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The Aesthetics of Perception:
Fine Arts in the Fiction of Henry James

Angela M. Gawel

A Thesis

in

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of

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ABSTRACT

The Aesthetics of Perception:
Fine Arts in the Fiction of Henry James

Angela M. Gawel

Henry James's interest in the visual arts influenced the style, subject matter, themes, and language of his fictional work and of his critical writing throughout his career. The foundation for his development of an aesthetic of fiction was his interest in nineteenth-century art-critical writing with its basis in travel journalism and critical-historical art surveys.

While James's ideas concerning the roles of art and the artist--whether visual or literary--are expressed in his critical writings, they are also inherent to and developed through his tales and novels. The two connected themes of artist and traveller emanate from the tradition of the Grand Tour with its emphasis on the educational benefits of observation, a tradition James appropriated for the epistemology of his fiction. Hence, the primary mode of knowing in James's fiction is pictorial; it is an intellectual excursion involving the accretion of knowledge through perception and the exercise of imagination through vision.

In his early travel essays, <u>Transatlantic Sketches</u>

(1875) and Portraits of Places (1883), James began to explore the nature of perception and the theme of knowledge through vision. James pursued this theme in his novels by employing visual art devices. Through the close analysis of pictorial passages in three novels: Roderick Hudson (1875), The Portrait of a Lady (1881), and The Ambassadors (1903) the development of James's aesthetic theory may be traced from its source in the nineteenth-century art-critical tradition.

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of this thesis is the relation between Henry James's fiction and the visual arts. The hypothesis is that James's interest in the visual arts had a direct influence on the style, subject matter, themes, and language of his fiction. While James's ideas concerning the roles of art and the artist--whether visual or literary--are expressed in his critical writings, they are inherent to and developed through his novels. The most appropriate critical method to this subject is the close analysis of pictorial passages in three novels: Roderick Hudson (1875), The Portrait of a Lady (1881), and The Ambassadors (1903). By examining novels from early, mid, and late points in James's career the development of his aesthetic theories may be traced. My close analysis will concentrate on the role of perception and the purposes of visual art devices in these three novels.

Though much has been written about the connections between Henry James and the French Impressionist painters, Impressionism is only one aspect of James's concern with the visual arts and certainly not a seminal one. During the 1870's art critics such as Ruskin and Pater had a greater influence on the young novelist than the Impressionist painters whose doctrines, in 1876, James found "incompat-

ible, in an artist's mind, with first-rate talent."[1] Clearly, a study of James's fiction through its connections to the visual arts begins prior to the Impressionist movement, and, while James did develop some writing techniques comparable to methods of Impressionist painting, his style in the late novels does not depend solely on an appreciation of Impressionism.

James's themes of artist and traveller have been studied and considered at length, though they have not, I think, been satisfactorily reconciled. This apparent thematic split in James's novels actually emanates from a single thematic concern in James's fiction: that of being an observer and having a critical eye. This concern is neither a purely artistic nor geographic one, rather it is an intellectual excursion involving the accretion of knowledge through perception and the exercise of imagination through vision. The sources of James's interests in art and travel are to be found in his critical experience, and they may be traced through the evolution of art criticism to the nineteenth-century tradition of travel writing. James followed this tradition by writing _Transatlantic Sketches_ (1875) and _Portraits of Places_ (1883). Through his studies of the visual arts in these travel essays James began to explore the nature of perception, an interest which led to

[1]Henry James, _The Painter's Eye: Notes and Essays on the Pictorial Arts_, ed. with an Introduction by John L. Sweeney (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1956), pp. 114-115.

the theme of knowledge through vision in his novels. It was through his early critical experience that James's theories of literature evolved. James's place in the tradition of travel writing and his connections to the art critics and travel writers of the nineteenth century will form the first chapter of this thesis, for it is out of these traditions that theme, imagery, language, and style evolve in James's novels.

James's early novel Roderick Hudson is directly concerned with the arts. The title character is an American artist who goes to Europe to work and to refine his talent. In this novel James created artists who espouse diverse aesthetic ideologies to construct a discussion of aesthetics. The author gave the perceptions of the characters a role secondary to that of the novel's action. James's own ideas concerning art are reflected both in the characters' endeavours and their eventual successes and failures. Artistically, James remained distant from his subject; there is no evidence from the handling of the language that James favoured any one of the aesthetic theories outlined by the artist characters in his novel. The development of James's own theory had begun, but he had not achieved the artistic sophistication necessary to express his ideas on art without essayistic interludes.

James's Portrait of a Lady suggests by its title that the author had begun to act as an artist in his portrayal

of character and his approach to language. James's use of figurative language, which is most complete in The Golden Bowl (1904), is first evident in this novel. The generic artists of Roderick Hudson give way to the author-as-artist, and the characters, consequently, need not be literal artists for James to express his artistic concerns. The only character in The Portrait of a Lady who does have artistic pretentions is a mere dilettante, a hoarder, and cataloguer of art rather than a creative artist. The role of appearance is also important to the novel's structure, but it is the characters' perceptions of appearances which make it so.

James's role as an artist is completely integrated with structure and form in The Ambassadors. In this novel the visual arts are not present in the form of an artist character. Instead, the visual arts, particularly painting, are suffused through the novel to form a major theme and to give the novel its structure. The artist here is Henry James, but the principal character, Lambert Strether, gains an artist's point of view through his perceptions in the novel.

While my study is, to some extent, inter-disciplinary, the approach to literature through the visual arts--an inter-textual method of analysis--is neither a new nor an unprecedented mode of literary criticism. Its origin is, perhaps, the very conception of western art, for in the Poetics Aristotle makes a comparison of literature to painting by

suggesting that the poet, like a painter, is concerned with creating a likeness.[2] If all literature--whether diegetic or representational--is mimetic, then the threads of intertextuality are evident in Aristotle's concept of literary mimesis. Allusion, quotation, and appropriation are abundant in literary texts; but while the phenotext, to use Julia Kristeva's terms, may be discursive, the genotext need not be. Images appropriated from the visual arts or discourses imitative of visual art styles and techniques may be incorporated into a literary text. Woven together, visual arts and literature may be said to produce in James's fiction an intertextual "text-style." Roland Barthes's S/Z is a contemporary example of the Jamesian text-style, for in it Barthes interrupts his discourse by shifting from the imitation of reality, to the destruction of narration with analysis, to the abandonment of sequential structure in favour of a self-referential text. The initial interruption in Barthes's text is, of course, a painting. Anne-Louis Girodet's Endymion (1793), which is reproduced in S/Z, is in turn the implied likeness or portrait at the core of Balzac's "Sarrasine." That James had learned "The Lesson of Balzac" makes Barthes's study all the more germane: it is at once a critical approach to visual arts in literature, yet it belongs to that intertextual tradition of art and

[2] Aristotle, Poetics 25: 1-15; Aristotle's Poetics, trans. with an Introduction by Gerald F. Else (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1967), p. 67.

literature as well.

Studies of James's fiction have traditionally focused on his discursive methods, in particular on his diegetic mode: the manipulation of narratives through impersonal narration, on one hand and through restricted point of view or unreliability on the other. Percy Lubbock's Craft of Fiction (1921) and Wayne C. Booth's Rhetoric of Fiction (1961) have defined James's narrative methods and explored their implications and influence; both studies are indispensable. But, prior to 1970, little attention was paid to the role of the visual arts inside James's fictions. Viola Hopkins Winner's Henry James and the Visual Arts (1970) was the first--and is still the most comprehensive--study of the topic. Winner supplies extensive historical and biographical background to the visual arts in James's work; however, her discussion relies primarily on the comparison of literary and visual art objects, rather than on an analysis of their relation. More recently, Peter H. Stowell's Literary Impressionism: James and Chekhov (1980) and James Joseph Kirschke's Henry James and Impressionism (1981) have examined Henry James and the visual arts, but these discussions are restricted to Impressionism and are extremely limited. Stowell does not consider the sources of James's Impressionism, for example, while Kirschke simply makes comparisons without analyses. These books reiterate rather than complement the deficiencies of Winner's study. Adeline

R. Tintner has produced many articles on James and the visual arts that suggest sources for artworks in James's fiction. Although Tintner's studies provide backgrounds to historical sources for images, they ignore the significance of the intertextual quotations made by James in his translations of image to text.

My thesis will take a broader view of the subject than these studies by initially providing a context for James's writing in the nineteenth century art-critical tradition. Since my discussion will then focus on the influence of the arts in the evolution of James's literary method and the significance of the visual arts to James's style, I will not confine the discussions of art to a particular movement but will examine the shifting role of the arts inside James's novels from subject in Roderick Hudson to writing method in The Ambassadors. It is my interest in the arts as an aspect of James's own literary concerns and aesthetic theory, not simply as a point of comparison or biographical detail, which distinguishes my study from existing criticism.

CHAPTER I:
THE PLEASURE OF THE MATTER

> We go to Italy to gaze upon certain of the highest achievements of human power,--achievements, moreover, which, from their visible and tangible nature, are particularly well adapted to represent to the imagination the maximum of man's creative force.[1]

The evolution of Henry James's aesthetic theories out of nineteenth-century art critical traditions, a process that both underlies and is reflected in his fictional practice, must itself be placed in the context of an understanding of art history as a mode of discourse and its representation in travel and critical writing. During the nineteenth century the study of art history evolved from three diverse critical attitudes towards art: the scientific, the intuitive, and a view which combined aspects of observation and intuition. This critical diversity was neither arbitrary nor unaccountable: all three paths of discourse originated somewhere on the road to Rome, for the tradition of the grand tour led to the establishment of the art-critical tradition, and that, in turn, led to the study of art history.

From Elizabethan times the grand tour had been considered an excursion essential to the completion of a young

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[1]Henry James, "Howells's Italian Journeys" (1868), in Literary Reviews and Essays by Henry James on American, English, and French Literature, edited by Albert Mordell (New Haven: College and University Press, 1957), pp. 199-200.

gentleman's education. Originally a means for gathering information about other countries, the grand tour also equipped a young man with first-hand knowledge of foreign lands suitable to a future career in diplomacy. While such tours might include France, the Low Countries, Switzerland, and Germany, the grand tour climaxed in Italy.[2] This emphasis on Italy originated in the eighteenth century when western Europe became preoccupied with its cultural origins in classical antiquity. The development of neoclassical architecture and "heroic" subject paintings featuring scenes from classical mythology indicate, in part, the extent of that preoccupation. The idea of the grand tour as essential to a complete education persisted through the nineteenth century. In literature it produced a plethora of travel guides, phrase books, and albums of "picturesque" views such as Gilpin's Scaleby Castle (Plate 1-1). Of greater significance, however, was the travel diary. In its incipient form the travel diary was a book of monetary rather than personal accounts. Records of such mundanities as expenditures for food and lodging, and masters', tailors', and wigmakers' fees comprised its principal contents; but, a gazetteer of places visited might also be included by the more ambitious diarist. Unlike the travel guides which recommended places of interest to the tourist, the diary was

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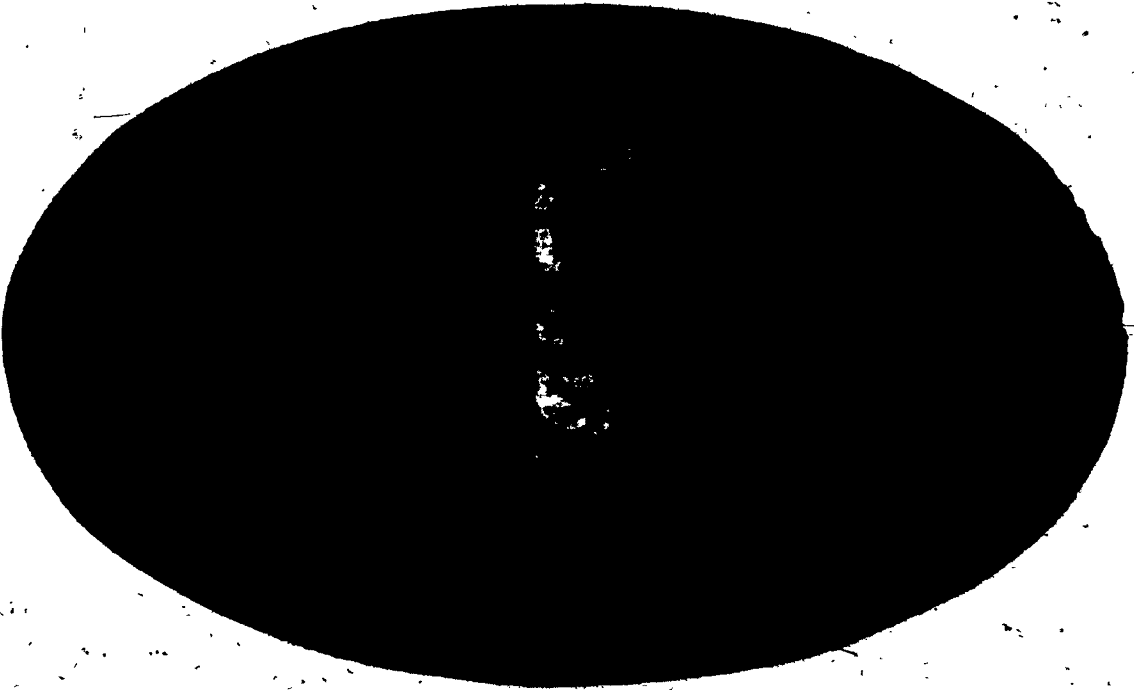
[2]Christopher Hibbert, The Grand Tour (Toronto: Spring Books, 1969), p.10.



1-F. William Gilpin: Scaleby Castle, 1808

a personal record of a tour. In time, the list of interesting places cited in the gazetteer took precedence over the lists of expenditures, becoming the diary's subject. Travel diarists wrote about the places they saw, and although their accounts are often anecdotal when not descriptive, the educational benefits of travel were most apparent to those diarists who recorded their responses to new sights in the course of their journeys. Foreign cultures being their main source of interest, diarists paid particular attention to antique art treasures. This combination of record, description, and personal response or interpretation was applied to artworks for the sake of diaries, thereby establishing the guidelines for art criticism. In these critical criteria we see, as well, the nucleus of James's fictional method: observation and interpretation.

In 1786 Goethe embarked on a trip to Italy. His letters and diary became his Italian Journey, 1786-1788. While Goethe did consider his journey a flight from Weimar into Italy, he did not consider it an escape. As with most tourists, and in the tradition of the grand tour, Goethe considered his excursion an educational one. Early in the account of his trip he comments that, "My purpose in making this wonderful journey is not to delude myself but to discover myself in the objects I see."[3] It is significant that

[3]Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Italian Journey, 1786-1788, translated by W.H. Auden and Elizabeth Meyer (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), p. 40.

the travel diarist has gone abroad not simply to avoid responsibilities at home or to cross off curiosities on a long list of essential foreign oddities, but rather, the travel diarist has fled home with the desire to understand better, not the foreigners, but himself. Goethe's "discovery" required the application of his eyes and intellect. To discover himself in objects he became "preoccupied with sense-impressions":

> The truth is that, in putting my powers of observation to the test, I have found a new interest in life. How far will my scientific and general knowledge take me? Can I learn to look at things with clear fresh eyes? How much can I take in at a single glance? Can the grooves of old mental habits be effaced? This is what I am trying to discover.[4]

Essentially, Goethe was interested in his own perceptions and their relation to knowledge. As his accounts of the journey continue, Goethe pursues his interest in perception and comments that he had a tendency to "look at the world through the eyes of a painter," indicating a fresh vision or a new way of seeing. That the poet had specific expectations from the artworks he saw is indicated by his assertion that "one would feel crushed oneself if sublime works of art did not always elevate the spirit."[5]

However, for all Goethe's interest in the educational benefits of travel--particularly as it relates to the exercise of looking at artworks--his personal responses to

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[4]Goethe, p. 21.
[5]Ibid., pp. 79-80.

paintings remain those of an interested observer, an amateur rather than a professional critic. Goethe relies more often on descriptions of subject matter and narrative content than on any technical observations about painting. His comments are expressive of an interest in and an enjoyment of painting rather than any technical knowledge of it. It is significant that travelling produced in him a painter's eye that emanated from his interest in looking, and Goethe's Journey is interspersed with his pen sketches of the Italian landscape. Goethe's comment that looking "is the same in art as in life,"[6] anticipates James's attempt to integrate life and art through his interest in realism; it is also a precursor to James's comment that, "one perceives . . . that the province of art is all life, all feeling, all observation, all vision."[7]

The author most directly responsible for the development of art criticism through the travel diary was Anna Jameson. According to Adele M. Holcomb, Jameson's Diary of an Ennuyée (1826)

> . . . has one of the most art historically inclined heroines of its period, a young woman who is not at all bored in front of the paintings, sculptures and monuments she encounters in Italy. She displays an unusual reflective and critical faculty while puzzling over the subject of Titian's Sacred and Profane Love, in analysing the elements of style in painting, and in her explan-

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[6]Ibid., p. 96.

[7]Henry James, "The Art of Fiction," in The House of Fiction: Essays on the Novel, ed. with an Introduction by Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957), pp.38-39.

> ation of the character of the Aegina marbles by referring them "to a period when sculpture was confined to the exact imitation of natural forms."[8]

In discussing Jameson's career, Holcomb comments that the "incunabula of Victorian art criticism are to be found in the realm of travel literature."[9] Anna Jameson's career illustrates the point. Following the Diary she abandoned the novel form and her fictionalized tourist along with it; instead, upon a visit to Germany in 1833, she published two informative art guides for tourists there,[10] then, turning her attention further away from the traveller, she wrote three books of art criticism specializing in the long-neglected area of iconography.[11] Jameson's books were both original and influential; Elizabeth Gilmore Holt suggests a connection between Jameson's work and the Symbolist movement in art and literature:

> Mrs. Jameson's rediscovery of the symbolic meaning of objects in painting and sculpture . . . precede[d] by a few years the time when painters and poets, turning away from objective scientific realism, attempted to formulate a new symbolic language.[12]

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[8]Adele M. Holcomb, "Anna Jameson: The First Professional English Art Historian," Art History 6 (June 1983): 175-176.

[9]Ibid., p. 172.

[10]A Companion to Private Galleries and A Handbook to the Public Galleries.

[11]Anna Jameson's three books on iconography are concerned with Pre-Renaissance art and the Acta Sanctorum and the Book of Golden Legends. They are: The Poetry of Sacred and Legendary Art (1848), Legends of the Monastic Orders (1850), and Legends of the Madonna (1852).

[12]Elizabeth Gilmore Holt, From the Classicists to the Impressionists: Art and Architecture in the Nineteenth Century, vol. 3 of A Documentary History of Art (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), p. 141.

By 1868, Mrs. Jameson was one of the few English art critics whom Henry James considered both literary and innovative, since she advanced the study of art criticism yet remained a distinct voice, separate from the disciples of Ruskin. In his assessments of these critics James already displays a full awareness of the integration of the arts involved in their endeavours, and he addresses this issue himself by considering the interrelations between critic and artist, spectacle and spectator, and vision and knowledge:

> They examine pictures (or such, at least, is their theory) with equal regard to the standpoint of the painter and that of the spectator, whom the painter must always be supposed to address--with an equal regard, in other words, to the material used and the use made of it. As writers who really know how to write, however, will always of necessity belong rather to the class of spectators than to that of painters, it may be conceded that the profit of their criticism will accrue rather to those who look at pictures than to those who make them.[13]

That art critics are at once literary artists concerned with visual arts, and critics engaged in analysis and elucidation is of interest to James, but in the course of his considerations the young author draws a clear--although not emphatic or final--distinction between the role of the painter and that of the writer: critics must fall in with the writers rather than the artists. The implication of these remarks

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[13] Henry James, "An English Critic" (1868), in The Painter's Eye: Notes and Essays on the Pictorial Arts, edited with an Introduction by John L. Sweeney (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1956), p. 35.

is that James considered the art of writing more expository than artistic, or that he considered the painter more of an artist than the writer. No doubt James was speaking specifically about writers of criticism here, but his association of criticism with spectatorship, and, therefore, with perception rather than creation, is a crucial assumption in his early art criticism and it becomes a major artistic problem in his fiction. The difficulty arises for James's characters when they try to create while lacking perception: Rowland Mallet's attempt to create an artistic genius by moulding Roderick Hudson, Isabel Archer's attempt to make her life a work of art, and Lambert Strether's attempt to portray Chad Newsome as a Titian painting are all failures because they are based on false romantic assumptions, not on careful observations. Once James's characters develop their critical faculties of observation and apply their intelligence to give those observations clear expression, they become the "fine central intelligences" James intended. The need to create, then, remains with the author; however, the artist's eye should belong to every critic just as it belongs to the centre of consciousness in James's novels.

Earlier in the same year that he considered the nature of art criticism in "An English Critic" James considered the nature of the travel diary in a review of Howells's Italian Journeys. While James seems to have been somewhat

suspicious of the travel diary form in which "letters and diaries are simply strung into succession and transferred to print" he does go on to say that:

> If the writer is a clever person, an observer, an explorer, an intelligent devotee of the picturesque, his work will doubtless furnish a considerable amount of entertaining reading; but there will yet be something essentially common in its character. The book will be diffuse, overgrown, shapeless; it will not belong to literature. Mr. Howells's two books on Italy . . . belong to literature and to the centre and core of it,--the region where men think and feel, and one may almost say breathe, in good prose, . . . he is simply an observer . . .[14]

According to James, then, the literary value of travel diaries derived from the intelligence of the author who must be both "an observer" and a good writer. James values the same quality in the travel diary that he valued in the works of art criticism: observation is to no purpose without an intelligence to give it clear expression. The ability not only to see but to understand--with every nuance and subtlety of import--just what is seen became James's expectation of the travel diarist or observer. It is not coincidental that his characters go travelling. In order to develop the perceptive faculties, the Jamesian centre of consciousness is sent on an excursion: the conscious object of the grand tour being, as Mrs. Touchett might say, that of "seeing for

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[14]James, "Howells's," pp. 198-199.

one's self."[15]

In his own travel writing and criticism, James concentrated on two essential qualities when discussing art works: the impression made by the object on the observer and the expression instilled in the art by its creator. The impression received by a viewer of art is the same sort of impression he expected from a travel diarist: a viewer of life. His assessment of the travel diary as being good so far as the author is an intelligent observer is perhaps a seminal version of his comment in "The Art of Fiction" (1884) that "the deepest quality of a work of art will always be the quality of the mind of the producer."[16] This comment at once combines James's two essential qualities of artworks: the impression made on the viewer and the expression shaped by the artist. Spectator and artist are suddenly one. By conceding that some travel diaries are in fact literary because of the quality of their prose, James is conceding that the travel diary is an artistic endeavour. Like books of art criticism which have subverted narrative to analysis, a book that remains a narrative--whether or not it contains critical elements--may be considered literature if it eman-

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[15]Henry James, The Portrait of a Lady (1881; London: Macmillan, 1883) chap.3, 27. Chapter and page references pertain to this edition and will appear in parentheses in the text, if necessary with the abbreviation PL. James's revisions for the New York Editions of his works make those volumes unsuitable for a study of his aesthetic development; therefore, James's works cited in this thesis are editions based on the earliest available texts.

[16]James, "Fiction," p.44.

ates from the mind of a perceptive observer. While James was clearly seeking a definition of literature by 1868, his criteria were based on analyses of works of historical non-fiction. This basis is not insignificant either, as it becomes an integral part of James's understanding of fiction. James's definition of the relation between history and story is evident in his insistence that "the novel is history" and that its subject matter "must speak with assurance."[17]

In addition to Howells and Jameson, Nathaniel Hawthorne also travelled, wrote a diary, and subsequently produced a novel. Of these three novelists, Hawthorne had by far the greatest influence on Henry James. Hawthorne's French and Italian Notebooks recount his family's travels in Europe during 1858-60. A considerable portion of the work is devoted to Italy. Hawthorne's Notebook is written in the early tradition of the travel diary. The work relies heavily on narrative: Hawthorne tells us who did what, when, and how the weather was at the time. However, Hawthorne did put aside his misgivings about Italian winters long enough and often enough to consider many of the artworks he saw there. While Hawthorne's Protestant sensibilities prevented him from a thorough enjoyment of Italian art--because of its intrinsically sensuous and often religious nature--they did not preclude sensitive observations on religious art and Catholicism. In his entry of June 8, 1858, Hawthorne

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[17]Ibid., p. 25.

remarks that he "was sensible of a certain degree of emotion in looking at an old picture," which led him to "deem it a pity that Protestantism should have entirely laid aside this mode [the pictorial] of appealing to the religious sentiment."[18] That is perhaps the most expressive of Hawthorne's comments on art. Like Goethe, Hawthorne wrote about what pleased or disturbed him in the art that he saw. Often his comments are descriptive of subject matter, or, more interestingly, they are translations of physical impressions into prose. The impression he receives from the foreign tongue on shop signs, the bizarre frivolity of the Roman carnival, and the interior of a basilica may be equally "outlandish"; each impression is recorded and its source described. Hawthorne's role in his Notebooks remains that of an observer--and a foreign one: his diary tells us less about Rome than about Hawthorne. George Parsons Lathrop in his "Introductory Note" to an 1883 edition of the Notebooks comments that Hawthorne reviewed painting and sculpture "precisely as they presented themselves to him at the time."[19] So, like Goethe, Hawthorne was concerned with impressions and the powers of observation. However, unlike other travel diarists, Hawthorne had no aspirations in the direction of

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[18]Nathaniel Hawthorne, French and Italian Notebooks, with an Introductory Note by George Parsons Lathrop, vol. 10 in The Complete Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, (1871; Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, 1883), p. 287.

[19]George Parsons Lathrop, "Introductory Note" to Hawthorne's French and Italian Notebooks, 1883, p. 5.

guidebooks; his Notebooks retain the confessional subjective voice of a personal diary.

The Marble Faun (1860), a novel set in Rome and the Italian countryside that Hawthorne had visited, resulted from his travels in Italy. The idea for the novel, recorded in his Notebook on April 22 and 30, 1858,[20] was suggested to Hawthorne when he saw Praxiteles's Faun while visiting the sculpture galleries of the Capitol in Rome. Katharine Lee Bates comments that The Marble Faun was an essential piece of baggage for the American tourist in Rome, "No good American tourist visits Rome without it."[21] Illustrated with photographs of many of the places mentioned, the 1902 edition could have been used as a traveller's guide to Rome. Labelled pictures of the Praxiteles's Faun, Trevi Fountain, Piazza del Popolo, and St. Peter's Basilica punctuate the narrative, presumably to enhance the reader's grasp of scene. And scene comprises a great deal of the novel: with all the regularity of people on a guided tour excursion, Hawthorne's characters move into and out of particular Roman places, yet they experience little of the life seen in these locations, for guided tourists--being guided--are expected to look without much reflection. The artists' promenade, which begins in Chapter Fifteen and culminates with

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[20]Hawthorne, Notebooks, pp. 172-173, 182.

[21]Katharine Lee Bates, "Introduction" to The Marble Faun (1860; New York: Kelmscott Society, 1902), p. ix.

the novel's first climax three chapters later, is interspersed with directions for reaching the Trevi Fountain, the Temple of Minerva, the Temple of Peace, the Coliseum, the Arch of Constantine, the Palace of the Caesars, the Arch of Titus, and the Forum. Yet throughout the walk the descriptive passages offered are those of Hawthorne, not his characters. Excerpted from his own Notebooks, the Roman place descriptions remain a background to the actions and words of the characters and--because they are Hawthorne's impressions --they rarely provide any commentary on or insight into the characters, as they did when Hawthorne presented himself through his travel diary. Hawthorne's impression of a basilica interior becomes Hilda's description of the interior of St. Peter's, while his description of stained glass windows is transferred to Kenyon, along with his contemplation of the nature of divine light.[22] Hawthorne's characters suffer from his lack of delineation through description, since no descriptions emanate from their minds. They simply become Nathaniel Hawthorne themselves whenever descriptive passages intervene in the narrative. It is perhaps significant, though, that it is often impressions of objects that Hawthorne transfers to his characters; however, these impressions are static: they may function symbolically, but are neither indicative of character nor of character

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[22]Hawthorne, Notebooks, pp. 52, 278-279; Marble Faun, vol. 2, pp. 109-110, 70-71.

development--as they eventually will be for Jamesian characters. In spite of Hawthorne's recognition that "there is reason to suspect that a people are waning to decay and ruin the moment that their life becomes fascinating either in the poet's imagination or the painter's eye,"[23] his novel and his notebooks pay little attention to these people or to the nature of their decay. Their life, while it may have been fascinating to him, was not Hawthorne's subject; he chooses two Americans, an exotic, partly Italian or English Jewess, and one shallow--although developing--Italian as his cast. James commented on Hawthorne's distance from reality in the Notebooks in his review of Howells's Italian Journey:

> Hawthorne, . . . was only half descriptive. He kept an eye on an unseen world, and his points of contact with this actual sphere were few and slight.[24]

He later elaborated this view in his book on Hawthorne: ". . . his contact with the life of the country, its people and its manners, was simply that of the ordinary tourist--which amounts to saying that it was extremely superficial." James had "the impression that Hawthorne was a good deal bored by the importunity of Italian art," but perhaps his greatest dissatisfaction with The Marble Faun derived from Hawthorne's failure "to project himself into an atmosphere in which he has not a transmitted and inherited property."[25]

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[23] Hawthorne, Marble Faun, vol.2, p.62.

[24] James, "Howells's," p. 201.

[25] Henry James, Hawthorne (1879; Ithaca: Cornell U P, 1963), pp. 125-127, 131.

Certainly James's characters are also mainly Americans in Europe, but they are immersed in their European surroundings far more deeply than the characters of Hawthorne. The integration of action with setting in James's novels may be evidence of his having learned the value of location from Hawthorne, but in the application of this device James is much subtler.[26] While Hawthorne's travel diaries are those of the traditional tourist who makes a temporary visit, James's travel writing, particularly in Portraits of Places, reveals his undeniable sense of being *in* a place. His pleasure in Venice, for example, comes not from cataloguing its sights, but from immersing himself in them:

> Almost all the pleasures of the place are simple; . . . There is no simpler pleasure than looking at a fine Titian--unless it be looking at a fine Tintoret, or strolling into St. Mark's . . . and resting one's light-wearied eyes upon the windowless gloom; or than in floating in a gondola, or hanging over a balcony, or taking one's coffee at Florian's. It is of these superficial pastimes that a Venetian day is composed, and the pleasure of the matter is in the emotions to which they minister.[27]

This sense of place, along with the necessity of clear observation, was one he passed on to his characters, but without the awkward device of transforming his own impressions directly into their experience. We never see Strether in

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[26]See Viola Hopkins Winner, Henry James and the Visual Arts (Charlottesville: U P of Virginia, 1970), p.79.

[27]Henry James, "Venice" (1882), in Portraits of Places, (1883; reprint edition, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1972) pp. 4-5. All subsequent citations refer to this edition and will appear in parentheses in the text, if necessary with the abbreviation PP.

Venice, but his experience of Paris as seen from its gardens, balconies, and cafés parallels that of James in Venice. Both are engaged in forming impressions for themselves.

One traveller who had little difficulty with immersion while abroad was the English art critic John Ruskin. Ruskin wrote his influential work The Stones of Venice between 1851 and 1853 after many visits to Venice over a seventeen year period. His essays on its art and architecture, then, were not direct responses to new sights, but controlled and considered interpretations of the history and architecture of the city. In many respects The Stones of Venice is as much about art and the nature of art in nineteenth century England as it is an introduction to that of Venice. Because Ruskin's essays are more interpretive than narrative, they mark a considerable change in the direction of travel literature. Like Anna Jameson's travelling diarist, Ruskin was concerned with the art that he saw on his travels, but his observations are not embedded in a fictional journal. That The Stones is directed towards other travellers, though, is one of Ruskin's assumptions. He provides, as he says, "chiefly for the traveller's benefit,"[28] appendices and indices to buildings and paintings the traveller will find in Venice. While The Stones is ostensibly a travel

[28] John Ruskin, The Stones of Venice, vol. 2, (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1907), p. 109.

guide, it is really an art guide. Anna Jameson was the first important English art historian, but Ruskin was the most popular and influential. Among his early devotees was the young Henry James[29] whose own travel writing was forever "Ruskin-haunted," whether the older critic's ideas were embraced with enthusiasm or, increasingly, rejected.[30]

Ruskin was not interested only in the historical particulars of Venice. Richard Stein notes that in 1832 Ruskin was profoundly moved by a gift edition of Samuel Rogers's poem Italy,[31] of which Ruskin, commenting on the Venetian section, said, "There is more true expression of the spirit of Venice in the passage devoted to her in that poem, than in all else that has been written of her."[32] That Ruskin found "true expression of the spirit" in a poem on Venice indicates his interest in the expressive nature of the arts as well as in their historical value. His comments

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[29] James had read Modern Painters by 1858, becoming a Ruskinite at an early age; see Leon Edel, Henry James: The Untried Years, 1843-1870 (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1953), p.147. James continued reading Ruskin including The Stones of Venice, which he read in 1869 during his first visit to Venice and re-read--with an increasingly critical attitude--whenever he returned there. See Henry James Letters, vol. 1: 1843-1875, ed. Leon Edel (London: Macmillan, 1974), p. 140; also James's "Venice" (1882) in Portraits of Places pp. 2-3.

[30] Henry James, Transatlantic Sketches (1875; reprint ed., New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1972), p. 291. All subsequent references pertain to this edition and will appear in parentheses in the text if necessary with the abbreviation TS.

[31] Richard L. Stein, The Ritual of Interpretation: The Fine Arts as Literature in Ruskin, Rossetti, and Pater (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 70.

[32] Ruskin, vol. 1, p. 8.

on the poem illustrate the nature of Ruskin's work in general, for he straddled two divergent traditions in art: the interest in literalism through close observation and that of emotionalism through evocative effects. Robert L. Peters comments that Ruskin was one of those critics who "fused the elements" of the two traditions in which "one group maintained that a 'science' of criticism and art could be based on methods of mathematics and literal observation," while, "another segment of writers and painters attempted to counter this observant literalism by adopting a more intuitive and emotional approach."[33] In his fiction, Henry James maintained this connection between literalism and emotionalism. On one hand, his centres of consciousness are observers of life, but on the other, they experience sudden moments of insight which lead to an intuitive and accurate perception. One could say that James's centres of consciousness personify the Ruskinian reconciliation.

Ruskin developed the idea that Christianity and fidelity to nature were essential to the artist's production of good or noble art. Yet Ruskin believed that artists should not presume to challenge God's creation, for "the first cause of the fall of the arts in Europe was a relentless requirement of perfection," and "the demand for perfection is

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[33]Robert L. Peters, "Introductory Notes" to Victorians on Literature and Art (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1971), pp. 1-2.

always a sign of a misunderstanding of the ends of art."[34] Having dispensed with perfection, Ruskin felt that the creation of "good" art had two essential requirements, the body and soul:

> All art is great, and good, and true, only so far as it is distinctively the work of manhood in its entire and highest sense; that is to say, not the work of limbs and fingers, but of the soul, aided, . . . by the inferior powers.[35]

In his insistence on the combined application of body and soul in the manufacture of art, Ruskin veered away from those critics advancing a science of beauty, such as David Ramsay Hay, for example, who sought to map the geometry of flowers with an angleometer,[36] and towards a subjective, interpretative art criticism. In spite of--and, ironically because of--Ruskin's inclusion of Christianity in art, his interpretative method anticipates the *fin de siècle* aesthetic movement. By examining art and architecture without Hay's "angleometer" but with emphasis on his own concept of the "inner part of the man . . . which has light in itself"--man's intellect or soul, not simply his mechanical ability to imitate--Ruskin allowed his criticism to transcend mathematical or historical survey and begin to be art for art's sake.

In his defense of the Pre-Raphaelites (1851) Ruskin

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[34]Ruskin, vol. 2, pp. 157,156.
[35]Ibid., vol. 3, p. 156.
[36]David Ramsay Hay, *The Science of Beauty, as Developed in Nature and Applied in Art* (1856).

made a strong case in defense of artistic vision and subjectivity:

> I wish it to be understood how every great man paints what he sees or did see, his greatness being indeed little else than his intense sense of fact . . . . all . . . who ever were great became so by painting _the truths around them as they appeared to each man's own mind, not as he had been taught to see them_, except by the God who made both him and them.[37]

While he connects such vision to the mind, the "inner part" or "light" in Ruskin's vocabulary, it is this spiritualism (the sanctity of the artist's vision) which most pointedly implies the idea of art for art's sake, having no motivation other than vision. By suggesting that art represents the truth as it appeared to the artist's _mind_, Ruskin removed art and art criticism from the factual context of journalistic reports and descriptions prevalent in the personal narratives of travel diarists, yet he retained the single point of view of the travel diarist by situating art and art criticism in the realm of perception and interpretation. Alwyn Berland, in discussing Ruskin's concept of the "entire" manhood, suggests that:

> One consequence of Ruskin's theory of the single sensibility was that it forced him to place morality _in_ art, a procedure which enabled him to exalt art as a religion without destroying ethical sanctions. Further, his conviction that good art is produced only by good men (a thesis adopted by James ...),

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[37]Ruskin, "Pre-Raphaelitism," in _Victorians on Art and Literature_, ed. Robert L. Peters, p. 49, italics are mine.

replaces religious orders with the priesthood of art.[38] Berland refers, of course, to James's statement on the correlation between the quality of art and that of the mind of its producer in "The Art of Fiction."[39] For James, Ruskin's "good" meaning "moral" has become "good" meaning of "high quality." This idea becomes entrenched in James's novels as his characters' ability to perceive--that is, to understand--increasingly relies on their moral sense. As Mrs. Assingham of The Golden Bowl remarks, "stupidity pushed to a certain point *is*, you know, immorality. Just so what is morality but high intelligence?"[40] While the door on the temple of taste has yellowed by the time Strether comes knocking, the sensibility that prompts him to seek the temple and to find instead the truth and beauty of his situation exemplifies Ruskin's "single sensibility" at work in the experiences of James's characters. Strether's ethical position is irreproachable, but rather than being reinforced by an understanding of God, it is formed by an ability to understand what is seen.

While John Ruskin wielded considerable influence over both the development of art criticism and the aesthetics of the young Henry James, Walter Pater's *The Renaissance:*

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[38]Alwyn Berland, "Henry James and the Aesthetic Tradition," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 23 (July-Sept. 1962): 410.

[39]James, "Fiction," p. 44.

[40]Henry James, *The Golden Bowl* (Scribner's, 1904; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), p. 87.

Studies in Art and Poetry (1873) may have been ultimately more influential. By 1873 when The Renaissance was published, art criticism had severed its ties to the travel diary. Pater used neither fictional tourists nor references to authentic ones in presenting his essays. That the author had toured Italy is a tacit assumption; that The Renaissance is concerned with the art of the Renaissance and the definition of beauty in art is of far more importance than whether or not tourists will take the book touring along with The Marble Faun. Pater moves out of the travel and personal narrative context by beginning with "Two Early French Stories," episodes tied to intellectual rather than travel experience. That Pater chose to begin with "Two Early French Stories" "because they help the unity of my series"[41] indicates the operation of point of view. The "unity" of which he speaks is the consciousness which composes the Studies. The critic here is an artist as well: he chooses the most pleasing form for his work--a choice based on personal perceptions. Items are no longer included "chiefly for the traveller's benefit."

However much Pater's work differed from a travel diary, his interest, like that of Ruskin, Hawthorne, Howells, and Goethe, lay in Italy. While Henry James travelled to Italy

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[41] Walter Pater, "Preface" to The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry, ed. with notes by Donald L. Hill. An edition of the 1893 text. (Berkeley: U of California P, 1980), p. xxiii.

to view the "maximum of man's creative force," Pater viewed Italy as evidence of a more important past. One travelled to the Renaissance through Italy:

> But it is in Italy, . . . that the interest of the Renaissance mainly lies,--in that solemn fifteenth century which can hardly be studied too much, not merely for its positive results in the things of the intellect and the imagination, its concrete works of art, its special and prominent personalities, with their profound aesthetic charm, but for its general spirit and character, for the ethical qualities of which it is a consummate type.[42]

The Italy of Pater's Renaissance might still be visible (in the guise of art objects) through the brown patina of four dark centuries, but it is only accessible through literature. That Pater focused on Italy for his study of the Renaissance is significant, but of greater significance is his understanding of Italy as an intellectual experience rather than a physical one. (We'll never know his views on Italian winters.) To Pater experience was a series of felt "impressions" which he described as follows:

> A sudden light transfigures some trivial thing, a weather-vane, a windmill, a winnowing-fan, the dust in the barn door. A moment--and the thing has vanished, because it was pure effect; but it leaves a relish behind it, a longing that the accident may happen again.[43]

While Ruskin tempered his view of art with Christian philosophy, Pater, too, included a strong spiritual component in his view of the arts. The spiritualism expressed by Pater differs from Ruskin's in its connection, not to

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[42]Ibid.
[43]Ibid., p. 140.

Christianity directly, but to exertion of the intellect. The "hard, gem-like flame"[44] which Pater desired to see burning is comparable to the inner "light" Ruskin insisted the artist exert in making art, and both correspond to the light of intellectual illumination by which James's characters will see. While Ruskin had a soul in mind, Pater had a mind in mind. For both critics, the artist has an inner quality of understanding or transcendance or of a larger knowledge contained within the self which must be tapped in the production of art. For Ruskin the resulting artwork is an example of man's subservience to his God, but for Pater the result is part of an individual process of self-creation. Gerald Monsman defines Pater's criticism as "a form of creative self-portraiture" or an

> act of autobiography [which] begins with a question about his subjective or personal response to artistic presentation . . . . On the one hand, Pater's nature is "modified" by the influence of the aesthetic object he contemplates; on the other, by interpreting what he feels, Pater modifies his readers' conceptions of the past and creates his precursors anew in his own image.[45]

This process of self-creation is one employed by James. It is not yet evident in Roderick Hudson because one character attempts to mould another, but in The Portrait of a Lady Isabel's attempts to shape her own life manifest the notion of an act of "self-portraiture." Isabel, as we shall see,

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[44] Ibid., p. 189.
[45] Gerald Monsman, Walter Pater's Art of Autobiography (London and New Haven: Yale U P, 1980), pp. 14, 13.

is largely unsuccessful since she shapes her life around preconceived romantic ideas; but Strether, when he allows pure observation to evoke Pater's self-creating responses, does succeed remarkably well.

Pater believed that experience consisted of "impressions" that are perceived and understood by the mind. Accordingly, experience is different for each person, and the impressions which form the experience differ with each personality. How one perceives will depend on the intellectual source of perception, and likewise the experience that emanates from the seen impression will depend on the brightness of inner light that illuminates the impression itself. The implications of Pater's theories about art are evident in his discussion of impressions. In the following passage he pursues the concept of subjectivity--not only in art, but in the understanding of reality:

> Experience, already reduced to a group of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without. Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world. . . . . Analysis . . . assures us that those impressions of the individual mind to which, for each one of us, experience dwindles down, are in perpetual flight; that each of them is infinitely divisible also; all that is actual in it being a single moment, gone while we try to apprehend it . . . to a single sharp impression, with a sense in it, . . . of such moments gone by, what is real in our life files itself down . . . It is this movement, with the passage and dissolution of impressions, images, sensations, that analysis leaves off--that continual vanishing and unweaving of ourselves . . . Every

> moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest; some mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistably real and attractive to us,--but for that moment only.[46]

Thus experience is defined by impressions and impressions are defined by personality: paradoxically, personality must be defined by experience. Pater sees lives as constantly layered impressions acquired and amplified through time.

Perhaps the most interesting essay in The Renaissance is "The School of Giorgione." In this essay Pater originated the concept that art has an existence other than its surface meaning. The depiction in a painting, for example, is not the painting's only existence--the actual material of the painting is one of its realities as well:

> All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music. That the mere matter of a poem, for instance, its subject, namely, its given incidents or situation-- that the mere matter of a picture, the actual circumstances of an event, the actual topography of a landscape--should be nothing without the form, the spirit, of the handling, should become an end in itself, should penetrate every part of the matter: this is what all art constantly strives after, and achieves in different degrees.[47]

The idea that the scene depicted in a painting could be considered inferior or even equivalent in value to the paint on the surface of the canvas seems completely unprecedented. Yet the idea, shocking at the time, is traceable in art historical terms and certainly anticipated in

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[46] Pater, pp. 187-188.
[47] Ibid., p. 106.

Pater's 1873 essays[48]. That experience is different for each individual and that the impression of any given object will be different for each viewer is manifest in the very origin of art criticism in the "sense-impressions" of travel writing. That, "All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music" led Pater to further conjecture that:

> Art, then, is thus always striving to be independent of the mere intelligence, to become a matter of pure perception, to get rid of its responsibilities to its subject or material . . . the ideal examples . . . being those in which . . . form and matter, in their union or identity, present one single effect to the "imaginative reason," that complex faculty for which every thought and feeling is twin-born with its sensible analogue or symbol.[49]

So, while art may strive to be free of the intelligence (that is, preconceptions about the seen object), Pater did expect it to appeal to the imaginative reason. That faculty, similar to Ruskin's "penetrative imagination," subjectively perceives at once the whole visual aspect of a painting, regardless of definable representational meanings or symbols, such as the differentiation between figure and ground, or picture and paint. If this aspect of art is a given quality in music, and a discernable one in painting, then, by extension, we may expect to see evidence of this idea in literature.

In examining the development of art criticism through

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48 "The School of Giorgione" was first published in the Fortnightly Review of October 1877 and subsequently appeared in the 1888 edition of The Renaissance.

49 Pater, pp. 108-109.

the travel diary, one finds that Anna Jameson's <u>Diary of an Ennuyée</u>, Ruskin's <u>Stones of Venice</u>, and Pater's <u>Renaissance</u> are not histories, rather they are guides to the viewer of art, which map aesthetic theories, not places. The result of these manifestos of intensity of vision is two-fold: on one hand, through their reliance on close observation of art objects rather than vague postulations and romantic characterization of artists, critics advanced the study of serious art criticism in which the artwork itself takes precedence over romantic speculation; on the other hand, the point of view of a subjective observer assumes the authority to instruct an audience. So, more importantly, perhaps, than being maps of aesthetic theories, these works are also maps of the consciousnesses of observers--the critic, the historian, the perceiver become, ultimately, the subjects of their works. So engaged in the experience of seeing is the author, that his vision (the act of seeing) becomes more important than the actual objects seen. Since the authoritative observer's comments eventually characterize the observer himself, he then becomes the subject of a fiction. In the fictions of Henry James the fictional narrator of Jameson's <u>Diary</u> is resurrected to become the subject of the narrative. The narrative which fictionalized a real author through its subjectivity is now used to define a fictional character through that character's self-defining perception of experience.

In a sense the nineteenth-century preoccupation with a definition of aesthetics and the arts in society was a grand tour in its own right: it represents an intellectual excursion in the pursuit of knowledge. Pater's ideas have by now, of course, become very familiar and are essential to our understanding of the arts, but in 1873 they were innovative and controversial. Henry James's reading of and interest in Pater's work had a profound effect on his fiction.[50] However, these absorptions and influences were not immediate, but gradual. To trace James's development as a critic and artist it is necessary to return to the 1860's when he began his career as a critic and delved into the interesting and varied tradition of travel writing.

James travelled to Europe many times, and from an early age, yet travels with his parents never took him to Italy. Making a European tour on his own, he first went there in 1869, and, as his letters home reveal, he was profoundly affected by what he saw. If letters, like those that Goethe sent to Weimar from Italy, are part of a travel writer's

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[50]For a detailed discussion of Pater's influence on James see: James D. Wilson, "Walter Pater's Influence on Modern Fiction: Henry James and James Joyce," (M.A. thesis, Concordia University, Montréal: 1981), esp. pp. 101-159. Adeline Tintner's "Henry James's Mona Lisa," Essays in Literature 8 (Spring 1981): 105-108, traces a particular influence of Pater on James to as early as 1869 when Pater's essay on Leonardo first appeared in the Fortnightly Review. Tintner's "Another Germ for 'The Author of Beltraffio': James, Pater and Botticelli's Madonnas," Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies 1, 1 (1980): 14-20, also considers Pater's influence on James and his increasing admiration for the critic's work.

diary, then we can consider these the earliest of James's travel writings. Henry Seidel Canby, in his review of The Painter's Eye, describes the development of James the epistler in the following way:

> . . . he becomes a different kind of observer. You can watch the process beautifully in the letters from abroad to his family when at first he had for weeks at a time no one to talk to but his waiter or his language teacher; when wandering on crowded streets or sitting in the parks of fashionable spas he gave his time utterly to observing, observing almost forgetting, it would seem, his own personality, his own personal life, though intensly aware of his critical opinions.[51]

These letters written home from abroad exemplify the nature of travel writing: experiences are recounted by an observer, a foreigner--and perhaps they are given meaning. Like Goethe, James is an observer in his letters, but James was not only aware of his role, he was also aware of its inadequacies. On September 25, 1869, he wrote to his brother William:

> This Italian tone of things which I then detected, lies richly on my soul and gathers increasing weight, but it lies as a cold and foreign mass--never to be absorbed and appropriated. The meaning of this superb image is that I feel I shall never look at Italy--at Venice, for instance--but from without . . .[52]

By being isolated from the society he was visiting, James is never in that society, and, like Hawthorne in Rome, he remains not only an observer, but a foreign one. The import-

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[51]Henry Seidel Canby, "Henry James and the Observant Profession," Saturday Review 33 (December 2, 1950): 11.

[52]James Letters, vol.1, p. 137.

ance of James's remark is its recognition of the role of the writer as an observer--particularly an observer who wants to see from <u>within</u>. Unlike Hawthorne's, James's sense of foreignness in Italy was a source of distress not because Italy was foreign, but because James was. The immersion of personality in observation is really the very sort of experience Walter Pater advocated, for it is through such observational experience that personality is redefined. This gathering and understanding of impressions is, as we have seen, the object of the critic, writer, artist, and eventually the Jamesian centre of consciousness.

<u>Transatlantic Sketches</u> includes James's accounts of his second, third, and fourth visits to Italy. In 1872, beginning in France--as the young gentleman on a grand tour usually did--James travelled through that country in constant anticipation of his destination. Along the way he stopped to record his "impressions." According to Donald Emerson, James's accounts reflect "with the intensity of vivid, immediate experience, perceptions and responses to pictures which James had learned elsewhere. The travels reinforce one's inescapable sense of <u>connection</u> in everything James wrote."[53] While the reviews of paintings may have been influenced by those impressions James had already formed and

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[53]Donald Emerson, "The Relation of Henry James's Art Criticism to His Literary Standards," <u>Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters</u> 57 (1969): 14.

brought with him through his earlier travels and his reading, so too is his interpretation of scene coloured by his expectations. In a discussion of the house shared by Rousseau and Mme. de Warens in "From Chambéry to Milan," (1872), for example, James comments that the "sordid little house" seemed "a hardly deeper shade of reality than the images you contemplate on his [Rousseau's] pages," (TS 74). Then, upon his arrival in Italy in 1872, James commented:

> Every object is a reminder . . . looking out on the great square, it seemed to me that the scene within and without was a rough epitome of every pleasure and every impression I had formerly gathered from Italy . . . (TS 75)

James, having been to Italy only once before, must have gathered some of his impressions from the literarture of Howells, Goethe, and Hawthorne. Such impressions do not correspond to Pater's idea of impressions made by the direct experience of what one sees. While James uses the word "impression" liberally, he uses it in its broad, original sense. But, if we assume that James went abroad to Italy with some of those intentions he had attributed to tourists there: to "gaze," at artworks which would "represent to the imagination the maximum of man's creative force,"[54] then his expectations anticipate Pater's idea of the appeal to the imaginative reason made on us by observing objects and artworks. In his discussions of artwork, however, James's method falls somewhere between the puzzlement of Goethe, the

[54] James, "Howells's," p. 199-200.

narrations of Hawthorne, and the interpretations of Ruskin. In Transatlantic Sketches James generally analyses paintings by describing their appearances, registering his "impressions" of the works, and recording the "expressions" of the works. In his discussions of Vandyck, Tintoretto, and Fra Angelico (IS 76-77, 92-93, 296-297), for example, he describes the artworks' appearances in narrative terms as Goethe would have done; like Hawthorne, he registers his impressions of the works' subject, handling, and colour; and, on the basis of these qualities he records what he calls the expressions of the paintings, meaning the over-all tone of the painting given to it by its creator such as the politeness of Vandyck (IS 76-77). On the basis of these criteria, James decides whether or not the painting is a worthwhile object, and in doing so he attempts to construct an objective analysis rather than a subjective response. In the 1860's and early 70's, then, James's approach to art was obviously rather simplistic in spite of its rigour.

According to Carl Maves, Italy, for James, "effects that combination of feeling and intellect, of perception and passion, without which a great novelist is impossible--and Italy unfathomable."[55] Surely these combined qualities--which remind us of Ruskin's literalism and emotionalism--are James's imaginative intellect, that ability to observe and

[55] Carl Maves, Sensuous Pessimism: Italy in the Work of Henry James (Bloomington: Indiana U P, 1973), p. 18.

analyse, however foreign the young Henry James felt amidst Italian sensuality. James's discussions of artworks during his travels in Italy are not unlike his art reviews. He brings to them his critical faculties, which are held in check by his conservative tastes on one hand, and by his Ruskinian ideas about art on the other.[56] In his discussion of James's art critism Donald Emerson notes that James displays "a concern for reality," searches for "justness of characterization," exhibits a "fondness for the narrative or literary aspects of a canvas," and "exercises a demand for morality and taste."[57] These strictures are largely attributable to Ruskin's influence. In his early admiration of Tintoretto, for example, James refers to him as an artist whose hand "never drew a line that was not, as one may say, a moral line" (TS 91),[58] and in his discussion of the Milan Cathedral James comments that the building represents "difficulties annulled, resources combined, labor, courage, and patience," then marvels that, "there are people who tell us that art has nothing to do with morality!" (TS 78).

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[56]W. R. Martin, "'The Eye of Mr. Ruskin': James's Views on Venetian Artists," Henry James Review 5, 2 (Winter 1984): 107-116. Martin traces Ruskin's influence over James's interest in the Venetians and suggests that not until 1892 was James a truly "confident and independent critic," p. 111.

[57]Emerson, p. 11.

[58]W. R. Martin also points out that in 1872 James emulated Ruskin's "innocuous affectation" of calling Tintoretto "Tintoret." However, in his letters during his first visit to Italy in 1869 James did refer to the artist as "Tintoretto," indicating, perhaps, that James's early visits to Italy further reinforced his agreement with Ruskin's views.

James's comments clearly echo Ruskin's on the god-praising attributes of the Gothic stone carvers in "The Nature of Gothic." The connection to Ruskin is reinforced by James's assertion that "a great building is the greatest conceivable work of art," (TS 78).

However, Ruskin's hold over James's opinions on art was not permanent, and soon diminished as James's own critical faculties developed. Though James does not, as W. R. Martin points out, differ in taste from the dictates of Ruskin, he does begin to disagree with the art critic by expressing his own favourable opinion of artists such as Titian whose work Ruskin initially disliked. Martin attributes these divergences to James's battle "for his independence from Ruskin,"[59] but Martin's comments surely underestimate the interest and knowledge James had acquired about the arts from other sources, and his critical and analytical faculty itself. That James felt, in 1872, that Ruskin was "pushing matters too far" in calling Veronese "a painter of deep spiritual intentions" (TS 91) reflects his rejection of Ruskin's overtly Christian attitude. But his interest in the moral line of Tintoretto recognizes that inherent morality Ruskin instilled in the arts through his Christian stance. That James does move away from Ruskin is inevitable, but the manner in which Ruskin influenced him is also significant.

In October 1873, James made his fourth trip to Italy,

[59]W. R. Martin, p. 111.

staying there till June 1874. Either just before or during this trip, James read the first edition of Walter Pater's Renaissance.[60] Having learned from Ruskin the moral component in art, and, as a result, the spiritual component as well, James was by then forming his own concept of aesthetics. Pater must have had some immediate influence, but James's only comment on The Renaissance at that time was that Pater was eloquent in his discussion of Botticelli, if inconclusive, (TS 299). However, that James could speak of Botticelli's Coronation of the Virgin as one of the "supremely beautiful productions of the human mind" (TS 300), indicates a shift in his approach to art towards a cerebral and subjective view. Moreover, in his comments that one's response to paintings "depends vastly upon one's mood--as a traveller's impressions do, generally" (TS 290), and his increasing tendency to regard paintings "more as an entertainment and less as a solemnity" (TS 290), James found himself relishing perception rather than system in understanding art. Further evidence of James's concern with the imagination and the subjectivity of art is evident in his assertion that his imagination projected a sympathetic glow which was itself half the substance of his "genial impres-

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[60]James apparently bought a copy of The Renaissance in Florence on May 31, 1873, just prior to his leaving Italy for the third time (see Letters, vol. 1, pp. 390-91) and later refers to Pater's "Studies on [sic] the History of the Renaissance," in Part IV of his "Florentine Notes," dated February-April, 1874, Transatlantic Sketches, p. 299.

sions" (*TS* 291). James was, therefore, aware that everything he saw was seen through that ring of personality that Pater considered the determiner of the impression received. And this ring of personality--the glow that emanates from the imagination--has been fuelled by the reading and the knowledge of the observer. Like a painting, an impression is the product of vision. Whether these ideas represent the direct influence of Pater is difficult to assess, but James's increasing reliance on the word "impression" in connection with the arts must be partially due to Pater's emphasis on and definition of the word. Still, "The School of Giorgione," that essay in which Pater so strongly describes his concept of the impression and the importance of the surface appearance rather than the meaning of art, is anticipated by James in 1874. Unlike Ruskin, who disdained art for art's sake by deploring the Victorian fascination with the decoration of useless objects, James in what might be as revolutionary a manner as Pater, suggests that beauty is itself a worthwhile end. In the following passage about Vincigliata Castle, which he calls "a triumph of aesthetic culture," James, in defense of this description, clearly makes a break with Ruskin's rigid morality of art which would label blasphemous any attempt by the hands of men to create beauty and perfection:

> There are moods in which one feels the impulse to enter a tacit protest against too generous a patronage of pure aesthetics, . . . One turns half away, musingly, from certain beautiful useless things.

> But the healthier state of mind, surely, is to lay no tax on any really intelligent manifestation of the curious and exquisite . . . This elaborate piece of imitation has no superficial use; but, even if it were less complete, less successful, less brilliant, I should feel a reflective kindness for it. So handsome a piece of work is its own justification; it belongs to the heroics of culture. (TS 287-288)

Critics of James's art criticism, in spite of their awareness of James's importance as a literary critic, have often ignored the connection between these two endeavours. Emerson calls his art criticism "amateur";[61] E. Lane Faison claims James's limitations as an art critic "were grave indeed";[62] and Robert L. Gale comments that James's travels in Italy though productive of some "charming" sketches were only useful by providing a cache of colorful scenes and figures to plunder in the concoction of descriptions.[63] We may agree that James was not a brilliant art critic; however, we must admit that he was an acutely conscious one. His criticism, with its emphasis on the search for "impressions," represents the growth of consciousness through vision which becomes essential to the experience of James's characters. In his "Foreword" to Carl Maves's Sensuous Pessimism, Ian Watt comments that James's novels "are written in the mood, not of the territorial imperative, but of the ecological subjunctive," of Italy whose history, for

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[61]Emerson, p. 9.

[62]E. Lane Faison, Jr., "The Novelist as Art Critic," Saturday Review 40 (June 1, 1957): 28.

[63]Robert L. Gale, "Henry James and Italy," Nineteenth Century Fiction 14 (September 1959): 163, 167.

James, did not merely provide local colour, but provided "reminders of intractable realities which lie in wait for vagrants who stay too long."[64] And Carl Maves, in his study of James's fascination with Italy, pays considerable attention to James's travel writing and the relation between the genre and James's use of it in his fiction. These critics begin to suggest a direct extension of the author's mind into that of his characters.

That the collecting of impressions was for James both a manner of personal growth and a way of seeing is fundamental to his development as a writer. It accounts also for James's shifting interest away from travel writing or critical journalism towards fiction. Like the narrator of a journey, a tale, or a quest-romance, James becomes subject of the history of his travels abroad. This history itself is as "real" as any fiction by its translation from experience into literature. As his interest in impressions increases, James's narrative becomes increasingly an account of his ideas and thoughts rather than a narrative of events or actions. The most striking example of James's translation of narrative description into an intellectual impression occurs in his account of a walk in Genoa in 1877:

> There was no one within sight but a young man, who was slowly trudging upward, with his coat slung over his shoulder and his hat upon his ear, like a cavalier in an opera. Like an operatic performer, too,

[64] Ian Watt, "Foreword" to Sensuous Pessimism by Carl Maves, pp. ix, xi.

> he was singing as he came; the spectacle, generally, was operatic, and as his vocal flourishes reached my ear I said to myself that in Italy accident was always picturesque, and that such a figure had been exactly what was wanted to set off the landscape . . . . the young man overtook me, and . . . asked me if I could favour him with a match to light the hoarded remnant of a cigar. This request led, as I walked back to the inn, to my having some conversation with him. . . . But the point of my anecdote is that he presently proved to be a brooding young radical and communist, filled with hatred . . . . He was an unhappy, underfed, unemployed young man, who took a hard grim view of everything, and was operatic only quite in spite of himself. This made it very absurd of me to have looked at him simply as a graceful ornament to the prospect, an harmonious little figure in the middle distance. . . . Yet, but for the accident of my having a little talk with him, I should have made him do service, in memory, as an example of sensuous optimism! (PP 52-53)

James's anecdote simultaneously exposes the romantic view as misleading and illustrates the need to see beyond the surface image. The young man is "picturesque" only as long as he is part of the landscape; seen on his own, he is hardly an operatic cavalier.

That James ceased regular writing of art criticism by the late 1880's indicates, I think, not as Emerson suggests[65] that he was simply an intelligent observer, but that as an intelligent observer the role of art critic was a limiting one. More to the point is the observation that at the time his art notices decrease, his major period as a novelist begins. James's art reviews and travel writings only cease to be elements of non-fiction--they are increasingly integrated into his fiction. Alwyn Berland might be

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[65]Emerson, p. 10.

describing the young, travelling James when he describes the nature of a Jamesian protagonist:

> Most often he has acquired his thirst [for culture] from an early taste of Europe, and augmented it by ambitious tastes in reading or in art, as has Rowland Mallet ... as as well as Isabel Archer and Lambert Strether.[66]

The interest in James's travel writings and art criticism, then, lies not in any particular originality or novelty of description, but in their place in the development of James's fictional method and aesthetic theories.

[66]Berland, p. 418.

CHAPTER II:
THE PICTURESQUE HEART

> I speak of the painter in general and of his relation to the old picture, the work of his hand, that has been lost to sight and that, when found again, is put back on the easel for measure of what time and the weather may, in the interval, have done to it. . . . It helps him to live back into a forgotten state . . . and the old motives fall together once more, and a lesson and a moral and a consecrating final light are somehow disengaged.[1]

In 1875 James published both his Transatlantic Sketches and his first successful novel, Roderick Hudson. Roderick Hudson is the story of a philanthropic Pygmalion who attempts to have a hand in the development of artistic genius. James presents the story as a grand tour of Europe--particularly Italy--by two young men, but on an underlying level the novel is an intellectual tour as well. Roderick Hudson is James's first assertion of himself as a literary realist and the novel marks his ascent from aspirant to artist. In a fundamental way, Roderick Hudson's subject is James's development of an artistic method in the novel.

Throughout the novel James literally struggles with aesthetic theories as he is forced in his writing to reject and adopt certain aspects of the very aesthetic theories his

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[1]Henry James, "Preface" to the 1909 New York Edition of Roderick Hudson, reprinted in the Penguin edition (Penguin Books: Harmondsworth, 1969), pp. 15-16. Subsequent references pertain to this edition, which is based on the 1878 text, and will appear in parentheses in the text, if necessary with the abbreviation RH.

characters debate. Each aesthetic creed is given a voice through an artist character so that the novel's developments and outcome are at least partially indicative of James's aesthetic developments. A study of the artist and his characters reveals James's passionate interest in the importance of having an artistic purpose and philosophy. Roderick Hudson is not the answer to James's aesthetic questions: it is merely a starting point for a definition of aesthetics which interested James in all his fiction. James developed his theories through his writing of each successive novel, until, in "The Art of Fiction," he made his declaration of purpose; and in its application in The Ambassadors the concept of a way of seeing was an integral part of the novel's composition, rather than an imposition--either allegorical or authorial.

Confusion between the roles of observer and object in Roderick Hudson has long impeded its criticism. The novel's title may be its most misleading element, but the presentation of Rowland Mallet through his view of a young man ruined by unrequited love for a woman has, no doubt, further obscured the novel's real subject. Even Viola Hopkins Winner, after emphatically asserting Rowland's centrality to the text ("the novel 'hangs together' to the degree that it does because the subject is presented, not as Roderick's experiences, but as Rowland's consciousness of them") bases her main discussion of Roderick Hudson on the mechanics of Rod-

erick's artistic experiences. She suggests that, "it may be assumed that Rowland expresses James's own art views," and concludes that "James subjects the romantic genius of Roderick to the test of experience, and he fails."[2] Winner, having mentioned Rowland's consciousness in connection with James's presentation of the subject, fails also--as the critics of this novel have almost inevitably failed--to recognize that the subject of the novel is Rowland's experience of consciousness and that Roderick's experiences are the mere spectacle upon which this consciousness must feed. More precisely: consciousness is the novel's subject, experience the subject of that consciousness. While my view suggests a horrible consumption of one character by another, this horror seems to me to be one of the dangers of romanticism exposed by this novel and further explored in subsequent fictions through James's art connoisseurs. Peter J. Conn's "Roderick Hudson: The Role of the Observer," is an important exception to the critiques which emphasize Roderick's excesses at the expense of understanding Rowland's control over the narrative. In his reading Conn claims that readers have been led astray because "they have accepted Rowland's testimony without questioning his reliability, a reliability which the entire novel indicts."[3] However, the strength of Conn's argument relies considerably on its basis in the New

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[2]Winner, pp. 65, 102, 107.

[3]Peter J. Conn, "Roderick Hudson: The Role of the Observer," Nineteenth-Century Fiction 26, 1 (1971): 75.

York edition of Roderick Hudson. This reliance reinforces Conn's contentions but tends more to illustrate James's retrospective understanding of Roderick Hudson than to explore the significance of Rowland's observations to the development of James's aesthetic. James had to write Roderick Hudson to solve some of his own artistic dilemmas; it is not, therefore, coincidental that thirty-four years later he found himself essentially in agreement with the novel's aesthetic--he did include it in the New York edition--but at the same time felt that he was "literally re-seeing" it, as F.O. Matthiessen says[4], and, I would add, by the bright light of his mature "aesthetic illumination." The choice of text is crucial here because those very "abstractions" of apprenticeship Matthiessen cites in the original edition are evidence of James's aesthetic winnowing. The vagueness of James's early abstractions could only be clarified years later, after those first tentative assertions had been tested and proven in James's fictional method.

While James may not have expressed his intentions clearly at the time he wrote the novel, in his Preface he states explicitly that his

> . . . subject, all blissfully, in the face of difficulties had defined itself--and this in spite of the title of the book--as not directly, in the least, my young sculptor's adventure. This it had

[4] F.O. Matthiessen, "James and the Plastic Arts," Kenyon Review 5 (Autumn 1943): 538.

> been but indirectly, being all the while in essence and in final effect another man's, his friend's and patron's, view and experience of him . . . The centre of interest throughout "Roderick" is in Rowland Mallet's consciousness, and the drama is the very drama of that consciousness . . . what happened to him was above all to feel certain things happening to others, to Roderick, to Christina, to Mary Garland, to Mrs. Hudson, to the Cavaliere, to the Prince, so the beauty of the constructional game was to preserve in everything its especial value for <u>him</u>. (19-20)

James acknowledges the temptation to read the novel as the story of Roderick's decline and death, and the consciousness of genius in decline. Yet he asserts that the novel is the story of Rowland's mind and that Roderick is important, as are the other characters, only for the role he plays in the development of that consciousness. Clearly Roderick, the Idealist, is meant to fail. This is, after all, a novel about a great failure. But if we grant that Rowland's consciousness is the novel's subject then <u>which</u> failure is the novel really about? The great tragedy of <u>Roderick Hudson</u> is not the trite story of the failure of artistic genius, rather it is the tragedy of failed vision: Rowland is a romantic, and in spite of all his experiences in the real world, in spite of all his feelings , or lack of them as Conn suggests,[5] concerning the things that happen to the others, Rowland remains a romantic.

A number of early observations or comments foreshadow the novel's outcome and give the reader insight into James's

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[5]Conn, p. 68.

own questions about art and the nature of Rowland Mallet as subject as well. For example, Rowland clearly comprehends an artist's reliance on and duty to his visual faculties. He defends Roderick against Mr. Striker's charge of laziness in the law office as an education of the young man's perceptive faculties:

> ". . . to a sculptor who loves his work there is no time lost. Everything he looks at teaches or suggests something."
> "That's a tempting doctrine to young men with a taste for sitting by the hour with the page unturned, watching the flies buzz, or the frost melt on the window pane. Our young friend in this way must have laid up stores of information which I never suspected!"
> "It is very possible," said Rowland with an unresentful smile, "that he will prove some day the completer artist for some of those lazy reveries." (60-61).

Pater's idea that vision is informative and formative to the artist is implied in Rowland's defense, yet Rowland too suffers from partial vision and an unwillingness to understand what is seen.

Rowland's misperceptions occur through his persistently romantic view of the world and the other characters. While still in Northampton, Rowland romanticizes scene. That the frame of his vision is his imagination rather than his observation of objects signals a conflict between romance and reality. Rowland is prepared to see only what he imagines--whether it or something altogether different appears before his eyes. He calls the hemlocks by the Hudson household "melancholy," for example, and notes the "moss-coated

bricks" of the garden pavement and the "air of antiquated dignity" about the house which "had seen its best days" (45). On the basis of this vision Rowland is "sure," having never met the woman, that "Mrs. Hudson . . . might be seen in the garden of a morning, in a white apron and a pair of old gloves, engaged in frugal horticulture" (45). Clearly everything Rowland sees suggests something romantic to his imagination; however, these suggestions are not accurate perceptions.

In a short passage during the Northampton section of the novel, Rowland tells of having,

> ". . . read in a book the other day that great talent in action--in fact the book said genius--is a kind of somnambulism. The artist performs great feats in a dream. We must not wake him up lest he should lose his balance." (39)

Rowland, of course, ignores this advice, first by flattering Roderick's ego, then by wrenching him out of his productive slumbers in Northampton, and finally by taking him off to Europe where Roderick loses his balance in the Alps. Rowland, however, is even more deeply asleep than Roderick, for his romantic dreams about Italy and his romantic apotheosis of Roderick are made through the elevation of Roderick's wasted and tragic life to the stuff of romantic heroism. In Rowland's retrospective view the sallow patina of time imparts to the story a polished golden glow. Rowland slumbers and dreams his way out of Northampton to Italy and back again without ever waking to any realizations of the

hideousness of the tragedy he has brought upon his most intimate friend. At the moment of his "ecstatic vision," or most spiritual experience, Rowland succumbs to a romantic recognition of doom rather than being jolted by it--as James's characters subsequently are--into awareness. His vision of the devil--evil incarnate--at the Franciscan convent garden seems to be a moment of self-revelation as he was "literally beside himself" (216), implying that the devil Rowland sees is himself. But, rather than accept his vision as "a moment of self-recognition, and the source of a life taken in hand,"[6] Rowland retreats from it, thus refusing to cross the "bridge" from romance to reality. Rowland's thoughts prior to his vision of evil are concentrated upon Roderick's impending doom and include, allegorically, Rowland's desire to push Roderick over the brink in his image of fueling the fires for a man being burnt at the stake. While Mary Garland initially appears to be that "something" of "reversionary interest" which "the victim was to leave behind him," on closer inspection it is clearly the affirmation of Rowland's romantic vision and a fulfilment of his desire for uncompromisingly romantic experience that Roderick's death will impart to Rowland--which is of course precisely what happens. Having admired the grace and beauty of Roderick's fatal plunge, it is no wonder Rowland thinks

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[6]Robert K. Martin, "James and the 'Ecstatic Vision'," Modern Language Studies 13, 4 (Fall 1983): 37.

he has seen a devil. Perhaps it is significant that Rowland can imagine these things after having "pulled his hat over his eyes," but sees the devil, one can presume, only after his hat "had rolled away" (217-218). When the eyes are closed one cannot observe, and so one cannot interpret or understand, for the moment of consciousness is precipated by an unobstructed vision. What Rowland has "resisted--and conquered" (218) is not evil but, unfortunately, the opportunity to understand the harm he has done Roderick through his own inherent evil. Rowland's retrieval of his hat indicates his desire, once again, to shield himself from reality; for, as deftly as he recovers his hat, Rowland covers up his consciousness, shakes off his vision, and resumes his romantic quest.

Roderick Hudson commences with an image of thirst in the form of Roderick's sculpture, and it is Rowland, not Roderick, who is parched at the outset. He is "tired," and "not happy," has "no errand," cannot "feel ardent," considers himself "half finished," because his "genius" and "faculty of expression" have been left out (26). He is a character wanting experience. Yet Rowland does not initially view his proposed grand tour as a means of personal fulfilment; instead, he calls it "a sort of idealized form of loafing." To Rowland, the tour is not necessarily an educational experience; it is an indulgent one through which he may succumb to a romantic state of melancholic ennui.

Rowland maintains the traditional association of the fine arts with the grand tour, but the reverie featuring himself as the rescuer of an exquisite Italian Renaissance drawing illustrates Rowland's romantic attitudes towards art and man (26). That Rowland feels nothing for the imaginary host's "reduced circumstances," that he can dismiss sympathy and interest in a man in favour of the joint satisfactions of investment and possession suggest that Rowland is the prototype of the Jamesian connoisseur. He lies somewhere between Ralph Touchett and Gilbert Osmond and might be Adam Verver in his youth, for Rowland is a man in search of a collection who settles on a human prize.

Unlike Osmond, though, Rowland is not a deliberately ruthless collector: his desire for possession is tempered by his overwhelming sense of the romantic. In this respect, Rowland is far closer in temperament to Isabel Archer than to Gilbert Osmond.[7] In <u>Roderick Hudson</u>, through the experience of Rowland, we see the early stages of James's devotion to realism. The romantic temperament has been transferred from the narrative structure and distilled into one character, through that character's point of view. James attempts to introduce the romantic to reality: elements of plot and setting that were once fixtures of romantic art and writing often appear as objects seen by Rowland. The Pygmalion

[7]Conn, however, sees Rowland as always "self-interested" yet devoid of all "conscious malice" (p. 68), which is, of course, my point: Rowland is <u>un</u>consciously malicious.

structure of Roderick Hudson, for instance, seems an overtly romantic feature of the novel which probably reflects the influence of Mérimée's "Vénus d'Ille" which James had translated in 1860. Yet the whole idea of Pygmalion is not one imposed on the novel by James, but a derivative of Rowland's desire to express his own "genius" through Roderick. Rowland tells Cecilia, "I am holding myself ready for inspiration. I am waiting till something takes my fancy irresistibly" and later says, "I told you the other day, you know, that I longed to have something on my hands. When it first occurred to me that I might start our young friend on the path to glory, I felt as if I had an unimpeachable inspiration" (25, 52-53, italics mine). Rowland, then, has adopted the language of sculpture and imagines himself a Pygmalion figure. Not only are we told that "something considerable might be made of Roderick" we are also informed these are Rowland's reflections (52). The Pygmalion theme is clearly Rowland's view of his own role; it does not emanate from an authorial imposition through symbolism except perhaps in Rowland's surname. So, although James was undeniably interested in the conventions of romance, and perhaps incapable at the time of writing a novel without them, their manifestations in Roderick Hudson are symptomatic of a romantic temperament operating inside the novel rather than governing it externally.

Italy represents for Rowland a chance for "moral

misery" as one rambles "among the ruins of the Palatine" and rides "in the shadow of crumbling aqueducts," (27). In this attitude he is not too far removed from the young Henry James. James's letter to his brother William, upon arriving in Rome (October 30, 1869), shows him succumbing to a very romantic vision of the city. Rome was the only place that sent the young James's usually restrained and controlled enthusiasms bursting into an unprecedented paroxysm of exclamatory punctuation. James tells his brother he "went reeling and moaning thro' the streets, in a fever of enjoyment. . . traversed almost the whole of Rome and got a glimpse of everything-- . . . all the Piazzas and ruins and monuments. The effect is something indescribable. For the first time I know what the picturesque is."[8] It seems that upon his arrival in Rome, James finally felt he was truly _in_ Italy. But it is also clear that James saw what he expected to see. Carl Maves compares James's account to an "ecstatic conversion."[9] James's interest in "Piazzas and ruins and monuments" is paralleled by Rowland's, and the author's enthusiasm seems to constitute that "peculiar refinement of bliss" which Rowland attributes to a winter in Rome (26). It would be naive, though, to align Rowland's romanticism too closely with James's, for Rowland's romanticism is consistently viewed through a veil of irony. Adeline Tintner

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[8] _James Letters_, p. 160.
[9] Maves, p. 4.

traces the romantic inheritance in Roderick Hudson through no fewer than nine lines of descent in her "Roderick Hudson: A Centennial Reading."[10] While Tintner's exploration of romantic aspects of the novel is certainly extensive, it stresses James's place within the romantic traditions without consideration of how James modified this literary legacy. Since James had had his own romantic vision (PP 52-53) of Italy's seductive picturesque heart (RH 111), he could convincingly portray its lure for the artist. James's use of Rowland's romanticism to satirize the character's egotism indicates that James did not remain insensitive to what, by 1873, he recognized as the "literally hideous" component of the picturesque (TS 272), that is, its physical requirements of the shabby, ugly, and dirty. But James also failed to see that the most hideous aspect of the picturesque is surely the viewer's ability to regard either life or art without any intrusion of morality. His own consciously romantic view in "The Autumn in Florence" permits him to describe graphically the "ugliness" of a Florentine slum, for example, while enjoying its "picturesque" arrangements without compunction:

> Anything more battered and befouled, more cracked and disjointed, dirtier, drearier, shabbier, it would be impossible to conceive. They look as if, fifty years ago, the muddy river had risen . . . and left them coated forever with its unsightly slime. And yet, forsooth, . . . these miserable

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[10]Adeline R. Tintner, "Roderick Hudson: A Centennial Reading," Henry James Review 2, 3 (Spring 1981): 177-188.

> dwellings . . . bloom and glow all along the line in a perfect felicity of picturesqueness. (IS 272-273)

The image evoked by James is comparable to the illustrations of popular nineteenth-century travel books. Samuel Prout's Verona (Plate 2-1) from George Baxter's The Pictorial Album; or Cabinet of Paintings (London, 1837), for example, is a "typical . . . romantic image of a foreign city."[11] Nevertheless, if we agree that James took up the romantic traditions left him by Hawthorne and Goethe, among others, we must also grant that in doing so James gradually exposed these traditions through rigorous scrutiny of romanticism's flaws in its operation in the lives of his characters.

Rowland's primary and unspoken interest in his grand tour is not the "liberal education" James sought on his own grand tour,[12] but the acquisition of European art--a peculiar ambition, one might think, for a man who wants to open an American museum. Nevertheless, Rowland, like many nineteenth-century Americans, associates the highest artistic culture with Italy.[13] But Rowland's interest in Ghirlandaio

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[11] Yale Center for British Art, Selected Paintings Drawings & Books with a Foreword by Paul Mellon (New Haven: Yale, 1977), p. 99.

[12] James Letters, p. 161.

[13] See: James's William Wetmore Story and His Friends: From Letters, Diaries, and Recollections (Boston, 1903; reprint ed. New York: Kennedy Galleries, 1969), concerning the American artist colony in Rome during the mid-nineteenth century; also Regina Soria, Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century American artists in Italy 1760-1914 (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickenson U P, 1982); and E.P. Richardson, Travelers in Arcadia : American Artists in Italy 1830-1875, (Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts, 1951).

2-1. Samuel Prout: *Verona*, 1837

and Botticelli (26) is not a reflection of the conventional mid-nineteenth-century American taste for the classical and the neo-classical. Rather, it indicates a considerable knowledge of art and anticipates the interest aroused in the Italian Renaissance by Walter Pater following his publication of The Renaissance in 1873. As we have seen, James's own interests in art had been influenced by Ruskin through the 1860's and 70's, but his increasing interest in Florentine painters rather than Ruskin's Venetians was probably due to his reading of Pater, who popularized Botticelli and praised Ghirlandaio.

Rowland's ambition to impose visions of the Italian Renaissance on nineteenth-century America corresponds to his desire to impose his own view of the world on others, without regard for their desires or points of view. The greatest error possible for any character in a James novel is to impose one's expectations on one's vision at the expense of seeing whole and thus also at the expense of understanding. An incomplete point of view will always preclude revelation and knowledge. This error, however, is also the error of the failed artist. To be a good artist one must not only develop a way of seeing but one must also be true to that vision in the creation of art, otherwise the made objects lose their authenticity and the artist his means of translating life into art. Rowland, though, exhibits severe myopia in his imposition of romance on reality. Perversely,

Rowland may be regarded as a successful romantic artist since he never wavers from his romantic view.

Rowland may lack an artist's genius, but he lacks neither the sculptor's desire to mould nor the taste of an aesthete. Roderick is first described by Rowland in terms of colour and form suitable to a description of a work of art:

> The features were admirably chiselled and finished . . . The fault of the young man's whole structure was an excessive want of breadth . . . the result was an air of insufficient physical substance . . . a generous dark grey eye . . . gave at times to Hudson's harmonious face an altogether extraordinary beauty . . . He was clad from head to foot in a white linen suit, . . . wore a bright red cravat, . . . a pair of yellow kid gloves . . . and . . . one of those slouched sombreros which are the traditional property of the Virginian or Carolinian of romance. When his hat was on he was very picturesque (37-38).

Roderick, with his beauty, harmony, and romantic aspect, becomes Rowland's first acquisition when the artist's talent is literally purchased in trust. Roderick provides Rowland with an element of the picturesque. Initially, then, Roderick quenches Rowland's thirst for romantic experience.

Tied to the image of thirst are the tales of two artists in the novel. Both are failures. Roderick tells Rowland of the Richmond portraitist who "used to drink raw brandy and beat his wife," (49). Later, in Rome, Madame Grandoni tells of Herr Schaafgans, the German artist who "'never painted anything so profane as a man taking a drink,'" (97). Herr Schaafgans, though, in spite of being

a "'votary of spiritual art'," had been ruined, "'his wife used to beat him and he had taken to drinking.'" These tales are at once comic versions and tragic figurations of Roderick's fate. The story of Schaafgans's ruination through his love for a perfidious woman parodies the romantic theme of the artist who drinks more than his share of the heady wine of artistic freedom, gets drunk on experience, and eventually, addicted to pain, dies penurious. While it may be trite and hackneyed, this story does reveal a danger that James himself must have sensed and and at least partly resolved by writing the novel. That the artist must live life fully is accepted by the characters in this novel, but that he should drown his muse in the very wine of experience for which he thirsts is the cruelest of ironies. It indicates that the very experiences that feed artistic vitality may enervate the artist. James illustrates in these two fables the discrepancy between artistic ideals and real life.

In Roderick Hudson the illustration of this distance between the ideal and the real is handled more subtly than in "The Madonna of the Future," (1873), although the story makes a useful comparison to Roderick Hudson since it concerns the same dilemma. In that story Theobald, the idealist, is a "deluded . . . victim of unbridled aspiration"[14] who strives fruitlessly after the ideal. This commitment

[14]Winner, p. 97.

to "aesthetic idealism . . . ruins both artists [Roderick Hudson and Theobald] for the same reason: beginning as a theory, it proceeds to impose itself on every facet of their experience until it totally usurps the place of reality."[15] Critics have tended to read "The Madonna of the Future" as James's admission that one must compromise the ideal in order to produce art, but this reading of the story tends to ignore the type of work produced by the cat and monkey artist. While Theobald is artistically paralysed by his inability to compromise his ideal vision, so too is the producer of vulgar cats and monkeys paralysed by his complete compromise of the aesthetic to the commercial: neither one is a producer of fine art. "The Madonna of the Future" is not simply a fable about a necessary compromise, but is, more importantly, an exploration of how the imposition of preconceptions--whether ideal or vulgar--will prevent the production of art objects.

Roderick is an idealist, but unlike Theobald he is able to compromise and still manage to produce good art. Since Gloriani's sculptures "were extremely elegant" (89), we cannot place him in opposition to Roderick as a champion of the vulgar. The difference between these two is that Gloriani has already made and reconciled himself to the necessary compromise when we first meet him, but Roderick does not take "his turn" until he has been to Baden-Baden (112-113). The

[15] Maves, p. 49.

character who most resembles Theobald is Rowland, for he is unable to compromise his romantic vision. That Rowland resents Roderick's behaving "as if his consciousness were a common blank, to be overlaid with coarse sensations" (107) implies that Rowland resents, as does Theobald, the revelation of imperfection in his subject. Rowland, too, would rather have his canvas blank than blackened. That Rowland not only lacks the genius of expression but is uncompromising in his romantic vision indicates a combination of the two flaws of "The Madonna of the Future" artists. Thus Rowland lacks the two qualities that Maurice Beebe has identified as essential for the artist in James's fiction, "the artist as dreamer and the artist as craftsman: . . . the true artist must be both."[16] Roderick, Gloriani, and Singleton all meet Beebe's criteria, while Rowland most definitely does not. Even in these terms Schaafgans is a parody, for he too compromises his idealism but to so great an extent that he becomes a producer of vulgar objects which--rather ironically in this context--he sells to tourists.

Herr Schaafgans, since he is named as a student of Overbeck's, belongs to the German Nazarene school (Plate 2-2). The Nazarenes professed to be followers of German Gothic painting; however, they left Germany for Rome in 1809 and, embracing Catholicism, settled in an Italian monastery.

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[16]Maurice L. Beebe, Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts: The Artist as Hero in Fiction from Goethe to Joyce. (New York: New York U P, 1964), p. 202.

2-2. Johann Friedrich Overbeck:
Joseph Sold by his Brethern, 1816-17

Fritz Novotny comments that though the Nazarenes had links to classicism through their interest in Raphael, didacticism, and religious subject matter, "on the whole, they must be considered as belonging to romanticism" due to their concentration on the "spiritual content of religious narrative pictures."[17] Schaafgans's failure implies that James rejected the Nazarenes' work. The assumption is not unlikely: James's increasing interest in realism in art probably prevented his acceptance of art that reduces characters to "geometrical figures." Such a reduction denies the consciousness of a character in favour of appearance only. Schaafgans is a votary of spiritual art, but "spiritual" here is the affectation of a religious aspect. The inadequacy of romantic spiritualism is evident in what Novotny calls the "ostentatious and derivative"[18] quality of Nazarene paintings of which James was obviously aware. There is no indication, for instance, that Schaafgans has had any of the artistic spiritual experience that Pater describes as part of the artists' vision: instead Schaafgans relies on a sham religiosity in the form of talk about "gilded aureoles and beatific visions" to supply the artistic vision that he lacks. A final damnation of Schaafgans is his inability to include anything "vulgar" in

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[17] Fritz Novotny, Painting and Sculpture in Europe: 1780-1880, trans. R.H. Boothroyd. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, Pelican History of Art, 1978), p. 113.

[18] Ibid., p. 114.

his work--an affliction shared by Gilbert Osmond.

While the implications of the danger of too much thirst are painfully obvious to Roderick, who takes the tale of Schaafgans good humouredly, Rowland only recognizes the danger to Roderick, not to himself. Rowland, though, in a very insidious way is as susceptible to the danger as any of the artists are. In fact, once Roderick has "peremptorily taken possession of his mind" (64), he is like a man drunk on Roderick. Roderick represents the raw material for Rowland's mallet: an intellect not yet educated and an unrefined genius just waiting to be moulded by Rowland's vision of beauty. Roderick is like clay; he is that "something" Rowland longed to have on his hands (52). But Roderick is very much a man, a clay idol, whose apotheosis can occur only through Rowland's memory. Roderick, in his tragedy, is the hero of an artistic romance. He becomes, by the novel's end--and no doubt is portrayed during those later Northampton visits (349-350)--a beatific vision shrouded in the gilded aureole of the Roman air.

If we are to consider Roderick Hudson the novel through which James began his aesthetic development and established the fundamentals of his aesthetic method as an author, then it is worth considering the role of aesthetics in the novel. James uses four artist characters to give expression to specific nineteenth-century aesthetic modes. The division may appear to be a simplistic allegorical device;

it does, however, divide the aesthetic theories of the time into concise categories over which James, and his readers, may have a complete view. James may have set these aesthetic theories out specifically so that he might more clearly understand them himself--not that each character represents Ruskin, say, or Pater, but that each character is a personification of a type of nineteenth-century art. In 1874 the young Henry James was still piloting his aesthetic craft in shallow waters, and to strike out for the open sea he had to establish a particular course. He must have struggled with certain aesthetic theories more than with others, and, in spite of his own expectations and intentions, the experience of writing Roderick Hudson and his subsequent novels led him in aesthetic directions from which he might initially have turned.

Chapter Six of Roderick Hudson is principally a discussion, similar in form to a Platonic dialogue, but in essence it represents the characterization of an intellectual debate within the self which, less obviously, pervades the novel's whole narrative structure through its constant struggle to pull away from the almost overwhelming romanticism of Rowland's point of view. James's four artists, Gloriani, Sam Singleton, Augusta Blanchard, and Roderick Hudson, debate their philosophies of art. James's use of the mimetic mode is crucial here as we are assured that the artists are expressing themselves rather than being interpreted by the

centre of consciousness. This use of character for the sake of argument was a device that James never repeated. The major flaw in this allegorical employment of point of view is its universality: the characters lose their characteristics when reduced to personifications of art standards, but the one character whose portrayal is enhanced by the conventions of his view is Rowland Mallet. As a visionary or artist he is the most three-dimensional of the characters. Rowland represents an irresponsibly romantic view of the world, nothing swerves him from his view, and the other characters bask in the glow cast by Rowland's consciousness, though none of them is, upon examination, a romantic. Rowland's view colours the whole novel and the other characters in a way that no other character in the novel can. The reason is, of course, his centrality in the text in his role as its central consciousness; and, because of his centrality to it, Rowland's story is his creation: the real artwork at the center of the debate is the novel itself.

The best example of Rowland's centrality is his act of framing at the end of Chapter Six. This scene is the first of a particular type that may be called _tableaux_ due to their presentation as a sort of _tableau vivant_, or living picture. In these scenes James's centres of consciousness perceive objects as if they were depicted in paintings. The result is a tableau composed by the centre of conscious-

ness. This technique differs significantly from the painterly scenes--such as Rowland's description of the Hudson home and garden in which his imagination supplied an image of domestic felicity--for those scenes show the imagination making-up a picture, whereas the tableau, while it may be equally static, is a picture seen by the centre of consciousness. Hence, it is an image embedded in a verbal context for the reader which is apprehended by the novel's centre as if it were a work of art. Its importance is, of course, the very manner of its apprehension, for it is from such tableaux that the centre of consciousness--like the travel diarist looking at paintings--takes an impression. And, as in a travel diary, the quality of that impression relies on the observational abilities of the novel's centre. The intriguing aspect of these tableaux is that their precedent is not to be found in any of the traditional narrative modes of fictional writing but is set in the non-fictional narratives of travel journalism and, in turn, in art criticism. The gaining of knowledge through the perception of objects becomes for James's characters an indispensible activity, for without these tableaux the instantaneous impressions could not occur. An ironic aspect of the tableau is its appearance as an artwork. While it appears specifically as a painting, the tableau is obviously a mode of discourse. The artwork, despite its appearance to the centre of consciousness, is for James and his readers a verbal tour de

force. For, what appears as picture is verbal imagery, what appears as static anti-narrative due to its arrest of action is really an unfamiliar form of narration: in short, what appears to the mind's eye as a painted picture appears to the eye in black and white ink as a page of text. The art working here is that of artifice: James the author creates the illusion of visual arts through his skill with the verbal sort.

The first signal of the tableau is the appearance of a "frame" in the narrative. In the Roderick Hudson scene a doorway provides the [illegible]es of Rowland's vision:

> Coming back to the drawing-room, he paused outside the open door; he was struck by the group formed by the three men. They were standing before Roderick's statue of Eve, and the young sculptor had lifted up the lamp and was showing different parts of it to his companions. He was talking ardently--the lamplight covered his head and face. Rowland stood looking on, for the group struck him with its picturesque symbolism. Roderick, bearing the lamp and glowing in its radiant circle, seemed the beautiful image of a genius which combined sincerity with power. Gloriani, with his head on one side, pulling his long moustache and looking keenly from half-closed eyes at the lighted marble, represented art with a worldly motive, skill unleavened by faith, the mere base maximum of cleverness. Poor little Singleton, on the other side, with his hands behind him, his head thrown back and his eyes following devoutly the course of Roderick's explanations, might pass for an embodiment of aspiring candour afflicted with feebleness of wing. In all this, Roderick's was certainly the beau role. (98-99)

While Winner accurately notes Rowland's reading in this scene as being "in conformity with his own taste and romantic idealism," she concludes that it simply "symbolizes Row-

land's relation to the active life."[19] Peter J. Conn also recognizes that in this scene "the Observer [Rowland] imposes definitions and fixed roles," then suggests that "it is not the 'romantic symbolism' but the possibilities for allegory that attract Rowland."[20] Both Winner and Conn fail to examine adequately the implication of these romantic impositions, for Rowland's symbolizing or allegorizing of relationships here seems to be an aspect of his romantic imposition rather than its source. Because Rowland lacks the necessary "penetrative imagination" or "imaginative reason," the quality of the mind of the observer here is poor; hence, his observations too are lacking in intelligence and are not insightful. That Rowland imposes his romantic expectations upon the scene by deciding what Roderick "seemed," Gloriani "represented," and Singleton "might pass for" indicates that he cannot take a passive "sense impression." Instead, Rowland makes what may justifiably be called an aggressive apprehension. Perhaps James's female characters make better observers or centres for this very reason: the act of passive observation through receptivity accords with traditional female roles.

The allegorical aspects of character are not an unimportant feature of this novel and do bear some scrutiny. Augusta Blanchard, for example, is a representation of the

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[19] Winner, p. 72.
[20] Conn, p. 73.

neo-classical movement in nineteenth-century art. A curious split exists between Miss Blanchard's existence as an example of the neo-classical and her productions as a painter. As an allegorical object, Miss Blanchard is thoroughly characteristic. Her two names evoke the Caesars and the whiteness of marble statuary. Her appearance is manifestly neo-classical: she is "slender, pale and elegant," and has "brilliant auburn hair, . . . braided with classic simplicity" (91); and she is often seen in profile: Rowland would "find her working . . . profiled against the deep blue Roman sky" (91). That Miss Blanchard's likeness is rejected by Mr. Leavenworth as a model for a sculpture of "Culture" may imply that she is too classical for his vision. He desires to patronize "indigenous" American talent which takes an American view. Miss Blanchard's form, assisted by a scroll, is perhaps far too Roman for Leavenworth's tastes. He later expresses regret that "American artists should not boldly cast off that extinct nomenclature" of "pagan" mythology (207). While Leavenworth's Christian view of the world will not allow him to be reconciled to Classicism, it makes no issue of reducing art to its investment value (leavening its worth), nor does it preclude his lavish indulgence of poor taste. Miss Blanchard's person, as a neo-classical art object--rather than as a model for Roderick's Christian American sculpture--is a welcome part of Leavenworth's collection. Madame Grandoni accurately describes

their relationship:

> It was a matter of course, perhaps, that Mr. Leavenworth, who seems to be going about Europe with the sole view of picking up furniture for his "home", as he calls it, should think Miss Blanchard a very handsome morceau; but it was not a matter of course . . . that she should be willing to become a sort of superior table ornament. (248)

In the same evening Rowland apprehends "Miss Blanchard's classic contour," as "hardly more than an effigy stamped upon a coin of low value" (251), and a little later Christina Light remarks, "There is Miss Blanchard sitting as usual in profile against a dark object. She is like a head on a postage stamp" (254). These descriptions of Augusta Blanchard in profile liken her to a cameo or a piece of Wedgwood porcelain: a white silhouette against a blue ground, while the original description of Augusta with her auburn braids evokes an image like that of David's Mme. Récamier (Plate 2-3) or Canova's Pauline Borghese as Venus (Plate 2-4) which Novotny calls Mme. Récamier's "sculptural counterpart."[21] We feel, along with Rowland, that Miss Blanchard has recently been purchased, yet we also see the ironic similarity of her situation to Roderick's.

The dismissal of the splendidly neo-classical Augusta Blanchard through her sale to Mr. Leavenworth reflects James's attitude towards neo-classicism. As early as 1868, James expressed dissatisfaction with the neo-classical be-

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[21]Novotny, p. 380.

2-3. Jacques-Louis David: *Mme. Recamier*, 1800

2-4. Antonio Canova, *Pauline Borghese as Venus*, 1807

cause, as he comments in a discussion of Ingres, it "looked at natural objects in a partial, incomplete manner." This incompleteness may account for Augusta's constant appearance in profile. James felt the neo-classicists lacked an "impartial and comprehensive" vision which would "see objects in their integrity, and reject nothing."[22]

The only account we have of Augusta Blanchard's work dismisses it as it describes:

> . . . she was not above selling her pictures. These represented generally a bunch of dew sprinkled roses, with dew-drops very highly finished, or else a wayside shrine and a peasant woman with her back turned kneeling before it. She did backs very well, but she was a little weak in faces. Flowers however were her speciality, and though her touch was a little old-fashioned and finical, she painted them with remarkable skill. Her pictures were chiefly bought by the English. (90-91)

Miss Blanchard is a painter of two subjects: floral still lifes and pseudo-religious, sentimental genre paintings. That Miss Blanchard is "weak in faces" may symbolize her inability to understand other characters or to see them clearly. Her "uncertainty in her opinion of Roderick's genius" (141), for example, may be a manifestation of her weakness. We are told that Roderick "had never liked her" (140), and that his dislike stemmed from an objection to the thorn of morality appended to her roses. The "moral" that pricks Roderick denies him sensual enjoyment of her paintings: the flowers' beauty may not be enjoyed without sensing pain.

22James, "An English Critic," Painter's Eye, p. 38-39.

It seems that Miss Blanchard's "remarkable skill" renders her flowers natural, since fidelity to nature rejects nothing; thus, the flowers are seen in their integrity. In pursuit of the "moral" Miss Blanchard is, perhaps, a follower of Ruskin. The moral however, must surely be an attitudinal one on the part of the artist, for her paintings of women at shrines and moral roses relates her aesthetic to the "spiritual art" of Herr Schaafgans, whose story also carries, as Roderick points out, a "moral" (97).

While Miss Blanchard's art is undeniably simple, it draws our attention to an aspect of the visual arts that all the characters in this novel appear to ignore: the epistemological aspect of art--and more broadly of all vision--which is necessary for the growth of any character. Roderick Hudson, in his rejection of Miss Blanchard's art on "moral" rather than on technical grounds, characteristically denies himself an opportunity for vision.

If we consider each artist in Roderick Hudson the representative of a particular movement in art, then Sam Singleton surely represents the school of romantic landscape painting. That he is a water-colourist indicates his technical ties to traditional English painting and perhaps to the French Barbizon school as well. The luminosity of watercolour paintings, though, associates Singleton with the American landscape painters of the Hudson River School such as Thomas Cole (Plate 2-5). While Roderick Hudson is

2-5. Thomas Cole: The Oxbow on the Connecticut River Near Northampton, 1836

associated with this school through his name and because of his fresh view of America at the novel's outset (43), it is Singleton, through his techniques, subjects, and nationality, who is the true affiliate of the Hudson River School. With his luminous landscapes, Singleton appears to fit into the nineteenth-century American tradition of "Luminism," yet his landscapes are not of America. Singleton's name is an indication of his insignificance and limited range, for he has but a single tone. The epithet "little", which is so consistently applied to his person and his work, indicates a smallness of stature and talent. Singleton is a plodder lacking in genius; moreover, the scale, if not the subjects, of Singleton's works separate them from the sublime and awe-inspiring productions of German romantic painters such as Caspar David Friedrich (Plate 2-6). Viola Hopkins Winner points out that by making Singleton a water-colourist, "James placed intrinsic limitations on his achievements."[23]

Singleton's situation is ironic. His works fall into a specifically American school of painting, but his subject, Italy and the Alps, distances him from the American nationalism of the Hudson River School. The same irony clouds Roderick's desire to "do" America while thriving on Roman life (95), and Rowland's desire to endow an "American city" with culture through a collection of "valuable specimens of the Dutch and Italian schools" (26). These ironies all point

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[23]Winner, p. 105.

2-6. Caspar David Friedrich:
Landscape in the Harz Mountains, c. 1820

to a certain culpability James may have felt concerning his own artistic life in Europe. James felt consciously American, and in recalling William Wetmore Story, he described that consciousness as a "property he carried about with him as the Mohammedan pilgrim carries his carpet for prayer, and the carpet, as I may say, was spread wherever the camp was pitched."[24] James wrote almost exclusively of Americans yet must have felt an inadequacy in American culture which led him, like his creations, to drink at the fount of experience in Italy instead of remaining on the shores of the Connecticut River or in Buffalo.[25] Buffalo is undoubtedly where Singleton will falter. When the little landscapist returns to his fresh America, whose freshness so captivated the Hudson River artists, he intends to ignore the place. He tells Rowland, "I shall live in my portfolio" (279). Such an intention is a dangerous one for any artist; it indicates an unwillingness to live _in_ the world and to _see_ the world clearly. Singleton, rather than returning to America with fresh eyes, will be returning with closed eyes. By the mid 1860's, the time of the action of this novel, the Hudson River School was on the wane. The European Romantic movement was also fairly well exhausted. So, while James seems

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[24]James, _William Wetmore Story_, [illegible] 28.

[25]The same ironic conflict of interest affected the Nazarenes who came to Italy and embraced Catholicism all the while attempting to follow ancient German painting. James may have had this dilemma in mind in the story of Herr Schaafgans.

to have hoped initially for a strong contrast between the plodding, diligent successes of Singleton and the quick, soaring, fated genius of Roderick, the contrast is unsuccessful. As an ideal artist, Singleton is neither an appealing nor convincing alternative to Roderick. By the novel's end James destroys any lingering illusions that Singleton is a "colossal figure" (321), and reduces Singleton to a "moral" that pricks Roderick's pained conscience (322) like the thorns of Miss Blanchard's roses.

Like Augusta Blanchard, Singleton appears to have a Ruskinian lineage. He is comparable to the Gothic stone carvers whose diligence is, by Ruskin's definition, the greatest attribute of the artist. In the eventual diminution of Singleton's stature, we also see James's rejection of the Ruskinian view of the artist as a humble technician in the service of God; Singleton, however, is never described as particularly Christian or spiritual in his aesthetic avocations. So, while the humble craftsman element of Ruskin's definition of the artist is rejected by James through his depiction of Singleton, the spiritual aspect of that definition--which developed for Ruskin through one's service to God--has not been repressed. Towards the novel's end, Singleton begins to emerge as a moral exemplar for Roderick. Ultimately, then, Singleton embodies some of the moral integrity of the artist which James sought for his own definition.

Of all the artists in Roderick Hudson Gloriani appears to be the least serious and certainly the least studied character. Unlike Roderick and Singleton he appears to have none of the necessary integrity of the true artist, for his work is described as "very corrupt," "positively indecent," "florid and meretricious" (88-89). That Gloriani endured in James's imagination and emerged again in both The Ambassadors (1903) and "The Velvet Glove" (1909) should not be surprising. Although Rowland declines to purchase any of Gloriani's works, James does not pass judgement on Gloriani's realistic aesthetic, which combines both beauty and ugliness. Apart from emphasizing the difference between Rowland's romanticism--which can find "no charm" in Gloriani's art--and James's own growing devotion to realism, Rowland's reluctance points to an element of unreliability in his consciousness. If Rowland is wrong about the intensity of Roderick's talent, the growth of Singleton's stature, and the ultimate value of Gloriani's work, how reliable are any of his judgements, and, by extension, how reliable is his story of Roderick Hudson? Any elements of unreliability in Rowland's view all point back to his romantic outlook: Roderick is a hero of romance, so his talent must be extraordinary and tenacious; Singleton paints luminous romantic landscapes; so he looms colossal on the horizon; but since Gloriani's statues force the viewer to confront both ugliness and beauty without the veil of romanticism,

they have no appeal for Rowland. The rationale for Rowland's insistence that Roderick must work and his constant defence of his protégé's romantic idealism are evidence that Rowland has no interest in realistic productions. His real fear is not that Roderick will die (which we have seen Rowland consider a beautiful conclusion to a romantic adventure) but that Roderick will eventually move from idealism to realism and thereby cease to produce the sort of statues Rowland wants to own. For Rowland will purchase only those objects which fill his romantic longings: Roderick, Roderick's sculptures, and Singleton's landscapes. It would seem, then, that any story told from Rowland's point of view would include only those people and events suited to a tale of romance.

But, while it is Rowland Mallet who declines to purchase Gloriani's work, one still has the impression that James "was hardly in sympathy with Gloriani's theory and practice."[26] Carl Maves points out that the bald "picturesque" Gloriani with his "small bright eye," "broken nose," and "moustache with waxed ends," (89) is something of a caricature. According to Maves, "James eventually saw a new significance in 'art with a worldly motive, skill unleavened by faith, the mere base maximum of cleverness'," and, "came to respect Gloriani's Italian pragmatism, his humane cynicism, as a valid or at least potential alternative to

[26]Winner, p. 102.

Roderick's impassioned romanticism." As Maves points out, James "recast" Gloriani in the New York edition of Roderick Hudson,--certainly the Gloriani of The Ambassadors is a dignified master rather than a caricature--but "his theories of art . . . remain the same."[27] While Maves's assessment of Gloriani's role in Henry James's development of an aesthetic seems correct, his comment that Gloriani's initial incarnation is an alternative to Roderick's impassioned romanticism is not wholly accurate. It is Rowland who is really the impassioned romantic here. Initially Roderick is essentially an Idealist; there can be no taint of the baseness of nature in his art, for Roderick's concern is with absolute beauty. Gloriani makes the comment that Roderick, to continue, must resort to "violence, to contortions, to romanticism" (96). Nevertheless, after the Baden-Baden episode, Roderick's art becomes more "practical," a development that appeals to Gloriani but, Rowland when asked "'Don't you see it yourself, man?'" can only tell Gloriani, "'I don't particularly like this new statue,'" (112-113). The implication of their exchange is, once again, that Rowland is blinded by his own "purist" or romantic point of view. This view allows Rowland to see Roman slums, just as James saw Florence, through a softening golden patina of time. For Rowland the "unclean historic" Tiber washes the "dusky, reeking walls," making them "crumbling and shabby

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[27] Maves, pp. 53-54.

and melancholy," in their "delightful" picturesqueness (83). Rowland, like the Italy portrayed in Singleton's sketches (111), possesses a picturesque heart which is extremely susceptible to the romance of Roderick's tragedy. Again it is Rowland's experience of Roderick that is a romantic experience, and that romantic experience is the novel's subject. Edward Engelberg has identified the conflict between Rowland's romantic expectations and Roderick's productivity:

> For all his knowledge of the arts and his immersion in the "antique" world, Rowland's conception of the artist--which is central to the shaping of Roderick's fate--is a "strong conviction that the artist is better for leading a quiet life" . . . . The somewhat sudden decline of Roderick's creative productivity, James shows very clearly, is not due to a lack of work--as Rowland repeatedly thinks.
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> The chronology of the story is here very important. Despite Rowland's repeated insinuations that it was Christina Light whose fatal charms paralyzed Rodericks's genius, events do not bear this out . . . . The dissipation of Roderick's powers begins almost immediately after his great success and <u>before</u> he meets Christina Light again.[28]

While he may seek perfection in his art, Roderick, as Engelberg implies, is not as devoted to the romantic as Rowland is. Roderick's move towards realism in his art through the production of excellent portrait busts rather than idealized figures corresponds to his experience of suffering a hopeless and painful love for Christina Light, and the

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[28]Edward Engelberg. "James and Arnold: Conscience and Consciousness in a Victorian 'Künstlerroman'," <u>Criticism</u> 10 (Spring 1968): 99-100.

disappointments of his mother, Mary Garland, and Rowland. He has, Ralph Touchett would surely agree, suffered. However, he is not the novel's centre of consciousness, nor does he have enough self-consciousness to learn from his pain. On the other hand, Rowland attempts to imprison Roderick in his own romantic expectations of the artistic life. While Roderick, unlike Theobald in "The Madonna of the Future," is capable of compromising perfection in order to create his successful portrait busts, Rowland is dissatisfied with anything less that the monumental "Adam" and "Eve" or the perfect statue of "Thirst."

What sort of artist is Roderick Hudson? Critics have spent long hours searching the sculpture galleries of Italy and America for clues to a real-life original for Roderick Hudson. However, they have done so fruitlessly. Viola Hopkins Winner comments that, "it has been assumed that in his portrayal of Roderick James had in mind [William Wetmore] Story" (1819-1895), but she finds this assumption unsatisfactory and suggests that along with Antoine-Louis Barye (1796-1875) and his followers Story was a source for Gloriani. Winner proposes William Morris Hunt (1824-1879), with whom James had studied, as a likely supplier of Roderick's "personal characteristics," while she considers the sculptures of Hiram Powers (1805-1873) and Paul Dubois (1829-1905) comparable to the descriptions of Roderick's.[29] Robert

[29]Winner, p. 100-102.

L. Gale argues for Thomas Crawford (1811 or 1813-1857) as the model for Roderick primarily because Crawford lived in Rome and produced sculptures corresponding to Roderick's productions and proposed subjects. But as Gale admits, Crawford had no monopoly on neo-classical subjects during the nineteenth century.[30] However, the emphasis on neo-classicism in nineteenth-century American sculpture is largely attributable to Antonio Canova (1757-1822), who was emulated by many sculptors including Crawford. For example, Thomas Ridgeway Gould (1818-1881), another American in Italy, sculpted a West Wind (Plate 2-7) which was a virtual--and as a result notorious--copy of a Canova.[31] The West Wind is another of Roderick's proposed works (95). That Roderick, too, works after Canova is evident in Rowland's description of his Lady Listening as bearing a resemblance to "the noble statue of Agrippina in the Capitol" (110), which was also the model for one of Canova's most famous works, the statue of Napoleon's mother, Letitia Bonaparte (Plate 2-8).[32] Finally, Adeline Tintner draws a long and unconvincing parallel between Roderick and the Hudson River School painter

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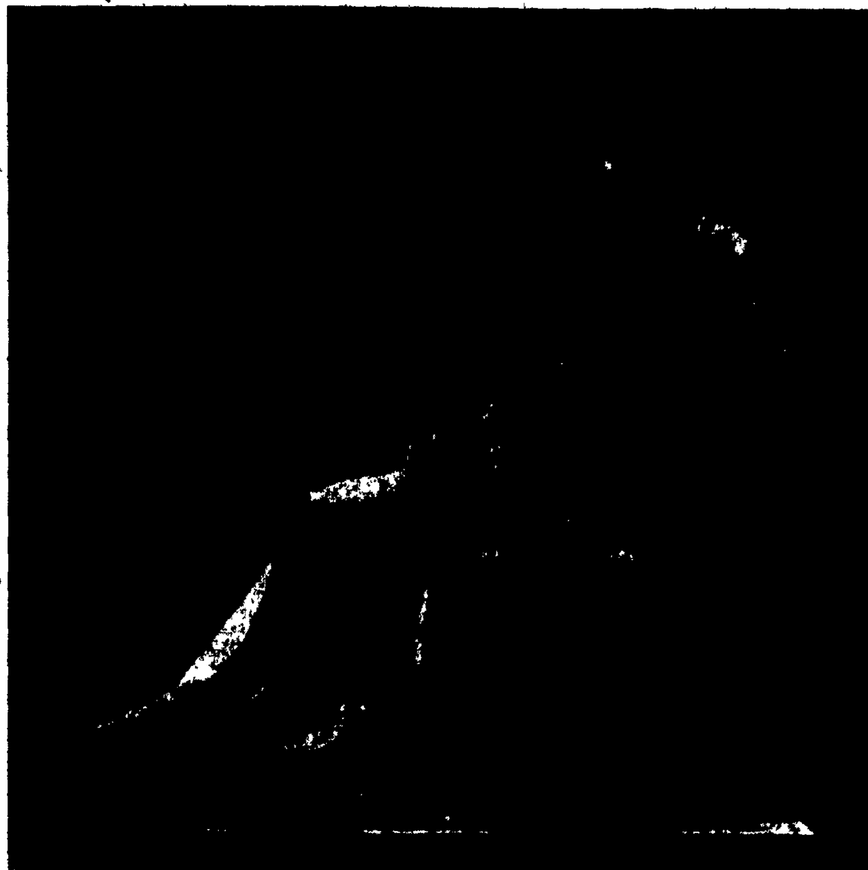
[30] Robert L. Gale, "Roderick Hudson and Thomas Crawford," American Quarterly 13, 4 (1961): 499.

[31] Stephen Eiden, "Thomas Ridgeway Gould," An American Perspective: Nineteenth-Century Art from the collection of Joann & Julian Ganz, Jr. National Gallery of Art (Washington: U P of New England, 1981), pp. 134-135.

[32] In the New York Edition James reinforced Roderick's connnection to the artists who emulated Canova by having him gaily tell Gloriani "Ah, I think I could have shown Canova how." (New York: Scribner's 1907; re-issued, New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1971), p. 118.

2-7. Thomas Ridgeway Gould; <u>The West Wind</u>, 1874.



2-8. Antonio Canova: Letitia Bonaparte, 1808

Thomas Cole (1801-1848) based on a white hat depicted in Asher B. Durand's Kindred Spirits (Plate 2-9).[33] Considered collectively these suggestions prove only one thing: the question has no definitive answer. Clearly James had in mind the experiences of various American sculptors in nineteenth-century Rome; Roderick is a type rather than a fictionalized historical person. By searching for a non-fictional identity for Roderick (as if the novel were a *roman à clef*) critics forget that between Roderick and the reader James has interposed Rowland Mallet. Once again, the true model for Roderick's identity will never be found in art directories because he exists only in the romantic preconceptions of Rowland Mallet.

If an examination of Roderick's artworks leads only to Rowland, then perhaps we must look elsewhere for intimations of James's aesthetic point of view in this novel. By elimination we may narrow the field: Rowland's purist romanticism is not James's; it is also apparent that at the time he wrote Roderick Hudson James did not fully endorse Gloriani's realism; Singleton, as we have seen, displays admirable perseverance, yet his potential greatness is consistently undermined by his inconsequence; and Augusta Blanchard's aesthetic is rendered obsolete when she surrenders her muse to Leavenworth's museum. We are left with Roderick. If his artworks do not answer, perhaps in some way

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[33]Tintner, "Centennial Reading," pp. 179-180.

2-9. Asher B. Durand: Kindred Spirits, 1849

his aesthetics will.

Roderick wants to create beauty in "the large ideal way" (94), and he aspires to evoke, "in the human breast--a kind of religious awe in the presence of a marble image," as did the artists of the Italian Renaissance (95). Roderick's idea of "religious awe" suggests the ecstatic vision that becomes the means to understanding and correct vision for all James's characters,[34] yet here it can be seen as an aspect of misguided aestheticism. The difference between the "religious awe" that Roderick desires to evoke in the hearts of his viewers and the ecstatic visions James eventually grants his characters lies in their sources. Roderick expects awe to emanate from a vision of perfection and he does not succeed, because no such perfection exists. The major flaw in Roderick's aesthetic coincides with that of Rowland's and both exemplify Ruskin's contention that the "first cause of the fall of the arts in Europe was a relentless requirement of perfection."[35]

In his discussion of aesthetics in Chapter Six Roderick, employing Arnoldian aesthetic terminology, proclaims himself a Hellenist as opposed to a Hebraist. However, Roderick's ambition to <u>create</u> perfect beauty is not in keeping with Arnold's concepts that culture has "its origin in the love of perfection; it is <u>a study of perfec-</u>

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[34]Robert K. Martin, pp. 32-33.
[35]Ruskin, <u>Stones</u>, vol. 2, p. 157.

tion,"[36] while Roderick's inclination is to study the perfect beauty of Christina Light, he is discontent to remain a student of perfection: the requirement of his aesthetic is the creation of perfect beauty. While Ruskin deplored the art of the Renaissance for this blasphemous ambition, Arnold, with greater equanimity, suggests that "we are to join Hebraism . . . together with Hellenism, inculcate both, and rehearse the praises of both."[37] Arnold defines Hebraism as "the tendency to cultivate strictness of conscience" while Hellenism is a cultivation of "spontaneity of consciousness." If "what we seem to be confronted with in Rowland is rather a rampant case of 'conscience'"[38], then perhaps in Roderick we are confronted with a rampant case of consciousness. Roderick, in his pursuit of the Hellenistic, misinterprets Arnold's definition of "the Greeks." In his assertion that "The Greeks never made anything ugly" (94), Roderick implies that the Greeks ignored all ugliness and imperfection; however, Arnold states explicitly that Greek art and beauty "have their root in the same impulse to see things as they really are, inasmuch as Greek art and beauty rest on fidelity to nature--the best nature--and on a delicate discrimination of what this best nature is."[39] That Roderick rejects these Hebraic attitudes

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[36]Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, (1869; reprint ed. London: John Murray, 1920), p. 6.

[37]Arnold, p. 107.

[38]Conn, p. 67.

[39]Arnold, pp. 106-107.

and lives his life almost in defiance of them is indisputable, but his espousal of the Hellenistic attitude is misleading because he is selective in his embrace and insensitive in his discrimination of "the best." He ignores nature altogether in favour of concept. Edward Engelberg suggests that:

> What finally frustrated Roderick was not only Rowland, the Puritan Hebraist (his alter-conscience), but his illusory belief that the artist's conscience can go slumming and then return to its rarefied Heaven. Clearly once the artist has had true intercourse with life he has fallen and no return to innocence is possible. To see the object as it is requires, at least for the artist, a seeking out, a process of "doing." Thus, whether or not he intended it, James's novel is a critique of Arnold's distinctions, for implicitly James insists that the artist cannot survive them.[40]

Engelberg's suggestion that James did not intend to critize Arnold is probably correct, for it indicates that James's aesthetics were still not firmly established. That in writing Roderick Hudson he attempted to clarify aesthetic theories through their operations inside the novel is apparent, but at the novel's end James's readers are still left without a definite aesthetic of fiction.

Roderick's comments on "religious awe," for example, may well emanate from James's reading of Pater in 1873; however, Roderick intends his sculptures to evoke such awe, whereas Pater felt that it should be a matter of pure per-

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[40] Edward Engelberg, The Unknown Distance: From Consciousness to Conscience, Goethe to Camus (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U P, 1972), pp. 168-169.

ception transfiguring "some trivial thing."[41] There is no instance of such a transfiguration in Roderick Hudson, although these experiences become essential for "seeing whole" in James's subsequent novels. It seems to me that James had not yet formed specific thoughts about Pater's ideas. James's gradual movement away from Ruskin's theories, which is evident in the failure of the religious spiritualism of Schaafgans and Blanchard in Roderick Hudson, corresponds to a receptiveness on James's part towards other aesthetic theories, particularly, now that he was irrevocably pledged to the art of the novelist, to those theories which could be employed by the literary artist.

James's interest in the artist novel diminished after Roderick Hudson,[42] but his interest in the observer (the artist of criticism) intensified. This intensification indicates at least that James's interest no longer lay in the romantic tradition of the Künstlerroman. But critics such as Maves, Winner, and Engelberg who persist in reading the novel as the story of Roderick Hudson foster Dupee's view that, "James was being romantic about romanticism,"[43] and did not "see through," in Eliot's words, his character.[44]

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[41]Pater, p. 140.

[42]His only other artist novel is The Tragic Muse, written in 1890.

[43]Dupee, F.W., Henry James, The American Men of Letters Series (Toronto: George J. McLeod, 1951) p. 88.

[44]T.S. Eliot, "On Henry James," The Question of Henry James: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. F.W. Dupee (1945; New York: Octagon Books, 1973), p. 117.

The novel can only be construed as a romance about romanticism if we confuse Rowland's view with that of the author. Rowland is the center of consciousness, not a hero of romance, but Rowland's perverse triumph is in his nostalgic preservation of Roderick as the tragic hero of a romance. In this he succeeds quite splendidly: the whole novel is Rowland's ode to the "sacred fire" that was Roderick Hudson. Rowland and at least two other people in Northampton still worship at the altar of that flame long after its extinction. The tragedy of the novel is neither James's inability to detect Rowland--which he clearly does--, Roderick's inability to succeed, nor the labyrinthine unrequited love stories--the tragedy of Roderick Hudson is the failure of Rowland Mallet's eyes. Having had the experience of all these things, Rowland's perceptive faculties are too weak to make accommodations; he remains unflaggingly romantic to the bitter and relatively contented end. The tragedy is that a Jamesian character, faced with innumerable opportunities to see, takes no impression from what he sees and is content to satisfy his thirst for experience on a perfumed draught of romance.

CHAPTER III:
THE SUBSTANCE OF BEAUTY AND TRUTH

> The house of fiction has in short not one window, but a million . . . . at each of them stands a figure with a pair of eyes, or at least with a field-glass, which forms again and again, for observation, a unique instrument, insuring to the person making use of it an impression distinct from any other.[1]

If the cornerstones of James's house of fiction are first set down in Roderick Hudson, then in The Portrait of a Lady the frame of the house itself appears within the novel's pages arching gracefully--one might say--as it spans the space between the small province of romance and the large domain of "all life, all feeling, all observation, all vision."[2] We may read the Portrait simply as the portrayal of a girl whose perceptions grow--allowing her to know her own mind--as she becomes a lady, but we may also read the novel as a process of "aesthetic illumination" for the author, who comes to know his own intentions. Perhaps these two views *are* separate, yet their operation in the novel is always through the character of Isabel. The intent of this chapter is to survey the operation of Isabel's consciousness in the context of James's emerging aesthetics of fiction. What purposes are served by the references to art, the many

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[1] James, Preface to the New York Edition of The Portrait of a Lady, in The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces with an Introduction by Richard P. Blackmur (New York: Scribner's, 1962), p. 46.

[2] James, "Fiction," p. 39.

tableaux, and the action of translative vision (that is, vision which permits life to become art or art life) on the part of characters as well as of the author? Who in this novel is painter, spectator, subject?[3] These are questions James's novel answers, not in the essayistic fashion of _Roderick Hudson_'s artists' party, but through its narrative structure. For the subject of _The Portrait of a Lady_ is, to a great extent, the nature of art and its relation to life. On one hand, vision in _The Portrait of a Lady_ serves an anti-narrative purpose by allowing characters to understand without being told: events need not be related in a traditional narrative sequence in order to be understood with all their import and implication. On the other hand, the manifestation of that vision as a passage of words in a larger collection of words (that is, an image embedded in a verbal context or a tableau) represents an emerging prose style: a manner of composition with which James sought to

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[3]Although, as Dorothy Van Ghent has so neatly put it, "architectural images, and metaphors whose vehicle (like doors and windows) is associated with architecture, subtend the most various and complex of the book's meanings," _The English Novel: Form and Function_ (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1953), p. 226 this chapter will not be concerned with architectural metaphors. The primary reason for this exclusion is my interest in the structural signification of pictorial passages rather than in the symbolic value of architectural imagery. These two areas may be separated to a certain extent: the former is a function of the aesthetic experiences of the characters while the latter operates to a greater degree in the reader's apprehension of the text. A second reason for excluding architecture is simply a lack of necessary space to cover this topic adequately.

mimic thought processes.

When, in inventing Isabel Archer, James asked himself "'What will she "do"?'" and then answered with the suggestion that she would "come to Europe" he surely had in mind the traditional educational benefits of the grand tour. However, when he continued answering himself by finding in Isabel's perceptions an innovative substitute for the traditional perils and adventures of the romantic heroine--in short, a new sort of adventure altogether--the author quite cleverly proposed the very adventure of finding for his heroine her own personal point of view.[4] In converting Isabel's "sense" of her adventures, "her sense *for* them," as James says, into the "drama" and "story" of the novel, he not only created scenes of "rare chemistry" but also concocted the rare chemistry of a developing one's own point of view, becoming, in other words, the conscious, intelligent observer. That Isabel thinks she has a "thoroughly American" point of view at the novel's outset is an indication of her naiveté (chap. 7, 66). It indicates that this is a young woman engaged in seeing the world, yet unwilling to live *in* it, as Strether or any observer must be *in* a particular place. Mrs. Touchett's response to her niece's declaration seems to coincide with James's own ideas about developing a point of view:

". . . there are as many points of view in the

[4]James, Preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*, p. 56.

> world as there are people of sense . . . . My point of view, thank God, is personal!"
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> Isabel thought this a better answer than she admitted; . . . but it would not have sounded well for her to say so. On the lips of a person less advanced in life, and less enlightened by experience than Mrs. Touchett, such a declaration would savour of immodesty, even of arrogance. She risked it nevertheless, in talking with Ralph, . . . (chap. 7, 66)

For James, a point of view is necessary to the process of self-creation, and the degree to which a character's point of view is a perceptive one indicates the degree of morality or of moral understanding of its owner. The dwellers in the "house of fiction" should each take an "impression distinct from any other,"[5] yet, Isabel does not initially have her own point of view. Ironically, she shifts from the Americanism of Henrietta to the personal view of her aunt in order to redefine herself. No one else in this novel would have such arrogance.

In considering the place of The Portrait in the development of James's aesthetics of fiction, it is perhaps simplest to take up the thread of romanticism left off by Rowland Mallet in Northampton and taken up by Isabel Archer in Albany. To compare these two characters is to discern a number of similarities not only between their surface actions--both go off to Europe--but also between their outlooks and perceptions of the world. If there is any ambiguity about the source of romanticism in Roderick

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[5]Ibid, p. 46.

Hudson, The Portrait of a Lady leaves no doubts as to the author's point of view, for in this novel James's realism sharply delineates Isabel's often painful romanticism.

We have seen the development of James's fictional aesthetics taking shape through his critical writing and seen as well his struggles to reconcile an intellectual interest in realism to a youthful romanticism. Roderick Hudson succeeds in being anti-romantic not because the projected hero of the romance falls to his death, but because the centre of the novel, Rowland, never sees the blindness of his own romantic visions, and he is a dismal failure in his own artistic genius--for Rowland is after all an artist. He has created the myth of Roderick Hudson, failed artist and hero of romance. James's approach to the problems of romance in The Portrait of a Lady is more direct than in Roderick Hudson. Rowland Mallet, since he was unable to distinguish between romantic fantasy and reality itself, is never able to recognize his own perceptual problems: in this way the outcome of Roderick Hudson is a perverse triumph of romanticism--not for James, but for Rowland. Rowland, as the last chapter of Roderick Hudson illustrates, has his romanticism reinforced by the tragedy that his own will to dominate has precipitated. The ending of Roderick Hudson, perhaps because there is a lack of the feeling of any compunction on the part of Rowland, seems to fail in the exhortation against romanticism, and thereby leave itself open

to Dupee's charge of being romantic about romanticism. It is in fact Rowland, not James, who is so; consequently, the viewers of Rowland's creation are forced to regard his narrative through that cloud of romance, and, unfortunately, if we fail to perceive it, the significance of its very presence is lost to us. The authorial irony of Roderick Hudson is not strong enough to rescue the novel's vision fully from Rowland's romantic perceptions, perhaps because James himself was not yet capable of the total surrender of his own romanticism. Roderick Hudson then, remains nostalgic and romantic in tone due to Rowland's unpenetrating view, and the dangers of this view are not completely exposed because James, one suspects, harboured a strong sympathy for Rowland's romantic view of life and particularly that of the artist.

However, James must have realized that the veil of irony in Roderick Hudson was too transparent to separate his own suspicions of romantic fiction from Rowland's opaquely romantic view--at least to the reader unused to the device of an unreliable narrator. For in The Portrait he reverts to more traditional modes of narration and makes his authorial irony overtly evident through comments which situate an almost fully omniscient narrator outside the novel's action. According to Martha Collins "James did not make his character the single center of consciousness, as he had done in Roderick Hudson;" instead "he conceived of a balance" in

which information could now be "filtered through the minds of a few characters" (or 'satellites') and supplied by a narrator who "establishes himself in the role of historian."[6] Collins argues convincingly for Isabel's gradual assumption of her role as the novel's centre, "displacing both the narrator and the satellites" as the novel's authoritative voice,[7] but does not address the reasons for James's introduction of a multiple perspective (particularly in the novel's first six chapters) nor the source of his impulse to give himself away, as it were, by becoming Isabel's biographer. The obvious reason for using multiple perspectives in this novel is simply that of drawing attention to the presence of internal perspectives in fiction. Since, to this day, readers persist in their opinion that Rowland Mallet is somehow Henry James in disguise, then clearly James's use of point of view in Roderick Hudson, while undeniably rigorous in its application, was not altogether a success. (Ironically, of course, its very rigour is the source of its "failure.") One way to separate author from character is to introduce many points of view in the novel; none can then be assigned easily to the author. And, lest the sympathetic Ralph be cited as James's fictive guise-- for as Collins points out, "the narrator stands very close

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[6]Martha Collins, "The Narrator, the Satellites, and Isabel Archer: Point of View in The Portrait of a Lady," Studies in the Novel 8 (Sept. 1976): 142-144.

[7]Ibid., p. 156.

to Ralph"[8]--James must have felt obliged to take one step backwards into a Victorian narrative frame and out of the novel's intellectual action by producing his biographical historian.

This "biographer" persona is of considerable interest in light of James's comment three years later that an author betrays "a sacred office" in admitting that novels are fiction.[9] To avoid such admissions James studiously calls himself a "biographer" and writes as if he were recording actual events, thereby laying the grounds for his contention that "the novel is history." Yet James makes his readers his confidants and co-conspirators by repeatedly intruding with the authorial first person, both singular and plural, by referring to Isabel as "our heroine," and by telling us early on that she is intended "to awaken on the reader's part an impulse more tender and more purely expectant" than "scientific criticism" (chap. 6, 57), a statement which reminds us that this is a fiction not a document and tells us that its author is in control and quite prepared to make demands on his readers' sensibilities and to manipulate their sympathies. Other reflexive comments throughout the novel such as Isabel's exclamation that tea at Gardencourt is "'just like a novel!'" (chap. 2, 15), Warburton's observation that his love was formed "'at first sight, as the

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[8]Ibid., p. 148.
[9]James, "Fiction," pp. 25-26.

novels say'" (chap. 12, 119). Henrietta's insistence that she is "'not talking about imaginary characters . . . Isabel is intensely real'" (chap. 13, 136), and her charge that Isabel once speaks "'like the heroine of an immoral novel'" (chap. 17, 191), all conspire to undermine our acceptance of _The Portrait_ as history by reminding us that it is not. What purpose, then, is served by such seditious authorial sabotage? While it is true that in 1881 "The Art of Fiction" had not yet been written, the discrepancy between the overt authorial and reflexive intrusions of _The Portrait of a Lady_ and the arguments against them in that essay seems far too wide a gulf to cross in three years. But when we recall that _Roderick Hudson_ contained no such intrusions, we are forced to re-examine their inclusion in _The Portrait_; their presence does not likely indicate a case of immature stylistic indecisiveness, but rather a deliberate and necessary regression to elucidate the technique of the earlier--and subsequent--novels. _The Portrait_, after all, does increasingly rely solely on Isabel's point of view. It is as if in the course of a single novel James removed his craft from the Victorian straits of authorial intrusions, set it adrift in the stream of consciousness in Chapter 42, and finally launched it into the deep "fathomless waters" (chap. 55, 223) of a central intelligence. In this context James's seditious authorial sabotage has an additional important function: the undermining of "history"

in The Portrait of a Lady also weakens its place in the traditions of the marriage fiction. By using the conventions of omniscient and intrusive narrator James turns this technique against itself when Isabel's irreproachable life leads her not, gentle reader, to a happy end but to chronic misery through her own moral rectitude.[10] The Portrait of a Lady's open ending with its lack of a tidy epilogue comments more profoundly on Isabel's life than could any imaginable authorial excrescence. James's very abandonment of the conventional form points to its acute inadequacies; thus its use in the novel is its own indictment.

Through Isabel Archer's experiences, the realistic dangers of romanticism (that is, the sorrow of a suffocating marriage rather than a dramatic, but unlikely, plunge from a mountain top) are evident. Isabel is never tempted to hurl herself from the top of a picturesque Alp, but just as attraction to romance clouded Rowland's vision it clouds Isabel's and leads her to unhappiness. For James, devotion to romance stifled the muse just as Rowland stifled Roderick. While it seems that James has shifted focus in The Portrait of a Lady by choosing to write about a manipulated rather than manipulating character, the shift is not as significant as the similarity between these novels: in both

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[10]See Annette Niemtzow's "Marriage and the New Woman in The Portrait of a Lady," American Literature 47, 3 (Nov. 1975): 382-383, for a detailed discussion of Isabel's entrapment in her own moral values.

novels the centre of consciousness is the romantic. Isabel Archer resembles Roderick only in that she is whisked off to Europe by a kindly benefactor--her resemblance to Rowland is more striking. Neither sets off on the grand tour with the object of education: Rowland intends Roderick to learn but seems to have no inclination to educate himself. Presumably, he considers his own education complete or at least sufficient. Isabel, likewise, has no intention of learning on her journey. The trip with Mrs. Touchett is undertaken as a romantic adventure. It is Ralph who first discerns Isabel's motives in travelling, and he alone is aware of the dangers of Isabel's intentions. Ralph and Isabel might be discussing Rowland and Roderick when they mention the young men who travel to see the world:

> "If one is two-sided, it is enough," said Isabel.
> "You are the most charming of polygons!" Ralph companion broke out, with a laugh. At a glance from his companion, however, he became grave, and to prove it he went on--"You want to see life, as the young men say."
> "I don't think I want to see it as the young men want to see it; but I do want to look about me."
> "You want to drain the cup of experience."
> "No, I don't wish to touch the cup of experience. It's a poisoned drink! I only want to see for myself."
> "You want to see, but not to feel," said Ralph. (chap. 15, 173)

Of course, Isabel does not realize that in James's novels, drinking from the cup of experience is a requisite of seeing for one's self. Isabel's difficulty throughout this novel stems from her lack of understanding of the relationship be-

tween vision and reality. Isabel is unaware that to see one must first feel--or to see ghosts, one must first have suffered. Before she can combat or even attempt to understand romanticism, Isabel must learn that to live is to see. Once Isabel begins to understand the reliance of seeing on experience, her understanding will allow her to see for herself. Isabel outstrips Rowland Mallet in her understandings: if Rowland was unable to discern the relation between romance and reality, Isabel eventually not only makes these distinctions but chooses between them as well. Rowland's is _not_ a choice of romance _over_ realism, because he is unable to make any distinction between the two. He may go to Italy, but the world is never all before him as it is for Isabel Archer. That Miltonic echo at _The Portrait_'s end implies that Isabel's paradise is behind her; the absence of such intimations in _Roderick Hudson_ suggest that Rowland never encounters the tree of knowledge. Isabel, then, when faced with the necessity of experience for perceptive vision is forced to make a choice that is far more sophisticated than that faced by Rowland. If she recognizes reality by learning to see clearly, she must surrender her romanticism: her choice then is between a bolted in but blind romantic ideal or the terrors of a vital outward-looking realism. Once the experience of an "unexpected recognition" forces Isabel in to a "labyrinth" of "ugly possibilities" she can never return to her peaceful ignorance, and must submit to

having "her soul . . . haunted with terrors" (chap. 42, 27-28). Isabel's real freedom of action is that based on knowledge or consciousness of life, but that very knowledge is precipitated by the recognition of her "fundamental limitations."[11]

Isabel's character and its development through the course of the novel constitute the novel's structure. Isabel's consciousness, her understanding of the events of her trip and subsequent life in Europe, provides the reader's experience of the novel. This process is comparable to the experience of the viewer of a paimting. Once the artist's vision is distilled on a canvas, we have only to look at it to see, momentarily, through that artist's eyes. Viola Hopkins Winner defines the analogy between the centre of consciousness and the painter as an essentially subjectifying action. That is, one in which both the vision is subjective and the subject is vision:

> The center of consciousness character . . . resembles the painter in relation to his subject and the painting's viewers: like the painter, he provides a "frame" which organizes and brings into focus the otherwise inchoate external world. By transforming it with the imagination, or to use Susanne Langer's phrase, by "subjectifying nature," he makes it available to the reader. In effect (even taking into account all of the variations and permutations of this method of narration in James's later fiction), it is as if James placed a painter in the novel so that the reader has a view of the action or the life depicted in the novel both clarified through the formal unity provided by the individual

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[11]Robert K. Martin, pp. 36-37.

> perspective and enriched, for the center of consciousness is almost inevitably endowed with the "penetrative imagination," as Ruskin called it, of the artist. As one on whom "nothing is lost," he sees or comes to see beyond the surface to the meaning at the heart of things.[12]

While Winner's definition of the role of the centre of consciousness as analogous to the role of the artist seems to be absolutely accurate, her account lacks an elaboration of this connection to its actual operation in James's novels: how, in other words, the centre of consciousness is like its author. And how, as a result, the centres of consciousness undergo shifts and developments in their aesthetic educations which parallel those of James throughout his career. By this I mean that in her analysis Winner places her emphasis on the role of the centre of consciousness in general; which is fine except that the conclusions, being based on James's work in general, are applicable as such but not in particular. Winner ignores the fact that she points to: that they are "almost inevitably endowed with the 'penetrative imagination'" indicates that sometimes they are not. For the Jamesian centre of consciousness it is the very acquisition of the penetrative imagination--not only of Ruskin, but of Pater as well--that determines the degree of the centre's consciousness. James's novels are essentially about the education of vision and the development of an artist's, or more accurately, a critic's, point of view.

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[12]Winner, p.65.

If one examines James's works individually, then one discovers not only that the centre of consciousness is like an artist, but also the manner in which that artist's vision moulds the product. This is not to imply that The Portrait of a Lady is a self-portrait; James has deliberately chosen a third person narration, but the centres of consciousness give each novel its character--both its central character and its distinguishing features. Rowland Mallet's vision, for example, which is inevitably clouded by the gilded aureole of his imagination is the source of romanticism in Roderick Hudson. Of course, Rowland Mallet is one of those centres who is unendowed with the necessary "penetrative imagination"; consequently, we could say that he is one on whom everything is lost.

Clearly, by the time he finished that novel, James realized that Rowland's romanticism was an impractical choice of vision for any artist in the 1870's. His travel essays in Portraits of Places, unlike those of Transatlantic Sketches, rely less on his picturesque descriptions and more on his personal experiences in the countries he visited. While James continued to record his impressions, they are no longer so heavily influenced by the "falsetto key" and "Draconic legislation" of Ruskin.[13] His impressions too have changed; no longer descriptions or "sketches" of

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[13]Henry James. "Italy Revisited," Portraits of Places, p. 68-69. By 1877, the time of this essay, James seems to have lost his once considerable faith in Ruskin's views.

"picturesque surfaces"[14] in life and art, they increasingly record James's responses to and impressions of paintings and places. The titular designations "sketches" and "portraits" are distinct: the former denotes superficial description while the latter carries the connotation of a Paterian "impression" or intellectual inculcation productive of understanding. The romantic imagination has given way in James's criticism to the power of the penetrative imagination or imaginative reason; it has given way not only to the spiritual experience of vision, but to the personal and secular aspect of vision in a society inhabited by real and complex characters comprising both good and evil, rather than a population of devout stone masons. This operation of the imagination in social rather than cultural situations is explored in The Portrait of a Lady as the actions of the characters are determined by the rituals of their social intercourse. Isabel's eventual emergence from romance into reality, for example, is necessitated by her situation in a particular society; it is also an emergence into deeper understanding of that society and not into the allegorical studio settings of Roderick Hudson where art may be used to perpetuate romance. Isabel's conflicts arise from her attempts to live a life of romance in a real and restrictive society where art is recognized as illusory or representational, but not accepted as a substitute for existence.

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[14]Winner, p. 195.

Henrietta quite accurately assesses the dangers of Isabel's inheritance in this respect when she warns Isabel that:

> The peril for you is that you live too much in the world of your own dreams--You are not enough in contact with reality--with the toiling, striving, suffering, I may even say sinning, world that surrounds you. You are too fastidious; you have too many graceful illusions. . . . you think that you can lead a romantic life . . . . You will find you are mistaken. Whatever life you lead, you must put your soul into it--to make any sort of success of it; and from the moment you do that it ceases to be romance, . . . it becomes reality! (chap. 20, 13-14)

Although James's interest in realism may have dictated his focal shift from the consciously aesthetic vision of Rowland to that of a "presumptuous girl," he did not make the shift at the expense of his interest in art; for, despite its shortage of actual artists, The Portrait of a Lady is as much about art as is Roderick Hudson. Apart from illustrating the irreconcilability of real life and romantic expectation, The Portrait also exposes the mercenary and de-humanizing aspects of highly refined aestheticism. While Roderick Hudson partially examined the role of the connoisseur, its situation in the traditionally romantic settings of art studios, Roman ruins, and sublime landscapes undermines their exposure. By having Isabel "affront" her destiny with her romantic intentions James affronts her romanticism: the province of art is "life", after all. If in Roderick Hudson Rowland's attempts to make Roderick's life a work of art had almost overpowered James's representation of Rowland's consciousness, then the risk of art en-

croaching on life is finally exorcised in The Portrait of a Lady, for the later novel does meet James's novelistic raison d'être: "the only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life."[15] And in representing life, The Portrait places art in its various relations to everyday experience.

Nevertheless, in writing The Portrait of a Lady, James once again faced the task of exposing the fatality of the romantic imagination. Like Roderick Hudson, The Portrait of a Lady has a fairy-tale quality that situates it in the kingdom of romance. Each novel is the story of a trip abroad that "'is like something in a fairy tale,'" as Mary Garland remarks (RH 63). While Isabel Archer does not set out to do the grand tour in the way that Rowland and Roderick do, like Roderick, she too is carried off to Europe "'in a golden cloud'" (RH 63) by an unanticipated interloper, for Mrs. Touchett is comparable to a fairy godmother.[16] When we first see Isabel she is in the Gardencourt garden: an enchanted place populated by a kindly old invalid uncle, a young gentleman cousin who is, in the best romantic tradition, being consumed by illness, and a "hero

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[15] James, "Fiction," p. 25.

[16] Juliet McMaster observes that Mrs. Touchett's "name is significant, for there is something of the wand-waving fairy godmother about her," and also points out that "Maxwell Geismar [Henry James and the Jacobites (Boston 1962), p. 42.] notes the association with sorcery and enchantment in Madame Serena Merle's name." "The Portrait of Isabel Archer," American Literature 45 (March 1973): 58.

of romance" in the form of Lord Warburton. Mrs. Touchett has, for the most part, withdrawn from the action. An account of Isabel's acquaintance with her aunt follows the first two Gardencourt chapters, but the method of Isabel's transport from the bolted room in Albany is omitted from the narrative sequence. Isabel was in Albany, Mrs. Touchett arrived, and Isabel is now in Gardencourt. While the method of travel was no doubt a ship, she might as well have travelled by pumpkin coach. The significance of the transition from New York to Europe is that it is not there at all. Isabel's understanding of her journey does not exist either: to this heroine quest and consequence have no value. Part of what Isabel must learn is the significance of passages. At the novel's outset Isabel is taken abroad by her aunt in the first of a sequence of events in which Isabel will continue to be taken, both intellectually and physically, by her fellow characters. But her final journeys to England and back to Rome are the most self-conscious actions the young woman who has longed for "freedom" is capable of making. While the details of these trips are as nebulous as her passage to Europe, their origins are not. The decisions to go to Ralph and then to return to Rome are the results of her own deliberations rather than of the touch of a magic wand. By the novel's end Isabel makes journeys because she leads her own life.

The two novels differ most in the quality of the minds

of their centres of consciousness. While Isabel may be a "mere slim shade of an intelligent but presumptuous girl,"[17] her perceptual development exceeds that of Rowland Mallet. The same romantic impulse that prompts Rowland to mould Roderick seems to prompt Isabel's moulding of herself. But while this impulse produced a static figure of the romantic hero in <u>Roderick Hudson</u>, in <u>The Portrait of a Lady</u> multiple images of Isabel are presented which cumulatively form our final perceptions of her character as they parallel her autogenous development. Rowland lacks the ability to produce a perceptive portrait, but Isabel, aided by the novel's supplemental points of view, develops the psychological penetration necessary for the production of good portraits. The novel's tacit suggestion that art is as good as the quality of the mind of its producer is of particular significance to portraiture since the production of a true likeness relies heavily on the artist's ability--not simply to copy lines--but to perceive and express the character beneath the lines. Early in the novel we are informed that Isabel:

> . . . had a certain nobleness of imagination which rendered her a good many services and played her a great many tricks. . . . Her life should always be in harmony with the most pleasing impression she should produce; she would be what she appeared, and she would appear what she was. (chap. 6, 55-56)

Scenes in which Isabel produces a pleasing harmony must be

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[17]James, Preface to <u>The Portrait of a Lady</u>, p. 48.

viewed with her imaginative tricks in mind, for Isabel is constantly engaged in making an impression. Pictorial passages, then, may signal the masking of character as well as its revelation.

There are five portraits of Isabel in the novel which all indicate her character either through direct depiction or covert implication. Isabel's first appearance in the novel takes the shape of a formal portrait: she appears standing noiselessly "in the ample doorway for some moments before he [Ralph] perceived her." Isabel picks up Ralph's terrier Bunchie and he is able "to see that Bunchie's new friend was a tall girl in a black dress, who at first sight looked pretty. She was bare-headed" (chap. 2, 14). Ralph's point of view, then, supplies our first image of Isabel. This image bears a purely coincidental correspondence to John Singer Sargent's <u>Beatrice Townsend</u> (Plate 3-1)[18] and fits perfectly well into the conventions of formal portraiture with Bunchie included. Our next pictorial vision of Isabel is one which she contrives. Having strolled and walked about the park with Bunchie, Isabel:

> . . . seated herself on a garden-bench, within

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[18]Although the date of this painting is not exact, the portrait did not exist in 1879 when James began <u>The Portrait of a Lady</u> and was not completed until after the novel's appearance in 1880. James first made Sargent's acquaintance in 1884, but according to Adeline R. Tintner, he did not appropriate Sargent's images until 1887. See: Tintner, "Sargent in the Fiction of Henry James" <u>Apollo</u> (Aug. 1975), pp. 128-132, for details of James's literary appropriations of Sargent.

3-1. John Singer Sargent: Beatrice Townsend, c. 1882

> sight of the house, beneath a spreading beech, where, in a white dress ornamented with black ribbons, she formed among the flickering shadows, a very graceful and harmonious image. (chap. 11, 13)

This image is comparable to a Gainsborough portrait for it reveals no deep psychological insights into the subject, but shows her in a landscape and derives its beauty, as Gainsborough's work did, from the "fleeting effects of shadow and texture."[19] Isabel's image, particularly upon her receipt of Caspar's letter, is comparable to Gainsborough's Mrs. John Douglas (Plate 3-2). But the dominance of character by image in this description of Isabel does reveal something of her character, for that her appearance is of greater consequence than her personality or thoughts implies vapidity: Isabel has little to offer here apart from her graceful appearance.

The central image of Isabel is of structural significance to the novel and of symbolic importance to her development. Isabel, now in "deeper mourning" following her uncle's death, strikes her aunt and Madame Merle as "pale and grave" and "as solemn . . . as a Cimabue Madonna!" (chap. 20, 5; Plate 3-3). Isabel's gravity emanates partly from her emotional loss but mainly from the shock of her material gain. The iconic association reiterates the significance of Isabel's gain: her life is transformed and she

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[19]Ellis Waterhouse, Painting in Britain 1530-1790 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, Pelican History of Art, 1978), p. 245.

3-2. Thomas Gainsborough: Mrs. John Douglas, 1784

3-3. Cimabue: Madonna Enthroned with Angels and Prophets, c. 1280-90

is transfigured. The golden background of the Cimabue signifies the "gilded aureole" of romance which still clouds Isabel's imagination and symbolizes as well the gold of her wealth which destroys the former. The inherent duality of the madonna is also transferred to Isabel; she is both an innocent rejoicer and a sorrowing mourner on the edge of experience. This duality looks at once backward to an unretrievable but happy past and forward to the future anticipating inevitable sorrow. The dual perspective seems to act as a mirror in the novel, for the two subsequent portraits of Isabel reflect the two antecedent images.

In Isabel's first re-appearance in the novel after her marriage she is once again observed in a frame as she emerges "out of the deep doorway" in the Palazzo Roccanera. In this scene Rosier supplies a description:

> She was dressed in black velvet; she looked brilliant and noble . . . . . framed in the gilded doorway, she struck our young man as the picture of a gracious lady. (chap. 37, 191)

That Isabel's appearance here gratifies Rosier's eye for "decorative character" and that he detects the loss of her youthful "quick eagerness" implies a new formality in Isabel's character. The casual youthful "confidence" (chap. 2, 14) of Isabel's initial appearance has been transformed into a hauteur which is enhanced by the decorative richness of this picture; Isabel wears black velvet and her frame is now a gilded one. The decorative but somber quality of this image is evident in a portrait such as

Sargent's Isabella Stewart Gardner with its formal linear composition and icon-like gilded background. Rosier's perceptions are reinforced by Ralph's description of Isabel as:

> Slender still, but lovelier than before, she had gained no great maturity of aspect; but there was a kind of amplitude and brilliancy in her personal arrangements which gave a touch of insolence to her beauty. Poor human-hearted Isabel, what perversity had bitten her? Her light step drew a mass of drapery behind it; her intelligent head sustained a majesty of ornament. The free, keen girl had become quite another person; what he saw was the fine lady who . . . . represented Gilbert Osmond. (chap. 39, 221)

Isabel is perceived by both these connoisseurs as an object in Osmond's collection; she is a fine example of a lady, in short a portrait of a lady. For Rosier she is a "picture," for Ralph a representation. But for all her hauteur Isabel is only _a_ lady, an anonymous albeit dignified, example of type. Finally, Isabel projects an image of herself as she sits on the "historical" bench in the park at Gardencourt:

> at this moment she was the image of a victim of idleness. Her attitude had a singular absence of purpose; her hands, hanging at their sides, lost themselves in the folds of her black dress; her eyes gazed vaguely before her. (chap. 55, 218)

This last portrait, set in twilight at a moment of great "agitation," recalls Isabel's vigil in Chapter 42 with its play of light and darkness within and surrounding the Isabel.[20] In that chapter the painterly device James

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[20] For a detailed discussion see: John T. Frederick, "Patterns of Imagery in Chapter XLII of Henry James's The Portrait of a Lady," Arizona Quarterly 25 (Summer 1969): 150-156.

appropriated for his prose is what André le Vot calls "<u>le clair-obscur d'une conscience qui se cherche et cherche le sens du monde</u>."[21] The importance of the image resides not in its reliance on evocative effects, however, but in the figure of Isabel herself; her attitude, her hands, her eyes --the most important features of a portrait--are those of a victim. Isabel has become that Titian Ralph wanted for the wall (Plate 3-4); she is essentially ornamental.

These five pictorial scenes are arranged symmetrically: portrait/portrait, icon, portrait/portrait. In the first pair Isabel appears bare-headed and then in daylight; following her inheritance and marriage Isabel is burdened by ornament and then seen in fading light. Her arrangements increase in formality as they increase in ornament. The symbolism is obvious and somehow made more poignant by being set on either side of the solemn yet golden madonna. Clearly, by her final portrait portrait appearance, Isabel has begun to make some sense of the world, for in the very least she recognizes that her harmonious image has made her not a heroine of romance but its victim.

Isabel's susceptibility to romantic delusion and her reluctance to live <u>in</u> the world are established by the author at the novel's outset. One can almost imagine, for example, that Rowland and Isabel grew up in the same

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[21]André le Vot, "Le critique comme romancier," <u>Le Monde</u> (Paris) 27 (March 7, 1970): iv.

3-4. Titian: Portrait of Eleonora della Rovere, c. 1538

Jamesian neighbourhood: Rowland's Dutch grandmother might have been at home in the "Dutch" house across the street from that of Isabel's grandmother in Albany. However, Isabel's memory of those houses and her childhood thoughts about them are evidence of her romanticism and of her lack of education and experience in society:

> . . . even as a child she thought her grandmother's dwelling picturesque. . . . On the other side, opposite, across the street, was an old house that was called the Dutch House--a peculiar structure, dating from the earliest colonial time . . . . It was occupied by a primary school for children. . . . [Isabel] had been offered the opportunity of laying a foundation of knowledge in this establishment; but having spent a single day in it, she expressed a great disgust with the place, and had been allowed to stay at home, where, in the September days, when the windows of the Dutch House were open, she used to hear the hum of childish voices repeating the multiplication table--an incident in which the elation of liberty and the pain of exclusion were indistinguishably mingled. The foundation of her knowledge was really laid in the idleness of her grandmother's house, where, . . . she had uncontrolled use of a library full of books with frontispieces, which she used to climb upon a chair to take down. When she had found one to her taste--she was guided in the selection chiefly by the frontispiece--she carried it into a mysterious apartment which lay beyond the library . . . (chap. 3, 24)

One suspects that Isabel, having rejected the society of the Dutch House in favour of bookish isolation, chose as her model the young Jane Eyre: a heroine of romance. She too chose books according to their pictorial content and retreated with them to her "double retirement."[22] As Juliet

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[22]Charlotte Brontë. Jane Eyre, (New York: Signet, 1960), pp. 9-10.

McMaster has observed, Isabel "sees her life primarily in literary terms: she intends to compose it as a romance, possibly as a tragedy."[23] Like Jane Eyre in her window seat, Isabel is willing to imagine that beyond her bolted room there is "a region of delight or of terror" (chap.3, 25). It is quite possible that James had Brontë's novel in mind when describing the young Isabel.[24] The echoes of Brontë reinforce the anti-romantic outcome of The Portrait of a Lady by showing just how ill-equipped a pictorial education leaves the heroine of a realistic novel. While Jane Eyre's region of terrors turns out to be the reality of existence in the world of gothic romance, terrors for Isabel Archer are not sublime aspects of nature but the malicious sides of her fellow characters. In other words, the sublime "Arctic Zone" of Jane Eyre becomes the cool Madame Merle of The Portrait of a Lady. Aspects of romance have been translated into aspects of real experience. It is only in her immature imagination that Isabel can safely choose her books by their frontispieces; her mistake, we shall see, is that of continuing to judge--not only books but other characters

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[23] McMaster, p. 59.

[24] See Alice Hall Petry's "Jamesian Parody, Jane Eyre, and 'The Turn of the Screw,'" Modern Language Studies 13, 4 (Fall 1983): 61-78, for an account of James's familiarity with Jane Eyre and its "sentimentalized vision." If Petry's parody suggestion is correct, then James's echoing of Jane Eyre in The Portrait of a Lady as part of Isabel's self-image as a heroine of romance--although not as extensive as that of the governess in "The Turn of the Screw"--seems entirely plausible. It may, in fact, be the germ of the idea for the 1898 novella.

as well--on their pictorial appeal.

Isabel, of course, cannot know that by following Mrs. Touchett out to Europe she is making the first move to unbolt her own romantic imagination. What Isabel finds, though, unlike Jane Eyre and Rowland Mallet, is not the satisfaction of the sublime landscape with its picturesque heart, but the inadequacy of romance itself, for the picturesque heart is always a cold and empty one. That Isabel must rely on her own eyes to supply a clear picture of herself and of the reality of her existence, indicates that the sublime qualities of nature, or of god-in-nature, have been rejected by James himself. While the romantic experience of sudden understanding as a moment of vision is retained by James, the source of this experience has shifted.[25] When Rowland Mallet comes closest to a moment of vision, he believes he has seen the devil; the evil he sees is in himself. Isabel's moment of vision is even less traditionally romantic as it does not rely on sighting a supernatural apparition; increasingly, evil in what Graham Greene calls James's "visible universe," is not an invasive exorcisable devil, but an insidious human sort of malevolence, "the treachery of friends, the meanest kind of lies."[26] The evil Isabel sees is that embodied by Madame Merle and Gilbert

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[25]Robert K. Martin, pp. 32-33.

[26]Graham Greene, "Henry James: The Private Universe," in The Lost Childhood and Other Essays (New York: Viking, 1951), p. 28.

Osmond; yet, tempered by compassion, Isabel's understanding of Madame Merle is not one of evil incarnate but of suffering hopelessness (chap.51, 169).[27] Already it is clear that Isabel's vision is of a far more naturalistic sort than that of Rowland. Even Madame Merle has her moments of consciousness[28]: "Have I been so vile all for nothing?" (chap. 49, 148) is a question that Rowland Mallet is never prompted to ask himself.

Isabel, while closeted in the "office" in her grandmother's house, has no desire to discover the world of experience, whether romantic or real. The bolts on the door which are so often considered figures of sexual repression or frigidity seem far more likely to symbolize an intellectual isolation Isabel imposes on herself. Isabel's sexual nature seems to be really of little consequence in this novel, as James virtually excludes it. While its exclusion from the novel seems more likely indicative of James's own discomfort with the subject than of a particular kink in

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[27]Greene identifies this ability "to pity the most shabby, the most corrupt" of characters as a unique feature of James's fiction and the source of his greatness as a novelist. Ibid., p. 30.

[28]J.T. Laird. "Cracks in Precious Objects: Aestheticism and Humanity in _The Portrait of a Lady_," _American Literature_ 52, 4 (Jan. 1981): 643-48. Laird makes a valiant attempt to redeem for Madame Merle "the human and moral virtues of sincerity, compassion, and conscience," then contradicts this argument by quoting Madame Merle's comments on her "dried up soul." Laird misses the point, it seems--that Madame Merle _is_ flawed and yet remains a precious object. She is neither reformed nor redeemed, nor can she be.

Isabel's libido, critics tend to regard it in that way. McMaster asserts that Isabel marries Osmond because she recognizes that he "will cause her the pain and suffering that she perversely desires"[29]; Viola Hopkins Winner suggests that Isabel's "choice of an older man for a husband after her rejection of likelier suitors and other indications of sexual coldness suggest sexual-psychological determinism at work"[30]; and, taking the opposite view, Annette Niemtzow argues that Isabel "feels her sexuality . . . strongly" and "possesses an almost obscene . . . imagination, filled with disturbing sexual fantasies" but manages through respect of her marriage vow to "resist her sexuality."[31] This combination of masochism, frigidity, and nymphomania seems as unlikely as it is unfortunate. Isabel's asexual or repressed sexual nature is important to the novel to the same extent as any other repression in her character. The importance of the matter is that Isabel denies experience altogether--whether sexual or social. In this respect, the bolts on the door in the house in Albany do not simply symbolize Isabel's sexual nature in the image of a resistant vagina; instead, their dominance of the symbolism in the novel indicates that they are far more important as representative of Isabel's <u>whole</u> outlook, or rather her lack of one. Isabel's assertion that the cup of experience is a "poisoned drink"

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[29]McMaster, p. 53.
[30]Winner, p. 142.
[31]Niemtzow, pp. 386-387.

reveals her attitude towards experience in general. To see but not to feel, as Ralph suggests, is Isabel's strongest desire. The stimulation that Isabel requires is not sexual, but intellectual. In order that Isabel develop her "penetrative imagination," she must first penetrate, and be penetrated by, life itself.

The bolt image is one recognized by Rowland Mallet as well. He comments to Cecilia, in describing himself as lacking the genius of expression, that he spends his days "groping at the latch of a closed door" (RH 27). While Cecilia interprets that comment as an admission of sexual dissatisfaction, "'What an immense number of words, . . . to say you want to fall in love!'" (RH 27), it is again an indicator of a closed mind, one incapable of taking impressions. When Rowland retreats to Northampton at the end of his story, those bolts have remained untouched; whereas when Isabel returns to Rome at the end of her story, it is precisely because the "slender little girl" has grown up and acquired the strength to slide the bolts open revealing "the world all before her." Isabel does step into a region of terrors; however, in doing so she learns to confront the terrors of experience itself, a confrontation from which Rowland Mallet successfully retreats. Neither character, when last seen, has been living a life of ease, but Isabel has equipped herself to "Live!". She has, it seems, learned that genius of expression that Rowland Mallet will always

lack and that Lambert Strether will, finally, put to use.

The integration of the visual art devices in this novel and their relation to those of Roderick Hudson also demand attention. Visual art devices in The Portrait of a Lady essentially manifest the idea of romanticism and the moral problem of art as possession. In her discussion of "Art Devices and Parallels in the Fiction [of Henry James]" Winner makes the following comments about James's debt to Hawthorne and his own employment of the visual arts in his novels:

> Roderick Hudson marks a further advance in this direction. Unlike Hawthorne's The Marble Faun, it would make a poor guidebook to Italy; the descriptions of places, and art objects are too well integrated with the action. The scene in St. Peter's, for example, in which Christina is seen kissing the bronze toe of the holy statue is not only a touch of local color but a sign of her capriciousness and flair for the dramatic. She has given no signs earlier of being devout. By the time of The Portrait of a Lady, James has become expert in conveying a great deal in a single stroke: when the again-rejected Lord Warburton bids Isabel goodby in Rome, the scene takes place in the gallery of the Capitol with the "lion of the collection"--The Dying Gladiator--in the background . . . . [James] soon learned to practice a wise economy in fusing much of what is normally called background with action and characterization. The art object is an especially important means of achieving this desired fusion, for it may be used simultaneously as a symbol of a culture, superficially as a plot device, and more profoundly as a means of revealing character of reinforcing a theme. When the allusion is to specific paintings by actual artists or to an artist's style or to that of a particular period, James's ideal of economical richness is most fully realized.[32]

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[32]Winner, p. 79.

Winner's assessment is once again accurate; however, her analysis of the roles of the visual arts remains concerned mainly with thematic aspects of the novels. While it is true that James's use of the arts is far more sophisticated than that of Hawthorne, it is also true that James's own use developed during his career. Roderick Hudson could certainly not be used as a guidebook, and clearly the art in that novel is most strongly used as a device of characterization. Gloriani's sculptures are bold; Singleton's watercolours are literally superficial; and Roderick's sculptures are rare but sensational. Christina's action in St. Peter's is not merely a moment of colourful melodrama like Hawthorne's bleeding corpse in the cathedral--as Winner says, some aspect of Christina's character is revealed through her action. Still, these observations hardly elevate James's use of the visual arts beyond those of Hawthorne. They simply point out that artwork is one more aspect of setting or background which contrives to characterize. Madame Merle would no doubt consider this a noble function for art: things are to some extent part of that "whole envelope of circumstances" which constitute the self (chap. 19, 233). But this assignation points to a paradox: for all James's characters who display a "great respect for things" are lacking in any respect for people. Surely we ought to re-examine any assessment which incriminates James through his own moral procedures. One may argue, of course, an exemp-

tion for the novelist as a producer of fictions who must necessarily invent the characters and their characteristic things; yet James's interest in the consciousness of his characters suggests that it is not the _things_ which are of importance, but the characters' attitudes towards those _things_. Much has been made of the fact that while Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond revere theirs, Ned Rosier is perfectly willing to relinquish his _objets d'art_ in order to win Pansy. As Rosier's intention is really to substitute one form of wealth for another in order to impress his beloved's father and thereby win his beloved, his action is not necessarily, as most critics have assumed, motivated by a nobler emotion than the basic greed of Merle and Osmond. While it may be argued that Rosier's greed is essentially a humanitarian rather than mercenary one, his view of Pansy as a "Dresden china shepherdess" (chap. 36, 179) seems eerily close in its aesthetic appreciation of "composition" over character to Osmond's view of Isabel as a "silver plate" (chap. 35, 171). Even though Rosier's love for Pansy is for herself, "not for the use to which . . . [she] may be put to increase his prestige,"[33] "tender though it seems, [his love] is saturated with the acquisitive spirit."[34] However, all the loves in this novel are, to a great extent, selfish loves.

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[33]Ibid., p. 137.
[34]Niemtzow, p. 392.

In James's terms, the importance of objects lies not in the implication that a cracked cup stands for Madame Merle, nor that Spanish lace represents Rosier; rather, it lies in the values his characters assign their possessions. Like her cup, Madame Merle is cracked and chipped from use; she has been left empty on a shelf with nothing to show for having drained the cup of experience; but her innate selfishness is evident in her attitude towards something that was once, but surely in its present condition can no longer be, one of the "delicate specimens." "Please be very careful of that precious object," is an utterance she never makes on behalf of anyone else (chap. 49, 146), yet her desire, having provided for Osmond, to have Pansy marry well indicates her desire to protect her child. Can we really determine, for instance, whether Rosier's desire to marry Pansy is any more respectful of her integrity than Madame Merle's desire to marry her off? Neither one is disinterested. Joseph J. Firebaugh defends Rosier by contending that his "conception of beauty is not absolute, but relative to human life,"[35] but what could be more relative to human life than Madame Merle's knowledge of the world and her desire to save her daughter from the chips and cracks that result from living "in the world"?

The important precious objects in The Portrait are its

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[35]Joseph J. Firebaugh, "The Relativism of Henry James," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 12 (Dec. 1953): 239.

characters, for like their <u>objets d'art</u> people are apprai-sed, bought, and sold throughout the novel. The inherent evil is possession by the spirit of acquisition. Beginning with Mrs. Touchett's "adoption" (chap. 1, 12) of Isabel in Albany and only ending when Isabel prevents Caspar Goodwood from fulfilling his act of possession, everyone in this novel is either possessed by the spirit or simply possessed by another character--for even Isabel has purchased her hus-band. These characters all have "the evil eye" (chap. 42, 28), for the eye of the connoisseur reduces art to currency by assigning pecuniary values to aesthetic properties. In other words, they regard the properties of people and things as possessions not qualities. This violation of personal integrity is an aesthetic dilemma James reconsidered in "The Real Thing" (1893). In that story the ethics of the artist's use of people for the production of his art are ex-plored. The narrator, a professional artist interested in portraiture, dismisses an aristocratic but money-less couple, the Monarchs, because as models they fail to meet the requirements of his art. This example of the artist's "inhuman and dehumanizing <u>use</u> of people" is according to Lyall H. Powers "the chief sin" for any Jamesian character.[36] But the story does not end with the artist's "ideal" visions defeating an example of "the real thing."

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[36]Lyall H. Powers, "Henry James and the Ethics of the Artist: 'The Real Thing' and 'The Liar'," <u>Texas Studies in Language and Literature</u> 3 (Autumn 1961): 360.

Instead, the Monarchs return, forcing the artist to choose a vision of the "actual" over both the "ideal" and the "real." Viola Hopkins Winner notes that "the 'actual' is not literal fact transcribed but what the artist perceives, what the fact stimulates him to see."[37] While Winner has in mind the artist's perception of his subject, this perception stimulated by the facts is one of deeper understanding which discerns art in the context of life. The narrator of "The Real Thing," having scorned the aristocrats as "amusing" irritants and patronized his talented models, feels a pang of compassion when told by a fellow artist that the Monarchs make "stupid" models and ought to be shown the door. But the artist's most perceptive vision is stimulated by the re-appearance of these unsatisfactory models and the "eloquence" of their unbidden assistance; the nature of that perception is a moral one. Earle Labor comments that "though such [emotional] involvement may have blurred his esthetic perspective, it has sharpened his moral insight . . . . [the] narrator emerges with a finer understanding of the human situation and with a new awareness of what constitutes 'the real thing' in human relationships."[38] The essence of this artist's vision is a recognition of human integrity, for the people he has subverted to his art prove far more valuable objects than his illustrations, so much

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[37]Winner, p. 109.

[38]Earle Labor, "James's 'The Real Thing': Three Levels of Meaning," College English 23 (Feb. 1962): 378.

so, that the artist is "content" at the story's end to have compromised some of his expertise for the sake of his moral gain. Such insights as this are never imparted to the connoisseurs of The Portrait of a Lady. Their inability to extract knowledge from the seen life is an indication of the failure of their moral sense.

Throughout The Portrait of a Lady artworks are either objects that replace money and represent greed, or objects that accommodate penetrative vision. One behaves as a spectator when faced with art objects, and as a spectator, one is forced to be a critic because, as James implied in his discussion of Howells's Italian Journeys, observation is to no purpose without intelligence to give it clear expression. Isabel gives her observations clear expression by the novel's end--beginning during her all-night vigil in Chapter 42. Osmond's observations, however, lack all expression: he merely collects things in an effort to express himself. To create that envelope of the self he makes his life a work of art. Osmond's definition of life is unfortunately of the frontispiece sort: one chooses a cover and ignores the content. He quite explicitly tells Isabel his idea with a candour about the artificial that would certainly shock Strether:

> . . . "You know my opinions--I have treated you to enough of them. Don't you remember my telling you that one ought to make one's life a work of art? You looked shocked at first; but then I told you that it was exactly what you seemed to me to be trying to do with your own." (chap. 29, 121)

Juliet McMaster agrees with Osmond when she claims that "what James has shown in Isabel, and increasingly as the novel progresses, is life straining towards the condition of art."[39] However, McMaster does not pursue the implication of her Paterian echo.[40] Why should Isabel's life aspire to art? On one hand her overwhelming aesthetic sensibility--that desire to produce an harmonious image--compels her to comply "with the critical requirements of the connoisseurs of life who surround her,"[41] but on the other hand the observation of art with a painter's eye is a means of better understanding life itself, as James demonstrates in "The Real Thing." That art and life become indistinguishable is dangerous (remember Rowland Mallet), but that art and life become inseparable is an ideal condition for growth in the Jamesian centre of consciousness.

Isabel's "romantic views" and her consequent lack of "contact with reality" motivate her sometimes puzzling actions. In her essay on The Portrait of a Lady, Mary Maxse asserts that "the author's description of Gilbert Osmond's outward appearance entirely fails to justify Isabel's choice," and adds with relief that "we are spared the trouble of trying to understand what Isabel saw in him."[42]

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[39]McMaster, p. 63.

[40]"All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music." Pater, p. 106.

[41]McMaster, p. 57.

[42]Mary Maxse, "Henry James: A Master of his Art," National Review 113 (Dec. 1939): 775.

However, this is the essence of their relationship, for Isabel sees nothing *in* Osmond. She falls in love with his envelope or frontispiece only to discover that the envelope is empty and the book blank. A.K. Chanda adroitly observes that Osmond's "art consists of projecting in a cunningly sincere way a romanticized image of himself which will appeal to Isabel."[43] Yet the idea that Isabel's choice is a mystery persists: Martha Collins suggests that "we see too little of her positive response to appreciate fully why she marries him,[44] and McMaster, Winner, and Niemtzow, as we have seen, have produced ingenious but not altogether convincing arguments for masochism, frigidity, and nymphomania respectively. Chanda's contention is the most probable and the most supportable of these arguments, for Isabel is always susceptible to the aesthetic appeals of romanticism. The first chapter of the novel, for example, is presented as a "peculiarly English picture" which the author has "attempted to sketch" (chap. 1, I). The tea scene at Gardencourt is comparable to a conversation piece;[45] appro-

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[43]A.K. Chanda, "Art and Artists in *The Portrait of a Lady*," *Indian Journal of English Studies* 10 (1969): 113.

[44]Collins, p. 149.

[45]Conversation pieces were popular during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Yale Center for British Art describes them as "small scale paintings of real people engaged in everyday informal or domestic activities. With its snapshot quality of arrested motion and meticulous attention to details of costume, possessions, and surroundings, the conversation piece introduced an intimate mood into . . . British portraiture." Yale Center for British Art, *Selected Paintings Drawings & Books*, with a Foreword by Paul Mellon (New Haven: Yale, 1977), p. 14.

priately, the main action in the scene is "desultory talk." When Isabel steps out of the doorway and into the this scene she is undoubtedly "straining towards the condition of art"; however the numerous impressions (chap. 2, 17) made by the scene do not impart to her knowledge or understanding. Instead, this scene sets the precedent for Isabel's aesthetic responses throughout most of the novel: she finds the house "enchanting," the scene "delightful" and the general aspect, as we have seen, "just like a novel!" But Isabel takes no intellectual impression from what she sees. She would make a very poor travel diarist, for the enchantment of art always obsfucates meaning for Isabel.

Isabel chooses Osmond simply because his appearance coincides with her romantic expectations. Consider Caspar Goodwood. Isabel's only apparent objection to Caspar is that he is not romantically handsome; his remarkable eyes, for example, have less "charm" than "resolution" for Isabel (chap. 4, 38). Nevertheless, the "charming" Lord Warburton presents himself as a romantic alternative. Warburton makes the strategic mistake of revealing his emotional vulnerability. When Isabel suspects that he is "suddenly turning romantic," she receives "an appreciable shock" for the intensity of his felt emotion; the abrupt "bitterness" she incites (chap. 9, 91) is a sip of the "poisoned drink" of experience. Once Isabel has experienced this "fear" of involvement in the world, Lord Warburton's

reputation as a "hero of romance" diminishes. The more unhappiness Warburton displays at Isabel's refusals the less attractive he appears to her until, no longer heroic, he sits before her "unceremoniously, doggedly, like a man in trouble" (chap. 14, 150). Gilbert Osmond is the only truly enchanting man amongst Isabel's suitors. Unlike Warburton, Osmond is unperturbed by Isabel's initial refusal and maintains his "tone of almost impersonal discretion" (chap. 29, 123). As Juliet McMaster notes "it is one of Osmond's shrewd moves in his courtship that he does not play the melancholy lover,"[46] a pose which would quickly disenchant Isabel with its emotional responsibilities. The obvious irony is that true enchantment will cause Isabel the most pain. The underlying irony is that both Isabel and Osmond, in attempting to satisfy their aesthetic tastes, are forced to drink the cup of experience.

Isabel, like Rowland, seeks romantic experience, and she regards Merle and Osmond as the purveyors of romance. Like frontispieces, these two figures look interesting, and Isabel makes the mistake of assuming that an interesting object is a worthwhile one. Just as Warburton strikes Isabel as "a hero of romance", Madame Merle strikes Isabel as a work of art. Despite her detection of a "secretive disposition", Isabel finds Madame Merle "charming," "delightful," and "graceful" (chap. 18, 199-204). Madame Merle is

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[46]McMaster, p. 51.

described by Isabel in sculptural terms; she is "tall, fair," "round and replete" and her features have a "graceful harmony among them." With her "thick, fair hair, arranged with picturesque simplicity," Madame Merle is comparable to a neo-classical bust--a connection James reinforced in the New York Edition by having Isabel think Madame Merle like "a Bust . . . a Juno or a Niobe." Hiram Powers's Proserpine (Plate 3-5) is a comparable image. Likewise, Isabel's first impression of Gilbert Osmond is that "he was not handsome, but he was fine, as fine as one of the drawings in the long gallery above the bridge, at the Uffizi" (chap. 23, 50). Osmond has the fine quality of a portrait sketch, but that he is a sketch, not a complete painted portrait, implies a deficiency in his character. Osmond is the insubstantial outline of good form. That Osmond's pose is calculated to produce a fine image is suggested by his first appearance in the novel:

> He had a thin, delicate, sharply-cut face, of which the only fault was that it looked too pointed; an appearance to which the shape of his beard contributed not a little. This beard, cut in the manner of the portraits of the sixteenth century, and surmounted by a fair moustache, of which the ends had a picturesque upward flourish, . . . suggested that he was a gentleman who studied style. (chap. 22, 27)

Osmond is also connected to coins through his work as a copyist (chap. 51, 159). His artistic activities indicate that Osmond is not an original artist: he copies a depiction of an antique coin that was, in turn, an ectype pressed from

3-5. Hiram Powers: Proserpine, 1844

a cast of an original. The association of Osmond with coinage connotes the avarice of his aestheticism. His connoisseurship is somewhat like that of Mr. Leavenworth in relation to Augusta Blanchard. The image of a coin also suggests Osmond's dazzling face value, which has as much appeal for Isabel as her sterling quality has for him.

Catherine Lord has delineated three stages of aesthetic experience which occur as one views paintings, listens to music, or reads poetry and novels; these stages are clearly operable inside The Portrait of a Lady.[47] According to Lord, at the first stage a viewer of art seeks "focus or order" as "the imagination functions ectypally" and moves from part to whole."[48] For the first thirty-nine chapters of the novel Isabel's imagination functions in this manner. She perceives, but her impressions are reflections; her mind reproduces a surface image without grasping the substance of the seen object, as in her delight in the initial scene at Gardencourt. In these terms Osmond's association with coins, or actual ectypes rather than archetypes or originals,--such as in Ralph's perception of Isabel as a "bas-relief" (chap. 7, 70)--signals a primary but literally superficial form of aesthetic experience. "The recognition

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[47]Catherine Lord, "Aesthetic Unity," Journal of Philosphy 58 (1961): 321-327. Lord mentions a number of artworks but focuses on The Portrait of a Lady, Mondrian's "Broadway Boogie," Donne's "Canonization," and Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress."

[48]Ibid., p. 321.

of the interrelationship of the work of art marks the second stage of the aesthetic experience."[49] In The Portrait of a Lady this second stage is precipated by the novel's central tableau in chapter 40. If Rowland Mallet had been unable to see the meaning of his picture, as Isabel enters her drawing room there can be no doubt that she recognizes the "figures . . . seen in their interrelationship":

> Just beyond the threshold of the drawing-room she stopped short, the reason for her doing so being that she had received an impression . . . . Madame Merle was standing on the rug, a little way from the fire; Osmond was in a deep chair, leaning back and looking at her. . . . the thing made an image, lasting only a moment, like a sudden flicker of light. Their relative position, their absorbed mutual gaze, struck her as something detected. (chap. 40, 9-10)

This moment of apprehension, like the tableau of Roderick Hudson, is presented in much the same way as the novel's first scene: Isabel steps through a doorway and into a conversation piece. However, the conversation is no longer desultory, having lapsed instead into silence. While the depth of the relation between Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond has been intimated to Isabel by their placement, she does not yet grasp their relationship in context. In Lord's third stage "the parts of the work of art are enjoyed in terms of the whole" but with this stage of experience comes a sacrifice for one "cannot return to the naive state of awareness that characterizes the first stage."[50] When

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[49]Ibid., p. 322.
[50]Ibid., p. 326.

Isabel finally sees the world "open out, all round her" her moment of aesthetic unity is at hand, but it is Caspar Goodwood's infamous catalytic kiss that in making her see herself as a victim of possession imparts to her, finally, a view of herself and everyone else in terms of the whole. Once Isabel recognizes her part in the world, she rejects her place in its network of possession. The path is very straight for Isabel because that "process of growing awareness" which constitutes aesthetic experience has culminated "in the unity of the imagination and the understanding."[51] Isabel's desire to see for herself has ultimately been satisfied by a taste of the "poisoned cup" of experience.

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[51]Ibid., p. 327.

CHAPTER IV:
THE AMBASSADORS OF PERCEPTION

> One's work should have composition, because composition alone is positive beauty.[1]

Leon Edel has called _The Ambassadors_ James's "most pictorial" novel,[2] and certainly this novel explores and incorporates more areas of the visual arts than any of James's earlier works. However, "pictorial" is a term too limited to indicate the extent to which the visual arts suffuse the novel. No doubt much of the novel's beauty and originality emanates from James's skill with pictorialism in his use of the embedded tableau and the pictorial apprehension of the observer with a critical eye, but subtending this pictorialism is an interest in symbolism which both augments the novel's pictorialism and moves away from it toward a more purely textual interest in metaphor through the figurative language of imagery. In short, the early stages of James's symbolism coincide in _The Ambassadors_ with the "most pictorial" example of his novelistic methods. The irony of

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[1]Henry James, Preface to _The Ambassadors_ in _The Art of the Novel_, p. 319.

[2]Leon Edel, Introduction to _The Ambassadors_ by Henry James (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), p. xiii. Subsequent references to _The Ambassadors_ will not refer to this edition which reprints the text of the 1907-1909 New York Edition but will refer instead to R.W. Stallman's Signet Classic edition (New York: New American Library, 1960) which is set from the first bound edition (Methuen, 1903) and cites variants prior to the New York Edition. Page number references to this edition will appear in parentheses in the text.

the coincidence is the root of James's pictorialism in his realism--that "attempt to represent life" he expounded in 1884.[3]

The Ambassadors cannot strictly be termed a Realist novel due to its abundant use of metaphors and figurative language, yet its metaphorical component is not sufficiently developed to define the novel as a Symbolist work; it has, however, been conveniently labelled by F.O. Matthiessen an Impressionist novel.[4] The developments in James's work are comparable to the history of French painting. According to Lionello Venturi "in [French] painting there was an interval of a few years between Realism and Symbolism during which there was neither Realism nor Symbolism, but Impressionism."[5] The aesthetic of James's writing can be easily discussed in these terms. His early fiction and travel writing with its emphasis on the picturesque is essentially romantic. With Roderick Hudson James broke away from romanticism and worked towards greater realism which comes to fruition in The Portrait of a Lady and corresponds to his realist aesthetic in "The Art of Fiction." While the architecture of The Portrait of a Lady is the first extensive use of symbolism in James's fiction, it is only through

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[3]James, "Art of Fiction," p. 25.

[4]F.O. Matthiessen, Henry James: The Major Phase (New York: Oxford, 1944), p.34.

[5]Lionello Venturi, "The Aesthetic Idea of Impressionism," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 1 (Spring 1941): 38.

the figurative language of his late work, The Golden Bowl, that symbolism becomes the dominant aesthetic. As in French painting, James's development from realist to symbolist is not direct: The Ambassadors, not The Portrait of a Lady, marks the transition to symbolism in James's novels. The Ambassadors is no doubt a "direct impression of life,"[6] but the "impression" is neither the objective observation of the realist nor the subjective intellectualization of the symbolist. Just as Impressionism was an interval between Realism and Symbolism in the history of French painting, so it is in the development of James's aesthetic.

If we examine The Ambassadors in search of visual art devices we quite literally find more than meets the eye, for perception--particularly the aesthetic of perception--is this novel's true subject. Both the symbolist and the impressionist elements of pictorialism are apparent, but they function as aspects of perception for the reader as well as for the central character. My emphasis will remain on the epistemological function of pictorialism in The Ambassadors and its connections to Impressionist painting and literary Impressionism. The greatest emphasis, however, will be placed on the relation of these compositional elements to the perceiver inside the novel, for, as the novel's central intelligence, and hence its physical "centre,"[7] Lambert

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[6]James, "Art of Fiction," p. 29.
[7]James, Art of the Novel, p. 317.

Strether--the tourist in Europe--is the key to the novel's composition.

Before discussing Impressionism as an element of James's pictorialism in The Ambassadors it is useful to have a sketch of the Impressionist movement in painting. The Impressionist movement occurred in France roughly between 1870 and the mid 1880's. The group refered to as Impressionists were painters who rejected the traditional academic mode of painting in favour of a style of painting derived from realism and influenced by the landscapes of the Barbizon School such as those of Camille Corot or Charles Daubigny (Plate 4-1). The result is an art depicting common people which concerns itself with capturing particular atmospheric moments and light conditions from a specific viewpoint through pure colour.[8]

It would be simplistic to suggest that the Impressionistic pictorialism of The Ambassadors derives solely from the influence of these painters on the author; yet this view has tended to prevail in James criticism particularly in connection with James's admiration of Sargent's paintings.[9] Henry James's 1876 review of the second Impressionist exhibition clearly shows his lack of appreciation for the

[8] Venturi gives a good short synopsis of the Impressionists' aims and methods while John Rewald's The History of Impressionism, (1946; 4th rev. ed., New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1973) is perhaps the most comprehensive study of the movement.

[9] See for instance: James Joseph Kirshke, Henry James and Impressionism (Troy, New York: Whitson, 1981), esp. pp. 1-42.

4-1. Charles Daubigny: Spring Landscape, 1862

style:

> I have found it decidedly interesting. But the effect of it was to make me think better than ever of all the good old rules which decree that beauty is beauty and ugliness ugliness . . . . None of its members show signs of possessing first-rate talent, and indeed the 'Impressionist' doctrines strike me as incompatible, in an artist's mind, with the existence of first-rate talent.[10]

The Ambassadors was published twenty-seven years after James made these comments, so they hardly represent his opinion of the Impressionists in 1903. Still, the comments are relevant to the novel since they indicate that James did not immediately embrace the aesthetics of Impressionism and then set out to make a corresponding movement in literature. While the presence of the Impressionist aesthetic is pervasive in The Ambassadors, its importance lies not only in James's intentions but in Lambert Strether's vision.

The word "impression" as James employed it had more to do with Pater's use of the word to mean an apprehension--vision that brings with it understanding--rather than with the almost accidental appellation of the French art movement.[11] However, as Venturi points out, the "impression" of the Impressionists and that of Walter Pater are not unrelated:

> [The Impressionists'] lack of subject matter was

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[10] James, "Impressionists," Painter's Eye, pp. 114-115.

[11] The origin of the term "Impressionist" was, of course, the satirical label affixed to the group by a French journalist in the Charivari of April 25, 1874, based on Monet's Impression, Soleil Levant. The title of the review article was "The Exhibition of the Impressionists."

> . . . an opportunity for creating motifs instead of representing subjects.
> Walter Pater discovered in Giorgione a new creative impulse because he did not use Christian or pagan subjects drawn from the Bible, mythology, or history as did his contemporary Florentine painters, but invented his own motifs, and subordinated them to his form and colouring. Before Walter Pater's disclosure, the artistic value of Giorgione was discovered by Manet when Giorgione's <u>Concert Champêtre</u> in the Louvre inspired him to paint <u>Le Déjeuner Sur l'Herbe</u>.[12]

Rewald notes that prior to 1874 "the word *impression* was frequently heard in the discusssions of the [Impressionist] painters" and had been used by Manet as a technical term since 1860.[13] Perhaps his interest in Pater partly accounts for James's ultimate admiration of the Impressionists, for in 1905 James spoke in glowing terms of some "wondrous examples" of Impressionist paintings by Manet, Degas, Monet, and Whistler.[14] But, as we have seen, James's earliest travel writings emphasized the observer's impressions of life and art. James's eventual appreciation of Impressionist painting does not indicate his adoption of its doctrines; rather it reveals his recognition of an aesthetic sympathy between the art of the Impressionists and his own literary Impressionism. As an aesthetic term "impression" was being used frequently in the late nineteenth century. Perhaps under the influence of Walter Pater the aesthetes

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[12] Venturi, p. 41.

[13] Rewald, p. 212.

[14] James, "New England: An Autumn Impression," in <u>The American Scene</u>, with an Introduction by Irving Howe (New York: Horizon Press, 1967), pp. 45-46.

had adopted the word. Oscar Wilde's poems "Impression du Matin" (1881) and "Impression de Voyage" (1881) are two instances of poetic impressionism; each poem describes a moment of visual experience, or an impression.

But what is meant by "literary Impressionism"? According to Calvin S. Brown literary Impressionism:

> is characterized by such structural devices as fragmentation of form, the breaking up of rhythms, juxtaposition without subordination, the avoidance of big climaxes, and a general preference for small units . . . . The most striking linguistic features of literary Impressionism include the use of phrases . . . and single words as sentences, a passion for rare words and neologisms, conversion of the parts of speech, a predilection for impersonal verbs and constructions, and a liking for abnormal word order. Synaesthesia is common, and allusion and suggestion are generally preferred to overt statement.[15]

While many of these characteristics do appear in James's novels--the abundant use of synaesthesia, for example, is manifest in James's use of pictorialism in the embedded tableaux--, obviously these are devices and features available to writers but not to painters. The connection between Impressionist painting and literary Impressionism is not technical but ideological. We can hardly accuse James of attempting to pass off a canvas as a novel; we may agree, however, with Winner's contention that The Ambassadors is "informed by the impressionist mode of vision."[16] The con-

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[15]Calvin S. Brown, "How Useful is the Concept of Impressionism?" Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature 17 (1968): 54.

[16]Winner, p. 51.

nection is the word "impression." Pater's suggestion that experience is a series of impressions each formed as "a sudden light transfigures some trivial thing"[17] is paralleled by the Impressionists' use of "light . . . to interpret all of nature."[18] In both cases the impression made is "the discovery of a new beauty where, before, it had not been believed that beauty existed."[19] In The Ambassadors Strether is at once the subject of an Impressionist work--he is a common man exposed to a single light of the iridescent "bright Babylon", Paris (57)--and he is the observer whose experience grows with the accumulation of his impressions.

Let us first consider Strether as the subject of an Impressionist work of art. In this role he may be said to represent that "lack of subject matter" which allows the creation of motifs in Pater's view of Giorgione and in all Impressionist canvases. One motif that Strether creates is that of the observant Jamesian traveller, the impression-gathering tourist such as Rowland Mallet, Isabel Archer, and of course James himself. But there are other less literal motifs characterized by Strether, and the most striking of these is his role as a colour. This role is a metaphorical one which evidences James's growing interest in Symbolism; for Strether's distinguishing feature throughout The Ambassadors is not only how he sees, but how he looks. He

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[17]Pater, p. 140.
[18]Venturi, p. 36.
[19]Ibid., p. 41.

functions, in other words, as a colour in a painting, for he is the artist's medium. As a repeating colour, he is also a motif. Although Strether's "colour" draws our attention to the novel's pictorialism by emphasizing the synaesthetic effect of its numerous colour nouns, it is the prominence given Strether's role as colour mass among other colour masses that invites close scrutiny and analysis. James underlined the importance of Strether's colour in his Preface to the New York Edition:

> He had come [to Paris] 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 . . . and might, for all he knew, be on its way to purple, to black, to yellow.[20]

This figurative series is not a random one. The colour green, for instance, is appropriate to Strether's character as well as his view at the novel's outset. He tells Maria Gostrey that his name on the cover of the Woollett Review, a publication distinguished by being "green--of the most lovely shade," is his "one presentable little scrap of identity" (42).[21] However, Strether displays a susceptibility to change: when Maria Gostrey suggests that he is doing something he does not think right, her remark "so touched the

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[20]James, Art of the Novel, p. 314.

[21]Although there is no "Woollett Review," its real-life counterpart may be the Atlantic Monthly, see p. 186, below. Twenty-one of James's stories were published in the Atlantic between 1865-1900, fourteen of which appeared between 1865-1874. See: The Complete Tales of Henry James, 12 vol., ed. by Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1962-64), pp. xi-xv.

place that he quite changed colour" (13). The blush of guilt or embarrassment will plague Strether; yet it is associated with knowledge and perception, as in this instance. Likewise, in Chapter 4 (43) another "truth" of Maria's prompts him to blush, and in Chapter 16 Madame de Vionnet's provocative suggestion that Strether "must be possessed . . . of a woman" causes him to "colour" and pause, adding "truth to her supposition" (186). Red then becomes associated with truth or knowledge, and, in a covert way, with sexual awareness, for thoughts of Maria in comparison to Mrs. Newsome make Strether turn red (239). Nevertheless, green is the colour initially associated with Strether. The traditional connotations of the cool colour green are: hope, inexperience, growth, envy, and, no doubt in Woollett, money. In the novel's second paragraph Strether feels "headlong hope" that his adventure will be "colour[ed] with cool success" (5), a desire which implies his reluctance to be tainted (or perhaps tinted) by the warm hues of knowledge. And, while Strether is not a young man, his observation of "marked streaks of gray" in Chad's hair elicits the thought that Chad may make him "feel young" (88-89). The contrast implicit in this response is that of innocence confronting the "aged and hoary sinner" of experience. These inverse proportions of youth and age recall the curious hydraulics of The Sacred Fount, but there is an ironic foreshadowing of the whole structure of The

Ambassadors, with its central role reversal, in this apprehension. Strether, who has recently arrived from the 'new world,' is an old man made to feel young by meeting a young man grown old in the 'old world.' Strether's metaphoric youth and his lack of experience in the 'old world' characterize him as green, a greenhorn, perhaps. Youth and inexperience precipitate growth: another shade of green. Envy, while it is not immediately apparent in Strether's Woollett-fresh form, emerges in Chapter 11 when Strether tells Little Bilham that he is "hatefully young" (135) having wistfully elaborated the lost opportunites of his own youth. Finally, the greeness of dollars is the base element in Strether's identity. When the novel begins, it is Mrs. Newsome's money which produces the Review for Strether to edit, Mrs. Newsome's commercial empire of vulgar objects which necessitates Chad's return and, as a consequence, Strether's sojourn in Paris. Strether's interest is tied to the new sum of the Newsome's fortune.

William Veeder cites Strether's first "use [of] French to describe a French situation" (135) as a signal of Strether's "progress toward new speech and new vision."[22] Certainly Strether's French utterances indicate changes in his point of view: he no longer speaks only as an American from Woollett. When Strether uses French words and phrases,

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[22]William Veeder, "Strether and the Transcendence of Language," Modern Philology 69 (Nov. 1971): 120.

they should be understood not merely as conveyors of meaning but as part of a compositional pattern in which French becomes an important part of the French texture of the text. Strether's progress is not signalled by language alone, for James extends his colour metaphor through the novel making Strether change as he is exposed to new light, or enlightened. For example, a curious thing happens to Strether's "one presentable little scrap of identity": it is supplanted in Strether's consciousness by its salmon-coloured French counterpart. By Chapter 13 the Woollett Review is nowhere in sight but "the great Revue," "a touch of Chad's own hand," is a "familiar face" in Madame de Vionnet's drawing-room (151). In Chapter 24 Strether visits the Pococks' rooms and discovers there "the last number of the salmon-coloured Revue" (263). This displacement of the lovely-green Woollett Review by the pink-orange Revue des deux Mondes is a physical manifestation of the inner changes which Strether experiences as he "turn[s] from green to red."[23] While the names of both papers, review or revue, suggest the action of re-seeing, the Revue des deux Mondes summarizes Strether's achievement in the novel for he comes

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[23]Like Strether's, James's change from English to French is also connected to the Revue des Deux Mondes. The first five French translations of his tales appeared in the Revue--a journal James had read in his youth--between November 1875 and December 1878. See: Robert K. Martin, "Henry James and the Harvard College Library," American Literature 41, 1 (March 1969): 97; and Leon Edel and Dan H. Laurence, A Bibliography of Henry James (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1961): E29-E33.

to re-see both the old world and the new. Of course these two papers also indicate Strether's linguistic conversion from Woollett English to Parisian French. On one hand the suppression of the Woollett Review indicates that Mrs. Newsome's fortune no longer controls Strether's, on the other hand, it reflects that blushing dawn of knowledge which will turn Strether "red" and even "redder" still until feeling "that he was showing much . . . he offered up his redness" (239). James's use of red and green in describing Strether is an intentionally graphic illustration of a radical change. Since these two colours are complimentary, or absolute opposites, on the artist's palette, the change in Strether from green to red represents a complete reversal in his viewpoint.

While Strether may not consider himself a clear green liquid, he is at least aware of the symbolic associations of red and green, for both Maria Gostrey and Marie de Vionnet are linked to these colours. Strether's dinner with Maria Gostrey in London is suffused with the "pink lights" of candles with "rose-coloured shades" that mingle with Maria's softness in their appeal to his senses. Strether notices that Maria wears "round her throat a broad red velvet band with an antique jewel" (32-33). Daniel J. Schneider suggests that Maria's red collar represents "sensuality, blood, life, and, especially, the lust of the

eyes."[24] According to Tony Tanner, "Strether is learning the attraction of things that appeal to the senses"[25]; Maria Gostrey, along with Paris, is one of those things. Marie de Vionnet also wears a collar, and, while we may expect hers to be red also, it is instead misleadingly green: "a collar of large old emeralds, the green note of which was more dimly repeated, at other points of her apparel" (166). We may, as Schneider cautions, misinterpret those notes of green as hints of "nature, the garden, life, artlessness"[26], and so conclude, as Strether does, that Madame de Vionnet is "half mythological," "a goddess," "or a sea nymph." But as we lack Strether's strong desire to think Madame de Vionnet "good" we are not so likely to be misled by her apparent greeness. She shows her true colours--shades of the "dull winecolour" that gleams through her black dress in Notre Dame (182)--when she comes into view with her pink parasol toward the novel's end (333). For Strether, the pink parasol simultaneously signifies the acquisition of sensual knowledge and of sexual awareness that he has lacked all along.

Since Strether himself turns from green to red in the course of <u>The Ambassadors</u>, his contemplation of "lemon-

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[24]Daniel J. Schneider, "The Ironic Imagery and Symbolism of James's 'The Ambassadors'," <u>Criticism</u> 9 (Spring 1967): 188.

[25]Tony Tanner, "The Watcher from the Balcony: Henry James's <u>The Ambassadors</u>," <u>Critical Quarterly</u> 8 (Spring 1966): 43.

[26]Schneider, p. 188.

coloured" volumes seems a tertiary tint in his complexion. Yet the elusive lemon-coloured volumes hover in Strether's consciousness through "the great desert of the years" (56) as symbols of knowledge and aesthetic aspirations:

> They represented now the mere sallow paint on the door of the temple of taste that he had dreamed of raising up--a structure that he had practically never carried further. Strether's present highest flights were perhaps those in which this particular lapse figured to him as a symbol, a symbol of his long grind and his want of odd moments . . . of positive dignity. (55)

That yellow is the last colour on James's list of chromatic consciousness suggests that complete self-knowledge is characterized by that shade; therefore, it is appropriate that Strether's long-dormant aesthetic volumes are lemon-coloured. In colour theory, the insubstantiality of brilliant yellow causes the colour to "rise," hence, it is considered to be "more celestial than worldly."[27] But these lemon-coloured volumes also allude to the journal of the aesthetic movement, The Yellow Book, to which James contributed three stories.[28] Eben Bass has observed that "the fiction that James contributed to this short-lived journal is an effective commentary on Strether's youthful ideal" for "just as these [volumes] represent the greatest art to Strether on his first visit to Paris, so each young disciple

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[27] Faber Birren, Color Psychology and Color Therapy (New York: University Books, 1961), p. 171.

[28] James's "The Death of the Lion" and "The Coxon Fund" were published in The Yellow Book in 1894, and "The Next Time" appeared there in 1895. See: Edel, Complete Tales, p. xiii.

in the _Yellow Book_ tales sees in his master's work the epitome of art."[29] It is significant then that the lemon-coloured volumes are available to Strether only towards the novel's end. Strether _is_ the green Woollett Review and develops a familiarity with the salmon-coloured _Revue des deux Mondes_, but it is only after having seen a "half uncut" lemon-coloured novel that has "been pushed within the soft circle" of the lamplight" in Chad's room that "Strether found himself in possession as he never yet had been." Unfortunately, Strether is in possession not of knowledge, but of a "pang" for "the youth he had long ago missed" (303-304). Strether's reluctance to abandon the romanticism of that aesthetic ideal prevents him from gathering deeper impressions. The importance of the lemon-coloured volumes lies in their contribution to the synaesthesia of _The Ambassadors_. Unlike the bowl and the pagoda of _The Golden Bowl_, their metaphorical existence as symbols in the novel is subordinate to their value as a colour. The dominant "mode of knowing" in _The Ambassadors_ is pictorial (or in Austin Warren's terms "mythic" as opposed to "dialectic"); however, it is essentially the pictorialism of "emblematic perception" rather than that of the "extended conceit."[30]

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[29] Eben Bass, "Lemon-Colored Volumes and Henry James," _Studies in Short Fiction_ 1 (Winter 1964): 113-115.

[30] Austin Warren, "Henry James: Symbolic Imagery in the Late Novels," in _Rage for Order: Essays in Criticism_ (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1948), p. 148.

Warren's terms provide useful labels for the epistemological aspects of the novel: the two modes of knowing he identifies are the "dialectic" and the "mythic." Warren defines the former as an almost stichomythic form of dialogue used to present "the conscious mind working hard and critically scrutinizing all available facts, [and] examining semantically the import of words."[31] While it is used for comic irony as well as for its epistemological value, Strether's attempt to understand Chad's "good relations" with Madame de Vionnet is one example of the dialectic mode:

> "And what are your good relations?"
>
> "That's exactly what you'll make out if you'll only go, as I'm supplicating you, to see her."
>
> Strether stared at him with a little of the wanness, no doubt, that the vision of more to "make out" could scarce help producing. "But how good are they?"
>
> "Oh, awfully good."
>
> Again Strether had faltered, but it was brief. It was all very well, but there was nothing now he wouldn't risk. "Excuse me, but I must really--as I began by telling you--know where I am. Is she bad?"
>
> "'Bad'?"--Chad echoed it, but without a shock. "Is that what's implied?"
>
> "When relations are good?" Strether felt a little silly . . . . What indeed was he talking about? . . . he still didn't know quite how to turn it. The two or three ways he thought of, and one of them in particular, were, even with scruples, dismissed, too ugly. He none the less at last found something. "Is her life without reproach?"
>
> . . . . The young man spoke so immensely to the point that the effect was practically of positive blandness. "Absolutely without reproach. A beautiful life. Allez donc voir!" (147-148)

Obviously the dialectic mode is not always informative. The

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[31] Ibid., p. 145.

second mode of knowing, the "mythic," is described by Warren as "the kind of truth to be arrived at not socially, intellectually, or analytically but personally, intuitively, imaginatively--through images and symbols."[32] Warren subdivides the mythic mode into the "two modes of figuration" mentioned above: extended conceit and emblematic perception. In an extended conceit a figure of metaphor is drawn through a passage of text--perhaps through the whole novel--functioning as a cohesive device. Warren compares these conceits to those of metaphysical poetry and notes that James "resurrected" them while revising his work for the New York Edition. The emblematic perception, however, is a type of "intuition . . . in the form of an image." This latter figuration seems to me by far the more important mode of "myth" in The Ambassadors. First, James's amplification of the extended conceits in 1907-1909 suggests that his late interest in symbolism prompted him to revise his texts in this fashion, that is, by developing their symbolic content in accordance with his increasing interest in symbolism. In this respect, the extended conceit is a linguistic rather than imagistic device, for it is formed primarily of metaphor not imagery. Second, the extended conceit is a feature which appears most often in the late work. Unlike the emblematic perception, which appears in the earliest works because it derives, I think, from James's critical essays

[32] Ibid., p. 147.

and non-fictional narratives, the extended conceit, and particularly James's awareness of it as a literary device, should be properly considered as part of his late technique.

The emblematic perception is, of course, the impression which has its precedent in James's travel writing and art criticism. The experience of looking at paintings and forming both an impression of the work and recording a response to it is paralleled by the appearance and import of the pictorial passages in the novels. Warren suggests that the connection is a mnemonic one:

> Recollected images become metaphors. For years James had traveled diligently in France and Italy, written conscientious commentaries on cathedrals, châteaux, and galleries. Now people remind him of art, become indeed works of art. His heroines, almost without exception, are thus translated.[33]

Yet the relation of James's travel writings to his novels seems more complex than a simple translation. If Hawthorne had lent his own travel <u>perceptions</u> to his characters, James lent his characters <u>experiences</u> but gave them <u>perceptions</u> of their own. In other words, James shared with his characters his experience of looking and taking impressions, but the actual objects seen and impressions gained by James are completely different from those of his characters. The reason they differ is that the impression, by Pater's definition, defines personality. Since the apprehensions of his characters are elements of characterization, they can-

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[33]Ibid., p. 149.

not resemble James's unless the work is autobiographical. Pictorial passages in James's novels evolve from his experiences of looking at art, but it is his characters, not James, who make the translations through their own impressions.

The impression is always pictorial, appearing either as an image or as a tableau embedded in the text. The difference between these two forms of impression is slight but distinct. The former is present in any images that evoke or identify artworks. The description of Roderick as a portrait, Miss Blanchard as a neo-classical figure, Madame Merle as a bust, Gilbert Osmond as a fine drawing, and Isabel Archer as various painted portraits are all examples of the emblematic perception that is an image. Likewise, the recurrent scenes of meditation in gardens fall into the category of emblematic perception for they signal a character's attempts to apprehend something. Rowland's misperceptions of the Hudsons in their Northampton garden, his brush with evil in the Franciscan convent garden, and his loss of Roderick in the wilderness of the alps all indicate attempts to reconcile romantic vision with real experience. Isabel Archer's initial delight in the park at Gardencourt, her talks with Ralph in his London and Florentine gardens, and her final escape from the park at Gardencourt mark her romantic views and trace her gradual understanding of reality. Lambert Strether's meditations in the Tuileries,

Gloriani's garden, and the riverside garden in the country represent his attempts to grasp life. Each of these scenes is pictorial, evocative of some type of picture; however, those scenes which are tableaux differ in their semantic signals from the direct romantic/realistic imagery of these episodes.

The tableau is flagged by certain words and actions. In Roderick Hudson Rowland stops short of his drawing-room doorway which then acts as a frame for the tableau which confronts him. In The Portrait of a Lady Isabel steps through her drawing-room doorway which then acts as a frame for her tableau. In the Ambassadors Strether steps through the gilt frame of a Lambinet painting and into his tableau. With each subsequent novel the centre of consciousness, in apprehending a tableau, moves further into the world of art, and becomes increasingly active in the composition of the tableau.[34] The tableau appears only once in each novel, and is always an impression made on the novel's centre of consciousness. While Rowland's apprehension of the tableau

[34] Although James used the word "drawing-room" in its correct sense (i.e. withdrawing-room, a room to withdraw to, OED), it is strangely appropriate to the intellectual action precipitated by the tableau. The drawing-room tableaux allow the centres to draw conclusions, and the centres' apprehensions of subjects, composition, picture, and frame prompt them to compose their tableaux as an artist draws a picture and thereby arrives at a truth by literally drawing things together. Strether, of course, does not step into a drawing-room in the French countryside. He does recall, however, the Boston dealer's "inner shrine," which is a room for drawings, or, as an artist's studio is a room for drawing, a drawing room.

in Roderick Hudson does not impart knowledge, Isabel's apprehension of Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond in the drawing-room does. Isabel's impression is that there is a closer relationship between her husband and her friend than she had realized, but this is not a complete apprehension; Isabel still requires a ficelle, her sister-in-law Countess Gemini, to inform her of the nature and depth of the relationship. When Lambert Strether is confronted with his tableau, there is no need of a ficelle. As Rowland does, Strether sees that the scene makes a painting, but he accepts it passively without the aggressive apprehension (that is, the imposition of meaning) which Rowland applies. And, like Isabel, Strether is aware that he has seen something in his picture of two people together, but, unlike Isabel, Strether immediately understands all the implications of the tableau and thus the real relationship between the two people is revealed. It is not coincidental that these tableaux appear later in the sequence of each subsequent narrative; since each tableau indicates a greater degree of insight, its position corresponds to an appropriate moment in the sequence of the centre's experience. Pictorialism, then, is the main epistemological mode in James's novels; in The Ambassadors, James's "most pictorial" novel, pictorial elements function as the ambassadors of perception.

As if to emphasize their function as impressions, the

pictorial passages in The Ambassadors evoke images of Impressionist canvases. Not only does James employ the style of literary Impressionism in his prose, but the pictorial imagery seems deliberately mimetic. It is as if each new degree of development in Strether's consciousness were represented by an Impressionist painting. The frequency of these passages and the extension of their duration with the progress of the novel suggest that Strether is gradually acquiring an artist's point of view as his education of the senses advances. The first major recognition scene in the novel occurs in Chapter 7 when Strether realizes that the stranger in the theatre box is Chad (85-89). The theatre was a frequent subject of the Impressionist painters, particularly Edgar Degas. His Ballet of "Robert le Diable" (Plate 4-2) is one of many possible examples. Such paintings depict, from a specific point of view not confined to the frame of the stage, the whole spectacle: audience, musicians, and performers. This viewpoint is characteristic of Strether's position in the theatre: he is peripherally aware of the performance and acutely aware of his box-mates, particularly Chad. James does not describe the scene through colour and form; it relies on viewpoint and setting for its Impressionism. The implication of this indirect Impressionism is that Strether has not yet entered the realm of the artist but remains in the audience attempting to frame his subject. This depiction of Strether's conscious-

4-2. Edgar Degas: The Ballet of Robert le Diable, 1872

ness parallels his response to a painting in the Louvre (78). Strether's description of the young man in the painting by Titian (Plate 4-3) could be a description of Chad. The "overwhelming portrait" seems to hover above Strether as Chadwick Newsome looms in his mind. Strether is a passive viewer of art, not an artist, so his understanding of Chad is a response to an outward appearance--gray hair and so on--which comprises the surface of Chad or "the young man with the strangely shaped glove and the blue-gray eyes." The theatre, like the Louvre, is a place of art; therefore, it is an appropriate place for Strether to develop "new vision" (86). Strether believes "the remarkable truth" that Chad is not Chad; this is a false observation. Chad, as we later find out, is very much himself. The remarkable aspect of this episode is Strether's detection of his own ability to see things from a new point of view:

> The fact was that his perception of the young man's identity--so absolutely checked for a minute--had been quite one of the sensations that count in life; . . . . He was in presence of a fact that occupied his whole mind . . . . The phenomenon that had suddenly sat down there with him was a phenomenon of change so complete that his imagination . . . felt itself . . . without margin or allowance. (85-86)

While Strether's belief in Chad's change illustrates a romantic view not unlike that of Rowland or the young Isabel, his sensitivity to his own imagination marks the beginning of his new understanding of the world. This ability

4-3. Titian: Man with the Glove, 1519

to accommodate conceptual adjustments is rooted in the "consciousness of personal freedom" realized by Strether in his first "draught of Europe" (5-6). The "truth" which Strether derives from his vision (that Chad has been "made over") is an artificial one; that Strether has abruptly altered "not only his moral, but also, as it were, his aesthetic sense" (92) is the actual "sharp rupture of an identity" (86) which occurs at the theatre.

The second major recognition scene occurs in Gloriani's garden at the climax of the first half of the novel. The artist's garden was another subject popular with the Impressionist painters; Manet's The Artist's Garden in Versailles (Plate 4-4) is a particularly appropriate example. Strether's appearance in just such a garden of art indicates that his perception is progressively more impressionistic. At the theatre and the Louvre Strether remained a spectator: looking at paintings, seeing the stage, and watching Chad in the theatre box. Strether's awareness of imagination and perception at the theatre marks his entry into a place of new vision, while his lack of active participation in the scene--apart from a "strained smile and," appropriately, "an uncomfortable flush" (86)--reinforces his role as an outsider looking in. In Gloriani's garden, though, Strether becomes part of the spectacle. In his Preface to the New York Edition of The Ambassadors James comments that "the dear man in the Paris garden was then

4-4. Edouard Manet: The Artist's Garden in Versailles, 1881

admirably and unmistakeably _in_ one--which was no small point gained."[35] This time, faced with a moment of perception, Strether is inside the scene in Gloriani's "queer old garden":

> It was in the garden, a spacious, cherished remnant, out to which a dozen persons had already passed, that . . . [Gloriani] met them; while the tall, bird-haunted trees, all of a twitter with the spring and the weather, and the high party-walls . . . spoke of survival, transmission, association, a strong, indifferent, persistent order. The day was so soft that the little party had practically adjourned to the open air . . . . Strether had presently the sense of . . . a whole range of expression all about him, too thick for prompt discrimination. (120-121)

The dominance of green in Manet's painting makes it a suitable place for Strether. The intense glimmers of red which draw the eye into the centre parallel the blushes of Strether's self-consciousness, the glimmers of truth, as it were. The bench in the painting has significance for Strether as well. According to Tanner the garden bench, since it is a place of meditation, is comparable to the balcony as a place for the extension of the consciousness through sitting and watching.[36] Rowland, Isabel, and Strether all linger on garden benches at moments of heightened consciousness.

The brilliance of Manet's sun-drenched colours also does justice to Strether's exuberant speech in the garden. Strether's exuberance is really the climax of the first half

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[35] James, _Art of the Novel_, p. 313.

[36] Tanner, p. 43.

of the novel; however, the "truth" precipitated by this climax of impressions is false, and it ironically fore-shadows the new truths Strether will have established by the novel's end. In the course of his exhortation to "live all you can" Strether tells Little Bilham that:

> these impressions-- . . . have had their abundant message for me . . . I see it now . . .--and now I'm old . . . . It's too late. And it's as if the train had fairly waited at the station for me without my having had the gumption to know it was there. Now I hear its faint receding whistle miles and miles down the line . . . . Still, one has the illusion of freedom; therefore don't be, like me, without the memory of that illusion . . . . the right time now is yours . . . . don't make _my_ mistake . . . . Live! (134-135)

Perhaps the greatest irony of Strether's speech in the context of this thesis is its source. On October 31, 1895, James recorded the _donnée_ for _The Ambassadors_ in his Notebook. The story told him by Jonathan Sturges was of his having recently met William Dean Howells in Paris. Howells, in response to a remark of Sturges's, uttered the original of Strether's exuberant speech.[37] James appropriated Howells's occupation, his scarce early visits to Paris, as well as his place of origin (Howells was editor of the Boston-based _Atlantic Monthly_) for the character of Strether. The irony here--though perhaps it is less an irony than a felicitous circularity--is that Howells, one of the travelling novelists whose example James followed,

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[37]See: Henry James, _Notebooks_, ed. F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Mudrock (1947; New York: Oxford, 1961), pp. 225-228.

should acknowledge late in life that he had actually missed the abundant impressions of his youthful tour. Although James wrote in 1868 of Howells's having produced "literature" in his <u>Italian Journeys</u> through his observations and good prose, Howells himself could retrospectively see the myopia of those observations.[38] But for Strether, the irony of the speech is that he claims to see. Like the Chad he sees in the theatre, the sights in the garden are false perceptions clouded by a romantic notion of youth. Strether has gained an awareness of the possibilities of growth available to him, and he promptly assumes that these possibilities are the territory of the young. Yet it is Strether, not Chad or Bilham, who has the urge to "Live!" Simply by being able to imagine an expansion of his scope Strether is ready for it. Unbeknownst to Strether, the train is still waiting for him at the station. The train "selected almost at random" (326) in Chapter 30 is the very train which leads Strether to the real climax of the novel in its tableau. That train will also lead to a spontaneous grasp of freedom as illusory--Madame de Vionnet and Chad are having an affair, yet they are bound by social convention to return to Paris with Strether--and will simultaneously relegate that illusion to the province of memory. Further irony appears in Bilham's response--or lack of one--to the intended tone of "innocent gaiety." Bilham's solemnity is

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[38]James, "Howells," pp. 198-199.

ambiguous: he may be bored by the sententiousness, attending to the grave contents of the speech, surprised at Strether's bittersweet attitude, or politely hiding his amusement at the older man's outburst. The last and most profound untruth Strether arrives at in the garden occurs with the "click of a spring" in which all vagueness vanishes (136) leaving the knowledge that it is Jeanne de Vionnet to whom Chad is attached. Madame de Vionnet consequently assumes the role of a virtuous attachment; her function being determined by Bilham's broad interpretation of the constituents of virtue (172) and Chad's definition of an "awfully good" woman (147).

As in the first half of the novel, there are two recognition scenes in the second half. Once again they occur on a balcony and in a garden. The first of these occurs in Chapter 24 when Strether goes to see Sally Pocock but meets Mamie instead. It is as if Strether has stepped into Adolf von Menzel's Room with a Balcony[39] (Plate 4-5):

> he suddenly had a fresh arrest. Both the windows of the room stood open to the balcony, but it was only now that, in the glass of the leaf of one of them, folded back, he caught a reflection quickly recognized as the colour of a lady's dress. Somebody had been then, all the while, on the balcony, and the person, whoever it might be, was so placed, between windows, as to be hidden from

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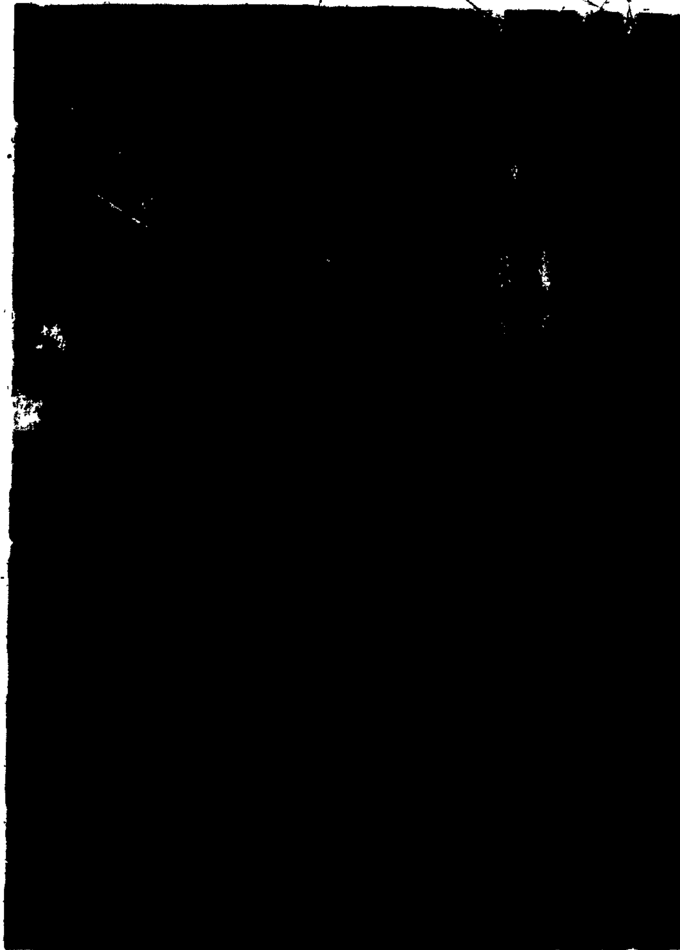
[39]Menzel, a German painter, has no association with the French Impressionist movement, although his work is remarkably similar in style, pallette, and content. Fritz Novotny does speak of Menzel as an Impressionist; however, Menzel's work pre-dates that of the French painters by a few decades. See: Novotny, pp.277-287.

4-5. Adolf von Menzel: Room with a Balcony, 1845

him. (264)

There is a sharp contrast between Strether's apprehension of the impenetrable surface of Titian's Man With the Glove, and his impression in the Pococks' room. This time "the touch of a spring" (265) makes things fall into correct order and the "bland," "bridal," "funny," "wonderful" Mamie (267) reveals the possibility of some new relationship. It transpires that Mamie, after all, recognizes the changes in Strether. When Strether joins Mamie on the balcony he resembles the figure in Gustave Caillebotte's Man on Balcony, boulevard Haussman (Plate 4-6). Strether, like the man in the painting, is at once in the room and able to look out. The high perspective of a view from a balcony is important for Strether who, upon his arrival in Paris, could only look up at Chad's balcony from the street below (63). Strether has by this time experienced a literal alteration in point of view: his position on the balcony is the figurative counterpart to this change. Strether's vision is still not complete, for although he sees from a higher plane, he seems to see little beyond the street below. When in Chapter 28 Strether repeats his action of walking out onto a balcony-- in this case Chad's--after having observed the "lemon- coloured" novel in the circle of light, his new, broader angle of vision is reinforced:

> The night was hot and heavy, and the single lamp sufficient; the great flare of the lighted city, rising high, spending itself afar, played up from the Boulevard and, through the vague vista of the



4-6. Gustave Caillebotte: Man on Balcony, boulevard Houssman, 1880

> successive rooms, brought objects into view and added to their dignity. (303)

His view has expanded to take in all of Paris and its inhabitants but still looks inward to the rooms rather than out at the city. The sadness evoked by the scene is not simply Strether's regret for his lost youth. He has a dawning recognition that perhaps he has grown to like the "vast bright Babylon" "too much" (57), and an inkling that it is not his youth that is illusory but the notion of freedom. Just as the view from Mamie's balcony lacks depth, this view is obscured by darkness. Both actions indicate Strether's broadened vision and his awareness that he now sees further, but neither one is a complete apprehension. Strether needs to take the impression of something to get at the truth of things.

The key scene in the novel occurs in Chapters 30 and 31 when Strether makes an impromptu visit to the countryside. This scene is the most extensive use of the tableau in James's fiction and also the most Impressionistic, in both senses of the word. In it, Strether is "freely walking about" in a painted landscape by Emile Lambinet (327). According to Viola Hopkins Winner:

> Emile Lambinet, a student of Daubigny and Corot, was a minor nineteenth-century landscapist associated with the Barbizon school, the general quality of which is an unheroic, intimate, quiet, somewhat idealized treatment of nature: slow-moving rivers, luminous skies, tangled willows, light filtering through the trees--these

are the features of Lambinet's art.[40]

During the 1860's the Barbizon school was a major influence on the young Impressionist painters' perceptions of landscape.[41] Just as Daubigny and Corot influenced Manet, so the Lambinet image influences Strether. His perception of nature is painterly; it is described as if a Barbizon landscape were opening out into three dimensions before him:

> The oblong gilt frame disposed its enclosing lines; the poplars and willows, the reeds and river--a river of which he didn't know, and didn't want to know, the name--fell into a composition, full of felicity, within them; the sky was silver and turquoise and varnish; the village on the left was white and the church on the right was gray; it was all there, in short--it was what he wanted: it was Tremont Street, it was France, it was Lambinet. Moreover he was freely walking about in it. He did this last, for an hour, to his heart's content, . . . boring so deep into his impression . . . (327)

This description corresponds to the sylvan river, large expanse of sky, tall trees, reedy banks, and distant pale village which Lambinet painted in Fishing on the Banks of the Seine (Plate 4-7). James's choice of Lambinet as the artist whom Strether remembers may have been meant, as Winner suggests, to evoke the general tone of the Barbizon without interference from particular images associated with prominent Barbizon painters.[42] Tony Tanner has suggested that the choice of Lambinet is appropriate since the

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[40] Viola Hopkins Winner, "The American Pictorial Vision: Objects and Ideas in Hawthorne, James, and Hemingway," Studies in American Fiction 5, 1 (Spring 1977): 152.

[41] Rewald, p. 93.

[42] Winner, Visual Arts, pp. 76-77.

4-7. Emile Charles Lambinet: Fishing on the Banks of the Seine, 1872

painter's name echoes Strether's Lambert.[43] Both observations are relevant since Strether is forming his own Barbizon "composition." The importance of the scene, though, lies not in the identity of a particular artist, but in Strether's actions. He has developed an artist's eye, and his senses have received such an education that the country-side may be taken in as a "sense-impression." Strether's awareness of the scene is acute because it is part of his self-awareness. Like Goethe as he gathered impressions in Italy, Strether is discovering himself in the objects he sees. Another important feature of this passage is its time. The pictorialism is sustained by James through two chapters; however, Strether's sense of the pictorial has an unprecedented duration of several hours, the climax of which is the actual tableau of Chapter 31. No other impression in James's fiction is so enduring. The extended time of Strether's walk in the Lambinet seems to draw the reader into the picture as well. As we follow Strether, we follow him <u>inside</u> the painting, not simply as he looks at it, or as he stands in it looking out. We bore deep into his impression with him.

There is a reflexive quality in this scene that emanates from James's depiction of a canvas in a novel: the synaesthesia draws our attention to James's literary Impressionism. The contents of a novel must be considered

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[43]Tanner, p. 49.

in the same way that a painted landscape is understood to be a specific experience filtered through the artist. In _The Ambassadors_ there are two such filters: James and Strether, for despite the apparent authorial absence, James is present in his prose. No doubt the ideal literary Impressionism calls for the "banishing of the author," but, as Suzanne Ferguson points out, the theory that the author is not present in a third-person Impressionist narrative is false.[44] While James's presence in _The Portrait of a Lady_ began by being overt in the characterization of a biographer, it gradually withdrew from the narration allowing Isabel's consciousness to assume the whole narrative burden. Yet the withdrawal of the author is an illusion, one which James stressed through his intrusions in _The Portrait_. In _The Ambassadors_ the burden of narration falls to Strether, yet James does intrude. James's apparent withdrawal from the text drew our attention to Isabel's role as a centre of consciousness in _The Portrait_, but his intrusions in _The Ambassadors_ draw our attention to his presence in the novel. The insistence on an authorial presence is, according to Ferguson, "the only apparent function" of James's intrusions.[45] Its purpose, then, is to allow "the reader to see into the characters' consciousness and at the

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[44]Suzanne Ferguson, "The Face in the Mirror: Authorial Presence in the Multiple Vision of Third-Person Impressionist Narrative," _Criticism_ 21 (1979): 230-231.

[45]Ibid., p. 239

same time to see beyond them," to produce, in other words, a multiple perspective.[46] Through his intrusions James makes us aware that the whole novel, not simply the French countryside, is a fiction. James, like a painter (Ferguson suggests Monet as he intervenes between what we recognize as the painting of a haystack and the haystack itself), conjures the words which form Strether's mind and the images which compose that consciousness. As Strether reconstructs the gallery in Tremont Street, James constructs Strether, revealing both author and subject, for James is the artist painting the Lambinet in Strether's mind. In making us see that Strether sees with the artist's eye, James illustrates his own aesthetic of fiction by revealing its operation. The events in the country constitute an "inward exercise" (328) for both character and author.

Strether's expectations of the countryside correspond to the sights he sees and to the artwork he remembers. "The special green vision . . . the poplars, the willows, the rushes, the river, the sunny, silvery sky, the shady, woody horizon" (327) are all there. Strether imagines himself "touching bottom" (329) during this sequence and it is as if the idyllic "green" landscape is his own inner core. His perceptions are clear and accurate; he has at last caught the train. If Strether's perceptions are initially characterized by a Barbizon landscape, then a change in the nature

[46]Ibid., p. 231.

of this image suggests a change in his perceptions. As Winner notes, a change does occur; Strether's vision is transformed into an Impressionist painting:

> The picture in which he has been moving changes from a Lambinet with its low-keyed idyllic vision to an Impressionist canvas with its pleasure themes, fresh, vibrant color, and concern only for things as seen in an instant rather than as distilled or generalized.[47]

In the same way that the Impressionism drew from, and explored further some techniques of Barbizon landscape painting, Strether's new vision is an extension of his past perceptions. The shift from the somewhat idyllic Barbizon mood to the ocular realism of Impressionism also suggests that the last vestige of Strether's romanticism has dissipated.

Winner compares the passage describing the water-side scene to paintings by Renoir and by Monet of La Grenouillère (Plate 4-8):

> a small and primitive pavilion, that, at the garden's edge, almost overhung the water, testifying, in its somewhat battered state, to much fond frequentation. It consisted of little more than a platform, slightly raised, with a couple of benches and a table, a projecting rail and a projecting roof; but it raked the full gray-blue stream, which, taking a turn a short distance above, passed out of sight to reappear much higher up . . . . Strether sat there and . . . felt at peace; the confidence that had so gathered for him deepened with the lap of the water, the ripple of the surface, the rustle of the reeds on the opposite bank, the faint diffused coolness and the slight rock of a couple of small boats attached to a rough landing-place hard by.

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[47]Winner, "Pictorial Vision," p. 153.

4-8. Auguste Renoir: La Grenouillère, 1869

> The valley on the further side was all copper-green level and glazed pearly sky, a sky hatched across with screens of trimmed trees, which looked flat, like espaliers; and, though the rest of the village straggled away in the near quarter, the view had an emptiness that made one of the boats suggestive. Such a river set one afloat almost before one could take up the oars--the idle play of which would be, moreover, the aid to the full impression. This perception went so far as to bring him to his feet . . . (333)

This is another case of Strether's apperceptive vision: Strether becomes aware, before the scene changes, that it is incomplete. He is like an artist in his tacit desire to rid the scene of the "emptiness" which flaws what appears to be a flat surface. When Strether's frame of mind and the surrounding scene coincide and fuse, the one missing piece is the obvious gap between the world as it appears and the world as it is. Through his new vision as an artist, Strether is able to anticipate the action of the novel: a boat does sail in and with it bring the missing information. In anticipating the novel's action as an author would, and completing the image in the same way that an artist might balance a painting by introducing a boat (or some such element of form) to solve a compositional problem, Strether affirms the education of his senses. But the real artwork in this scene is Strether's consciousness which has at last become whole. The "what" in "what he saw was exactly the right thing" (333) may refer to both the suitability of the boat and to Strether's perceptions: he is finally seeing the whole spectacle, and seeing the thing

correctly.

If The Ambassadors is a novel which traces the cultivation of an artist's point of view in the mind of a character, what is the author's intention, and what is his achievement at the novel's end? Tony Tanner thinks that the progression of Strether's recognitions from theatre to garden to countryside represents a movement away from pure artifice to naturalism which culminates in a merging of art and nature when Strether's expectations of nature match the Lambinet image.[48] Tanner argues that "it is impossible to regard the real world as one would a painted canvas" due to the intrusion of human conduct. This statement may be true, but it ignores the fact that Henry James purposely makes Strether regard the world as a work of art. The direction in this novel--in all James's fiction--is one which delib-eratley increases in artifice: Strether cannot engage him-self with the theatre or the painting in the Louvre, but he does begin to "see" in Gloriani's garden, and finally walks through the countryside as if inside an actual painting. The problem here is not the intrusion of human conduct so much as the inadequacy of a view rooted in social convention which depends solely on vision and lacks the penetrative imagination or the imaginative reason necessary to take an impression. Knowledge, of the self and of others, is gained through penetrative vision; it combines the eye of the

[48]Tanner, pp. 49-50.

critic who takes the impression of what is seen and the eye of the artist who draws together what is seen. To be an artist one must have imagination accompanying one's vision so as to produce, not simply a superficial copy of the image before one's eyes, but all the inherent compositional possibilities of light and dark, beauty and ugliness, colour and form which support this vision. To be a critic one must have the sensitivity to apprehend the artist's vision. Just as the quality of a work of art relies on the "intelligence" of its creator,[49] so the quality of an impression relies on mind of the observer. For James, the act of seeing and of creating had a moral component, for truth and beauty can only be be discerned by eyes trained to observe and by a mind capable of understanding.

The issues raised by James's use of the visual arts in The Ambassadors are both moral and aesthetic, and they originate in Ruskin's insistence that good art is the product of the entire manhood, the work of the body aided by the soul.[50] However, Pater's philosophy of art is also evident in the pictorialism of The Ambassadors, for Strether's growth of consciousness through his experience of vision is the main action of the novel. By the novel's end, Strether has developed the single sensibility which allows him to see at once the truth and the beauty of his

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[49]James, "Art of Fiction," p. 44.
[50]Ruskin, Stones, vol. 3, p. 156.

situation and of the those around him. It is his moral comprehension that allows Strether to understand that Madame de Vionnet is both a victim and a user, for example, and it is his aesthetic sense--that "hard, gem-like flame,"[51] which permits him to appreciate her still.

In his Preface to The Ambassadors James says that "art deals with what we see, . . . it plucks its material otherwise expressed, in the garden of life."[52] It is interesting, in light of James's late comments on art, that almost thirty years after writing Roderick Hudson the sculptor Gloriani should resurface at a crtical point in The Ambassadors. Gloriani had maintained that "there is no essential difference between beauty and ugliness" (RH 89). While James never made such a bold declaration, by the early 1900's he clearly recognized that both beauty and ugliness are components of art as well as part of life. While Strether may be musing in a garden of art in Chapter 11, the garden he finds himself sitting in in Chapter 30 is life itself. The truth Strether arrives at there is that the observer with a fine intelligence cannot perceive beauty without recognizing ugliness as well. It is apparent that James's belief in "all the good old rules [of art] which decree that beauty is beauty and ugliness ugliness"[53] has been destroyed by his own experience as an artist.

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[51]Pater, p. 189.
[52]James, Art of the Novel, p. 312.
[53]James, "Impressionists," p. 114.

The draught of Europe, the cup of experience, and the thirst for life are all at once the pleasure of "straw-coloured Chablis" sipped on a warm spring day (185) and the taste of a "poisoned cup". James pushes his characters further into art so that they begin to see as an artist would. They travel abroad perhaps to "gaze upon certain [artworks] . . . which . . . represent to the imagination the <u>maximum</u> of man's creative force"[54] but in doing so they are forced to develop new ways of seeing, to see, as Goethe did, "through the eyes of a painter."[55] The importance of the painter's eye is explained by James's perception of the function of the artist. The artist's purpose is neither to render a partial portrait in the name of ideal beauty at the expense of truth or complete vision, nor is it to make imitative reproductions of what the optic nerves perceive; instead the artist must be an intelligent observer who "sees" with a very wide angle of vision in order to take impressions from life and commit them to art. The Jamesian centre of consciousness must do the same; for by taking impressions from life, the observer discovers the self.

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[54]James, "Howell's's," pp. 199-200.
[55]Goethe, pp. 79-80.

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