every paragraph. Everything is planned, everything fits; none of the minor characters are just decorative like the talkative Alexandrians at Nicias’ banquet; they elaborate on the main theme, they work. The final effect is prearranged, dawns gradually on the reader, and is completely successful when it comes. Details of intrigue, of the various missions from America, may be forgotten, but the symmetry they have created is enduring.”

(2002: 104-105)

With its free atmosphere, the Parisian life begins to impress Strether in many ways, completely captivating him. Strether now feels guilty for having condemned them before and agrees to help Mme de Vionnet and Chad. When Chad states that he wants to return to America immediately, Strether suggests that Paris might offer them more than Woollett. For himself on the other hand, Strether will willingly accept the risk of falling out of favor with Ms. Newsome. Later, when Strether visits Madame de Vionnet, he seems to have been defeated and convinced that Chad will return to the United States. Still, Strether says he can help Mme de Vionnet to keep Chad. However, after Chad stays away from both for a week, Strether's stability begins to erode. When Strether finally meets Chad again, the young man only mentions plans to develop the family business in Woollett. The desire to return home is for certain. Strether tries to convince Chad to stay in Paris, since he thinks he will be better off with Madam de Vionnet in Paris. Strether himself decides to return to Woollett, even though he realizes that his life in Woollett now will never be the same compared to his experience in Paris. Fearing that Chad is returning home and will live a miserable life like himself, Strether tries to convince that Chad not to return home, not to leave Mme de Vionnet and Paris, regardless of what Chad wants, which is to return to Woollett. Strether does not want this to hang over his conscience, although this will be hard for Strether; he will definitely lose his chance with Mrs. Newsome. The likelihood of getting married with her is also invalidated. In short, Strether, a man with very little money, loses the opportunity to make a better deal. At the end of the novel, his only consolation is that he knows that he has remained true to his ideals and has never gained anything for himself but the other (s).

In conclusion, Strether serves for the other, for the sake of the other. We as readers are not really provided with an answer by James whether Chad would leave Mme de Vionnet at the end of the novel. However, what is obvious is that this relationship and what it entails do open the eyes of Strether. He does indeed construct things but in a way that is right according to himself for the sake of the other, and the novel provides us with an open ending. As Ünal Aytür explains:

“In *The Ambassadors*, it is not an important point whether Chad returns to Woollett or not. In fact, it is as if Chad is an instrument James has designed for taking Strether from the limited society he has lived in up until that day and bringing him to Europe and getting him to encounter a different way of living.”

(2009: 158)

In the end, according to what he chose, Strether does the right thing, advises Chad not to leave Mme de Vionnet, although everyone tells him that this relationship is wrong, and that he sees that it is uniquely virtuous. The path is chosen and Strether preferred the less travelled one. Strether feels like what Chad did to him was a good thing for him. There is no regret in Strether; he will again be a no one, but even him encouraging Chad not to leave Mme de Vionnet is enough to clear his own consciousness.

Strether’s feelings for Little Bilham represents a mourning for a completely un-lived life. As already mentioned, Little Bilham and Chad Newsome – especially Chad Newsome – put Strether, under their influence. Strether sacrifices himself, especially for Chad, as a result of his latent attraction to Chad and Little Bilham, and he chooses the right thing with a clear conscience as a new man.

CHAPTER III

THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY

“Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask and he will tell you the truth”

(Wilde: 2012)

3.1 Heteronormativity and What it Encompasses

The story of Tom Ripley begins with the character as a lonely scammer trying to live in New York with little money or hope. Ripley is a con artist, an opportunist living his life in the shadows. When one day an old man named Herbert Greenleaf approaches him and asks him to bring back his lost son Dickie Greenleaf from Italy where he has left for and has not come back yet, Tom Ripley immediately tells him he has met Dickie Greenleaf before, subtly pretending and making up a story that they are long lost friends. Tom Ripley then goes to Italy to find Dickie. When he gets there, he meets Dickie and soon enters his social circle, the two become fast friends, meanwhile Tom starts to show signs that he likes Dickie as he is attracted to him from the beginning, but Dickie has a girlfriend. Moreover, his girlfriend Marge does not like Tom very much, as she once implies that Tom is gay since she senses that he is a strange man. This is something that breaks off the camel's back for Dickie, because Dickie begins to act in a cold way towards Tom since he, as a heterosexual man, is vary of gay people.

When Dickie sees Tom wearing his clothes and trying to imitate him, Dickie condemns him and dislikes Tom completely. During all these incidents, Tom becomes more obsessed with Dickie and all the things which represent him. Towards

the middle of the book, Tom and Dickie go on a little journey by boat, and that is when Tom realizes that Dickie is determined to put an end to their friendship, and he plans to kill Dickie. After an argument Ripley acts on his plan, kills Dickie with an oar, throws him into the sea, runs away, and more importantly decides to take over Dickie's identity and start to live his life as Dickie Greenleaf.

Tom Ripley finds himself within the personal space of Dickie Greenleaf and directs his attention to him. Dickie Greenleaf becomes his love object of desire and then, for the reasons I will argue, Ripley violates Greenleaf's rights by eliminating (killing) him. However, in his decision to kill, social prejudices play a significant role. Tom Ripley has feelings for Dickie Greenleaf, which are growing day by day. He is jealous of Dickie's girlfriend, and he does not admit this to Dickie or to other people who may or may not be aware of his presence or his repressed identity. It must be stressed that the sense of shame of being queer somehow shapes the behavior of Tom Ripley against the other. Shame is a driving force, and the desire to be accepted by the society surrounds him. He cannot get out of it. Finally, Dickie Greenleaf becomes the victim of Tom Ripley's shame of being queer, therefore, Dickie Greenleaf is to be replaced as the object or the origin of this affection, not only because of that but he also will be replaced because he possesses the desired heterosexual identity. Regarding the reason why Ripley kills Dickie, Kate Hart puts forward the idea that Ripley is a classic example of Highsmith's fiction;

“Much like her notebooks, her fiction also contains stereotypical portrayals of homosexuals, as well as more nuanced examinations of the social pressures placed on gays and lesbians. Although most of Highsmith's gay characters are criminals, her novels also suggest how this criminality results from restrictions placed on homosexuals. By assuming the queer or "abnormal" perspective of a gay man or a lesbian, Highsmith's novels suggest how violence and criminality can proceed from repressive sexual norms. Repressed emotions, as Highsmith suggests in one notebook entry, can lead to murder: "no one murders who has a satisfactory sexual outlet. This I apparently unconsciously did in Bruno and Kimmel." (Two of Highsmith's queer characters.) In *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, Tom Ripley kills the man he has fallen in love with when he realizes that they will never be together as a couple...”

(2011)

It must be underlined that one of the substantial reasons why Tom Ripley is uncomfortable with himself is due to the effect of the heteronormative society. In

Counselling Ideologies: Queer Challenges to Heteronormativity, Julie Tilsen and David Nylund describe heteronormativity as; “the institutionalized assumption that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality is inherently superior and preferable to any orientations outside of heterosexuality” (2010: 95). Tom Ripley justifies committing a murder with the oppression of society he is under since society is always waiting to judge him and exclude him due to his untraditional sexuality. The social prejudice is always there, there is no room for homosexual individuals in a traditional and heteronormative society, and a non-entity like Tom Ripley will be excluded since on top of everything, he is gay. The object of his affection, Dickie Greenleaf, does not want him, and when he suspects that he is a homosexual, he decides to end his friendship with Tom Ripley. This is a low blow for Tom and his shame plummets due to this.

It can be argued that when Ripley kills Dickie, he shows that he may have gay panic; the situation he finds himself in points to that. Since “Social man’s fear of his own homosexuality induces in him a paranoiac fear of seeing it appear around him.” (Hocquenghem, 1993: 56), being face to face with Dickie causes a panic in Ripley and according to Chris Straayer the gay panic situation applies to him;

“Was Ripley panicked when he killed Greenleaf? Certainly at that moment he closely resembles the profile for the psychiatric understanding of acute homosexual panic during the 1950s: he is severely defensive if not actually repressed about his homosexuality; he is horrified by heterosexuality; he senses an impending separation from a same-sex friend to whom he is emotionally attached; he feels an outsider (Marge) is trying to negatively influence his life; and he is self-derogative.”

(2006: 376)

In his book *The Construction of Homosexuality*, David Greenberg also suggests that this type of response (in a gay man) is called reaction formation in that there is a desire; however, the superego forbids its (homosexual) expression. If it is acknowledged for its existence, it could be threatening. He goes on stating that if one is afraid of or has anger towards homosexuality, it is supposed to testify to his heterosexuality. He continues that the subject is not aware of his homosexual feelings because it was never allowed to come forward in the consciousness.” (1990: 25) By destroying the object of his affection and taking over him, Ripley feels that he will

have everything he has ever wanted to be including, most importantly, being not queer, he will live his life as a heterosexual man. Ripley is a sexually repressed individual. He is in denial regarding his sexual identity because he does not want to be found out as a “pervert”, which is the term used for homosexuals at the time the book was written. Therefore, to identify with his sexuality is an actual problem for Tom Ripley. He wants to be seen as a normal, regular straight man. He wants to pretend that he is not gay in any shape or form. Antonia Mackay interprets Tom’s identity crisis as follows;

“Tom’s identity is therefore, the ultimate performative masculinity. It is a masquerade informed by the spaces he inhabits, reflecting the smiles on the boat, the pleasantries of those at his table, and the conformist face in the mirror. What is noteworthy however, more so than the fact that this identity hides his infernal intentions, is the way in which this performance fits a mould of unquestionable ‘normality’.”

(2014)

If the period of time the book was written, the USA of the 1950s, is taken in into consideration as well, one could easily put into perspective that homosexuality, especially male homosexuality, was in dire straits. In *Concise Companion to Literature and Culture*, John Bell observes that;

“...In the developing Cold War climate which dominated all forms of American culture from 1945 through the 1970s, a certain amount of repression was in order: homosexuality and leftist political sentiments were not just uncomfortable lifestyles or beliefs, but dangerous to the United States’ sense of its very existence as the leader of the “Free World.”

(2004: 119)

Thus although it can be argued that being gay is never clear-cut and easy for anyone, Highsmith created a character which was very adaptable to the setting of a paranoid country during the Cold War period in the USA, after WW2, a time when most people were hunted down by the authorities, in a country where almost no one was safe and everyone was paranoid. Especially for a conniving kind of character like Ripley, who has always lived under the disguises he has created for himself and who conducts shifty activities, the idea of eliminating the “heterosexual” other, i.e. Dickie, who possesses a sexual identity in the traditional way and taking over his identity seems a plausible and attractive next step. During a period which witnessed

the paranoia reaching its peak, Ripley stands for the clear reflection of America's fears and paranoia in the Cold War period.

Later in the book, Tom remembers his experiences with the other queer people he has known and acknowledged as gay in the old days in New York. Tom is in a state of complete confusion about this situation. On the one hand, he remembers that those people made some pass at him, but nothing happened, but when Dickie enters his mind Tom shows a complete denial. Although Dickie has been in contact with queer people as well, he is heterosexual, so he does not want to be associated with them. As a closet case and a latent homosexual, neither does Ripley.

“The tone reminded Tom of the answers Dickie had given him when he had asked Dickie if he knew this person and that in New York. Some of the people he had asked Dickie about were queer, it was true, and he had often suspected Dickie of deliberately denying knowing them when he did know them. All right! Who was making an issue of it, anyway? Dickie was...but he had never had anything to do with any of them! When a couple of them had made a pass at him, he had rejected them...”

(Highsmith: 60)

Tom has other gay friends in New York and he blames Dickie for being judgmental about it. Henceforth, as we are witnessing in the narration, Dickie Greenleaf is the representative of the heteronormative society, he has a girlfriend, Marge Sherwood. Moreover, while on the one hand Ripley is jealous of Dickie's relationship with Marge, and he admires him, on the other, he envies Dickie's privilege in this world as a heterosexual man.

3.2 Identity of Tom Ripley

But is Ripley really a gay man? If we wish to dig deeper into Ripley's sexuality, it can be perceived that from the start of the narration, it is apparent that Ripley is "different" from his straight counterparts or heterosexual men in that he is generally disgusted by girls or anything to do with them and his friendship with his female friend Cleo is very chaste and does not involve sexual or emotional relations and Ripley is only interested in her friendship:

"Cleo always asked him up to her apartment, and there was somehow never any thought that he might ask her out to dinner or the theatre or do any of the ordinary things that a young man was expected to do with a girl. She didn't expect him to bring her flowers or books or candy when he came for dinner or cocktails, though Tom did bring her a little gift sometimes, because it pleased her so."

(Highsmith: 20)

Ripley does not perform what is expected from a man of compulsive sexual identity, which is being heterosexual and he does not have any sexual interest in girls or women. Thus, Tom Ripley could be seen as a gay man who is in denial of his sexuality. So much that he even cannot admit to himself that he has such feelings towards other men. When they encounter some girls, Tom actually puts on the defensive by stating that "he likes girls!" (Highsmith: 52). Therefore, Ripley's primal objective in eliminating the other and wearing the mask of Dickie Greenleaf is to salvage himself from his sexual identity with which, in the first place, he has a problem and which he rejects vehemently. Guy Hocquenghem states that inner homophobia exists in homosexual men as well;

"All relationships between the homosexual and his circle are trapped in the problematic of confession, in a guilty situation where desire is criminal and is experienced as such. And just as the Jews can easily be anti-semitic, homosexuals can easily be anti-homosexual."

(1993: 90)

Notwithstanding the foregoing, there are various comments by critics stating that Tom Ripley cannot be regarded as a gay man as his character is portrayed in *The Talented Mr. Ripley*. Slavoj Žižek is one of those critics and although he states that

Ripley's homosexuality is not apparent for the narration of the novel, he nevertheless supports the idea that he idolizes Dickie and wishes to be like him. His views regarding this issue are as follows.

“All the talk about Tom's homosexuality is here misplaced: Dickie is for Tom not the object of his desire, but the ideal desiring subject, the transferential subject "supposed to know /how to desire/." In short, Dickie becomes for Tom his ideal ego, the figure of his imaginary identification: when he repeatedly casts a coveting side-glance at Dickie, he does not thereby betray his erotic desire to engage in sexual commerce with him, to HAVE Dickie, but his desire to BE like Dickie...”

(2008)

Contrary to Zizek's first point, Ripley's attraction for Dickie is apparent from the start. The moment Tom meets with Marge and Dickie, he quickly forms a passionate dislike for Dickie's girlfriend Marge Sherwood. Tom senses that nothing is as it seems between Dickie and Marge, or he likes to imagine that they are not as in love as he first thought. He even muses that; “Marge was in love with Dickie, Tom thought, but Dickie couldn't have been more indifferent to her if she had been the fifty-year-old Italian maid sitting there.” (Highsmith: 38). He even criticizes her speech, which he thinks is abominable and dislikes her choice of words and pronunciation. (Highsmith: 53). Since he sees her as a competition/contender for Dickie's affections, he has a dislike for her along with jealousy that grows with the time he spends with her and Dickie.

On the other hand, Ripley's first instinct is to get Dickie to like him. (Highsmith: 40). He develops feelings for Dickie, idolizes him since he wants Dickie to be much more than a painter (Highsmith: 46), and as the below quotation clearly expresses, Tom begins to admire the physicality of Dickie as well;

“...He was waiting for something profound and original from Dickie. Dickie was handsome. He looked unusual with his long, finely cut face, his quick, intelligent eyes, the proud way he carried himself regardless of what he was wearing. He was wearing broken-down sandals and rather soiled white pants now, but he sat there as if he owned the Galleria...”

(Highsmith: 50)

It should be stated that from the beginning of the novel we do not learn many things about Tom Ripley other than Ripley is a con-artist, and he is dealing with

insurance scams. Regarding him being shifty and being different, Fiona Peters argues that “[w]hile Highsmith offers tantalizing clues into Tom Ripley’s background there is never any sense that these ‘explain’ his actions or account for his difference from others.” (2011: 185) Speaking of being different, Ripley remembers his Aunt Dottie’s behaviors towards him when he was a child;

“... 'Come on, come on, slowpoke!' out the window all the time. When he had finally made it to the car and got in, with tears of frustration and anger running down his cheeks, she had said gaily to her friend, 'Sissy! He's a sissy from the ground up. Just like his father!' It was a wonder he had emerged from such treatment as well as he had. And just what, he wondered, made Aunt Dottie think his father had been a sissy? Could she, had she, ever cited a single thing? No.”

(Highsmith: 28)

It is very obvious that growing up, Tom Ripley’s Aunt Dottie, by whom he was raised felt that something was “wrong” with him in terms of the mannerisms he exhibited and she showed that with homophobic language and that plainly played a part in his being internally repressed. Also, at the beginning of the novel, when Tom is approached by an older man (in fact Mr. Greenleaf, the father of Dickie) “he asks himself what he really wants. He thinks Mr. Greenleaf was not a pervert, though now his tortured brain groped and produced the actual word, as if the word could protect him” (Highsmith: 2). Because Tom Ripley is always involved in shifty activities and scared of getting caught, interestingly he prefers Mr. Greenleaf to be a pervert rather than a policeman. Regarding the internal homophobia displayed in this part of Tom Ripley, Alex Tuss argues that;

“That Tom employs self-demeaning language such as ‘pervert’ and ‘queer’ demonstrates the palpable desire on his part to fit logically into the social context of the 1950s. The conformist attitude displays itself in the ease with which Tom knows he can dismiss a ‘pervert’ and the vehemence with which he stresses to Dickie that he is not a ‘queer’.”

(2004: 96)

Therefore, his classifying Mr. Greenleaf as being a pervert in the first glance is indeed ironic because we come to know that he himself is a sexually “different” man than his heterosexual peers. However, since we also infer that he is a repressed gay man, this categorization somewhat makes sense. Lee Horsley puts it much more

succinctly; “Tom Ripley, whose actions have a disturbing appeal and, in the context of the novel, make an odd kind of sense.” (2009: 117). It makes sense since according to Tom, he is not a gay man. Therefore, he can easily classify Mr. Greenleaf as a pervert and dismiss him in his mind.

In the later parts of the novel, Tom likes to imagine himself with Dickie. It is as if he is ready to spend the rest of his life with Dickie although he does not have a name for his feelings. He only sees his future with Dickie as;

“Tom sat on the broad window-sill in Dickie's studio and looked out at the sea, his brown arms folded on his chest. He loved to look out at the blue Mediterranean and think of himself and Dickie sailing where they pleased. Tangiers, Sofia, Cairo, Sevastopol... By the time his money ran out, Tom thought, Dickie would probably be so fond of him and so used to him that he would take it for granted they would go on living together. He and Dickie could easily live on Dickie's five hundred a month income....”

(Highsmith: 43)

In some ways, Tom even reckons that Marge is jealous of him and Dickie being close;

“She had the look of a mother or an older sister now--the old feminine disapproval of the destructive play of little boys and men. La dee da! Or was it jealousy? She seemed to know that Dickie had formed a closer bond with him in twenty-four hours, just because he was another man, than she could ever have with Dickie, whether he loved her or not, and he didn't.”

(Highsmith: 53)

Tom even imagines himself as far as going to the point of killing Marge as well, whom he regards her as a rival because she is Dickie's girlfriend, and since she “owns” him in emotional terms, he sees her as someone to be eliminated and in doing so, he impersonates and becomes Dickie. This is tied with his desire of transforming into Dickie Greenleaf as well as the below quotation showing Tom in front of the mirror and impersonating Dickie;

“Marge, you must understand that I don't love you,' Tom said into the mirror in Dickie's voice, with Dickie's higher pitch on the emphasised words, with the little growl in his throat at the end of the phrase that could be pleasant or unpleasant, intimate or cool, according to Dickie's mood. 'Marge, stop it!' Tom turned suddenly and made a grab in the air as if he were seizing Marge's throat. He shook her, twisted her, while she sank lower and lower, until at last he left

her, limp, on the floor. He was panting. He wiped his forehead the way Dickie did, reached for a handkerchief and, not finding any, got one from Dickie's top drawer, then resumed in front of the mirror. Even his parted lips looked like Dickie's lips when he was out of breath from swimming, drawn down a little from his lower teeth. 'You know why I had to do that,' he said, still breathlessly, addressing Marge, though he watched himself in the mirror. 'You were interfering between Tom and me--No, not that! But there is a bond between us!'..."

(Highsmith: 60)

Later when Dickie starts to grow tired of Tom, he speaks to Tom about how Marge feels about them being close. At that moment Ripley panics and begins to feel shame and puts on the defensive, considers being queer as an insult and this shows a deep sense of inner homophobia in Tom. The following conversation later shapes the murder in Tom's mind;

"Another thing I want to say, but clearly,' he said, looking at Tom, 'I'm not queer. I don't know if you have the idea that I am or not.'

'Queer?' Tom smiled faintly. 'I never thought you were queer.'

Dickie started to say something else, and didn't. He straightened up, the ribs showing in his dark chest. 'Well, Marge thinks you are.'

'Why?' Tom felt the blood go out of his face. He kicked off Dickie's second shoe feebly, and set the pair in the closet.

'Why should she? What've I ever done?' He felt faint. Nobody had ever said it outright to him, not in this way.

'It's just the way you act,' Dickie said in a growling tone, and went out of the door. Tom hurried back into his shorts. He had been half concealing himself from Dickie behind the closet door, though he had his underwear on. Just because Dickie liked him, Tom thought, Marge had launched her filthy accusations of him at Dickie. And Dickie hadn't had the guts to stand up and deny it to her! He went downstairs and found Dickie fixing himself a drink at the bar shelf on the terrace. 'Dickie, I want to get this straight,' Tom began.

'I'm not queer either, and I don't want anybody thinking I am.'"

(Highsmith: 61)

Highsmith puts significant emphasis on the word "closet" and uses it more than once. Because it is somewhat consistent with the assumption that Tom Ripley is also classical example of a closet case, a latent homosexual. Michael Bronski states that Ripley's story begins in the context of "the fears of the 1950s... For Ripley and

for Highsmith herself, the closet is first and foremost a place of safety.” (Bronski, 2000). He not only is in the closet but he also characterizes being homosexual with derogatory words such as *filthy*, *dirty*, etc. That alone showcases a big amount of internalized homophobia. He is safe in this closet; however, he wants to be with Dickie, who rejects his friendship eventually. Therefore, when Tom realizes the bitter fact that Dickie is not interested in him in a romantic way after a scam business goes wrong, his thoughts are very telling regarding him being rejected by Dickie. His chances being ruined with Dickie makes him feel rather petrified and terrible:

“Now Tom stopped. He had an impulse to go back, not necessarily to go back to the Italian, but to leave Dickie. Then his tension snapped suddenly. His shoulders relaxed, aching, and his breath began to come fast, through his mouth. He wanted to say at least, 'All right Dickie,' to make it up, to make Dickie forget it. He felt tongue-tied. He stared at Dickie's blue eyes that were still frowning, the sun bleached eyebrows white and the eyes themselves shining and empty,. nothing but little pieces of blue jelly with a black dot in them, meaningless, without relation to him. You were supposed to see the soul through the eyes, to see love through the eyes, the one place you could look at another human being and see what really went on inside, and in Dickie's eyes Tom saw nothing more now than he would have seen if he had looked at the hard, bloodless surface of a mirror. Tom felt a painful wrench in his breast, and he covered his face with his hands. It was as if Dickie had been suddenly snatched away from him. They were not friends. They didn't know each other. It struck Tom like a horrible truth, true for all time, true for the people he had known in the past and for those he would know in the future: each had stood and would stand before him, and he would know time and time again that he would never know them, and the worst was that there would always be the illusion, for a time, that he did know them, and that he and they were completely in harmony and alike. For an instant the wordless shock of his realisation seemed more than he could bear. He felt in the grip of a fit, as if he would fall to the ground. It was too much: the foreignness around him, the different language, his failure, and the fact that Dickie hated him. He felt surrounded by strangeness, by hostility. He felt Dickie yank his hands down from his eyes.”

(Highsmith: 68)

Dickie Greenleaf is the other Ripley aspires to become, the other for whom he develops strong feelings, however since subconsciously he knows that his affection and love for another man, especially a heterosexual man will not and cannot materialize, much as he needs and wants this relationship between himself and Dickie Greenleaf to develop, his feelings are not reciprocated by him. Tom's pain of

losing Dickie is very significant as he understands that he will never be with him and Dickie would never love him back;

“The fact that his stomach had a hard pressure in it as if someone were holding a fist against his navel, the vivid anticipation of the long steep walk from here up to the house, the faint ache that would come in his thighs from it.”

(Highsmith: 69)

While they are watching the acrobats on the beach, Ripley feels found out by Dickie, and his shame plummets thus;

“Tom looked at Dickie. Dickie was looking at a couple of men sitting near by on the beach. 'Ten thousand saw I at a glance, nodding their heads in sprightly dance,' Dickie said sourly to Tom. It startled Tom, then he felt that sharp thrust of shame, the same shame he had felt in Mongibello when Dickie had said, 'Marge thinks you are. All right, Tom thought, the acrobats were fairies. Maybe Cannes was full of fairies. So what? Tom's fists were clenched tight in his trousers pockets. He remembered Aunt Dottie's taunt: Sissy! He's a sissy from the ground up. Just like his father!'”

(Highsmith: 75-76)

In other words, the act of killing Dickie is the “straightforward” result he actualizes due to his shame of being a queer (gay) man and his unrequited love for Dickie Greenleaf. Regarding this, Rebecca L. Prigot argues that;

“Tom wishes to attain Dickie’s possessions that he can achieve true mastery over Dickie. If he cannot possess Dickie’s body (for it has been repeatedly denied to him), then at least he can possess every other aspect of his life...”

(2014: 35)

Ripley’s “shame” of his sexuality shapes his actions in the narration and provides him “guidance” for/on how to act after he meets with Dickie Greenleaf, and the shame of being homosexual and/as well as his desire to be a heterosexual man somewhat compel him to act selfishly and to kill Dickie. Since Tom Ripley is in denial over his homosexuality, he even questions and judges the persons who perceive him as a “queer deviant”. He laughs to himself when one of Dickie’s friends, Freddie Miles, whom Ripley also kills when he thinks he is found out by him regarding killing Dickie, suspects him of “sexual deviation.” He laughs at that phrase ‘sexual deviation’, and he muses to himself; “Where was the sex? Where was the

deviation? He has this to say: “Freddie Miles, you’re a victim of your own dirty mind.” (Highsmith: 113)

3.3 Ripley’s “Other” Equivalent

Ripley’s process of breaching the right of the “other” starts with coming face to face with the “other”, i.e. Dickie Greenleaf, a character very distinct in every aspects of character compared to himself, and then he ends up turning Dickie into a casualty. In fact, although Tom Ripley is not some misunderstood man who kills Dickie Greenleaf because he is a blameless victim of his times and society, his survival instinct in a hostile and heteronormative society drives him and in doing so, he breaches the first rule of Levinas. On the subject of killing the other, Levinas argues;

“ ‘You shall not kill’ Knowledge reveals, names and consequently classifies. Speech addresses itself to a face. Knowledge seizes hold of its object. It possesses it. Possession denies the independence of being, without destroying that being - it denies and maintains. The face, for its part, is inviolable; those eyes, which are absolutely without protection, the most naked part of the human body, none the less offer an absolute resistance to possession, an absolute resistance in which the temptation to murder is inscribed: the temptation of absolute negation...To see a face is already to hear 'You shall not kill'...”

(1990: 8)

Ripley carries out the exact opposite. He is a distinct example of breaching the other’s rights by the act of killing. Levinas theorizes that a person can always do more for the other, and this awareness is, in part the basis for man’s guilt and bad conscience. In the course of the story, the contrast occurs and Ripley does not feel guilty for killing Dickie and he does not have a bad conscience about it. He surpasses this part of the responsibility for the other. However, one can also argue that Ripley already feels guilty but not because of killing Dickie, but because of his own homosexuality. He has neurotic guilt regarding his queer self. Guy Hocquenghem’s following views perfectly illustrate the guilt of being homosexual in Ripley;

“So called “moral” masochism is an Oedipal concentrate; it contains, unadulterated, the sense of guilt which pervades homosexuality. Masochistic Oedipalisation gives sexuality both a clear and a guilty conscious in inversion: pleasure in guilt, the guilt of pleasure and lastly, the pleasure of guilt, reign supreme. Freud writes in *Three Essays* that clinical analysis of cases of masochistic perversion shows that they are the result of a “primary passive sexual attitude”, bound of course to the castration complex, which binds positivity- narcissism-homosexuality-guilt through fear of castration, fear of outside world and fear of phallus bearing men and phallus-less women.”

(1993: 128)

Paul Marcus puts forward the idea of neurotic guilt. According to Marcus, “the neurotic guilt is different from real or genuine guilt as he suggests that for Levinas, at least as how Marcus interprets him, neurotic guilt, that seemingly unrealistic and in a certain sense, undeserved tormented feeling of self-absorption, self-loathing, worthlessness and misery occurs (because of Ripley’s queerness) as the result of an individual’s attempting to avoid the meaningful awareness of the much more painful, threatening and identity-subverting experience of what has been called genuine or real guilt.” (Marcus, 1992: 54)

Indeed, when Tom Ripley constantly tries to repress his mind and body and with these, he causes far-reaching consequences for himself and for the “other”. On the topic of Ripley’s shame about homosexuality, Martha Nussbaum provides an insight in her book *Hiding from Humanity*. She starts by asserting that “primitive shame” – a shame closely connected to an infantile demand for omnipotence and the unwillingness to accept neediness – is, like disgust, a way of hiding from our humanity that is both irrational in the normative sense, embodying a wish to be a type of creature one is not, and unreliable in the practical sense, frequently bound up with narcissism and an unwillingness to recognize the rights and needs of others. (Nussbaum, 2004: 15). Ripley’s murder of Dickie Greenleaf is a shining example of this situation. Being queer causes an aggression in Ripley and in a roundabout way destruction for Dickie Greenleaf. Undoubtedly, within the course of the novel Ripley does not think about the consequences of his actions, just seeing the face of the other inspires him to do something for himself rather than for the other ironically. He acts

selfishly for his own sake, and instead of fulfilling his responsibility towards the other (Dickie), treating him with respect and putting him first in Levinasian terms, he kills and plays the role of Dickie Greenleaf, the respected (heterosexual) man in the heteronormative world and society. On the same subject, Mari Ruti argues for what the self should do when faced with the death of the other as follows:

“For Levinas the proper human begins when I transcend my ontology and begin to exist for the other. In this sense, ethics brings about a kind of crisis, upheaval, or suspension of being, which jolts me out of my absorption in my own life. Levinasian ethics demands that I prefer “injustice undergone to injustice committed” (EN 132), which is why I cannot, under any circumstances, injure the other. Quite the contrary, I should be willing to sacrifice myself for the other, to die in the other’s place or—when this is not possible (say, because the other is going to die anyway)—to make sure that the other does not die alone. Of course, I cannot actually die for the other in any ultimate sense for the simple reason that the other will always eventually die; I cannot make the other immortal. But there are situations where I can postpone the other’s death, where I can, for instance, redirect the aggressor’s murderous rage from the other to myself. And, at the very least, I can make sure that I do not remain indifferent to the other’s death that I do not callously turn away from the other’s need at the moment of his or her death.”

(Ruti, 2015 :6)

This is very relevant for Ripley and Dickie because Ripley is so full of his neurotic guilt that stems from his unwanted sexual and emotional desires for Dickie that he is at a point where he does not seem aware of the rights of the other, the death of the other. The self-loathing of Ripley can be interpreted as follows: According to clinical psychologist June Price Tangney, “being sexually different – belonging to a sexual minority – is a virtual guarantee of being socially rejected and stigmatized in many circles. She asserts that homosexuality is perhaps the most obvious example of this: “Homosexuality has been variously conceived and characterized as immorality, as against nature, as gender disturbance, and as mental illness.” She tells us that the stigmatization of homosexuality begins early in childhood and intensifies during adolescence, when slurs such as “queer,” “faggot,” “lesbo,” and “dyke” are commonly used to ridicule and shame peers. Like the character of Ripley as interpreted in this study, long before children begin to grapple with their own sexual orientation, they learn quite clearly that it is shameful to be “gay.” Tangney thus

draws her conclusion stating by it is no surprise that many gay and lesbian adolescents stay locked "in the closet." So, this secrecy, in turn, only serves to intensify a deep-rooted sense of shame. (Tangney, 2004: 167). Consequently, the part below is mixed with love and hatred Tom has for Dickie, and this is a rather crucial part, as that is the moment Tom decides to kill Dickie;

“Dickie said absolutely nothing on the train. Under a pretense of being sleepy, he folded his arms and closed his eyes. Tom sat opposite him, staring at his bony, arrogant, handsome face, at his hands with the green ring and the gold signet ring. It crossed Tom's mind to steal the green ring when he left. It would be easy: Dickie took it off when he swam. Sometimes he took it off even when he showered at the house. He would do it the very last day, Tom thought. Tom stared at Dickie's closed eyelids. A crazy emotion of hate, of affection, of impatience and frustration was swelling in him, hampering his breathing. He wanted to kill Dickie. It was not the first time he had thought of it. Before, once or twice or three times, it had been an impulse caused by anger or disappointment, an impulse that vanished immediately and left him with a feeling of shame. Now he thought about it for an entire minute, two minutes, because he was leaving Dickie anyway, and what was there to be ashamed of any more? He had failed with Dickie, in every way. He hated Dickie, because, however he looked at what had happened, his failing had not been his own fault, not due to anything he had done, but due to Dickie's inhuman stubbornness. And his blatant rudeness! He had offered Dickie friendship, companionship, and respect, everything he had to offer, and Dickie had replied with ingratitude and now hostility. Dickie was just shoving him out in the cold. If he killed him on this trip, Tom thought, he could simply say that some accident had happened. He could--He had just thought of something brilliant: he could become Dickie Greenleaf himself. He could do everything that Dickie did.”

(Highsmith: 77)

Dickie is the other Ripley tries to reach but cannot. He attempts to be with him; however, he fails as Fiona Peters states below regarding Tom's rejection and demand from the other;

“Thus Tom has withdrawn from the possibility of an acceptance of a world of responsibility and commitment to the other person. In other words, he has already, in effect, murdered Dickie at the point where Dickie fails, as it is impossible for him not to, to meet his demand for recognition.”

(2011:168)

According to Levinas, the priority of the other is essential. On the other hand, for Ripley, the “other”, becomes a means to an end. On the issue of the alterity of the other, Levinas argues that;

“...a comportment in which the other, who is strange and indifferent to you, who belongs neither to the order of your interest nor to your affections, at the same time matters to you. His alterity [otherness] concerns you. A relation of another order than that of knowledge, in which the object is given value by knowing it, which passes for the only relation with beings. Can one be for an I without being reduced to an object of pure knowledge? Placed in an ethical relation, the other man remain other.”

(2001: 48)

As we can see, all Tom cares about is his own well-being and his selfish desires. The more Ripley is attracted to him, the more he neglects his responsibility for the other and as we witness, he ends up killing Dickie. Ripley is a repressed gay man; according to him, his ideal self is the “heterosexual, ideal other”, Dickie Greenleaf. In order to achieve his goal, namely being “normal”; becoming a heterosexual man and to be accepted into society, Ripley kills Dickie and takes over his identity. Tom Ripley reckons in his mind that society would not accept and welcome him due to his homosexuality; therefore, he uses Dickie as a means to an end. Murder becomes a symbol of the revenge Tom Ripley takes from the society. In other words, Tom Ripley regards Dickie Greenleaf as the embodiment of the “heteronormative” society, and therefore he kills him in an attempt to survive in it. He assumes the identity of the heterosexual other; he also has enormous shame and guilt regarding his queer identity. As a result of repressing his sexuality, Tom Ripley takes his revenge from the society by the act of murdering Dickie Greenleaf. By rejecting to act morally, he acts selfishly and disregards the rights of the vulnerable other. After killing Dickie, these thoughts of Tom are very significant in terms of justifying his crime as they showcase that he, in a roundabout way, does not blame himself for having committed a crime and breaching the right of the other but he regards outside factors as the main causes for his crime:

“He muses that if he only hadn't been in such a hurry and so greedy, if he only hadn't misjudged the relationship between Dickie and Marge so stupidly, or had simply waited for them to separate of their own volition, then none of this would have happened, and he could have lived with Dickie for the rest of his life, travelled and lived and enjoyed living for the rest of his life.”

(Highsmith: 213)

“One of the paramount benefits Ripley gains by killing Greenleaf is heteronormativity” states Chris Straayer. (2006: 377). Tom Ripley decides to kill Dickie Greenleaf and in doing so he also destroys himself who is internally homophobic and whose sexual identity is rejected by the society since he is subconsciously aware that he is not what he needs to be, he has not got what it takes to be a “real man”, which is being heterosexual in the eyes of the society, undoubtedly.

At the end of the novel, when Ripley's safe place, his persona is taken away from him after Dickie's body is found and Tom has to be Tom Ripley again, he regards this as a very unfortunate thing to happen to him and he hates being himself again, something he so desired to repress and eliminate all his life prior to meeting Dickie. Accordingly, he muses to himself that this is the end of Dickie Greenleaf. He hates becoming Thomas Ripley again, hates being nobody. Because according to him, when he is Tom Ripley, he does not matter as a person, he hates putting on his old set of habits again, and he loathes feeling that people looking down on him and were being bored with him unless he puts on an act for them like a clown, as he hides under various personas, his feeling incompetent and incapable of doing anything with himself except entertaining people for minutes at a time. He says he is not afraid of it but he adds that it (becoming Tom Ripley again) is one of the saddest things he has done in his life. (Highsmith: 154). According to Chris Straayer;

“It was only his desire for Greenleaf that ever-interrupted Tom's heterosexual attitude and cracked his facade. By killing Greenleaf, he eliminated that vulnerability. Now, he has Greenleaf. And he has Greenleaf's heterosexuality. Together they form his ideal homosocial couple, two heterosexual men (with the woman excluded).”

(2006: 378)

He succeeds in escaping the law, but he has a suspicion at the back of his mind that that he may be caught. He thus becomes so paranoid so that when he is caught by Dickie's friend Freddie Miles, who has found out about Tom's murderous nature and evil deeds, Tom Ripley kills him as well with an ashtray and conceals this murder like he has done with Dickie's murder. Dickie's father, Herbert Greenleaf, Marge and a detective search for the missing Dickie. When confronted, Tom tells them that Dickie was depressed and may have committed suicide. Although he is still paranoid about getting caught by the law to the end, Tom arrives in Greece and learns that the Greenleafs have accepted that Dickie has committed suicide. Now that he is a free man, the revolutionary side of the book is actually manifested here. Ripley escapes both the law and the straight man he killed does not cause him to pay any prices at the end. Tom Ripley only thinks of himself; he acts for his own interest. Self-preservation is Tom Ripley's first priority; his sexual identity also compels him. He is ashamed of this identity, he tries to suppress it and as he cannot achieve this desire, his feelings for another man are strong enough to push him to kill the other. Self-preservation outweighs the other's natural rights. What the self wants and needs are more vital, and the thought of self-preservation surpasses everything. Ripley's own survival instinct comes before the other.

As a result, the main debate point about Tom Ripley is his conflict as a closeted gay man, trying to live his life by getting involved in crimes and feeling guilty for being gay. Since Tom is closeted, he is interpreted as projecting this to the other person and with the repression he experiences in himself, he reflects this inner homophobia onto his actions. The encounter with the other person drives Tom Ripley to a very unethical conduct. He first falls in love with the said person. However, as discussed, societal prejudices for being a gay man are in effect in shaping his behavior towards the other and ending the other's life due to his inability to accept being queer due to society.

CONCLUSION

“Have you Henry James's *The Ambassadors*?”

Tom asked the officer in charge of the first-class library. The book was not on the shelf.

‘I’m sorry, we haven’t, sir,’ said the officer.

Tom was disappointed. It was the book Mr Greenleaf had asked him if he had read. Tom felt he ought to read it.”

(Highsmith: 26)

This quotation from Highsmith’s book gives clues to the reader about the content of the two novels, suggesting that there will be some common ground, a connection to bind them and the main characters together. This connection is explained as;

“Shipping magnate Herbert Greenleaf has read *The Ambassadors*, so when he sends Tom Ripley to the small Italian fishing village Mongibello to retrieve his wayward son Dickie, he is aware of the literary precedent. He can’t have read James’ book very carefully, though. For while he believes he has made a tactical advance on Mrs. Newsome by sending a peer of his son’s rather than a father figure, in appointing Ripley—a petty criminal, small-time con artist, and repressed homosexual with a fungible personality—to be his ambassador, he proves himself to be an even worse judge of character. The failure of Ripley to fulfill Mr. Greenleaf’s mission is far more spectacular than Strether’s. Instead of merely being unable to convince Dickie to come home, Tom murders him. He then kills Dickie’s friend Freddie Miles, steals Dickie’s identity, fakes his own suicide, and makes off with Dickie’s inheritance. These grotesque twists on James’ plot make up the dark heart of Patricia Highsmith’s classic novel *The Talented Mr. Ripley*.”

(Ruby, 2011)

Lambert Strether is a rather insignificant man. We know that he is someone who wants to execute orders from his future wife at the beginning of the novel. But his encounter with the other changes his world (view). He fights against the status quo. Everyone assumes that Chad Newsome and his lover, Mme de Vionnet, are unvirtuous and should be prevented to live as they like, but when Strether realizes that Chad is now is more decent person because of his experiences in Paris, his awakening starts. Actually, what Mme de Vionnet expresses at the end gives a brief

summary of what actually happens to Strether by choosing not taking from the others but giving;

“When I think that one has to take so much, to be happy, out of the lives of others, and that one isn't happy even then. One does it to cheat one's self and to stop one's mouth--but that's only at the best for a little. The wretched self is always there, always making one somehow a fresh anxiety. What it comes to is that it's not, that it's never, a happiness, any happiness at all, to TAKE. The only safe thing is to give. It's what plays you least false.”

(James: 419)

The Levinasian approach showcases the contrast between Strether's and Ripley's actions. Levinas advocates the significance of the other and how he should not be harmed in any way. Strether, as an older and repressed man, uses his own conscience to act towards the other as required by Levinasian ethics. He acts in favor of Chad Newsome and in a way sacrifices his happiness for him because he sees that what the other needs is more pressing than his own desires.

Ripley, on the other hand, has a sexual identity he cannot accept due to societal prejudices because he is afraid of not surviving in it if his secret of being a gay man became known. His feelings for another man are already frowned upon. Instead of choosing to walk away from his unreciprocated feelings, he plans to kill his object of affection and somehow assumes that wearing Dickie Greenleaf's skin will save him. In the meantime, he does not give a second thought to the rights of the other. He does not seem tortured by his unethical behavior, too. Because if he does not kill Dickie, he assumes that he will live as a dead man in the society since he is a gay man. No one can say that he is right in his actions towards the other. However, if one wants to make this contrast clear in his mind, it may be emphasized that by choosing to favor the happiness of the others rather than himself, Strether becomes a free man. Tom Ripley on the other hand is a prisoner of the homophobic society, and he finds a way to get out of it. But this way is not an ethical behavior towards the other person. He does not come across as good in terms of Levinasian ethics. Tony Hilfer argues that;

“Tom's very defects turn out to be functional in his eventual transformation—his other-directed oversensitivity to others, his diffidence, his self-dislike all make it easy for him to shuck off his rather minimal self and become the other he has so well observed.”

(1990: 188)

Nevertheless, Scott F. Stoddard celebrates Tom Ripley as a revolutionary character stating that; “Highsmith created a revolutionary character in Tom Ripley, a man who is queer not only in his desires but in his conception of self.” (2013: 220) Therefore, it can be argued that Patricia Highsmith somewhat challenges stereotypes about gay people in *The Talented Mr. Ripley* and by at the end of the novel, when she enables Ripley to escape from punishment, she provides him with a bitter-sweet ending. In other words;

“Highsmith deliberately and shamelessly evades the conventional morality of crime and punishment. Toward the end of the novel she presents us with a barrage of signs that Tom has pushed his luck too far, has risked too much, that nemesis is finally, if a bit belatedly, approaching. Tom “considered that he had been lucky beyond reason,” speculating that “something was going to happen now...and it couldn’t be good. His luck had held just too long” [...] So Tom’s exemption is a thoroughly calculated flouting of moral and literary expectations, a play against genre since even in the relatively subversive crime genre a murderer-protagonist usually ends up being hoist with his own petard.”

(Hilfer, 1990: 195-196)

At the very least, he survives at the end of the novel. Strether’s and Ripley’s queer desire towards the other persons lead them in their ethical journey. It drives them, this desire that they cannot exclusively express molds their ethical and not so very ethical behavior from the Levinasian perspective.

Strether's story leads him to find himself again in other ways, form a moral and ethical point of view, in order to get a good form to construct his own point of view for transformation. Since Strether is acting in accordance with Levinasian ethics, he is trying, from the ethical perspective, to repay his debt to the other. Strether encounters with various objects (the others) during his story which takes place in Paris, and this drives him to fulfill his responsibilities for the other. His decisions and the paths he walks on are all the results of his own choices. The others only guide him, direct him to choose the right thing. In the end, Strether does what he has to do in the subject’s experience with the other. He feels as if he is triumphant

and although the encounters initially disrupt him in a way, at the end, they transform him forever.

The stories of Lambert Strether and Tom Ripley are very humane. They are very complicated characters. Therefore, their stories reflect real life. They hold a mirror to the real-life persons with their characters and motivations. In their encounters with the other persons, their points of view change, they take action, some of them are frowned upon, some of them are revolutionary but at the end, their journeys bring them to that place. Therefore, there is not a decree to judge them for being good or bad people, it is the actions that they do which constitute them as revolutionary characters. After all, it is what we do that counts in the course of our journey in this world. Strether and Ripley choose to act, not sit back when events unfold before them and in that way, they become the intricate characters they are at the end of their respective stories.

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