The Integrated Self: A Reading of the Novels of Henry James

By

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Dedicated
to the memory of
little Jimmy
Pages are misnumbered following this insert
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SJH
In a brilliant essay on Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*, the late Dorothy Van Ghent remarked, "Much of James's work is an exploration of the profound identity of the aesthetic and the moral." This almost off-hand statement, which in context seemed to summarize much of my own response to James's works, operated for me as a catalyst, for it started me along the road that led ultimately to the present study.

The context in which that sentence appears is Mrs. Van Ghent's analysis of the character of Gilbert Osmond, whose marriage to Isabel Archer is the primary determinant of the novel's dramatic conflict. James himself had been specific in characterizing Osmond when, for instance, during that crucial fireside meditation he had had Isabel reflect concerning her husband: "Under all his culture, his cleverness, his amenity, under his good nature, his facility, his knowledge of life, his egotism lay hidden like a serpent in a bank of flowers." And, along with most other readers of James, I had long been aware that Osmond is not the only egotist among the Jamesian dramatis personae. But Mrs. Van Ghent's analysis, which seemed to me the most perceptive on the subject, prompted me to examine the Jamesian egotists more closely. As I did so, I began to perceive a dialectic operating through the relationships which obtain between the "good" and the "bad" characters. Further, it seemed to me that this dialectic embodied an essential element of the Jamesian moral vision.
So this study evolved. I have attempted, basically, three things: first, following Mrs. Van Ghent's lead, to define the Jamesian egotist in his varying manifestations and degrees; second, to explore the Jamesian definition of the integrated self and the relationships which constitute the dialectic between self and ego; and, finally, to draw some conclusions about the moral vision which thus emerges from the fictive world of Henry James. I think most readers will agree that the Jamesian vision, like the Jamesian aesthetic, is not reducible to any single statement. Yet the sheer volume, not to mention the thematic and artistic complexity, of this great American novelist is a rich mine of literary gold which shows no sign of depletion. It is my hope that I have successfully probed one of the veins.

Mrs. Van Ghent's essay did more than suggest my subject, however; it also provided the model for my method. Having long been convinced that the way to meaning lies through literary form, I recognized in her book an admirable example of that critical technique, one which seems to me inescapable when dealing with James in particular, committed as he was to the organic novel and the effacement of authorial judgment from the narrative. In short, because James eschewed the didactic in fiction, one must look to his artistry to ascertain meaning. I have, then, tried to confine myself for the most part to those elements within the works themselves which comprise their totality: i.e., imagery, narrative mode, verbal and thematic irony, qualitative settings, names, dramatic character statements, character-defining actions, and the like, in reaching my conclusions.
A central problem, of course, was determining which of the works should be discussed. My final choices were dictated by four criteria. First, because the fullest character development is possible only in the long form, I categorically eliminated the short stories from consideration. This was an unhappy exclusion in at least one case—"The Beast in the Jungle"—because John Marcher is in many ways the quintessential Jamesian egotist. On the other hand, a case arguing that fact seemed superfluous in the face of its general recognition. In any event, I have used Marcher only for illustrative purposes in Chapter I. The second criterion was the inclusion of a reasonable number of those novels generally accepted as James's major works. Although each reader (myself included) has his list of favorites, it must be agreed that no study which purports to deal with any continuing concern of James's can ignore with impunity Roderick Hudson, The American, The Portrait of a Lady, and the major phase novels. Third, I sought of course to choose those works which seemed most illustrative of my thesis; thus my omission, for instance, of The Tragic Muse and The Awkward Age. I do not mean to imply by any of these omissions that the scheme I posit is absent from those works; simply that it is perhaps more clearly presented in others. And, finally, I wished to include works from each period of James's development in order to illustrate the facts that his concern with the problems involved in the consciousness of the self was present throughout, and that it underwent expansion and variation as his career advanced. So I settled on nine works: besides the three already named, Washington
Square, The Bostonians, The Princess Casamassima, The Aspern Papers, The Ambassadors, and The Wings of the Dove. And while I have not adhered to a strict chronology, the chapter groupings correspond generally to early, middle, and late James.
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Henry James's novels reveal a consistent concern with the problem of achieving and maintaining a loving, open, dynamic, and spontaneous consciousness, identified in this context with life itself. This endeavor constitutes a mode of morality which has as its basis a total integration of moral and aesthetic sensitivity; it is a morality which must be realized in one's relationships with other human beings. The attempt at self-realization is, however, constantly challenged by the opposite force of self-serving ego gratification. The challenge and resulting conflict constitute a thematic dialectic which is embodied in the aesthetic form of the novels. The thesis of the dialectic is defined as the potential, willingness, desire and effort to achieve full sentience. The protagonist is the one who is impelled most strongly to realize his unique identity, to expand his consciousness to its farthest
reaches, to achieve the total integration of feeling. The antithesis is
the collaboration of forces, internal and external, which would inhibit,
deflect, or deny that growth. The synthesis occurs when and if the goal
is reached, and is qualified to the degree that the effort falls short.
In the earlier works, the inhibiting force is incarnated in one or sev-
eral characters who are egotists functioning as a primary component of
the protagonist's experience. In the later works, the dialectic is
internalized to a greater degree, appearing as the forces of stasis
opposed to those of dynamism. For the sensitive Jamesian "centre of
consciousness," the struggle in the later works assumes the form of con-
flicting values, attitudes, motivations, and actions as he strives for
knowledge and attempts to reach the state of consciousness that is the
ultimate of the "felt life."

In this study, three general patterns of this dialectic are speci-
"fied and applied to nine novels. The simplest pattern poses two egotists
struggling for the possession or exploitation of a third character of
limited sensibility. This pattern appears in Washington Square, The
Bostonians, and The Aspern Papers. The second pattern combines the ego-
tists' effort at control with the theme of the developing consciousness.
Here the emphasis is upon relationships; the characters are psychologi-
cally more complex; and there is frequently a residue of ironic ambigu-
ity. The Portrait of a Lady, The Princess Casamassima, Roderick Hudson,
and The American are discussed in these terms. The third pattern is the
most complex, as motives and attitudes take precedence over external
action. Qualities within individuals act and react, in parallel or con-
trapuntal ways, in their attempts to achieve their respective ends, to
relate to themselves and to each other in a complex mental and social
world. The Ambassadors and The Wings of the Dove are considered in this
light.

The conclusions reached recognize the pervasive irony often noted
in James's fiction. In terms of the dialectic, this irony is identified
as resulting either from the discrepancy between the protagonist's
efforts at self-realization and the degree to which he falls short of
the goal, or it occurs when his moral victory is gained at the price of
the realization that, in the course of his experience when he was labor-
ing under delusion or ignorance, he has contracted obligations or estab-
lished conditions which qualify the possibility of applying the lessons
learned. Despite the failures to reach it, however, the ideal of the
integrated self is consistently posited, constituting a major component
of the moral vision of James's novels.
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CHAPTER I

"THE CHILL OF HIS EGOISM"

One of Henry James's most famous stories—"The Beast in the Jungle"—is a chilling tale about a man who wakes up too late to the realization that he has missed his life. From his earliest time, John Marcher tells May Bartram, he has held himself in readiness for an event which he is sure will happen to him, the exact nature of which he cannot specify but which will confirm his self-image as a man set apart, extraordinarily, from the common run of human experience. May agrees to watch and wait with him. The years glide by while they keep their vigil, she in the interim helping him "to pass for a man like another." On his part, while accepting to the full the measure of devotion May tacitly accords him, he observes with the utmost scrupulosity—as he regards it—the limitations which he sees as the necessary condition to their relationship. "One doesn't take a lady," he says, "on a tiger hunt." The day eventually comes when it is apparent that May will die. Marcher's primary emotions in the face of this fact are regret that she will be deprived of witnessing the climax of their long wait, and apprehension of his own impending loneliness. During their penultimate interview, Marcher accuses May of holding something back, of possessing knowledge which he does not share. She admits the charge, telling him in effect that she knows what the "beast" is, and that it is something more "monstrous" than their wildest imaginings had devised. He expresses the fear
that what she means is that it has been a delusion, to which she replies, no, it is all too horribly real. But, she says, it's not yet too late; she rises to stand before him, all soft and expectant, while he but "stupidly stares." Finally she turns away, "strangely ill," as he cries, "What then has happened?" "What was to," she replies.

It is not until after her death and a subsequent year filled with aimless and lonely wandering that Marcher finally sees what she meant. The catalytic event occurs in the cemetery where May lies buried. One day he sees there a man in the throes of a fresh bereavement, and Marcher's glimpse of his ravaged face makes him wonder, "What had the man had, to make him by the loss of it so bleed, and yet live?"

Something—and this reached him with a pang—that he, John Marcher, hadn't. . . . No passion had ever touched him, for this was what passion meant; he had survived and maundered and pined, but where had been his deep ravage? (NYE, XVII, 124).

The process of recognition thus begun rushes on, until "what he presently stood gazing at was the sounded void of his life."

The escape would have been to love her; then, then he would have lived. She had lived . . . since she had loved him for himself; whereas he had never thought of her . . . but in the chill of his egotism and the light of her use (NYE, XVII, 126).

As the realization grows within him, it assumes the symbolic form of a rushing monster: "he saw, in the cruelty of his image, what had been appointed and done. He saw the Jungle of his life and saw the lurking Beast; then, while he looked, perceived it, as by a stir of the air, rise, huge and hideous, for the leap that was to settle him." John Marcher becomes a tragic figure as he perceives the monstrosity of his lifelong egotism.
"The Beast in the Jungle," written late in James's creative life, is neither his first nor his only probe into the destruction wrought by egotism upon human beings and their relationships with one another; it is only his most concentrated. Indeed, the ravage effected by obsessive and excessive self-love is a major component of the moral vision embodied in his fiction, a vision which, as T. S. Eliot remarked, makes of his canon "a complete whole."2 While many critics have attempted, with varying degrees of success, to define that vision, and some have noted the egotists operating in one or another of the individual works, no one to date has attempted a novel-to-novel exploration, even on the selective basis of the present study, of that which I call the dialectic of egotism, a dialectic which embraces not only the moral but the aesthetic values of his fiction.3

Before proceeding to the general outlines of the Jamesian definition of egotism, a note on terminology is appropriate. Webster defines egoism as "excessive love and thought of self; an egocentric attitude"; egocentrism as "the regarding of everything in its relation to oneself; self-centered; centering in the ego or self; viewed from one's own mind as a center"; and egotism as "the frequent use of the word I; the practice of referring overmuch to oneself, conceit; also, loosely, egoism." While it may seem incredible to accuse James, that lover of le mot juste, of using a word in the "loose" sense, it is nevertheless true that such is the case in his choice of the terms egotism and egotist (consistently used throughout his writings), for the attitudes he associates with those terms include those offered for both egoism and egocentrism. The dis-
tinction between Willoughby Pattern--whom Meredith, with perhaps more accuracy, calls the egoist--and the quintessential Jamesian egotist is morphological rather than semantic. For consistency's sake, I follow James's precedent.

The touchstone of the Jamesian definition is egocentrism, excessive love and thought of self. The egotist is convinced of his innate superiority in all things and, conversely, of the inferiority of others. He believes that he is self-sufficient, a world unto himself. He sees those close to him as reflectors of his own glory, evidence of his own taste, vehicles of his own advantage. Like Marcher, he does not see them in any meaningful way as moral entities in themselves, for his inner vision is focused exclusively upon himself. Concomitant with self-love is excessive pride, the classical hybris and the satanic sin. The persistence of the theme of excessive self-pride in James's fiction places it squarely in the mainstream of Western literary, cultural, and religious tradition, and partially accounts for his reliance, increasing as his career advances, upon conventions of image and archetype. The "moral sweetness," as Oscar Cargill observes, of James's novels is "uncloyed by any fantastic theology"; yet his view of human morality as embodied in the works is clearly conditioned by his cultural milieu.

The Jamesian egotist's conviction of and pride in his own superiority and self-sufficiency are directly related to his propensity to unquestioned a priori assumptions concerning the correctness of his beliefs, the probity of his motives and actions, the impeccability of his taste, the ultimacy of his standards--moral, intellectual, aesthetic, and social.
He typically refuses to submit any of these assumptions to the experien-
tial test, for his self-esteem bars to his imagination the possibility
that any attitude other than his might be brought significantly to bear
upon a given situation. He has then an incomplete and/or fallacious view
of the reality of dynamic, pragmatic experience. He is, or prefers, the
static rather than the dynamic. There is no room in his nature for
growth, expansion, revision, or acceptance of new ideas, norms, or
responses. He has a nature and an outlook fixed, rigid, and inflexible,
and, as such, is devoid of the receptivity, vitality, fluidity, and
potential for change which, in James, is the essence of life.

This rigidity produces a reliance upon convention. The egotist
characteristically adheres to societal forms and institutions as the
correlative of his own inflexibility. As a general rule he is politi-
cally conservative, even reactionary; religiously a Roman Catholic or
Calvinist; socially an observer and defender of traditional systems of
manners and social orders. But it must be emphasized that the egotist's
nominal regard for the traditional values is accorded to the symbol
rather than to the substance. The appearance of the thing is valued over
the reality; the beauty of manner is substituted for the beauty of being,
resulting in parody or even blasphemy of the substantive values which
have been subsumed by him in the form. The egotist's bastion of rigid
conventionality produces a haughty exclusiveness and a contempt for the
world which lies beyond the walls of his self-protective ego, yet per-
versely he frequently covets the commendation of that world as reiteration
of his self-image. His refusal to submit himself to the experience of
the senses belies any claims he might make to the capacity for appreciation or enjoyment. He is unable to achieve the objectivity necessary to a sense of humor, thus he is often depicted as humorless and as taking himself, as a matter of course, very seriously. Any humor he does manifest assumes the form of biting, satiric wit. He is incapable of love, as Marcher exemplifies, for in his preoccupation with self there is no room for unselfish consideration of others.

The egotist's most characteristic action is, paradoxically, essentially non-action, as Marcher again illustrates, or its correlative, the attempt to impose stasis upon Heraclitean flux. In terms of human relationships, this attempt can manifest itself in the egotist's seeking to impose his will upon other people and upon the circumstances of his existence. He literally seeks to create his world in his self-image, and in so doing he denies the right of others to the dynamics of human growth, the fullness of self-realization, and the dignity of conscious identity. He is an authoritarian who, because he believes that his is the ultimate authority, attempts to manipulate, control, and possess others. He denies the dynamics of experience to himself and he attempts to deny them to other people. As Tony Tanner says:

Rigidity, inflexibility, intransigence—these are bad characteristics in the Jamesian world. The rigorous imposition of moral preconceptions and social prejudices on the organic stuff of life is usually shown to be either ill-advised or cruel, and always impoverishing. It is Winterbourne's social stiffness and acquired rigidity of prejudice that prevents him from fully appreciating the real spontaneous quality of Daisy Miller... It is the father's cruel rigidity which crushes Catherine Sloper's chances for a fuller life in Washington Square, it is the desire to manage
and manipulate which makes Mr. Flack such an obnoxious and dangerous presence in _The Reverberator_. It is Gilbert Osmond's cold, calculated abuse of Isabel Archer's natural vitality which means a possible death for her; it is the dogmatic stiffness of Waymarsh's moral judgements which Strether disaffiliates himself from in the interest of a fuller vision of life; it is the icy possessive dominating rigour of Olive Chancellor which threatens to divert Verena Tarrant into a sterile death-in-life. The examples of the variety of more or less damnable rigidities in James's work could be extended.7

We cannot proceed far beyond this enumeration of apparent character traits without considering the Jamesian concept of consciousness. Implicit in the discussion so far is, I hope, the connection between the pervasive presence of the egotist in James's fiction, whose point of reference in all things is himself, and James's insistence upon the essential subjectivity of experience. This is a crucial point, for James typically accords a comparable degree of intelligence and cultivation—what he frequently calls "cleverness," which can be either a commendatory or a pejorative term—to both his positive and his negative characters.8 Some of the latter are, indeed, quite attractive until one looks at them closely, a fact which has caused much of the controversy which has characterized a significant portion of critical commentary upon James's works. The key to the difference lies in the quality of the motives and actions which are dramatized in the relationships between protagonists and antagonists. The protagonists typically submit themselves to experience; the antagonists attempt to codify experience. And when we understand that, in James, experience is to all intents and purposes synonymous with consciousness, we can discern the pattern. In that often-quoted passage in
"The Art of Fiction," James wrote, "experience is never limited and never complete."

It is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness, and catching every air-borne particle in its tissue. It is the very atmosphere of the mind. . . . If experience consists of impressions, it may be said that impressions are experience.9

And then comes his famous adjuration, "Try to be one of the people on whom nothing is lost," a monition which is equally applicable to his fictive creations as to his hypothetical aspirant to the art of fiction.

If "impressions are experience" and "experience is . . . an immense sensibility," then experience is consciousness. And if "experience is never limited," then consciousness is never limited so long as impressions continue to register. The implication of élan vital contained in these associations suggests the further equation of life itself with consciousness. The prevalence of biological metaphors among James's diverse comments concerning the nature of consciousness, as Ernest LaBrie has pointed out, further substantiates the association. "Consciousness allows perception to occur, seeing behind the world of appearances, gathering impressions, creating a reflector of the character as he transforms the environment, reacting to it with sensitivity."10 Among the plastic sensibilities which appear in James's fiction, three distinct types are discernible: the first type is the one limited in its basic endowments of intelligence and sensitivity, the second is that which is generously supplied with the innate capacity for full and intelligent experience, and the third that which possesses the same potential as the second but
which perverts, denies or otherwise stultifies its growth. The least "interesting" (to use James's term) for fictive purposes is the first, the one limited by nature, "the gross fools, the headlong fools, the fatal fools" he calls them. And since his interest from first to last is less in what happens to people than in their responses to experience, none of this type appears as a protagonist in a major work. James is far more interested in the sensibilities who are capable not only of "being moved" but of "moving," that is to say, of the kinds of sensibilities which are capable of the furthest reaches of knowledge. Dorothea Krook writes:

The intelligence is not of course of the academic kind, the sensibility is not 'trained' . . . and the moral insight appears to owe nothing to the offices of teachers or preachers. On the contrary, it appears to owe everything only to their inordinate capacity for being and seeing . . . for life, that is, and for consciousness; for living and for understanding. And since their inordinate capacity for enjoyment and suffering is matched by their inordinate passion for knowledge, especially self-knowledge, their suffering is not the blind, brute suffering of common humanity, which is always pitiful, often indeed heartbreaking, but never tragic. Their suffering is the kind peculiar to the highly intelligent and the highly imaginative—'full vessels of consciousness,' . . . 'those upon whom nothing is lost,' who are all the time 'exposed' . . . to the impact of living experience, and fully cognisant, all the time, of the operation and effect of that experience.  

James was aware that there are those who resist that knowledge, who deny the dynamism of experience, who substitute an impassive wall for the tissue of silken threads, and that such a consciousness, such an approach to experience, creates its own limitations. The egotist is one upon whom everything of value, i.e., of moral determination, is lost; the contex-
tual equation of "experience" with the "immense sensibility" provides, by reverse implication, a tacit rejection of the sensibility which does not or will not respond to the totality of experience, of impressions in the fullest and most comprehensive sense of the term. Yet both attitudes—the positive and the negative, the limitless and the limited, the responsive and the unresponsive—constitute "the atmosphere of the mind." The Jamesian "religion of consciousness," as F. O. Matthiessen originally called it, along with James's essentially dramatic methods, has given rise to that persistent critical notion, which even today crops up periodically, that James's fiction is "morally neutral." Such a notion can only be predicated upon a failure to distinguish between those fictive figures who accept consciousness in its fullest sense and those who deny it in one way or another, who manifest (to a greater or lesser degree) the sterility of static egotism.

James's definition of consciousness implicit in the integrality of experience and impressions is pregnant with further implications. Besides its asseveration of the subjectivity of essential experience, its insistence upon receptivity as the prerequisite for consciousness, and its association of consciousness with life itself, it demands a closer look at the kinds of impressions which constitute life. A suggestive phrase occurs in the Preface to The Princess Casamassima, which includes James's most explicit discussion of the matter. He says there that his predisposition in his selection of central characters had always been to those who are "finely aware and richly responsible." Fine awareness in the Jamesian sense is the functioning in harmony of physical sight (an
attribute of the body responding to sensuous stimuli) and of inner vision, or insight (the soul apprehending moral beauty). The awareness of both sensuous and moral beauty is the necessary prerequisite for the attitudinal stance of moral responsibility. James's linking in this phrase of awareness and responsibility suggests that he saw them as interdependent and ultimately inseparable, and, as such, constituting a formulaic definition of the self, a definition which is very close in its phraseology to the philosophical definition of ego offered by Webster: "the entire man considered as union of soul and body." The common semantic root of the terms ego and egoism/egotism supports James's recognition of the delicate line which separates the realization of the self—a desideratum—from preoccupation with self. It further supports his accuracy in placing both attitudes, positive and negative, within the realm of consciousness.

The essential Platonism of the identification of beauty with goodness implicit in the Jamesian concept of the full consciousness has not gone unrecognized by his critics, of course. In that landmark of James criticism, The Major Phase, F. O. Matthiessen wrote:

... James conceived of seeing in a multiple sense, as an act of the inward even more than of the outward eye. ... When Emerson declared that the "age is ocular," and delighted in the fact that the poet is seer, he was overwhelmingly concerned with the spiritual and not the material vision. But concern with the external world came to mark every phase of the century's increasing closeness of observation. ... Matthew Arnold was to note that "curiosity" had a good sense in French, but unfortunately only a bad one in English. James, an early convert to Arnold's culture, set himself to prove the value of the farthest reaches of curiosity. The distance that he
had traveled from Emerson may be measured by the fact that though both knew their chief subject matter to be consciousness, the mind's awareness of its processes, for Emerson that awareness reaffirmed primarily the moral laws. James was also a moralist, but aesthetic experience was primary for him. . . . But what distinguished him from French naturalists and English aesthetes alike was that he never forgot the further kind of seeing, the transcendent passage to the world behind appearance and beyond the senses. 13

In the light of Matthiessen's placing of James in a position touching at various points French naturalism, English aestheticism, and American idealism, it is curious to note his comment that for James "aesthetic experience was primary." 14 He acknowledges that James was "an early convert to Arnold's culture," yet apparently does not recognize the connection between the Jamesian concept of consciousness and the aesthetic tradition's "unified sensibility." Alwyn Berland writes:

Ruskin's aesthetic was based on the conviction that human spirit is single and unified, irreducible to specialized compartments or categories; this thesis later finds expression in James as his conception of "sensibility." Instead of a theory of specialized components or discrete faculties, Ruskin argued for a singleness of psyche in which aesthetic sensibility and religious sensibility, intellectual awareness and spiritual perception, are all a part. 15

Berland relates this concept to "the loss of religious conviction common to the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries," saying that Ruskin, Arnold, and Pater were attempting "to replace as much of its moral and spiritual content as possible."

Ruskin's attempt is rooted in his theory of spiritual oneness, and developed in his insistence that the perception and appreciation of beauty is identical with moral perception. . . . To deny that relationship by isolating beauty is the "art for art's sake" or
aesthetic fallacy; to deny it by isolating the "moral" is the Puritan fallacy. And Henry James was opposed to both. 16

Such a statement as Matthiessen's, then, as Berland has demonstrated, could only be made from a critical viewpoint that is itself perhaps chauvinistically American, for it is not so much that James gave primacy to the aesthetic experience as that Emerson, along with most of his American contemporaries, minimized it. The paucity of opportunity for aesthetic cultivation, as we all know, was the major reason for James's rejection of the American life style. He saw a definite connection between the American suspicion of the aesthetic experience and what he regarded as the incompleteness of the idealistic American moral vision, that vision of which Emerson was both representative and spokesman. James's comments concerning Hawthorne's "provinciality," his pointing to Emerson's unawareness of evil, his remonstrances to Howells regarding the lack of cultural density in America are all of a piece. 17 James's view of his native land has a two-fold representation within the dialectic of egotism. The first is his choice of American nationality for many of his major characters in their beginning unformed and uninformed states. The freshness, openness, and spontaneity, as well as cultural ignorance, endemic to American nativity provides the starting point from which the Jamesian "vessel of consciousness" can launch his peregrinations upon the seas of experience.

James insisted that culture must include morality; his argument with actual European civilization is that it often does not. Similarly, he insisted that while Puritan morality may be a part of a "culture," it is a culture which apart from its morality scarcely
exists. The sensibility of his prototypic American lacks aesthetic imagination; of his European, moral imagination. Neither alone is, in Ruskin’s phrase, a unified sensibility.¹⁸

James’s most explicit statement regarding his view of American cultural barrenness occurs in his review of Cabot’s memoir of Emerson published in 1887. Discussing that review in relation to James’s uses in his fiction of American "types," Tony Tanner writes:

Claiming that "we know a man imperfectly until we know his society," James points to the "singular impression of paleness," the want of colour, which the book reveals. And the pallor of the book represents precisely the shortcomings of the society of which Emerson was a member. . . . James’s point in all this is that "the will, in the old New England society, was a clue without a labyrinth." . . . In such a barren, colourless society a man like Emerson dwelt "with a ripe unconsciousness of evil," and thus could develop "a special capacity for moral experience—always that and only that." A moral sense with no vision of evil; a conscience with no confronting sensations to work on; a fish without an element; a clue without a labyrinth—such was the Emersonian, the New England mind. And one can see at once that James decided to take that conscience and push it into a labyrinth, dazzle it with impressions, engulf it with sensations, bewilder it with alternatives, distract it with counter-solicitations. The Emersonian vision was removed from the thin vertical simple light in which it could thrive without challenge, and introduced into a complex society.¹⁹

But some of James’s "prototypic" Americans are unable to overcome their "special capacity for moral experience—always that and only that," and this failure constitutes the second use to which the peculiarly American sensibility is put within the dialectic of egotism. The exclusively "moral" sensibility is as rigidly intransigent as are other forms of limited vision and limited response, and carries an equal potential for destruction. The sensibility which takes refuge in a sense of moral
superiority is guilty of the sin of the Pharisees—"Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men are"—and at its root is another form of perverted ego gratification. As the old saying has it, he who is convinced that he is in sole possession of The Truth always winds up burning other people at the stake. Further, this form of egotism is a two-edged sword, for it carries the additional dimension of a propensity for a quasi-religious martyr complex, an attitude which is no less evil for the fact that the denial of life-dynamics is directed against oneself. Discussing James's *The Europeans*, J. A. Ward writes: "... the inflexible virtue of the New Englander has become perverted and destructive; negative virtue has become positive evil." He adds, however, that "for the most part, the New England conscience is evil only to the extent that it prohibits experience."20

Another way of expressing the moral-aesthetic tension in James's works, as Berland has pointed out, is his adoption of Arnold's symbols of Hebraism and Hellenism: "the call to duty and the call to beauty become in James (without the labels) his most typical treatment of American and European, as they tend respectively to represent 'strictness of conscience' and 'spontaneity of consciousness.' ... Like Arnold, James rejects each of these two terms alone—each without some interfusion of the other—as fragmentary, but welcomes both together as comprising man's wholeness."21

The dream of the Jamesian pilgrim is the Arnoldian ideal: the marriage of Hebraism and Hellenism. It is what the "braver imagination" desires, as James tells us in the preface to Lady Barbarina, as "the dauntless fusions to come." James's heroes never achieve this perfect marriage, although Lambert Strether almost does; but it is their
striving toward such a synthesis which gives them, very often, their stature.22

Others of James's critics besides Berland and Tanner have seen that statements such as Matthiessen's are a distortion which fails to recognize the fact of James's cumulative insistence throughout the canon upon the absolute necessity, for the fullest consciousness, of the realization of the "Arnoldian ideal." Dorothy Van Ghent has addressed the matter in terms of the Jamesian emphasis upon "vision":

The theme of "seeing" (the theme of the developing consciousness) is fertile with ironies and ambiguities that arise from the natural symbolism of the act of seeing, upon which so vastly many of human responses and decisions are dependent. The eye, as it registers surfaces, is an organ of aesthetic experience, in the etymological sense of the word "aesthetic," which is a word deriving from a Greek verb meaning "to perceive"—to perceive through the senses. James provides his world with innumerable fine surfaces for this kind of perception; it is a world endowed with the finest selective opportunities for the act of "seeing," for aesthetic cultivation. But our biological dependence upon the eye has made it a symbol of intellectual and moral and spiritual perception, forms of perception which are—by the makers of dictionaries—discriminated radically from aesthetic perception. Much of James's work is an exploration of the profound identity of the aesthetic and the moral. (In this he is at variance with the makers of dictionaries, but he has the companionship of Socrates' teacher Diotima, as her teaching is represented by Plato in the Symposium. Diotima taught that the way to spiritual good lay through the hierarchies of the "beautiful," that is, through graduations from one form of aesthetic experience to another.)23

Dorothea Krook has similarly recognized the Platonic element in the relationship between the richly endowed—in the aesthetic sense—Jamesian world and the theme of moral consciousness, saying that the "uncommonness" of the Jamesian personages in their world of privilege is an index to
their being "endowed in an extraordinary degree with the gifts of intelligent, imagination, sensibility, and a rare delicacy of moral insight":

In the moral world that James has created . . . perfect lucidity, perfect composure, and perfect good humour are . . . the transcendent virtues of man as man, by which the greatness and dignity of the human spirit are affirmed in the very midst of suffering in itself degrading and demoralising. The lucidity is the mark of the human intelligence at its furthest reach, which seeks to understand, to render fully intelligible to itself, its own deepest experience of life. The composure is the mark of the human spirit at its highest reach—"spirit" in the Platonic sense, meaning the courageous, the heroic, element in the soul of man . . . . And the good-humour (taking the word in the large sense in which James uses it) is the supreme mark of the civilised temper, which will not stoop to rail at life, whatever the provocation—will not revile or recriminate, but seeks instead to come to terms with life by understanding it. This is the vision of human perfection that lights the way of the Jamesian vessels of consciousness with a radiance consistently splendid.24

Less poetically, Arnold Goldsmith has expressed much the same thought:

"everybody in this world suffers, but decent people bear it. . . . Like Hemingway, James insists that in a hostile universe, human dignity, courage, manliness, and decency can be victorious."25

This then is the posited ideal, the Jamesian "vision of perfection" in its moral and its aesthetic implications, which it is essential to understand in relation to the failures to reach it. Mrs. Krook recognizes that the "intense moral energy" of the Jamesian personae can be directed toward ends either good or bad, but Mrs. Van Ghent, again, has pinpointed the matter more precisely, saying that there are other bases for identifying the Jamesian fusion of the aesthetic and the moral experiences. Both, she tells us, are experiences of feeling: the aesthetic because of its reliance upon the physical senses, and the moral (when "it is
not sheerly nominal and ritualistic") in its reliance upon the inner senses:

Neither one has reality—has psychological depth—unless it is "felt" (hence James's so frequent use of phrases such as "felt life" and the "very taste of life," phrases that insist upon the feeling base of complete and integrated living.)

Furthermore, both are nonutilitarian:

The first designation that aestheticians usually make, in defining the aesthetic, is its distinction from the useful; when the aesthetic is converted to utility, it becomes something else, its value designation is different—as when a beautiful bowl becomes valuable not for its beauty but for its capacity to hold soup.

Similarly, the moral sense, when it is "converted to utility, becomes something else than moral—becomes even immoral, a parody of or a blasphemy against the moral life":

The identity that James explores is their identity in the most capacious and most integrated—the most "civilized"—consciousness, whose sense relationships (aesthetic relationships) have the same quality and the same spiritual determination as its relationships with people (moral relationships.)

The distinction between "good" and "evil" in the Jamesian moral universe—as defined within human relationships—derives directly from the tension between the posited ideal and the failures to reach the ideal. Any force which contributes to the development, realization, and maintenance of the fully integrated, fully sentient, open and receptive consciousness is good; that which would hamper, limit, or prohibit that growth is evil, a denial of good, a denial of consciousness, a denial of life. The single most destructive force militating against the realization of the ideal is failure of vision in one form or another, and such failure is
most often depicted as emanating from the turning inward of vision upon oneself, i.e., egotism in the comprehensive sense. The failure of vision can assume one of two general forms, both deriving from the failure to integrate the moral with the aesthetic sense— or vice versa— into a unified, nonutilitarian, feeling-based whole:

His exploration of that ideal identity involves cognizance of failed integration, cognizance of the many varieties of one-sidedness or one-eyedness or blindness that go by the name of the moral or the aesthetic, and of the destructive potentialities of the human consciousness when it is one-sided either way. His ironies revolve on the ideal concept of a spacious integrity of feeling: feeling, ideally, is one—and there is ironic situation when feeling is split into the "moral" and the "aesthetic," each denying the other and each posing as all.

Such a "split in feeling," such a failure of vision, when translated into relational terms, results in "the evil referred to by Kant in his Second Categorical Imperative: the use of persons as means—an evil to which perhaps all evil in human relationships reduces." Tony Tanner has similarly explored the Kantian connotations, extending the implications of the split in feeling within the realm of relationship:

Imagine two worlds. One is a world of ends in which everything and everyone has an intrinsic worth and they are all respected for what they are. . . . They are regarded as ends in themselves. This is the moral world. In the other world, everything and everyone is regarded as a means, nothing is considered as having a fixed inherent worth but only what Kant calls a "value." This is misleading since we tend to use "value" to imply "worth," so let us say "price," i.e., a market value which may change as appetites change, as opposed to an inner spiritual value, a permanent immutable worth. In this lower world of means, people only look at each other in the light of how they can use people,
manipulate them, exploit or coerce them in the interests of some personal desire or appetite, or indeed mutilate them and shape them to fit the dictates of a theory or a whim. In this world people see other people only as things or instruments, and they work to appropriate them as suits their own ambition. The world of means is a world of rampant egoism, while the world of ends is the realm of true morality and love. These two worlds are effectively the upper and lower parts of James's moral world. 29

And then Tanner states categorically that the "total appropriation of another person's life for egotistical ends is . . . the cardinal Jamesian sin." 30

The emphasis upon relational morality, it should perhaps be added, is James's own. He rarely, if ever, confronts evil in the abstract, the metaphysical, or the theological sense. 31 There is an underlying existentiality to his vision, a cognizance of the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to. The awareness is there, and on several occasions a Jamesian personage gazes into the abyss of annihilation, but the attitude implicit in his handling of such situations is essentially one of acceptance. Such acceptance is, indeed, part of that heroism of the spirit which Krook identifies, and is all that is necessary—or possible. J. A. Ward writes:

James's acceptance, imaginative rather than literal, of "some terrible aboriginal catastrophe," . . . that made evil, if not a natural element of human life, certainly a permanent reality, takes the form in his novels of what theologians term "sin" rather than of what they term "evil," or of "moral evil" rather than "natural evil." Natural evil, which is beyond the realm of human control, the caprices and cataclysms of nature, the unavoidable facts of disease and death, is, according to Reinhold Niebuhr, "an irrelevance and a threat of meaninglessness in the realm of human history." In James the emphasis on natural evil is
equally slight. It is of course an accepted reality, and instances of it set many of his stories in motion. . . . But such matters are never treated for their own value; they merely serve as bases for stories which have moral evil at their center.32

Naomi Lebowitz has expressively described the Jamesian humanistic orientation toward morality as "the moral imperative of relationship," and then encapsulated that imperative as "the imagination of loving" (which is James's own phrase). Her study is both provocative and frustrating; the former because of her perceptive schematizations of certain essential elements comprising James's "legacy to the novel" and the latter because the scope of her study necessitates a movement away from James's own works toward his literary successors.33 Nonetheless, her talent for happy phrase-making finds further expression in terms which cast an additional perspective, I think, upon my own: she defines the struggle of the developing consciousness in terms of one between the "masculine ego" and the "feminine sensibility." Both, she hastens to assure us, are present in greater or lesser degree in every individual; one's biological sex is but an index, and an indefinite one at that, to the proportions. Cultural definitions of respective sex-roles are obviously involved here, as she identifies the qualities of assertiveness, aggressiveness, and unflagging will as "masculine," and those of receptivity, gentleness, and sensitivity as "feminine."

It is the masculine will that raises the status of relationship to a religious or romantic ritual, but it is the feminine sensibility that keeps relationship alive by disturbing ritual, by submitting it to the tests of change.34

Her use of such terms as the "deadening . . . satanic unconquerable will"
opposed to the "free, rich, and innocent" support my claim that she is
discussing essentially the same element in James's work that I am, and
that Van Ghent, Krook, Tanner are. Her abstracting is further useful in
that it suggests that James, with his acuity of psychological observa-
tion, tacitly challenges traditional definitions of sex-roles and attribu-
tes, and that an important part of his realization of the desideratum
of verisimilitude that he set for himself as an artist lies just there,
in his recognition that human beings are compounds, in various degrees
and proportions, of both the "masculine ego" and the "feminine sensi-
bility," and that a unified self is possible only when the opposing
tensions reach and maintain a judicious equilibrium.

I have said that the Jamesian moral vision is embodied within the
aesthetics of the Jamesian novel, and perhaps we should now consider some
of the ways in which this is so. The theme of the struggle of the recep-
tive "vessel of consciousness" to realize itself in its full moral and
aesthetic dimensions, to achieve the maximum of "felt life," to submit
itself to the dynamics of growth and change as the means to that develop-
ment, and to steer clear of the perilous shoals of manipulative exploita-
tion, is embodied in the fiction in multifarious ways. The most obvious,
of course, is the illustrative functioning of the characters themselves
as they strive to achieve lucidity of vision and as they interact on the
plane of relationship. The stress laid by James on states of conscious-
ness as purveyors of thematic significance is the determinant of his many
experiments with "point of view," for he was always working to ascertain
and implement the narrative stance which would provide the fullest
opportunity for rendering that struggle in terms of the particular donnée. Consequently the narrative mode of any given work must be among the first considerations of a critical approach to any of the works. James's directional shifts were anything but arbitrary or indicative of an obsession with method for method's sake. They are integrally bound up with the themes. In my sections on the individual novels I discuss the significance of the respective narrative stances in more specific terms.

Although much of the tone of any novel is embedded within the narrative mode, an equally important vehicle of meaning is the abundance of image and metaphor, upon which James comes increasingly to rely as his conceptualizations increase in subtlety. Certain recurring patterns of figurative language are discernible which have a direct relation to the dialectic of egotism. The sensibility inclined to rigidity and lack of receptivity is frequently associated with images of walls, forbidding and incommunicative houses, prisons, or other buildings. The exploitative impulse is often described in terms of predatory birds or animals (we remember John Marcher's "beast"), or in images conveying a connotation of massive immobility frequently combined with military or other images connoting violence. The desire to appropriate and possess is suggested by means of images of flawed, spurious, or obscured objets d'art, images which imply the perversion of the aesthetic sense within the world of means. And the inability to give of oneself, to establish reciprocal relationship, to love (in a word) is conveyed by images of cold, chill, freezing, and the like. The moral blindness of the egotist
is suggested by images implying failure or obliquity of vision, or the presence of darkness as the inhibitor of sight.

Conversely, the receptive sensibility is characteristically associated with vessel images, either in the sense of a receptacle (cups, bowls, and the like) implying openness, or in the sense of ships, implying the willingness to submerge oneself in the destructive element. Water images are also part of this pattern, James employing to the full the archetype of the journey by water in all of its suggestive possibilities. The sensibility groping through a maze of incomprehensible facts or situations is often depicted in terms of a labyrinth or a comparable image of perilous passage. Garden imagery is employed to suggest creative, growing life, sometimes expanded to include the idea of cyclical death and rebirth, or the juxtaposition of life and death in the natural organic process. Objets d'art appear in imagistic association with the receptive sensibility as choice, genuine articles, conveying the sense of the rarity and the inestimable value of such a state of consciousness. These few examples of consistently employed imagistic associations illustrate another dimension of the fusion within the works of the moral vision and the aesthetic form.

Beyond the level of verbal surface, the Jamesian dianoia is reiterated within structures essentially dialectical. Baldly stated, the thesis can be defined as the potential, the willingness, and the desire to achieve full sentience. The protagonist is the one who is impelled most strongly to realize his unique identity, to expand his consciousness to its fullest reaches where it is receptive to and cognizant of the
beauty of the senses and the beauty of being, to achieve, in short, that total integration of feeling. The antithesis is the collaboration of forces—within and without—which would inhibit, deflect, or deny that growth. The synthesis occurs when and if the goal is reached, and is qualified precisely to the degree to which the effort falls short of the mark. Such is the general outline.

In the course of my discussions of particular novels which comprise the substance of this study, I try to define the particularization of the dialectic as it variously appears. However, it is not amiss at this point to indicate three general patterns of specification. The simplest of the three patterns is one which James uses sparingly, and can be described as two egotists struggling for possession or exploitation of a third character of limited sensibility. In this pattern the dialectic is sharply outlined and admits of little, if any, ambiguity. Of the works which I have selected for discussion, *Washington Square*, *The Bostonians*, and *The Aspern Papers* fit into this scheme. The second pattern, of increased complexity, combines the egotist's efforts at control with the theme of the developing consciousness. Within this pattern fewer characters are categorically definable. The emphasis is upon the relationships, and final judgments must be held in reserve until the novel reaches its conclusion. The characters, as well as the relationships, are psychologically more complex and it is frequently necessary to abstract the motivating forces which find expression in the evolving relationships in order to ascertain the ultimate meaning; even then, there is sometimes a residue of ironic ambiguity as, for instance, in our final
views of Isabel Archer or the Princess Casamassima. The two novels in which they appear are the best examples, artistically as well as thematically, of this pattern among the novels I discuss; *The American* and *Roderick Hudson* fit into the scheme as well. The third pattern is the most difficult and complex, and of course refers to the novels of the major phase. In these works James's steady shift to increased emphasis upon subjective experience finds its fullest expression. The shift to subjectivity can, indeed, be observed in the progression of the three novels themselves. The objective world plays a much more important role in its impact upon Strether's consciousness in *The Ambassadors* (the first written) than it does to Maggie Verver's drama in *The Golden Bowl* (the last). The narrow circumscription of Maggie's objective world is matched by the profound depth of her subjective one. While I cannot agree, obviously, with those readers who complain querulously that the people of the major phase novels are substanceless wraiths moving in relationships which bear no more connection to life than does a geometry theorem, one cannot escape the fact that motives and attitudes have taken precedence over external "action." In short, in the major phase novels the dialectic becomes polyphonic as qualities and attitudes within the individuals act and react, in parallel or contrapuntal patterns, in their attempts to relate to themselves and to each other in a complex mental and social world. The major phase particularization of the dialectic will be developed in greater specificity at the beginning of Chapter IV.

In sum, then, the dialectic of egotism is the dramatic rendering of the tensions between the forces of receptivity, mobility, and moral/
aesthetic awareness and those of rigidity, inflexibility, and muted or nonexistent awareness. In the earlier works, the egotist appears as a primary component of the protagonist's experience, or as an exploiter manipulating a sensibility limited by nature. It is largely a dialectic among characters, finding expression in their evolving relationships. In the later works, the dialectic is largely internalized and appears as the forces of stasis opposed to those of dynamism. For the sensitive Jamesian centre of consciousness, the struggle assumes the forms of conflicting values, attitudes, motivations, and actions as he (or she) strives for self-knowledge and attempts to reach that state of consciousness and knowledge which is the ultimate of the felt life. The treatment is sympathetic in direct proportion to the degree with which the protagonist engages in the struggle. When the moral victory comes as close to completeness as is possible in an imperfect world, the novel belongs to the comic mode. This, however, is extremely rare, although a case could be made for The Golden Bowl as comedy. When the ultimate insight is achieved but at exorbitant cost, it approaches tragedy in the classical sense; one thinks immediately of The Wings of the Dove. But since James recognized that "experience is never limited and is never complete," by far the greatest number of his works belong to the ironic mode. Although James's treatments of his egotists is frequently marked by irony, there is no major long work with such a character at the center. Such is not the case among the shorter works; "The Beast in the Jungle" and The Aspern Papers present the type within the genres of the short story and the nouvelle, respectively. Some of his central characters in the
novels fall sufficiently short of the ideal to warrant ironic resolution, however. In these cases the irony is directed at the discrepancy between the character's self-knowledge and the reader's knowledge of him, or between the character's illuminating experience and his failure to issue into action. But the most affective form of ironic resolution occurs when the moral victory of the protagonist is gained at the price of the realization that, in the course of his experience while he was laboring under delusion or ignorance, he has contracted obligations or established conditions which militate against, or at least severely qualify, the possibilities of happiness or the full implementation of the lessons learned. The irony in these cases—*The Ambassadors* is the clearest example—nonetheless lends itself to a kind of qualified comic tone in the light of the Jamesian insistence upon the supremacy of moral integrity and fullness of vision over circumstantial felicity.

It boils down, finally, to the lesson that Marcher so tragically learns. James's works constitute an insistent repetition of the importance of one's having had his *life* in the fullest, the Jamesian definition of the term. And life in this sense is possible only when one has learned to silence the demands of the importunate ego and to give in a loving, unselfed way. J. A. Ward expresses it this way:

> To miss experience . . . is to stultify one's self, to make moral development impossible, to starve the consciousness, to become sterile and spiritually dead. . . . The maturing of the moral consciousness through experience enables James's heroes and heroines to triumph over evil spiritually though they are otherwise defeated by it. Proper moral growth can occur only with an encounter with evil. Though the exposure of the innocent to evil involves loss and suffering, the result—*the expanded consciousness*—represents an ultimate victory.40
Chapter I

1 New York Edition of the Novels and Stories of Henry James (New York, 1909), XVII, 59-127. Further quotations from the story will be noted in the text and refer to this edition. The New York Edition is the text used throughout this study, with the exception of the two works which were not included, Washington Square and The Bostonians. Quotations from the Critical Prefaces to the NYE refer to their collected form, The Art of the Novel, ed. R. P. Blackmur (New York, 1934), and will be noted as AN in parentheses within the text.

2 The reference is to a short article by Eliot entitled "A Prediction in regard to Three English Authors: Henry James; J. G. Frazer; F. H. Bradley," which appeared in the February 1924 issue of Vanity Fair; the section on James is reproduced in its entirety by Dorothea Krook in The Ordeal of Consciousness in Henry James (Cambridge, Eng., 1962), pp. 1-2. The phrase I quote occurs in a passage reading: "One thing is certain, that the books of Henry James form a complete whole. One must read all of them, for one must grasp, if anything, both the unity and the progress. The gradual development, and the fundamental identity of spirit, are both important, and their lesson is one lesson. . . . The example which Henry James offered us was not that of a style to imitate, but an integrity so great, a vision so exacting, that it was forced to the extreme of care and punctiliousness for exact expression. James did not provide us with 'ideas,' but with another world of thought and feeling." Eliot commented elsewhere on Henry James, most notably in the essay included in The Question of Henry James, ed. F. W. Dupée (New York, 1945), which includes the famous and ambiguous statement that "James had a mind so fine that no idea could violate it." See Alwyn Berland, "Henry James and the Aesthetic Tradition," JHI, XXIII (1962), 410, for a brief comment upon a major division between James's and Eliot's world-views.

3 In a review of Naomi Lebowitz's The Imagination of Loving (Detroit, 1965), Leon Edel wrote: "So much emphasis has been put on the technique and methods of Henry James that his 'meaning' has been somewhat neglected. To be sure, dominant themes have been studied in various fictions, but their reconciliation has been avoided and there exists no summary statement of what might be termed the core of James's intent." Edel's review, entitled "A Jamesian Triad," appeared in NCP, XXI (1966), 101-103.

4 A distinction which is important, however, is in the attitudes which obtain in the respective writers' views toward their egotists. Meredith saw Patterne in the light of the "comic spirit"; indeed, The Egoist is often regarded as the fictive embodiment of the ideas in Meredith's famous essay. While James sometimes treats his egotists satirically, in the long run it is clear that he regards them much more seriously than Meredith seems to. To James there was nothing "comic" about selfish exploitation.

6Cf. Quentin G. Kraft: "... in some circumstances failure to act may be even more vicious than active exploitation of a human being. ... A symptom of Marcher's fatal sickness in "The Beast in the Jungle" is his sheer passivity. Mere awareness of May's love would not have been sufficient to save him. The possibility of salvation for him—of his emerging from spiritual death into life—remains only so long as there is a chance that he will not only become aware of her love but actively return it"; see "The Question of Freedom in James's Fiction," CE, XXVI (1965), 372-376, 381.


11Ordeal of Consciousness, pp. 15-16.

12Matthiessen used the term "religion of consciousness" as a chapter title in his work, Henry James: The Major Phase (New York, 1944); others have picked it up, e.g., J. H. Raleigh in "Henry James and the Poetry of Empiricism," PMLA, LXVI (1951), 109. Joseph Warren Beach was the one who used the term "morally neutral" to describe James's works in his The Method of Henry James (Philadelphia, 1951, orig. publ. 1918). Others of James's early critics came to the same conclusion, e.g., Cornelia Pulsifer Kelley, The Early Development of Henry James (Urbana, Ill., 1965, orig. publ. 1931). Stuart P. Sherman was another early critic who claimed that James substituted aestheticism for morality: "To the religious consciousness all things are ultimately holy or unholy; to the moral consciousness ... good or evil; to the scientific ... true or not true; to Henry James all things are ultimately beautiful or ugly"; see "The Aesthetic Idealism of Henry James," On Contemporary Literature (New York, 1917).

13Major Phase, pp. 31-32.

14Cf. Raleigh and Sherman, who agree with Matthiessen's comment. Christof Wegelin has pointed to a similar misconception in his review of a more recent study, Alan Holder's Three Voyagers in Search of Europe: A Study of Henry James, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot (Philadelphia, 1966). Wegelin writes: "The fly in Mr. Holder's argument seems to be the notion
that in James aesthetic judgment . . . and 'moral impulse' were at war, when in effect their union became one of his most important themes. Wegelin's review appeared in AL, XXXVIII (1967), 568-570.


16Ibid., pp. 410-411.

17The comments on Hawthorne occur in James's 1879 book-length study of his predecessor; the phrase on Emerson is contained in his 1887 review of Cabot's memoir; and his most famous comment on the matter to Howells occurs in a letter which reads in part: "It is on manners, customs, usages, habits, forms, upon all these things matured and established, that a novelist lives—they are the very stuff his work is made of; and in saying that in the absence of those 'dreary and worn-out paraphernalia' which I enumerate as being wanting in American society, 'we have simply the whole of human life left,' you beg (to my sense) the question. I should say we had just so much less of it as these same 'paraphernalia' represent, and I think they represent an enormous quantity of it."

18Berland, p. 411.

19Tanner, Reign of Wonder, pp. 262-263.


21Berland, p. 415. It is interesting to note, as Berland does not, that James does indeed use the labels in Roderick Hudson, as I point out in my discussion of that novel in Chapter II. They also occur in The Tragic Muse, in which the figure of Gabriel Nash appears as the votary of "art for art's sake." It should also perhaps be observed that the concept of the "closed" as opposed to the "spontaneous" consciousness was familiar to James through his father; cf. Frederick J. Hoffman, who says in part, "His father's lifelong preoccupation with the basic difference between the 'spontaneous' and the 'closed' mind is in James's work dramatized as a conflict of a full and sensitive moral life against a closed life, cut off by deficiencies either of the moral sense or of the intelligence." Hoffman's article is entitled "Freedom and Conscious Form: Henry James and the American Self," and appeared in VQR, XXXVII (1961), 269-285. The most thorough exploration of the intellectual relationship between the two Henry Jameses is Quentin Anderson's The American Henry James (New Brunswick, N. J., 1957). The point all this proves is the eclecticism of James's mind, and his ability to synthesize and assimilate similar concepts from different sources.


24 Ordeal of Consciousness, pp. 17-19.


27 Cf. Graham Greene: "No writer has left a series of novels more of one moral piece. The differences between James's first works and his last are only differences of art as Conrad defined it. In his early work perhaps he rendered a little less than the highest kind of justice; the progress from The American to The Golden Bowl is a progress from a rather crude and inexperienced symbolization of truth to truth itself: a progress from evil represented rather obviously in terms of murder to evil in propria persona, walking down Bond Street, charming, cultured, sensitive—evil to be distinguished from good chiefly in the complete egotism of its outlook," from "The Private Universe," reprinted in Henry James: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Leon Edel (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1963), p. 112. Greene's essay was written in 1936.

28 Van Ghent, p. 219.


30 Ibid., p. 209.

31 It is possible to claim that James was dealing with evil in the abstract in such short stories as "A Romance of Certain Old Clothes" or "The Great Good Place." Some of the critical readings of "The Turn of the Screw" see that story too in such a light; cf., for instance, Dorothea Krook's attempt to reconcile the critical controversy in her essay, "Edmund Wilson and Others on 'The Turn of the Screw,'" included as an Appendix in Ordeal of Consciousness, pp. 370-389.

32 Imagination of Disaster, p. 7.

33 The Imagination of Loving: Henry James's Legacy to the Novel (Detroit, 1965). The phrase "the moral imperative of relationship" was the title of the study in its original dissertation form. Edel's review
already cited displays much the same feeling about the book that I do: he says that the early chapters display the "grasping intelligence that James admired," but that the later ones "tail off."

34 Ibid., p. 66.

35 There are so many studies of James's narrative modes, his handling of "point of view," that to list them all would be a redundancy. Among the more important are the seminal one, Percy Lubbock's The Craft of Fiction (New York, 1921); Joseph Warren Beach's The Method of Henry James (New York, 1918); Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago, 1961); Lawrence B. Holland, The Expense of Vision: Essays on the Craft of Henry James (Princeton, 1964); Walter Isle, Experiments in Form: Henry James's Novels 1896-1901 (Cambridge, Mass., 1968); Walter F. Wright, The Madness of Art (Lincoln, Neb., 1962). There are also of course many articles dealing with the matter in connection with individual works; this has been, in short, the most overworked of all aspects of James's works.


37 For a thorough analysis of the formalist elements in James's structural patterns, see J. A. Ward's "James's Idea of Structure," PMLA, LXXX (1965), 419-426. Ward says that "... form exists to reveal and suggest a tissue of implications, extensions, and connections in the central set of relationships which comprises the subject" and that "James's conception of structure reflects the Coleridgean principle of the reconciliation of opposites" (pp. 423, 426).

38 Dorothea Krook sees it in such a light (see Ordeal of Consciousness, pp. 232-324); cf., however, Elmer Borklund, who points to the "... bitterness and irony of the novel's ending" (see "Recent Approaches to Henry James," JGE, XVI [1965], 53-66).

Imagination of Disaster, p. 15. Cf. also James L. Roberts, who says that James, like Hawthorne, "... saw the knowledge of evil as necessary for the complete development of the personality," and that the "... denial of life constitutes one of the greatest evils to James" ("An Approach to Evil in Henry James," ArQ, XVII [1961], 5-16).
CHAPTER II

TOWARDS A FICTIVE DEFINITION

"I think it established that in the long run
egotism (in too big a dose) makes a failure
in conduct."

Roderick Hudson

The Portrait of a Lady

There are several reasons why it is appropriate to begin my discus­sion of Henry James's novels with The Portrait of a Lady. One, it was his first truly great work. In The Portrait, which James described as "wine to water" in relation to his two earlier novels, he achieved for the first time that rich synthesis of all the elements--moral and aesthetic--which he projected as the aim of the organic novel. The Portrait represents Henry James's literary coming of age.

The second reason, more germane to my present purpose, is that this story of a "certain young woman's affronting her destiny" also embodies the first complete rendition--complete in terms of psychological and artistic complexity--of the dialectic of egotism. The Portrait is both climax and catalyst, and its position at this point in my discussion signifies its importance in this respect. Later in this chapter I shall examine the outlines of the dialectic as represented in Washington Square and the two novels of his apprenticeship. In subsequent chapters I
shall explore its variations in later novels. But Isabel Archer is the very type of the "interesting" human being as James defined the term; indeed, this is the epithet Lord Warburton applies to her after their first encounter at the novel's opening. Her progress from noetic to experiential knowledge—the progress which Joseph Friend calls the Quest Theme—has its roots in the stories of Rowland Mallet/Roderick Hudson, Christopher Newman, and (by way of contrast) Catherine Sloper. The character of Osmond functions in a similar relation to both his antecedents and his successors in the role of egotist. And the dialectic which occurs between the elements of dynamic aspiration and static egotism forms a pattern, a leitmotif, which runs through the Jamesian canon. I depart, then, from strict chronology in order to emphasize the crucial position occupied by this novel of 1881 in James's development of the vision which I see as inherent in his work.

The novel's focus, of course, is on Isabel Archer as the repository of the developing consciousness. She has a sensitive nature of great potential, but one which is hampered and limited by erroneous misconceptions regarding herself, other people, and life itself; the ultimate reordering of her vision under the impact of actual experience constitutes her story. Her development as a character takes her from a point perilously close to egotism to one approximating the desirable selfhood; whether her self-knowledge is complete at the novel's conclusion is a judgment that James left the reader to determine for himself. The chief agent of her moral growth is Gilbert Osmond, the egotist beyond compare, with secondary roles being played by the others involved in Isabel's
drama. But throughout The Portrait she stands squarely in the center of her canvas; the consciousness of her "satellites" is "an interest contributive only to the greater one" (AN, p. 51). This consistent focus is the primary reason for the enhanced psychological subtlety which this novel exhibits over its predecessors; indeed, the method as well as the theme of The Ambassadors and The Wings of the Dove can be detected in embryonic form in The Portrait of a Lady.

It is possible to identify the catalyst which set James's creative imagination functioning along the lines that led to The Portrait. In the March, 1873, issue of The Galaxy, James had published a review of George Eliot's latest novel, Middlemarch. While the tone of that review is generally consistent with the approbation with which he customarily regarded her works, he made one stricture. He thought that Middlemarch was too diffuse, that the author's intention of presenting "A Study of Provincial Life" had resulted in a "mere chain of episodes, broken into accidental lengths and unconscious of the influence of a plan." He seems to have interpreted Eliot's intention in the novel to be the presentation of a picture "of an ardent young girl ... framed for a larger moral life than circumstances often afford," and concluded that the design had become submerged, so that the finished novel lacked the "great dramatic chiaroscuro" which a more subdued background might have afforded. James himself did not produce such a work for another eight years, but the design loomed in his imagination as an ideal to be striven for, and when he began work on The Portrait in 1879 it seems clear that his aim was to write the novel he thought his predecessor should have written in Middlemarch.
The advantages in dramatic intensity and psychological profundity which he gained by his method are apparent from the novel's opening, in which Isabel's state of relative formlessness and unrealized potential are embodied. The setting of Gardencourt for the opening is the expressive signature for this scene and, indeed, for all of Book I. Ralph Touchett, his father, and Lord Warburton take their afternoon tea in an atmosphere thick with the associations of a long tradition of leisure, beauty, culture, and privilege. The house with its storied past and lovely antiquity capable of inspiring an "aesthetic passion" in the heart of even its prosaic owner; the vast, spacious, "furnished" lawn stretching down to the "reedy, silvery Thames"; the ritual of the tea itself; even the two dogs—all combine to convey an image of beauty deriving from tradition, an image designed to evoke an aesthetic response from the sensitive and appreciative consciousness. Isabel herself is absent as the scene opens. She is, indeed, almost as much of an unknown quantity to the tea-takers on the lawn as she is, at this point, to the reader. Reference to her enters the conversation casually but significantly, in that she is first mentioned in the context of Lord Warburton's desire to find an "interesting" young lady whom he might marry. It soon becomes apparent that the Touchetts are aware of her imminent arrival (in fact, of her very existence) only by the means of a characteristically cryptic and uninformative telegram from their eccentric wife and mother. Before the tea has ended, however, the young lady herself appears, framed "in the ample doorway." She is not named or described; she is simply "a person who had just made her appearance." The first living creature to
notice her is the irrepressible little terrier; Ralph's attention is directed towards her by Bunchie's barking. "His master now had time to follow and to see that Bunchie's new friend was a tall girl in a black dress, who at first sight looked pretty." Certainly a major heroine never made a less auspicious entrance.10

From that point on the outline is filled in, more rapidly as events progress but still with that air of leisurely graciousness that the opening scene has established. Isabel's instantaneous delighted reaction to the little dog prompts Ralph to give her his pet (foreshadowing his later, crucial act of generosity) and, further, to observe to himself that she is indeed "unexpectedly pretty." Daniel Touchett and Lord Warburton, observing the cousins' encounter from a distance, remark on her "air of independence," further noting that "she seemed to have a great deal of confidence." She reacts to all of the components of the setting with a quick interest and delight which establish the fact of her possession of that capacity for the appreciation of beauty which is the essential prerequisite, in the Jamesian view, of the full life. In sum, her easy air of confidence, her remarkable beauty, and her obvious relish of her surroundings quickly arouse the interest of all three men and, presumably, the reader. When she learns from Ralph the identity of Lord Warburton, she makes a comment which is significant in the light of later insights into her nature: "Oh, I hoped there would be a lord; it's just like a novel!" The comment suggests the fact, later affirmed, that Isabel's conceptions of English life have been formed by her reading.11 She is delighted on this occasion that the reality conforms to her
expectation. It is not always to do so, and this fact constitutes an important part of her drama. One of the most difficult lessons in her education is to be the willingness to submit her convictions to the experiential test and to accept the results.

Our beginning knowledge of Isabel, then, as conveyed by these means, is in virtually the same proportion as that of the three men and, more importantly, that of Isabel herself. Her self-knowledge, like ours of her, deals mainly with appearances. Additional details are added through the next three chapters, largely through the means of the "method of mutual irradiation," in which each of the other characters holds a "lighted lamp" to Isabel, thereby illuminating yet another aspect of her character. The preliminary outlining culminates in Chapter Six, where the author, speaking in his own voice, concludes the exposition and fills in such gaps as may have been left from the dramatic presentations which have preceded it. The authorial tone in this chapter is simultaneously indulgent and ironic—indulgent because we are expected to be aware of and sympathetic to those qualities which indicate Isabel's possession of a consciousness "subject to fine intensification and wide enlargement" (AN, p. 67); ironic because we are expected to be equally aware of the nature and extent of Isabel's limitations, even those of which she herself is but dimly conscious.

The chapter opens with the sentence, "Isabel Archer was a young person of many theories." Certainly, a nature prone to theorizing is not intrinsically bad, but when the theorizing is based upon a paucity of knowledge and experience, and when it assumes the form not of
hypothesis, but of dogma, danger threatens. Her tendency to form 
a priori expectations and convictions based upon her reading has already 
been adumbrated. Now James tells us ironically that among her contem­
poraries she "passed for a young woman of extraordinary profundity," but 
that "her thoughts were a tangle of vague outlines which had never been 
corrected by the judgement of people speaking with authority." Regarding 
her own nature, "she only had a general idea that people were right when 
they treated her as if she were rather superior." Furthermore:

It may be affirmed without delay that Isabel was 
probably very liable to the sin of self-esteem; 
she often surveyed with complacency the field of 
her own nature; she was in the habit of taking for 
granted, on scanty evidence, that she was right; 
she treated herself to occasions of homage. 

At moments she discovered that she was grotesquely 
wrong, and then she treated herself to a week of 
passionate humility. After this she held her head 
higher than ever before; for it was of no use, she 
had an unquenchable desire to think well of her­ 
self (NYE, III, 67).

Her conviction of her innate superiority and her sense of self-sufficiency 
color her attitude toward men and the prospect of marriage: "she held 
that a woman ought to be able to live to herself ... and that it was 
perfectly possible to be happy without the society of a more or less 
coarse-minded person of another sex." Yet further on we read:

Deep in her soul—it was the deepest thing there— 
lay a belief that if a certain light should dawn 
she could give herself completely; but this image, 
on the whole, was too formidable to be attractive 
(NYE, III, 71-72).

It remains to be demonstrated just how formidable that image is.

But these elements in her nature—ones which point to her proclivity 
to egotism—are palliated. She recognizes that her habit of self—
examination and analysis, a kind of secularization of the Puritan custom of soul-searching to determine the state of one's spiritual grace, has its dangers: "it often seemed to her that she thought too much about herself; you could have made her colour, any day in the year, by calling her a rank egotist." Furthermore, she shows an instinctive awareness that egotism can be destructive to others:16

She had resented so strongly, after discovering them, her mere errors of feeling (the discovery always made her tremble as if she had escaped from a trap which might have caught her and smothered her) that the chance of inflicting a sensible injury upon another person, presented only as a contingency, caused her at moments to hold her breath. That always struck her as the worst thing that could happen to her (NYE, III, 68).

The image of the trap in this passage is, of course, ironically anticipatory of the fate to which Isabel's naive egotism is to lead her. The irony of the passage serves to underscore the fact that her egotism is such that she can conceive of this eventuality only in terms of herself as the injurer; it bars, to her imagination, the possibility of herself as the victim of an egotism greater and more rigidly inflexible than her own.

By the end of Chapter Six, then, we have taken almost the full measure of Isabel Archer, the young American who comes to Europe in search of experience. We have seen her capacity for aesthetic appreciation and her eagerness to embrace what she conceives of as life; and, on the other hand, her complacent sense of her own moral and intellectual superiority, her proclivity to the formation of a priori convictions, and her romantic naivété. She wants to become a "lady," but her
definition of that term is basically that which sees manners as the
infallible index of moral refinement. Through the combination of her
personal traits and the definition which the society of her day provides,
Isabel is led to the tacit assumption that a finely aware sensibility
such as she takes it for granted that she herself possesses must, by
definition, expand in both directions if it is to expand at all. Experi­
ence frequently teaches that manners and morals are by no means auto­
matically synonymous in the practical world, but it is that very experi­
ence which Isabel lacks. She assumes then that the person—the "lady"
or "gentleman"—who exhibits the highest polish, the smoothest manner,
the most extensive variety of social accomplishments, the greatest taste,
the most sensitive appreciation of art in all its aspects, is also the
person possessed of the highest pitch of moral scrupulosity.17 But
James does not spell out for us this aspect of Isabel's theorizing;
rather, it is dramatized throughout the remainder of Book I, beginning
with Isabel's reaction of instantaneous admiration to Madame Merle and
culminating in the fascination she conceives for Gilbert Osmond. Madame
Merle is the first person whom Isabel meets who exhibits the level of
social cultivation which the American girl sees as the mark of a
"lady."18 To Isabel, Madame Merle has perfected the art of living. The
fact that Isabel seeks to model her own development after the example
provided by the older woman brings home to us more effectively than any
authorial statement the seriousness of Isabel's misconception. Her
ambition for herself, rightfully, is that "she would be what she appeared,
and she should appear what she was." That others should not place a
similar value on the unity of outward appearance and inward moral probity does not occur to her. Her indiscriminate admiration for Madame Merle prepares us for her similar response to Osmond; Isabel's determination to marry Osmond despite the admonitions of all her friends is the definitive mistake she makes under the impetus of her erroneous theory.

Ralph, who is the brightest and closest of the "lamps" held up to Isabel, senses the danger in Isabel's admiration for Madame Merle. He is not "fond" of the lady: her perfection is too facile, her surface too smooth. Ralph has an equally negative reaction to Osmond, but when he tries to express his sense of disappointment and disquietude to his cousin after her engagement, the most he can say is that "Osmond is somehow—well, small," and that "he's narrow, selfish" (NYE, IV, 70). We are aware by this point in the unfolding of events that Ralph's cousinship to Isabel is more than merely fortuitous; it is emblematic of the close kinship they share in the matter of sensibility. That kinship is reinforced by the intimacy that develops between them, and has its most dramatic effect in Ralph's decision to make Isabel an heiress. Both his love and his decision stem from his recognition of Isabel as a person capable of the ultimate development; this, combined with the fact of his illness which is established at the outset as the defining fact of his life. He desires to transfer to Isabel the opportunity denied him by the prospect of untimely death. He differs from Isabel at the beginning in that he has a somewhat clearer idea of the path her development could take, a fact deriving from the greater opportunity for observation which he has
had both as a man and as a lifelong resident of England. But observation is not the same thing as direct experience; thus he is as little prepared as Isabel herself to cope with the deeper treacheries that the possession of great wealth may subject one to. So while he senses something amiss in Madame Merle and Osmond—and some undefinable danger in his cousin's fondness of the pair—he cannot precisely put his finger on it. However, it would not have mattered if he had, for Isabel is determined to seek her own path regardless.

Ralph experiences a development parallel to Isabel's, although in a lower key, along a narrower range, and proportionately subordinated to hers, in keeping with James's scheme. As Ralph observes from a distance—for the intimacy the cousins had shared before her marriage receives a severe rupture with that event—he sees ever more clearly those qualities in Osmond which he had merely sensed earlier, and he sees the toll they are exacting from Isabel. Furthermore, a sense of guilt stemming from the growing conviction that he is himself indirectly responsible for Isabel's unhappiness grows within him. He comes to feel that, inadvertently and with the best of intentions, he had interfered with her destiny. That very sentiment, in fact, had been expressed by his father during the conversation which resulted in the bequest:

"I'll do anything you like," Mr. Touchett said at last; "but I'm not sure it's right. You say you want to put wind in her sails; but aren't you afraid of putting too much?"
"I should like to see her going before the breeze!" Ralph answered.
"You speak as if it were for your mere amusement."
"So it is, a good deal."

"Well, I don't know," Mr. Touchett answered.
"I don't think I enter into your spirit. It seems to me immoral."
"Immoral, dear daddy?" (NYE, III, 262-264).

Having had his way on that occasion, Ralph now doubts its wisdom, indeed its morality, as his father had suggested.

But he keeps those doubts to himself, not wanting to divulge his identity as Isabel's benefactor to her even at this point. It is a typical Jamesian irony that Madame Merle, who has after all a greater degree of responsibility in the matter than does Ralph, should be the one who informs Isabel of his role in her fate and who points the accusing finger at him. By the time that event occurs, however, Isabel has developed sufficient magnanimity so that, while the revelation comes as a shock, it causes her not to turn against Ralph but to honor the benevolence of his intentions and to feel a renewal of tenderness that paves the way for the re-establishment of their old intimacy. It is this feeling that incites her to the direct defiance of her husband in going to Ralph's deathbed. The deathbed scene is one of the most affecting in the novel as Isabel, submerging her own problems in this extremity, seeks to assuage Ralph's anguish of spirit. "'I believe I ruined you,' he wailed." But the moment they share of spiritual union and love, poignant as it is in the face of Ralph's imminent death, relieves Ralph sufficiently so that he can say as his last words to her, "I don't believe that such a generous mistake as yours can hurt you for more than a little. . . . And remember this, that if you've been hated you've also
been loved." Ralph's tragedy is that he is denied the full measure of life; given his necessarily limited experience, however, and the concomitant limited attention accorded him in the story, he nonetheless emerges at a point very near the desirable balance. He is closer than anyone else to the heroine herself.

That inheritance arranged by Ralph is, of course, the catalyst "that activates at once, as if chemically, the proclivity to evil in the world of privilege that her wealth allows her to enter." Ralph's desire, as we have seen, had been to make her sufficiently rich so that she may be "able to meet the requirements of her imagination"; more practically, so that she shall not be forced to marry for support. Like Isabel, however, he gives no evidence of having considered the possibility that she might be the victim of an exploitative marriage; his conception of her invulnerability to exploitation is at least as great as her own. He dislikes Madame Merle, but he underestimates her capacity for intrigue. When he tries to express his uneasiness about Osmond to his cousin, he is met with the reply: "In everything that makes one care for people, Mr. Osmond is pre-eminent. There may be nobler natures, but ... Mr. Osmond's is the finest I know." Isabel continues:

"I've only one ambition--to be free to follow out a good feeling... He [Daniel Touchett] did perhaps a better thing than he knew when he put it into my power to marry a poor man--a man who has borne his poverty with such dignity, with such indifference. Mr. Osmond has never scrambled nor struggled--he has cared for no worldly prize. If that's to be narrow, if that's to be selfish, then it's very well... he has the kindest, gentlest, highest spirit" (NYE, IV, 73).
Isabel's words, disheartening as they are to Ralph, reveal the degree to which she, "having invented a fine theory about Gilbert Osmond ... loved him not for what he really possessed, but for his very poverties dressed out as honours." Isabel's egotistical conviction that she has found the perfect gentleman and that she is right, even noble, in her choice, carries the day.

She is wrong, of course, "grotesquely wrong," and a week of "passionate humility" will not suffice this time to rectify her error. Osmond is the definitive example in Jamesian fiction of the limits to which egotism can go. Oscar Cargill has called him "James's most completely evil character," reinforcing my conviction that egotism is synonymous with evil in the Jamesian moral universe.21 This is not to say that he is without charm; nor, we remember, was Milton's Satan.22 The fact of Osmond's polished surface is essential both to James's method and his theme. During the period of Osmond's courtship of Isabel, we as readers must be apprised of the appearances which institute and support her theory about him. But we are also given clues as to his real nature. His first comment to Madame Merle, upon hearing of that lady's plan to bring them together, had been, "Is she beautiful, clever, rich, splendid, universally intelligent and unprecedentedly virtuous? It's only on these conditions that I care to make her acquaintance," and the horror of the statement derives from the fact that while he says it in jest, it is precisely and absolutely true. The quality that Isabel subsequently admires so greatly—that he "has cared for no worldly prize"—is the emblem, not of nobility and generosity of spirit as
Isabel sees it, but of a cold, unfeeling exclusiveness emanating from his contempt for all others. This particular quality of the egotist is prefigured in the description of his Florentine villa:

> It was the mask, not the face of the house. It had heavy lids, but no eyes; the house in reality looked another way—looked off behind. . . . The windows of the ground-floor, as you saw them from the piazza, were, in their noble proportions, extremely architectural; but their function seemed less to offer communication with the world than to defy the world to look in (NYE, III, 325-326).

Mrs. Van Ghent has noted the appropriateness of the description to Osmond himself, saying that it applies to "not only Isabel's first illusionary impression of him—when it is his renunciatory reserve that attracts her, an appearance suggesting those 'deeper rhythms' of life that she seeks—but also her later painful knowledge of the face behind the mask which, like the house, is affected with an obliquity of vision."23 The "eye" imagery of the passage, as Mrs. Van Ghent suggests, indicates Osmond's inverted vision: turned inward upon himself, he is morally blind. This excessive concern with self causes him to regard others solely in relation to him, in terms of their use to him. Isabel is useful to him in at least two important ways: besides the obvious practical benefits accruing from marriage with an heiress, she offers a challenge to his will. Furthermore, as his young, beautiful, and rich wife, she will demonstrate to the world—that world of which he is contemptuous but whose good opinion he perversely covets—his impeccable taste. Like Pansy, she will reflect his superiority. One of the functions fulfilled by Pansy in the novel is to illustrate this point.
Given a malleable child, he has so shaped and formed her that her will is but an echo of his own; he has created a work of art. But a human being, however malleable, is not insensate clay; so, because Pansy is a human being who has been treated as an object, she illustrates the immorality which occurs when the aesthetic sense is perverted, when human beings are regarded and used as manipulable objects. 24

One of the novel’s many ironies turns on the fact that Isabel—she of the "independent air" and "look of confidence"—is considerably subdued with awe when she first visits Osmond in his villa. Even Gardencourt had not affected her thus. The air of cultivated aestheticism, the dim coolness of the rooms, the quiet good taste manifested in their decor and in the few but obviously choice objets d'art discreetly arranged, produce a temporary muffling of her customary aspect. On his part, Osmond, also judging by appearances, interprets this reaction as a measure of Isabel's plasticity. Upon closer acquaintance he discovers and deplores the fact that she has "too many ideas," but to the confirmed egotist no force exists that is greater than his own will. He is almost—but not quite—right.

Further evidence of Osmond's egotism is found in his dependence upon forms. It is no accident that he entrusts Pansy's education to the sisters at the convent; the authoritarian approach to anything is to his mind the only one. He says at one point, "I am not conventional, I am convention itself"; again, he "prizes most the honour of the thing." When the marriage, to all intents and purposes, has lost its substance, he insists that the form must be preserved and the appearance of felicity
maintained. 25 He rebukes Isabel in tones of cold contempt for entering his room without knocking just minutes before he exhibits his unfeeling indifference to the fact of Ralph's impending death and Isabel's natural agitation, an indifference which is all the more appalling because he knows what Isabel at the time does not, namely, that Ralph had been responsible for his wife's fortune. James sums Osmond up in one sentence which occurs, significantly, as a reflection in Isabel's mind: "Under all his culture, all his cleverness, his amenity, under his good nature, his facility, his knowledge of life, his egotism lay hidden like a serpent in a bank of flowers." The image of the bank of flowers aptly expresses Osmond's aesthetic surface; the hidden serpent indicates the moral evil beneath. It is hardly fortuitous that James uses here the traditional Christian symbol of evil incarnate. 26

Both Osmond and Madame Merle are damned, but the difference between them lies in the fact that while he is unaware of, or indifferent to, that fact, she is not. 27 The point is made dramatically clear during the encounter (Chapter Forty-Nine) between the former lovers in Madame Merle's salon. Both are disappointed on this occasion at the failure of the plan to secure Lord Warburton as the grand match for Pansy to which they aspire, but the lady is equally distressed at the "revenge" which she sees that Osmond has taken upon his wife. She tells him, "... it's only since your marriage that I've understood you. I've seen better what you have been to your wife than I ever saw what you were for me" (NYE, IV, 337). She is seeing, in short, that her machinations, undertaken in order to provide for the daughter she must otherwise leave
unacknowledged and instigated doubtless by a residue of the love she had once felt for the girl's father, have had dire results that she had not anticipated. It is characteristic of the difference between the two conspirators that while she is agitated on this occasion, he is only contemptuously bored, amusing himself by toying with the "specimen of rare porcelain," an antique cup. James's skill at introducing symbolic artifacts is again at work here: Osmond's excessive aestheticism is signified by his perceiving the "wee bit of a tiny crack" in the cup; the fact that he notices such a thing at such a time equally signifies his total lack of human feeling. After his departure, the metaphorical value of the cup is transferred to Madame Merle as she, holding it in her hand, "vaguely wailed, 'Have I been so vile all for nothing?'" (NYE, IV, 338).28

The awareness of her "vileness" does not of course mitigate it, and it is reasserted in our last view of her. As she and Isabel confront each other in the parlor of the convent during their first meeting since Isabel has learned the whole facts of her case, Madame Merle tries to minimize her own guilt by placing the blame on Ralph. But the pupil has outstripped the tutor by this time; as we have seen, Isabel is the real lady as she stands her ground and maintains her dignity under even this new blow, saying simply, "I think I should like never to see you again."29

The discovery of her erstwhile friend's perfidy has caused her to realize the truth of her earlier speculation, when her knowledge was not yet complete:

... she had taken a resolution not to think of Madame Merle; but the resolution proved vain, and
this lady's image hovered constantly before her. She asked herself . . . whether to this intimate friend of several years the great historical epithet wicked were to be applied. She knew the idea only by the Bible and other literary works; to the best of her belief she had had no personal acquaintance with wickedness. She had desired a large acquaintance with human life, and in spite of her having flattered herself that she cultivated it with some success this elementary privilege had been denied her. Perhaps it was not wicked—in the historic sense—to be deeply false; for that was what Madame Merle had been—deeply, deeply, deeply. Isabel's Aunt Lydia had made this discovery long before, and had mentioned it to her niece; but Isabel had flattered herself at this time that she had a much richer view of things, especially of the spontaneity of her own career and the nobleness of her own interpretations, than poor stiffly-reasoning Mrs. Touchett (NYE, IV, 329).

Isabel's painful process of discovery, as she learns through the dialectic of experience the meaning of the "great historical epithet," is a gradual one which constitutes Book II of the novel. As we have seen, Book I had ended with her determination to pursue her own idea of freedom. The "free" choice she has made is actualized, of course, as a trap of a particularly horrible sort. Chapter Forty-Two, which the author called "obviously the best thing in the book," reveals the first stage of Isabel's deepened perceptions after her three years of marriage. She "sits up, by her dying fire, far into the night, under the spell of recognitions on which she finds the last sharpness suddenly wait. It is a representation simply of her motionlessly seeing . . ." (AN, p. 57). During the scene Isabel realizes and accepts for the first time the extent of the mistake she has made in her choice of husbands: "she saw the full moon now—she saw the whole man" and she knew "the infinite vista of a multiplied life to be a dark, narrow alley with a dead wall
at the end" (NYE, IV, 189). It is also during this scene of nighttime reflections that Isabel sees her husband's egotism as the "serpent in a bank of flowers." Their very home, the Roman Palazzo Roccanera, becomes in her meditations a metaphor for the marriage itself:

Between those four walls she had lived ever since; they were to surround her for the rest of her life. It was the house of darkness, the house of dumbness, the house of suffocation (NYE, IV, 196).

The images of evil, death, darkness, and suffocation which come so readily to Isabel's imagination characterize vividly the nature of her realization as it has thus far manifested itself.

But she learns through her suffering; the realization of evil is but part of the experience. Having become aware of the destructiveness of the egotist, through her suffering she learns the positive value of its opposite quality. She recognizes the absolute value each human being possesses by virtue of being human, and realizes that the preservation of spiritual integrity is the highest good, just as its violation is the greatest evil. And she knows now that when one's vision is centered upon one's self, such violation is inevitable. Her own egotism has been eradicated through the agonizing realization of the fact of her exploitation, and she sees the necessity to honor the human bond. Her personal suffering causes her to be more aware of the suffering of others; she sees Rome itself as a repository of the suffering of the ages:

She had long before this taken old Rome into her confidence, for in a world of ruins the ruin of her happiness seemed a less unnatural catastrophe. Small it was, in the large Roman record, and her haunting sense of the continuity of the human lot easily carried her from the less to the greater. She had grown to think of it chiefly as a place where people had suffered (NYE, IV, 327-328).
She has come to realize, in short, that "spacious integrity of feeling." In her effort to choose only the best in experience, based upon her egotistical belief that the best is what she deserves, she has chosen the worst, but the resultant suffering is her path to humility, compassion, and insight.

Isabel's process of discovery is embodied imagistically in the successive houses that figure in the story. At the very beginning, her eager anticipation had prompted her to say to Mrs. Touchett about her Albany home, "I like places in which things have happened . . . full of experience, of people's feelings and sorrows." Her theory about life had included, then, the possibility, perhaps the necessity, of suffering. Her refusal to become Lady Warburton had reflected that belief: "I should try to escape [my fate] if I were to marry you." Gardencourt and Lockleigh (Lord Warburton's manor) symbolize the first tentative expansions of her vista, and it is significant that her English sojourn is climaxed by the inheritance which is to make her free "to choose only the best." Later she appreciates the atmosphere of the Palazzo Crescentini, Mrs. Touchett's Florentine villa, in terms of its "having witnessed much life." But the narrowing of her vista, prefigured by Osmond's villa already noted, is embodied in the Palazzo Roccanera. When she flees that "house of suffocation" to attend the dying Ralph back at Gardencourt, her reflections during the journey are a measure of the spiritual distance she has come:

It couldn't be that she was to live only to suffer; she was still young, after all, and a great many things might happen to her yet. To live only to
suffer—only to feel the injury of life repeated
and enlarged—it seemed to her she was too val­
able, too capable, for that. Then she wondered
if it were vain and stupid to think so well of
herself. When had it ever been a guarantee to be
valuable? Wasn't all history full of the destruc­
tion of precious things? Wasn't it much more
probable that if one were fine one would suffer?
(NYE, IV, 392).

And when she arrives, her new concepts of love, compassion, and humility
enable her, as we have seen, to relieve the mental anguish of her dying
cousin. The change in Isabel is reflected in Gardencourt itself; on the
night Ralph dies, she sees the ghost which Ralph had earlier told her she
could not see because she "hadn't suffered enough." Thus is the theme
embodied in the verbal texture as well as in the ordering of events.

The single most pervasive image pattern in the novel, however, is
that of "sight" and "seeing." Mrs. Van Ghent has provided a thorough
exploration into the thematic implications of the "sight" imagery:

The informing and strengthening of the eye of the
mind is the theme—the ultimate knowledge, the thing
finally "seen". . . . The dramatization is deliberately
scenic, moving in a series of recognition scenes that
are slight and low-keyed at first, or blurred and
erroneous, in proportion both to the innocence of the
heroine and others' skill at refined obliquities; then,
toward the end, proceeding in swift and lucid flashes. . . .
The context of particulars offered to physical sight . . .
intensifies the meaning of "recognition" in those scenes
where sight is insight, and provides a concrete embodi­
ment of the ambiguities of seeing.34

In a very real sense, Isabel has realized her ambition to "be what she
appeared, and to appear as she was." She has become a lady.35

But the portrait is not quite complete as yet. The immobility and
indecision which afflict her after Ralph's death and funeral, when there
is no longer any need for her to linger at Gardencourt, reflect a tension
as yet unresolved. The agent of its resolution—within the limits of the novel, at least—is Caspar Goodwood, whose primary function throughout has been to illustrate the aspect of Isabel's nature upon which Ralph had touched when he had told her, "You want to see, but not to feel."

We have already noted her creator's comment concerning the emotional depth in her nature the plumbing of which she fears. Goodwood is the one capable of plumbing that depth, and her deep-seated fear is the basis of her negative reaction to him. Cargill has said, comparing Isabel to Gwendolen Harleth:

... although James draws [Isabel] from the first as capable of deep sexual arousal, he also delineates her as cautious, theoretical, and inhibited, and the touch is satiric.36

After each of Goodwood's cameo appearances, Isabel's reaction has been precisely the same: she experiences a violent tremor of uncontrolled emotion, usually accompanied by a fit of weeping. This pattern reaches its climax in the last dramatic scene of the novel, as Goodwood comes to Gardencourt to try to break Isabel out of her stalemate and take her away with him. The scene occurs at the "historical, interesting" bench under the great oaks where she had long ago received Lord Warburton's proposal, the one she had refused because she had not wanted to escape her "fate." James's deliberate evocation of the circumstances of the earlier offer serves to underscore both the parallel and the contrast between the two situations.37 Caspar too approaches unheard: "it occurred to her ... that it was just so Lord Warburton had surprised her of old" (NYE, IV, 429). She has a "new sensation" at Caspar's presence: "it was a feeling of danger." He tells her, first, that he
is aware of her misery, then implores her to trust him, to "turn straight" to him. As she listens, her new hard-won humility overcomes the old sense of false pride which had formerly led her to attempt to conceal her unhappiness from others and, although her words reflect the old resistance which has become virtually automatic, the feeling that consumes her is "that she had never been loved before." The imagery is significant:

She had believed it, but this was different; this was the hot wind of the desert, at the approach of which the others dropped dead, like mere sweet airs of the garden. It wrapped her about; it lifted her off her feet, while the very taste of it, as of something potent, acrid, and strange, forced open her set teeth (NYE, IV, 434).

The image of the "hot desert wind" is the first of a series of images which come crowding in upon each other in the same manner as Isabel's consciousness is whirling under the impact of conflicting emotions. There are two image patterns discernible, diametrically opposed, in which James deliberately confuses, even reverses, the usual connotations. Isabel knows for the first time what it is to be loved, but love is "potent," dry, acrid, and strange. Goodwood's next appeal is a plea for final separation from her husband: "We can do absolutely as we please; to whom under the sun do we owe anything? . . . The world's all before us, and the world's very big." She weakly remonstrates, "The world's very small." But his final appeal is wordless: "... his kiss was like white lightning, a flash that spread, and spread again, and stayed; and it was extraordinarily as if, while she took it, she felt each thing in his hard manhood that had least pleased her, each aggressive fact of his face, his figure, his presence, justified of its intense identity
and made one with the act of possession." Thus to the image of the "desert wind" is added that of "white lightning," another violent phenomenon of nature, one associated with both light and destruction. The sexual images in the description of Goodwood in this "act of possession" link love with sex and then with death: "she believed just then that to let him take her in his arms would be the next best thing to dying," and he cries as she resists, "don't kill me!" But also associated with these ideas are those of light, warmth, and expansion. Conversely, Isabel's feelings are described in terms of water, also violent: rushing torrents, mighty seas, fathomless waters, shipwrecks, drowning, and darkness. The violence of the water images negates the sterility of the hot wind, but "when darkness returned, she was free." As light is associated with death, so darkness is associated with freedom, but—in another reversal—freedom is not really freedom at all for it means the return to the bondage of physical and spiritual sterility.

This complexity of imagery serves, of course, to convey the sense of the complexity of Isabel's situation, and to suggest that it is not easily resolvable. The key would seem to lie in their brief exchange about the size of the "world." There is a monumental irony in the fact that the escape Goodwood represents and offers so urgently would exact a price Isabel cannot pay. She cannot sacrifice the "extension in depth" of moral perception which she has gained at such a cost to herself for an "extension in breadth." Goodwood asks her to do precisely what her husband has done with such evil effect, to claim for herself a separation from and a contempt for the world. He asks her, in effect, to abandon Pansy and to abrogate the responsibility which she still recognizes as
accruing to her marriage. Her final decision implies that it is preferable, after all, to be the victim rather than to court even the possibility of being the perpetrator of callous inhumanity, or, as Naomi Lebowitz has put it, Isabel decides that "the privilege of loving was greater than the benefits of being loved." 40

But--the final irony—it is not really a decision at all; it is a reaction, emotional rather than rational. With all of Isabel's refinement of vision and her new moral acuity, there still remains that "formidable image" deep within her nature with which she is unprepared to cope. The resolution is only temporary and incomplete, then, of the tension between her moral vision and her sexual inhibition, but we must remember that she is young yet and has a long time to live, as Ralph had told her. 41 James replied to the feeling of dissatisfaction he predicted some readers might have with this open ending:

> The obvious criticism of course will be that it is not finished—that I have not seen the heroine to the end of her situation—that I have left her en l'air. This is both true and false. The whole of anything is never told; you can only take what groups together. What I have done has that unity—it groups together. 42

"What groups together" is not the whole life story of Isabel Archer Osmond; it is the story of the process of aesthetic and moral growth which transforms her into a lady. If her self-knowledge is not quite complete, it is nonetheless as close as most people come in real life, thus adding to the novel's illusion of verisimilitude. The important thing is that she is now prepared and willing to live; she has realized the profound, intensely aware, feeling-based morality which, in the fictive world of Henry James, is essential to a meaningful life.
During the same period when James's "big" novel was foliating in his creative consciousness, he turned out a short work which in some ways was a trial run for The Portrait of a Lady. Certainly in the portrayals of Dr. Sloper and Morris Townsend we find an egotism which may differ slightly in degree, but not in kind, from that of Gilbert Osmond. By way of contrast, however, Catherine Sloper is essentially the photographic negative of Isabel Archer. Her story is one of failure.

Washington Square is not one of James's major novels, although it has always had admirers. Its relative thinness, however, is not attributable to its brevity, or its American setting, or even its narrow dramatic circumference. No one knew better than Henry James that such considerations have little to do with the dramatic possibilities of a donnée. In "The Art of Fiction," for instance, he contrasts Treasure Island with Edmond de Goncourt's Chérie:

I call Treasure Island delightful, because it appears to me to have succeeded wonderfully in what it attempts; and I venture to bestow no epithet upon Chérie, which strikes me as having failed deplorably in what it attempts—that is in tracing the development of the moral consciousness of a child. But... the moral consciousness of a child is as much a part of life as the islands of the Spanish Main. ...

In Washington Square James is himself tracing the "development of the moral consciousness," not of a child, but of a young woman. He did not fail deplorably, but neither did he produce that subtle complexity most of his other works exhibit. The relative thinness of this novel lies
primarily in two facts: first, there is little character development in the usual Jamesian manner. Almost from the opening pages, the characters of the principals in this domestic drama are apparent; the events of the story simply embody in dramatic form the actions and reactions one expects from these relatively static characters. Catherine is the only one whose attitude undergoes any significant degree of alteration, as James noted in a letter to his brother, and her appeal is limited by the fact that she is not an "interesting" human being. Catherine's limited sensibility is the second major reason for the novel's thinness. Yet, despite these limitations and other faults which a severely critical eye might discern, *Washington Square* warrants consideration in the present study by virtue of its clear exemplification of the dialectic of egotism.

The pattern is simple: Catherine Sloper is caught in a struggle of wills between two egotists, her father and her lover. Dr. Sloper's egotism is delineated with an irony which is almost, for James at least, heavy-handed. He is a man excessively concerned with appearances, most specifically, the appearance which he presents to the world. Convinced of his own superiority, he is concerned that the world also see him in that light. This concern had dictated his very choice of a profession:

> In a country in which, to play a social part, you must either earn your income or make believe that you earn it, the healing art has appeared in a high degree to combine two recognized sources of credit (p. 3).

The circumstances of his marriage, too—although it had been a marriage, the author tells us, "for love"—had nonetheless had the satisfying effect of further increasing the lustre of his brilliance both in his own eyes and in those of others.
Even at the age of twenty-seven Austin Sloper had made his mark sufficiently to mitigate the anomaly of his having been chosen among a dozen suitors by a young woman of high fashion, who had ten thousand dollars of income and the most charming eyes in the island of Manhattan (p. 5).

For five years thereafter his life had proceeded without challenge to his sense of self-satisfaction and conviction of his superiority, until his self-esteem is severely shaken by the death of his first-born, who died "in spite of everything that the mother's tenderness and the father's science could invent to save him." Two years later the mother, having delivered her second child, a girl who is a "disappointment," met the same fate. The Doctor considers both of these events as outrageous and ignominious blows to the authoritarian control which the egotist, by definition, assumes that he exerts over the circumstances of his existence. This unexpended store of authoritarianism he subsequently directs toward the daughter who remains to him.

At the time the story opens, the daughter has confirmed his early sense of disappointment; she seems to him to be an insufferable insult following on the heels of his double injury. It is a humiliation to him to observe Catherine's plainness, her lack of grace and "cleverness," and he reacts to the humiliation with continual sarcastic references to her personal and social deficiencies, usually in the form of an exaggerated deference. Like other Jamesian egotists, he regards those people who are near to him as reflectors of his own superiority; even his love for his lost wife and son, James implies, had been at least partially predicated on their beauty, brilliance, and promise. Considered in these terms,
Catherine is a blow to his ego. Her sole virtue, and a considerable one at that, is the gentle, unqualified, self-sacrificing worship she accords him. She has nothing to offer aesthetically, but she does possess an inner beauty which, given the proper nurturing, carries at least a potential for development. But the egotist, as we have seen, does not see moral worth in others—"you are good for nothing unless you are clever," Dr. Sloper says—so Catherine's capacity for submissive devotion seems to him but further evidence of her pusillanimity. He is unable to relate meaningfully either to the deeper needs or to the submerged potential beauty of her moral nature.

This is the situation into which the handsome, clever dilettante, Morris Townsend, enters, and Dr. Sloper is sincere in his conviction that, in his opposition to the incipient match, he is protecting his daughter from the invidious designs of an unscrupulous fortune-hunter. A clue to the essential similarity of the two egotists is embodied in the fact that Dr. Sloper likes Townsend personally; they share the same tastes for the fine amenities of social intercourse. It is only as a potential husband for his daughter and legatee of his own fortune that the Doctor objects to the young man. So the battle is joined, for Townsend is as much of an egotist as his antagonist. His confidence in his ability to bend Catherine, and ultimately the Doctor, to his own will is in equal measure to the Doctor's inflexibility. Morris is more devious than Dr. Sloper, yet the reader's sympathy, for a portion of the novel at least, is with him, since we see that which Dr. Sloper cannot see because of his moral obtusity: the possibility that to a nature like
Catherine's, even an unrequited and self-sacrificial love might be preferable to the emotional aridity to which her father has condemned her. She, like May Bartram, might have "had her life"—circumscribed, certainly; painful, probably; tragic, possibly—but it would have been life. But the cards are stacked against "poor Catherine"; she, with her proclivity to martyrdom, stands between two immense egos.

However, this is not the whole of Catherine's story for, as is usual with James, the main interest lies less in the circumstances which are brought to bear upon a character than in his reaction to those circumstances. Many readers have seen Catherine only as a pitiable and inept victim caught in a trap of forces beyond her control. This is only partially true, for her quiet resistance to her father's decree constitutes a positive, life-affirming act. Despite the reader's knowledge of Townsend's true nature and motives, one admires Catherine at this point both for her insistence upon her right to make her own decision and for her desire to reconcile her father to her choice. Like Isabel, she is unwise in that choice, for she has been deluded by a deceptively beautiful appearance which, to her, is evidence of sincere and honest devotion; in short, she too has confused the aesthetic appearance and the moral reality. But her similarity to Isabel begins and ends on this point.

She is unlike Isabel in that she is not an "interesting" young woman. Elisabeth Cary has said:

Catherine Sloper... is the one unperceptive intelligence of the group [of Jamesian heroines] and her heaviness of mind is adroitly symbolised by her author in the fact that she wears satins at the age of muslins.
Throughout the book, the epithet habitually applied to her, in the
author's voice, is "poor" Catherine, implying her poverty of sensibility;
in this respect, her creator seems to agree with her fictive father. She
evinces no response to beauty in any form except that of Townsend. Al­
though it is clear that her circumstances have been such as to discourage
any aesthetic sense which might have lurked deep in her nature, it is
significant to note that she is provided with the experience of "Europe"
and that she signally fails to avail herself of it. She passes with
equal indifference by the beauties of nature and the beauties created by
man, so that we are almost forced to agree with Townsend when he silently
exclaims, "Gracious heaven, what a dull woman!" She is alive only to the
beauty of her handsome suitor and, as we have seen, his beauty of aspect
belies his moral ugliness. Thus Catherine is "bedimmed, befooled,
bewildered."

The end of Catherine's story, albeit disappointing, follows logi­
cally from her limited sensibility. Her affirmation of the life-impulse
turns out to be, after all, but temporary. After her betrayal by
Townsend, she solidifies, as it were, into a rigid inflexibility which
rivals her father's. "She formed habits, regulated her days upon a sys­
tem of her own, . . . and went generally, with an even and noiseless
step, about the rigid business of her life" (pp. 267-268).

From her own point of view the great facts of her
career were that Morris Townsend had trifled with
her affection, and that her father had broken its
spring. . . . There was something dead in her life,
and her duty was to try and fill the void (p. 268).
Extending the implications of these words of James's, R. P. Blackmur has said:

She is taught the geometry of the surfaces of emotion and as a result becomes early an empty bottle. In her emptiness she grows to understand that the emotions that are bent on her have nothing to do with fondness and in the end there is no violence in her, and no room for any, except the violence of her heartbeat, to which she chooses to listen in the increasing vacuum and halting circulation. She has given up everything for the lover who has deceived her and has now deserted her; but at the same time she has given nothing to anybody, anytime, least of all to herself. As the others have tampered with her, so she has learned to tamper with herself.48

Glauco Cambon, in an expressive phrase, has described Catherine's response to her betrayal as a "negative gesture" and draws an apt comparison with Melville's Bartleby.49 An even closer literary parallel might be made with Dickens' Miss Havisham in Great Expectations, the ticking of whose personal clock, it will be recalled, stopped at the moment on her wedding day when the news had come of her jilting.

James's treatment is neither so melodramatic as Dickens' nor so symbolic as Melville's, but the meaning is essentially the same. Catherine denies her life. She foregoes two opportunities to marry; she adopts an attitude of voluntary martyrdom and calls it "duty." The dramatic illustration of this point is the purpose underlying the confrontation between the erstwhile lovers with which the book closes. Although it is clear that Townsend—now portly, balding, middle-aged—is still the ego­tistical opportunist, the scene's focus is upon Catherine's final and definitive denial of life. She commits symbolic suicide as she, "picking up her morsel of fancy-work, [seats] herself with it again—for life, as
it were." Self-destruction, literal or symbolic, in the name of moral self-righteousness is but another form of perverted ego gratification; as such, it is as much of a cardinal sin in the Jamesian moral world as are other manifestations of egotism. It is indeed a "negative gesture."

Roderick Hudson

Although the relational dialectic which we have been considering does not emerge in James's works in its full dimensions until the novel of 1881, the basic components are evident in the two novels of the mid-seventies. Roderick Hudson is the egotist in the novel which bears his name; Rowland Mallet possesses the sensibility which functions as the moral touchstone. The relationship between the two, limited as is its development, nevertheless reveals in a rudimentary way the pattern that James is to explore in its full ramifications throughout the course of his career. It seems appropriate, then, to retrace our steps and consider briefly the elements as they appear, first, in Roderick Hudson and then in The American. 50

A preliminary point to be recognized is the eclecticism that characterized James's apprenticeship as a novelist. In the Prefaces to both novels of this period he acknowledges that they are closer to the "romance" than to the "novel" as he later defines and illustrates it. 51 In this connection, the similarities between Roderick Hudson and Hawthorne's The Marble Faun have frequently been noted, and indeed the similarities range from the fact of the common Italian setting to the themes of the
two works, which were, after all, scarcely fifteen years apart. At the end of The Marble Faun, Miriam in a summarizing statement says, "The fall of man—is it not repeated in our romance of Monte Beni?" James too is dealing with a variant on the ancient theme, albeit in more secular and less allegorical terms. This fusion in James's novel of the "romantic" and "realistic" elements—shall we say the merging of the influences of Hawthorne and Balzac, another of his early mentors—is one quality which accords Roderick a place in the Jamesian canon. It is also a quality which contributes to its particularization of the theme with which the present study is concerned.

The novel's "realism" requires little comment, for James not only recreated the physical details of the Italy he knew and loved so well but "evoked atmospheres and essences." The particular "romantic" quality which is of interest to us is the emblematic character of the people, each of whom represents some defining trait. It is the interaction of those traits—particularly those represented by Roderick, Rowland, and Christina—which provides the action and illustrates the theme. Roderick and Christina are larger than life, extremes each. Roderick is the artist/egotist, a man of genius, comparatively rare, after all, in real life; Christina is simply "the most beautiful woman in Europe." Rowland, a more "ordinary" mortal, is the repository of the novel's moral sense. The lesser figures—Mary Garland, Mrs. Hudson, Gloriani, Singleton, Madame Grandoni, Mrs. Light, the Cavaliere—also have various defining qualities. Since James has not yet reached the point where he has developed the skill in the depiction of psychological
complexity which distinguishes his mature works, the strokes are broad, the conflict elemental, and (with the exception of Rowland and, to a lesser degree, Christina) largely situational.

Despite the tentativeness of the dramatization, however, the conflict between the aesthetic and the moral is present. Roderick is both artist and egotist by definition. Rowland recognizes from the first Roderick's egocentrism, and every statement that Roderick makes, as well as every one of his attitudes and actions, drives the point home. But, in the face of each successive outrage, Rowland always returns to the view that Roderick's genius puts him beyond the pale of the considerations which should govern relationships. Roderick's egotism is to be accepted and indulged because his genius exempts him from moral responsibility.57

Roderick, then, is a character who, literarily considered, reaches back to the Byronic hero and ahead to the Nietzschean Ubermensch.58 Rowland's offer to take him to Rome is made in the spirit of patronage, to provide him with the environment and the opportunity to realize his genius. Once in Rome, the immunity from moral imperatives which Roderick implicitly claims and which Rowland endorses is reflected in the very form assumed by his education in his art. A contrast is established between the context of classical art and that of Christian art. The patron and the artist civilly pay their respects to Bernini's columns, the Sistine Chapel, and the "chambers painted by Raphael," but it is the classical art, embodying a form of worship which idealizes the Beautiful, toward which they gravitate. Rowland thinks of Roderick's particular genius in these terms, and Roderick says of himself, "The Greeks never
made anything ugly, and I'm a Hellenist; I'm not a Hebraist." The implications of this Arnoldian dichotomy extend to the characters of the two young men themselves, placing Roderick in the realm of eros and Rowland in that of agape. The first statues Roderick produces in his new environment, despite their nominally Christian reference, embody the sensuous appeal associated with the antique. They are "Adam" and "Eve" in classical terms, but they are Adam and Eve, suggesting the platonic element in Roderick's conception of physical beauty as the manifestation of Ideal Beauty. The aesthetic idealism inherent in Roderick's view of his art is further developed by the contrast afforded by Gloriani, whose theory of aesthetics, practice of his art, and whose very life illustrate the corruption resulting from the perversion of art to utilitarian ends. The implication seems clear that Rowland would never have offered patronage to such an artist as Gloriani; it is Roderick's platonism which, for most of the novel, gives Rowland cause for hope in Roderick.

The amorality which Roderick takes for granted as accruing to him is the determinant of his relationship with Christina Light. Roderick sees Christina as an inhabitant of his realm of beauty, indeed as the embodiment of that realm. To Roderick, Christina is the incarnation of Ideal Beauty. In his histrionic manner, Roderick insists on his "passionate" nature, but it is a passion which has less to do with the libido than with the second definition which Webster offers for eros: "an aspiring self-fulfilling love, often having a sensuous quality." We note, for example, his reaction to his first view of Christina. After having visited the Villa Ludovisi and the "famous Juno," the two young
men are lounging in the garden, Roderick declaring that "after the Juno, it was a profanation to look at anything but sky and trees" (NYE, I, 84). But with the appearance of the Light entourage—and despite the bedecked poodle, the "semi-grotesque" Cavaliere, and the "furbelowed" grande dame—Roderick springs to his feet, his eyes only on the girl:

> "Immortal powers, what a vision! In the name of transcendent perfection who is she? ... She's beauty's self—she's a revelation. I don't believe she's living—she's a phantasm, a vapour, an illusion!" (NYE, I, 95).

Later, after the "vision" has posed for him, it is significant that he does not name the bust "Beauty," which would have been consistent with the platonic abstraction suggested by the names of his other projects—"Thirst," "Wisdom," "Power," "Genius," "Daring"—but simply "Christina Light," revealing the degree to which the human girl is synonymous with the ideal of Beauty that he worships. Given this identification of Christina with his ideal, it is no wonder that his powers of artistic creation diminish as his passionate devotion is increasingly centered on her. Similarly, it accounts for his total enervation after her break with him. She is not just his inspiration; she is his genius.

Thus we see the egotism of the artist. Roderick's "love" for Christina has nothing to do with any concept of reciprocity; it is "self-fulfilling." His platonism has not advanced beyond the hierarchies of the beautiful to the realm of spiritual good; he is a case of arrested development. Christina's role in the relationship is almost equally self-serving, and in a sense less defensible than Roderick's in that he is to her simply a momentary relief from boredom. Yet there are hints
of a complexity in Christina which qualify such a statement and which demand further comment.

Christina Light is the triumph of the novel. It must be admitted that, like the other characters, she does not receive the kind of full development for which James is later noteworthy; in fact, for him to have granted Christina that kind of development here would have tended to divert attention from the Roderick-Rowland story. Yet, despite his careful handling, she comes close to doing just that anyway, and the hints of complexity suggest why James was reluctant to "let her go," as he put it, and why she is the only major character whom he ever revived.

She is an enigmatic, contradictory, fascinating blend of the innocent and the corrupt, the exploited and the exploiter, the selfless and the egotistical, the profound and the frivolous, the idealistic and the cynical. She is a living oxymoron.

Her very being embodies this paradox; she is the "most beautiful woman in Europe," yet she is the illegitimate result of a sordid adulterous affair between a coldly calculating American adventuress and an Italian gigolo. Christina is on the marriage market; no one knows better than she her potential cash value. In this respect, she is the prototype of Pansy Osmond and all of the other girls in James's fiction who are bartered for the sake of the material advantage of their families. Like Pansy, she is a human work of art, the embodiment of the beautiful, who is the victim of the perversion of values which results from the conversion of the beautiful to utility. Christina is the object of a monstrous immorality. She has known all her life that, like a latter-day
Iphigenia, she is being prepared for the day when she shall be sacrificed on the altar of her mother's avaricious ambitions. Her response to this knowledge is the cultivation of an air of haughty indifference and worldly-wise cynicism which belies her youth. But she is young, very young, and somewhere beneath the cynicism and the sophistication is a youthful strain of idealism, a glimmer of hope and a vague yearning for something which she cannot define but which somehow involves more meaningful values than she has ever known. These oppositions in her nature respond to Roderick and Rowland, respectively. She is attracted by Roderick's romantic flamboyance, his promise of genius, and even perhaps, subconsciously, by his egotism, which answers to a similar strain in herself. And his egotism, misguided as it is, is at least an improvement on the world she has always known, for it has that strain of idealism which contrasts with the blatant immorality of her mother's market-place values. Yet he is not her ideal, as she is his. She is sufficiently intelligent to recognize that Roderick is simply incapable of responding to that deeper yearning she feels. Rowland is the one with whom, she senses, a communication on that rarified level might be possible, but he does not respond. To him, "she looks dangerous." So she amuses herself with Roderick, enjoying his adulation but entertaining no delusions about its prospects. She is quite frank to him about it; she tells him on the occasion of their tryst in the Coliseum, for instance:

"Why have you been at such pains to assure me, after all, that you are a little man and not a great one, a weak one and not a strong? I innocently imagined at first that your eyes—because they're so beautiful—declared you strong. I think they declare nothing
but just their beauty. That would be enough—if you were a being like me. But I want some one so much better than myself. Your voice, caro mio, condemns you; I always wondered at it; it's not the voice of a conqueror" (NYE, I, 261).

She wants, in short, not a larger-than-life artist, but a larger-than-life man, a "conqueror," a man who embodies her ideal of strength combined with a capacity for a devotion characterized by selflessness, tenderness, and consideration. Christina's ideal is as qualitatively romantic as Roderick's, differing from his only in its envisioned form. 65

Roderick is clearly not the man whom Christina envisions. Yet, were not the problem of marriage involved, she might have been willing to compromise. During the crucial scene with Rowland after she has dramatically broken her engagement to the Prince Casamassima, she tells Rowland that she "doesn't care a button for [Roderick] . . . as an amoureux."

"One doesn't want a lover one pities, and one doesn't want—of all things in the world—a husband who's a picturesque curiosity. . . . I should like Mr. Hudson as something else. The world's idea of possible relations, either for man or woman, is so poor—there would be so many nice free ones. I wish he were even my brother, so that he could never talk to me of marriage. Then I could adore him. . . . I'm much stronger than he, and I would stand between him and the world. Indeed, with Mr. Hudson for my brother I should be willing to live and die an old maid" (NYE, I, 409).

This scene marks Christina's most exalted moment. As she relates to Rowland the internal struggle which had preceded her rejection of the Prince (a rejection which also implies a rejection of her mother and her mother's values), she describes it in terms of her basic inner conflict of motives and desires:
"It was on one side the world, the splendid, beautiful, powerful, interesting world. I know what that is; I've tasted of the cup; I like its sweetness. Ah, if I chose, if I should let myself go, if I should fling everything to the winds, the world and I would be famous friends. I know its merits, and I think without vanity it would feel mine... I'm fond of luxury, I'm fond of a great society, I'm fond of being looked at, I thrill with the idea of high consideration... There I am in all my native horror. I'm corrupt, corrupting, corruption! Ah, what a pity that couldn't be too! Mercy of heaven!

But, after she recovers from the "intense agitation" which interrupts her account at this point, she goes on:

"But you needn't think I'm afraid!... I've chosen, and I shall hold to it. I've something here, here, here!" and she patted her heart. "It's my own. I shan't part with it. Is it what you call in Boston one's higher self? I don't know; I don't care! It's bigger and brighter than the Casamassima diamonds—every one of which, if you please, I've seen and handled and adored" (NYE, I, 407).

Riding high on the crest of her conviction that in her action she has honored her better instincts, Christina is receptive to Rowland's request that she continue in that path by effecting a final break with Roderick, whose deluded hopes had risen with the news of her rupture with the Prince. Rowland mistakenly believes that such an action on Christina's part would have the effect of setting Roderick back on his own true path of creativity. Christina makes no promises to Rowland on this occasion, but she subsequently does as he asks, viewing it as another opportunity to act in accord with her "higher self," to do something "really fine." And when her bubble of self-respect bursts in her face and she is forced to marry the Prince after all, the memory of her action in regard to Roderick assumes for her a kind of apotheosis, representing the unself-
ishness she might have been capable of, the kind of person she might have become. At that point, however, she believes that those possibilities are irrecoverable, that her enforced marriage has committed her, as she says, to "the world and the Devil."

We have one more glimpse of the Princess Casamassima before this novel ends, but let us turn now to Rowland Mallet. As James tells us in the Preface, Rowland is the first in that long line of "registers," those sensitive people upon whom nothing (or very little, at any rate) is lost.

The centre of interest throughout "Roderick" is in Rowland Mallet's consciousness, and the drama is the very drama of that consciousness—which I had of course to make sufficiently acute in order to enable it, like a set and lighted scene, to hold the play. By making it acute, meanwhile, one made its own movement—or rather, strictly, its movement in the particular connexion—interesting; this movement really being quite the stuff of one's thesis. It had naturally, Rowland's consciousness, not to be too acute—which would have disconnected it and made it superhuman; the beautiful little problem was to keep it connected... intimately with the general human exposure, and thereby bedimmed and befuddled and bewildered, anxious, restless, fallible, and yet to endow it with such intelligence that the appearances reflected in it, and constituting together there the situation and the "story," should become by that fact intelligible... This whole was to be the sum of what "happened" to him... but as what happened to him was above all to feel certain things happening to others... so the beauty of the constructional game was to preserve in everything its especial value for him (AN, p. 16).

Although James's comments, as usual, emphasize the "constructional game," it is equally clear that his conception of Rowland involved more than technique. Rowland's consciousness is "sufficiently acute" in that he possesses that integration of feeling which results when aesthetic
percipience is balanced by a proportionate degree of moral sensitivity. He is an aspirant for the *ars vivendi*, as Roderick is for the *ars poetica*. Rowland's failure of acuteness—that which keeps his consciousness "human" and "connected"—is indicated by his indulgence of Roderick's egotism. One of the questions which the novel raises is whether the two aspirations are really separable. As we have seen, Roderick gives all his devotion to the aesthetic ideal. Whether his egotism is cause or effect is a moot point; in this novel they simply co-exist. Rowland, on the other hand, rightly sees living itself as an art inseparable from the apprehension of beauty, physical and moral. The realization that he eventually reaches is that there can be no exceptions to the necessity for integrated feeling and living, that the moral cannot be divorced from the aesthetic, or vice versa. Thus Rowland's drama—the "stuff of one's thesis"—takes the form of an expanded awareness of the universal necessity of moral values which determine the quality of relationships and of individual character. This is the lesson which he learns through his experience of feeling "certain things happening to others"; the irony of the novel's ending inheres in the fact that he does not learn the lesson quite well enough.

Rowland is the prototype of Ralph Touchett. Both are young men endowed with ample means, a taste for experience, and a cultivated leisure. Both are cosmopolitan, naturally generous, capable of deep, even self-sacrificing, devotion. Further, both are curious about human nature, a fact which, combined with their wealth and their generosity, motivates them to similar acts of bestowing opportunity upon one less
fortunately situated. Ralph is limited from full participation in life, as we have seen, by his illness; Rowland is similarly limited in the fulfillment of his artistic propensities by his lack of a gift. He must remain the connoisseur of art and artists because he does not possess the special creative genius. Both, too, are frustrated lovers; Ralph again by his illness and Rowland by the scrupulosity which constrains him to silence regarding his love for Mary Garland. And, finally, both are plagued by feelings of guilt—in the face of the disasters which overtake the respective recipients of their generosity—for having "meddled."

Rowland's sense of guilt is less convincingly motivated than Ralph's, however, because of Roderick's consummate and irremediable egotism, which would have been no less destructive in Northampton than in Rome. Despite this fact, however, it is to Rowland's credit that he admits such scruples, for they reinforce his identity as the feeling man, one who is alive and responsive to the sufferings of others. His scruples also serve to illustrate the necessity that one respect another's spiritual integrity. Whether Rowland has actually contributed to Roderick's downfall is irrelevant; the point is that he thinks he has. Thus is Rowland the moral touchstone as well as the centre of consciousness in the novel. He is the one on whom the responsibility falls to discover the precarious balance between egotism and martyrdom, the responsibility to preserve his own identity without violating that of others.

The climax of Roderick Hudson does not really lie in the melodrama of Roderick's fall from the Alpine cliff, although that literal fall symbolizes, almost too obviously, the moral applicable to Roderick, that
pride goeth before a fall. One is tempted to paraphrase Miriam, "The fall of man—is it not repeated in our romance of Roderick Hudson?" But Roderick's death, sensational as it is, is inevitable after the scene of the final conversation between the two men. To claim, as some have, that Roderick's death is accident rather than suicide is to miss the whole significance of that conversation, which is the real climax of the novel. It occurs in the context of the trip undertaken by the two men in the company of Mary and Mrs. Hudson, in the attempt to shake Roderick out of the lethargy which he histrionically proclaims after Christina's marriage. His egotism is nowhere more evident than at this point. He is oblivious to the suffering he is inflicting on the woman, much less upon Rowland; he is not even alive to any compassion for his great lost love, Christina, in her new situation, abhorrent as it is to her. He is concerned only with his own agonies of hopeless love and immobilized genius. His lack of human compassion renders his protestations of suffering absurdly meretricious. But during this conversation, Rowland breaks out of his long-suffering silence, abandons his hitherto inviolate conviction that Roderick's solipsism is justifiable, and informs him in no uncertain terms of his monstrosity. Mary is the pivotal figure here, of course; Roderick's audacious callousness in asking her, in effect, to finance his resumption of a relation with Christina is the act that stirs Rowland out of his misguided tolerance. And when Rowland tells Roderick of his own love for Mary, this startling fact seems to penetrate the barrier of Roderick's egotism as nothing has heretofore done. But we cannot impute to Roderick in his suicide the unselfish motive, however
misdirected, of a desire to remove himself as an obstacle to Rowland's love. The motive, rather, goes back to the determining nature of Roderick's egotism: his disproportionate worshipping at the shrine of Beauty. The reappearance of his "vision," that is, Christina, has had a revitalizing effect upon him, he claims: "I only know that her beauty has the same extraordinary value as ever and that it has waked me up amazingly" (NYE, I, 499). Rowland reminds him that she is now the Princess Casamassima, but it is clear that such considerations as the honoring of the married state are irrelevant to Roderick. They belong to that moral realm of which he has no conception. That any future relationship with Christina would exude the unpleasant odor of adultery—literal or symbolic—is simply unimportant. The reason for Roderick's precipitate plunge is contained in a single moment of insight following Rowland's startling revelation. But even here it is significant to note that he does not accept or even consider his actions—past, present, or future—as immoral; he sees them in terms of their affront to Beauty. He says, "I've been damably stupid. Isn't an artist supposed to be a man of fine perceptions? I haven't, as it turns out, had one. . . . I must have seemed hideous" (NYE, I, 512). He comes close, in this minute, to seeing the interrelatedness between fine perceptions and moral determinations, but he falls short of the mark. He knows that Mary would love no one but him, and tells Rowland so. At the time neither Rowland nor the reader knows whether his comment is "vivid insight" or "deep fatuity," yet another manifestation of his egotism. But the novel's last page proves it to be insight, reinforcing the fact that the reason
for Roderick's suicide is his realization of his "hideousness." "I can certainly shut up shop now," he says, and wanders off, never to return. To the worshipper of Beauty, such a realization is intolerable. It is too much for him to handle, and so his destructive potential is turned against himself. He has failed to recognize and respect others' humanity and in the end he fails to respect his own. He is a martyr to his ego­

Thus ends the romance of Roderick Hudson; all that remains is to suggest the continuing effect he wields, even in death, upon the people to whom he has "happened." Although James gives us only a sentence or two, he suggests that Mary's life congeals into a pattern much like that of Catherine Sloper's. As Roderick had foretold, she idolizes his memory and holds Rowland accountable for his destruction. It seems clear that the promise of development she had fleetingly revealed during the Roman interlude has been aborted; she is, in effect, emulating Roderick at least symbolically. A similar failure marks our last view of Rowland; he does not complete the recognition begun during his last conversation with Roderick. He reverts to clinging to a romanticized memory of Roderick and to his hopeless love for Mary. Roderick's death has abruptly truncated Rowland's realization of Roderick's egotism, and so he retreats into a masochistic, life-denying cherishing of his own sense of guilt in the affair. His vision remains obscured, clouded by his failure to profit in terms of his own self-knowledge through his experi­
ence with the egotist.
The American

As in Roderick Hudson, the conflict in The American is presented in broad strokes and sharp contrasts which suggest little of the later Jamesian subtlety. This time he is dealing with a form of egotism which derives from the class consciousness of the aristocratic traditions of Bourbon France and developing the ensuing dialectic in terms of the "international theme." Although James treated the contrasts afforded by the clashes of European and American cultures in many of his works, rarely does he ever again couch it in such unambiguous, black and white terms as he does in The American. Cargill claims that with The American James invented the "international novel," and presents a convincing case that, in so doing, James was deliberately undertaking a "defense of the salient characteristics of his countrymen" in the face of what he considered outrageous misinterpretations of Americans, particularly in the French theatre. In this way Cargill explains the obvious national bias of the novel. But since we are interested here in literary effects rather than biographical causes, let us see how the dialectic of egotism functions in the novel itself.

Christopher Newman is, of course, the "type" of the American. He has his vulgarities, but they are minimized in favor of his positive virtues. He is a man with an air, as Valentin tells him, of "being at home in the world"; he possesses those attributes of energy, daring, enterprise, self-sufficiency, shrewdness, and acumen which Americans have traditionally been fond of attributing to themselves. He has
accumulated a sufficient fortune by the age of forty-two to enable him to set aside his business enterprises for a time in order to steep himself in those cultural traditions represented by Europe for which there have not been time in his busy life. He thinks in largely acquisitive terms, however, and expresses a naive expectation that his money will open most, if not all, doors to him. He tells Tristram early in the novel:

"I know the best can't be had for mere money, but I rather think money will do a great deal. In addition, I am willing to take a good deal of trouble. I want the biggest kind of entertainment a man can get. People, places, art, nature, everything. I want to see the tallest mountains, and the bluest lakes, and the finest pictures, and the handsomest churches, and the most cultivated men, and the most beautiful women (NYE, II, 33).

But despite Newman's typically American naïveté regarding the power of money, and even despite his lapses in taste, the implication is clear that he is to be indulged in much the same manner as is, later, Isabel's youthful egotism. Newman is to be indulged because he is aware of the cultural and aesthetic limitations which his American experience has had, and because at least he evinces the desire to rectify those limitations and develop his latent aesthetic sensibility. Although he lacks the power of fine discrimination, he possesses the capacity to appreciate and enjoy, a capacity which is illustrated by way of the contrast afforded by Tom Tristram and the little New England minister, Babcock. Tristram has lived in Paris for six years, but when Newman encounters him in the Salon Carré of the Louvre in the novel's opening pages, he is astounded
to learn that this is the first time Tristram has been inside the famous
gallery. Babcock embodies that trepid inability to enjoy that James
frequently associates with the more rigid American types. Babcock
embodies that trepid inability to enjoy that James
frequently associates with the more rigid American types. Neither of
these faults is apparent in Newman himself.

Further, Newman evidences from the very beginning a capacity for
magnanimity which reveals his native moral sensibility. His account to
Tristram of his experience in the New York hansom functions as both
characterization and foreshadowing. His sudden impulse to refrain from
avenging on the market an unspecified wrong he had once suffered—an
impulse which costs him half a million dollars—clearly foreshadows his
similar decision in regard to the Bellegardes at the end of the novel.
The incident functions as character statement in its revelation of the
ascendancy Newman accords to magnanimous action and the preservation of
self-respect over the material advantages of pecuniary gain and the
dubious satisfaction of revenge.

As with Isabel, Newman's experience has not prepared him to cope
with the subtle treacheries of the world of privilege, hidden this time
behind the impenetrable facades of the exclusive Faubourg Saint-Germain.
The Bellegardes, last citadel (as they see themselves) of the ancien
régime, embody the rigidity of form, the clinging to sterile convention,
the haughty exclusiveness predicated on contempt for the bourgeois world,
and, most importantly, the destructiveness of egotism. They consider
themselves "guardians of beauty" or "beautiful guardians"; the compo-
nents of the name look both ways. Both readings are equally applicable
and equally ironic. The beauty of which they are the self-appointed
preservers is the high pitch and surface polish of civilization, the splendor of the courts of the Louis. It is an historical fact, of course, that the glittering tradition that they are trying to preserve and restore to eminence—all satin and lace and bloodlines and Racine and larks’ wings—was rotten to the core, that the aesthetic magnificence of Versailles was matched by the moral corruption of Chenonceau. The corruption is personified in the old Marquise and her elder son, Urbain de Bellegarde; Claire and Valentin embody the positive values—beauty, wit, and charm—of the ancient tradition.

It is a foregone conclusion that the egotism of class is destructive. Newman, of course, is the direct object of its malevolence, but the more vulnerable members of the family, Claire and Valentin, also fall victim. But while Newman, the outsider, is wronged by the old Marquise and the Marquis personally, the sister and brother are victims of the system itself or, more specifically, of those of the system’s values to which they respectively adhere. Valentin, certainly one of the most engaging figures in the novel, embodies the wit and polish of the tradition as Claire embodies the beauty. Both are innocent of the sense of exclusiveness based upon an innate conviction of superiority which animates the elder Bellegardes. Perhaps the lesser degree of commitment to the system which they share is explained by the positions of subservience they occupy, Valentin as the younger son, Claire as a woman. But their ultimate victimization is effected by their internalization of an aspect of the code. In the case of Valentin, it is the concept of honor; for Claire, it is religious ascetism. The degree to which Valentin cherishes
the concept of honor is indicated by his insistence upon pursuing to its fatal conclusion the duel foolishly motivated by a challenge arising from his infatuation for Noémie. As Newman protests, calling it "G--d-- barbarous and G-- d-- effete," Valentin replies with his characteristic air of careless aristocratic gallantry:

"Oh, I can't begin, at this time of day, to defend the theory of dueling. . . . It is our only resource at given moments, and I hold it a good thing. Quite apart from the merit of the cause in which a meeting may take place, it strikes a romantic note that seems to me in this age of vile prose greatly to recommend it. It's a remnant of a higher-tempered time; one ought to cling to it" (NYE, II, 359).

With the oblique vision of his class, then, Valentin sees dueling in both moral and aesthetic terms; both as an act of honor and as a ritual embodying aesthetic beauties worthy of preservation. He becomes a martyr to his obliquity of vision, sacrificed to an outmoded code.

Claire's sacrifice is equally perverse. She is the least fully realized of all the novel's characters, having neither the complexity nor the vividness of her nearest fictive sister, Christina Light. That she exists for the reader at all is largely attributable to the extrinsic fact that Newman prizes her, but, as Cargill has noted, "actually Newman's values would have been increased by a clearer definition of what he valued." Her fate is analogous to Catherine Sloper's. Like Catherine, she is buffeted by familial egotism; also like Catherine, her act of self-assertion constitutes a denial of life. She does not adhere to the social exclusiveness of her family, a fact indicated by her acceptance of Newman. But there is an exclusiveness in her which manifests itself in the form of religious ascetism. She exchanges the high
wall of the Hôtel de Bellegarde in the Faubourg Saint-Germain for the "pale, dead, discolored" wall of the convent in the Rue d'Enfer. Furthermore, having taken the Carmelite vow of silence, she is hereafter committed to the "chant of the Carmelite nuns, their only human utterance, . . . their dirge over their buried affections and over the vanity of earthly desires" (NYE, II, 480). Claire conceives of her renunciation in terms of "peace and safety . . . to be out of the hateful, miserable world . . . and for life." Death could be described in precisely the same terms.

Any argument that Claire's renunciation implies an advocacy of ascetism as a positive value is negated both by the imagery used to describe it, and by Newman's reaction of horror. As Claire tells him that she is "going out of the world," his feelings are:

That this superb woman, in whom he had seen all human grace and household force, should turn from him and all the brightness he offered her . . . to muffle herself in ascetic rags and entomb herself in a cell, was a confounding combination of the merciless and the impossible. As the vision spread before him, the impossibility turned to the monstrous" (NYE, II, 419).

To the conceivable rebuttal that this view of the situation is Newman's and not necessarily James's, one can cite the fact that throughout the novel there is a noticeable absence of irony attendant upon Newman's point of view, as well as such authorial touches as the description of the convent, of the street where it is located, of the name of the street (Street of Hell), and especially the grim overtones of the scenes when Newman visits the convent. Further, there is a subtle association
of motives suggested by Lord Deepmere’s comment on the occasion of Newman’s encounter with him in London:

"... It was [Noémie], you know, who was at the bottom of [Valentin's] affair. ... They got up some story about its being for the Pope; about the other fellow's having said something against the Pope's morals. They always do that, you know. They put it on the Pope because Bellegarde was once in the Zouaves. But it was about her morals—she was the Pope!" (NYE, II, 522-523).

The suggestion that Noémie had been the "Pope" in Valentin’s fatal affaire d'honneur links the responsibility for the fates of the brother and sister in a manner which reflects no credit on the autocratic tradition of the Roman Church. Thus are both Claire and Valentin martyrs to the tradition of the ancien régime.

Newman’s renunciation, on the other hand, is a different matter altogether, for it does not deny but rather asserts and deepens his humanity. With his decision to abstain from publishing the proof he possesses of the Bellegardes' monstrosity, indeed criminality, he underscores his moral superiority. "He would arrive at his just vindication and he would fail of ... vulgarly enjoying it. ... All he would have at the end would be therefore just the moral convenience, indeed the moral necessity, of his practical, but quite unappreciated magnanimity" (AN, p. 22). Like so many others of his Jamesian compatriots, Newman's experience of "Europe" and his exercise of what he thinks is his freedom of choice has brought him, not happiness, but misery. But that misery has put his moral fibre to the test, and it is not found wanting. In the first version of the novel's final scene, Mrs. Tristram sums the matter up thus:
"Their confidence, after counsel taken of each other, was not in their innocence, nor in their talent for bluffing things off; it was in your remarkable good nature! You see they were right."

In the same version, James has Newman turn instinctively, upon hearing this pronouncement, toward the fireplace where the incriminating paper has crumbled to an ash, an action which Floyd C. Watkins has suggested has the effect of placing a qualification upon Mrs. Tristram's statement. As Watkins further notes, however, James's revision of the ending for the definitive edition makes it clear that he did not intend such a qualification. By omitting Newman's perhaps ambiguous gesture James eliminated any possibility of misinterpretation and sharpened the scene's focus upon Newman's magnanimity. The omission of Mrs. Tristram's speech does not alter this focus, but rather indicates the mature James's preference for "rendering" over "telling." The second ending has Mrs. Tristram giving Newman a tender kiss on the hand and saying, "Poor Claire . . . poor, poor Claire," thus implying that Claire is to be pitied "a thousand times" for having renounced such a man.

So Newman takes his place among the Jamesian heroes and heroines who have discovered the "beauty of goodness." George Knox has noted that, having gone through the stages of agon and pathos, Newman reaches finally anagnorisis. He has realized the promise of moral vision inherent in his earlier foreshewing of revenge; he has established his identity as a feeling man; he has learned, through painful and bitter experience, the absolute value of moral integrity. He has seen his friend and his beloved violate their own humanity; he has experienced,
from the old Marquise and the Marquis, the attempt to violate his; and he has preserved his humanity by refusing to succumb to the temptation to violate theirs in the name of redress. He has won the moral victory.
NOTES
Chapter II


2 Although there has always been dissent from those who are categorically anti-James, the consensus of criticism, from the first post-publication reviews to the present time, agrees on this point. See George Monteiro, Henry James and John Hay (Providence, 1965), pp. 65-69, for a recapitulation of The Portrait's initial reception. Hay's review, which appeared in the New York Tribune on Dec. 25, 1881, is reprinted in its entirety on pp. 69-76. Hay's enthusiasm was unqualified; he wrote, for instance, "no work printed in recent years, on either side the Atlantic or on either side the English Channel, surpasses this in seriousness of intention, in easy scope and mastery of material, in sustained and spontaneous dignity and grace of style, in wit and epigram, and, on the whole, in clear conception and accurate delineation of character" (p. 69). For a representative example of recent evaluations, see R. P. Blackmur, "Introd.," The Portrait (New York, 1961), pp. 5-12.

3 The phrase "wine to water" occurs in a letter written by James to his mother (February 1878), a letter quoted by Leon Edel in his "Introd.," The Portrait (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), p. vi. Edel says that the family fell into the habit of referring to The Portrait as "Henry's wine-and-water novel."

4 In disregarding the early (1871) novel, Watch and Ward, I am following James's own lead. In the Preface to Roderick Hudson, he called that novel of 1875 "his first attempt." Watch and Ward is, indeed, a weak and amateurish work, so James was perhaps right in seeking, in effect, to disown it.

5 I adhere to this statement despite my recognition that certain members of the "anti-James cult" do not agree. See, for instance, J. M. Newton, in "Isabel Archer's Disease and Henry James's," CQ. II (1967), 3-22, who sees Isabel as "unattractive and unintelligent." Although the article includes some valid insights, e.g., his statement that at the root of Isabel's ideal which had prompted her admiration for Madame Merle and Osmond, "is a perverse and even monstrous egotism" (p. 6), in general his obvious lack of empathy precludes any objective evaluation.
6"The Structure of The Portrait," NCF, XX (1965), 85-95. Friend's discussion (which, taken as a whole, really deals more with themes than with structure, despite the title) ties in the Quest with the Cinderella motif.

7For a reprint of this review, see The Future of the Novel, ed. Leon Edel (New York, 1956).

8During his career as a critic James wrote a total of nine reviews and essays on his great English contemporary. It is no exaggeration to say that hers was one of the most important influences upon him during his formative years as a creative writer. See Cornelia Pulsifer Kelley, The Early Development of Henry James (Urbana, Ill., 1965), pp. 60-72, for a detailed analysis of Eliot's influence as revealed through James's criticism and fiction of the period ending with The Portrait of a Lady.

9Among the critics who have commented on the Eliot-James affinities (which include Daniel Deronda as well as Middlemarch) are F. R. Leavis, who sees them along with Conrad as The Great Tradition (New York, 1964), pp. 1-172; Q. D. Leavis, "A Note on Literary Indebtedness: Dickens, George Eliot, Henry James," Hudson Review, VIII (1955), 423-428; Oscar Cargill, "The Portrait: A Critical Reappraisal," MFS, III (1957), 11-32 (the substance of which was subsequently incorporated into his Novels of Henry James [New York, 1961], pp. 81-83); George Levine, "Isabel, Gwendolen, and Dorothea," ELH, XXX (1963), 244-257. Alwyn Berland has pointed out a way in which Henry James, having assimilated the influence of Eliot, moves away from that influence; see "Henry James and the Aesthetic Tradition," JHI, XXIII (1962), 409. A reaction against some of the more extreme claims of James's literary indebtedness to Eliot (most notably, that of F. R. Leavis) is found in Joseph L. Tribble's "Chérbuliez's La Roman d'une Honnête Femme: Another Source of James's Portrait," AL, XL (1968), 279-293, which attempts to demonstrate that "the presence of this additional source indicates the complexity of the [creative] process and, in doing so, renders absurd the hardening of the critical arteries that Leavis displays in asserting that James's novel would never have been written except for his reading of George Eliot's work [referring to Great Tradition, p. 85]."

10A comparison in terms of inauspicious first entrances might well be made between Isabel's, described here, and that of Madame de Vionnet in The Ambassadors. Cf. Cargill, Novels of Henry James, p. 311.

11Cf. John Rodenbeck, "The Bolted Door in James's Portrait," MFS, X (1964), 330-340, who relates Isabel's book-reading with the image of the bolted door that "separates her from life," referring to the flashback scene in which Mrs. Touchett discovers Isabel in the "office" of her Albany home. Rodenbeck traces the image throughout the book and demonstrates how it functions in relation to Isabel's process of discovery.
Cf. Victor H. Strandberg, "Isabel Archer's Identity Crisis: Two Portraits of a Lady," UR, XXXIV (1968), 283-290: "Isabel Archer, at the beginning, is an unknown quantity whom even the clairvoyant Ralph Touchett regards as a lovely but inscrutable mystery. . . . What is more significant is that Isabel is equally a mystery to herself" (p. 283).

The term "method of mutual irradiation" is Leon Edel's; see The Modern Psychological Novel (New York, 1955), p. 36. The analogy of the "lighted lamp" is James's; see Preface to The Awkward Age (AN, p. 110).

. . . she would be an easy victim of scientific criticism if she were not intended to awaken on the reader's part an impulse more tender and more purely expectant" (NYE, III, 69).


Cf. Vincent F. Blehl, S.J., "Freedom and Commitment in James's The Portrait," Personalist, XLII (1961), 368-381, who points out Isabel's fear of being an exploiter: "The prospect of using another person as an instrument for one's own ends . . . is peremptorily dismissed" (p. 372). Father Blehl points out, and rightly so, that Isabel's refusal of Lord Warburton illustrates the matter. However, as Christof Wegelin says, "Although from the first Isabel is intent on doing right, her intention is perverted by her egotism, which prevents her from realizing the dangers to which inexperience exposes her" (The Image of Europe in Henry James [Dallas, 1958], p. 68).


Cf. Strandberg: "To become a Madame Merle in her own right is now Isabel's manifest destiny, the new purpose of her existence" (p. 284).

Cf. Tanner, p. 212.

Van Ghent, p. 226. Cf. also Blehl: "To Madame Merle, . . . Isabel, in taking possession of a considerable fortune, becomes by that fact a marketable object. . . . In accomplishing her plan, Madame Merle is effectively reducing Isabel to the same level as money, that is, a means to be used for one's personal ends" (p. 373).

Novela of Henry James, p. 87.
The comparison is not as far-fetched as it might seem at first glance. Tanner says, "the Miltonic echo is deliberate" (p. 208) and Naomi Lebowitz notes "... the Paradise Lost imagery permeating the last part of The Portrait . . ." (Imagination, p. 69). In this connection, too, it is interesting to note that C. S. Lewis makes a comparison between Milton's Satan and Sir Willoughby Patterne, the titular character of Meredith's The Egoist (publ. 1879); see A Preface to Paradise Lost (New York, 1961), p. 95. Meredith's delineation of Patterne in that novel was clearly another of the factors involved in the "complex creative process" which resulted in The Portrait; see Van Ghent, pp. 190-193, where she discusses Sir Willoughby in relation to Osmond. Obviously we are dealing with a distinct pattern of moral values which has its roots in Christian orthodoxy and finds wide dissemination, in more or less secular terms, throughout nineteenth-century fiction.

Van Ghent, p. 214.

Cf. Tanner: "To care so totally and uncritically for forms, taste, convention ... is to be absolutely enslaved to mere appearances, never questioning essences or the intrinsic worth of things. ... How far he will take this is of course revealed by what he does to his daughter Pansy. ... Such a total appropriation of another person's life for egotistical ends is ... the cardinal Jamesian sin" (p. 209). Cf. also Van Ghent, p. 222.

In his essay on "Laughter," Henri Bergson defines travesty as "the manner seeking to outdo the matter, the letter aiming at ousting the spirit," and again, "... as soon as we forget the serious object of a solemnity, ... those taking part in it give the impression of puppets in motion." See Comedy, ed. Wylie Sypher (New York, 1956), pp. 90-94. Cf. Tanner (n. 24 above).

I do not wish to over-emphasize the matter of overt Christian symbolism in regard to The Portrait, for such an emphasis seems to me to be violating the tone of the work. Later on in his career, as we shall see, the Christian overtones become more explicit; as yet, however, they occur in just the proportion as might be expected from the cultural milieu in which James functioned. It seems to me that Strandberg, for instance, goes too far when he describes the novel's ambiguous ending in terms of the basic paradoxes concerning sacrifice and renunciation which exist at the heart of Christianity (p. 24).

Cf. Tanner: Madame Merle's cry of "vile" ... "at least attests to a vestigial moral sense which she has deliberately subverted for the world's ends, only to see no gains" (p. 210); again, he says that she "gives the most succinct expression of living in the world of means" with her statement, "I don't pretend to know what people are for; I only know what I can do with them." Cf. also Van Ghent (p. 222), who quotes the same passage in support of much the same point.
See Adeline R. Tintner, "The Spoils of Henry James," PMLA, LXI (1946), 242-244, for a discussion of the symbolic significance of the cup. Cargill also mentions it (Novels of Henry James, p. 96) in his general discussion of the novel's imagery.

Cf. Strandberg, who calls Isabel in this scene a "portrait of true ladyhood" (p. 289).

Cf. Tanner: "She is starting to read things properly. . . . And with this new access of vision, Isabel . . . has started on what James later called 'the subjective adventure': the adventure of trying to understand, to sound out depths, to appreciate qualities, to transcend the importunities of the ego" (p. 217).

The name of the palazzo is clearly suggestive, as Cargill notes: "Roccia nera could be read 'dark fortress or citadel.' . . . James's play upon Roccia may be an allusion to the Church founded by Peter upon a rock . . . " (Novels of Henry James, p. 114).

Cf. Rodenberg, p. 333.

Several critics have noted the pattern of "house" images; see, for instance, Richard Chase, The American Novel and its Tradition (New York, 1957), pp. 120-126, and Tanner, pp. 214-215.


Cf. Strandberg: "James's real portrait of a lady is that only in ethical character, not in the acquired glamor of Europe, may one's bedrock identity be found" (p. 286). It is on the point of Isabel's character after her discoveries that the lines are sharply drawn between those readers who are sympathetic to Isabel (and James) and those who are impatient with both. For a reading of Isabel which typifies the latter view, see William Bysshe Stein, "The Portrait: Via Inertiae," WHR, XIII (1959), 177-90, who sees James as treating Isabel throughout the novel with "sardonic wit." Speaking of Henry Adams' criticisms of James's treatment of women, Stein writes, "[Adams] assumes that James wants the reader to take her suffering seriously and to steep himself in her moral predicament" (p. 177). It seems to me that not taking her suffering and predicament seriously is a categorical misreading of the novel. The most that can be said for Stein's reading is that it is a curious blend of dislike for Isabel and a more cautious appraisal of her creator. On the other hand, Newton (see n. 5) and A. R. Mills ("The Portrait and Dr. Leavis," EIC, XIV [1964], 380-387) are avowed anti-Jameaians, in these articles at least. Of course, the leading proponent of this point of view is Maxwell Geismar, whose Henry James and the Jacobites (Boston, 1963) is the classic of anti-James criticism.

Novels of Henry James, p. 83.
This one is the culmination of a series of parallels that is a major source of structural unity between the two divisions of the novel marked off by Isabel's marriage. See Fred B. Millett, "Introduction," The Portrait (New York, 1961), pp. xx-xxiv.

Friend mentions the imagery of this scene but refrains from exploring its implications; see p. 24. Tanner also refers to the "curious cluster of images [by which] James implies that she is both wrecked and freed" (p. 218).

The phrases are Van Ghent's; see p. 215.

Imagination of Loving, p. 69.

Mills, whose generally unsympathetic reading of The Portrait has already been noted (see n. 35) writes: "We may however presume that she eventually reaps some reward for the undoubted stoicism she reveals by returning to Osmond. It may be a stoicism born of pride and a fear of being revealed to the world as a 'failure' but we cannot ignore her lack of self-pity" (p. 384). Mills damns with faint praise here; besides, in attributing to Isabel a mere stotic acceptance of her lot, he seems to be unaware of James's attitude toward stoicism which, he held, was "essentially unphilosophic." Lebowitz treats the matter (pp. 105-106) by quoting James's essay on "Epictetus" (included in Notes and Reviews). There he writes: "The taint of Epictetus is the taint of slavery. . . . It simplifies human troubles by ignoring half of them. It is a wilful blindness, a constant begging of the question. It fosters apathy and paralyzes the sensibilities. It is through our sensibilities that we suffer, but it is through them, too, that we enjoy; and when, by a practical annihilation of the body, the soul is rendered inaccessible to pain, it is likewise rendered both inaccessible and incompetent to real pleasure,—to the pleasure of action; for the source of half its impressions, the medium of its constant expression, the condition of human reciprocity, has been destroyed." See Berland, "Aesthetic Tradition," pp. 407-408, for additional commentary on James and Stoicism.

The Notebooks of Henry James, eds. F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock (New York, 1961), p. 18. Further references to the Notebooks will be noted in parentheses within the text as NB with the appropriate page number.

44F. R. Leavis, for instance, noting the echo of Eugénie Grandet in Washington Square, says that it is "fine in a way that is beyond Balzac" (Great Tradition, p. 172) and Bruce McElderry (Henry James [New York, 1965], p. 53) calls it "a distinguished story." On the other hand, Herbert Croley wrote that it "did not rank among his successes" (Question of Henry James, p. 30) and Pelham Edgar wrote that "it would be a mistake to deal too seriously with a book that was not meant for greatness" (Man and Author, p. 32). The most extreme antipathy, as usual, is expressed by Geismar, who calls it a tale of "complex incestuous and oedipal family relationships" (Jacobites, p. 39). Perhaps the truth of the matter is most nearly expressed by Matthiessen's quip that it "is the favorite James novel—with readers who really don't like James" (American Novels, Introduction, p. x).


46"The young man in Washington Square is not a portrait—he is sketched from the outside merely, not fouillé. The only good thing in the story is the girl." Quoted by McElderry (Henry James, p. 171, n. 3).


49"The Negative Gesture in Henry James," NCF, XV (1961), 335–343. Cambon calls Catherine a "Puritan vestal" who "gets to recognize truth with a unique firmness—she has her father's blood" (p. 339). I disagree with him, however, when he calls her gesture a "negative affirmation of value" (p. 340) and allies the meaning of the story with "that recurrent Puritan gesture—the withdrawal, or denial, of the Pilgrim Fathers, of Thoreau, of Hawthorne, Melville, and Emily Dickinson" (p. 343). Again one need only be reminded of James's essay on Epictetus to discern his attitude toward stoicism (cf. n. 41 above).


51See AN, particularly pp. 31–34.

52See Cargill, Novels of Henry James, pp. 19–21 and p. 33 (n. 3). Cargill cites Matthiessen, Leavis, and Rahv on the subject. Marius Bewley in The Complex Fate (New York, 1952) discusses at some length Hawthorne's influence upon James in relation to these and other novels.
53 See Kelley, Early Development, particularly pp. 73-80.

54 Cargill, p. 20.

55 Cf. Elizabeth Stevenson's comment: "James created a gallery of exceptional men and women. Among the creatures of his imagination he proposed the following: the most gifted American artist (Roderick Hudson), the true type of the American (Christopher Newman), the most beautiful woman (Christina Light), the type of revolutionary leader (Paul Muniment), the greatest actress (Miriam Rooth), the richest girl (Milly Theale), and others of the same reverberating importance." The Crooked Corridor (New York, 1961), p. 53. Cf. James's own comments in the Preface, AN, p. 12.

56 Cf. Cargill, who calls Rowland's conscience "the most active in the book" (Novels of Henry James, p. 27).

57 Cf. Jefferson, Modern Reader, p. 102, where he refers to Rowland's tolerance of Roderick's eccentricities of behavior without suggesting, however, any reason for Rowland's forbearance.

58 Roderick is not wholly a "literary" creation, of course; James had ample opportunity to study in the flesh the circle of American expatriate artists which frequented Rome in these years. In fact, his single excursion into biography dealt with one of them: his two-volume work on William Wetmore Story, published in 1901. See Robert L. Gale, "Roderick Hudson and Thomas Crawford," AQ, XIII (1961), 495-504, for another suggested real-life source of the character of Roderick.

59 According to Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, the definitions of these two words are as follows: "agape - spontaneous self-giving love expressed freely without calculation of cost or gain to the giver or merit on the part of the receiver; Christian brotherly love in its highest manifestation"; "eros - (1) aggregate of pleasure-directed life instinct whose energy is derived from the libido; (2) aspiring self-fulfilling love, often having a sensuous quality; (3) calculates its relations to others from the standpoint of its own need of others."


61 I am obviously at odds with Jefferson here, who sees Christina as "something of a bore" (Modern Reader, p. 87), and with Ernest A. Baker, who calls her an "adventuress, a creature whose unscrupulousness is matched by her magnanimity" (History of the English Novel [10 vols., London, 1938], IX, 247-248).
It is a curious fact that the only characters whom James ever revived for use in later novels are all from Roderick Hudson. Christina, of course, has the title role in The Princess Casamassima; her husband the Prince, and Madame Grandoni also reappear in that novel. Gloriani was revived for The Ambassadors (see n. 60 above).

Cf. Jefferson, who at least grants that "femme fatale though she is, Christina certainly has her share of 'ballast' and moral imagination, and even a touch of transcendentalism" (Modern Reader, p. 87).

One feels constrained to defend Rowland against the frequent charge (based primarily on the fact of his bachelorhood) that he is a mere "spectator at the edge of life" (Stephen Spender, "The School of Experience in the Early Novels," Hound and Horn, VII [Apr.-June, 1934], p. 420). Elizabeth Stevenson apparently believes that he is "middle-aged"; see The Crooked Corridor, p. 136. I am in essential agreement with Cargill, who holds that the view of Rowland as passive is "the very mistake that Roderick makes about his friend. ... Until his choice of death, Roderick never conceives a project so great as Rowland's scheme to transform the sculptor's amateurishness into professionalism" (Novels of Henry James, p. 27). Rowland is certainly no laggard, either, in falling in love with Mary Garland. In fact, the only vestige in Rowland of his Puritan heritage is his reaction of suspicion to Christina; the fact that "she looks dangerous" to him echoes the old Puritan distrust of beauty as morally debilitating. The question of the presence of the same strain in James himself is a matter for the biographer, not the critic.

The essential romanticism of Christina's and Roderick's relationship can be sharply illustrated by going outside the context of this novel and making a comparison to the two lovers who are perhaps the most romantic in all of English fiction: Emily Bronte's Heathcliff and Cathy. In her discussion of the latter pair, Dorothy Van Ghent has said that their relationship is "extra-Christian, essentially amoral, sexless, immature, even childish, and mutually destructive" (English Novel, pp. 153-170). There are two main differences between the pairs: (1) that Christina does not idealize Roderick or feel the sense of essential unity with him that Cathy does with Heathcliff, and (2) that while, as Mrs. Van Ghent points out, Heathcliff and Cathy inhabit an amoral realm of primordial violent energy, of natural elements and forces personified, Roderick and Christina inhabit an equally amoral realm of a milder, sunnier Hellenism.

Cf. Dorothea Krook, who says, speaking of Densher in The Wings of the Dove: "... Densher shows most clearly the lineaments of that long and distinguished line of Jamesian heroes 'who consecrate by their appreciation,' which starts with Roland [sic] Mallet in Roderick Hudson, includes Ralph Touchett, 'little' Hyacinth Robinson, (and in some respects also Nick Dormer [of The Tragic Muse]), and reaches its apotheosis in Gray Fielder in The Ivory Tower and Lambert Strether in The Ambassadors" (Ordeal of Consciousness, p. 221).
67 One should, I suppose, acknowledge the rather tiresome reiteration that Roderick and Rowland are extensions of James's own "geminian" nature, that he separated his own capacity for appreciation from his creative genius and embodied them in the two characters. For a convenient summary of this standard reading, see S. Gorley Putt, A Reader's Guide to Henry James (Ithaca, 1966), pp. 94-100.

68 With this statement I am at odds with Cargill: "Roderick, realizing that he is apparently the sole barrier to his patron's inclination toward Mary Garland and her response, . . . disposes of himself. . . . If Roderick's death were 'accidental,' Rowland's suffering for it cannot be justified either artistically or morally" (Novels of Henry James, p. 24). I agree that Roderick's death is not accidental, but cannot accept Cargill's explanation of his motive for the reasons I suggest in my discussion.


70 Cf. Wegelin: "... the moral contrast underlying . . . The American is conceived almost in black and white: a highly idealized American virtue doing honorable battle with what is almost a caricature of aristocratic villainy" (Image of Europe, p. 46). See also pp. 38-43.

71 Novels of Henry James, pp. 42-46.

72 Cf. Cargill, Novels of Henry James, pp. 47-48. Wegelin interestingly points out Newman's atypical qualities, saying that he represents the "best in America." Newman is "one of 'Nature's noblemen,' and his story, quite in the American tradition, dramatizes a competition between his 'natural' nobility and the 'artificial' nobility of his French antagonists" (Image of Europe, p. 40).

73 In the earlier versions of the novel Newman is only thirty-six; the advance in his age is but one of the many changes which prompted Max F. Schulz to say that Newman "is a more mature, compelling person in the revision"; see "The Bellegardes' Feud with Christopher Newman: A Study of Henry James's Revision of The American," AL, XXVII (1955), 42-55. In another revision study, Royal A. Gettman noted the related point that James modified the commercial aura surrounding Newman's desire to marry; see his "Henry James's Revision of The American," AL, XVI (1945), 279-295. Another such study, this time focusing on the refinements of imagery in the later version, is Isadore Traschen's "An American in Paris," AL, XXVI (1954), 67-77. These studies by and large agree in favor of the revised version; a notable exception is Robert Herrick, "A Visit to Henry James," Yale Review, XII (1923), 732-739, who called the
second Newman an "old egotist, too self-conscious and sophisticated to be attractive" (p. 735). This evaluation can perhaps be explained by the general tenor of James criticism at the time. Fortunately for my reading, this seems to be a minority opinion, Cargill for instance noting specifically that Newman's self-confidence is not to be confused with egotism (Novels of Henry James, p. 47). The proliferation of revision studies is accounted for by the fact that, as James himself pointed out in the Preface, this was the most extensively revised of all the works which he chose for inclusion in the definitive New York Edition.

74Cf. Wegelin: "... James is capable of the objectivity of satire, as he shows in the incidental sketch of a New England minister, traveling on funds supplied by his flock in order that he may enrich his mind with the treasures of European art but constantly prevented from doing so by his high moral seriousness, which will not let him abandon himself to enjoyment of that art" (Image of Europe, p. 43).

75The incident is related by Newman to Tristram on pp. 30-32. Cargill also notes the foreshadowing (see Novels of Henry James, p. 48), as does George Knox in his "Romance and Fable in James's American," Anglia, LXXXIII (1965), 308-323.

76Cf. Krook: "... it is in [The American and The Ambassadors] that he exposes, openly and sharply in the first, more ambiguously in the second, the decadence of the old European aristocracies, with their ferocious pride of race, their fanatical adherence to traditional forms, and their ripe Old World sophistication, issuing in the more insidious varieties of moral corruption" (Ordeal of Consciousness, p. 8).

77Novels of Henry James, p. 51. Cargill goes on to say that James's greatest failure in regard to Claire was his failure to "properly prepare us for Claire's decision to seek refuge in a convent."

78Cf. Stevenson, who says that James showed "in his picture of Madame de Cintre's withdrawal into a convent ... that he thought such a withdrawal a perversion of life" (Crooked Corridor, p. 36).

79"Christopher Newman's Final Instinct," NCF, XII (1957), 85-88. Watkins' article, which is essentially another revision study, argues for the final version as "making Newman better but perhaps less human," suggesting that the word "instinctively" in the early version is an expression of Newman's "baser" instincts, i.e., the impulse to revenge. William T. Stafford, however, responding to Watkins, argues for the first version, saying that "we know long before the final scene that Newman is not going to publish his incriminating evidence against the Bellegardes." Stafford marshals a convincing body of evidence to support his point (neglecting to mention, however, the cab scene) and concludes by saying that "the destruction of the evidence in the fire ... is thus in both
versions merely the cap of a decision already clearly made. That Newman would, under the additional provocation of discovering his good nature possibly exploited, instinctively turn to the fire ... is only human"; see "The Ending of James's American: A Defense of the Early Version," NCF, XVIII (1963), 86-89.

80 "Romance and Fable," pp. 313-314. The article discusses the novel in terms of its mythic, "fairy-tale," melodramatic, Gothic, etc., qualities, carrying through the implication of James's own statement in the Preface that he "had been plotting arch-romance."
"So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as a means only."

Kant

The Bostonians

Despite the broadening of scope effected by his excursion into the realm of "social novels," both of James's long fictions of the mid-eighties present variations on the dialectic of egotism. The problems of the ego are depicted in The Bostonians and The Princess Casamassima both in terms of individuals interacting on the plane of personal relationship and in terms of their identifications with specific political attitudes. But, his current interest in Zola notwithstanding, in these works James produced fictions that are less "scientific" analyses of politico/sociological phenomena than explorations of what it means to be a human being at a given moment in history, in a specific place, and within a particular social and cultural milieu. The emphasis, as always with James, falls on the specifically human dilemma; causes, ideologies, and institutions are rendered insofar as they relate to those basic human concerns.
That emphasis has not always been acknowledged. James has been criticized for moving out of his element in attempting to deal with "... the public world, with the fluid contours of society and the tempting dangers of politics. ... He lacked that passionate absorption in the worlds of business and politics which a social novelist must have." No one will deny this last sentence of Irving Howe's—James, least of all, would have done so—but to criticize him for not accomplishing that which he never set out to do seems an injustice. In "The Art of Fiction," James insisted that the only valid measure of a critic's success is his estimate of the degree to which the artist succeeded in that which he attempted. William McMurray, reacting as I have to the disproportionate emphasis implicitly given to the political aspects by critics such as Howe and Lionel Trilling, has written:

Sex and politics, certainly, are everywhere in [The Bostonians]. The way that they are there, however, urges a consideration of moral and philosophical matters that describe a larger framework than a sexual and political one. ... Public and private experience are both dealt with ... as complementary aspects of what he perceived as a uniquely American conduct of life; and it is this conduct, dramatically focused in a conflict among characters who, James said, were evolved from his "moral consciousness," that is the subject of The Bostonians.

Before proceeding to the novel's particularization of the dialectic of egotism, let us consider further the variations on the theme. The most obvious thing that sets The Bostonians apart from the mainstream of Jamesian long fiction is its focus on the "uniquely American conduct of life." While several novels treat European (mainly English) types and
scenes exclusively, this is the only example of a strictly "American
tale." This fact can perhaps be explained by the enforced prolonging
of the visits to his homeland during this period occasioned by family
problems; we know, at any rate, that the scheme for the novel had been
formed by April 8, 1883, when he wrote in his notebook:

I wished to write a very American tale . . . and
I asked myself what was the most salient and peculiar
point in our social life. The answer was: the
situation of women, the decline in the sentiment of
sex, the agitation on their behalf (NB, p. 47).

The execution conformed to his conception of a "very American tale," for
there is no development at all in The Bostonians of "Europe" as the sym-
bol of an alternative set of standards or values, as there is in Washing-
ton Square, the only other of his novels in which the characters and
setting are American. Mrs. Luna, a minor character, is the only one in
The Bostonians who has seen Europe with anything approaching appreciation,
and she emerges as the "type" of one form of American vulgarity. The
cultural conflict, then, is shifted from the international scene to the
American regional, with Olive Chancellor representing the North in
general and New England in particular, and Basil Ransom representing the
South in general and Mississippi in particular. James reversed the
direction of the late conflict by having his Southerner "invade" the
North and win the ultimate victory. However, it is a qualified victory
accomplished by the exercise of brute force, analogous, say, to Sherman's
march through Georgia. It is further qualified in that, again like the
victory of the Union forces, it guarantees no definitive resolution of
the sources of conflict.
Included in the regional identifications are the political ones. True to James's conception of his character as an ante-bellum Southerner, Ransom is conservative, even reactionary, whose political philosophy embraces the pseudo-aristocratic ideals of the defeated South. Most important, in terms of his struggle with Olive, that tradition includes the idea of male supremacy. Olive, on the other hand, identifies herself with the bluestocking movement, fueling her indignation at the history of man's immemorial exploitation of woman, as she sees it, with constant reading and brooding on the subject. Because most of the novel's action takes place in New England, James provides himself with the opportunity to recreate the ambience of that region's "Indian Summer," the aftermath of the great mid-century surge of humanitarian reform. The dessication of that once-vigorous spirit is incarnated in the figure of Miss Birdseye, who is the only character in the novel accorded a degree of tender, if ironic, indulgence. The charlatanism of the present period, on the other hand, is most vividly represented in Selah Tarrant, the greedy, exploitative mesmerist who feeds, vulture-like, on a feast of gullible females. James further associates, through imagery and scenic rendering, the growth of industrialism with the decline of genuine humanitarianism. The pictures of Boston and New York as those cities moved into the factory age are masterful, as James captures the very sights, sounds, and smells of the musty, dimly lit meeting rooms of the reformers, the vulgar lecture-hall flickering with gaslights and bustling with women, the traffic-choked streets, the defiled vistas, the gaudy ostentation of Mrs. Burrage's music room with its potted palms and
marble busts. It is a picture far removed from the atmosphere of picturesque antiquity in which his evocations of many European cities are customarily enveloped, and the defining difference is the pervasive American vulgarity.

Also, The Bostonians is remarkable for the explicit role accorded to the sexual aspect of the conflict. Any experienced reader of James is well aware of the fact that the relationship between the sexes in its multifarious forms is one of his continuing concerns, but nowhere else, except perhaps in What Maisie Knew (1897), is it granted so conspicuous a place, and nowhere else does he explore in such specific terms the effects of certain perversions of the libidinal instincts. It is apparent almost immediately that Olive's passionate espousal of the cause of women's rights is a projection of a deep feminine insecurity which has gone so far as to be latent lesbianism; and Basil's insistence upon the principle of male supremacy is an important facet of his particularization of egotism. The terms of the struggle between them—a struggle for the possession of Verena Tarrant—is the key to the basic immorality of each.

And, finally, matters of style distinguish The Bostonians from other Jamesian productions. This is the only long work in which his talent as a satirist is given full scope. All of the characters and the attitudes they represent come in for their share, to a greater or lesser degree, of satirical treatment. None of them exhibits that potential for moral and aesthetic development that we are accustomed to find in a true Jamesian hero or heroine; thus there is no "centre of consciousness,"
no "register," no "mirror," or "sensibility sufficiently acute." The novel consistently utilizes an omniscient narrator point of view, with the author telling the story in his own voice or moving in and out of the consciousnesses of his people as the story demands. This objectivity of treatment accounts in large measure for the pervasive satiric tone, as does James's employment of other satiric devices.\(^{15}\)

In these ways at least, then, The Bostonians is unique among the novels of Henry James. In certain other ways it conforms to the pattern of expectation which the reader of James is likely to have developed; so, more specifically, let us see in what ways we have in The Bostonians a clash of wills between egotists. The fact that the egotism represented in this novel is not only personal but also regional, political, and sexual serves but to broaden the implications of the destructive power of which egotism is capable.

The omission of a Jamesian "centre of consciousness," as well as the satiric tone, is a clue to the fact that in The Bostonians James was dealing with differing forms of the limited consciousness. Various critics have tried to prove that one or the other of the three central characters is the "hero" or "heroine" of the novel, by which one assumes they mean the person with whom the author's sympathies are aligned or who acts as his spokesman. Charles R. Anderson, for instance, argues persuasively for Ransom as the "hero," and, on the other side, Oscar Cargill and Daniel Lerner present a case for Olive as a "tragic heroine" on the model of Antigone.\(^{16}\) Speaking of Verena, Abigail Hamblen has
said that "it is difficult to escape the feeling that she is James's . . . ideal of perfect femininity." I shall consider the last claim first.

Many readers have been charmed by James's red-haired oratress, and it is true that there is something superficially engaging about Verena Tarrant. Her striking appearance, her disarming ingenuousness, her desire to please make comprehensible, if not unarguable, Anderson's comment that she is the "embodiment of the feminine principle." This conclusion is brought into question when one considers the types of girls to whom James elsewhere chose to accord his most sympathetic treatments; Verena is far from being an Isabel Archer, for instance, or a Daisy Miller, to choose two examples from this period of his career. She is not even a "femme fatale," as McMurray claims, in the sense that Christina Light is; Verena lacks the cleverness and sophistication required for that role. In short, she possesses none of that capacity for intelligent discrimination and courageous independence that characterizes James's major heroines; even Kate Croy and Charlotte Stant, the so-called "bad heroines" of The Wings of the Dove and The Golden Bowl, are given a higher degree of sympathy than is either Verena or Olive Chancellor. But it is not really necessary to go outside the novel to support this claim.

Of course it was necessary to James's scheme that, as a character, Verena have a certain charm if she was to be sufficiently credible as the object on which the novel's dramatic conflict was centered. But even that charm is qualified; her beauty appears as beauty largely
because of the dinginess and sordidness of her background and because of the obliquities of vision on the parts of those whom it affects. The author makes frequent references to its qualities of cheapness. It is difficult to imagine that the man who later suggests that the charming Madame de Vionnet's long black sleeves conceal perhaps more bracelets than a lady might wear would present as an "ideal of femininity" a girl whose "idea of enjoyment . . . is an abundance of feather on her hat," who, "with her bright, unique clothes . . . might have been a ropedancer or a fortuneteller." Verena's ingenuousness and desire to please, delightful as they might be in a young naïf, go deeper than her naiveté; they reveal her essential malleability. She is a plastic substance whose mold has not yet been finally cast, true, but there is lacking in her basic composition both the capacity for fine aesthetic discrimination and the potential for meaningful moral development. She is a weak person who will always assume the form dictated by whatever influence stronger than herself is brought to bear upon her. McMurray has said that she has "an absolutely open and selfless consciousness," but he continues, "if she gives herself effortlessly, it is because she is 'anemic' of any self to give." Like Browning's Duchess, she has a heart too soon made glad, too easily impressed: "she liked whate'er/She looked upon, and her looks went everywhere." This is the quality in Verena which causes Olive her moments of greatest anxiety, as the scene of the Tarrants' tea-party makes vividly clear. Robert L. Selig has presented a case that Verena was based on the model of Dinah Morris in Adam Bede, but despite the evidence he marshals in support of his thesis,
Verena has not even the courage of sincere convictions which gives depth and substance to George Eliot's lady-preacher. Verena's "gift of eloquence" is brought severely into question by the air of charlatanry surrounding it, by the uses to which it is put, by those upon whom it has its effects, and by the few examples of it to which we are privy. Whatever commitment she may have to women's rights is a pale refraction of the atmosphere of "causes" in which she has been reared and of Olive's unyielding pressure. Mrs. Luna is right in her ungenerous conviction that Verena "cared as much for the rights of women as she did for the Panama Canal.... She will give Olive the greatest cut she has ever had in her life. She will run off with some lion-tamer; she will marry a circus-man!" (pp. 209-210). In short, Verena is a fool—"one that will do/To ... start a scene or two,/ ... an easy tool,/Deferential, glad to be of use"—a pretty fool, no doubt, but a fool nonetheless. The fact that the cousins contend so bitterly over this relative nonentity is one measure of their own limitations.

Verena, then, cannot be the "heroine," if one assumes, as we have no right not to, that James was sincere in saying, in effect, "I confess I never see the leading interest in any situation in the consciousness of a fool" (AN, p. 67). I repeat, Verena is the object for the possession of which the struggle takes place, and now I should emphasize the words object and possession, for they indicate the ultimate dehumanization which the novel depicts: the treating of a human being, however foolish, as a beautiful trifle (in this case, objet d'art seems hardly to apply) to be appropriated and possessed. The terms of the dramatic
conflict define Olive and Basil as egotists, for both contenders have identical aims. Each loves Verena in a wholly egocentric way, for each sees her as the bolster for his or her own particular form of egotism. Since Olive's is the more complex and less usual form, she shall be considered next.

Olive is a case of extremes. As Hamblen has said, she is a "single-minded intense character ... [whose] hatred of men is pathological." We shall consider her misanthropy presently, but let us focus first on that quality of intensity. It is hard to escape the feeling that she represents, in a concentrated dose, all that James disliked about his native country and the American character. Olive has the morbidity of the brooding, introspective sensibility that is one strain of the Puritan heritage as James saw it. "She took things hard. . . . She was a woman without laughter" (pp. 18-19). She has the rigidity, intolerance, and desire to control and manipulate others that is part of that strain, and the conviction of moral self-righteousness that follows when one is convinced that he is in sole possession of the truth. "She has a fastidious, exclusive, uncompromising nature" (p. 126). That nature is imaged forth vividly as one reads that her smile "might have been likened to a thin ray of moonlight resting on the wall of a prison," and that "when she turned [her eyes] upon you, you thought vaguely of the glitter of green ice."25

But Olive, for all her cold rigidity, does have an aesthetic sense. However, again like her Puritan forebears, she harbors a distrust for beauty as morally suspect. She registers distaste at the dinginess and
ugliness of Miss Birdseye's lodgings but tries to convince herself that these things are unimportant:

The bareness of her long, loose, empty parlor . . .
told that she had never had any needs but moral needs, and that all her history had been that of her sympathies. . . . [Olive] mortally disliked it, and . . . in a career in which she was constantly exposing herself to offense and laceration, her most poignant suffering came from the injury to her taste. She had tried to kill that nerve, to persuade herself that taste was only frivolity in the disguise of knowledge; but her susceptibility was constantly blooming afresh and making her wonder whether an absence of nice arrangements were a necessary part of the enthusiasm of humanity (pp. 29-30).

Mrs. Luna comments in the novel's opening pages that although Olive had been to Europe, "she stayed only an hour or two. She hates it; she would like to abolish it." Olive's attitude toward Europe (so different from her creator's) is akin to that implied in the little sketch of the Reverend Mr. Babcock, rendered satirically in The American, and anticipates the more fully developed Waymarsh and Sarah Pocock of The Ambassadors. She is not, like Catherine Sloper, merely indifferent to Europe; she hates it, as Mrs. Luna says, because it touches a sensibility deep within her that her perverted moral sense tells her must be crushed. Yet, like most such efforts, her attempt to "kill that nerve" is unsuccessful, and the nerve surfaces as her unhealthy attraction to Verena, no small part of which is attributable to her sense of the girl's beauty. It is essential that Verena be flamboyantly beautiful; she would not have served as an illustration of this particular aspect of Olive's character had she been plain or even just ordinarily pretty.
But, as Babcock and Waymarsh demonstrate, these negative aspects of James's refracted Puritan characters are not exclusively feminine traits. Olive is an extreme case because in her these qualities are combined with an innate lack of positive femininity. She fears the implications of her sex, a fear which manifests itself in that pathological hatred of men:

... what Basil Ransom actually perceived was that Miss Chancellor was a signal old maid. That was her quality, her destiny; nothing could be more distinctly written. There are women who are unmarried by accident, and others who are unmarried by option; but Olive Chancellor was unmarried by every implication of her being. She was a spinster as Shelley was a lyric poet, or as the month of August is sultry. She was so essentially a celibate that Ransom found himself thinking of her as old, though when he came to look at her ... it was apparent that her years were fewer than his own (p. 18).

Whatever the cause or concatenation of causes—hereditary, environmental, biological, or psychological—and despite the fact that this particular statement occurs as an impression of Ransom's, the point of Olive's insecurity as a sexual being, and specifically a female, is emphatically iterated and reiterated throughout the tale. In this respect she serves, along with other female characters, to illustrate a pervasive sexual distortion, the "decline in the sentiment of sex" that James observed and the depiction of which he posited as one of his aims in writing the novel. Howe suggests that "the disarrangements of society . . . are embodied in the often deformed and grotesque sexual lives of the characters, particularly the women." He continues, quoting liberally from the novel:
Mrs. Luna's "hair was in clusters of curls, like bunches of grapes; her tight bodice seemed to crack with vivacity." Verena Tarrant, predictably, has a "flat young chest" and Miss Birdseye "no more outline than a bundle of hay." Dr. Prance is "spare, dry, hard... If she had been a boy she would have borne some relation to a girl, whereas Dr. Prance appeared to have none whatever." Olive Chancellor's appearance is deliberately left vague, except for the clue given our sense of catastrophe when we learn, upon her first meeting with Ransom, of "the vague compassion which [her] figure excited in his mind." 27

Olive's personal problems are thus generalized and extended, and then are particularized again in her crusading zeal for the cause of women's rights. James runs no risks that the cause might appear in his rendering as a viable or admirable campaign; however much he might have privately admired certain aims of the feminists, he makes it clear in his fictional version that the form assumed by this latter-day Boston reform movement is both impotent and meretricious. 28 The note is struck early with the superb description of Mrs. Farrinder, a "national leader" who is the featured speaker of the evening at Miss Birdseye's:

Toward nine o'clock the light of her hissing burners smote the majestic person of Mrs. Farrinder, who might have contributed to answer that question of Miss Chancellor's in the negative. She was a copious, handsome woman, in whom angularity had been corrected by the air of success; she had a rustling dress (it was evident what she thought about taste).... There was a lithographic smoothness about her, and a mixture of the American matron and the public character. There was something public in her eye, which was large, cold, and quiet; it had acquired a sort of exposed reticence from the habit of looking down from a lecture desk, over a sea of heads, while its distinguished owner was eulogized by a leading citizen. Mrs. Farrinder, at almost any time, had the air of being introduced by a few remarks.... She was held to have a very fine manner, and to embody the domestic
virtues and the graces of the drawing room; to be a shining proof, in short, that the forum, for ladies, is not necessarily hostile to the fireside. She had a husband, and his name was Amariah (pp. 30-31).

While these excerpts can give only an idea of the satiric force which accumulates through the passage in its entirety, they sufficiently illustrate the point that James saw the movement as essentially vulgar. The grandiose formality of the prose reflects Mrs. Farrinder's own conscious sense of inflated self-importance; the use of the cliché of the lecture platform is heavily ironic; the analogy of the lithograph underscores her deliberate pose as a swayer of public sentiment; and the superlative flatness of the final sentence laconically expresses the total insignificance of the male in Mrs. Farrinder's—and, by extension, the movement's—scheme of things. The passage is almost mock-heroic in the manner of Fielding or Pope. 29 This scene at the novel's beginning is balanced by similar ones, equally satirical, at the mid-point (the occasion of Verena's first New York performance at the home of Mrs. Burrage), and at the end (the climactic scene at the Music Hall). These three scenes are a major source of structural and thematic unity in the novel.

All of which simply serves to underscore Olive's distorted values in allying herself with such a movement, for, unlike Mrs. Farrinder, she is sincere and, unlike Miss Birdseye, she is possessed of a superior intelligence, one indication of which is the depth and breadth of her researches into the subject of her monomania. The fact that her motivation stems primarily from her personal aberrations is seen in the ineffectuality of her attempts at positive involvement. When she
approaches Mrs. Farrinder on the occasion noted above to inquire what she might do to help the cause, that lady, shrewdly surmising Olive's relative affluence, suggests that she "contribute," by which she means money. This is clearly not what Olive envisions. Elsewhere the point is made that she has tried on occasion to befriend "poor, downtrodden shopgirls," but had become discouraged when it seemed that they "were all odiously mixed up with Charlie"; it is further noted, significantly, that the girls "seemed afraid of her" for some reason that Olive cannot comprehend. So while she quivers intensely for "the long martyrdom of woman" and feels it "as a deep, unforgettable wrong . . . as one feels a stain that is on one's honor," her actual participation in the movement is more desire than fact.

Her meeting with Verena seems to offer the opportunity she has been awaiting. Olive's motives—public and private—in trying to appropriate the girl are really two sides of the same coin. She tells herself that she wants to help Verena to become an instrument in the "holy cause," she herself to provide the financial backing and spiritual determination necessary to effect a significant surge forward in the campaign for justice for women. The public motive, then, has its exploitative side, in Olive's using Verena to supply her own deficiencies in the realm of public speaking. But the private motive is more important and even more exploitative, for secretly Olive admits even to herself that "she found here what she had been looking for so long—a friend of her own sex with whom she might have a union of soul" (p. 80). The form of Olive's neurosis has been generally recognized, as it should
be, for there seems to be no doubt that James was well aware how accurately he was drawing in Olive the very type of the latent lesbian. Olive desires a solemn vow of fidelity "for life"; she habitually speaks of it as "our union"; she admits she is "jealous, that she didn't wish to think of the girl's belonging to anyone but herself"; she writhes in an agony of apprehensive terror as Verena innocently flirts with the Harvard men; and she conceives a mortal hatred for Ransom which is terrible in its ferocity when she divines his interest in Verena. Every passage describing or even referring to the relationship between the two girls is rife with pointed implication, so that the point is made inescapable that Olive's passion for Verena, as well as her espousal of the "sacred cause," is emblematic of her deepseated sexual neurosis. And, lest the reader be tempted to suffer empathetically with Olive, James depicts all of this in the pitiless glare of his devastating, if subtle, satire.

The objectivity of the consistently satirical treatment, with its tacit lack of sympathy, should not be construed as a minimization of the degree of Olive's suffering. She does indeed suffer, but suffering, as well as justice and love, can be blind. James would not have agreed with some modernists that suffering per se is tragic; it becomes tragic only when it is accompanied by moral insight. We remember, for instance, May Bartram's comment to John Marcher: "You were to suffer your fate; that was not necessarily to know it," a point effectively dramatized in that scene of tragic intensity at the end of his story when Marcher experiences, too late, his moment of insight, when his beast finally
springs. But up to that moment, his character as the morally blind, solipsistic egotist had been unshaken. So with Olive Chancellor, except that Olive never does see. She never sees the underlying cause of her passion for Verena and the movement, and she never sees the root of the perversion of sensibility which manifests itself as "the secret, the most sacred hope of her nature was that she might some day have such a chance, that she might be a martyr and die for something" (p. 13). She seeks out tasks, duties, responsibilities, and the more unpleasant they are, the better they serve her masochistic self-flagellation. "She expected to suffer intensely; . . . the prospect of suffering was always, spiritually speaking, so much cash in her pocket" (pp. 112-113). After her satisfactorily distressing interview with the opportunistic journalist, Matthias Pardon, we read that Olive "seemed to see the glow of dawning success; the battle had begun, and something of the ecstasy of the martyr" (p. 147). Other examples could be cited, but the point is clear, I hope, that Olive's quasi-religious desire for self-sacrifice is the reductio ad absurdum of any genuine selflessness; it is perverted ego gratification masquerading as moral self-righteousness. It further illustrates that blindness into her own nature already adumbrated, and, even more serious, the perversion of her moral sense into what can only be called immorality. She may be sick, but that fact would not have mitigated James's view that she is essentially immoral.

Olive finds the martyrdom she seeks, but not in the form she envisions and, ironically, at the end she is fighting desperately for life. When Ransom by sheer force wrenches Verena from Olive's frenetic clutches
during the powerfully wrought final scene and leaves Olive to face the restless, disappointed crowd alone, one feels that the stake would have been infinitely preferable to her. She believes that she is prepared and even desirous of giving up her life, but she cannot endure the loss of Verena. Without Verena as her strut and support, she has no sense of self; she needs the girl to supply her own desperate lack of conscious human identity. But this kind of appropriation of another human being for one's selfish ends is blatant immorality, as we have seen, in the Jamesian moral universe, and it defines Olive as the extreme example of the perverted martyr-complex form of egotism. In her, the moral is posing as all. All forms of egotism stem from the failure to respect human selfhood, whether another's or one's own. Olive violates Verena's spiritual integrity, intrinsic to her as a human being, by attempting to appropriate, control, and manipulate her; her desire for martyrdom is the index of her inability to recognize and realize her own. She is the sine qua non of the failure to integrate feeling and living into an organic, unified moral and aesthetic whole.

The primary emphasis given to Olive's failure as a woman and a human being might suggest that Ransom, her opponent and mortal enemy, embodies the positive values of the novel. It is true that he is subjected less to the authorial rapier-thrust than his cousin, but that is strictly a matter of degree. James casts his ultimate vote for the normal heterosexual relationship, but he makes it clear that it is not a happy alternative that Verena faces.32 In view of attempts, most notably that of Charles R. Anderson, to elevate Ransom into the role of repository of the novel's positive values, let us consider the question.33
Anderson's thesis is that "Ransom became properly the hero, for what began as a satire of Bostonians ended by being the triumph of a Mississippian," a conclusion one could reach only if he chose to ignore the consistency of the satirical tone up to and including the last lines, and failed to see the qualifications inherent in Ransom's "triumph" that I have noted above. He goes on to say that Ransom espouses the righteous causes of "chivalry and conservatism" and that he is the "champion of love and marriage," yet he admits that Verena is "loved possessively by both Ransom and Olive." Apparently Anderson approves of possessive love when it is directed from male to female; I suggest that James would not have approved of it in any guise. Anderson does admit some of Ransom's absurdities and inadequacies, pointing out his evident unfamiliarity with the "material panoply" (by which he means the tradition of beauty, taste, and gracious living which is part of the ante-bellum Southern myth), and even saying "how could Ransom's cavalier pride, his aristocratic conservatism, his cult of chivalry, be anything but tinsel and pretension?" Yet he draws the conclusion that Ransom's faults are attributable to "James's lack of familiarity with the South and Southerners."

It seems clear that Anderson is trying to reconcile what he sees as contradictory qualities in Ransom, in order to justify his thesis, by putting it down to James's ignorance of the "Southern character." It may be true that James may have been drawing upon the stereotypes of the unreconstructed Southerner in his portrait of Ransom, but his view is larger than any desire to depict the "Southern character" in any narrow,
local-colorist sense. The presence of contradictory statements regarding Ransom are evidence, again, of that satirical objectivity, as when James says, for instance, describing Ransom's appearance, that "these things, the eyes especially, with their smouldering fire, might have indicated that he was to be a great American statesman; or, on the other hand, they might simply have proved that he came from Carolina or Alabama." The inflexibility of critical vision which demands that individuals conform to one's a priori expectations is one of Ransom's own faults, as McMurray has pointed out, and another of the qualities which aligns him with Olive; McMurray calls it an "absolutist psychology."  

McMurray's reading comes much closer to the core of The Bostonians. Although it is based upon an ex post facto application of philosophical pragmatism to the novel, James himself tacitly supported such an application with his quip, after the publication of his brother's book on the subject, that "I have been a pragmatist all my life without knowing it." But the quip also suggests that, as a conscious artist, James worked more in terms of a moral rather than a philosophical vision, admittedly a fine line, but a distinct one nonetheless. McMurray summarizes his reading as follows:

Basil Ransom's victory over Olive Chancellor brings to a climax ... a metaphysical impulse that emerges as a concept of reality in which competing absolutisms are relatively integrated within an organic totality of experience. The primary appearances the competing absolutisms take are as love and politics. However, they are but particular vehicles for a larger moral and philosophical meaning. The major problem raised by James's drama—what attitude, in a various world, is most likely to bring us into harmony with the actuality and potentiality of life?—is answered in
the fate of the three central characters. The narrow and exclusive worlds of Olive and Basil are opposed to the boundless one of Verena Tarrant. In her selflessness the worlds of both Olive and Basil are contained. Verena's crisis comes when she is driven to choose between them. But the psychological and moral condition for exercising such a choice—a consciousness of self as the basis for discriminatory action—is what Verena lacks in her make-up. If Verena is to fulfill the range of her potentiality and be furnished with a sense of self, the union between her and Basil must take place. It does; but only by virtue of Basil's forceful action in the critical moment when Verena is torn between her opposite experiences of life and love. . . . The union between Basil and Verena telescopes James's vision of the character of reality as one emerging out of experience itself. As such, reality is conceived of as dynamic and changing rather than static. It stands for life in actuality and potentiality. It means freedom to live. 39

There are but two points here with which one might cavil. The first is that, however valid a philosophical reading might be in its generalizations, such a critical emphasis tends to distort James's emphasis within the novel itself. James was not a philosopher in the systematic sense and, indeed, might have objected to the logical systemization of thought when applied to art for the very reasons that McMurray cites to support his reading, i.e., that such application tends to impose stasis upon dynamic experience, in this case the experience of art. James's own vision was grounded in the interaction among human beings which constitutes morality (or the lack thereof); the qualities which McMurray abstracts into "absolutisms" are the qualities which James dramatizes in his egotists, of which company Ransom is a member. Ransom's egotism is partly regional, based on his sense of his identity as a Southerner
cruelly wronged, and partly personal, based upon his conviction of his superiority both as a male and as an intellectual. As an egotist, he attempts to impose his will upon the circumstances of his existence; he is rigid in his outlook, inflexible in his convictions. The "easy-going" manner and "ready wit" that Anderson admires are only part of his adherence to the cult of chivalry, just as his Southern accent becomes more pronounced as he makes his gallant but insincere speeches to Mrs. Luna. He is not, however, a very clever egotist, and he is only partially successful in his egotistical aims. James's satirical thrusts suggest that Ransom is, among other things, more than a little fatuous.

The other point of McMurray's that seems to require comment has to do with Verena and the novel's resolution. While he says that Verena "lacks in her make-up" that "consciousness of self as the basis for discriminatory action," he goes on to say that through her marriage to Ransom, she will "fulfill the range of her potentiality and be furnished with a sense of self." I have already suggested that Verena's potential is severely limited by nature; James confessed, in this regard, that he adhered to the view, unpopular among democratic egalitarians, that human beings are not created equal in respect to such fundamental endowments as intelligence and perceptivity.40 I reiterate: all three of the major characters are limited people with limited potential, a fact implicit in the narrative mode. And the novel's concluding lines suggest very clearly that Basil will go on being an egotist, that he will adhere to his rigid conception of the marriage relationship, that he will go on trying to impose his will upon every facet of his and Verena's existence,
and that Verena will acquiesce because it is in her nature to do so.

But though she was glad, he presently discovered that, beneath her hood, she was in tears. It is to be feared that with the union, so far from brilliant, into which she was about to enter, these were not the last she was destined to shed (p. 464).

James, as always, has the last word, and his last word in this case seems clearly to imply, not an opening of vistas into a "reality . . . dynamic and changing," but a continued failure to realize and respect spiritual selfhood.

The Princess Casamassima

In The Princess Casamassima, published the same year as The Bostonians, James continued his concern with the world of social and political ferment. The influence of Zola is even more evident in this novel than in the American one, and in his evocation of the "great gray Babylon" that was nineteenth century industrial London, there are frequent echoes of Dickens. Yet he did not eschew his characteristic concern with the subtleties of human conduct and motivation, nor did he, in this single attempt to render the sordid, dreary lives of the working classes, abandon his predilection for the consciousness "finely aware and richly responsible." It is in the Preface to The Princess, in fact, that this phrase occurs, in the context of his explanation of the reasons why his central characters so uniformly exhibit extraordinary sensibilities, why he finds so little interest, "on the part of the moved and moving creature," in the consciousness of a fool.
Not unexpectedly, then, none of the three central characters in *The Princess Casamassima* is a fool in the Jamesian sense. What we find, again, is a variation on the theme of the fine sensibility suffering at the hands of the egotist, or rather, a combination of very particularized and special egotists. Hyacinth Robinson is the most overt and specific "victim" of all the Jamesian heroes or heroines; he literally dies a violent death. Although his death is by his own hand, he is driven to his choice by the fatal combination of circumstances, within and without, circumstances represented and embodied in the characters of Paul Muniment and the Princess, so that even in this Zolaesque novel of social revolution we find the familiar Jamesian pattern of egotists effecting the ruin of a sensitive and morally aware human being who becomes a martyr to their solipsism.

The Princess, she of the book's title, is of course our old friend Christina Light of *Roderick Hudson*, who, although ten years older, has "still the air of youth" and is "the cleverest woman in Europe."\(^{43}\) I have already speculated on some of the reasons why she was the only major character he ever revived; Leon Edel has claimed that James "fell in love" with her.\(^{44}\) James's own comment concerning the matter is contained in the Preface to the earlier novel, where he says that upon completing *Roderick Hudson*, he "knew the pity, the real pang of losing sight of her."\(^{45}\)

I desired as in no other such case that I can recall to preserve, to recover the vision. . . . The multiplication of touches had produced more life than the subject required, and that life, in other conditions,
in some other prime relation, would still have somehow to be spent. Thus one would watch for her and waylay her at some turn of the road to come . . . (AN, p. 18).

In the Preface to the later novel, James says that The Princess "proceeded . . . from his habit and interest of walking the streets":

"... I arrived so at the history of little Hyacinth Robinson—he sprung up for me out of the London pavement (AN, p. 60).

So it was not at a "turn of the road" but at a London street corner where the image of Christina Light arose from limbo and merged with the history of "little Hyacinth." Daniel Lerner has advanced a case for Turgenev's Virgin Soil as the literary source for The Princess, detailing the similarities between Hyacinth and Nezhdanov and their respective situations. Cargill, agreeing with Lerner that The Princess is largely derivative, says that "with the three important women in Nezhdanov's life . . . James does some fancy juggling of roles and traits to produce the Princess, Lady Aurora, and Millicent Henning." But this claim does not seem to take sufficiently into account the fact of the Princess' already realized "life" in James' imagination. For her James owed no man except his own younger self who had endowed Christina with so much "unspent vitality" that she cried out for some new "prime relation."

It was a happy choice to make of Hyacinth Robinson, child of the London streets, the Princess' new relation. In so doing, James created a situation in which the reverberations of the Princess' character as she had played her part in the sad fate of Roderick Hudson are constantly present. As in the earlier novel, she is a pivotal figure—however
inadvertently on her part—in the destruction of an adoring young admirer. And whatever indebtedness James may owe to Turgenev, Zola, or Dickens is offset by her presence as a character who is indubitably his own, and by his dramatization of yet another version of the dialectic of egotism.

Of the critics who have addressed themselves to The Princess, Louise Bogan and M. E. Grenander have provided the most thorough exploration of Christina's continuity in the two novels. In largely ignoring this aspect, others of his readers seem to be following James's own deceptive lead, for in The Princess there are no explicit references to Christina's earlier life, but only oblique glances which do nothing to impair her discrete identity as the Princess Casamassima. Yet, as happens so often with James, an awareness of that which remains implicit deepens the significance, and since she is primarily "what happens" to Hyacinth, as Roderick had been "what happens" to Rowland, a full appreciation of her must invoke that earlier self.

"Her prime note," James tells us, "had been an aversion to the banal" (AN, p. 74). Another note was that she was "world-weary." Both notes had been struck in her very first appearance:

She was tall and slender and dressed with extreme elegance; she led by a cord a large poodle of the most fantastic aspect. He was combed and decked like a ram for sacrifice, . . . he stepped along stiffly and solemnly beside his mistress, with an air of conscious elegance. . . . A pair of extraordinary dark blue eyes, a mass of dusky hair over a low forehead, a blooming oval of perfect purity, a flexible lip just touched with disdain, the step and carriage of a tired princess—these were the general features of his vision (NYE, I, 95).
The immediate sign of Christina's "aversion to the banal" is the "fantastic" pink poodle with the blue ribbons on his tail and ears. The foreshadowing metaphor of royalty is reinforced a few moments later when, as the two men speculate on her identity, Rowland suggests that she might be the "principessina Ludovisi-Olimpiani." Christina's remarkable beauty, her elegance, her royal carriage, then, are visually combined with the "touch of disdain," the "air of weariness," and her fondness for the eccentric and extraordinary before we even know her name. The same notes are struck again and again. Her very relationship with Roderick, in addition to revealing her search for "someone better than [she] is," expresses her fondness for the extraordinary and aversion to the banal. The necessary emphasis placed upon that relationship tends to subjugate the equally important relationship with Rowland, to whom she is drawn because he, unlike his friend, does not regard her as a goddess. It will be remembered that it is Rowland who strikes the "transcendental" chord in Christina's complex make-up, and that even after her marriage she remembers her act of selflessness as something worth treasuring. Louise Bogan has pointed out, in relation to Christina's marriage, that it reveals a serious flaw in her:

... she is not truly courageous. She marries the Prince at once after receiving her mother's revelations.52

Christina's lack of courage in that instance is irrefutable, but we should not allow her acquiescence to cause us to overlook her desire to be and do good. That very desire is involved in the acquiescence, for it is quite consistent with Christina's character that she should feel
shame and revulsion and accept the Prince's cloak of respectability in atonement for her mother's lack thereof. She remembers it later as the darkest hour of her life.

By the time of her reappearance in the later novel, she has left her husband in a futile and misguided attempt to rectify her mistake. Jaded, bored, and cynical, she needs "to feel freshly about something or other—it might scarce matter what. . . ."

She can, or she believes she can, feel freshly about the "people" and their wrongs and their sorrows and their perpetual smothered ferment (AN, p. 74).

This need is the initial prompting of her cultivation of Hyacinth, whom she sees as a representative of the "people," but we as readers are aware, even before Christina is, that although they are on opposite ends of the social scale, the gulf between them is more apparent than real. In fact, of the two, it is Hyacinth who has the more valid claim of "blood"; his father had been a peer whereas hers was the poor, insignificant Cavaliere. Miss Bogan, again, has pointed out the implications of the circumstances of their respective births:

Now the "cleverest woman in Europe," she bears a grudge against society strong enough to force her into a repudiation of everything her trained taste fully values. When Hyacinth bares his own tragedy to her, the relation of the two is lifted out of a stupid contrast between a revolutionary-minded woman of the world and a talented pauper. For what the Princess knows, as she listens to him, and what the reader should also know, is that she herself is a bastard. James ... deeply realizes that the life she represents is as undermined by the results of cruelty and passion, for all its beautiful veneer, as Hyacinth's own.53

The fact of their similar origins is integral to the novel's logic.
First, it makes Christina's interest in Hyacinth natural rather than arbitrary, as it might have appeared if it had been prompted only by her bored capriciousness. Second, it expresses, much more tellingly than her vague "revolutionary" sympathies, her instinctive sensitivity to the sufferings of others. It also accounts for Madame Grandoni's willingness to remain with Christina through most of the novel, for that shrewd old lady also knows the girl's history. A further parallel then emerges between Christina's relationship with Roderick and her later one with Hyacinth. In neither case is it a question of "love" insofar as Christina is concerned; the adoration, however unfounded, is all on the part of the respective young men. Nor is it a matter of conscious exploitation—as with unrelieved egotism—on her part. Just as she had been willing to relinquish her hold on Roderick, if by so doing she could set him back on the path of artistic creativity, so does she later, in the throes of her humanitarian impulse and under the impact of her awareness of their bond of illegitimacy, invite Hyacinth to Medley out of pure generosity. She cannot know that the awakening of his aesthetic sense on this occasion will contribute ultimately to his downfall. Mr. Vetch is at least equally guilty on this score by providing Hyacinth with the opportunity to visit the great monuments and treasures of art on the continent. These two events—his stay at Medley, which puts the seal on his infatuation for Christina and all that he thinks she represents, and his experience in Europe—are the determinants which arouse the latent aesthetic potential within him, dissuade him from his
revolutionary commitments, and lead to his final agon, insoluble to him except through suicide.

So through much of the novel Christina, if not totally guiltless, is at least exonerated from the charge of heartless and self-centered egotism, a charge to which she might have been liable had she exploited Hyacinth for her own amusement. This situation changes, however, when she meets Paul Muniment.

Muniment is unusual, if not unique, in James's fiction. He is a revolutionary, a type which James attempts nowhere else. It is a curious fact that, despite the criticism that has been levelled from certain quarters at James for his attempting a political subject, most critics applaud the characterization of Muniment. Stephen Spender, for instance, has written:

He is a true revolutionary type. He has the egoism, the sense of self-preservation, the cynicism, of a person who identifies himself so completely with a cause that he goes through life objectively guarding himself from all approach.

Paul belongs to the working class, but that fact, far from reducing the possibility of his possession of intelligence, serves to point up his possession of a fine mind. His sister declares that he should some day be prime minister, and nobody ventures to disagree with her. Paul is also perhaps the most "masculine" of James's men. He is totally unmoved by the fact that Lady Aurora is in love with him, suggesting equally his insusceptibility to the allure of "class" (in contrast to his sister), his single-minded devotion to his cause, and the operation of his masculine ego in rejecting a woman singularly lacking in charm.
But he is not nearly so indifferent to the Princess. Like Lady Aurora, she is a woman of wealth and rank; she feels strongly for the sufferings of the poor; but unlike Lady Aurora, she is a great beauty. As Grenander has pointed out, Paul's first reaction to her is similar to Rowland's: he is suspicious of her. But, also like Rowland, once that suspicion has been quieted, he finds himself drawn to her. Although he bluntly tells Christina that his interest is only in the money that she can supply to the cause, there are strongly sexual overtones to their ensuing relationship, ranging from his careful dressing as he prepares to go to Madeira Crescent, to Hyacinth's jealousy, and culminating in the climactic scene when, as Hyacinth and the Prince watch from across the rainy street, the conspirators return from a political meeting and, after a few moments' pause at the door, Paul follows Christina inside. And there is a world of significance in the simple fact that Madame Grandoni, who had known the girl from babyhood and had remained faithful through all Christina's previous enthusiasms and attachments, however ephemeral or misguided, reaches the limits of her tolerance and leaves when Paul becomes a fixture at the Princess' fireside.

One must be careful not to permit Hyacinth's fondness for Paul to blind him to Paul's character. To Hyacinth, Paul is a hero; to Paul, Hyacinth is a means to an end. Paul is cool, detached, unemotional, even ruthless. Grenander calls him "a cold-hearted and self-centered fanatic, almost monstrous in his combination of egotism and devotion to the cause." Paul's personal egotism and his devotion to the cause are really inseparable; he is devoted to the cause largely because his egotism
refuses to permit him to accept as permanent the social station to which he was born. Again, Grenander has said:

He is motivated by no altruistic desire to better the lot of the lower classes, and indeed feels rather contemptuous of Lady Aurora because she is. If he were on top, he says quite frankly, he would bend every effort to stay there. His fanaticism seems all the more repellent because it is unaccompanied by shrill hysterics; he sacrifices Hyacinth to the revolution as coldly and calmly as he jilts the Princess when her husband cuts off her income. Consequently we are rather chilled when this grim and humorless man takes up with Christina; instead of being gratified, we shudder at what is happening to her. 61

Although Hyacinth's initial impulse to revolution had sprung from the circumstances of his birth and upbringing interacting with his innate sympathy for others, he soon identifies the cause with Paul. Hyacinth responds more keenly to persons than to abstractions, and the "movement" is never more than an abstraction to him except perhaps on the night of his fateful pledge. This aspect of Hyacinth's awareness is a reason why the movement never assumes more definite form in the novel; why it consists of mysterious comings and goings in the night; why the leader is referred to as the "shadowy" Hoffendahl; why Paul, presumably among the initiated, is consistently enigmatic when questioned about specifics. 62 Paul refers to it as "quiet as the grave," a metaphor as portentous as it is descriptive. The scene in which that metaphor occurs—the Sunday outing scene—is rife with such images. The "reasonableness" of Paul's tone, as he suggests to Hyacinth that the latter would prefer to "chuck up" the job, "casts a chill upon Hyacinth's spirit. It was like the touch of a hand at once very firm and very soft, yet strangely cold"
Paul's detachment and objectivity are analogous to the impersonality and vagueness of the movement itself. Unable to derive any sense of heroism or even self-justification from the prospect of ideological martyrdom, Hyacinth seeks as recompense the warmth of appreciation and the glow of affection from his friend. He does not get it, yet he reverts to the conviction that Paul "was a tremendously fine fellow even if he didn't understand the inexpressible," and, as they depart, "he condoned, excused, admired—he merged himself, resting happy for the time, in the consciousness that Paul was a grand person, that friendship was a purer feeling than love, and that there was an immense deal of affection between them. He didn't even observe at that moment that it was preponderantly on his own side" (NYE, VI, 219). James is here exploiting to the full the irony of the fact that identification with abstract causes—even those ostensibly humanitarian—can and frequently does produce a moral myopia which blinds one to the specific human need. It blunts the moral nerve-ends, resulting in a failure to feel. Paul Muniment is such a man.

But Christina does not fully see Paul as he is until the scene of their last meeting. Until that point she sees him in the light, first, of that old desire which we know she nurtures, of finding a man better than she is, a man superior in strength as she is in beauty. She believes she has found this man in Paul, in his self-confidence, his single-minded determination, his qualities of leadership which cause all around him naturally to defer to him. The fact that his leadership is linked with her current enthusiasm with the revolutionary movement further misleads
her about his character; she may even believe that he is actuated by a humanitarian feeling, a belief to which that transcendental element in her nature would respond. So, blinded to the negative elements in Paul by these considerations, and blinded to Hyacinth by Paul, she in effect "drops" Hyacinth, or at least neglects him shamefully, a neglect which results first in his jealousy and then in his despair. But I do not believe, as Grenander apparently does, that her neglect of Hyacinth is malicious; we know Christina too well by now—her weaknesses and strengths, her desires and frustrations—to judge her so harshly. She is deluded; believing that what she is doing is for the betterment of mankind, she neglects the opportunity at hand to mitigate the suffering of one man. But it must be acknowledged that, although too late as far as Hyacinth is concerned, she does at last see Paul for what he is, and herself for what she has been, in that last meeting when he informs her that her usefulness is at an end and that Hyacinth has received his call. There is a real poignancy as she says to him, "Ah, Paul Muniment, you are a first rate man!" and then flings herself over, "burying her face in the cushion."

Christina's tardy awakening to her share of responsibility regarding Hyacinth's fate will be pursued presently, but let us look first at Hyacinth himself. James tells us in the Preface, in words reminiscent of his statements concerning Rowland Mallet, that although from the beginning his primary concern was "the mind of little Hyacinth, immensely quickened by the fact of its so mattering to his very life what he does make of things," the problem lay in "the difficulty of fixing at a
hundred points the place where one's impelled bonhomme may feel enough and 'know' enough—or be in the way of learning enough—for his maximum dramatic value without feeling and knowing too much for his minimum verisimilitude, his proper fusion with the fable" (AN, p. 69). He needed, in short, to be "bedimmed, befooled, bewildered" while still possessing the finest capacity to see, to know, and to feel. Few would disagree with the statement that James handled his problem well; Hyacinth's contradictory heritage is smoothly expanded into his dilemma of conflicting values and loyalties. John L. Kimmey has said that the bewilderment of Hyacinth is the novel's theme, calling it an "emotional dialectic," and saying that his suicide is "the consequence of irreconcilable feelings as well as contradictory loyalties to two different worlds."64 The worlds are those represented by Paul and Christina, respectively, for as Paul becomes the virtual incarnation of his impulse to revolution, so does Christina represent his responsiveness to beauty. Again an echo is heard of Roderick Hudson, who had apotheosized Christina into the form of platonic beauty. The degree of Hyacinth's identification of Christina with the world of social beauty and tradition is articulated in the letter that he writes her from Venice, when he is ecstatic with his new sense of the magnificence of the old order to the destruction of which he has pledged himself:

I'm very happy—happier than I have ever been in my life save at Medley.... That will mean, no doubt, that I'm deeply demoralised. It won't be for you, however, in this case, to cast the stone at me; for my demoralisation began from the moment I first approached you.... I may have helped you to understand and enter into the misery of the people—though
I protest I don't know much about it; but you've led my imagination into quite another train. . . . What has struck me is the great achievements of which man has been capable, . . . the splendid accumulations of the happier few, to which doubtless the miserable many have also in their degree contributed. . . . The monuments and treasures of art, the great palaces and properties, the conquests of learning and taste, the general fabric of civilisation as we know it, based if you will upon all the despotisms, the cruelties, the exclusions, the monopolies and the rapacities of the past, but thanks to which, all the same, the world is less of a "bloody hell" and life more of a lark. . . . [Hoffendahl] would cut up the ceilings of the Veronese into strips, so that every one might have a little piece. I don't want every one to have a little piece of anything and I've a great horror of that kind of invidious jealousy which is at the bottom of the idea of a redistribution (NYE, VI, 144-146).

He had earlier been equally explicit in regard to his personification of the movement in Paul, telling him, "It's no use your saying I'm not to go by what you tell me, I'd go by what you tell me anywhere. . . . I don't know that I believe exactly what you believe, but I believe in you, and doesn't that come to the same thing?" Hyacinth's fluctuations between his divided loyalties suggest a deeper motive behind his desire to bring his two friends together; success in that attempt might effect a reconciliation of the warring elements within him. But such a reconciliation is impossible because Hyacinth has mistaken notions about each of his friends, a fact which helps to explain his pangs when they do take up with each other to the exclusion of him.

Hyacinth's suicide has been viewed in different ways by different readers, ranging from Trilling's claim that it is "an act of heroism" to Andreas' saying that it is an evil "due to his unjustifiable meddling in his own life." It would seem that a more judicious appraisal lies
somewhere between these extremes. Andreas does have a point worth noting when he says that "James means by the history of Hyacinth Robinson that a man has no more right to restrict his own growth than he has to restrict anyone else's." On the other hand, such a statement seems to fail to take into account the very human fallibility which is the means by which James kept Hyacinth directly related to the "general human exposure." Furthermore, it fails to consider the alternatives Hyacinth faces: either commit the act of assassination (an act which has become unutterably repugnant to his new sense of humanism) or renge on a sacred vow (which would violate his sense of his own honor and integrity). And we must not overlook Hyacinth's desperate reaching out to those he loves in his hour of need, nor their lack of response. It is at the point when Hyacinth feels most keenly the pain of having been betrayed by Paul and Christina that he receives his instructions. James's depiction of Hyacinth's last forty-eight hours of life, from the Sunday night when the call comes to the Tuesday when he resolves his dilemma with a well-placed pistol shot, is richly poignant without any meretricious appeal for commiseration. It is in this scene that we feel most keenly the pathos of the failure of Hyacinth's quest, the quest to find himself. During his visit to Medley much earlier, Madame Grandoni had warned him, "Don't give up yourself," but, as Kimmey has properly noted, "it is the one thing he never really has to surrender and the one thing he dies trying to find." His looking to his friends for the resolution of his personal identity crisis is his fatal error. His choice of physical self-destruction is, to him, preferable either to murder or to the
violation of his spiritual integrity. It is in this sense that his act is heroic; it exemplifies the meaning of moral responsibility. It is symbolic that he shoots himself through the heart; in his very weakness he is defined as a feeling human being.

But if Hyacinth is at least partly responsible for his own fate, this fact does not lessen Paul's and Christina's share. The greater responsibility is theirs for failing to see and respond to his need; theirs is the selfish act. Paul, the greater egotist, has a greater degree of culpability than Christina, for he knows of Hyacinth's predicament earlier than she does and, indeed, tells her that he is deliberately staying away from their friend in order "to leave him free." Such cold-hearted blindness to Hyacinth's need can only be explained on the basis of Paul's myopic dedication to the cause which is his alter-ego. Christina's guilt is palliated by her reaction to the news. She wants to take Hyacinth's place and commit the act herself, both as a means of relieving Hyacinth of the responsibility and as a means of proving the sincerity of her own dedication. But when she goes to Hyacinth's lodgings, to be met there by Schinkel and the news that Hyacinth does not answer the door, her impatience turns to fear and fear to panic. Her dread at the locked door, her insistence that they force their way into the room, and finally her "convulsive movement" as she bends over the body "while a strange low cry came from her lips" constitute our last glimpse of the Princess Casamassima. We are not privy to her thoughts at this moment, but it is interesting to speculate whether the memory of a broken body at the foot of an Alpine rockface flashes across her mind.
If we could see into her mind, we might know for certain whether or not the repetition of the experience had wrought any change in her self-evaluation. The speculation seems tenable that it does, for she is too intelligent not to recognize the lesson with which Hyacinth has so tragically provided her. Surely she is aware of the degree of her betrayal of the trust which he had placed in her, and we hope, at least, that her "finer self," tarnished as it may be, will assert itself again. Grenander believes that Christina will fulfill Paul's prediction that she will return to her husband, and that such an act would prove her shallowness, lack of sincerity, and weakness. In short, he accepts Paul's evaluation. But James has shown us that Christina is neither so perfect as Hyacinth had viewed her, nor so shallow as Paul had seen her, and it seems much more consistent with the character that we have learned to know over the course of two novels to conclude that while she probably will return to the responsibility of her marriage, she will do so out of moral strength rather than weakness. The emphasis placed upon her reaction to Hyacinth's death forcibly suggests that the meaning of his sacrifice is not lost upon her, that her "higher self" responds, and that she finally takes her place as a full-fledged inhabitant of the Jamesian moral universe. Viewed in this light, her story is finally complete.

The Princess Casamassima marks a significant advance in James's development of his art and his thematic concerns. His skill in psychological characterization has developed to the point where events and people are no longer presented in terms of black and white; he has
communicated through his art his conviction that the line between good and evil in human conduct, between meritorious and blameworthy motives and actions, is a precariously fine one. But, upon isolating the figure in the carpet, one can see that the pervasive Jamesian concern for the preservation of spiritual integrity and the realization of the unified sensibility is not obliterated, but rather reaffirmed in the face of the realization of the difficulty of the endeavor. The harder the task, the more important that it be accomplished; and the more complex the individuals concerned, the sadder it is when they fail. The moral implicit in the respective degrees of failure represented by Paul Muniment, the Princess Casamassima, and Hyacinth Robinson seems quite clear: Paul fails as a human being because his egotistic identification with his cause blinds him to true humanistic values. Lost in the forest, he cannot see the trees. Christina fails because she has not yet learned to see herself truly and because she awakens too late to save Hyacinth from his fate; yet there is a hope for redemption for her. Hyacinth's failure is that he never found his selfhood. Yet, despite their failures, both Christina and Hyacinth achieve relative degrees of moral awareness; only Paul remains the egotist to the end.

The Aspern Papers

Before proceeding to James's late novels, let us consider a shorter work of the "middle period" which provides another variant on the dialectic of egotism. In The Aspern Papers the definitive egotist is a
literary editor/scholar engaged in researching a literary figure of another age, poet Jeffrey Aspern. This grounding in the literary scene suggests that certain questions embodied in the story loomed large in James's own consciousness, and supports Edel's contention that the problems posed by the ego were a concern that vitally affected him not only as a writer but as a man.71

One of the questions raised by the story, of course, is the degree of personal privacy which an artist may legitimately expect from his public.72 As we know from Edel's exhaustive biography, James felt very strongly about the living artist's right to retain his private life intact, and resented attempts to intrude upon his own.73 It is but a short step from this kind of invasion to the moral concern which I have been attempting to trace through his fiction: the evil inherent in the violation of any individual's personal integrity and spiritual selfhood. Such a violation is the narrator's real sin; his quest for the papers is the metaphor for this ultimate defilation of privacy. In pursuing his quest despite the promptings of even his own conscience, the narrator convicts himself of a monstrous egotism.74

There is another autobiographical strain to The Aspern Papers, relating to the role of the artist in life. The fact that the unnamed narrator is himself a writer is the externalization of this side of the problem. As we know, James held that the artist must preserve a certain distance and objectivity from the entanglements in which most human beings become involved in the usual course of events; that he must cultivate the role of observer in order fully to serve his art.75 But the
question arises, as it clearly did with him, at what point does such abstention from involvement for art's sake cause one to cross that invisible boundary into preoccupation with self? Stated another way, if true morality results from the subjection of one's beliefs, convictions, emotions, intellect, cultural conditioning—one's composite self, in short—to the experiential test, and is exemplified in the quality of one's relationships with his fellow creatures, how can the man who habitually holds himself aloof from relations claim to be a moral person? Much of James's fiction—as well as the biographical details supplied so painstakingly by Edel—suggests that he himself wrestled long and often with the problem. In *The Aspern Papers* the protective coloration provided by art is so transparently thin that we have a story in which the personal concern is strongly interfused with the aesthetic. We also have an answer to the question—a negative one—in the pervasively ironic account of the narrator's moral degeneration.

Like *Washington Square* and *The Bostonians*, *The Aspern Papers* seems to display a clear-cut dialectical framework organized around three central characters, two of whom are egotists pitting wills against each other, and the third a plastic, malleable, limited creature caught in the middle. Unlike those earlier works, however, in which a virtually equal weight is cast on either side of the struggle, the emphasis in this story is placed on the narrator, an emphasis embodied in the choice of first-person for the narrative mode. James's selection of this method of telling the story underscores the personal immediacy of his dramatization of the problem; it also contributes to the effect suggested
by the fact of Juliana's incredible age, an effect of tipping the scales, so to speak, to suggest that it is the narrator's moral situation which is the story's primary concern. The narrative mode is further functional in that it provides for a consistent maintenance of dramatic irony, with the reader seeing with ever-increasing surety the deepening immorality of the narrator as his obsession becomes monomania, a fact which he himself glimpses only sporadically and quickly rationalizes away. And while Miss Tina, in the center, does exhibit a tiny bud of self-awareness and human dignity by the story's conclusion, she is throughout too pathetic a creature to be the repository of a fully integrated and sentient Jamesian consciousness. The belated, halting step she takes at the end is insufficient to obliterate her definition as the exploited martyr, or to overcome the effect of the probing, insistent anatomy of immoral egotism embodied in the narrator.77

The authorial irony directed toward the narrator and the pathos of Miss Tina's characterization, it seems to me, fully support the critical readings which have stressed the moral seriousness of the tale and recognized the narrator as the primary locus of meaning.78 I cannot agree either with William Bysshe Stein who, despite his many insights, calls the story a "comedy," or with Mildred Hartsock, who goes too far in my view when she says that Miss Tina is "a pathetic spinster whose pathos becomes true tragedy."79 H. S. Canby goes even further than Hartsock, calling Miss Tina "the heroine of the story ... left unrealized" by the author.80 Miss Tina, like Catherine Sloper and Verena Tarrant before her, is simply insufficiently endowed with the potential for capacious
consciousness to carry such a moral weight. James's development of the narrator as the teller of his own tale seems ample evidence in itself to make tenable my claim that this story is above all an exploration of the mind, motives, and immorality of an egotist.

Another dimension of The Aspern Papers which has provoked critical commentary is the "romantic evocation" of Venice which forms the setting. Edel has said that the contrast of past and present embodied in James's brilliant rendering of scene is "the major theme." I shall return to this matter presently; it is sufficient for the moment to say that while I agree that this contrast is very important, I would say that it is contributory to the major theme. Wayne Booth sees the atmospheric rendering as signifying a distinct aesthetic failure in James's handling of the tale, and since his comments imply a failure to recognize the basic Jamesian definition of the fully integrated, fully sentient moral and aesthetic consciousness, let us examine his reading more closely.

He begins well enough by observing the direction taken by James as he fleshed the donnée given him by Eugene Lee-Hamilton into the finished story and then revised the story some time later for the New York Edition. All of the shifts, as Booth properly notes, are in the direction of further emphasizing the narrator's moral status. But Booth is "astonished" to find in the Preface, written of course at the last revision stage, little mention of the narrator and his quest. Instead, he says, "it is all talk about atmosphere and atmospheric contrasts, the delight in restoring 'my old Venice,' and the 'still earlier one of Jeffrey Aspern'; it is all about the 'romance' of his effort to 'evoke a final
scene of the rich dim Shelley drama played out in the very theatre of our modernity."

Booth continues:

We have . . . two neatly distinct subjects. There is a plot, the narrator's unscrupulous quest for the papers and his ultimate frustration; it is a plot that requires an agent of a particularly insensitive kind. There is, secondly, a "picture," an air or an atmosphere, a past to be visited and recorded with all the poetic artistry at James's command. So far so good; there is nothing inherently incompatible about these two subjects. . . . But unfortunately there is a general principle in accordance with which James feels constrained to write his stories. "Picture" must not come from the author in his own voice. It should be pushed back into the consciousness of a large, lucid reflector. And who should that reflector be—who can it be in this case but the antiquarian himself? . . . He it is who must visit and evoke the past. And yet he must "pounce on" the possessions of the poet's aging mistress and violate the naive spirit of the dying woman's niece.

Booth's problem here, as my italics indicate, is that he has failed to recognize that Jamesian concern with the "exploration of the profound identity between the aesthetic and the moral," and James's recognition and condemnation of the frequent failure to achieve that integration.

Booth's bewilderment is an example of the critical myopia which results from a preoccupation with the Jamesian method at the expense of the Jamesian meaning. He seems puzzled by the notion that a "lucid" reflector with a sufficient measure of aesthetic sensibility to evoke adequately "the visitable past" should also be a man so unscrupulous that "there is no baseness [he] wouldn't commit." And this is despite the fact that Booth recognizes that the narrator is "half-brother to Morris Townsend . . . who plays upon an innocent woman's affections for his own selfish ends."85 We remember that Townsend—as well as Dr. Sloper, Osmond,
Roderick *et al*—has a fully developed sense of aesthetic appreciation. But all of these egotists have failed to achieve that "feeling-base of complete and integrated living"; all have converted both the aesthetic and the moral to utilitarian ends, and treat people as though they were things.

The narrator of The Aspern Papers clearly belongs in this company. One might be tempted to say that his occasional promptings of conscience mitigate slightly his immorality; yet, in another sense, they merely reinforce it, for if he knows that what he is doing is morally wrong and he continues to do it, he is totally reprehensible. His using the two women to gain his ends is the aspect of his immorality which Booth and others recognize. The exploitation of Miss Tina is the worst, for she, in her aging innocence and naiveté, is a victim by definition.

Juliana is a different matter altogether, of course. She is vulnerable on only one score, albeit a very important one: her advanced age. Despite her age, however, she is a strong-willed, clever, scheming, and avaricious woman. She too has exploited Tina, most reprehensibly in that she has in effect denied the younger woman her life. She has done that which Dr. Sloper tried to do to Catherine, and Osmond to Pansy. The struggle of wills between Juliana and the narrator, with each attempting to use the other to gain the desired end, and with each using Miss Tina as a pawn in the struggle, provides the cohesive tension of the first two-thirds of the story, culminating in the "second-act curtain" scene, one of the most intensely dramatic (if not melodramatic) scenes that James ever created. In that scene the struggle between the
two egotists reaches its first climax, with Juliana gaining the victory as she "unmasks" the narrator's true intentions and thwarts his furtive search of her private quarters for the papers. It also brings to a climax the "death's-head" imagery associated with old Juliana throughout the story, as she collapses, "as if death had descended on her, into Miss Tina's arms" (NYE, XII, 118). Juliana has won only a battle, of course, and not the war, and the fact that she dies as a result of the skirmish prolongs the conflict, but her victory in this instance anticipates her ultimate victory from beyond the grave. James avoids the pitfall of anticlimax after this dramatic encounter by transferring the residuum of Juliana's implacable will to the niece, a transfer that has been foreshadowed by the motive advanced for Juliana's avarice, and by Miss Tina's own quavering responses to the narrator's duplicitous attentions.

But the struggle of wills, the structural premise of the tale, is not so important as the vehicle of meaning in this case as is the narrative mode, so let us return to Booth's question of the narrator's plausibility as "reflector" of the "picture." All agree that he is eminently articulate, as becomes a literary man. He is precise in his expression, imaginative in his descriptions, and capable of discreetly submerged literary allusions. This very style disturbs Booth; it is the style, he says, of "the worthy disciple of the great poet, speaking in the voice that James himself uses in describing his feelings about Venice and his imagined Aspern." Booth recognizes here the autobiographical echo that I have mentioned, and indeed the echo is distinct. The narrator
is a literary man (like James); a critic (like James); a man (like James) granted access to the drawing rooms of sophisticated and respectable ladies, represented in the story by Mrs. Prest; a widely traveled American (again like James). Beyond this, the narrator is a man who has devoted his life to establishing the reputation of a Romantic poet, "genial, handsome, brilliant." The poet is Byron or Shelley, transplanted by the author to America only for the sake of altering the details of the real-life story of Captain Silsbee and Claire Clairmont. The narrator's devotion to this poet reveals his susceptibility to imaginative, sensuous, imagistic, idealistic poetry. And if—as we have no reason to doubt—the narrator is capable of responding so fully to a Romantic poet, it is certainly credible that he should respond equally to Venice, a legendary repository of "romance." And when that city harbors, in a "charming ... grey and pink palazzo" tucked away on a "clean, melancholy, rather lonely canal," the ci-devant mistress of the adored poet, subject of some of his greatest poems, partner of the most mysterious interlude in his life, why should the narrator not respond? On the contrary, his response is a necessary adjunct to the depiction of his monomania. It is highly logical, as is the fact that his passion for possession increases at the prospect of actually beholding the "divine" Juliana and of possessing papers of the "divine" Aspern.

Booth has apparently overlooked James's careful preparation altogether in his horror at the narrator's immorality and his preoccupation with the Jamesian method. But certainly James provides ample evidence of the narrator's susceptibility to beauty, romance, antiquity, poetry,
qualities shared alike by Aspem (as the narrator conceives of him) and by Venice. And none of this is antithetical to the fact of his immorality; in fact, it serves to compound and underscore the nature and degree of his moral failure.

But the psychological probe goes deeper than this. The narrator's interest in Jeffrey Aspem exceeds the normal bounds of even the most enthusiastic and devoted literary detective. Aspem has been metamorphosed in the narrator's fancy to the status of a god, a fact revealed by his choice of images. "One doesn't defend one's god," he says, "one's god is himself a defence." To him the metaphor is literal, as the narrative increasingly adumbrates. He describes his associate, Cumnor, as a "fellow worshipper."

The world . . . had recognised Jeffrey Aspem, but Cumnor and I had recognised him most. The multitude today flocked to his temple, but of that temple he and I regarded ourselves as the appointed ministers (NYE, XII, 6).

Besides revealing the degree of "sacred" devotion accorded to this "god" of poetic beauty, this passage gives further insights into the egotistical elements in the narrator's motives. He has already told us that Cumnor, the "fellow worshipper" and "minister," had accepted Juliana's refusal by letter as final. The implication of this fact is two-fold: first, it suggests that Cumnor (who does not appear in the story) has a more balanced sense of propriety in his attitude toward Aspem and Juliana, i.e., that he is willing to accept Juliana's asseveration of her right to privacy. Second, it implies that, unlike Cumnor, the narrator is unwilling to recognize that right of Juliana's and that, further, his
own motivation is intensified by the prospect of success where his
colleagues had failed, a success which would clearly bolster and gratify
his own ego. Such touches are multiplied geometrically to convey
unmistakably the point that indeed his "promulgations are overdone."

But there is more to it yet than the prospect of glorious success
in a difficult task and the assertion of his will over another. For the
further dimension, let us return once more to the matter of the "two
subjects," the plot of the quest and the scenic rendering. James unites
them in a way even more subtle than the "contrast of past and present"
that Edel suggests; he unites them in a series of parallels that throws
additional light on the narrator's character as egotist. The clue, as
Edel has pointed out, is in the word which James underlined in the
Preface: "... the palpable, imaginable, visitable past."

That, to my imagination, is the past fragrant of all,
or of almost all, the poetry of the thing outlived
and lost and gone, and yet in which the precious
element of closeness, telling so of connexions but
tasting so of differences, remains appreciable
(AN, p. 164).

The most obvious "connexion," clearly, the one who makes that past
"visitable," is Juliana. But there are two Julianas, "tasting so of
differences." In the past had been the young, vivacious, expatriate,
convention-defying American girl, she of the extraordinary eyes, feminine
half of a tumultuous, passionate, perhaps scandalous love affair. In
the present—the "age of newspapers and telegrams and photographs and
interviews"—that same Juliana is an ancient, withered, shrewd, and
grasping crone, draining the last drop of advantage from the cracked cup
of her long-ago romance. In the past had been Aspern, poet and lover, who had perhaps "treated her badly." In the present is the narrator, neither poet nor lover, but critic, editor, historian, an artistic man who can live only off the creative artistry of others. He derives an egotistic satisfaction from his position as Aspern's "minister," from living off his "god's" identity as poet. And he also derives an egotistic satisfaction from his ghoul-like participation in Aspern's role as lover. The narrator's quest has a distinct quality of voyeurism; indeed, for him Aspern has assumed the dimension of alter-ego. It is repeatedly emphasized that the papers are not manuscripts of any distinctly literary value, such as unpublished poems or journals. They are private letters, love letters, dealing with an affair of unabashed passion, possibly of unscrupulosity, certainly of irregularity. Stein recognizes this dimension in the narrator, saying that he "attempts to relive vicariously the tenuous legend of an American Don Juan" and that "the hero's scholarly interest in the personal letters of the poet both reveals and conceals a preposterous narcissism." The narrator's narcissism, his monomaniacal obsession with the private love life of his alter-ego, adds a psychotic dimension to his egotism.

If we grant the parasitic element of the narrator's adulation for the poet—an adulation which implies a desire to appropriate and possess him via the papers—Miss Tina's ultimatum completes the parallels between past and present. It starkly dramatizes the contrast between the ego and the alter-ego of the narrator. He is confronted with, not the papers through which he had hoped to relive the perhaps lurid details of his
hero's great love affair, but the "faded, dingy, elderly" person of Miss Tina making her timorous proposition. And with this we have the most beautiful Jamesian subtlety of all, for while the narrator does the morally right thing, he does it for all the wrong reasons and in the worst possible manner. If he had been constitutionally and psychologically capable of marrying her for the sake of obtaining the papers, he would have committed an even more reprehensible sin than that of which he is already guilty. He would then have ranked with Osmond, who did marry his ostensible victim and thereby perpetuated the spiritual violation through life. But the narrator makes no choice, moral or immoral. He does not weigh the papers against the immorality of an exploitative and opportunistic marriage. Instead, his face registers his horror at the prospect of Miss Tina herself, and he runs confusedly away to wander aimlessly around the city of which the romantic glow has suddenly been dimmed. When he returns to the palazzo on the following day, there is a hint that he might be near a choice—the wrong one—when he sees Miss Tina "with a face of mildness bent upon [him], and her look of forgiveness, of absolution, made her angelic." But the moment is short-lived. When he discovers the fait accompli, "the transfiguration was over and she had changed back to a plain dingy elderly person." And just as there is a hint that he might have been on the verge of the immoral choice, so is there a hint, in the revision of the final line made for the New York Edition, that he all but too dimly suspects that he has lost his humanity along with the papers.92
So the evocation of Venice is infinitely more than James's characteristic indulging of his love of atmospheric scene. It is essential to the meaning; it reveals the narrator's egotistical immorality in a clearer light by pointing up the contrast between the aesthetic beauty he prizes and the ugliness of his moral failure.

James's next long work was *The Tragic Muse* (1890), a novel about politics and art. After its critical failure he turned away from the writing of fiction, and for five years devoted his creative efforts to the theatre. He returned to his "own old pen" again only when his hopes for success as a playwright collapsed in 1895 with the failure of *Guy Domville*. According to Edel, it took him five years to work himself out of the psychological corner into which this difficult experience cast him, but with the turn of the century he set about creating that which was to be the crowning achievement of his career, the three novels of the "major phase." In these novels the dialectic of egotism assumes more complex dimensions, which I shall engage to explore in my examinations of *The Ambassadors* and *The Wings of the Dove* in Chapter IV.
1 Since The Bostonians was not included in the New York Edition, all notations refer to the Modern Library edition (New York, 1956). The Bostonians appeared serially in Century, Feb. 1885 - Feb. 1886; it was first published in book form by Macmillan's in London, 3 vols., in 1886, and in New York later in the same year. Bibliographical information on The Princess Casamassima will appear at the beginning of my discussion of that novel; see n. 41 below.

2 See Leon Edel, Henry James: The Middle Years (Philadelphia and New York, 1963), pp. 95-106, for a detailed discussion of James's return to Paris for the first time in nine years on Feb. 2, 1884, and his renewal of acquaintance with the French literary circle. During this visit he wrote the often-quoted letter to Howells which says in part: "I have been seeing something of Daudet, Goncourt, and Zola; and there is nothing more interesting to me now than the effort and experiment of this little group, with its truly infernal intelligence of art, form, manner—its intense artistic life. They do the only kind of work, today, that I respect; and in spite of their ferocious pessimism and their handling of unclean things, they are at least serious and honest. . . . Read Zola's last thing, La Joie de Vivre. This title of course has a desperate irony, but the work is admirably solid and serious" (quoted by Edel, p. 103). See also Oscar Cargill, Novels of Henry James, pp. 124-125, for a brief discussion of the effects on James's own work by his awakened interest in Zola et al.


4 "Of course it is of execution that we are talking—that being the only point of a novel that is open to contention. . . . We must grant the artist his subject, his idea, his donnée; our criticism is applied only to what he makes of it." "The Art of Fiction," which was written the same year as the publication of The Bostonians, also reflects the influence of the French group upon James's thinking about his art.


Among the English novels are The Spoils of Poynton (1897), What Maisie Knew (1897), The Awkward Age (1899), The Sacred FOUNT (1901). As these dates suggest, the English novels belong largely to the period between the theatre phase and the major phase.

See Edel, Middle Years, pp. 19-78, for an account of James's American visit from October 1881 to April 1882, during which his mother died (on January 29, 1882) and then his recall to America in December of 1882 at the death of his father. His younger brother, Wilky, also died during this period. In addition to the emotional strain of these events, James was involved in the settling of estates and seeing that his sister was provided for. He did not leave Boston until August 22, 1883.

It is true that, during the time-span covered by the novel, Olive takes Verena to Europe for a sojourn of several months. However, her purpose in doing so is to cement her hold on the girl and to complete Verena's break with her past and the dangers it threatens to Olive's plans. No part of the trip is depicted in the novel (unlike Washington Square, in which a crucial scene is the confrontation between Catherine and her father in the Alps) and, most significantly, there is no hint of any change effected by Europe on the girls after their return, except that their abnormal bond has grown stronger.

There is general critical consensus that the portrait of Miss Birdseye is one of the masterful strokes in the novel. S. Gorley Putt writes, for instance, "It is worth noting the extraordinary tenderness of the portrait of Miss Birdseye, from the very beginning. We are guided to see courage and honest value in the dim drapery of a foolish old woman fumbling in a muddle-headed way with causes beyond her scope... There is no straining after effect: the adjectives tumble out as though the author is quite saturated with his appreciation of her.... (Henry James: A Reader's Guide [Ithaca, 1966], pp. 179-180). James himself wrote, in the letter to his brother defending himself against the charge that he had unkindly satirized Elizabeth Peabody, that "though subordinate, [Miss Birdseye] is, I think, the best figure in the book.... She is represented as the embodiment of pure, the purest philanthropy." Cargill comments similarly on the matter; see Novels of Henry James, p. 132 and p. 141 (n. 35).

In the light of Putt's perceptive appreciation of the authorial attitude towards Miss Birdseye, it is curious that he does not see James's shift in tone in his treatment of Tarrant. Putt writes: "Another...
instance of James's detached sympathy . . . is the gentle ironical
humour of the portraits of Selah Tarrant the mesmeric healer and his
wife. . . . It comes out in a kind of amused outrage at their pathetic
poverty of taste, their shoddy system of pretences and make-shifts." At
the end of the very same paragraph, however, Putt says that "the portrait
of Verena Tarrant's mother . . . offers another clear indication of the
author's disapproval of those who allow amateur and ineffective gestures
towards the political life to diminish whatever chance they may have of
developing a rich private integrity" (Reader's Guide, p. 181). I do not
find these comments consistent.

12 Cf. Cargill: "The most neglected point about The Bostonians is the
pains which James took to establish the environment that produced Olive
Chancellor and made the contest for Verena possible. . . . If we apply
Zola's test of the adequacy of an environment (that which 'determines
and completes the man'), The Bostonians is as satisfactory as any French
naturalistic novel. . . . In his first major effort in their direction
Henry James demonstrated that he had read the French naturalists to his
advantage. His environment of ideas is as substantial as Zola's environ-
ment of things" (Novels of Henry James, p. 137).

13 Commenting on Trilling's discussion of the novel's sexual aspects
in his essay (see n. 5 above), Cargill writes: "... he sees it as a
revelation of the beginnings of sexual disorientation in America . . .
[but] Mr. Trilling emphasizes that James's treatment is focused on the
cultural consequences rather than directly on the phenomenon itself--
James, he avers, did not 'understand the sexual situation as an isolated
fact.' Trilling, however, casts up such an account of sexual frustra-
tion and perversion as to show the novelist very thoroughly acquainted
with the erotic arcana of the time. . . . Had James not exercised that
taste in which he finds the French naturalist deficient . . . someone,
long before Mr. Trilling, would have proclaimed James in The Bostonians
to be the keenest observer of frustrated love, not excepting Zola in
Le Bête humaine; in his penetrating and sentient introduction, however,
Trilling has piled up such evidence as to force that conclusion, if it
is not uttered" (Novels of Henry James, pp. 129-130).

14 In his perceptive comments on What Maisie Knew, Tony Tanner has
noted, in effect, that the primarily sexual basis of Maisie's situation
is muted by the fact of the story's being filtered through the conscious-
ness of the child. "Maisie is astray in a world of perpetually disinte-
grating and reforming relationships, a world open to a theoretically
infinite number of interpretations. There is of course one thing which
determines Maisie's groping ignorance, one missing clue without which
the whole tangled web of adult involvements will remain forever incom-
prehensible—sex. She has picked up all the terms, but she does not
understand the matching substance." So, while sex is as crucial to What
Maisie Knew as to The Bostonians, it is kept off-stage, so to speak, as
the missing key to Maisie's bewilderment. Tanner's comments occur in
I note in passing some of these devices as they relate specifically to my discussion; see pp. 12-13 of the text and n. 29 and 36 below.


Abigail Ann Hamblen, "Henry James and the Freedom Fighters of the Seventies," Gar, XX (1966), 35-44. Hamblen too holds to the view, more qualifiedly than Anderson, that "James seems much in sympathy with Basil Ransom and his views" (p. 40). Her thesis is that Ransom and Verena together are the "freedom fighters" against Olive.

Anderson, p. 314.

McMurray, p. 342. McMurray even calls her a "passionate femme fatale," which seems to me not only misleading but categorically wrong. One of Verena's most salient characteristics is that she has so little passion of her own and since she has so little, she is prey to the passions of others. Her passionlessness is the emotional aspect of the "lack of selfhood" McMurray acknowledges. I find his frequently contradictory statements about Verena the weakest point in McMurray's argument.

I mention Olive in this context only to acknowledge Cargill's claim that Olive is the direct prototype of Rose Armiger (in The Other House [1896]) and Kate and Charlotte (Novels of Henry James, pp. 136-137). I shall consider the matter again in Chapter IV below.

McMurray, p. 342.

The full context of the passage is: "Verily even, I think, no 'story' is possible without its fools—as most of the fine painters of life, Shakespeare, Cervantes and Balzac, Fielding, Scott, Thackeray, Dickens, George Meredith, George Eliot, Jane Austen, have abundantly felt. At the same time I confess I never see the leading interest of any human hazard but in a consciousness (on the part of the moved and moving creature) subject to fine intensification and wide enlargement. It is as mirrored in that consciousness that the gross fools, the headlong fools, the fatal fools play their part for us—they have so much less to show us in themselves." The passage occurs in the Preface to The Princess Casamassima (AN, p. 67). It frequently happens in the
Prefaces that James moves away from his discussion of the particular work to statements about his theories in general. It is regrettable that the omission of *The Bostonians* from the *New York Edition* deprived James's readers of a Preface to the novel.

Hamblen, p. 36. Hamblen goes on to say that Olive "has an unhealthy, if secret, desire for martyrdom. Martyrdom has been the lot of many a reformer—and, James indicates, the desire for it has been in the very nature of reformers."


Naomi Lebowitz makes a perceptive analysis of James's view of the struggle between "the feminine sensibility and the masculine ego" (a struggle which goes on within as well as between individuals) in *The Imagination of Loving* (Detroit, 1965), pp. 58-66 and passim. It is in this sense that I use the phrase "positive femininity"; see Chapter I above.

Howe, p. xix.

In *The American Scene*, some twenty years after *The Bostonians*, James was to write: "The feminization is there just to promote for us some eloquent antithesis; just to make us say that whereas the ancient order was masculine, fierce and mustachioed, the present is at most a sort of sick lioness who has so visibly parted with her teeth and claws that we may patronizingly walk around her." Anderson uses this comment as evidence that James agreed with the views expressed by Ransom, which seems to me a tenuous conclusion at best. James's whole life and writings are testimony to the fact that he valued a kind of freedom of the spirit which is totally foreign to Ransom.

Other readers have shared my appreciation of this passage; cf. F. R. Leavis in *The Great Tradition* (New York, 1964), p. 134, for instance; or Putt, who writes: "... what are we to say of that superb first presentation of Mrs. Farrinder, except that although unnecessary she is wonderfully welcome, and would have served, together with other free marginal sketches, to make the reputation of a lesser novelist? She, if anyone, provides a passage 'that one would like to learn by heart'" (Reader's Guide, p. 189).

Cf. Howe: "It is sometimes asked whether James 'really knew' how thoroughly he had drawn a lesbian type. The question is relevant only if we suppose that because people of an earlier age did not use our
vocabulary they necessarily understood less than we do" (p. xxiv).

Cargill notes that recognition by critics of Olive's nature is long-standing: "G. Hartley Gratten writes as though the idea had currency in 1932... in The Three Jameses (New York, 1932), p. 266" (Novels of Henry James, p. 140). Cf. also Osborne Andres, Henry James and the Expanding Horizon (Seattle, 1948), p. 34; Michael Swan, Henry James (London, 1952), p. 75; H. S. Canby, "He Knew His Women," Saturday Review of Literature, XXXIV (Nov. 10, 1951), 9-10; Anderson too refers to Olive's "incipient lesbianism" on p. 310 of his article, already noted. In short, there is no critical debate on this point.

The financial metaphor, besides casting aspersions on the "Protestant Ethic," is a perfect example of the satiric device of "semantic gravitation," a term which describes the satirist's exploitation of the phenomenon which occurs when a higher value is juxtaposed with a lower; the effect is to reduce the higher to the level of the lower and thus bring it into serious question. See Joseph Bentley, "Semantic Gravitation, An Essay on Satiric Reduction," MLQ, XXX (1969), 3-19.

I stand with Cargill (Novels of Henry James, pp. 135-136) and Howe (pp. xxiv-xxvi) against Anderson, Trilling, and Philip Rahv ("Introd.," Bostonians [New York, 1945]) who tend, as Cargill says, "to inflate him." Howe, in particular, effectively disposes of Trilling's and Rahv's arguments, saying in summary, "what James thought of Ransom's pretensions, what he made of the whole affair, how thoroughly he maintained the critical and ironic tone throughout the book, is suggested in this hint [in the novel's last lines] that Ransom and Verena, married at last, would live unhappily ever after" (p. xxviii).

"James's Portrait of a Southerner" (see n. 16 above). I select Anderson's essay in particular for my rebuttal, first, because it is concerned only with the question of Ransom and, second, because neither Howe nor Cargill does so.

Anderson, p. 311.

Ibid., p. 314.

Ibid., p. 325-327.

This is an example of another satiric device: antithesis couched in grammatical parallelism. The effect is the same as that of semantic gravitation, i.e., satiric reduction.

McMurray, p. 341.

Ibid., pp. 343-344.

Cf. again Preface to The Princess Casamassima (AN, pp. 65-67).

Leavis has developed the comparison with Dickens most fully; see Great Tradition, p. 172 especially. Cf. also Cargill, Novels of Henry James, pp. 149-151, p. 165, n. 8, for summary and commentary upon other critics who have seen The Princess as Dickensian.

Cf. M. E. Grenander, "Henry James's Capricciosa: Christina Light in Roderick Hudson and The Princess Casamassima," PMLA, LXXV (1960), 309-319. I shall have occasion to refer to Grenander's article frequently since it is the most thorough analysis of the character of Christina. However, I agree with Cargill, who says (p. 170) that valuable as Grenander's discussion is, "it is marred . . . by being too harsh towards Christina." As an illustration, I quote: "... to put the matter bluntly, she is no longer young; she is merely well-preserved" (p. 314). Such a "blunt" statement overlooks the fact that Christina cannot be more than thirty at the most, hardly an age when beauty is largely dependent upon good preservation, and the frequent statements within the novel such as "her beauty had an air of perfection." Throughout his article Grenander emphasizes the negative side of Christina at the expense of her positive attributes.


Cf. Edgar: "It was James's recognition of Christina's undeveloped possibilities that prompted him to resurrect her and subject the baffling contrariety of her nature to a more competent analysis" (Man and Author, p. 237).


Novels of Henry James, p. 148.

For another source study, see W. H. Tilley, The Backgrounds of The Princess Casamassima, University of Florida Monographs, Humanities, No. 5 (Gainesville, 1961). Regarding the quest for real-life prototypes of Christina, see Edel (Conquest of London, pp. 111-112) who says that she was based upon Elena Lowe; Bebe Spanos, "The Real Princess Casamassima," PQ, XXXVIII (1959), 488-496, who votes for the Princess Christina Belgrajosa; and George Monteiro, "Another Princess," PQ, XLII (1962), 517-518, who claims that the fictional Christina was more like Maria, daughter of the Princess Belgrajosa, particularly in her disregard for conventionality. Gardner Burnett says that she was modelled after Violet Paget; see his "An Apology for Henry James's 'Tiger Cat,"' PMLA, LXVIII (1953), 688-695.
49 Louise Bogan, "James on a Revolutionary Theme," *Nation*, CXLIV (April 23, 1938), 471-472, 474. See n. 43 above for Grenander.

50 For instance, Grenander notes that there is no specific substantiation in *Roderick Hudson* for Madame Grandoni's surmise that Christina was the illegitimate daughter of her mother and the Cavaliere, but that these facts are substantiated in *The Princess*. See p. 310.

51 Cf. Grenander, (p. 311) who discusses at some length Christina's unconventionality, quite properly noting that "in *The Princess* . . . her disregard for the conventions tends to be on a grander scale than the rather simple improprieties she indulges in in *Roderick*." Cf. also Monteiro, n. 48 above.

52 Bogan, p. 472.

53 Bogan, pp. 472-474.

54 Cf. Grenander, pp. 310-311, who develops the parallels, not only in terms of Roderick and Hyacinth, but in terms of other characters as well.

55 See, for example, Yvor Winters, *Maule's Curse* (Norfolk, Conn., 1938); A. H. Quinn, *American Fiction* (New York, 1936); Carl Van Doren, *The American Novel* (New York, 1921); George Woodcock, "Henry James and the Conspirators," *Sewanee Review*, LX (1952), 219-229; and D. G. Halliburton, "Self and Secularization in *The Princess*," *MFS*, XI (1965), 116-128. It will be noted that these comments, except the last, are relatively old; Halliburton's article differs from the earlier ones in that he recognizes more than just the political context. However, his reading is still basically a political one. Recent criticism has tended to be less critical of James for his choice of subject; see especially Trilling's defense of James in *The Liberal Imagination*, pp. 1-19. Cf. n. 5 above.

56 *The Destructive Element* (Philadelphia, 1953), p. 44.

57 It is interesting, in this connection, to recall once more Naomi Lebowitz's choice of terms in her discussion of the salient characteristics of the typical Jamesian character: his or her blend, in varying degrees, of the "masculine ego" and the "feminine sensibility." It might be that Muniment registers as a very masculine character precisely because he possesses the first in such disproportion to the second. Cf. n. 26 above.

58 See Grenander, p. 316.
Cf. Edgar: "The duenna has taken very actually the measure of Christina's tainted idealism, and recognizes precisely to what extent this magnificent creature is the dupe of her own theatrical enthusiasms. Madame Grandoni's ultimate desertion of this beautiful wrecker of souls is the only clue the author provides for us in this moral labyrinth" (Man and Author, p. 237).

Grenander, p. 316.

Idem.

Cf. the Preface: "My scheme called for the suggested nearness (to all our apparently ordered life) of some sinister anarchic underworld, heaving in its pain, its power and its hate; a presentation not of sharp particulars, but of loose appearances, vague motions and sounds and symptoms, just perceptible presences and general looming possibilities" (AN, p. 76).

Grenander, p. 311.

"The Princess Casamassima and the Quality of Bewilderment," NCF, XXII (1967), 47-62. Kimney expands his point in terms similar to mine: "These two seemingly opposite qualities go to form one 'intense perceiver' of society. Instead of being mutually exclusive, representing the aesthetic and the moral, they are interdependent" (p. 51). Another article which deals with the novel from much the same point of view is that by Sister Jane Marie Luecke, "The Princess Casamassima: Hyacinth's Fallible Consciousness," MP, LX (1963), 274-280. Cf. also Halliburton, p. 121.

Cf. Sister Luecke: "The Princess and Paul are the two characters in the novel who seem most responsible for Hyacinth's fate. However, their responsibility is more passive than active, for the simple reason that Hyacinth has made them fit ideals he had long cherished" (p. 274).

See Kimney (p. 47) for a review of some of the divergent opinions regarding Hyacinth, including those of Trilling, Cargill, Sister Luecke (who calls the suicide "an act of weakness"), Bogan, and Joseph J. Firebaugh in "A Schopenhauerian Novel: James's Princess Casamassima," NCF, XIII (1958), 177-197. Andreas' comments occur in Expanding Horizon, pp. 117-118.

Andreas, p. 118.

Kimmey, p. 49.

Grenander, p. 318. Earlier in his article Grenander had accused Christina of irresponsibility in leaving her husband, an irresponsibility which demonstrates her superficiality and lack of consideration for
others; at this point he seems to take the position that a return to the Prince would also prove her irresponsibility. Such an inconsistency suggests to me that his largely disapproving view of Christina is out of focus.


71 This is a point to which Edel recurs frequently in the biography; see, for instance, his discussions of James's relationship with Constance Fenimore Woolson in Conquest of London, pp. 407-417, and in Middle Years, pp. 213-217 and 356-362.

72 Cf. NB, pp. 71-72, where the entry of the donnée appears. The last line in the entry is: "She says the letters--addressed in Italian to the Guiccioli--are discreditable to Byron; and Henry elicited from her that she had burned one of them!" The note of outrage is definitely discernible here. The same note is apparent in his letter to Grace Norton telling her the story; see Edel, Middle Years, p. 218.

73 Edel's explanation of the seeming paradox between James's insistence upon his right to privacy and his outrage at the burning of the Byron letter is thus: "This spontaneous indignation from a novelist who built one of the biggest bonfires in Anglo-American literary history to destroy his private papers may seem rather strange. Henry, however, held that it was a writer's duty to clear away the approaches to his privacy. If documents did survive, it was questionable whether others could take it upon themselves to destroy them"; see Middle Years, p. 218.

74 My suggestion that the quest for the papers is basically metaphorical—an objective correlative, as it were—for the more serious invasion of privacy is not meant to imply that I agree with the thesis of Jacob Korg in "What Aspern Papers? A Hypothesis," CE, XXIII (1962), 378-381. Cf. Robert S. Phillips, "A Note on 'What Aspern Papers? A Hypothesis,'" CE, XXIV (1962), 154-155.

75 Cf. Edel, Untried Years and Conquest of London. This is an attitude that James frequently reiterated and incorporated into some of his fiction, either overtly or implicitly.

76 In this connection, it is interesting to note that in the Sir Michael Redgrave dramatic version of The Aspern Papers, the unnamed narrator is identified by the initials "HJ."

my view he does not give sufficient weight to the narrative mode, with the result that he invests Tina with a disproportionate degree of significance. My point is that the emphasis within the story is on the moral failure of the narrator, rather than on the very limited degree of moral awareness achieved by Tina.


79 Stein begins his article thus: "Interpreters of The Aspern Papers have, I think, unduly stressed its moral seriousness"; "The Aspern Papers, A Comedy of Masks," NCF, XIV (1959), 172-178. The quotation from Hartsock occurs in "Unweeded Garden," p. 65; cf. n. 78 above.

80 Henry Seidel Canby, Turn East, Turn West: Mark Twain and Henry James (Boston, 1951), p. 233.

81 The phrase occurs in Edel's introduction to The Complete Tales of Henry James, Vol. 6, (Philadelphia, 1963), p. 7. The same focus is observable in his discussion of the story in Middle Years, pp. 219-227.


83 Booth, pp. 354-355. See NB, p. 73, for Matthiessen's and Murdock's identification of the "Hamilton" of the notebook entry as Eugene Leo-Hamilton, half-brother of Vernon Lee.

84 Ibid., p. 355.

85 Ibid., p. 356.

86 Cf. Edel: "The strange tension of the story resides in the fact that James provided two climaxes; so that when Sir Michael Redgrave converted the tale into a play he had that rare thing among modern dramas, both a second-act 'curtain' and a genuine third-act dénouement. ... This is the coup de théâtre of the story." See Middle Years, pp. 220-221.

88 Booth, p. 360.

89 Cf. Wright, p. 103: "Other hints reveal the egoistic concern for the fame that will come to him, though he hastens to reassure himself that he has a duty to Aspern, a duty that justifies whatever he may have to do." I disagree with Wright, however, when he says that the narrator "is a journalist, hence trained to observe and also, by James's concept of journalists, free from qualms about prying into the private life of a dead poet..." I think it is essential to the story to understand that the narrator is not a "journalist" according to "James's concept of journalists," i.e., he is not of the Mr. Flack or Matthias Pardon ilk, the vulgar newspapermen of yellow journalism. Rather, he is a literary man of the kind that later provided the bases of Lambert Strether and Merton Densher. His development is, of course, different from Strether's and Densher's.

90 It is relevant to note here, in view of the unusually close adherence of the tale to the real-life anecdote, that Claire Clairmont, the original of old Juliana, was Byron's mistress, mother of Allegra, and sometime member of the *ménage à trois* consisting of Shelley, Mary Shelley, and herself.

91 Stein, p. 175. Later Stein says that "the narrator seeks in Aspern's papers a vicarious eroticism," further substantiating the point.

92 The first version ended with the narrator saying, in reference to the miniature of Aspern, "When I look at it, I can scarcely bear my loss." To this James added, "--I mean of the precious papers." The expressed afterthought emphasizes the fact of the narrator's unredeemed moral blindness.

CHAPTER IV

"THE STUFF OF POETRY"

"When vigorous writers have reached their maturity, we are at liberty to look in their works for some expression of a total view of the world they have been so actively observing."

Henry James

These words of Henry James, written in 1874 in his first essay on Ivan Turgenieff, seem particularly appropriate as one approaches the last works of James himself. Although this chapter will be concerned with only two of them, the three novels of 1902-1904 comprise the culmination of James's genius, including all that had gone before and advancing beyond, warranting the designation that Matthiessen coined, "the major phase." And if, as this study has been designed to demonstrate, the problem of the integrated self is central to James's work, then its representation within the major phase constitutes "some expression of a total view" of James's fictive world. We shall consider that expression as it appears in The Ambassadors and The Wings of the Dove.

But before approaching the first of these two works--The Ambassadors--we should consider briefly some of the changes in style and handling of characteristic concerns, those at least which have a direct bearing upon the dialectic. The differences, not of kind but of degree, are intimately bound up with the very texture of the novels. Every reader is
immediately aware of the increased syntactical complexity, of the configurations of indirection and qualification, of the added psychological density, of the seeming paradox of the simple plot-lines which carry a minimum of overt action but a maximum of inner conflict. And many readers have noted the "mythic," the "archetypal," the "fairy tale" qualities of these novels, and the final stages of a movement away from objective realism to a mode of fiction which could be called symbolic, depending heavily for its meaning upon the significance and interaction of symbol, image, and metaphor. These novels are symbolic not only in their reliance upon figurative language, but in a more basic thematic sense, for in them the focus is upon what James called "the constant world renewal," that is, upon the epistemological and ontological thought processes of the characters and the moral implications of those processes.

The relations between characters as they interact within that process of world renewal assumes even greater importance. In an essay on D'Annunzio written in 1903, James makes a comment that has a direct bearing upon his current concerns. Speaking of the complex associative clusters of significance which should characterize fictional renderings of human relationships, especially love relationships, he said:

Shut out from the rest of life, shut out from all fruition and assimilation, it has no more dignity than—to use a homely image—the boots and shoes that we see, in the corridors of promiscuous hotels, standing, often in double pairs, at the doors of rooms. Detached and unassociated these clusters of objects present, however obtruded, no importance. What the participants do with their agitation, in short, or even what it does with them, that is the
stuff of poetry, and it is never really interesting save when something finely contributive in themselves makes it so.6

His phrase "the stuff of poetry" goes far to describe, if not explain, that essence which sets these novels apart from the rest of his work, and the context of the phrase serves equally well to suggest the emphases those novels convey, emphases placed both upon the "agitation" of the "participants," and upon the "finely contributive" qualities within them which make for interest.

When we set about examining those contributive qualities, we see that the novels are concerned with the theme of the developing consciousness; Lambert Strether and Merton Densher, in the works that I consider, are the ones upon whom the responsibility falls to recreate, or "renew," their respective worlds. It goes without saying that they possess that capacity for the ultimate development of the unified sensibility that, in James, is the prerequisite; more important is the fact that they also display that willingness to submit their beliefs, habits, and convictions to the experiential test. This is essential, for without such willingness there could be no growth, no renewal—indeed, no story. Each of them is forced to lay on the line his most cherished mental or emotional possession. Strether must submit no less than his past and his future, all that has been bound up with Woollett, Massachusetts, which has been the shaping force of his life and which offers, through the medium of Mrs. Newsome, the only tangible prospect for the years ahead. Densher must place on the altar his love for Kate Croy, and is ultimately called
upon by the logic of events to consummate the sacrifice. The important point is that they are willing to take the chance and, when the time comes, to make the necessary sacrifices.

These characters, along with the special case of Milly Theale, are the representations of the dynamic life-force which I identified in Chapter I as the distinguishing quality of a Jamesian hero or heroine. But through the increased psychological density that marks their treatments we see that they also possess the inclination to stasis; certain of their thoughts and actions convey the sense of their more or less sporadic reluctance to go forward to the ultimate knowledge. Theirs is a West-running Brook; they experience what the psychologists call the "approach-avoidance" conflict; and the fact that they do press forward despite their inward qualms and trepidations gives them their stature as truly human beings as well as their dramatic value. It is this stature and this value which is really "archetypal," their roles in James's dramatizations of that which is probably the essential experience of the sensitive, intelligent life—the quest for knowledge—and the depiction of the conflicts, confusions, doubts, fears, mistakes, and sacrifices which attend that quest.

The dramas that these people experience, as always in James, is primarily relational; their dramas of world renewal take the form of their determination of relationships with themselves and with those who are nearest to them. While they struggle against the forces of stasis within, dramatized as fear, reluctance, ignorance, delusion, weakness, and the like, they are also engaged in external struggles with similarly
inhibiting forces incarnated in others. Again, we find those antagonists, by and large, to be handsomely possessed of intelligence, charm, culture—all of those surface qualities which James so prodigiously admires yet nonetheless rejects when they become ends in themselves. The charm and the psychological development given to both protagonists and antagonists is a major source of the controversy which has surrounded many interpretive readings of these works. Although the surface charm of Gilbert Osmond is early brought into question by various means—Ralph’s suspicions, Isabel’s proclivity to self-deception, imagistic associations—that of certain of the negative characters in the late works remains relatively unblemished. Chad Newsome and Kate Croy, for example, exhibit virtually to the last page those qualities which had enlisted our liking and our sympathy at the beginning. In addition, we know them so much better than we ever know Osmond, and as Robert L. Reilly has pointed out:

The difficulty in ascribing praise or blame in life varies according to how well we know the person whose acts we are judging. The perfect stranger is the easiest to judge, and is proved most easily a villain; but even a little knowledge leads to leniency. And we hardly ever pass a strictly moral judgment on one of our own acts because we know so well the complexities of the situation—our own strains and stresses, the shaping influence of time and place, and so on. Of people we know, we say they acted "characteristically," implying that their acts were predictable, as proceeding from their temperaments.

In these novels, then, because we come to know the people and their "shaping influences" so well, even those into whose consciousness we never intrude (such as Chad), conclusions seem elusive. However, if we
play James's own game of abstraction and look at these people in terms of the attitudes they exhibit and the actions they promulgate, the problem is resolvable.

And abstracted, they are instantly familiar. Among these negative characters we find again the attitudes and actions of the egotist, in one or another combination: rigidity, intolerance, inflexibility, the sense of superiority, the tendency to a priori convictions, the self-seeking ego gratification, the unwillingness to entertain any possible views other than one's own, the imposition of will upon others, the attempt to manipulate or exploit, and, perhaps most important of all, the inability to love unselfishly. One cannot stress too much the thematic importance of love in these novels, for James himself stresses it to the point of identifying it with life itself. This extension of the definition of life/consciousness to include unselfed love is perhaps the most significant of the added dimensions embodied in the major phase novels. Leon Edel sees it as a reflection of a change that had taken place in James himself:

At last James, the egotist and "man of the world," a great intellectual and artistic phenomenon, was allowing himself to feel not only the beauty of art, into which ugly life constantly intruded, but was recognizing that his exquisite "palace of thought" was not enough. One had not "lived" if one had not loved; one had to know the ache of love, the pain of absence, the need for communion with the beloved; one had to feel love, not as he had felt it in all the novels he had written—novels about egotists seeking power, seeking the world, seeking the high places of art and life... or the helpless, crushed by the absence of power and recognition.... Henry James's work had never dealt with love, save as a
force destructive of—or in competition with—power and aesthetic beauty. Now ... he knew the deepest ache, felt it with all the strength of his genius. This was the new awareness, the new insight.9

In sum, then, these are the most relevant of the new dimensions: the inclusion within all of the major characters of the forces of dynamism and those of stasis, in various forms, degrees, and proportions; the focus upon analysis of both character and relationship; the increased reliance upon symbolism; and the thematic equation of living with loving. But lest I stress unduly the threads which link these novels together and thus by implication deny the uniqueness of each, I shall proceed to my examinations of the two novels that I have chosen for my discussion.10

The Ambassadors11

I said above that the initial impulse of The Ambassadors—the attitude which precedes the act—is Strether's willingness to submit his past and his future, represented by Woollett, Massachusetts, to the experiential test. He himself does not conceive of his mission to Paris in this light, of course, but from the novel's opening page, when we see him responding with instantaneous delight to his first glimpse of Europe in many years, we are apprised of a dimension and a need in his nature which his past experience has met only fleetingly and sporadically. Strether's story is one of a gradual process of liberation: first from the stultifying and limiting influence of Woollett, then from his newly awakened but deludedly romantic perception of Paris, to a new vision
which combines and unifies the positive elements of each while rejecting the negative. Thus does he engage in his process of "world renewal," and achieve a state of being which comes as close as any of James's protagonists ever do to the completely unified sensibility.

Before Strether can achieve that unification, however, he must go through the experience, one described by James in chemical terms:

... he had come to Paris in some state of mind which was literally undergoing, as a result of new and unexpected assaults and infusions, a change almost from hour to hour. He had come with a view that might have been figured by a clear green liquid, say, in a neat glass phial; and the liquid, once poured into the open cup of application, once exposed to the action of another air, had begun to turn from green to red, or whatever, and might, for all he knew, be on its way to purple, to black, to yellow (AN, p. 314).

The view that "might have been figured by a clear green liquid" is the view of Woollett, which is less a specific place than a configuration of attitudes and ideas. Literally, of course, there is no such town in Massachusetts as Woollett; in the Preface to Roderick Hudson James confessed his mistake in actually naming Northampton as the place of Roderick's nativity (AN, pp. 8-10). In The Ambassadors, he made no such mistake and thus released himself from the "necessity of representation"; he further escaped that necessity by placing all of the novel's action on the other side of the Atlantic. Yet Woollett is very much present in the novel; it is a metaphor for that combination of attitudes which can be described as the "Puritan fallacy," the form of egotism that elevates the moral sense to the denigration of the aesthetic. The Puritan fallacy as represented by Woollett is embodied in those characters
who accept Woollett's values. The first of these to appear chronologically in the novel is Waymarsh, but the purest embodiment is Mrs. Newsome, who never appears except in the person of her surrogate and daughter, Sarah Pocock. Chad Newsome, by the novel's end, reveals himself to be a true son of Woollett, and of course certain of Strether's own assumptions clearly derive from Woollett. Waymarsh, Mrs. Newsome, and Sarah are consistent throughout in their rigidity, intolerance, and humorlessness; the reversal of roles that many readers have observed takes place between Strether and Chad is at least partially the result of the fact that while Strether is gradually freeing himself from Woollett, Chad's basic Woollett nature is gradually reasserting itself.

This, then, is the pattern. The tension of the novel—Strether's tension—can be viewed as one between the Puritan fallacy and the aesthetic fallacy, represented by Woollett and Paris, respectively. The hold of Woollett on Strether is figured most vividly by Mrs. Newsome's sponsorship of the review which he edits, and by the tacit promise of her hand in marriage once his ambassadorial mission is successfully concluded. That mission, the premise of the tale, is an example of the moral arbitrariness of this form of limited vision. Strether has been embarked upon his crusade on the basis of previously unquestioned a priori assumptions which form the major premises of deductive syllogisms: all "foreign" women are free-living, all free-living women are evil, therefore all foreign women are evil. Chad is in the grasp of such a woman; therefore Chad must be saved. Strether early betrays his initial acceptance of the syllogisms with his judgment concerning the
nature of Chad's temptress given to Maria: "She's base, venal, out of the streets." When Maria sums up his mission: "He's a young man on whose head high hopes are placed at Woollett; a young man a wicked woman has got hold of and whom his family over there have sent you out to rescue. You've accepted the mission of separating him from the wicked woman," she concludes by challenging the assumption. "Are you quite sure she's very bad for him?" Strether's answer is, predictably, "Of course we are. Wouldn't you be?" Maria's reply suggests a new dimension for Strether, an attitude which refrains from judging deductively and which reserves opinion until the particular elements are known. She says, "Oh I don't know. One never does—does one?—beforehand. One can only judge on the facts. Yours are quite new to me...." (NYE, XXI, 54-55). She goes on to reaffirm her faith in Strether's judgmental capacity, but the seed is clearly planted which will flower into Strether's eschewing of deduction based upon a priori premises as a basis for moral discrimination.

The same conversation discloses Mrs. Newsome's role as the novel's most inflexible egotist, and the one most directly responsible for Strether's acceptance at this point of the Woollett view of Chad's situation in Paris. The conversation occurs on the occasion of Strether's and Maria's theatre evening in London, during which he registers his sensuous delight in every aspect of his surroundings, so different from similar occasions at home, where "there had been no little confronted dinner, no pink lights, no whiff of vague sweetness, as a preliminary" (NYE, XXI, 50). He appreciates the "broad red velvet band" around
Maria's throat, over a dress "which was 'cut down,' as he believed the term to be, in respect to shoulders and bosom." Inevitably he compares this note with Mrs. Newsome's customary mode of dress, black silk with the "imperfectly romantic" ornament of a ruche.

He had once said to the wearer—and it was as "free" a remark as he had ever made to her—that she looked, with her ruff and other matters, like Queen Elizabeth. . . . It came upon him . . . that Miss Gostrey looked perhaps like Mary Stuart; Lambert Strether had a candour of fancy which could rest for an instant gratified in such an antithesis (NYE, XXI, 51, 52).

The image of the dictatorial, business-like Virgin Queen juxtaposed with the very different one of the romantically tragic Queen of Scots, while telling us a great deal about the bent of Strether's imagination, adds to our cumulative view of Mrs. Newsome's coldly efficient temperament and habits. Maria characterizes her on the basis of the information Strether has supplied: "She's just a moral swell," a definition Strether "gaily accepted." We emerge from the scene with a clear mental picture of the absent lady as one who is convinced beyond the shadow of a doubt that she knows the difference between good and evil, who passes moral judgments on that basis, who is convinced of her moral superiority, who will brook no opposition to her will, and who is possessed of the manipulative impulse. Despite, or perhaps through, Strether's self-deprecations, we see that he has in effect been governed by the lady, that she has handed him his dole with the aplomb of noblesse oblige, and that, further, these acts of putative charity stem from a morbidly exaggerated sense of inherited guilt deriving from certain questionable matters relating to her late husband's amassing of wealth. 19 Maria gets to the heart of
this matter, too, as she says, "You assist her to expiate—which is rather hard when you've not yourself sinned." But again Strether reveals himself to be under the sway of the Woollett ethic as he replies:

"I've sinned enough." ... "Enough for whom? Enough for what?" "Well, to be where I am." (NYE, XXI, 67).

Strether then sees his position as lackey to Mrs. Newsome also in an expiatory light, ministering to his own sense of undefined sin, when it really reveals the degree to which he has not yet realized his unique selfhood, his human dignity. He does not even know—or he refuses to face—the fact of his own exploitation. 20

The grimness implicit in this view of things is made explicit during another of the pre-Paris scenes between Strether and Maria. As we have seen, egotism in James is almost invariably associated with humorlessness, a quality which finds its extreme expression in the variety of egotism which denies the aesthetic experience. As the two friends walk around the Chester wall, with Strether obviously enjoying himself, Maria nonetheless notes that he frequently consults his watch. He feels guilty because "it was with Waymarsh that he should have shared" the walk, and "he was now: accordingly taking from him something that was his due."

Maria shrewdly puts her own construction on his uneasiness:

"You're doing something that you think not right."

It so touched the place that he quite changed colour and his laugh grew almost awkward. "Am I enjoying it as much as that?"

"You're not enjoying it, I think, as much as you ought."

"I see"—he appeared thoughtfully to agree. "Great is my privilege."
"Oh it's not your privilege. It has nothing to do with me. It has to do with yourself. Your failure's general."

"Ah there you are!" he laughed. "It's the failure of Woollett. That's general."

"The failure to enjoy," Miss Gostrey explained, "is what I mean."

"Precisely. Woollett isn't sure it ought to enjoy. If it were it would. But it hasn't, poor thing," Strether continued, "any one to show it how. It's not like me. I have somebody" (NYE, XXI, 16-17). Strether is only partially right in his last statement; Woollett, true, "isn't sure it ought to enjoy." But the failure lies not in the lack of a cicerone, but in the obfuscation of vision that follows from an obsessive concern with self-righteousness, which sees the least indulgence of the senses, the least response to beauty, as morally suspect. The obfuscation of Strether's own vision is apparent in his not realizing the validity of his own sensuous responses.

Strether's internalization of the Woollett ethic reasserts itself after his arrival in Paris, when during another of his probing discussions with Maria, the question of Chad's lady friend comes up again. Strether is at this point dazzled by the apparent improvement in the young man, and can ascribe the miracle to none other than the mysterious lady.

Maria says to him, echoing his own thoughts:

"There must . . . be somebody—somebody who's not a mere wretch, since we accept the miracle. What else but such a somebody can such a miracle be?"

He took it in. "Because the fact itself is the woman?"

"A woman. Some woman or other . . . ."

"But you mean then at least a good one."

"A good woman." She threw up her arms with a laugh.

"I should call her excellent."

"Then why does he deny her?"
"Because she's too good to admit... In Paris such debts are tacit... There's nothing that's taken as showing so much here as sudden unnatural goodness."

"Ah then you're speaking now," Strether said, "of people who are not nice."

"I delight in your classifications." (NYE, XXI, 169-170).

Strether's "classifications" indicate that, although puzzled and confused, he is still thinking in terms of Woollett's "either-or" categories, while Maria's comments suggest the very different assumptions underlying Parisian ideas of ethics. The passage serves the additional function of foreshadowing the swing of Strether's personal pendulum to a championship of Marie de Vionnet, and even of intimating, however faintly, the ultimate synthesis he is to achieve.

Late in the novel, after Strether's break with Woollett in the person of Sarah Pocock, he summarizes the constant concern he has felt for the Woollett views and his sense of obligation to them. Maria accuses him of having been "indifferent" to Mrs. Newsome, to which he protests:

"I haven't been so. I've been, from the first moment, preoccupied with the impression everything might be making on her—quite oppressed, haunted, tormented by it. I've been interested only in her seeing what I've seen. And I've been as disappointed in her refusal to see it as she has been in what has appeared to her the perversity of my insistence.... That's just her difficulty—that she doesn't admit surprises. It's a fact that, I think, describes and represents her; and it falls in with what I tell you—that she's all, as I've called it, fine cold thought. She had, to her own mind, worked the whole thing out in advance, and worked it out for me as well as herself. Whenever she has done that, you see, there's no room left; no margin, as it were, for any
alteration. She's filled as full, packed as tight, as she'll hold. . . . What it comes to . . . is that you've got morally and intellectually to get rid of her" (NYE, XXII, 237-238, 239).

Here Strether gives the sum total of the effect of his educative experience upon his early unquestioned acceptance of Mrs. Newsome and the point of view she represents. He sees at last all of the limiting intolerance, the manipulation, the refusal to accept the validity of sense impressions as a source of knowledge and a basis for judgment. His description of her as all "fine cold thought" echoes the most memorable image associated with the New England lady, that of a "particularly large iceberg in a cool, blue Northern sea," an image which vividly conveys the sense of the egotist's massive destructive potential and lack of human warmth. Strether has indeed "morally and intellectually to get rid of her," an act which, as Maria notes, "would appear to be practically what you've done."

Strether's primary failure of perception in regard to Mrs. Newsome is his assumption that she would be as susceptible to "impressions" as he himself is, but that lack of susceptibility had been prefigured by Waymarsh long before Strether's realization concerning Mrs. Newsome. We see from Waymarsh's first appearance that he is incapable of any such relish for the European experience as Strether feels. To Waymarsh Europe is a fatiguing bore; he has none of the latent sensibility that has lain dormant in Strether beneath the patina of Woollett attitudes. Strether senses something of this difference between himself and his friend as he registers his relief that Waymarsh is not the one to have "struck the first note of Europe." That note is struck instead, appropriately, by
Maria; the very manner of their acquaintance indicates Strether's intrinsic capacity of breaking the mold. As we have seen, it is she who shares with him all of the delightful experiences which precede Paris, and when later she remarks about Little Bilham, "Oh, he's all right; he's one of us," her comment serves to emphasize the gulf between the Parisian group and the representatives of Woollett. The breakfast scene at Chad's apartment, when Little Bilham entertains Maria, Strether, Waymarsh, and Miss Barrace, makes the contrast even sharper, and clearly places Strether with the Parisians against Waymarsh.

Which is where, in terms of his innate predilections, he belongs at this point. Warring with the loyalty and sense of obligation which binds him to Woollett is a deeper sensibility. "Buried for long years in dark corners . . . these few germs had sprouted again under forty-eight hours of Paris" (NYE, XXI, 86). Those sensibilities in Strether, which had been prefigured by the experiences in England, thrown into sharp relief by Waymarsh, and illumined by his conversations with Maria, find full expression once he is in Paris. On the morning of his second day, he abandons himself to his delight in the Paris spring, ambling through the city and finally settling down in a penny chair in the Luxembourg Gardens where "the cup of his impressions seemed truly to overflow." Mingled with his delight, however, with his feeling of freedom and sense of having "escaped," is a tinge of guilt at feeling so. His subsequent reverie, as he attempts to sort things out in his own mind, renders for us his sense of deprivation, of having failed in every matter of import
in his past life. He thinks of the journal which he edits, a sorry
reduction of "the temple of taste that he had dreamed of raising up."

His name on the green cover, where he had put it for
Mrs. Newsome, expressed him doubtless just enough to
make the world—the world as distinguished, both for
more and for less from Woollett—ask who he was. He
had incurred the ridicule of having to have his explana-
tion explained. He was Lambert Strether because he
was on the cover, whereas it should have been, for any-
thing like glory, that he was on the cover because he
was Lambert Strether. He would have done anything for
Mrs. Newsome, have been still more ridiculous—as he
might, for that matter, have occasion to be yet; which
came to saying that this acceptance of fate was all he
had to show at fifty-five (NYE, XXI, 84-85).

Thus early is the theme of "live all you can" made manifest, in the con-
text of Strether's welter of conflicting loyalties, sensory impressions,
nostalgia, regret, and sense of joy in the moment. But "uneasiness
seemed to peep at him out of the imminent impression that almost any
acceptance of Paris might give one's authority away." Then he thinks:

It hung before him this morning, the vast bright
Babylon, like some huge iridescent object, a jewel
brilliant and hard, in which parts were not to be
discriminated nor differences comfortably marked.
It twinkled and trembled and melted together, and
what seemed all surface one moment seemed all depth
the next (NYE, XXI, 89).

The description of the city as a "huge iridescent object" charac-
terizes the nature of Strether's "acceptance of Paris" which occupies
the first half of the novel, an acceptance which does indeed "give his
authority away." The city becomes for him "a symbol for more things
than had been dreamed of in the philosophy of Woollett" (AN, p. 316),
and once Strether has committed himself to the symbol—a die that is cast
once he has seen Chad and observed the changes in one whom he remembered
as a "wretched boy"—he has reached the point of no return.21 To him Chad registers "a sharp rupture of an identity"; Paris "had retouched his features . . . had given him a form and surface . . . a design."

"It would have been hard for a young man's face and air to disconnect themselves more completely than Chad's . . . from any imaginable aspect of a New England female parent" (NYE, XXI, 140). He perceives him in terms analogous to those in which he is later to see Marie de Vionnet, in terms, that is, of art, as an "irreducible young pagan" (NYE, XXI, 156-157). What he does not see at the moment are the implications within the image that foreshadow Chad's ultimate revelation as a quintessential egotist. His perception of the "new" Chad is the final blow to his earlier acceptance of Mrs. Newsome's moral postulates concerning her son's life in Paris.

His taking the appearance for the reality of Chad is typical of his faulty discrimination among the heterogeneous impressions of which he is so sensible. The image of the twinkling jewel, "all surface one moment . . . all depth the next," betrays the deceptiveness of the aesthetic fallacy. Miss Barrace, with customary brittleness, makes the point as she says, "We're all looking at each other—and in the light of Paris one sees what things resemble. That's what the light of Paris always seems to show. It's the fault of the light of Paris—dear old light" (NYE, XXI, 207). Any perception of Paris, or the effects of Paris upon people, is refracted through the "dear old light," which is to say a deceptive half-light that enables one to see what he is predisposed to see. In Strether's case, he is predisposed to see romantically, in the
modes of Murger and the glory of the First Empire and, closer to home, a
sense of his own lost youth and opportunity, and an ideal of himself that
is as far as anything could be from the Woollett reality that was.\textsuperscript{22}

The scene in Gloriani's garden is the climax of this stage of
Strether's experience. The tone is established at his entrance into the
garden, as he is beset by yet another barrage of impressions:

\begin{quote}
Strether had presently the sense of a great convent,
a convent of missions, famous for he scarce knew what,
a nursery of young priests, of scattered shade, of
straight alleys and chapel-bells, that spread its mass
in one quarter; he had the sense of names in the air,
of ghosts at the windows, of signs and tokens, a whole
range of expression, all about him, too thick for
prompt discrimination (NYE, XXI, 196).
\end{quote}

The last phrase is the most important one, as it sums up the quality of
Strether's responses. When he meets his host, "This assault of images
became for a moment, in the address of the distinguished sculptor, almost
formidable: Gloriani showed him, in such perfect confidence . . . a fine
worn handsome face, a face that was like an open letter in a foreign
tongue." The metaphor attached to Gloriani becomes, by a simple exten-
sion of meaning, a metaphor for Strether's whole experience of Paris so
far. One evidence of his inability to discriminate on this occasion is
his failure to recognize that the art world of Paris as symbolized by
Gloriani is not that of Murger, in Cargill's words, "a world of light
amorality and gay innocence, but one of veiled competitive ruthlessness
and price-marked females, of the seductive eye and the measuring
glance."\textsuperscript{23} Strether admiringly envisions Gloriani as a "glossy male
tiger, magnificently marked," and fails utterly to see the implication
within his own metaphor of a stealthy predator which, however beautiful, can kill. Gloriani is the embodiment of the form of egotism which substitutes aestheticism for morality: "The deep human expertness in Gloriani's charming smile—oh the terrible life behind it!" (NYE, XXI, 197).

This scene is important on at least three other counts: first, in that it is the occasion for Strether's bursting forth with his advice to Little Bilsam to "live all you can," a speech which is the culmination of the nagging sense of his own failure to have done so which has been present all along, in combination with his sense of the "life" surrounding him. But Mildred Hartsock is surely right when she says:

Both those critics who label Strether an anemic Puritan and those who rejoice that he embraces life have been wrong to assume that the crisis is reached in the scene in Gloriani's garden... This... is not the ultimate insight. Strether's experience in the garden is an important moment in his awakening awareness, but it is only one step in his evolving ethic. His rejection here of qualitative differences is as morally irresponsible as the rigidity of the Woollett code. Strether was soon to outgrow naive responses to art; he was to outgrow the garden as he later was to burst out of his Lambinet frame.25

To utilize Strether's own metaphors, having eschewed the "plain tin mould" of Woollett, he has allowed himself through his romantic predilections to be poured into the mold of Paris, "fluted and embossed, with ornamental excrescences." Through the rest of the novel his task will be to realize the unique mold of Lambert Strether, and in so doing he will reject the "glib context of determinism."26

The second point that should be noted in connection with this scene...
is Strether's putting the question to Little Bilham concerning the nature of the attachment between Chad and his lady friend, as yet unidentified. When Little Bilham assures him that it is "virtuous," the interpretation that Strether places upon the term is of a piece with his Woollett-formed "classifications." To Little Bilham, of course, the assertion is no lie, for according to the rituals governing such affairs in Paris, Chad and Marie de Vionnet have conducted themselves blamelessly. That Strether chooses to regard the word as signifying asexual, in regard to Madame de Vionnet, and honorable, in regard to Mademoiselle de Vionnet, is a mark of the residual influence of Woollett. His ignorance of Parisian codes is the direct cause of his confusion regarding which of the de Vionnet women is indeed Chad's interest, and his deduction that it must be the daughter, based upon the naïve premise that only she is "available." His meeting with mother and daughter is the third significant event of the afternoon.

James's handling of that meeting is one of the novel's master strokes, for it shows Strether, whose sensibility is thirstily consuming impressions from every quarter—"opening . . . all the windows of his mind . . . letting its rather grey interior drink in for once the sun of a clime not yet marked in his old geography"—as singularly unimpressed by Madame de Vionnet. He is struck by her "air of youth," and notes that she is "exceedingly fair and markedly slim"; on the other hand, "he had . . . perhaps a sense of the clink, beneath her fine black sleeves, of more gold bracelets and bangles than he had even seen a lady wear" (NYR, XXI, 210). As is his wont, he mentally compares her with
Mrs. Newsome and concludes "what was there in her, if anything, that would have made it impossible he should meet her at Woollett?" He even thinks that her talk, which "would have been found adequate for a Woollett garden-party," is not "perhaps truly . . . quite so bright."

"Why accordingly be in a flutter . . . about this unfamiliar phenomenon of the femme du monde? On these terms Mrs. Newsome herself was as much of one" (NYE, XXI, 213). He is even less impressed when, a few moments later, Madame fails to introduce him to several persons who interrupt their colloquy. Nevertheless, he accepts her invitation to pay her a call, feeling no sense of challenge in extending the acquaintance.

Strether's failures of discriminations on this occasion launch him into the next stage of his experience, which is marked among other things by Marie's gradual personification to him of his romantic perceptions of Paris. She becomes "Paris" to him as Mrs. Newsome is "Woollett"; she is the emblem of his succumbing to the aesthetic fallacy. The first step is taken as he fulfills his promise of a visit. Her very house, in its quiet aristocratic quarter, has "the high homely style of an elder day, the ancient Paris that he was always looking for."

He found himself making out as a background of the occupant, some glory, some prosperity of the First Empire, some Napoleonic glamour, some dim lustre of the great legend, elements clinging still to all the consular chairs and mythological brasses and sphinxes' heads and faded surfaces of satin striped with alternate silk (NYE, XXI, 244).

The setting makes the lady herself appear "immeasurably new, and nothing so new as the old houses and old objects." He notes a copy of the Revue des Deux Mondes on a table and attributes to its apparent reader "fine
aesthetic sensibilities." Under this new assault of impressions, he reverses the conclusion drawn from his earlier comparison with Mrs. Newsome, now seeing Madame de Vionnet as "not the kind of woman he had ever found in Mrs. Newsome." On a later occasion, at Chad's soirée, the contrast is completed, as he mentally clears Mrs. Newsome of any air of the femme du monde in his appreciation of Madame in that role.

Her head, extremely fair and exquisitely festal, was like a happy fancy, a notion of the antique, on an old precious medal, some silver coin of the Renaissance; while her slim lightness and brightness, her gaiety, her expression, her decision, contributed to an effect that might have been felt by a poet as half mythological and half conventional. He could have compared her to a goddess still partly engaged in a morning cloud, or to a sea-nymph waist-high in the summer surge. Above all she suggested to him the reflexion that the femme du monde—in these finest developments of the type—was, like Cleopatra in the play, indeed various and multifold (NYE, XXI, 270-271).

Like the "iridescent object" of Paris itself, with its illusory play of surface and depth, Madame de Vionnet is "an obscure person, a muffled person one day, and a showy person, an uncovered person the next." As the contrast between Madame de Vionnet and Mrs. Newsome becomes ever sharper in Strether's mind, it assumes the terms of a contrast between moral dogmatism and free-flowing aesthetic impressions. The images surrounding Strether's perceptions of Marie de Vionnet on every occasion are overwhelmingly aesthetic associations, evoking the range of artistic expression from the "coin of the Renaissance," to the architectural triumph of Notre Dame, where another of their crucial encounters takes place, to the Renoir quality of their intimate quayside déjeuner.29
As Strether falls more and more under the spell of Paris and of Marie, his relations with Waymarsh become increasingly strained. The breaking point occurs when Waymarsh, acting on the basis of his Woollett convictions, "informs" on Strether, prompting the dispatch of the second set of ambassadors. Sarah Pocock is as extreme an example of Woollettism as her mother is; she registers by her very presence and person the extent of her mother's disapproval of Strether's "perversity." "As Mrs. Newsome was essentially all moral pressure, the presence of [Sarah] was almost identical with her own presence" (NYE, XXII, 198). After the arrival of the Pococks, Waymarsh aligns himself completely with them against Strether, even going so far as to conduct a mild and presumably harmless flirtation with Sarah. When we remember that he had done the same thing earlier with Miss Barrace who, although a minor figure, serves the function of illustrating that part of the "twinkling jewel" of Paris that is all brilliant surface and no depth, we see how similar in essence the seemingly contradictory extremes are. Both views—those of Woollett and those of Paris—are limited and limiting as modes of perception; neither has the complete vision of the unified sensibility with its integration of the moral and the aesthetic senses. Waymarsh is thus, among his other functions, a connecting link between the Puritan fallacy and the aesthetic fallacy.

Matters finally come to a point of confrontation between Strether and Sarah during their meeting in the salon de lecture of Strether's hotel. There can be no doubt that Sarah is speaking in her mother's voice as she reveals her complete insensitivity to any of the things
that have registered so forcibly with Strether: the changes in Chad, the dignity, charm, and "quality" of Marie, the evident debt the young man owes to the lady. Sarah's opinion of Marie is clearly the same assumption with which she had left Woollett: "Do you consider her even an apology for a decent woman?" She spoke "by book," flinging a challenge at Strether in a tone of high irony: "You take good care not to meet ... my question about their life. If you do consider it a thing one can even speak of, I congratulate you on your taste!" (NYE, XXII, 203-204). Strether tries to convey his sense of things, but Sarah's high moral posture and indignant self-righteousness present an impassible barrier to communication. "What is your conduct but an outrage to women like us?" The scene concludes in the only possible manner, with Strether reflecting, not without regret, that "it probably was all at an end" (NYE, XXII, 206).

Strether's momentary regret, however, yields to a sense of relief from the moral pressure as the Woollett contingent, including Waymarsh, departs Paris for the conventional tour. Were Strether not so deeply immured in his own theories about the situation, he might have seen their departure as foreshadowing Chad's own ultimate return to Woollett. But his conviction that the change in the young man is one of character as well as appearance blinds him to such a realization; he has already disregarded Maria Gostrey's warning that Chad "really does want to shake her off," that "he's not so good as you think" (NYE, XXI, 171). Another stage of Strether's process of vision remains to be accomplished before he can see things truly; it is a stage which occurs during his day in
the country, which occupies Chapters III and IV of Book Eleventh, balanc­
ing the similarly climactic scene in Gloriani's garden in Book Fifth.33

The Lambinet scene is rendered almost wholly in terms of aesthetic
symbolism. The note is struck as Strether takes the train "at random"
for a day in the country, in a mood which marks a return to the joyfully
spontaneous sense of freedom he had felt during the first springtime
days in Paris.

... he had gone forth under the impulse ... to
give the whole of one [day] to that French ruralism,
with its cool special green, into which he had hitherto
looked only through the little oblong window of the
picture-frame. It had been as yet for the most part
but a land of fancy for him—the background of fiction,
the medium of art, the nursery of letters; practically
as distant as Greece, but practically also well-nigh
as consecrated. Romance could weave itself, for
Strether's sense, out of elements mild enough (NYE,
XXII, 245).

The notion of the picture-frame serves to "remind him of a certain small
Lambinet that had charmed him, long years before, at a Boston dealer's
and that he had quite absurdly never forgotten." Now he hopes to "see
the remembered mixture resolved back into its elements—to assist at the
restoration to nature of the whole far-away hour: the dusty day in
Boston, the background of the Fitchburg Depot, of the maroon-coloured
sanctum, the special-green vision, the ridiculous price, the poplars,
the willows, the rushes, the river, the sunny silvery sky, the shady
woody horizon" (NYE, XXII, 246). The mood of release is enhanced by the
randomness, and when he sees from the train window the vista he seeks,
he gets off "as securely as if to keep an appointment." He gives himself
up for the day to relishing the coalescence of past memory and present moment.

In a perceptive analysis of the range of meaning given this scene by the art imagery in which it is couched, Viola Hopkins Winner observes that the first sequences of Strether's day are accurately rendered in a prose style which evokes the techniques of the Barbizon School of romantic landscape painters, of which Emile Charles Lambinet was in fact a minor member. She writes:

It is especially fitting that the picture through which he sees the landscape should have been a Lambinet... It is the generic quality of this landscape school—the delight of these painters in the quiet moods of nature and their intimate treatment of it—that matters. Slow moving rivers that reflect a luminous sky and tangled willows, gently undulating meadows and winding forest paths, light filtering through trees—these are their recurring motifs; this is the "picture" James evokes of French "ruralism," and this is a typical Lambinet.34

In this setting Strether's thoughts, rambling in much the same fashion as his footsteps, turn to Marie de Vionnet and what he sees as a new development of their relationship:

He had really feared, in his behaviour, a lapse from good faith; if there was a danger in one's liking such a woman too much one's best safety lay in waiting at least until one had the right to do so. In the light of the last few days the danger was fairly vivid; so that it was proportionately fortunate that the right was likewise established.... How could he have done so more, he at all events asked himself, than in having immediately let her know that, if it was all the same to her, he preferred not to talk about anything tiresome?... It hadn't been till later that he quite recalled how in conjuring away everything but the pleasant he had conjured away almost
all they had hitherto talked about; it was not
till later even that he remembered how, with their
new tone, they hadn't so much as mentioned the
name of Chad himself (NYE, XXII, 250).

His musings lead him to reflect that it is as though "he were calling
for the first time." "One of the things that most lingered with him on
his hillside was this delightful facility, with such a woman, of arriving
at a new tone; he thought, as he lay on his back, of all the tones she
might make possible if one were to try her." Strether, as these passages
suggest, is clearly thinking of Marie not in terms of, as he puts it,
his "awkward connexion with Chad," but in terms of a new, more personal
relationship between the two of them. Then it occurs to him that "the
spell of the picture . . . was essentially more than anything else a
scene and a stage," and that, despite his solitary state, "the play and
the characters had, without his knowing it till now, peopled all his
space for him."

The conditions had nowhere so asserted their differ­
ence from those of Woollett as they appeared to him
to assert it in the little court of the Cheval Blanc
while he arranged with his hostess for a comfortable
climax (NYE, XXII, 253).

His dinner arrangements at the little auberge seem to him "the thing, as
he would have called it," that is the essence, of the rural French
experience, and it is inevitable that he should mentally couple this
essence with that other, "Madame de Vionnet's old high salon where the
ghost of the Empire walked."

Strether's subsequent view of an essential truth is a much less
pleasant one than his fancy supplies. Mrs. Winner notes that as day
gives way to evening and Strether, awaiting his dinner, goes down to the pavilion which testifies "in its somewhat battered state, to much fond frequentation," the art analogy shifts from the romantic school of Lambinet to that of the Impressionists.

First of all, the setting . . . is one which the Impressionists were especially fond of painting. The boating party on the river, the open-air dance place, the crowd in a café or a public garden—these were some of their favorite subjects. When . . . Strether sees "a boat advancing round the bend" . . . here is no longer, say, Lambinet's Fishing on the Banks of the Seine, but Renoir's Canotiers à chatou or Manet's En bateau. Lambinet's figures are peasants, men and women indigenous to the countryside, dressed in rough everyday garb and absorbed in their everyday tasks; Renoir's and Manet's are city dwellers—the men relaxing in shirt sleeves and the ladies stylishly dressed, wearing charming hats and holding parasols—sophistically enjoying the simple pleasures of the picnic excursion. 36

She substantiates her case by saying that the shift is not in subject alone, but in the descriptive phrases which characterize Strether's vision. Earlier in the day "color is presented through adjectives, and the light is represented as concentrated in the sky, not diffused throughout. . . . In contrast, the primary emphasis in the description of the village where he stops for dinner is not the thing modified by the adjective; instead, adjectives are converted into substantives, a grammatical shift which places the emphasis on the sensory quality of the visual experience rather than on the thing itself."

. . . The movement from the "special-green vision" of a Lambinet canvas, low toned and idyllic, to the color nuances and pleasure-trip theme of the Impressionist canvas corresponds to the evolution
of Strether's experience which is climaxed by his discovery that after all "he was mixed up with the typical tale of Paris." 37

It seems tenable to suggest an even further range of significance to the shift than Mrs. Winner notes. As we have seen, Strether's instincts are toward the interpretation of events and situations in the light of his romantic predilections, to which the "dear old light" of Paris has sensibly contributed. But the romantic school of landscapists, focusing upon an idealization of the thing itself through clear delineations of line, color, and perspective, did not capture the reality of the visual experience. The Impressionists, with their "open-air" technique, sought a different mode of perception, one which would take into account ocular phenomena of light and shadow, vibrations and color, and in so doing capture not only the essence of the subjective experience but come closer to the reality of the thing represented. 38 So it is with Strether. He is literally forced to abjure his romantic mode of perception, which cast an idealized perspective on experience, through the shock of his discovery that Marie is Chad's mistress, that their relationship is not platonic or fraternal, as he had fondly supposed, but quite obviously sexual. The possibility had been present all along, of course, and had formed the basis of the moral premises of Woollett, but it was a possibility that, once he had set aside the Woollett postulates, he had deliberately avoided confronting: 39

... His theory, as we know, had bountifully been that the facts were specifically none of his business and were, over and above, so far as one had to do with them, intrinsically beautiful; and this might have prepared him for anything, as well as rendered him
proof against mystification. When he reached home
that night, however, he knew he had been, at bottom,
neither prepared nor proof; and since we have spoken
of what he was, after his return, to recall and
interpret, it may as well immediately be said that
his real experience of these few hours put on, in
that belated vision—for he scarce went to bed till
morning—the aspect that is most to our purpose
(NYE, XXII, 261-262).

As the passage suggests, Strether had in effect exchanged one set of
\textit{a priori} assumptions for another, his "theory." What is needed now,
what occupies him during his night-long vigil, is that long-overdue pro-
cess of true discrimination, a "belated vision" that will accept the
thing for what it intrinsically is without the falsifying cast of pre-
formed assumptions of whatever sort. This is his "real experience" of
those few hours spent with Chad and Marie.

The fact that stands out above all others of course is the presence
of the "lie in the charming affair."

\begin{quote}
It was with the lie that they had eaten and drunk
and talked and laughed, that they had waited for
their \textit{carriole} rather impatiently, and had then
got into the vehicle and, sensibly subsiding, driven
their three or four miles through the darkening
summer night (NYE, XXII, 261-263).
\end{quote}

The "lie" had been sustained largely by the "performance" of Marie, an
ironic evocation of his earlier sense of having been on the set and
scene of a play. He is struck, too, by the way Chad had "let her know
he left it to her" without any overt communication between them. Then
he realizes that Chad "habitually left things to others," and feels the
bitter irony of the realization that "there had been as yet no such
vivid illustration of his famous knowing how to live" (NYE, XXII, 264).
"Knowing how to live," then, according to Chad's definition, includes slighting one's responsibility to relationship, leaving the burden to others, certainly a form of exploitation. The stripping off of Strether's romantic delusions concerning his two friends leaves him feeling "lonely and cold"; he reflects that, awkward as it is all around, "Chad and Madame de Vionnet had at least the comfort that they could talk it over together" (NYE, XXII, 266). Again a sad echo resounds of the early part of the excursion when, despite his solitariness, he had felt no twinge of loneliness. He thinks of Miss Gostrey, but dreads her inevitable comment, "What on earth—that's what I want to know now—had you then supposed?"

He recognised at last that he had really been trying all along to suppose nothing. Verily, verily, his labour had been lost (NYE, XXII, 266).

But the process of vision, like the chemical one in James's analogy, can be neither stopped nor reversed. The "clear green liquid" must continue its transmutation, and in the process Strether becomes the truly "moral man." His sense of Marie as a special creature, who has even "a language quite to herself," has been drastically altered. When he visits her the next evening, he sees her as "older... visibly less exempt from the touch of time." As he enters the old house on the Rue de Bellechasse, the "vague voice of Paris" beyond the court becomes, in one of his "sudden gusts of fancy," "the sounds... the omens... the beginnings... of revolution... the smell of blood" (NYE, XXII, 274). The hint of thunder in the air suggests to him "thunderous times," and Madame de Vionnet herself appears, in her simple old-fashioned
costume, as "Madame Roland on the scaffold." His sense of her as a sacrificial victim increases as he sees ever more clearly, through the course of their conversation, that she is mortally afraid of Chad's power over her, a power she has given him by virtue of her adoration, a fact of which Strether also takes the measure for the first time. Like Pygmalion, she loves the creation of her own hands, and that creation now has the capacity to turn and rend her, a capacity which Chad consciously exploits. Strether feels a sense of participatory guilt, that "he, a little, had made him, too; his high appreciation had, as it were, consecrated her work." But he sees now, as Marie does not, that "Chad was none the less only Chad"; "the work, however admirable, was nevertheless of the strict human order." It is a view that is significantly changed from yesterday's deludedly romantic perception of the young man, and one that has yet another stage of recognition to go through. The water imagery pervading the account of Strether's interview with Marie suggests both Strether's sense of moving in an unstable and fluid medium, and the imminent danger which threatens Marie, a danger he presently articulates as "you're afraid for your life!" He is touched as she dissolves in tears, but still "he could see her there as vulgarly troubled, in very truth, as a maidservant crying for her young man." He sees her for the first time as a lovely but fallible human being, not as a figure from art, mythology, or romance; "it was like a chill in the air to him, it was almost appalling, that a creature so fine could be, by mysterious forces, a creature so exploited." When the interview ends on her plea
that he remain in Paris—"we might, you and I, have been friends. . . .
You see how, as I say, I've wanted everything. I've wanted you, too"—
he can only answer "with an emphasis that made an end, 'Ah but you've
had me'" (NYE, XXII, 288-289). He has been treated to a vivid picture
of the dangers of exploitation, which can occur even without conscious
intent, and sensitive as he is to her obvious suffering, he cannot run
the risk of subjecting himself to that danger, which he would do if he
were to put himself in her power as she is in Chad's. The dissolution
of his idealizing has forced him to step back, so to speak, as one must
do in order to perceive the interplay of elements and thus the totality
of an Impressionist canvas. Just as the Impressionists caught a fuller
reality, so is Strether now able, through his new stance and new per­
spective, to do so.

His altered view of Chad is intensified by the anticlimactic effect
of the delay that marks their first meeting after the awkward evening in
the country. Chad leaves Paris for several days, and then waits an
additional time before informing Strether of his return, so that when
they do meet Strether's sense of the younger man's insensitivity, cal­
lousness, even cowardice is aggravated. During the course of their
belated conversation, he comes to realize that, as James put it in the
Project for the novel, "Chad . . . is not a little, really, alas, of an
egotist and even a brute" (NB, p. 382). When Strether uses the latter
term—"You'll be a brute, you know, if you ever forsake her"—he notes
the quality of protesting too much in Chad's assurances that he has no
intention of doing so. But "he spoke of being 'tired' of her almost as
he might have spoken of being tired of roast mutton for dinner" (NYE, XXII, 313). "Brute," "beast," "criminal of the deepest dye . . . guilty of the last infamy"—these are the terms with which Strether attempts to communicate to Chad the consequences of a failure to acknowledge and preserve the relationship that has given him so much. But Chad, the unqualified egotist, sees only himself—his own wishes, desires, whims, ambitions—and no amount of protesting on his part, or persuasion on Strether's, can alter that inescapable fact. He tells Strether that during his absence he has been to England, "getting some news of the art of advertisement." When he goes on to say that "it's an art like another, and infinite like all the arts . . . in the hands, naturally, of a master," it is the final blow to Strether's belief in the young man's moral and aesthetic sensitivity. He realizes the degree to which he had been right when earlier he had thought that "Chad had no imagination." The equation of "advertisement" with "art" suggests that Chad believes that art is of value only when it is utilitarian, ministering to the acquisitive impulse. We remember the taint of unscrupulousness attached to the Newsome family fortune, and recognize that Chad is his father's son. His egotism is cruel even to Strether, for throughout their conversation he reminds the older man that persuading him to return to Woollett and take up advertising was the mission that had brought Strether to Paris in the first place. Such reminders can only be painful to Strether at this point. Chad reveals himself, in short, to be living wholly in the world of means, where people and things are of value only insofar as they are useful to the gratification of the egotist's self-serving purposes.
The novel ends as it began, with a scene between Strether and Maria Gostrey. It is a scene which ties up loose ends and places into final perspective the experience of the novel, yet, in Mildred Hartsock's words, "criticism of Strether has shown a curious bifurcation." She cites F. O. Matthiessen as having been among the first to say that Strether's "decision to return to Woollett is disappointing evidence of his pallid puritanical withdrawal from the expanded experience which he has come to appreciate." More recently, Robert E. Garis has written that the ending is "a pathetic reduction of painful complexities to a meagre axiom which functions, not as an instrument of moral understanding, but as a talisman for the frightened and broken spirit." Other critics have seen Strether's final action in a more positive light; Robert N. Hudspeth, for instance, having written that "Strether, who escapes much of his innocence, is a man who escapes the intolerant cruelty of Woollett. This understanding is for Strether far more significant than the understanding of French aestheticism, for he can return to Woollett with his new consciousness and escape the evil of American innocence." Hudspeth's tacit slighting of the ultimate significance of the "French aestheticism" is rectified by J. A. Ward, whose comment is "Strether's experience amounts to a discovery of the fullness of life, for Europe itself, which embodies the deeds of man at his finest and of man at his worst, provides not merely a special kind of experience and an enriching one, but an experience without which one is incomplete." Ward's comment perhaps comes closer to one's experience of the novel, yet it is nonetheless unsatisfactorily vague.
The issue seems to center around Strether's final rejection of Maria Gostrey, although his scene with Marie de Vionnet has not been spared critical controversy either. About Maria, Joseph Warren Beach said exasperatedly, "Lambert Strether . . . gives up all and has nothing to show for it. He might have had Maria Gostrey, and a very good bargain it would have been." Beach's use of the word "bargain" is perhaps more revealing than he intended, implying as it does the haggling of the marketplace. Surely if Strether has learned nothing else from his experience, he has learned the dangers of a compromise with one's integrity. It seems to me that the meaning of the novel's resolution hinges on precisely this point: a definition of the new morality which Strether has achieved through his fusion of his moral sense with his aesthetic. We have James's word for it that he meant to show Strether as having passed through a crucible and come out on the other side, and his ultimate position as affecting Maria thus:

He can't accept or assent. He won't. He doesn't. It's too late. It mightn't have been, sooner—but it is, yes, distinctly, now. He has come so far through his total little experience that he has come out on the other side—on the other side, even, of a union with Miss Gostrey. He must go back as he came—or rather, really, so quite other than, in comparison, marrying Miss Gostrey would be almost of the old order (NB, p. 415).

One reason why it is "too late" now for Maria is that there has been Marie de Vionnet. Cargill has said, "Unless one realizes thoroughly the temptation that Marie de Vionnet offered Strether and the degree of his caring for her, one cannot understand at all his treatment of Maria
And Mrs. Winner has pointed out that even the visual arts imagery conveys the fact of Maria's being second-best to Marie:

Maria Gostrey's "little Dutch-looking dining-room" with its "ideally kept pewter" and "specimens of vivid Delf" speaks for the kind of haven she has to offer Strether. Fond though he was of the Dutch and Flemish school, James associated style in the grand manner with French and Italian art. 51

We remember the contrast suggested to Strether by the impact of his initial spell under the charms of Marie's home:

They were among the matters that marked Madame de Vionnet's apartment as something quite different from Miss Gostrey's little museum of bargains... Miss Gostrey had rummaged and purchased and picked up and exchanged, sifting, selecting, comparing; whereas the mistress of the scene before him, beautifully passive under the spell of transmission... had only received, accepted and been quiet (NYE, XXI, 244-245).

His disillusionment with Marie, conveying a sense more of disappointment than disgust, has not changed his feeling that she is "the finest of the type."

But, as we have seen, Strether has had a vision of the horrors of exploitation as well as an experience of love. Strether has loved and been loved; the fact that he has loved Marie and been loved by Maria is the "all comic, all tragic," i.e., the ironic, aspect of his adventure. 52 But the similarity in the names of Strether's two women suggests that love in itself is the important thing. One might speculate that for James to have provided a conventional happy ending for his hero might have obscured the point that the full and complete integrity, expressed most basically as love, is itself the value. But that value depends,
precariously, on the preservation of individual integrity, both of oneself and of others. The slightest tinge of exploitation, the slightest violation of reciprocal respect, compromises integrity in precisely that proportion. Only one letter marks the difference between the two names, but it is enough to suggest that neither potential relationship is free of the exploitative tinge. The conclusion is ineluctable; it is Strether's "only logic." But what he takes back with him to Woollett had been prefigured in the passage describing his adventure with the little Lambinet:

It had been offered, he remembered, at a price he had been instructed to believe the lowest ever named for a Lambinet, a price he had never felt so poor as on having to recognise, all the same, as beyond the dream of possibility. He had dreamed—had turned and twisted possibilities for an hour; it had been the only adventure of his life in connexion with the purchase of a work of art. The adventure, it will be perceived, is modest; but the memory, beyond all reason and by some accident of association, was sweet. The little Lambinet abode with him as the picture he would have bought. . . . (NYE, XXII, 245-246).

His adventure in living and loving—his moral adventure—is equally modest, yet he cannot pay the price in this instance any more than he could in the long-ago time of his adventure with the work of art. The metaphor of the marketplace reveals that Strether does not belong in the world of means. He lives rather in the world of ends, where the values are perhaps less tangible but ultimately more basic to one's identity as a feeling human being. Miss Hartsock has, I think, summarized it best:

Strether gives up everything—everything except the "loaf on the shelf" of memory—so that he can tell the world and himself what the right basis of a moral judgment has to be. This is the obverse of
Puritanism: it is a further affirmation of Henry James's belief that consciousness, creative awareness, is the highest good. It supersedes codes and plunges mankind into dangerous living. Such freedom for relative moral response can be validated, James shows, only by a sense of absolute moral responsibility. Strether has it. Art and life become one at this point: both depend upon the clearest seeing and the sternest discipline. . . . His decision to return to Woollett is very far, indeed, from negative renunciation: it is a positive affirmation of the most daring kind. He must maintain himself precariously, even sacrificially, upon the "dizzying crest" which is integrity.54

Strether has engaged in a dialectic, internal and external, which has posed two equally limiting modes of perception and approaches to experience against one which is integrated on the principle of the "beauty of goodness." He has come to learn that morality is possible only when the importunities of the ego have been conquered, but without compromise of the self. He emerges from his novel as the most complete example in James's fiction of the "finely aware and richly responsible" human being. James had ample reason for believing that Strether's story was "the best, all-round" of his productions.

**The Wings of the Dove**55

At the close of her second consultation with Sir Luke Strett, Milly Theale asks the great London physician, "Will I then live?" He replies, "My dear young lady, isn't 'to live' precisely what I'm asking you to take the trouble to do?"56 The doctor's advice, ironically contingent as it is upon the hopelessness of her case, suggests unmistakably that
"live all you can" is as central a theme to *The Wings of the Dove* as it is to *The Ambassadors*. Again the fullness of life is identified with the necessity for and the ultimacy of love as the supreme value, and with the development of the unified, truly moral consciousness as the supreme endeavor. Again a dialectic develops, between the dynamics of life and the evolving moral vision on the one hand, and the staticism of death on the other, death in both the literal sense and as it is figured in the blind, immoral, dehumanizing exploitativeness of egotism. J. A. Ward writes, "*The Ambassadors* deals with the last gasping breath of the old order; by the time of *The Wings* the old order is dead, visible only in its decay." That decayed order presents egotism institutionalized; it is the *modus operandi* for the corrupt and crassly materialistic society. Manners, customs, usages are no longer emblematic of positive human values; they are the parody of them, for human values have been perverted and subverted in the form. As Quentin Kraft says:

> The good manners of the Lancaster Gate society . . . are in themselves a perversion, for whereas manners should be a means of fostering life, they are, in fact, in this decadent London society, a means of concealing human life and of treating human beings as mere objects.  

The malignancy of this insidious influence is the determinant of the tragedy which qualifies, although it cannot negate, the ultimate synthesis. As in classical tragedy, everybody loses in *The Wings*, even the one who, almost in spite of himself, achieves the final insight. Such are the effects of monstrous, massive egotism on the grand scale.
The profundity of the experience of *The Wings of the Dove* has prompted some of James's readers to designate it his masterpiece, Matthiessen, for instance, having called it "that single work where his characteristic emotional vibration seems deepest and where we may have the sense, therefore, that we have come to 'the very soul.'"59 Others, while recognizing for the most part the novel's immense scope and essential humanness, have objected to the admittedly dense and difficult style, most specifically to the "indirect" presentation and treatment of Milly, that feature of the novel's technique of which James was most proud, to judge from the Preface.60 The novel is complex, both thematically and artistically, but careful perusal reveals that the polyphonics of the thematic dialectic are but refracted in the equally polyphonic dialectics of the form, demonstrating the degree to which James had mastered the concept of the organic novel and lifted it to a degree of artistic achievement not hitherto reached.61 Even *The Ambassadors* is not quite the technical *tour de force* that *The Wings of the Dove* is, for here there are no less than three Strethers, that is to say, three characters who initially qualify as candidates for the most fully developed and unified, thus truly moral sensibility. Kate's potential is aborted and perverted as she takes the wrong path in her endeavor to achieve freedom and identity; Milly's heroic effort is cut tragically short as her will to live, her "sacred spark," is extinguished by the revelation of her victimization. Only Densher endures to realize, at tremendous cost, the transcendent meaning of morality and love in the finest sense.62
Much of the novel's thematic and technical complexity stems from the fusion of "realism"—the presentation of vital, believable human beings operating on an equally real social plane—with poetic, even archetypal, dimensions expressed through the novel's richness of image, symbol, metaphor, and allusion. James's reference to himself as "the poet" in the Preface, along with other such comments, suggests that he conceived of the novel as a poetic drama in prose. Every aspect of the form has its organic connection with meaning; Densher's role as the locus of the final meaning of the experience recorded in the novel is sufficiently indicated by the facts that it is through his consciousness that the last three books are rendered, and that the significance of the climactic scene of his final interview with Milly is represented by the effect of the scene upon him. Similarly, we know that Kate's moral drama is essentially over by the beginning of Book Third, by the fact that never again is she a center of consciousness. From that point on she is, in Wegelin's words, "... a force, a form, a beautiful apparition ... a symbol of the English society. ..." The fact that she "is almost totally responsible for the physical action" accounts for the vivid reality of her continued presence, but she has disqualified herself as a participant in the moral dynamics. Milly's thematic centrality is formally embodied in the fact that hers is the consciousness through which the middle books of the novel are refracted, for this is the portion in which she has assumed her position as the matrix of the evolving intrigue, and is also the point at which her will to live is burning most brightly. The fact that she becomes a "reflected image" in the
novel's last fifth—reflected through the consciousness of Densher—indicates, in Wegelin's words, "that in the moral scheme of the novel Milly finally has to undergo a kind of transfiguration, both the pain and the sublimity of which are beyond dramatic representation." So the asymmetry of the novel's narrative mode, which is in direct contrast to the consistently focused Ambassadors, signifies both the diffusion of the thematic dialectic among the three major characters, and the importance of Densher's role as the novel's final "register" of meaning. In his ultimate awareness the dialectic between the forces of life and death, or dynamism and stasis, or unselfed loving and exploitative egotism—the terms are virtually synonymous—is synthesized.

The asymmetry of the narrative mode serves as counterpoint to the neat symmetry of the pairing, balancing, and contrasting of the dramatis personae, a symmetry which forms another expression of the novel's artistic dynamics. Besides the three major characters, there are three others directly involved, the total of six including four women and two men. Each pair of women consists of an older and a younger one; one pair is English, the other American. Of the English pair, the older one has money, source of power and control; the younger is dependent upon her. The reverse is true of the American pair. The reversal is extended into the realm of motivation, for to Milly, unlike Mrs. Lowder, money represents the opportunity to give rather than to control. The calculating Mrs. Lowder would like for self-serving reasons of her own to arrange a great marriage for Kate; the romantic Mrs. Stringham would like for Milly to find love in marriage. Kate has love, but no money, in the
person of Merton Densher. Milly has money, but no love, for her affections also are fixed on Densher. Lord Mark, possessed of a great name (unlike Densher) but no money (like Densher), hovers on the periphery, an adventurer ready to seize any and all opportunity by the forelock. All actual and potential relations and motivations revolve around Milly, who seems to all except Densher to have "everything," by which they mean the inestimable wealth from which they all (again excepting Densher) mean somehow, with varying degrees of conscious exploitative intent, to profit. Once again we see the world of means—the exploitative, egotistical approach to experience—pitted against the world of ends—the loving, unselfed approach.

We will remember that the world of means is the one in which people and things are regarded as commodities to be used, exploited, and manipulated for egotistical, self-seeking purposes. Here the world of means is the world of Lancaster Gate, presided over by Maud Manningham Lowder, whom Austin Warren describes as "Britannia seated on her money-bags and ruling the waves." Mrs. Lowder is the nonpareil egotist, as rigidly intransigent and coldly manipulative as are her many prototypes in James's fiction. Like her most immediate prototype, Mrs. Newsome, Mrs. Lowder uses her wealth as a weapon to manage, manipulate, and control the lives of others, and does it on the basis of her conviction of the superiority of her own judgment, tastes, and standards. Her disapproval of her dilettante brother-in-law, Lionel Croy, has resulted in her adamant refusal to assuage the dingy poverty of his family. Kate's father and sister are equally selfish and uncharitable in their motives
and behavior, but this fact serves not to exonerate Mrs. Lowder from the charge of ungenerosity, but to amplify the pressures initially working on Kate from all sides. Lionel Croy and Marian Condrip also see Kate as a manipulable means to an end: "it was through Kate that Aunt Maud was to be worked, and nothing mattered less than what became of Kate in the process" (NYE, XIX, 34). Mrs. Lowder's offer of patronage to her niece is akin to Mrs. Newsome's putative charity to Strether; both are thinly disguised efforts at control. Mrs. Lowder makes the stipulation that Kate have nothing more to do with her father, and it is further tacitly assumed that Kate is to relinquish her right to choose her own destiny in every regard. One reason why Mrs. Lowder prefers Kate as an object of charity to the querulous and tepid Marian is that she recognizes Kate's will as the equal of her own; she relishes the prospect of the inevitable struggle of wills while yet having no doubt as to her own eventual victory. The irredeemable egotist never questions the ultimate triumph of his or her own will. More importantly, she sees in Kate an opportunity to further her own ends, i.e., her social ambitions. Her possession of great wealth is clearly an inaccurate index of her social status, which has not kept pace with her ambitions, and Kate's handsome presence is an obvious enhancement of her drawing room. Kate thus functions as a bibelot to be appropriated, possessed, and displayed as part of the ostentatiously overstuffed furnishings of her house, that monument to conspicuous consumption. Further, if she can maneuver Kate into a "great" marriage, the result would be the long-sought elevation of her position in the social hierarchy. Lord Mark is the one visible candidate
for the role of bridegroom in this scheme, whose own manipulability is attributable to the dissipation of his family fortune. But he too belongs to the world of means, and is "working" Mrs. Lowder's *nouveau-riche* appetite for titles to his own advantage. This representative of a decaying aristocracy is an impalatable fellow, whose subsequent treachery is completely in character. First he transfers his attentions from Kate to Milly when it is apparent that the latter's wealth exceeds even Mrs. Lowder's; then, when his advances are gently rebuffed, he retaliates by informing Milly of the fact of her duping. Lord Mark is thus the direct agent, if not the motivating force, of Milly's early death, and reveals himself to be a shallow, selfish opportunist, out to achieve his own ends regardless of the cost to others and capable of the lowest kind of vengeance when his scheme fails. He is, in short, in his native element within the cruel, egotistical world of means. The whole pattern of intrigue and cold-blooded manipulation which emanates from Lancaster Gate and embroils all within its ken—Kate herself learns to play the evil game—is a vivid picture of the insidious and appalling immorality of the world of means.71

Predictably, the geographical center of this web of immorality—the house itself—is the epitome of expensive vulgarity. Mrs. Lowder's moral vacuum is reflected in the perversion of aesthetic taste manifested by her house. Densher sees the connection between Mrs. Lowder's personal vulgarity and its representation in her house and, further, sees the moral implications in the fact:
"When all's said and done, you know, she's colossally vulgar"—he had once all but said that of Mrs. Lowder to her niece; only just keeping it back at the last. . . . Never, he flattered himself, had he seen anything so gregariously ugly—operatively, ominously so cruel. He was glad somehow to have found this last name for the whole character. He had never dreamed of anything so fringed and scalloped, so buttoned and corded, drawn everywhere so tight, and curled everywhere so thick. He had never dreamed of so much gilt and glass, so much satin and plush, so much rosewood and marble and malachite. But it was, above all, the solid forms, the wasted finish, the misguided cost, the general attestation of morality and money, a good conscience and a big balance. These things finally represented for him a portentous negation of his own world of thought. . . . They revealed it to him by their merciless indifference (NYE, XIX, 76-79).

The identification here of the house's "gregarious ugliness" with "cruel . . . merciless indifference" suggests the profound correlation between the egotist's immorality and his perversion of the aesthetic sense. The house becomes an important symbol, as Edwin T. Bowden has pointed out:

The ironic phrase "morality and money" distinguishes the play of forces in Lancaster Gate, and defines the central theme. For it is within the conflict of these two values that the crime of Kate and the unwilling participation and eventual tragic recognition by Merton come into being. The house, representing Kate's hopes and Merton's fears, concentrates at one convenient point the thematic conflict of values which brings eventual failure, evil, and misery to them both.72

The house aside, Mrs. Lowder herself is a focus for a series of related images, all of them conveying an unmistakable association of voracious violence, all of them amplifying her role as egotist. On one occasion Densher calls her a "vulture," to which Kate replies, "Call it an eagle—with a gilded beak as well, and with wings for great flights" (NYE, XIX, 73). The touch of the "gilded beak" suggests Mrs. Lowder's
use of her wealth as an instrument of destruction, while the "wings for
great flights" is an ironic counterpart to Milly's "wings of the dove."
Elsewhere Kate sees her, militaristically, as the "besieger ... in the
provisioned citadel . . . and what made her formidable in this character
was that she was unscrupulous and immoral" (NYE, XIX, 31); then, extend­
ing the metaphor, "Mrs. Lowder was . . . the roar of the siege and the
thick of the fray" (NYE, XIX, 32). Even the idealistic Mrs. Stringham
sees her as a "projectile of great size, loaded and ready for use" (NYE,
XIX, 169). The suggestion of tightly packed massiveness is reinforced
as we read, "Mrs. Lowder might have been likened . . . to a capacious
receptacle, originally perhaps loose, but now drawn as tightly as possi­
ble over its accumulated contents—a packed mass . . . of curious detail"
(NYE, XIX, 168-169). When we remember that Mrs. Newsome had been
described in virtually the same terms to suggest her rigorous inflexi­
bility, we recognize that the two ladies are sisters under the skin.
But by far the most frequent image describing Mrs. Lowder is that of a
lioness. Kate feels herself, "in the lioness' cage," to be "a kid
... a morsel she had reason to suppose tender." The image is evoked
again during Densher's first interview with Mrs. Lowder, as that lady
conveys the sense of communicating to him the fact that "I can bite your
head off any day, any day that I really open my mouth" (NYE, XIX, 84).
But the most telling image within this particular pattern links her
voraciousness and massiveness with her vulgarity:

She would have been meanwhile a wonderful lioness
for a show, an extraordinary figure in a cage or
anywhere; majestic, magnificent, high-coloured,
all brilliant gloss, perpetual satin, twinkling bugles and flashing gems (NYE, XIX, 30).

Finally, the economic motive behind the use of persons as means is figured as she compares Kate to an investment: "I've watched it long; I've been saving it up and letting it, as you say of investments, appreciate, and you may judge whether, now it has begun to pay so, I'm likely to consent to treat for it with any but a high bidder" (NYE, XIX, 82).

She sees Milly too as a "bribe," as Densher perceives: "The pieces fell together for him as he felt her thus buying him off, and buying him . . . with Miss Theale's money" (NYE, XX, 67). She is, in short, "... Britannia of the Market Place—Britannia unmistakable, but with a pen in her ear, and . . . she should not be happy till she might on some occasion add to the rest of the panoply a helmet, a shield, a trident and a ledger" (NYE, XIX, 30-31). She is "unscrupulous and immoral," i.e., a total egotist. She might once have been a "capacious receptacle," which, we will recall, is a frequent Jamesian image for the open and receptive consciousness, but that time is long past. Now Mrs. Lowder is a "packed mass," that is, her nature has solidified into the rigidity, inflexibility, and immorality of self-serving ego gratification.

It is essential to understand Mrs. Lowder and the world she so corruptly dominates in order to understand Kate, for only then can we fully see the sources and dimensions of Kate's own scheme for exploitation and understand the external forces working upon her to draw her into the vortex of the world of means. Kate Croy is one of the novel's triumphs, perhaps its greatest. As Cargill has said:
Never was there such a gallery of full-length portraits. And at either end are placed the studies, elaborate indeed, of the good and the bad heroines. Milly Theale and Kate Croy would each be sufficient as the protagonist of a novel; here they are paired. One turns to great literature solely to find the equal of either.74

James's conception of her may have had its genesis in the literary convention of the "dark lady" or in his own earlier renditions of the type, but the similarity ends there.75 Only her dark beauty, her powerful aura of sexuality, and her ultimate immorality—which itself is of a very different sort from the usual versions—link her with the tradition. James granted her a dimension of humanity and a complexity of character foreign to the traditional renderings. As Ernest Sandeen has said, comparing Kate and Densher to Madame Merle and Osmond:

The Gothic tinges which distinguish Merle and Osmond ... have been elaborately subdued in the portraits of Kate and Merton. Much art and space are given over in The Wings to blending the darker guilt of Kate Croy and her lover into the general gray of human frailty. ...

Kate is herself in a situation hedged about with the imminent danger of exploitation, positioned as she is between the selfishness of her immediate kin and the complete egotism of Aunt Maud.77 In the first book Kate reveals herself to be capable of unselfish generosity, as the fact is disclosed that she has shared her modest inheritance from her mother with her widowed and child-burdened sister. The caddishness of Lionel Croy is adumbrated as she perceives that he resents that act: "What he couldn't forgive was her dividing with Marian her scant share of the provision their mother had been able to leave them. She should have divided it with him" (NYE, XIX, 24).78 We also see that Kate is capable
of self-sacrifice, for even though she recognizes full well her father's meanness of spirit, she offers—and would really prefer—to reject Aunt Maud's offer of patronage with its obvious material advantages in order to stay with and care for him. What she deprecatingly describes as her virtue of a "narrow little family feeling" is really an index of her innate capacity for generosity, for self-sacrifice, for devotion, qualities which do Kate immense credit. But she is frustrated in her hope as her father reveals himself to be in fact the cad that Mrs. Lowder thinks him, a small-minded man who cannot appreciate virtue when he is face to face with it. He and Marian both want Kate to go to Mrs. Lowder, believing as they do that Kate's generosity will see to it that some of Mrs. Lowder's munificence filters through to them. They are callously indifferent to Kate's own welfare. As Walter Wright says, "She is therefore essentially alone in a world filled with sordidness and egoism." The relationship of Kate to her father and sister on the one hand, and to her aunt on the other, forms a pattern that we have seen before, most notably perhaps in Washington Square, since here too there is an impecunious lover who is complicating matters. But the resemblance ends there, for Densher is as far from being a Morris Townsend as Kate is from being a Catherine Sloper. Once her lot is cast with Aunt Maud, as it irretrievably is once her father has rejected her generous offer, we see that she is fully equipped and prepared to battle Mrs. Lowder on her own ground and on her own terms. That battle is assured by the fact that Kate too possesses tremendous strength of will. At first that fact manifests itself as her
determination to fight for her own identity against the manipulations of her aunt, most specifically to realize her love for Densher in the marriage that they both want, and to which they commit themselves very early in the action. "For life," Kate breathes as she makes her pledge, and the phrase suggests not only Kate's potential for loyalty and steadfastness, but also her commitment to the forces of dynamic creativity. She is pledging herself to life and love as opposed to staticism and sterility. But, like the great tragic heroines that she so resembles, there is a flaw within her which finally produces her tragedy. That flaw is her weakness for the luxuries and advantages that only wealth can bring; she is a product of the world of means and is susceptible to its allurements. Admittedly, the deprivations of her early life—vividly imaged in the dinginess of the lower middle-class surroundings of Lionel Croy and Marian Condrrip—offer an explanation for her love of material comforts. And, also to her credit, she recognizes the appeal these things hold out to her. She reflects, soon after her installation at Lancaster Gate:

She saw as she had never seen before how material things spoke to her. She saw, and she blushed to see, that if, in contrast with some of its old aspects, life now affected her as a dress successfully "done up," this was exactly by reason of the trimmings and lace, was a matter of ribbons and silk and velvet. She had a dire accessibility to pleasure from such sources (NYE, XIX, 28).

So that while she recognizes that she has in effect been "introduced into the cage of the lioness," she is willing to take the chance, to submit herself to the "great mass" of Aunt Maud's "looming personality"
in order to achieve permanent possession of these luxuries. But, like Aunt Maud herself, she wants to possess them on her own terms; she is unwilling to relinquish Densher to do so, and this is precisely what Aunt Maud demands that she do. So within Kate a conflict evolves, between the opposing impulses which draw her equally to Densher and to a life of luxury. She decides to try for both, and all of the mitigating circumstances are insufficient to absolve her of the moral responsibility for her fatal choice. As Ward points out, "... James, neither a determinist nor a fatalist, holds his agents of evil morally responsible for their crimes."83

The first step in her counterattack is to conceal her betrothal from Aunt Maud, thus establishing the pattern of concealment and deception that is to have such dire effects upon Milly. By the time Milly is introduced into the picture, Kate has taken full measure of her antagonist, Aunt Maud. While she recognizes, accurately enough, that her will is the equal of Mrs. Lowder's own unflagging and relentless one, her aunt's wealth tips the scale hopelessly in the latter's favor. The gradual evolution of Kate's scheme in regard to Milly is the direct result of that recognition. It is not unaccompanied by twinges of conscience, most vividly represented perhaps during the scene when she frankly tells Milly what kind of a world she has come into, and that "you may very well loathe me yet." But Milly, for reasons of her own that we shall presently consider, persists, and Kate does too, so the web of intrigue and deception grows ever tighter. No matter how qualified
and rationalized Kate's scheme may seem, her decision to manipulate and exploit Milly as the means to her double end is a tragic error.\textsuperscript{84}

So, living within the world of rampant egotism, Kate herself becomes an egotist. She pursues the wrong set of tensions within her; she yields to the importunities of her ego; she adopts the protective coloration of the jungle and becomes a predator herself.\textsuperscript{85} Even Densher, her love for whom is initially one of the two ends she pursues, becomes an instrument to be used. She tells him, "I use, for the purpose, what I have. You're what I have of most precious, and you're therefore what I use most" (NYE, XX, 52). The fact that the "purpose" she refers to here is "to make things pleasant" for Milly reveals the degree to which her skill for dissembling has developed, for while this is certainly a secondary motive, it is clearly not the primary one. Good manners, if nothing else, would preclude anything else.\textsuperscript{86} She also uses Densher's love for her and his increasing frustration as a weapon of manipulation, drawing powerfully upon her sexuality as a means of overcoming his scruples, a pattern which culminates in the crucial scene in Venice when she strategically surrenders in order to achieve victory.

Densher is not blameless, of course. His embroilment evolves even more slowly than Kate's. As Wright has pointed out, James's atypical mode of presentation, emphasizing Kate as it does in the opening pages, makes Densher seem almost a "minor personage."\textsuperscript{87} It is only gradually that we come to see the significance of the early characterizing statement:
He suggested above all, however, that wondrous state of youth in which the elements, the metals more or less precious, are so in fusion and fermentation that the question of the final stamp, the pressure that fixes the value, must wait for comparative coolness (NYE, XIX, 48-49).

His low-keyed entrance into the novel's developing moral dialectic is the direct indicator of his beginning state of relative formlessness. He is in a state of potential, possessed of sufficient intelligence and sensitivity—"the metals more or less precious"—to suggest that the "value," when it is finally fixed, will be a positive one. But until the experience in Venice, he is more or less quiescently malleable, pending the stamp that fixes the value. 88

The difficulty with Densher was that he looked vague without looking weak—idle without looking empty (NYE, XIX, 48).

Densher is a contemplative man: apt to throw his "well-shaped head... suddenly back and, supported behind by his uplifted arms and interlocked hands, place him for unconscionable periods in communion with the ceiling, the tree-tops, the sky." He is "visibly absentminded," and sensitive to nuances of taste and feeling that are totally foreign to the world of means. But his tendencies to introspection, his relative formlessness, and his idealism, not necessarily harmful qualities in themselves, are associated with other traits which do carry a potential for danger. He is inclined to vacillate, to rationalize, and to display a weakness of will, a weakness that appears greater than it in fact is alongside Kate's tremendously forceful one. 89 Just as Kate has an initial potential for the world of ends, so does he in his plastic state
betray a vulnerability to the world of means. But the closeness—emotional, intellectual, psychological, purposive—of the lovers at the point of their betrothal can be compared, say, to the propinquity of two distinct and separate paths which temporarily merge but ultimately diverge, as they inevitably must since the goals are not the same. As Kate's manipulations generate power and strength through the increasing intensity of her battle of wills with Mrs. Lowder, Densher's will to resist becomes weaker, undermined by his love for her and by his own propensity for self-exculpation, causing him to acquiesce in the continuing deception of Milly. As long as his sins are ones of omission, he is able to find a rationalization for them. Once he had initially agreed to the seemingly tactful and harmless deception of Mrs. Lowder regarding the engagement, for instance, the subsequent deceptions become ever easier. That Kate is unwilling to marry him on the present basis, that is, without the wealth she so desires, is a flaw in their relationship that he typically chooses to ignore. Like Strether, he deliberately blinds himself to the more unpleasant implications of the situation in which he finds himself. But, also like Strether, the moment comes when he is forced to cast the blinders from his eyes and face things squarely.

By the time the group reaches Venice, the "special smothered soreness" that he has tried to bury causes him to consider "the interesting question of whether he had really no will left" (NYE, XX, 177). At this point two things occur: Kate asks him, for the first time, to commit a sin, not of omission, but of commission. The hints and indirections of their conversation in the great piazza are finally brought out into the
open at the party that evening, when Densher puts into words the precise nature of Kate's scheme: "Since she's to die, I'm to marry her?" The stripping off of the veil of pretense and rationalization, along with his agonies of self-doubt, cause him to stipulate that Kate make a con­comitant concession to his will. He seeks from her both a literal and a symbolic submission to his manhood, which he feels accurately enough has been eroded away. He mistakenly believes that her coming to his rooms will constitute an affirmation of his masculinity. It does not, of course, except perhaps in the most literal physical sense; indeed, from this point on, his and Kate's relationship is doomed. Kate's acquiescence is done not in a spirit of love, of open, selfless giving; rather it reveals the degree to which Densher himself has become a means to her goal. Similarly, it is Densher's lowest moral point, not because he violates the code governing premarital sexual relations, but because it marks his concession to contribute actively to Milly's exploitation. The sexual act in itself is not the sin, but the fact that sex has become a means of forcing mutual concession to the other's will. It is ego-serving, not giving of self in love; it is extrinsic sex, symbol not of union, but of divergence. But for Densher the event signals a turning point.

I have come this far in my discussion without specifically consider­ing Milly, but in following this circuitous path I am emulating the example of the novel. As James pointed out in the Preface, "One began "... with the outer ring, approaching the centre thus by narrowing circumvallations" (AN, p. 294). If Milly Theale's story were merely one
of a girl—however young, beautiful, rich, and possessed of the rage to live—doomed to an early death, it would have had none of the dimensions obtainable through the development of a complicated set of interacting relationships. As James said:

She would found her struggle on particular human interests, which would inevitably determine, in respect to her, the attitude of other persons, persons affected in such a manner as to make them part of the action. If her impulse to wrest from her shrinking hour still as much of the fruit of life as possible, if this longing can take effect only by the aid of others, their participation (appealed to, entangled and coerced as they find themselves) becomes their drama too—that of their promoting her illusions, under her importunity, for reasons, for interests and advantages, from motives and points of view, of their own (AN, p. 291).

Milly is the focal point on which the struggle between the forces of life and death is not symbolic or metaphorical but literal. Her struggle for life has a two-fold dimension: the first is her battle against the inroads of disease, a battle doomed to eventual defeat. But Sir Luke Strett's advice has given her the clue to the best weapon she can use in the battle, which is simply to embrace as much of life as possible "within her shrinking hour." Milly puts up a valiant struggle; she does not go gentle into that good night. But the forces of life within her that cause her to rage against the dying of the light make her vulnerable to "the catastrophe announced by the associated Fates, powers conspiring to a sinister end and, with their command of means, finally achieving it" (AN, pp. 290–291). Milly has not only to fight against "natural evil" but against "moral evil," that is, against the machinations of the people to whom she willingly submits herself in instinctive
recognition of the fact that fullness of life is possible only within the context of human relationships. What she does not realize is the voracity of the world of means and the degree to which she herself, or rather her money, represents a means to selfish ends.

Susan Stringham's relationship with her young companion is the least blameworthy of all those that follow from Milly's decision to live all she can. To Mrs. Stringham, Milly's wealth is the basis of her "poetry"; she sees the girl as "heiress of all the ages," an epithet vividly imaged by our first glimpse of Milly perched on the Alpine precipice surveying, as it seems, the kingdoms of the earth.\(^9\) The image also suggests the precariousness of her position, a danger which is soon actualized by her subsequent decision that "what she wanted of Europe was people," a decision which draws her into the destructive vortex of the Lancaster Gate whirlpool. Mrs. Stringham is the unwitting instigator, seeing no danger in her pride that at last "she has something to show" to her old friend, Maud Lowder. Mrs. Stringham's idealistically romantic imagination cannot conceive of the evil to which she is exposing her young friend.\(^9\)

Milly herself is not fully aware of the degree of temptation exerted by her wealth upon others.\(^9\) Unlike Mrs. Lowder, she has been born and bred to the purple, and lifelong habit causes her to think very little of her wealth. But even Mrs. Stringham sees this attitude of casual acceptance in a very different light from Milly's own view:

\[\ldots\text{it was the truth of truths that the girl couldn't get away from her wealth.} \ldots\text{She couldn't dress it away, nor walk it away, nor read it away, nor think it}\]
away; she could neither smile it away in any dreamy absence nor blow it away in any softened sigh. She couldn't have lost it if she had tried—that was what it was to be really rich. It had to be the thing you were (NYE, XIX, 121).

This is an attitude from the standpoint of deprivation. To Milly herself, her money is an attribute much like her red hair; she was born with it, but it does not constitute her identity. Unlike Kate, to whom wealth is an end in itself, Milly sees her money as a commodity to be used for an end, and since pursuit of life is her goal, she is willing to pay whatever is necessary of mere money to achieve it. She will "pay through the nose," as Kate puts it, if all she needs to pay is money, "her rent for the future." The distinction that Milly makes between her life, or her self, and her money is her first mistake, for what she fails to realize is the degree to which they are synonymous in the eyes of others. Since she has chosen to seek her life among those others, the distinction that she makes is to all practical purposes nullified. When she submits her wealth to exploitation, she in effect submits her self as well.

Her first weeks in London reveal that Milly's determination to live has not yet taken specific form. She wants to "go in for pleasure . . . the highest kind," but she confesses to Kate that she does not quite know what that is. Nevertheless, she enters the social stream in the belief that this is where "pleasure" lies. Her intense desire to play her drama to the utmost causes her deliberately to avert her eyes from the more sinister and predatory aspects of the world in which she finds herself. She is warned by Kate in no uncertain terms; she is fully aware of Lord
Mark's opportunism, of his "working" of Mrs. Lowder as well as that lady's "working" of him. She rightly believes that she is capable of fending successfully against them, for she has taken their measure. But only sporadically, and then very reluctantly, does she acknowledge certain signs in Kate. One such acknowledgment occurs as she mentally observes that to Kate, Mrs. Stringham "was simply as nought":

It just faintly rankled in her that a person who was good enough and to spare for Milly Theale shouldn't be good enough for another girl... yet in the end... she grasped the reason... Wasn't it sufficiently the reason that the handsome girl was, with twenty other splendid qualities, the least bit brutal too, and didn't she suggest, as no one yet had done for her new friend, that there might be a wild beauty in that, and even a strange grace? Kate wasn't brutally brutal—which Milly had hitherto benightedly supposed the only way; she wasn't even aggressively so, but rather indifferently, defensively, and, as might be said, by the habit of anticipation? (NYE, XIX, 181-182).

At the same time, Kate's restless movement about the room reminds Milly of the pacing of a caged panther, an image particularly appropriate as it simultaneously suggests Kate's confined circumstances, her dark beauty, and her predatory potential. But these portents are for the most part set aside, and Milly yields to her fondness for her new friend. And if she is reluctant to acknowledge danger signals in Kate, she is absolutely incapable of suspecting Densher of duplicity, colored as is her apprehension of him by their previous meeting in New York. It has been suggested that Milly had fallen in love with Densher then, that her decision to come to London had included at least the hope of renewing their acquaintance, and while there is no direct textual evidence of
confirmation, it is certainly tenable. What we do know beyond a shadow of a doubt is that, once Milly is in London and once Densher has reentered the picture, the girl is temperamentally inclined to put the best possible light on his actions and to accept without question Mrs. Lowder's interpretation of the relationship between him and Kate. Milly is too intelligent to have so accepted Mrs. Lowder's word, especially since she has taken the full measure of that lady's capacity for dissembling, unless she were predisposed to accept it. Mrs. Lowder tells her what she wants to hear, and that is that as far as Milly is concerned.

Milly then, like Densher and Kate, has an inconsistent apperception of her world, with a certain cultivated blindness to some things and an unflinching appraisal of others. The latter is most vividly represented in her realistic confronting of her state of health; the former is her selective idealization of Densher, Kate, and the social world in which she has chosen to "live." The two sides to her vision are juxtaposed during the Matcham scene in Book Fifth, largely through the art imagery that pervades the account. She sees the house, the grounds, the stately movements of the elegant people as they circulate in time-honored social ritual in terms of "an almost extravagantly grand Watteau-composition, a tone as of old gold kept 'down' by the quality of the air, summer full-flushed but attuned to the general perfect taste" (NYE, XIX, 208). The Watteau image, like Strether's Lambinet, evokes the suggestion of an idealized perspective, revealing Milly's predisposition to regard the scene around her as the embodiment of the "brilliant" life, the highest
degree of taste, elegance, amenity. But when she comes face to face with the Bronzino in the portrait gallery, she has a moment of clear insight into her future in her sense of personal identification with the lady of the portrait. Mrs. Winner writes:

In spite of all her richness and splendor, the personage in the picture is "unaccompanied by a joy" and dead. Through Milly's identification with her, she at one and the same time feels most fully and intensely the possibilities of life and has the strongest premonition of her doom. Paradoxically, the portrait of the dead woman that has itself endured also seems to urge her to assert her will to live.

At this moment the tension between the forces of life and death within Milly are held in dramatic and imagistic equilibrium. "I shall never be better than this," she says. Ward points out that Milly's vision until the time of her "apotheosis"---of which this scene is the "pink dawn"---is characterized by a tension between "life and art," that is, between her cognizance of a sordid reality and her tendency to idealize. He says, "In the overstuffed vulgarity of Lancaster Gate... the reality of egotism is unrelieved and virtually undisguised by the appearance of art. But at Matcham people and scene merge into a single vision—a picture." The apotheosis foreshadowed by the Bronzino "is personal and prophetic, rather than social and actual; it suggests that only through death and suffering can Milly approach the magnificence of art, that, according to a basic metaphor of the novel, Milly can go up only by going down, that she can be reborn into the immortal beauty of the portrayed woman only by being, like her, 'dead, dead, dead.'"
Milly's glimpse into her future causes her, among other things, to renew her assault upon the present, and it is soon clear that to her, life cannot be ultimately meaningful without love. Despite evidence to the contrary again she elects to accept Mrs. Lowder's designation—which Kate does not contradict—of Kate's and Densher's relationship. Her inadvertent meeting with the trysting lovers in the National Gallery should have been sufficient to belie Mrs. Lowder, yet she accepts Kate's explanations just as, later in the same day, she consciously adopts Kate's designation of her as a "dove." Milly had "the measure of the success she could have as a dove"; "she studied again the dovelike and so set her companion to mere rich reporting that she averted all inquiry into her own case"; "she should have to be clear as to how a dove would act." She derives a certain pleasure, there is an appeal to her romantic imagination, in this private role-playing; it is another way in which her consciousness can revel in a sense of life. As Wright has said, "... she gets what seems to her a very high form through acting her part and working at appreciation." Further, the role-playing provides a protective shield for her, ministering to her desire for privacy and dignity in her extremity. Bersani writes: "In studying the dove-like in human nature, she is trying to make it appear that she is acting on others' versions of what is good for her. She has to help them to help her because essentially she had already refused their plans for her and retired deep within herself for her resources." There is only one part of "their plans for her" that she has inadvertently accepted, and
that is Densher. Her desire for love, which is to say for Densher, is a vulnerable point. All three women—Kate, Mrs. Lowder, and Mrs. Stringham, each for different reasons of her own—are tacitly encouraging the same hope that Milly herself nurtures, and in this coincidence of purpose Milly conforms to the image of the dove in a sense that she does not intend.

Her role-playing assumes other forms: most notably that of the "princess" of Mrs. Stringham's imagination, and the more prosaic designation of the ingenuous "little American girl" which is Densher's view of her.106 A vivid illustration of the latter is her deployment of the role as a means of bridging the awkwardness of her meeting with Densher and Kate in the National Gallery:

The finest part of Milly's own inspiration . . . was the quick perception that what would be of most service was, so to speak, her own native wood-note. . . . She still had reserves of spontaneity, if not of comicality; so that all this cash in hand could now find employment. She became as spontaneous as possible and as American as it might conveniently appeal to Mr. Densher, after his travels, to find her. She said things in the air, and yet flattered herself that she struck him as saying them not in the tone of agitation but in the tone of New York (NYE, XIX, 295-296).

One is reminded of the false bravado of "American" heartiness that Strether adopts upon meeting his pair of lovers at the river. But, unlike Strether at that moment of perception, the moment has not yet arrived for Milly's ultimate confrontation of the truth. That does not come until Venice.
By the time of her installation in the Palazzo Leporelli she has become adept at all of her roles. The whole Venetian establishment is a conscious deployment of Mrs. Stringham's "princess" image; it pleases that lady's fancy to figure the situation as "composing" like a Veronese. But the other two roles have not been abandoned. There is no more clear definition of Milly's Americanness than in her "buying" of royal status, or at least of royal accoutrements. And, as Sandeen has pointed out, while at this point "... Susan may see Milly in the light of gentle triumphant power, Kate sees her as a potential victim," i.e., more than ever as a dove.107 In Venice all three roles and designations are brought into play as Milly's drama approaches its climax. Her moment of supreme happiness, a happiness stemming from her belief that Densher has come to Venice for her rather than for Kate, is vividly figured as she appears at her party in radiant white, her only jewelry a long rope of precious pearls, her whole being emanating a brilliance which casts the black-clad Kate into the shadows. She even looks like the "dove," and Kate evokes the image to Densher. As Milly throws the pair a brilliant smile at the precise moment of their agreement on their pact, the manifold images are fused. Sandeen writes:

Here Kate blends the figure of Milly's innocence with an emblem of Milly's power ... a "long, priceless chain of pearls. . . . The wings image, insofar as it implies 'wondrous flights,' signifies effortless superiority to earthly forces and can readily be associated with the picture of a fairy princess. But another meaning is brought out when the dove is seen to spread her wings, not for flight, but for protection of others.108
The black-and-white imagery of the scene is extended as the black storm off the Adriatic—what Jefferson calls a "great stroke of the obvious"—metaphorically conveys the bursting of Milly's bubble and the extinguishing of her will to live. After all the deception, self-imposed and externally promoted, the great ironic fact is that the truth conveyed by Lord Mark is too much for Milly's fragile spirit to bear. She turns her face to the wall. The complicated web of exploitative intrigue, having woven itself around Milly's point of greatest vulnerability, takes its toll. The spirit which the threat of physical extinction could not intimidate is forced into surrender by the machinations of self-serving egotism.

As the novel's form indicates, the affective agony of the novel's conclusion is Densher's. Although we are not privy to his last interview with Milly, the concluding book suggests the impact made upon him by his last days in Venice, culminating in the visit. Until then, Densher's moral weakness of self-deception wars unbearably with his aggravated sense of guilt. Although he is at first puzzled and disturbed by his refusal at the gates of the Palazzo, and is stricken when he catches a glimpse of Lord Mark through the windows at Florian's, his guess as to what has happened is soon assuaged by a sense of relief that he was, after all, "so remarkably blameless." When Sir Luke Strett arrives, he takes further comfort in the symbolic shelter of "the breadth of Sir Luke's shoulders." "He was being let off; dealt with in the only way that didn't aggravate his responsibility" (NYE, XX, 304-305). But this
false security is shattered, as it should be, and when he goes to see Milly at her request, he is literally forced into a new awareness.111

Densher's conflict is by no means over with the interview. What has happened is that he has been brought face to face with two divergent ways of approaching life, represented by the world of means (Kate) and the world of ends (Milly).112 But the ramifications of the conflict are not so obviously dichotomous as this statement suggests. The life-death dialectic has taken on a new dimension, for the enduring vitality of Milly's spirit is now one with her imminent and soon actual physical death. Similarly, Kate's dynamism and her personification of creativity is inextricably bound with her identification with the spiritual deadness of the world of means. It is no easily resolved conflict that Densher experiences. Kraft has said:

Milly and her friends are opposites: she faces death and they attempt to hide from it and, paradoxically, she in confronting death confirms life, and they in fleeing from the fact of death create a dead world in which human life is treated and exploited as if it were an object, a mere thing. . . . Densher is forced to see what he cannot ignore. . . . He must face the consequences of a vision clarified too late to avoid tragedy. It is perhaps the very usualness of Milly's reception of him that gives him the impression of something immense, of something "too beautiful and too sacred to describe." In the first portion of the novel, Milly . . . has said to Susan Shepherd Stringham, "Since I've lived all these years as if I were dead, I shall die, no doubt, as if I were alive." This is exactly what Densher's heightened vision presumably enables him to see: Milly triumphing over the fear of death simply by dying as if she were to live.113

The resolution of Densher's dilemma centers on two letters which become symbols of the terms of the conflict. The first is the Christmas
Eve letter from Milly, which he carefully keeps and refrains from opening until he has had a chance to see Kate. The chance occurs on the following day when he goes to the sordid Chirk Street house where Kate has gone to visit her sister. The setting of their meeting reinforces the image of the fate which Kate has tried so hard to avoid and her inappropriateness to these surroundings. The fact that she has gone there voluntarily also suggests that it may not be too late for her to eschew the Lancaster Gate world. When she tosses Milly's still unopened letter into the fire, Densher's loyalty to Kate causes him to check his impulse to try to rescue it from the flames. Nevertheless, he feels a blow the pain of which is inextinguishable, which stays with him "while the days melted":

The thought was all his own, and his intimate companion was the last person he might have shared it with. He kept it back like a favourite pang; left it behind him, so to say, when he went out, but came home again the sooner for the certainty of finding it there. Then he took it out of its sacred corner and its soft wrappings; he undid them one by one, handling them, handling it, as a father, baffled and tender, might handle a maimed child. But so it was before him—in his dread of who else might see it. Then he took to himself at such hours, in other words, that he should never, never know what had been in Milly's letter. The intention announced in it he should but too probably know; but that would have been, but for the depths of his spirit, the least part of it. The part of it missed forever was the turn she would have given her act. That turn had possibilities that, somehow, by wondering about them, his imagination had extraordinarily filled out and refined. It had made of them a revelation the loss of which was like the sight of a priceless pearl cast before his eyes—his pledge given not to save it—into the fathomless sea, or rather even it was like the sacrifice of something sentient and throbbing, something that, for the spiritual
ear, might have been audible as a faint, far wail. This was the sound that he cherished, when alone, in the stillness of his rooms (NYE, XX, 395-396).

During the ensuing weeks which pass before the arrival of the second letter, this one the official notification from the lawyers in New York, the tension is still unresolved. Kate remains at Chirk Street, and they accordingly have a degree of freedom to see each other that they have hitherto not experienced. Densher is very much aware of Kate's continuing "talent for life," but he is equally aware of the gulf that has opened between them. "He would have described their change--had he so far faced it as to describe it--by their being so damned civil" (NYE, XX, 393). Their relationship is becoming more a matter of form as the substance is slowly eroded. When the expected letter finally arrives, Densher puts Kate "to a test" by sending it to her, also unopened, with the request that she bring it with her to his rooms. 114

The novel's last scene lays bare the dimensions of the tragedy. Kate has failed the preliminary test, for she opened the letter upon receiving it, and Densher's hope that on her own she would see the symbolic value in its being returned to New York with the seal intact is shattered. Such a gesture would signal repentance and the possibility of regeneration. But, that possibility irrevocably gone, in Densher's view one more remains, which Kate sees and articulates: "You'll marry me without the money; you won't marry me with it." He assures her that in the latter case he will "make over every penny" to her, so that Kate's choice is clearly between the money and the marriage. Densher's view presumably is that marriage without the fruits of their deception
might offer the opportunity to emulate Milly's example of forgiving, unselfed, magnanimous love within the context of relationship, relationship denied to Milly herself. But Kate's view is different: "Her memory's your love. You want no other. . . . We shall never be again as we were."

Kate's vision, in this last instant and on this last point, is the truest, for they could never again be as they were; Densher is wrong in hoping that they could. But if his final vision is incomplete, so is hers, for failing to realize the possibility of establishing a new relationship on a new basis prefigured by Milly's example. But the damage wrought by the world of means on this "far from a common couple" is irreversible. The trap they had laid "for the great innocence to come" has become their trap; their passion has become a "... need to bury in the dark blindness of each other's arms the knowledge of each other that they couldn't undo." Mrs. Krook has said:

When one remembers the beauty and freshness of that early scene in Kensington Gardens when Kate pledged him every spark of her faith, every drop of her life, and he responded with breathed words and murmured sounds and lighted eyes, it is hardly possible to question the tragic intention of the dénouement... The tragic cast of the dénouement of The Wings of the Dove stems directly from the destructive impact wrought upon the three principals by the institutionalized egotism of the world of means. Milly's death has been transmuted from the pathetic to the tragic by her anagnorisis and agon. Densher has had his two-fold recognition: the first deriving from his having been "forgiven, dedicated, blessed" by the one he has so wronged, and the second from his subsequent insight and belated acknowledgment of
the immorality of any attempt, no matter how mitigated or rationalized, to use or exploit another human being. Kate Croy's is a case of tragic waste, and the catharsis she effects upon the reader is akin to those of the great tragic heroes of tradition whose downfall is accomplished by the coalition of extrinsic forces and intrinsic flaw. As Cargill puts it, "Kate is among the damned, and she knows it; but she is among the greatly damned. . . ."118 The tragedy is complete.

With The Wings of the Dove I bring to a close my consideration of the theme of the integrated self in these selected novels of Henry James. I have demonstrated, I hope, that his concern with the problem of realizing and maintaining a loving, open, dynamic, and spontaneous consciousness was one that occupied his attention from the beginning to the end of his literary career. I have further attempted to identify what I see as James's vision of the moral evil which results from an overweening preoccupation with the ego: the selfishness, exploitation, and manipulation, the attempts to appropriate and possess others, the violation of the bonds and responsibilities of relationship. James's fictive world, as many readers have observed, is in some ways a curiously paradoxical one. Granted that he recognized and repeatedly dramatized the fact that the world is full of "traps for the unwary" (to quote him from another context), granted even that his works often convey a sense of a "negative imagination" or an "imagination of disaster," he also displayed to the full "the imagination of loving." It is perhaps characteristic that all three of these phrases, subsequently utilized as titles for critical
studies of James, are James's own. The seeming contradiction implied by the juxtaposition of the first two with the last does not really prove a contradiction in James's thought; rather does it suggest that Scott Fitzgerald was right when he remarked that the test of a first-rate mind is the ability to hold simultaneously contradictory ideas and still function. Not even his detractors have suggested that James had less than a first-rate mind.

The question remains, I suppose, whether the vision—the ethics, standards, values, codes—which define the Jamesian morality in the fiction corresponds in every particular with that held by the man. Robert L. Reilly has demonstrated the difficulty of determining this point, so I will refrain from making any such claim. The skeptic can always declare that neither the evidence of the works (even if they seem to present consistent patterns), nor personal comments in letters, notebooks, Prefaces, or autobiography, nor the conclusions reached by his indefatigable biographer, are irrefutable proof to the strictly logical mind that any posited value system, standards, or beliefs correspond with those of the author. So be it. For this reader, James's works, in addition to their aesthetic merits, are a sufficiently adequate vade mecum for the moral life, and as for the man Henry James himself, I am content to accept the judgment offered by his last amanuensis, Theodora Bosanquet:

When he walked out of the refuge of his study into the world and looked about him, he saw a place of torment, where creatures of prey perpetually thrust their claws into the quivering flesh of the doomed, defenceless children of light. . . . [But] he had
the abiding comfort of an inner certainty . . .
that the children of light had an eternal advantage;
he was aware to the finest fibre of his being that
the "poor sensitive gentlemen" he so numerously
treated possessed a treasure that would outlast all
the glittering paste of the world and the flesh; he
knew that nothing in life mattered compared with
spiritual decency. 

If Miss Bosanquet was right, then we can also accept the sentiment
expressed on the Henry James Memorial Plaque in Chelsea's All-Saints
Church, where he is called "the lover and interpreter of fine amenities,
of brave decisions and generous loyalties." Let this epitaph be ours as
well.
The essay was a review of a German translation of two of Turgenieff's novels, Frühlingsfluten and Ein König Lear des Dorfes, a review which appeared in North American Review, April, 1874. See Cornelia Pulsifer Kelley's The Early Development of Henry James (Urbana, Ill., 1965), pp. 176-181, for a consideration of Turgenieff's influence on James as revealed in James's two essays on the Russian writer.

The reference, of course, is to the title of Matthiessen's book, Henry James: The Major Phase (New York, 1944), which was one of the first studies to deal seriously with these novels as the crowning achievement of James's career.

James's early critics almost invariably commented disapprovingly upon the "mandarin style" of the late works, comments which by now are cliches: "he came to write more and more of less and less," "his style was his sufficient fig leaf," etc. Matthiessen's study was among those which turned the tide of critical opinion, although there are still some who "protest against the James vogue" (see Arthur L. Scott's article, "A Protest Against the James Vogue," in CE, XIII [1952], 198-203). F. R. Leavis, too, insists that "something went wrong with his development": "it is as if his interest in his material had been too specialized, too much concentrated on certain limited kinds of possible development, and as if with the technical elaboration expressing this specialized interest he had lost his full sense of life and let his moral taste slip into abeyance" (Great Tradition, p. 161). The last indictment would be particularly damning if true, but fortunately most serious critics seem to agree with Cargill, who says that those like Leavis who "can appreciate nothing in the novel [The Ambassadors] ... seem to me unfortunately self-condemned (Novels of Henry James, p. 336, n. 63). For some constructive analysis of certain aspects of the late style, see Ian Watt, "The First Paragraph of The Ambassadors: An Explication," ELH, X (1960), 250-274; Ellen Douglass Layburn's chapter, "The Use of the Word 'Funny' in the Late Novels," in Strange Alloy: The Relation of Comedy to Tragedy in the Fiction of Henry James (Chapel Hill, 1968), pp. 136-167; or Mary K. Mitchell's "Henry James's Use of the Word Wonderful in The Ambassadors," MLN, LXXV (1960), 114-117. For a probing analysis of the psychology of Strether's process of change, see Gordon O. Taylor's section on The Ambassadors in The Passages of Thought (New York, 1969), pp. 71-84; Taylor demonstrates convincingly the advance in psychological complexity from Roderick Hudson to The Portrait of a Lady to The Ambassadors. Many people, too, have commented on the dialogue in the late works, ranging from Edith Wharton's anecdote--"But, Henry, people don't talk that way!" ... "Oh? Don't they?"—to James Thurber's parody, "The Beast in the Dingle." But a passage from William James's
Psychology provides a perceptive gloss on this matter: "When two minds of a high order, interested in kindred subjects, come together, their conversation is chiefly remarkable for the summariness of its allusions and the rapidity of its transitions. Before one of them is half through a sentence, the other knows his meaning and replies... The charm of conversation is in direct proportion to the possibility of abridgment and elision, and in inverse ratio to the need of explicit statement. With old friends a word stands for a whole story or set of opinions. With newcomers everything must be gone over in detail..." This comment, it seems to me, goes far to describe the kinds of conversations in which the characters engage, and it also perhaps helps to explain the difficulty those readers who are not "old friends" of James have; as Cargill said in connection with The Wings of the Dove, "Let us say bluntly it is for Jamesians, for they only have an adequate preparation for it... Ability to recognize subtle dramatic tensions, the proliferation of poetic imagery, the iteration of symbols, the rich interweaving of themes, and the control of the multiplicity of elements comes only from a long saturation in James" (Novels of Henry James, pp. 374-375).


5 An interesting study of the "transition to the modern novel" (his subtitle) is Alan Friedman's The Turn of the Novel (New York, 1966). Friedman discusses the shift from the "closed to the open" novel, and points out the ethical implications of the evolution of the "stream of consciousness" technique. He coins the metaphor "stream of conscience" to describe "the progressive complication of ethical experience" (p. xv), which, he says, is the experience of the modern novel. Of James, he says: "The unique syntactical refinement of the sensibility of his characters in Henry James's fiction is not merely the mode of rendering
consciousness in prose. The play of moral intelligence over the surface of events—polishing perceptions, perceiving values, evaluating feelings, and feeling polished—takes on the character of the highest form of conscience. The tissue of fine, grammatical, moral perception, forever strenuous, forever in tune, becomes both a technique in fiction and a desideratum, a way for existence" (p. 176). In view of the insights expressed in his generalizations, one wishes Friedman had provided readings of some of the novels, which, unfortunately, he does not do.

6 The essay was originally published in the Quarterly Review of Apr., 1904, and was subsequently included by James in Notes on Novelists (1914). See Leon Edel, Henry James: The Treacherous Years 1895-1901 (Philadelphia and New York, 1969), pp. 350-354, where he discusses the review and its significance to the novelist at this period in his life.

7 I shall note some of these divergent readings in the course of my examinations of the individual novels.


9 Treacherous Years, pp. 345-346.

10 I do not wish to seem to be allying myself with those critics—Matthiessen, Anderson, or Lee, for instance—who view these novels as a single unit. Basically I agree with Dorothea Krook, who says that "there is no doubt, of course, about the unifying preoccupations of these three works, nor about the peculiarities of the late style that they have in common. Yet the differences are as great, and as important, as the resemblances..." See Ordeal of Consciousness, p. 287.


12 Austin Warren, discussing James's reasons for having invented a town for his purposes in the novel, goes on to say that Woollett is a medium-sized city analogous, say, to Hartford, Providence, or Worcester. Having made the point, he then curiously enough continues to refer to the fictional Woollett as "Worcester," presumably on the basis of the alliteration. See "The New England Conscience; Henry James; and Ambassador Strether," MinnR, II (1962), 149-161.
In point of literal fact, of course, Waymarsh is represented in the novel as a citizen of "Milrose," neighbor community to Woollett; it is a fact which does not negate my point. Many critics have commented on the device of keeping Mrs. Newsome off-stage; see, for instance, Matthiessen, Major Phase, p. 21; Frederick C. Crews, The Tragedy of Manners (New Haven, 1957), p. 47, (who thinks it makes Mrs. Newsome too "abstract"); Cargill, Novels of Henry James, pp. 307-308, (who says James was influenced by Ibsen's Rosmersholm in this as in other matters). Warren, in "The New England Conscience," also sees Mrs. Newsome as the Conscience Incarnate.

Beach's statement that Strether is "the very incarnation of the New England conscience" seems much too strong, failing as it does to acknowledge that other dimension of Strether's nature; see Method of Henry James, p. 45. In this schematization, it is obvious that I am omitting mention of Jim and Mamie Pocock who, despite a certain richness they add to the situation, play relatively minor roles. Most critics see Jim primarily in the light of comic relief; however, J. A. Ward, while perhaps overstating the case, makes a good point by saying "though [Waymarsh and Pocock] are comic in their vulgarity and their inability to enjoy Europe, they are not simply victims of a fierce economic system, but are so emotionally and morally deranged by their backgrounds that they have become agents of evil. . . . Jim Pocock is the American business man blighted and dehumanized, made bestial through his activity in industry. He is an enemy of the fine and the noble. His raucous delight in a Paris which he imagines a center of licentiousness and debauchery is but the counterpart of his wife's prejudiced denunciation of Paris" (Imagination of Disaster, p. 118). Mamie serves as a kind of foil to Jeanne de Vionnet and, in her one important scene with Strether, serves temporarily as ficelle.

E. M. Forster was the one who coined the term, "hourglass pattern," to describe this reversal of roles and its embodiment in the structure of the novel; see Aspects of the Novel (London, 1927). Two recent articles utilizing the metaphor as a basis for argument are Robert E. Garis's "The Two Lambert Strethers: A New Reading of The Ambassadors," MFS, VII (1961), 305-316, and D. J. Dooley's "The Hourglass Pattern in The Ambassadors," NEQ, XLI (1968), 273-281. Both articles point out that the hourglass pattern is incomplete, since Strether stops short of changing places completely with Chad, but Dooley goes on to rebut Garis's negative view of Strether's final position. See also Leon Edel, "Introduct. The Ambassadors (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), pp. ix-x, for additional comment on the novel's "architectonic" structure.

Cf. L. Moffitt Cecil's "'Virtuous Attachment' in James's Ambassadors," AQ, XIX (1967), 719-724, who refers to the "dehumanizing repressions of Woollett" as opposed to the "moral obliquities of Paris" (p. 720). But Cecil continues, "The dilemma . . . is a false one. It
rests upon the erroneous assumption that the major conflict in the novel is the clash between the ideas and ideals of Woollett on the one hand, and those of Paris on the other. If one accepts this assumption as true, he will of course be forced to make a choice. He goes on to say, accurately enough, that "Strether chooses neither the one nor the other... In the course of the novel he has outgrown both the Woollett and the Paris codes and has gained a moral insight that is superior to either" (pp. 720-721). Cecil's conclusion, as will be seen, coincides with mine, but I hold to my position that through most of the novel, specifically until the Lambinet scene at the end of Book Eleventh, Strether's tension is precisely that which Cecil calls a "false dilemma." It may be false to the reader, if he is perceptive enough to anticipate the vision that Strether ultimately achieves; but the tension of the novel is Strether's tension and it is not until Book Twelfth that Strether achieves the synthesis that Cecil so aptly describes.

17 Cf. Mildred E. Hartsock, "The Dizzying Crest: Strether as Moral Man," MLQ, XXVI (1965), 414-425, who says that the Woollett morality is one "that does not discriminate: it is the morality of the general, of the not-to-be-questioned community code... Though inherent in all law and necessary, perhaps, in a society in which all men have not yet become capable of deep discrimination, such morality is minimal; one merely learns the code and acts accordingly" (p. 415). I find Miss Hartsock's article to be among the best discussions of the novel. Hudspeth makes a similar point, although he identifies this kind of morality solely with Americans; he writes: "Americans, in their innocence, judge from 'types,' from preconceived forms, not from individual instances. The morality which demands that life be fragmented into 'types' is a closed morality which refuses to consider the possibility of undifferentiated grey areas where types become indistinct... Insistence upon predetermined judgments is more than mere rigidity of moral judgment. It is the denial of values derived from human relationship" ("Definition of Innocence," p. 355). See also Sallie Sears's The Negative Imagination: Form and Perspective in the Novels of Henry James (Ithaca, 1968), esp. p. 117, where she makes an analysis of the "deductive, syllogistic" reasoning of Woollett, and Strether's subsequent responses to that reasoning, that is very close to mine.

18 Cf. Ellen Douglass Leyburn, who has a short but perceptive discussion of Maria and her relationship with Strether, including an analysis of this scene (see Strange Alloy, pp. 103-108).

19 An inordinate amount of speculation has gone into attempts to identify, on the basis of internal evidence, the unnamed domestic item (the "small, trivial, rather ridiculous object," Strether calls it), the manufacturing of which is the source of the Newsome fortune. See R. W. Stallman, "Time and the Unnamed Article in The Ambassadors," MLN, LXXII (1957), 27-32, and "'The Sacred Rage': The Time Theme in The Ambassadors
MFS, III (1957), 41-56, who argues for a timepiece of some sort. See also Patricia Evans, "The Meaning of the Match Image in James's The Ambassadors," MLN, LXX (1955), 36-37, who says it is a match. Oscar Cargill says "it would have been quite ironic if the mysterious object . . . were a tin jelly-mold," referring to Strether's use of that metaphor in the "live all you can" speech (see Novels of Henry James, p. 333, n. 40). Cargill goes on to say, however, that "knowing James's love of mystification . . . one might better argue that he had nothing specific in mind, preferring to let the reader's imagination select the worst object for him."

Hudspeth sees Strether himself as a potential manipulator, saying that his "whole purpose in 'coming out' was to interfere with Chad's life, a purpose which too easily assumes the possibility of control" ("Definition of Innocence," p. 356). He does say that the impulse in Strether is "magnanimous, open, and honest, yet . . . can be corrosive in Sarah and Mrs. Newsome" (p. 357). The point is, of course, that the purpose is really Mrs. Newsome's; Strether is only her "ambassador." See Walter F. Wright, The Madness of Art (Lincoln, Neb., 1962), pp. 236-237, for a discussion of the meaning implied in James's use of the term "ambassador."

Leavis's lack of appreciation for this novel is nowhere more evident than in his question, "What, we ask, is this, symbolized by Paris, that Strether feels himself to have missed in his own life? Has James himself sufficiently inquired? Is it anything adequately realized?" (Great Tradition, p. 161). Hudspeth has in effect answered the question, too summarily perhaps but nonetheless accurately, by saying, "Paris is the symbol of the aesthetic life . . . the vehicle of Strether's aroused perceptions; the city not only exists, it influences" (see "Definition of Innocence," p. 357). See also James's comments in the Preface (AN, pp. 316-317).


For a discussion of Gloriani as he figures in both Roderick Hudson and The Ambassadors, see Viola Hopkins's "Gloriani and the Tides of Taste," NCF, XVII (1963), 65-71; she also discusses the sculptor in her
subsequent book, published under her married name of Viola Hopkins Winner, *Henry James and the Visual Arts* (Charlottesville, 1970), pp. 112-113. Her comments, however, especially in the article, seem to apply a more positive significance to Gloriani than the scene seems to warrant. We remember, for instance, that Strether corrects Little Bilham's inference that is Gloriani whom Strether would enjoy "being like"; it is, rather, Chad. Mrs. Winner's reading seems to be based on the same assumption that Little Bilham made (see especially *Visual Arts*, p. 113). Mrs. Sears comments in a like manner, saying, for instance, that the "vision of Gloriani is the apotheosis of Strether's European adventure. The artist is the exalted image of the complex set of personal possibilities . . . that might have been . . ." (*Negative Imagination*, p. 143).


26The phrase is Cargill's; see p. 315. Cf. also Arnold L. Goldsmith, "Henry James's Reconciliation of Free Will and Fatalism" NCF, XII (1958), 109-126, who says that Strether's speech on this occasion implies that "if an illusion leads to successful action, to progress, to happiness, then it is meaningful, whether it is true or not. . . In this way, illusion becomes a major motivating factor in human behavior" (p. 117). Later, however, Goldsmith says that Strether's subsequent deeds belie his words (p. 119), implying that he too recognizes that a strict pragmatism is not Strether's final position.

27See Cecil, "'Virtuous Attachment,'" pp. 721-723, who provides a good discussion of the Woollett "group morality," the code of the Parisian *affaire d'amour*, and the different definitions which Little Bilham and Strether attach to the word "virtuous."

28Cf. Cargill, pp. 310-311, who also comments on James's audacity in waiting until almost mid-way through the novel before introducing the major heroine.

Cf. Ward, who says that Waymarsh becomes increasingly "sinister" as the novel progresses (Imagination of Disaster, p. 114).

Among the many who have recognized this point are Hudspeth, who says that Sarah is "the embodiment of all that is narrow, cruel, and unyielding in Woollett," and that her role is "to reveal fully the hideousness of American innocence. She is willing to disrupt the lives of others, to condemn that which she cannot understand and to coerce when all else fails" ("Definition of Innocence," pp. 358-359). I agree, obviously, with Hudspeth's evaluation of Sarah. My only cavil is that while these are not necessarily or unilaterally qualities of Americanness or innocence, they are necessarily and unilaterally qualities of egotism in James's works.

In her discussion of this scene, Dorothea Krook coins an inclusive phrase when she says that Sarah represents the "Woollett metaphysics of straight and simple dichotomies" (Ordeal of Consciousness, p. 407). Cf. also Hartsock, "Dizzying Crest," p. 415.

See Edel, who says that "it is the most 'classical' and symmetrical of James's novels. He spoke of each part as being 'like a rounded medallion, in a series of a dozen, hung, with its effect of high relief, on a wall.' His round dozen parts fall into two perfect halves, within the story's structure. During the first six books, the movement of the novel is forward; it is the story of Strether's ambassadorial mission. At the end of the sixth book Strether is 'recalled.' . . . In the last six books we see the new envoys on the scene. The climax of each half is reached neatly in the penultimate books—Book Fifth of the first half, and in Book Eleventh of the second" ("Introd.," Ambassadors, pp. ix-x).

Visual Arts, pp. 76-77. Cf. also McLean, "Completed Vision," p. 455, who points to the very similar evocation of French ruralism in "Madame de Mauves"; and Gibson, "Metaphor in the Plot," p. 292, who says that the image patterns in the scene "relate setting and character, define the character to which they are applied, and the consciousness which formulates them . . . and dramatize the psychological tensions and conflicts" of Strether.

Cf. Cargill, Novels of Henry James, pp. 317-318.

Visual Arts, p. 77.

Ibid., p. 78.

39 Cf. Ward, who says that "it is ironic that even though Mrs. Newsome and Sarah Pocock are right in believing their suspicions of adultery to be well founded, they are no less immoral for their condemnation of Strether and Mme. de Vionnet. They are wrong not only in their prejudices and in their blindness to beauty, but also in their unequivocal and easy identification of adultery with evil and in their condemnation of the adulterer" (Imagination of Disaster, p. 121).

40 The phrase refers, of course, to the title of Miss Hartsock's article; see pp. 417-419 of the article for a detailed analysis of the successive stages through which Strether goes between his return to Paris in the company of Chad and Marie and his visit with Marie on the following evening.

41 Cf. Wright, Madness of Art, pp. 239-240; Leyburn, Strange Alloy, pp. 132-133; and especially Hartsock, who points to the double imagery--"images of clarity and quiet and images of violence and bloodshed--which pervades the scene (p. 419). She points out that through his experience with Marie, whom he finally "absolves," Strether "cuts loose not merely from Puritan Woollett, but also from the human propensity to live by unexamined codes or by unexamined codelessness. The adultery is not shown as ugly: the only ugliness in the novel is in Chad's imminent desertion of Madame de Vionnet... Strether strongly affirms the beauty and grace of Madame de Vionnet. He pities her, and he understands, for the first time, how love can hurt and still be whole" (p. 420).

42 As the passage quoted in n. 41 suggests, Hartsock takes issue with Cargill, whose "belief that Madame de Vionnet's desire for Strether to stay is an attempt to 'use' him is strangely indifferent to the evidence" (p. 420). She suggests that "the word 'use' suggests some devious machinations on her part that nowhere appear evident." McLean takes even more emphatic issue with Cargill, saying that "such a reading attributes Chad's motives to Madame de Vionnet" ("Completed Vision," p. 458). McLean goes to the other extreme, however, reading Strether's actions and words in the scene as constituting an attempt to persuade Marie to become his mistress, and Marie as putting him off (see pp. 457-458). I can see no textual basis to justify attributing such cynical opportunism to Strether.

43 "Dizzying Crest," p. 414.

44 Major Phase, p. 39.

45 "Two Lambert Strethers," p. 315.
"Hourglass Pattern," p. 280. Replying directly to Garis's comment, Dooley writes, "The statements which Garis calls sterile maxims are really cryptic explanations, understood by Maria, of decisions arrived at rationally." Cf. William James's description of conversation between friends (n. 3 above).


See n. 42 above.

Method of Henry James, p. 141.

Novels of Henry James, p. 323; see also pp. 355-356, n. 54.

Visual Arts, p. 80.

Cf. Leyburn, Strange Alloy, p. 135; and Krook, Ordeal of Consciousness, p. 335.

See Cargill, p. 326, who makes the additional point that both names derive from the Virgin Mary. He goes on to summarize the "rich overtones" given the novel by James's evocations of Christian symbolism.


Matthiessen comments on the seeming vagueness of Sir Luke's advice, saying that "... it is James's method to give us such knowledge only through the refracted reports of other characters. He may have felt it necessary to play down the difficult fact of physical infirmity by never saying directly what Milly's illness is, though for many readers this operates as a tedious mystification" (Major Phase, p. 67). He goes on to say that in spite of Kate's opinion that it is "not lungs," Milly's behavior suggests that it must be tuberculosis. Matthiessen acknowledges in the next paragraph that the important point here is that the doctor's advice establishes the fact that Milly's illness is terminal. See also Quentin G. Kraft's "Life Against Death in Venice," Criticism, VII (1965), 217-223, where he says that Sir Luke's advice "... seems a little peculiar if it is not advice to be given to anyone suddenly become conscious of mortality" (p. 221). Cf. also Leyburn, Strange Alloy, p. 153.

Imagination of Disaster, p. 126. See also Christof Wegelin's The Image of Europe in Henry James (Dallas, 1958), who, in pointing out the thematic parallels between the two novels, says that "While the Paris
of the first represents the beautiful order which results from a continuity of social experience, the second is concerned with the corruption, the perversion of motives attendant upon the process of refinement when social organization becomes subservient to greed (p. 106).

58"Life Against Death," p. 221.

59Major Phase, p. 43. Rebecca West, in her little commemorative study, Henry James (London, 1916), was among the first to so designate it (see p. 104). See also Cargill, Novels of Henry James, 373-375, who mentions others who have viewed the novel in both positive and negative lights. Cargill’s own reading suggests unmistakably that he is among its admirers.

60Some who have found fault with The Wings on this score are Leavis, whose dislike for the major phase novels is unilateral (see Great Tradition, pp. 157-158); Richard Chase, who says that the "... metaphorical effects... strike one... as negative facts—attenuations of the naturalistic substance of the novel" (see The American Novel and its Tradition [New York, 1957], p. 137); and S. Gorley Putt, who says that "We see through Kate and Milly, we do not see them very clearly." Putt also says, however, that "It is the inwardness of it all that makes the novel, that reconciles the reader to so much bother" (see Henry James: A Reader’s Guide [Ithaca, 1966], p. 324). See also Pelham Edgar, who said, referring to Isabel’s scene with Ralph on his deathbed in Portrait: "It is such a scene that we miss in The Wings of the Dove, where we witness in Merton Densher only the moral reflection from his interview with the dying Milly. James by this time had convinced himself, to the point of infatuation, of the value of indirect methods..." (Henry James: Man and Author [New York, 1964, orig. publ. 1927], p. 255). See also Jefferson (Modern Reader, pp. 201-202), who comments on the difficulty of the style without condemning James for it.

61See Austin Warren, Rage for Order, whose chapter "Symbolic Imagery in the Later Novels" is an excellent analysis of the artistic dimensions of these works. The chapter was originally published in Kenyon Review, V (1943), and has been reprinted in Discussions of Henry James, ed. Naomi Lebowitz (Boston, 1962), pp. 96-105. Warren discusses the novels' organicism, that is, the relationship between their "technical or structural" elements and the thematic "epistemological and metaphysical counterpart."

62Cf. Sears, Negative Imagination, (p. 85), who points out the novel’s "paradoxical sense of things, antithetical modes of structuring and comprehending reality without granting authority to any one mode" and calls it "a fundamental characteristic of James’s imagination." Her reading, perceptive as it often is, does not always accord with mine, particularly in regard to Densher. An even more basic divergence is her question whether as a rule James "sees greed and manipulation as moral failures" (p. 86).


Image of Europe, p. 107. The phrase I quote in the next sentence is also Wegelin's.


An ingenious attempt to diagram this symmetry is D. C. Muecke's "The Dove's Flight," *NCF*, IX (1954), 76-78.

"New England Conscience," p. 156. Warren's comment occurs in the context of a comparison between Mrs. Lowder and Mrs. Newsome. He too sees them as essentially alike.

Bruce McElderry says, incredibly, that "James makes of Aunt Maud a gracious person" (*Henry James* [New York, 1965], p. 138). Such a statement seems to me to ignore the evidence of the novel. Dorothea Krook, more accurately, applies the epithet "terrible," calling Mrs. Lowder "... the presiding daemon, supreme symbol of [the] worldliness" of Lancaster Gate. She is "... a host of other earlier Jamesian grandes dames rolled into one; and being the quintessential grande dame, she is of course incomparably more deadly and dangerous than any of her predecessors" (see *Ordeal of Consciousness*, p. 202).

1945). See also Ward, who says that "The England which has its center in Lancaster Gate . . . is given over completely to materialism. Its art has degenerated to the colossal vulgarity of Maud Lowder . . . (Imagination of Disaster, p. 126). Ward has here somewhat narrowed the far-reaching implications expressed in his earlier article, "Social Disintegration in The Wings of the Dove," Crit., II (1960), 190-203, in which he sees the Lancaster Gate society as foreshadowing the imminent disintegration of Western culture. See also Wright, who says that "... Maud comes to represent a sinister, relentless force determined upon the destruction of Kate's soul" (Madness of Art, p. 221). In short, many readers have been sensitive to the sinister dimensions of the society represented by and embodied in Maud Lowder.

72 Themes of Henry James, p. 90. Bowden also notes (p. 89) the house's personification of Mrs. Lowder's own vulgarity. Cf. also Leyburn, Strange Alloy, pp. 150-151; Van Cromphout, "Intention and Achievement," p. 151; and M. A. Goldberg, "Things and Values in Henry James's Universe," WHR, XI (1957), 383.

73 Cf. Ward, Imagination of Disaster, p. 127; Wright, Madness of Art, p. 221; Matthiessen, Major Phase, pp. 60, 69.

74 Novels of Henry James, p. 373.

75 Cf. Matthiessen (Major Phase, p. 59). Cargill (Novels of Henry James, pp. 347, 362, 378, n. 22), relates Kate to James's earlier "bad heroines," most notably Olive Chancellor, Rose Armiger (The Other House), and Georgina Roy ("Georgina's Reasons"). I find it curious that Cargill does not acknowledge Kate's similarity to Christina Light, to whom she is much closer than to Olive, for instance. Cf. also Ronald M. Meldrum's "Three of Henry James's Dark Ladies," ES, XXXVII (1968), 54-60.


77 Cf. Wright (Madness of Art, pp. 220-221), who, reading Kate much as I do, provides a lucid analysis of the nature and terms of her dilemma.

78 See Leyburn (Strange Alloy, pp. 148-149), for an analysis of Lionel Croy. She refers to the ". . . selfishness of the debased schemer" and points out the effects he produces upon Kate, effects which deepen the reader's sympathy for the girl.

79 Madness of Art, p. 221.
Cf. Wright, who says: "Kate knows that Aunt Maud is using her and that she therefore owes her nothing; but she herself has gone a step beyond mere rebellious evasion, for she is going to use Aunt Maud. The effect on the latter need not worry us, but we begin to fear for Kate" (Madness of Art, p. 222). Cargill, too, recognizes that "Kate's real antagonist... is her Aunt Maud; between them is a clash of imperious wills, and the novel itself is in part a disquisition on the proper exertion of the human will: it may fittingly be used for self-preservation, as Milly Theale uses it; but it may not be exerted for the dominance of others, as Mrs. Lowder and Kate exert it" (Novels of Henry James, p. 363). An unusually condemnatory attitude toward Kate is expressed by Osborne Andreas, who says that, although James's art is able to endow her with "... a mode of sensibility able to stand alone, self-justified, we are not sure that she is anything better than a common little swindler" (Henry James and the Expanding Horizon [Seattle, 1948], p. 168). Cf. also Krook, Ordeal of Consciousness, p. 215; Ward, Imagination of Disaster, p. 137; and Bersani, who says: "What Kate does, which makes her different from Milly and Densher is to fight her struggle with the weapons of her antagonists" ("Narrator as Center," p. 136).

Referring to Kate's quest for identity, Ward points to the symbolic significance of her repeated glances into a mirror during the scene with Lionel Croy; she is "... holding fast to that which is herself," he says. Then, "... when she seeks her own image in Densher's mirror in the novel's final scene, she signalizes her separation from her lover, whose own renunciation of money forces Kate to retreat to the damming security of wealth" (Imagination of Disaster, p. 136).

Cf. Matthiessen, who says that "... once she is tempted, desire for money becomes the great corruptor" (Major Phase, p. 58). Cf. also Bowden, Themes, p. 88.

Imagination of Disaster, p. 130. Ward's evaluation of the matter of Kate's free will is equivocal. On the one hand, he makes such a statement as this; on the other, he says that "To pursue magnificence, Kate has no choice but to accept the code of Aunt Maud" (p. 136). But he does not seem to consider the fact that it is Kate's choice "to pursue magnificence." One gets the impression that Ward personally does not accept the idea of free will, although he acknowledges that James does, at least to the point of moral accountability. I would suggest that only the latter is relevant to criticism.

Sandeen provides a probing analysis of the complexity of the mitigating circumstances of Kate's situation, but apart from his initial acknowledgment that "It is true that Kate perceives in Milly's situation a chance to have her cake and eat it too," the effect of his argument is to present Kate as a victim of determinism. As I suggested above, my
own reaction is that such a view diminishes rather than enhances Kate's stature, for it deprives her of the tragic dimension (see "Study of . . . Later Phase," esp. p. 1067).

85 Cf. Rebecca West, who refers to "... the hard envious eyes of Kate Croy, who is the hawk circling over the poor dying dove . . ." Henry James, p. 103). See also Bersani, who says that Kate "... becomes one of the animals in the jungle of the London social life" ("Narrator as Center," p. 136).

86 Cf. Kraft, "Life Against Death," p. 221; Ward, Imagination of Disaster, p. 137; and Krook, Ordeal of Consciousness, pp. 204-205.

87 Madness of Art, p. 222.

88 Cf. Bersani, "Narrator as Center," p. 137; and Cargill, Novels of Henry James, p. 367.

89 The degree of Densher's weakness of will has been a much-debated point. Those readers who categorically dislike him see him as devoid of strength or any other virtue; others, while making no apology for his manipulability at the hands of Kate and his self-imposed blindness, have seen these facts as consistent with his character as a sensitive man and as contributing to his own tragedy. Ward has made an important point, I think, in his observation that, unlike Kate, "... his motivation is not greed, but love" (Imagination of Disaster, p. 137). I am in essential agreement with Wright's analysis (see Madness of Art, pp. 229-232). See also Bersani, "Narrator as Center," pp. 139-141.

90 Cf. Ward, who points out the financial metaphors that characterize this scene, saying "The relationship between Kate and Densher gradually becomes corrupted through association with the acquisitive drive; the natural has been made unnatural, so much so that Kate's visit to Densher's rooms is thought of by both as a payment for services rendered" (Imagination of Disaster, p. 127). See also Bradford A. Booth's "Henry James and the Economic Motif," NCJ, VIII (1953), 141-150, for a discussion of the motif throughout the novel, and Lebowitz, Imagination of Loving, pp. 101-102, for further comment on the exploitative element in the event.

91 See Sandeen for a succinct and explicit analysis of the basic terms of Milly's drama ("Study of . . . Later Phase," p. 1065). Cf. also James's famous statement in the Preface: "... the poet essentially can't be concerned with the act of dying. Let him deal with the sickest of the sick, it is still by the act of living that they appeal to him, and appeal the more as the conditions plot against them and prescribe the battle" (AN, pp. 289-290).
92 This is, of course, as many readers have noted, the aspect of Milly Theale that is commemorative of Minny Temple. See Cargill, Novels of Henry James, pp. 349-350; Sandeen, "Study of . . . Later Phase," p. 1060; Kimball, "Abyss," p. 282; West, Henry James, p. 102; O. P. Sharma, "The Albany Cousin and Two Heroines of Henry James," in Indian Essays in American Literature: Papers in Honour of Robert E. Spiller (Bombay, 1968), 149-165; Matthiessen, Major Phase, pp. 43-52; and of course James's own comments about his cousin in Notes of a Son and Brother (New York, 1914), pp. 453-515.

93 Cf. Jefferson, Modern Reader, p. 211; Matthiessen, Major Phase, pp. 63-64; Cargill, Novels of Henry James, p. 338; Krook, Ordeal of Consciousness, p. 211; Wright, Madness of Art, p. 224.

94 See Leyburn's discussion of Susan Stringham (Strange Alloy, pp. 92-96), where she says that although Milly's companion is primarily a "comic" character, "James never laughs at her tears" (p. 94).

95 Cf. Ward, Imagination of Disaster, p. 127; Wright, Madness of Art, p. 227; Leyburn, Strange Alloy, p. 152; and Sandeen, who says that her attitude towards her wealth is "... at once grand and unself-conscious" ("Study of . . . Later Phase," p. 1065).

96 Jefferson has said: "Nothing in Jamesian criticism is more remarkable than the widespread failure to appreciate Milly. . . . There is no reason whatever why one should not . . . recognise Milly for what she is: intelligent, ironical, self-reliant. . . . Milly is deceived, in one respect: but otherwise we may include her among those on whom little or nothing is lost. She is indeed loving and subject to tremulous feeling, and yet also the kind of person whom Henry James's brother would have called 'tougminded'" (Modern Reader, pp. 202, 205). An extreme example of the judgment that Jefferson notes is that of Elizabeth Hoskins, who wrote that Milly's goodness "... is perhaps the highest example of this vacuum surrounded by golden phrases"; she says Milly "expires like a kitten dressed up in doll clothes" ("Henry James and the Future of the Novel," Sewannee Rev., LIV [1946], 87-101). Leavis, too, called her not only "stupid" but "sentimental" (Great Tradition, pp. 157-158). More recently, critics have been increasingly aware of the inaccuracy of such judgments; see, for instance, Krook, Ordeal of Consciousness, pp. 200-215, for a more judicious analysis.

97 See Jefferson, Modern Reader, p. 211.

98 Jefferson sees this tension in Milly's perception as emanating from her "... continual need to compose her relations with the world into some bearable and acceptable shape" (Modern Reader, p. 204). See Krook (Ordeal of Consciousness, esp. pp. 209-215), for a thorough and acute analysis of the nature and degrees of Milly's awareness.

Imagination of Disaster, p. 132.

Ibid., p. 133. Cf. also Bowden, who says that "... the portrait, like the pictures in the National Gallery or like the Palazzo Leporelli, represents a refuge from insignificance and mortality... At the instant of her anguished 'dead, dead, dead,' she had also felt her first and most telling moment of self-knowledge, the knowledge that was to carry her through to the end" (Themes, p. 95).

It is this point that is submerged in the allusion to the "recorded jewels" of the Bronzino, which was originally identified by Miss Allott and the identification subsequently explored by Mrs. Winner. The Bronzino portrait is the Lucrezia Panciatichi, which hangs in the Uffizi where James had seen it. The legend on the "recorded jewels" is "Amour dure sans fin," a legend which is exactly appropriate for Milly Theale. Mrs. Winner reproduces the portrait on Plate XIII in Visual Arts; her discussion occurs on pp. 81-84. In connection with Milly's identification of life with love, see Kraft ("Life Against Death," p. 222), where he draws a thematic parallel with "The Beast in the Jungle": "As the most intense of relationships, love is the most life giving of experiences. ..."

Madness of Art, p. 225.

Cargill quotes Mrs. Krook as having said, in her original article on the novel, that Milly's "... fatal flaw is her pride, the noble pride, the infernal pride that causes her to repel help in the very time when her need is greatest." By the time of the publication of Ordeal of Consciousness, she had both softened and extended this judgment: "Milly ... responds to the indifference [of the others] with her own last infirmity, which is the sin of pride. ... It is of course a sublime virtue, this perfect fortitude in the face of death: but it is also the last temptation of the devil. ... If Milly Theale ... had been humble enough, or fearless enough, to renounce her pride, a saving connexion might have been established between herself and the enemy—enough at any rate to render impossible the diabolical design that finally kills her. But she does not renounce it, and thus deprives herself of the last possibility of being saved (pp. 213-214). Mrs. Krook's original article, entitled simply "The Wings of the Dove," appeared in Cambridge Journal, VII (1954), 671-689. Cargill's quotation appears in Novels of Henry James, p. 355.
105 "Narrator as Center," p. 136.

106 Most critics of the novel have commented on Milly's triple role-playing; see, for instance, Jefferson (Modern Reader, p. 203); Matthiessen (Major Phase, pp. 69-70); Cargill (Novels of Henry James, pp. 343-346, and 358-359); Wright (Madness of Art, pp. 224-225).


108 Ibid., pp. 1072-1073. Sandeen, despite his many perceptive insights, in my view goes too far with his interpretation of Milly's final act: "Returning good for evil she has proved her superiority but she has also had her revenge: without intending it she has heaped coals of fire upon the heads of those who tried to wrong her" (p. 1073). Sandeen is not the only one to see Milly in this light; see, for instance, Elizabeth Hoskins' "Henry James and the Future of the Novel," Sewannee Rev., LIV (1946), 86-101.

109 See Modern Reader, p. 214.

110 See Cargill (Novels of Henry James, pp. 338-341) for an examination of the significance of James's choice of this phrasing, uttered first by Mrs. Stringham and later echoed by Densher, to describe Milly's surrender. He relates it to the Tristan legend, suggesting an accumulation of symbolic dimensions revealed by the connection.

111 Cf. Bersani, "Narrator as Center," pp. 141-143; Jefferson, Modern Reader, pp. 209-210; and Wright, Madness of Art, pp. 230-231, for comment upon this segment of Densher's experience.

112 Cf. Bersani: "Densher is engaged in a drama of moral choice. . . . Kate is the way of power, acquisition, an active reaching out for the world. Milly . . . is the image of the self giving itself to the world, taking nothing . . ." ("Narrator as Center," p. 135).

113 "Life Against Death," pp. 221-223.

114 Cf. Sears, Negative Imagination, (pp. 92-98), whose comments on the "tests" of the letters and Densher's final attitude towards Kate is more severely critical than mine. She writes, for instance, "To be a blue-eyed darling in appearance and a serpent in fact—and not to recognize it" (p. 93) and later refers to his "sanctimonious viciousness" and says that "he does not extend to Kate the charity he, without tests, has received" (p. 95). She admits that such a view of Densher was "not James's intent" but that Densher's "conversion is not persuasive, in the sense that we do not feel moved, convinced of some radical spiritual growth" (p. 93). The point this proves is, I suppose, that different readers can have different responses to the same work of art.
115 Cf. Ward (Imagination of Disaster, p. 128), who also comments on the symbolic significance of the letters. Others who have discussed the novel's final scene include Matthiessen (Major Phase, pp. 74-78); Jefferson (Modern Reader, p. 216); Wright (Madness of Art, p. 229). Elizabeth Hoskins said that Milly's leaving the money to Densher establishes the malignancy of her motives; she should have left it to Kate ("Future of the Novel," pp. 97-98). I have already noted Sandeen's comment that Milly has "heaped coals of fire" upon their heads (see n. 108 above).

116 Ordeal of Consciousness, pp. 230-231.

117 Cf. R. P. Blackmur's "The Loose and Baggy Monsters of Henry James: Notes on the Underlying Classic Form in the Novel," Accent, XI (1951), 129-146: "It is interesting to observe . . . that the Aristotelian terms recognition and reversal of roles apply sharply to the major motions of the plot and that complication and intrigue apply firmly to the minor motions . . ." (p. 136). Blackmur is here discussing all three of the major phase novels.

118 Novels of Henry James, p. 366.


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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sallie Jean Hall was born August 22, 1931, at Atlanta, Georgia. In June, 1948, she was graduated from the Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, High School. After attending business college for one year, she was employed from 1949 until 1959 by the Camp Hill School District as secretary and office manager, during which time her marriage, which had taken place in 1950, ended in divorce in 1957. In 1959 she enrolled in the West Chester, Pennsylvania, State College, transferring to the Pennsylvania State University in June of that year. She received the degree of Bachelor of Arts with highest distinction in August, 1961, completing the Honors Program in English and receiving the Evan Pugh Honor Society Scholarship Award and the Mortarboard Scholarship Award. In September, 1961, she enrolled in the Graduate School of the Pennsylvania State University, where she was a teaching assistant for two years, receiving the degree of Master of Arts with a major in English in June, 1963. In September, 1963, she joined the faculty of the University of South Florida, where she is currently an assistant professor of English. In 1966 she enrolled in the Graduate School of the University of Florida to work toward the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. She has been elected to the honor societies of Phi Kappa Phi, Sigma Tau Delta, and Pi Gamma Mu, and is also a member of the Modern Language Association, the South Atlantic Modern Language Association, and the Florida College English Association.
I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

John T. Fain, Chairman
Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

John B. Pickard
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I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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June, 1971

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