The Concept of Culture in the Novels of Henry James

INAUGURAL-DISSERTATION

zur

Erlangung des Grades einer Doktorin der Philosophie (Dr. Phil.)

dem

Fachbereich fremdsprachliche Philologien

der

Philipps-Universität Marburg

vorgelegt von

Xiaohui Wang

aus Fujian

Master of Arts

Prof. Dr. Carmen Birkle

Prof. Dr. Martin Kuester

10. April 2018

09. July 2018

Marburg, 2018

Hochschulkennziffer: 1180

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

This dissertation would not have been completed were it not for the guidance, encouragement, and support from my advisor, fellow doctoral students, family, and friends to whom I owe a debt of gratitude.

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor Prof. Dr. Carmen Birkle for her continuous instruction and support during my time as her student, for her prompt replies to my questions and queries about my study and related research, and for her insightful comments on and suggestions for every draft I sent her. Her knowledge and guidance helped me overcome difficulties and gave me inspiration. I could not have imagined having a better advisor and mentor for my PhD study. Besides my advisor, my sincere appreciation goes to my second reader, Prof. Dr. Martin Kuester, who offered me valuable suggestions.

I would also like to thank my fellow doctoral students in American Studies who gave me many useful feedbacks in our doctoral colloquiums, even though our research interests are quite different.

I am very grateful for the funding of my PhD program from CSC (China Scholarship Council), the mentoring scholarship from the DAAD STIBET Doctoral Program, and the travel grants for participating in international conferences from MID (Marburg International Doctorate) and MARA (Marburg University Research Academy).

I'm forever indebted to my parents for their unremitting love, support, and encouragement.

Last but not least, many thanks go to my friends, especially Dorothea Wilke, Helmut Wilke, and Bettina Mohr, who helped me through hard times and made my life in Germany more enjoyable.

Introduction

Culture is a difficult term to pin down because of its different usages in different contexts. Since the nineteenth century, many critics from different disciplines have been employing it as an important tool of analysis. The critical project underlying the concept of culture in its nineteenth-century form has continued to frame the social analyses of a number of intellectuals in the twentieth century, even today. In the nineteenth century, America had been independent from Britain for over one hundred years; however, it was not easy for it to break from the previous colonial influence, especially the cultural legacy. After the Civil War, commerce and industry flourished in America. Therefore, how to find a way to structure an ideal culture under the pressure of European cultures and the erosion from commercial culture in America was a subject that American scholars or writers of that age had to consider and make efforts to cope with. At that time many American writers felt the need to define their own and their country's relation to Europe. In Europe, as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution, many noble families lost their economic power and were struggling to keep their properties and to go on living in the same pompous way of life. As a matter of fact, they despised the American *nouveaux riches* and the way they behaved when traveling in Europe. Therefore, the idea of Europe and America came to be shaped not only by native residents but also by visitors and expatriates on both sides of the Atlantic.

Born at that age, dangling between Europe and America for many years, Henry James felt like his contemporary writers, as he writes in his letter to his friend, Charles Eliot Norton in 1872: "It's a complex fate being an American, and one of the responsibilities it entails is fighting against a superstitious valuation of Europe" (*Henry James Letters* Vol. I: 274), which became a prophecy of his own career. James helped to fashion the myth of the American abroad and incorporated this myth in his novels with the "international theme," of which he was the acknowledged master. His works frequently portray the encounter of America with Europe, juxtaposing characters from the Old World (Europe), embodying a feudal civilization that is beautiful, often corrupt, and alluring, and from the New World (the United States), where people are often

innocent, open, and assertive and embody the virtues, freedom and a more highly evolved moral character of the new American society. “His career reflects the transformation of American literature from an insular, isolated tradition founded in rebellious but dependent relation to its British progenitors to a cosmopolitan one connected to the broadest currents of modern thought of England and Europe” (Freedman 292). As a great figure in transatlantic culture, he expanded the range of formal and thematic possibility for both his contemporaries and his successors. The globalized world now is still characterized by cultural misunderstandings, disagreements, prejudices, and tensions, which altogether pose challenges for many people. Culture, contextually dependent, is not regarded as unchanging and identical for all individuals, but as an inherently dynamic process of interpretation or analysis.

The aim of this study is to explore James’s concept of culture. To address the research aim, the specific research objectives are presented as follows: To examine the historical and cultural contexts of Europe and America in which James lived and worked; to inquire into the cultural conflicts and misunderstandings between European and American characters in James’s novels with the international theme; to map out the evolution of his concept of culture; and to unravel James’s attitude toward European and American cultures and his cultural ideal. Although living mostly in the nineteenth century, James foresaw the importance of the concept of culture, which is still heatedly discussed in modern society. He promoted tolerance, a recognition of similarities, and an acceptance of difference and explored how to reduce cultural conflicts, and the path of integration of different cultures, which still contributes to improving cross-cultural communication and harmonious development of the world today.

Culture is the everlasting topic of Henry James Studies. The field is highly prolific, and consists of essays, dissertations, and critical books about many different topics by various approaches or methodologies. Critics have applied structuralism, feminism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, phenomenology, reader-response criticism, and other approaches to interpret his works. Each approach might fail to master a certain aspect of James’s text. The theoretical limitation also shows that a new strategy of interpretation is always needed. Many critics interpret his works from the perspective

of cultural contrasts, conflicts, and integration and discuss the binary opposites of European culture and American culture, juxtaposing American innocence and European sophistication or analyzing the tragic fate of characters in the cultural conflicts. Earlier critics tend to hold the opinion that Henry James celebrated European high culture and held a snobbish attitude towards America. In *Pilgrimage of Henry James* (1925), Van Wyck Brooks intends to show that James had been at home nowhere and had lived in a kind of dream-Europe. Brooks took a stand against expatriation, arguing that James's later writing was convoluted and inferior because of his too-long separation from his native land. In his *Main Currents in American Thought 1620-1920* (1930), Vernon Louis Parrington appraises that Henry James devoted his whole life to prostrate gods in foreign temples rather than those in his homeland. "It is not well," Parrington wrote, "for the artist to turn cosmopolitan, for the flavor of the fruit comes from the soil and sunshine of its native fields" (240). Critical attention waned a little in the years that followed with the negative assessments, but it never died. Later in 1968 Leon Edel points out in his essay "Henry James: The Americano-European Legend" that in the vogue of the Brooks-Parrington thesis, and in its lingering echoes, there is "a kind of critical nationalism and provincialism which wholly misunderstands the cosmopolitan tradition in which Henry James created" (333).

There are also critics trying to explore his concept of culture. Alwyn Berland's *Culture and Conduct in the Novels of Henry James* (1981) investigates Henry James's conception of civilization as culture and the relationships of this conception to his major works. He points out that James brought to his fiction the strong moral commitment that characterized a Puritan New England past and an equally strong dedication to the aesthetic culture he found in Europe and emphasizes the importance of these commitments, with their complications and contradictions, to the development of James's work. He argues that they not only provided James with his major themes and characters, but also determined a number of his fictional techniques. He draws primarily on the novels, including *Roderick Hudson* (1875), *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), *The Princess Casamassima* (1886), *The Ambassadors* (1903), rather than on James's biography, or on any preconceived intellectual or philosophical system in his mind.

In *Culture and Criticism in Henry James* (1992), Dietmar Schloss derives his theoretical framework from British cultural criticism, although he extrapolates James's cultural ideals from his criticism of America and American society. He argues that the Victorian discussion about culture provided James with the essential paradigms. His discussion includes non-fiction and fictional works. He points out that James's *The American Scene* (1907) presents a critique of liberalism and capitalism similar to that of Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), and shows how James's hermeneutics of culture permeated his fictional works: *The American* (1877) and *The Ambassadors* (1903). Douglas W. Sterner's *Priests of Culture: A Study of Matthew Arnold & Henry James* (1999) analyzes the work of the two writers, with its focus on a few key ideas of nineteenth-century Anglo-American culture. It examines the efforts of both Arnold and James to find in an ideal of "culture" a supreme center of value around which to rally the forces of civilization in the wake of a nineteenth-century crisis of faith and unsettling social change. Arnold responds directly to that crisis in offering a doctrine of "culture" to serve as a bulwark for standards to replace an intellectually crippled Christianity. Unlike Arnold, James appears to have little concern in religion, but is even more appalled at the erosion of materialism in American culture and the consequent distortion of social relations. In his discussion of James's texts, Sterner focuses mainly on *The American Scene* (1907), not on his fiction.

In the twenty-first century, the discussion on culture is still one of the major concerns of Henry James Studies. John Carlos Rowe's "Henry James and Globalization" in 2003 analyzes Henry James's relevance to recent debates regarding globalization in three different ways: 1) James's responses to the modernization process anticipate our concerns with one-way globalization; 2) James's criticisms of the relationship between imperial expansion and second-stage modernization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; 3) the commodification of Henry James as a high-cultural writer in the modern and postmodern periods. The essay examines works from throughout James's career, including fiction and nonfiction. Lately, *Henry James in Context* (2010), edited by David McWhirter, demonstrates that James was acutely responsive not only to his era's changing attitudes toward gender, sexuality, class, and ethnicity, but also to

changing conditions of literary production and reception, the rise of consumerism and mass culture, and the emergence of new technologies and media, of new apprehensions of time and space. These essays portray the author and his works in the context of the modernity that determined, formed, interested, appalled, and/or provoked his always curious mind. The book rectifies the misreading that Henry James, lacking in historical consciousness, is detached from, and uninterested in, the social, political, and material realities of his time.

Much research work has been done on James and his works, which not only provides useful references, but also poses great challenges for further research. Although there are already many achievements in research about culture in James's works, among them the questions: What is his concept of culture and how is it projected into his works? How to resolve or reduce the cultural conflicts or clash? What's his attitude towards European and American cultures? What is his cultural ideal? Some of them are left unanswered, while others have no certain solution, and therefore deserve further studies. This study traces how Henry James explored, developed, and perfected his concept of culture in the historical contexts of Europe and America, in which he lived and worked, and how the concept is projected into his works. It focuses on the discussion of his novels: *The American* (1877), *Daisy Miller* (1879), *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), and *The Ambassadors* (1903). The selected novels are representative works with the international theme from the earlier to the later period of James's career, in which he discusses different aspects of European and American cultures. There are both female and male protagonists from different backgrounds, including a self-made millionaire, a daughter from a newly rich family, an heiress, and a common man. Some letters exchanged between James and his family and friends, his autobiography, and critical essays are also used in the discussion so that a more complete understanding of James's concept of culture can be achieved.

Broadly speaking, culture can be used in three different ways exemplified in the works by Matthew Arnold, Edward Tylor, and Franz Boas, who elucidated most clearly the concept and exerted great influences on later critics. First, in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), Arnold defines culture as, "a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting

to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world, and through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits" (viii). He claims that culture is the pursuit and study of perfection and the development of all sides of human nature, "an inward condition of the mind and spirit, not in an outward set of circumstances" (14). This sense of culture is more closely related to aesthetics or literary criticism than to social science. The second is pioneered by Edward Tylor in *Primitive Culture* (1871): "Culture or Civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (1). The greatest legacy of Tylor's definition lay in his "complex whole" formulation. The point is simply that cultural hierarchism is not incidental but crucial to Tylor's ethnology. The third usage of culture developed in anthropology in the twentieth-century work of Franz Boas, a German American anthropologist, and his students. He emphasized the uniqueness of the many and varied cultures of different peoples or societies. Moreover, he dismissed the value judgments he found inherent in both the Arnoldian and Tylorean views of culture; for Boas, one should never differentiate high from low culture, and one ought not to classify cultures as savage or civilized.

This study of the concept of culture is mainly in the field of literature; therefore, it will mostly follow the Arnoldian tradition, though not without relating to the concept of culture employed in other disciplines from time to time. James's unusual family background, early exposure to European culture, unorthodox transatlantic education, the European and American influences of great writers of his time, and later expatriation all contribute to his gradual evolvement of his concept of culture. His view of culture was more or less influenced by his contemporary writers and critics on both sides of the Atlantic in his time, especially the aesthetic tradition in his age by Ruskin, Pater, and Arnold, whose notions of criticism and culture are relevant not only for James's literary theory but also for his fiction. The ideas of the Arnoldian tradition such as pursuing "the best" (*Culture and Anarchy* viii), the "disinterested free play of mind" (*Essays in Criticism* 19), the "dedication to culture," the partiality to French culture, the rejection

of “provincialism” (xxi), in favor of becoming a “cosmopolite,” and art should be “aesthetically appealing and morally sound” are all projected into his works (Raleigh 23). Characters in James’s novels are like Arnold’s man of culture, a seeker after the light. However, unlike Arnold, whose concern is also with public reform or social order and religion besides the personal quest, James cared a great deal about his literary calling, which more or less anticipated F. R. Leavis’s notion of culture with its focus on art and literature. Arnold’s “culture,” as a name for general human perfection or an “inward condition of the mind and spirit,” cannot be objectified; in contrast, James’s concept of culture also included Tylor’s external codes of behavior, or later Raymond Williams’s expression of “a whole way of life” (*Culture and Society* xvi). To Arnold, culture was “at variance with the mechanical and material civilisation in esteem with us” (*Culture and Anarchy* 15). For James, the two words can be used interchangeably. In later years, James more or less abandoned the term—culture, writing instead of “cultivation” or “civilization.” For him, “civilization develops, protects, expands, and harbors the potential of human sensibility,” which “means the wholeness of the moral, the aesthetic, and the intellectual qualities which constitute man’s essential humanity” (Berland 37).

For James, Europe was not only a place with a string of cities, landscapes and works of art, but also served as a field for the accumulation of cultural, aesthetic, and spiritual capital for future literary creation. That can explain why James’s characters must visit or encounter Europe, its people and culture in order to be refined or perfected, since he saw Europe as the epitome of culture, the height of civilization. However, he did not overlook the corruption and other defects hidden behind it. Though he continually pointed out the defects of America, the cultural deficiencies and capitalist excesses, he aimed to improve its culture. He also pointed out that America must develop a culture of its own, and was convinced that the future was in the hands of America, though he thought the cultural ideal was harder and harder to imagine. A cosmopolitan by nature and upbringing, James had formed the “habit of comparison” of different cultures, and promoted tolerance, an acceptance of difference, and a recognition of similarities. Therefore, he asserted the importance for the American of

encountering other cultures, and adopting those virtues of other cultures. This also represents a rationale of and justification for James's life of expatriation. He has a vision, which is too wide and comprehensive to be limited to commitment to any country.

The dissertation consists of five chapters, an introduction, and a conclusion. Chapter one is the theoretical framework, and the following four chapters discuss four of his novels with the international theme: *The American* (1877), *Daisy Miller* (1879), *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), and *The Ambassadors* (1903) respectively.

Chapter Two discusses the cultural differences and conflicts in *The American* (1877). James asserts the importance for the American of encountering other cultures as part of the process of national self-definition and to question their own cultural assumption. His characters must visit or encounter Europe, its people and culture in order to be refined or perfected. First, it discusses the American's pursuit of "the best" and the obstacles in the process. Newman's primitive motive for traveling to Europe is to search for "the best," the cultural, aesthetical, and social superlatives of Europe, very much in the sense of an Arnoldian concept of culture, and to cap his fortune with the best the Old World has to offer by marrying the best woman in Europe. His commercial ideology is too deep-rooted and his pursuit is rather superficial and lacks profundity. Second, it contrasts two such different civilizations as those of democratic America and Bourbon France. Newman, a self-made man of action and enterprise who has been through many vicissitudes and various experiences of life, cannot understand aristocratic ideas of leisure. As a democrat and a casual optimist with few principles, he is innocent of the knowledge of hierarchical class arrangement and ignorant of social forms. Newman suffers from a desire to try to fit everything into his preconceived democratic framework. Much of the difficulty the Bellegarde elders have with Newman, and that he has with them, results from the expected difference in values, beliefs, occupations, and manners. Third, it compares different understandings of kinship bonds and views of marriage in America and France. From a society where the beliefs of equality, liberty, and the right to the pursuit of happiness are advocated, he has no idea what social position is, why it should be considered seriously in a marriage, and why one can't decide on one's own marriage as an autonomous individual. By contrast, for

the Bellegardes, the French aristocrats, the motivating force of marriage should be maintaining the glory and status of the family, and more often than not it means capitulation to the family's power or sacrifice one's own happiness.

Chapter Three observes the strikingly different manners of two groups of people represented by traveling Americans and American expatriates respectively in *Daisy Miller* (1879). James stages the conflicts between the Miller family who stubbornly retains their American ways and the American colony in Europe who totally adopt European codes of behavior. First, it discusses the relationship between manners and morals and observes the two customs—chaperonage and flirting, which are quite differently practiced in nineteenth-century Europe and America. In the nineteenth century, manners were often thought to carry moral contents. In other words, good manners and forms of civility were often seen as outer signs of morality. However, in James's works humans can have "very high-bred manners and very low-born feelings," while beneath the ill manners might be a noble mind and heart (Tocqueville 179). Second, it observes the manners of the Miller family, an American newly rich family in Europe, who are eager to make "the grand tour" and expose themselves to the art and culture of the Old World. The ignorant and spoiled children dominate their less cultivated parents. They imagine that what is permissible on that side of the Atlantic is equally in accordance with the manners and customs of Continental Europe. James uses the word "vulgar" emphatically in his description of the traveling Americans he observes in Europe. Third, it examines the manners of American expatriates in Europe, who hold in high regard and adopt the social niceties and the rules of propriety that have been laid down by centuries of European civilization. In their eyes, the Miller family's behavior is socially improper, thus vulgar. Without considering different characteristics of each individual, they try to establish a single and homogeneous pattern of manners to fit all. Their servile imitation of European manners and the worldliness and hypocrisy are also criticized.

Chapter Four explores the relationship between the individual and society in *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881). James portrays Isabel's restless imagination as seeking confirmation for her theories of the self and the world, liberty and duty, of good and

evil. First, it discusses the relations among place, culture, and character. Place often serves as a means of placing its characters within given geographical and cultural contexts, which sets each story within a fixed frame of reference so that most readers can recognize at once the expected qualities and tones that James wishes to convey. The places in the novel not only amplify American culture and European culture, but also shape characters, serving as an expression of characters' natures and a condition influencing characters' lives. The locales in America (in Albany), Britain (at Gardencourt), and Italy (in Florence and Rome) chronicle the journey of Isabel Archer, the protagonist, into self-knowledge, and the course of her life subtly correlates to them. Place is also integrated into other characters' personalities and experiences as to produce some distinctive interrelations. Second, it examines American and European influences on the characters, and two different concepts of identity. The novel witnesses the influence of literary trends in America and Europe in James's time, like Transcendentalism and Determinism. Isabel, though an Emersonian character strongly influenced by the concepts, like "individualism" and "self-reliance," advocated by transcendentalism, exhibits strong fascination with the European past as a repository of experience. Madame Merle has the sociological conception of self and insists that the self is composed through interactions and acquaintances with other things and other people in the world. Instead, Isabel, very fond of her liberty and her autonomous self, insists upon a self that is separate from these externals. Third, it probes into the reasons for Isabel's choices for her marriage and her return to Rome at the end. Lord Warburton has his great complicated system which would burden Isabel's freedom; Goodwood has a character dominant enough to suffocate her. She accepts Osmond because she mistakenly identifies his "system" as an embodiment of her own most fundamental beliefs. But she is too susceptible to fine appearances, to a brilliant surface, and believes the appeal of the merely aesthetic to be morally sound altogether. Isabel does not only have the spirit of independence but also the moral power, as James says in the novel, "[t]he desire for unlimited expansion had been succeeded in her soul by the sense that life was vacant without some private duty" (303).

Chapter Five discusses many main issues of James's international novels, such as

wealth, freedom, experience, aesthetics, and morality in *The Ambassadors* (1903). First, it contrasts the money-grabbing values of industrial Woollett and the civilized, diversified cosmopolitan Paris. Material acquisition and reward in the form of profit or money are overemphasized and used as the standard to define success in Woollett. It is the epitome of its people; it gives all sorts of knowledge about their likes, dislikes, habits, and behaviors. Paris symbolizes the social, intellectual, and imaginative freedom of Europe. It is charming not just because of its culture, its tradition, but also its varieties and possibilities. Second, it argues one should not be bound by one's cultural prejudice in order to gain a more complete view of an object by contrasting different ambassadors' attitudes toward Chad's situation in Paris. Strether is rather impartial by showing his tolerant and open-ended approach to people, to culture, his detached observation, and his disinterestedness, or "seeing things as they are." Other American "ambassadors" for the most part reject Europe, judging, condemning, and never trying to appreciate it. Blinded by their preconceptions and making their beliefs subservient to their own desires, their judgement is rather partial and deficient. Third, it discusses the dialectic of cultural forces: Hellenism ("Spontaneity of Consciousness") and Hebraism ("Strictness of Conscience") proposed by Arnold (*Culture and Anarchy* xxxiv). There are genuine attractiveness and limitations or inadequacies in both the aestheticism associated with Paris and the moralism of New England. Through his experiences in Europe, Strether's consciousness has spontaneously expanded, while his conscience also guides him. He becomes a cosmopolitan, who has gained insight into the different cultures, recognized that vices and virtues are underneath the cultural forms in all cultures, and emancipated himself from absolute black-versus-white contrasts.

1. James and Culture: A Theoretical Framework

Culture is a complex and ambiguous term. Raymond Williams, in his *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1981), terms culture as "one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language" (76). Stephen Greenblatt also comments that classic definitions of culture are "almost impossibly vague and encompassing, and the few things that seem excluded from it are almost immediately reincorporated in the actual use of the word" (225). It is notoriously difficult to define it in a univocal sense, "partly because of its intricate historical development, in several European languages, but mainly because it has now come to be used for important concepts in several distinct disciplines and incompatible systems of thought" (R. Williams 76). Intellectuals from various fields, such as anthropology, the social sciences, and literature, have attempted to disentangle the manifold meanings implicit in it; however, no satisfactory solution has evolved so far. An entire book will by no means exhaust all the areas in which the concepts of culture are employed and modified. Therefore, there is no possibility to trace the whole complex history of its derivation and all its usages in this chapter. However, it is necessary to give a brief survey of different definitions and usages given by some critics who elucidate clearly the concept and employ it in different ways and their influences on later critics.

Culture is also an old and everlasting topic of Henry James studies. James is not only a writer, but also a cultural critic. His unusual family background, early exposure to European culture, unorthodox transatlantic education, the European and American influence of great writers of his time, and later expatriation all contributed to the gradual evolvement of his concept of culture. His transatlantic perspective of culture and his criticism of American and European cultures permeate his international novels from the earlier *The American* (1877) to the later *The Ambassadors* (1903). A cosmopolitan by nature and upbringing, James had the lifelong wish to promote an ideal of tolerance, an acceptance of difference, and a recognition of similarities, to undermine the smug nationalistic arrogance that emanated from both sides of the Atlantic.

1.1 The Concept of Culture: A Brief Survey of Different Definitions and Usages

In 1952, the American anthropologists Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn compiled a list of more than 160 different definitions of "culture" in *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*. Apte writes in the ten-volume *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* and summarizes the problem as follows: "Despite a century of efforts to define culture adequately, there was in the early 1990s no agreement among anthropologists regarding its nature" (2001). The difficulty of understanding and interpreting the concept of culture mainly results from the different usages of the term since it was increasingly employed in the nineteenth century. Kevin Avruch provides a historical perspective to some of the ways in which the term has been interpreted in his *Culture and Conflict Resolution* (1998). Broadly speaking, it is used in three different ways exemplified in the works by Matthew Arnold, Edward Tylor, and Franz Boas, who elucidated most clearly the concept and exerted great influences on later critics in different disciplines.

First, in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), Arnold defines culture as "a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world, and through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits" (viii). In fact, this definition is first stated in his essay, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1864). Culture is described as an ongoing process of evaluation. "The best" is something yet to be determined, not something already known. Here culture refers to "special intellectual or artistic endeavors or products," what today we might call "high culture" as opposed to "popular culture," or "folkways" in an earlier usage. By this definition, only a portion – typically a small one – of any social group "has" culture. (The rest are potential sources of anarchy!) (Avruch 6). This sense of culture is more closely related to aesthetics or literary criticism than to social science. This usage of culture is of great relevance and importance to my study, therefore, it will be elaborated in the following sections.

Partly in reaction to this usage, the second is pioneered by Edward Tylor in

Primitive Culture (1871): "Culture or Civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Vol. I: 1). "In contrast to Arnold's view, all folks 'have' culture, which they acquire by virtue of membership in some social group – society. And a whole grab bag of things, from knowledge to habits to capabilities, makes up culture" (Avruch 6-7). Tylor's definition is the foundational one for anthropology; and also partly explains why Kroeber and Kluckhohn found abundant definitions in their book—*Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*. Culture for Taylor referred to a quality possessed by all people in all social groups, who nevertheless could be arrayed on a development (evolutionary) continuum (in Lewis Henry Morgan's scheme) from "savagery" through "barbarism" to "civilization" (7). The point is simply that cultural hierarchism is not incidental but crucial to Tylor's ethnology. For Tylor, European "civilization" was, though not perfect, "at least what is most perfect in human achievement," and "culture" reached its full flowering only in the third stage (Stocking 784).

The greatest legacy of Tylor's definition lay in his "complex whole" formulation, which was accepted even by those later anthropologists who forcefully rejected his evolutionism. They took it to mean that cultures were wholes – integrated systems. "Although this assertion has great heuristic value, it also simplifies the world considerably" (Avruch7). But Tylor's "culture" was not, like "cake of custom," an accumulation of social tradition passed on from generation to generation, acting through the mechanism of unconscious imitation to determine and unify the behavior of a social group (Stocking 790). Culture, for Tylor, was only slightly developed beyond its earlier English verbal sense of "cultivation"; it had to do primarily with change and progress, not continuity or stasis, which is similar to Arnold's definition.

Both Tylor and Arnold, for instance, are concerned with including a dimension of "moral and social excellence" in their notion of culture, and both attempt to represent this immaterial sphere in their writing. The differences between Tylor's and Arnold's uses of the term "culture" are no less revealing than their similarities. For Tylor, however, the mentalistic expression of social life—"belief, art, morals, law, custom"—

are presumed to be governed by the same "general laws" of development as are technological advances (Bentley 72). Arnold's "culture," on the other hand, as a name for general human perfection or an "inward condition of the mind and spirit" (*Culture and Anarchy* 14), cannot be objectified—indeed, it seems to function as another name for the subject, an abstract "best self" set down amid the landscape of the Victorian city (*Culture and Anarchy* 89). For Arnold, "culture," in mid-Victorian England if not all times, was quite a different thing from "civilization." Civilization was outward and mechanical; while culture was above all "inward condition of the mind and spirit." It was therefore fundamentally "at variance with the mechanical civilisation in esteem with us, and nowhere, as I have said, so much in esteem as with us" (*Culture and Anarchy* 15). And if it sought perfection, Arnold's culture did not find it in a simple upward historical progress so much as in isolated moments of cultural flowering, "when there is a national glow of life and thought, when the whole of society is in the fullest measure permeated by thought, sensible to beauty, intelligent and alive" (*Culture and Anarchy* 48).

"[T]he taproot of Tylor's thinking is in the tradition of the French Enlightenment and British empiricism"; while Arnold is in "the tradition of English Romanticism and of German transcendental philosophy" (Stocking 796); his revulsion from "Jacobinism," "Benthamism," Comtean positivism and all other "mechanical" system-making is explicitly expressed in *Culture and Anarchy*.[1] Both traditions contributed to the development of the modern culture concept. "If Tylor's provided the impetus for the scientific study of civilization, Arnold's contains the roots of culture as an integrative, organic, holistic, inner manifestation, whether in the humanist or the anthropological sense" (796).

The third usage of culture developed in anthropology in the twentieth-century work of Franz Boas, a German American anthropologist, and his students, "though with roots in the eighteenth-century writings of Johann von Herder" (Avruch 7). As Tylor

[1] See Chapter I "Sweetness and Light" in *Culture and Anarchy*.

reacted to Arnold to establish a scientific (rather than aesthetic) basis for culture, so Boas reacted against Tylor and other social evolutionists. Whereas the evolutionists stressed the universal character of a single culture, with different societies arrayed from savage to civilized, Boas emphasized the uniqueness of the many and varied cultures of different peoples or societies. Moreover, he dismissed the value judgments he found inherent in both the Arnoldian and Tylorean views of culture; for Boas, one should never differentiate high from low culture, and one ought not to classify cultures as savage or civilized.

Among Boas's main contributions to anthropological thought was his rejection of the then popular evolutionary approaches to the study of culture, which saw all societies progressing through a set of hierarchic technological and cultural stages, with Western European culture at the summit. Boas argued that culture developed historically through the interactions of groups of people and the diffusion of ideas, and that consequently there was no process towards continuously "higher" cultural forms. Boas also introduced the ideology of cultural relativism which holds that cultures cannot be objectively ranked as higher or lower, or better or more correct, but that all humans see the world through the lens of their own culture, and judge it according to their own culturally acquired norms. For Boas, the object of anthropology was to understand the way in which culture conditioned people to understand and interact with the world in different ways, and to do this, it was necessary to gain an understanding of the language and cultural practices of the people studied.

The above are the three very different usages and understandings of culture. The difficulty in defining the term partly lies in its multiple meanings. "But to compound matters, the difficulties are not merely conceptual or semantic. All of the usages and understandings come attached to, or can be attached to, different political or ideological agendas that, in one form or another, still resonate today" (Avruch 7).

My study of the concept of culture is mainly in the field of literature; therefore, it will mostly follow the Arnoldian tradition, though not without relating to the concept of culture employed in other disciplines from time to time. In the nineteenth century the concept of culture was largely, though not exclusively, the province of the literary

intellectuals. “They employed this term as a central feature of an important tradition of protest and critical discontent, a tradition of social thought for which they have been primarily responsible in England. The concept of culture expressed these writers’ distress at trends in their society and at the same time it articulated a concern to provide a positive vision for that society” (Lesley Johnson 1). The critical project underlying the concept of culture in its nineteenth-century form has continued to frame the social analyses of a number of intellectuals in the twentieth century, even today.

Matthew Arnold

The notion of culture employed by literary intellectuals in the nineteenth century, according to Raymond Williams, has its roots in the eighteenth century. But its clearest and most forceful expression was given by Matthew Arnold in the mid-Victorian period in England. As argued above, in his *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) Arnold defines culture as “a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world, and through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits” (viii). He claims culture is the pursuit and study of perfection and the development of all sides of human nature. It is a perfection which combines beauty and intelligence, or sweetness and light; it is a finely tempered nature. Perfection as the goal of Arnold’s “culture” thus becomes, as will be seen, not a closed condition capable of definitive analytical description, but an open-ended process of cultural and individual becoming, a progressive apprehension and approximation of an order inherent in the universe. Arnold believed culture to be the only antidote for the evils of an industrial society; it was a force to preserve and promote human values. The main three features of Arnold’s concept of culture are as follows: first, that it is a social idea; second, the notion of getting to know the best that has been thought and said; and third, the need to turn a stream of fresh thought upon our stock notions and habits.

The essence of his cultural theory is the dialectic of cultural forces: Hebraism and Hellenism. Whereas the Hebraistic tendency represents a concern for morality and conduct, the tendency of Hellenism is for spontaneity of consciousness, for beauty and

rationality, for seeing things as they are, in all spheres of life, not simply the moral. What is needed, in Arnold's view, is a proper balance of these forces, both in the individual and in society. It is intended to provide the source of authority both for the life of the individual and for the social order. For the individual it offers an ideal of "perfection" fostering intellectual as well as emotional and moral growth; for society it provides a standard of judgment and a stabilizing perspective, a means of promoting harmony and order along with the necessary and inevitable changes in the social order. In association with other key Arnoldian phrases—"Sweetness and light" (*Culture and Anarchy* xxxiv), "study of perfection" (xvi), "free play of mind on all subjects which it touches" (*Essays in Criticism* 19), and simplest of all, "the best"—the central term culture becomes in Arnold's hands a symbol promising a rational and human solution to doubt and disorder. Culture is concerned not only with discovering the best, but also with propagating it, in order to make it prevail. "[T]he sweetness and light of the few must be imperfect until the raw and unkindled masses of humanity are touched with the sweetness and light" (*Culture and Anarchy* 47).

In Arnold's writings the concept of culture affirmed a hierarchical vision of society. The aristocracy of England, he claimed, had been the worthiest and most successful of all history. There had been, however, a great change in the aristocracy between the eighteenth and the nineteenth century. They lost many of their public and conspicuous virtues: those of lofty spirit, commanding character, and exquisite culture. The aristocracy, he lamented, were no longer able to provide true leadership for the rest of the society. Arnold believed that it was vital to have a force in the society to provide leadership. An additional factor which led Arnold to wish to discover an agency which would provide guidance for society was his fear of what he called "Americanization," a fear which was to be echoed in the writings of literary intellectuals over the next hundred years. Lionel Trilling, an American literary critic and Arnoldian scholar, described Arnold's fear in terms of a fear of "vulgarity, and loss of distinction" (*Matthew Arnold* 171). Arnold's apprehension of Americanization might originate from

de Tocqueville's warning about democracy.[2] The state and culture should counteract democracy's weaknesses.

The basic conflict in Arnold's position, as Lesley Johnson points out, "appears to be between his liberal commitment to the idea of equality and his basic fear, or nervousness, about the masses" (26). According to Arnold, history shows that societies have always been destroyed by "the moral failure of the unsound majority" (*Poetry and Prose* 640). Storey argues that "such a reading of history is hardly likely to inspire much confidence in democracy—let alone in popular culture" (22). Throughout the twentieth century Arnold's "humanistic" (aesthetic and humanist) definition generally was viewed, especially though not exclusively by anthropologists, as an "elite" definition, in the sense that culture resides in or can be obtained through superior works of intellect and artistry, unlike the "anthropological" employment of the term, which came importantly to mean not which is limited to the "best" but that which embodies and represents the "complex whole" of a society. The inescapable element of elitism surfaces again and again in any accounting of Arnold's hopes for cultures. His only solution was to rely on the goodness of the individual and more generally, on his conception of culture; the ideal which leads man beyond himself so that the conflicting demands of the individual and society are subordinated to higher concerns. He does not address the practical question of how the influence or power of such an elite is to be secured, other than to recommend the extension of education.

However, as a founding figure in the celebration of "culture," an "apostle of culture," "slayer of Philistines," Arnold identified key issues that remain unresolved in our own time and continue to provoke our attention and our search for answers, though he didn't provide solutions to the problems. He is "one of the first to wander the maze of modern consciousness in search of a spiritual and intellectual 'home,' the record of Arnold's odyssey still has power to stir and even to illuminate our own" (Sterner 146).

---

[2] Alexis de Tocqueville, a French diplomat, political scientist, and historian, was best known as the author of *Democracy in America* (Vol. I:1835, Vol. II: 1840), in which he warned that modern democracy may be adept at inventing new forms of tyranny, because radical equality could lead to the materialism of an expanding bourgeoisie and the selfishness of individualism.

He has influenced F. R. Leavis, Raymond Williams, and other later cultural critics.

F. R. Leavis

F. R. Leavis was profoundly influenced by Arnold. He takes Arnold's cultural politics and applies them to the supposed "cultural crisis" in England in the 1930s. New cultural forms such as radio, film, and the mass-circulation newspaper undermined the old forms, leaving all intellectuals vulnerable to the increasing pressure of the mass market and the new expectations being placed on the artist and the intellectual. The pressure of the mass market and the expectations of professionalism and specialization articulated at the cultural level the fundamental changes in the material base of society. "Leavis's revoking of Arnold's concept of culture was a response by a certain group of intellectuals to these changes" (Lesley Johnson 94).

Throughout his life, Leavis made a concerted attack on what he believed to be the evils of mass society. He coined the term "technological-Benthamite" to symbolize his key criticism of this society, which emphasized the preoccupation with technical advances and utilitarian solutions which he found distasteful. Like Arnold, Leavis found America to epitomize so many of the aspects of modern industrial society which he despised and distrusted; America is the archetypal example of a "technological-Benthamite" society. Of particular concern for Leavis was the question of the lowering of standards in mass society, in areas such as the quality of life and aesthetic taste. One of the most significant changes in society has been the advent of mass production that accompanied the development of the machine. Mass production involves standardization and leveling down outside "the realm of mere material good" (Lesley Johnson 95). However, like Arnold, Leavis did not blame America for the process of what he, too, referred to as Americanization: "American conditions are the conditions of modern civilization, even if the 'drift' has gone further on the other side of the Atlantic than on this" (*Education and the University* 147). Leavis's attack on Americanization and his concept of the organic community were laments for an old social order. This form of society, he claimed, was destroyed by the preoccupation with the progress characteristic of modern industrial society. A rich traditional culture had

disappeared, according to Leavis, because of the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution.

Leavis made two major alternations to the concept of culture. The "discerning appreciation of art and literature" was now equated with culture, rather than it being the pursuit of harmonious perfection by means of such appreciation (Leavis 3). Culture, as Leavis described it, was no longer a process; it had become identified with the objects which previously provided its basis. But perhaps more fundamentally, culture had become the property of a minority. His notion is based on the assumption that "culture has always been in minority keeping" (Leavis and Thompson 3):

> Upon the minority depends our power of profiting by the finest human experience of the past; they keep alive the subtlest and most perishable parts of tradition. Upon them depend the implicit standards that order the finer living of an age, the sense that this is worth more than that, this rather than that is the direction in which to go, that the centre is here rather than there. (5)

Arnold at least espoused a commitment to the idea that culture should be pursued by all, though that it is attainable or not is still a question; whereas Leavis quite explicitly asserted the elitist basis of culture. He discarded Arnold's notion of culture as being social. Leavis rejected any claim that culture is always dependent on society for its well-being; in the organic society the traditional flourished, but it can be sustained today by the active co-operation of the elite of society, the cultured few. Leavis is more defensive in advocating a similar view of the necessity of elites in the society to preserve and revive the best of past traditions or the traditional culture, rather than democracy. He sees the collapse of traditional authority coming at the same time as the rise of mass democracy.

Leavis advocated Matthew Arnold's dictum that literature is a "criticism of life" (*Essays in Criticism* 249). He appeared far more preoccupied with the role of literary criticism in society and his concept of culture was focused on promoting that cause. "Leavis confined the idea of culture to the arts and literature, denying the value of the study of other fields of knowledge within the framework of this concept" (Lesley Johnson 102). He made particular reference to the classics, philosophy, and science, and argued that these are valuable in certain ways, but not to the same extent as objects

of culture. For him, literary study is paramount, because "it trains, in a way no other discipline can, intelligence and sensibility together, cultivating a sensitiveness and precision of response and a delicate integrity of intelligence—intelligence that integrates as well as analyses and must have pertinacity and staying power as well as delicacy" (Leavis 34). For Leavis, literature is "a treasury embodying all that is to be valued in human experience," but unfortunately, literature— "the jewel in the crown of culture," has, like culture, lost its authority (Storey 28). The re-establishment of literature's authority would not restore the organic community, but it would keep under control the expansion of the influence of mass culture and thus preserve and maintain the continuity of England's cultural tradition. In short, it would help produce an "educated public," who would continue the Arnoldian project of keeping in circulation "the best which has been thought and said" for Leavis more or less reduced to the reading of works of great literature (*Culture and Anarchy* viii).

Leavis explained the relationship between traditional culture and the literary tradition as being not identical, but that their relation is such that we could not expect one to survive without the other. The center of culture is language, for through language our spiritual, moral, and emotional tradition is largely conveyed. Literature retains what is best of this tradition. Though he denied that he identified culture with literary appreciation, or "literary culture," "it is easy to understand how such misapprehension could arise, for he claimed both that culture is only attainable through literary studies, and that the minority which he conceived as being the sole professor of culture is essentially a literary minority" (Lesley Johnson 103). Leavis carried the Arnoldian tradition, and refused to separate art from life, or the aesthetic from the moral and put even greater emphasis on literature and art.

Raymond Williams

Raymond Williams is a major forerunner of contemporary Cultural Studies, whose books such as *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (1958) and *The Long Revolution* (1961) served to map out much that is now taken as the basic subject area of Cultural Studies, as well as doing much to shape the understanding of culture that informs those studies.

Culture and Society is an exercise in literary history, but explores literature by relating books and authors to the broader historical and social development of ideas, and to culture as "a whole way of life," "a mode of interpreting our common experiences" (xvi). For Williams, "culture is therefore not the culture of an elite, but a culture that is embedded in everyday experience and activity" (Edgar and Sedgwick 226). The culture that Williams is interested in is the culture that emerges as a complex criticism of industrial capitalism. Like his contemporary Richard Hoggart, Williams may however still be seen to be working in tension with the dominant Leavisite approach to literature and culture, and thus the tension between an understanding of everyday culture as it is, and an attempt to evaluate parts of that culture more highly (or as more civilized) than others. Williams attempts to define his own concept of culture, a project which he continues in his next book *The Long Revolution* (1962). His *Marxism and Literature* (1977) marked a major development in Williams's work, as it represented his first thorough-going engagement with Marxism, and thus with a number of important theoretical resources for Cultural Studies, including Althusser's conception of ideology and Gramsci's concept of hegemony.

Williams was heavily influenced by Leavis, but he was able to break with that literary tradition while continuing to draw strength from its critique of society and its social vision. It provided him with intellectual roots, but he rejected any suggestion of a hierarchical vision of society in his writings on culture. Williams repudiates Leavis's analysis of mass culture as inferior and threatening to high culture (Lesley Johnson 152). Drawing on his Welsh working-class background, Williams proposed a concept of a common culture. Through this concept he hoped to provide a basis for the promotion of excellence in the society and to institute this quest as the preserve of everyone, not just a select group in the society. Williams suggests that mass culture should not be regarded as the culture of the "ordinary man" (Arnold, "Democracy" in *Mixed Essays* 27), but rather as the culture of the disinherited. He blames those who have sought artificially to isolate the great tradition for continuing this disinheritance; they have a significant responsibility for the destructive elements in mass culture.

Williams believes that to develop a satisfactory concept of culture, an attempt

should be made to envelop all the ways in which the term has been used. He argues that the variation of meanings for the term "culture" should not be seen as a disadvantage, but as a genuine complexity corresponding to real elements in experience. In "The Analysis of Culture" in *The Long Revolution*, he discusses "three general categories in the definition of culture" (57).

First, "there is the 'ideal', in which culture is a state or process of human perfection, in terms of certain absolute or universal values. In this definition, culture "is essentially the discovery and description, in lives, and works, of those values which can be seen to compose a timeless order, or to have permanent reference to the universal human condition" (57). It is the definition inherited from Arnold and used by Leavisism: what he calls, in *Culture and Society*, culture as an ultimate "court of human appeal, to be set over the process of practical social judgement and yet to offer itself as a mitigating and rallying alternative" (xvi).

Second, "there is the 'documentary,' in which culture is the 'body of intellectual and imaginative work, in which, in a detailed way, human thought and experience are variously recorded" (57). In this definition, culture "is the activity of criticism, by which the nature of the thought and experience, the details of the language, form and convention in which these are active, are described and valued" (57). Such criticism can range from a process very similar to the "ideal" analysis, the discovery of what Arnold calls "the best which has been thought and written in the world," through a process which, while interested in tradition, takes as its primary emphasis the particular work being studied (its clarification being the principal end in view) to a kind of historical criticism which, after analysis of particular works, seeks to relate to the particular traditions and societies in which they appeared.

Finally, "there is the 'social' definition of culture, in which culture is a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art, and learning, but also in institutions and ordinary behavior" (57). In this definition, it is the clarification of meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life, a particular culture. Such analysis will include the historical criticism always referred to, in which intellectual and imaginative works are analyzed in relation to particular

traditions and societies, but will also include analysis of elements in the way of life that to followers of the other definitions are not "culture" at all: "the organization of production, the structure of the family, the structure of institutions which express or govern social relationships, the characteristic forms through which members of the society communicates" (57-58).

The major difference between Leavis and Williams is that Williams does want a common culture, while Leavis wants only a hierarchical culture of difference and deference. Williams's is the basis for a democratic definition of culture. However, Williams still wrestles with two fundamental commitments to the working class and its tradition; and a commitment to high culture and the value of education, which is still a part of the Arnoldian tradition. Through his notion of a common culture Williams seeks to resolve the tension between these two fundamental commitments. He holds the ideal that "a common culture would help to purge society of its divisions and inequalities" (Lesley Johnson 160). His work remains significant in the field of English cultural studies, particularly in his efforts to provide a basis for understanding the constant shifts, the contradictions and conflicts in the relationship of culture and society.

Later cultural criticism also witnessed the influence of Arnold. Although it seems that Arnold has been ensnared by his own elitism, John Storey states in his *Culture Theory and Popular Culture*: *An Introduction* (2015): "Arnold does not so much reject practical politics, as leave them in the safe hands of established authority. […] his [Arnold's] influence has been enormous in that Arnoldian perspective virtually mapped out the way of thinking about popular culture and cultural politics that dominated the field until the late 1950s" (23). Robert J. C. Young observes that "Said's culture, for all his reservations, resembles nothing so much as that of Arnold, Eliot, or Leavis—there seems to be no irony intended at all when Said, the great campaigner against racism and ethnocentrism, laments in Leavisite tones the loss of culture's 'discrimination and evaluation'" (133). James Walter Caufield also argues in his *Overcoming Matthew Arnold: Ethics in Culture and Criticism* (2012): "A particular construal of the Arnoldian conception of 'Culture' plays a programmatically crucial role in postcolonial studies" (114). As John Henry Raleigh says, "Arnold cannot die, for we will not let him.

Someone is always knocking on his grave either to admonish him for his errors or to congratulate him on his prescience" (265). Like any other criticism, the concept of culture in the Arnoldian tradition has its limitations, but it still exerts influence on our contemporary discussion of culture and has the significance to be carried on. The problems Arnold addressed still need attention and search for solutions. Arnold's concept of culture is also relevant and very important for my study because it has greatly influenced James and his works.

1.2 James's Concept of Culture: A Transatlantic Perspective

James's unusual family background, early exposure to European culture, unorthodox transatlantic education, the European and American influences of great writers of his time, and later expatriation all contribute to his gradual evolvement of his concept of culture. Rich and comparatively free, the James family were pioneers in the American rediscovery of Europe, the enjoyment of art, the cultivation of the self, the spiritualization of values, as he describes, "we referred ourselves, with our highest complacency, to the classic years of the great Americano-European legend" (Preface to *The Pupil* xvii). They were notably itinerant. He and his three brothers and sister had been accustomed "hotel children," taken along by their parents on a succession of overseas trips, educated by short-term foreign English tutors or governesses and trials of foreign schools. Therefore, James's assessment of the value of American culture exists in a dialectical relationship with his experience of Europe, an experience that he began to acquire during the family's transatlantic trips, his own venture abroad, and later expatriation. "The complexity of this relationship is central to his conception of plot and characterization, and allows James to place permutation of transatlantic exchange at the heart of his writing" (Taylor 12).

James was born at a moment "when the ideals of the men of Philadelphia, who had read the world's constitutions to write America's, were being narrowed into the nationalism of a spreading continent. The Americans had their backs turned to Europe; they were looking to the Far West; their thoughts were continental, not international"

(Edel, “Henry James: The Americano-European Legend” 323). But Americans of intellect and those who had made fortunes in the trade along the eastern seaboard traveled strenuously in the Old World; and parents took their children to learn about Europe. He was born at Washington Place—a little street that now runs between Washington Square and Broadway in New York, then a modest metropolis—modest by comparison with London or Paris, though large by American standards. Henry James was still in his cradle when Henry David Thoreau of Concord came to call on the elder Henry James. “We might say that the man of Walden, if he gazed at the infant, was one of the few to see little Harry James in his original state of national innocence. The future novelist’s innocence ended when he was six months old” (Edel 323). He was carried aboard a steamer in New York harbor and conveyed, with his elder brother, his parents and appropriate servants, to England. The James family’s departure really upset Ralph Waldo Emerson. He wrote to Henry James, Sr., “I hate to have good men go out of the country which they keep sweet. […] truly it is a great disappointment to lose you now, when by the tenour of your last letter, I was just assuring myself that you would come into Massachusetts & reside for a time, & perhaps in due time we should make a neighbor & a brother of you” (566). Emerson’s intellectual project to assert America’s cultural independence against what they had already characterized—in his 1837 address “The American Scholar”—as the nation’s unnecessary deference to the “courtly muses of Europe,” is echoed in this lament (70). However, the elder Henry James preferred a detached existence on behalf of his children. For him, intellectual and spiritual growth would remain unbound by such national determinations, and over the seventeen years, from 1843 to 1860, he would take his family back and forth across the Atlantic three times in search of a cosmopolitan education for his children and a more sustaining culture for himself.

Henry James, of all the novelists, was “the one who became a cosmopolitan without ever having been a provincial” (Edel 323). When James began to toddle about and look at the world, the first scene that met his eyes was Windsor Park: a royal perspective. After that there was a glimpse of the glorious column in the Place Vendôme, his first tangible memory of Paris (Edel 324). He had become a nostalgic cosmopolitan

even before he was conscious of it, as he writes in the preface to "A Passionate Pilgrim": "the nostalgic cup had been applied to my lips even before I was conscious of it—I had been hurried off to London and to Paris immediately after my birth and then and there, I was ever afterwards strangely to feel, that poison had entered my veins" (xix). The "poison" was cosmopolitanism, a vision of far horizons not visible in domestic Manhattan, New York. In his later years, James was to speak of having eaten prematurely of "the fruit of the tree of knowledge" (xx). Thus from the first, James's world was a world of contrasts, American and European. His transatlantic experiences were often repeated. At twelve James was in Paris seeing the eagles and hearing the trumpets of the Second Empire. By this time French was his second language. He had a period at school in Switzerland, and a summer at Bonn. He had been tutored in England; and in late adolescence he returned again to the United Sates. His American roots were strong: fourteen out of his formative years were spent in his homeland out of the first twenty-one; seven were spent abroad; and there were seven more years in Cambridge and New York before he finally became an expatriate at the age of thirty-three (Edel 324).

James had dangled between America and Europe for many years. All his life he had weighed his relation to his homeland, his adopted country. He had always argued that the ideal was to have native roots; and he urged that Edith Wharton remain in New York. To test his feelings he had crossed the Atlantic many times trying to solve his great dilemma, whether to live at home or to live in Europe. He had tried in 1875 to earn his living as a writer in New York, but had discovered he could do better if he lived abroad. The Westward Movement was still going on at that time; but James turned his back on the spectacle of a nation engaged in hard domestic tasks—the drama of the West, the founding of cities, the building of railroads, the courage and industry of his fellow-citizens, while he looked eastward to Europe. He had to justify his expatriation; and he had to counterbalance his American birth. "He may have believed that his talent for fiction might flourish best while he lived in an ancient society, an argument for his move sometimes thought to be implied by his deprecation of his own 'raw' country" (Bell 16). For James, a successful literature depends on the existence of a fully-

developed civilization. “The young American society lacks the rich possibilities of European civilization, rendering it difficult for the American writer to find rewarding subjects” (Schloss 3). In depicting the America of the earlier part of the nineteenth century, James enumerated the things absent from American life in Hawthorne’s time which existed for British novelists:

> No sovereign, no court, no personal loyalty, no aristocracy, no church, no clergy, no army, no diplomatic service, no country gentlemen, no palaces, no castles, nor manors, nor old country-houses, nor parsonages, nor thatched cottages nor ivied ruins; no cathedrals, nor abbeys, nor little Norman churches; no great Universities nor public schools / no Oxford, nor Eton, nor Harrow; no literature, no novels, no museums, no pictures, no political society, no sporting class / no Epsom nor Ascot! (*Hawthorne* 247)

For James, Europe was not merely a place with a string of cities and landscape and works of art, but also served as a field for the accumulation of cultural, aesthetic, and spiritual capital for future literary creation.

James states in his letter to W. D. Howells, “[i]t is on manners, customs, usages, habits, forms, upon all those things matured and established, that a novelist lives—they are the very stuff his work is made of; in saying that in the absence of those ‘dreary and worn-out paraphernalia’ which I enumerate as being wanting in American society, […]” (*Henry James Letters* Vol. II: 267). He studied manners in order to ascertain the essence of individuals and their civilizations, as he argues in “The Question of Our Speech”: “The idea of good breeding—without which intercourse fails to flower into fineness, without which human relations bear but crude and tasteless fruit—is one of the most precious conquests of civilization, the very core of our social heritage” (45). To preserve and enlarge the value of good breeding, or “*secure* good manner,” James felt a conscious mission for himself (45). The significance of manners in the scheme of civilization was indeed to concern him more and more as time went on. In 1878 *Daisy Miller* established his fame on both sides of the Atlantic. It is one of James’s earliest works dealing with the “international theme” for which he became best known. In the novel, James stages the conflicts between traveling Americans who stubbornly retain their American ways and American expatriates who totally adopt European codes of behavior. He observes the strikingly different manners of both of the groups represented by the Miller family and the American colony in Europe respectively. Daisy becomes the prototype for

James's "American girls," free, spontaneous, independent, natural, and scornful of conventions, who comes forth to encounter Europe. Within his work there is not merely a superficial chronicle of comedies of tourism, but a sympathetic comprehension and acceptance of international differences—manners, customs, traditions, the fabric of social history which is the fabric of the art of fiction.

James's view of culture was more or less influenced by his contemporary writers and critics, especially the aesthetic tradition in his age by Ruskin, Pater, and Arnold. Their notions of criticism and culture are relevant not only for James's literary theory but also for his fiction. The ideas of Arnoldian tradition as the "dedication to culture," the partiality to French culture, the "disinterested free play of mind," the rejection of "provincialism" in favor of becoming a "cosmopolite," and art should be "aesthetically appealing and morally sound" are projected into his works. "The ultimate plea in Arnold's work is that man be 'civilized,' that he cherish and exercise 'sweetness and light' or exercise 'sweet reasonableness,' and that against the dark hideousness of his age he hold up an image of human life that is graceful, bright, supple, urbane. James's novels are in a sense a tribute to this ideal, […]" (Raleigh 46). Arnold's man of culture is like a character out of James, a seeker after the light. Arnold said that the "study of perfection" is not perfection, but the movement toward it, as state of becoming, of striving. It is this movement, this striving, which is at the heart of much of the fiction of Henry James. He was also drawn to Arnold by his cosmopolitanism. Arnold seemed to transcend national bounds by rising above the provincial character of the English critical method. "Arnold was 'English of the English' but had 'continental ways of looking at things'. For James, then, Arnold was able to overcome the 'huge blank surface' presented by the 'national wall' of Englishness" (Lustig 180).

However, James and Arnold have different ideas about the way culture functions due to their differences in experience and vocation, and James's increasing intellectual maturity. Unlike Arnold, a critic and a public official at the same time, whose concern is also on public reform or social order and the religious concern besides the personal quest, James is more private. He cared a great deal about his literary calling, gathering in as much of this life as he could through the creation of his fiction and the direct

observation in his travels. Dietmar Schloss also points out that "James usually talks about culture in the context of a discussion of the possibilities of literature and art" (2), which more or less anticipated F. R. Leavis's notion of culture with its focus on art and literature. Their conception of "culture" and "civilization" also differ to some extent. Arnold's "culture," as a name for general human perfection or an "inward condition of the mind and spirit," cannot be objectified (*Culture and Anarchy* 14). To Arnold, culture was "at variance with the mechanical and material civilization in esteem with us" (*Culture and Anarchy* 15). For James, the two words can be used interchangeably. Material and traditional institutions (the court, the aristocracy), built structures (palaces, castles), public events (Epsom, Ascot) and other items of high civilization, as he illustrated in *Hawthorne* are in the scope of culture, the objective products of culture defined, in Williams's words, as "a general process of intellectual spiritual and aesthetic development," the synchronic crystallization, so to speak, of a diachronic process (R. Williams, *Keywords* 80).

T. J. Lustig argues that Arnold hold the opinion that although America lacked culture it possessed a superior civilization, which "was objectively and synchronically manifested in the political, educational, and technological systems and structures of modern life" (175). However, Arnold made it quite clear that American civilization could not be described as "high" in his last published work, *Civilization in the United States*. Though the material civilization of England lagged behind that of the US, it possessed elevation and, in its "cathedrals, parish churches, and castles," beauty, which echoes James's list of the items of "high civilization" nearly a decade earlier. Therefore, "it would be misleading to suggest that James and Arnold took opposite positions on 'civilization', with one using it as a synonym and the other as antonym of 'culture'. They were both considering the relation between civilization as process and as achieved state" (Lustig 176). In later years, James used more often "cultivation" or "civilization," than the term—culture.

For James, "culture, in the 'accumulated monuments and treasures of art,' was Europe, and Europe was the altar of a culture newly dedicated by Ruskin and Arnold and Pater, before which the American must come to worship" (Berland 35). This idea

can explain why James's characters must visit or encounter Europe, its people and culture in order to be refined or perfected, since he saw Europe as the epitome of culture, the height of civilization. In *The American*, Christopher Newman has given up his business in America, and come to Europe in search of cultural, aesthetical, and social superlatives. He claims to get the best out of Europe. In his words, "I want to see the biggest kind of entertainment a man can get. People, places, art, nature, everything! I want to see the tallest mountains, and the bluest lakes, and the finest pictures, the handsomest churches, and the most celebrated men, and the most beautiful women" (23). Here James seems to echo Arnold's definition of culture, "a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world" (viii). His primitive motive to Europe is to search for the best, but the commercial ideology is too deep-rooted. He doesn't really submit to the Old World influences, but wants to acquire choice bits of culture and experience at a good price, with the result that his learning of Europe lacks profundity. Newman makes his own claim for "the best." He, too, claims to believe in "selection," yet he makes no effort to become involved in the selection process. He is trapped in a consumer's attitude towards Europe. The American businessman knows only how to acquire new property by money instead of cultivating himself by human effort and creative ingenuity. Though he admires and covets the achievements of European civilization, he is not able to deal with the social formalisms and complexities of Europe. Therefore, his pursuit fails in the end.

A cosmopolitan by nature and upbringing, James has formed the "habit of comparison," and promoted tolerance, an acceptance of difference, and a recognition of similarities early in his career as he expressed in "Occasional Paris" (1877):

> Being a cosmopolite is an accident, but one must make the best of it. If you have lived about, as the phrase is, you have lost that sense of the absoluteness and the sanctity of the habits of your fellow-patriots which once made you so happy in the midst of them. […] There comes a time when one set of customs, wherever it may be found, grows to seem to you about as provincial as another: and then I suppose it may be said of you that you have become a cosmopolite. You have formed the habit of comparing, of looking for points of differences and of resemblance, for present and absent advantages, for the virtues that go with certain defects, and the defects that go with virtues. (129)

The protagonists in James's novels with the international theme are often confronted with foreign cultures whose meanings are not easily disclosed. In some instances, the protagonists, who have always lived within one culture, are "unconscious" of other cultures, fail to gain insights into the other culture because they refuse to engage in an interpretative process. Only if they interact with other cultures, will they overcome the limitations of their own perspective and become a "cosmopolitan." If an object is to be understood, it has to be viewed in the right "light," in the proper perspective. "The project of his fiction can be regarded as an exploration of the cosmopolitan perspective; James transformed the transatlantic negotiations—the confrontations of American freedom and European convention—that were the subject matter of his early fiction into the compositional principles of his later work" (Winnett 166).

Christopher Newman suffers from the desire to try to fit everything into his preconceived democratic framework. Newman does not deny that different standards exist in Europe, but he refuses to let them challenge him; therefore, he can't understand French aristocratic values, and beliefs. Daisy Miller imagines that all which is permissible for a young lady on that side of the Atlantic is equally in accordance with the manners and customs of Continental Europe, or, if not, that there is no reason why she should not act as if it were. She is scornful of convention, unaware of social distinctions, utterly lacking in any sense of propriety, and unwilling to adapt to the mores and standards of others. Compared with the earlier protagonists, Isabel Archer has better cultural literacy. She keeps her mind open to different cultures, and begins to learn to compare and judge instead of accepting or rejecting all. Isabel moves from America to Europe, from England to the Continent, which reflects her ardent desire to be perfect, to enlarge and enrich her experience of life, to grow in wisdom and virtue, also James's search for a place to embody his vision of culture. However, due to her restless imagination and overdosed individualism, she is not able to tell the factitious from the real, to know the true essence of culture.

James states further in his "Occasional Paris" (1877): "The consequence of the cosmopolite spirit is to initiate you into the merits of all peoples; to convince you that national virtues are numerous, though they may be very different, and to make

downright preference really very hard" (129-30). In *The Ambassadors*, Strether repeatedly states that he must "see things for what they are," in order to fulfill his mission (205). According to James, one should not be bound by one's cultural prejudices. One should compare different representations of an object to gain a more complete view. The object is thus interpreted from a plurality of perspectives. James adopted Arnold's notion of "disinterestedness," which implies the possibility of a somehow timeless and universal perspective:

> By keeping aloof from practice; by resolutely following the law of its own nature, which is to be a free play of mind on all subjects which it touches; by steadily refusing to lend itself to any of those ulterior, political, practical considerations about ideas which plenty of people will be sure to attach to them, which perhaps ought often to be attached to them quite sufficiently, but which criticism has recently to do with. (*Essays in Criticism* 20)

Unlike other narrow-minded provincial ambassadors in the novel, who of the most part refuse Europe, judging, condemning, and never trying to appreciate it, Strether feels the need to gain a more complete view of Chad's situation before he can act as an ambassador, so he decides to see for himself first. Finally, Strether achieves knowledge through a continuous interaction with the people around him, and becomes a cosmopolitan, who has gained insight into the different cultures, recognized that vices and virtues are underneath the cultural forms in all cultures, and emancipated himself from absolute black-versus-white contrasts. Like his author, he has a vision, which is too wide and comprehensive to be limited to commitment to any country. As David McWhirter argues, "an appreciation of the advantages of *not* belonging, of being 'outside of it' is crucial to James's understanding of himself and his art, in youth *and* in maturity" (16; emphasis in original).

However, James's cosmopolitanism did not go without criticism. James's renunciation of American citizenship caused an uproar in the country in 1915. He had kept his American citizenship for 40 years while abroad in the belief that one could be national and be a cosmopolitan as well. Unfortunately, he was categorized as an "alien" in England during the First Word War. He wrote to his nephew on June 24, 1915: "I can only go down to Lamb House now on the footing of an alien under Police supervision—an alien friend of course, which is a very different thing from an alien enemy, but still

a definite technical outsider to the whole situation here, in which my affections and my loyalty are so intensely engaged" (*Henry James Letters* Vol. IV: 760). Therefore, he decided to be naturalized as a British subject because he couldn't think of himself as an alien, particularly in the face of American neutrality. The provisions of the Citizenship Act of March 2, 1907 prescribed that any American citizen would be deemed to have expatriated himself if he became naturalized in a foreign state. At that time, dual citizenship was not possible for Americans. The denunciation in the American press was violent and James could only shrug his shoulders; "he could not understand a logic in which his countrymen demanded that foreigners settled in the U.S. become American citizens but would not allow Americans the same privilege, that is to become nationals of other countries, in which they happened to live" (Edel, "Henry James: The Americano-European Legend" 331).

It is a period when the word "expatriate" was often used as a term of disloyalty and alienation. In the 1920s, a decade after James's death, a group of literary historians and critics, led by Van Wyck Brooks, still criticized his cosmopolitanism. In his *Pilgrimage of Henry James*, Brooks intends to show that the novelist had been at home nowhere and had lived in a kind of dream-Europe. In his essay "Henry James and the Nostalgia of Culture," Vernon Louis Parrington argues that James suffered "the common fate of the *déraciné*; wandering between worlds, he found a home nowhere. It is not well for the artist to turn cosmopolitan, for the flavor of the fruit comes from the soil and sunshine of its native fields" (240). The term "American isolation" was widely used in the era before the Second World War and the powerful nationalism and sense of self-sufficiency had developed in the United States; therefore, when Henry James spoke highly of the real cosmopolitan spirit, he invoked an idea peculiarly repugnant to his fellow Americans.

Edel argues that James's cosmopolitanism can be related to an earlier stage in American history. The great task of men like Franklin and Jefferson, after the Revolution, had been to overcome America's alienation from the world; the Revolution was feared abroad as new revolutions are feared today. The early Americans, many of them men of the Enlightenment, set out to read America into the world. Henry James,

coming fifty years later, sought to read the cultivated American—someone like himself—into this same world, that is into the Western World. By the time Henry James took up in letters what Franklin and Jefferson had sought to accomplish as Americano-Europeans in diplomacy and international relations, the United States had turned away from the international ideals of its founders. It had not only to build the nation but to heal the wounds of a disastrous Civil War. An intense and fervent nationalism had supplanted the wider views of the writers of the Constitution. In this sense, "Henry James was distinctly out of step with his time—yet he was very much in step with his country's original purpose" ("Henry James: The Americano-European Legend" 333).

The cosmopolitanism endorsed by Henry James is best exemplified in his own life. Although he became "more English than the English" (Brooks and Bettmann 166), James is often mentioned first and foremost as an American writer. In the letter to his brother William in 1888, James didn't hesitate to say that he aspired to write in such a way that it would be impossible for an outsider to say whether he was an American writing about England or an Englishman writing about America; and he was not ashamed of such an ambiguity; instead, he should be exceedingly proud of it. He preferred to live in "the liminal space between American futurity and the European cultural past—a space best exemplified by his own imaginative transit of the Atlantic" (Rowe, "Henry James and the United States" 19). He anticipated the choice of such American expatriates as Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Ernest Hemingway, and F. Scott Fitzgerald to live outside the United States. Henry James achieved the modernist ideal of a cosmopolitan, though not without being criticized "in the manner of the high-cultural standard set by Matthew Arnold" (Rowe, "Henry James and Globalization" 210).

1.3. James's Criticism of European and American Cultures

In the nineteenth century, America had been independent from Britain for decades; however, it is not easy to break from the previous colonial influence, especially the cultural legacy. After the Civil War, commerce and industry flourished in America. The

American was often referred to as "an industrial giant, an emotional dwarf," with spiritual poverty and material wealth. In Europe, as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution, many noble families lost their economic power and were struggling to keep their properties and to go on living in the same pompous way of life. As a matter of fact, they despised the American *nouveaux riches* and the way they behaved when traveling in Europe. The idea of Europe and America came to be shaped not only by native residents but also by visitors and expatriates on both sides of the Atlantic. The old-fashioned, elegant, and unpractical definition shaped by European cultures was unable to manifest the American reality at that time. How to find a way to structure an ideal culture under the pressure of European cultures and the erosion from commercial culture was a subject that American scholars or writers of that age had to consider and make efforts to cope with at that age. It was one of their duties to find an answer. The atmosphere in the new society of an urbanized and industrial kind had made the situation intolerable for their imaginative minds. Those Americans who tended to find an ideal American culture had to "rediscover and explore, assess or criticize his legacy of breed, culture, and tradition in the Old World" (Zabel 490). Many distinguished American writers made their journey to Europe, Franklin, Jefferson, Irving, Cooper, Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville, Twain, Howells, Henry Adams, and so on, with the exceptions of Whitman and Thoreau. "Of these, the younger Henry James was the great exemplar in years to come; but there were numbers of others, from New England and elsewhere, who also sought for haunts of ancient peace" (Brooks and Bettmann 164).

In their book *Our Literary Heritage: A Pictorial History of the Writer in America* (1956), Brooks and Bettmann discuss the reason that led several American writers of the nineteenth century to leave America and live in Europe more generally. They state:

> For most writers, the question of facing the new America, with its worship of "bigness" and numbers, seemed overwhelming. Incapable of creating new aesthetic patterns out of this native chaos, many American writers closed their minds to America and its patterns. […] They agreed with Matthew Arnold that for the artist there was no room in a country where "the sky was of brass and iron." Henry James's yearning for Europe had the same motive; to forget America, —hard, crude, vacant, with its terrible glare. For him, as for many other sentient artists and writers, the drama of Europe in American breasts remained a central problem. (164)

However, in their confrontation with Europe, they doubted that whether they would be accepted by Europeans as social equals or not, whether Europe could be a country for them or not. They felt sometimes that they could not reach to what they thought of Europe, therefore, many of them decided to return to America after a stay of a few months or even some years. "It implied a divided life for them, and deeper than all this was the general feeling that America, at its lowest reach, was better than Europe. Howells and Mark Twain, the Western writers, were those who took this feeling most for granted; but even Henry James confusedly shared it" (Brooks and Bettmann 165). They came back and wrote the reality of the adventure of Americans abroad or better to say Americans in Europe as they themselves experienced this situation.

In contrast to American writers who at that time searched for inspiration in Europe, side by side, there existed calls for literary independence, the treatment of themes and materials unique to America or finding their most salient expression here. However, Henry James ignored the claims of writers such as Emerson and Whitman that America had developed its own culture on which a native literature could be founded, and chose to stay in Europe. He could barely endure an American existence, and celebrated European high culture as the greatest achievement in human history. As Brooks and Bettmann say, "[h]e had been struck too deeply by the 'outland dart,' he had absorbed the 'European virus'. […] He had always felt that art lives on discussion, the interchange of views, the comparison of standpoints; and in Paris the Goncourts, Flaubert, Turgenev and Zola, gave him a place in their circle" (166-67). James's defense of history and culture seems to conflict with the core value of democracy. No wonder, immediately after *Hawthorne* was published, James was criticized by his American contemporaries for his seemingly anti-democratic, anti-American attitude. The list of things absent from American life which James drew up clearly in the book wounded the complacent and touched the patriotic. James was criticized as a stuffy Victorian snob sacrificing democratic ideals to aesthetic interests, pursing his career in the upper class of European society, and defending social differences to guard the privileges of the elite. The press fiercely attacked James and permanently fixed his image as an absentee writer who abused his own land. In *Main Currents in American Thought 1620-*

1920, Vernon Louis Parrington appraised that Henry James was "a lifelong pilgrim to other shrines than those of his native land, who dedicated his gifts to ends that his fellow Americans were indifferent to" (239). Even his friend at the *Atlantic Monthly*, William Dean Howells, was displeased and replied that the America there was still "the whole of human life left" (*Henry James Letters* Vol. Ⅱ: 267). However, it depended on what tone the reader imparted to it. James was not advocating an American monarchy or a House of Lords, but certain editors read him as if he were, as Edel argues.

However, James was not totally immune to American influences. Transcendentalism continued to bear upon Henry James's thought, despite living his adult life abroad and cultivating a European sensibility. He describes Emerson's orations as "the most poetical, the most beautiful productions of the American mind, and they were thoroughly local and national" (*Hawthorne* 80). Nevertheless, he states that there are faulty parts in Emerson's philosophy as well. There are no absolute autonomy and self-possession, and his ignorance of evil can be a source of potentially tragic illusions. James's portrait of Isabel in *The Portrait of a Lady*, as has been argued by critics, could be a creative response to Emerson, his literary father in America. Leon Edel reads the novel as a critique of American "self-reliance." Richard Chase also thinks it is associated with the American tradition of transcendentalism and puritanism. Isabel subscribes to the American romance of the self (160). She believes that the self finds fulfillment either in its own isolated integrity or on a more or less transcendent ground, immune to external circumstances. Like the protagonists in James's earlier stories, Christopher Newman and Daisy Miller, Isabel Archer is a national type of the New World, self-confident and independent, and her optimism and innocence make her unprepared for the sophistication of the Old World.

As James perceived it, modern American society no longer believed in the cultural process, since it was dedicated to utilitarian and materialistic goals. On the basis of this standard, American civilization was for him a non-culture. He was concerned with the threat posed to his cultural ideal by unbridled democracy and materialism. The "page" of America is blank because democracy continuously erases whatever traces history leaves. According to James, the "great equalizing pressure" systematically levels those

very differences which give meaning to human life (*The American Scene* 90). In the new business world in America, "to make a fortune became the epitome of success, and no idealism was required to achieve this goal. There was no need to improve one's mind […]" (Brooks and Bettmann 157).

James defends Arnold against the attacks of the "Philistine" press. In his essay, "A Word about America," Arnold says, "whereas our society in England distributes itself into Barbarians, Philistines, and Populace, America is just ourselves, with the Barbarians quite left out, and the Populace nearly" (*The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold* Vol. X: 7). This would leave the Philistines for the great bulk of America, who are known by their mundane wisdom, expert of industry and found busy in industrialization and commerce. According to his critique, with the Philistine predominating, American society was apathetic to the powers of beauty, intellect, and social life. Arnold records in his letters that Henry James, being asked by Knowles to write a reply to the essay, found the argument unanswerable, because it was so true, and he agreed with Arnold on this point. The burden of Arnold's protest against the Philistine was that he was "vulgarized." For James, too, the word "vulgar" expressed the extremest distaste. On Oct. 13, 1869, he wrote to his mother from Florence his views on traveling Americans, repeating Arnold's critique of the middle class: "vulgar, vulgar, vulgar" (*Henry James Letters* Vol. I: 152). James had very early caught that the American newly rich families' manners in Europe, the ignorant and spoiled children could dominate their less cultivated parents. In *Daisy Miller*, the American expatriates' opinion about the Miller family also echoes their author's comment—"They are hopelessly vulgar" (31). As a man fixated on manners, he was ashamed of his fellow country people's ill-mannered behavior when they were traveling in Europe. Therefore, he was long considered as "an artist as high priest devoted to art at the cost of, or rather in opposition to, the 'vulgar' material world" (Walker 251).

James exposes cultural impoverishment of America by giving his observation of the sacrifice of "society" and "manners" to the prevailing materialism in his works. The devastating monotony of monetary standard flattens and constrains variety in society. In *The Ambassadors*, in Woollett, the small town in New England, material acquisition,

and reward in the form of profit or money are overemphasized and used as the only standard to define success. However, it is also important to note that "James was no Luddite," though he attacks materialism severely (Sterner 253). Without money the American characters in his works cannot have the chance to go to Europe and be exposed to European culture. He was grateful for the advances material progress and abundance brought; he did not want to go back to "the days of buggies and bearskins" (Sterner 253). The target of the attack was the absence of some higher governing principle which, without destroying material advance, would regulate it so as to preserve other values equally important. To be sure, exposure of the spiritual bankruptcy of the governing value of culture is far from providing a solution. But it is necessary for people to be convinced that their situation is desperate before they look for remedies.

The antidote to all this "vulgarity" and lack of culture for him, like Arnold, was a knowledge of the French. He tended to regard France as a cultural and intellectual beacon and to advocate, without abdicating nationality or individuality, learning from French sweetness and light. Thus, "the Arnoldian tradition almost invariably involves, expatriation or not, a preoccupation with French culture" (Raleigh 258). From the earlier *The American* to the later *The Ambassadors*, James moves his protagonists from America to France. Of his first visit to France he remarked in his autobiography, *A Small Boy and Others*: "Had I ever till then known what a charm *was*?—a large, a local, a social charm" (159; emphasis in original). At the turn of the century, Paris, the city of light and beauty as well as the epitome of European culture, has become a magnetic metropolis attracting miscellaneous people from different social and cultural origins. Paris symbolizes the social, intellectual, and imaginative freedom of Europe. Paris is charming for Strether not just because of its culture, its tradition, but also its varieties and possibilities.

James, like Arnold, treats European high culture as a redemptive social force. They are often assumed to adore Paris and French culture in general and venerate French culture as the height of civilization. However, toward most other French writers, in general attitude toward French culture, "James and Arnold shared an equivocal and

peculiarly Anglo-American point of view, simultaneously admiring the French for their aesthetic craft and seriousness and for their high level of general culture and distrusting them for what was considered their immorality or amorality" (Raleigh 27). Though he exalted European civilization as the best so far, James did not overlook the corruption and other defects hidden behind it; for example, in *The American*, there are marriages of convenience, murder, and the utterly open betrothal through money negotiation.

However, they remained devotees of French intelligence and integrity in art and admired the French for their preoccupation with the artistic life and their "high seriousness." Both James and Arnold condemned the simple-minded morality of the official nineteenth-century English and American cultures, but they were equally vehement in utter distrust of its antithesis, "art for art's sake." This equivocal attitude which both James and Arnold had toward the French stems from their deepest concern, namely that art should be both aesthetically appealing and morally sound. In *The Portrait of a Lady*, Isabel Archer is too susceptible to fine appearances, to a brilliant surface, and believes the appeal of the merely aesthetic to be morally sound altogether. For this she has to suffer, and through her suffering learn that the aesthetic does not necessarily coexist with the moral. Though gesturing toward a separation between the two cultural forces, Hellenism ("*spontaneity of consciousness*") and Hebraism ("*strictness of conscience*") and his preference for Hellenism in his early published novel, like *Roderick Hudson*, Henry James later draws on "the fertile overlap between consciousness and conscience" in *The Ambassadors* (Held 33). At the end of his adventure, Strether hesitates between those two conceptions of life. He is "not only disengaged from graceless American cant, but able to see through the most charming European mirage" (Bender 134). He remains immune to the great threat to culture embodied in "the world of grab," and proves himself capable of that fullest expansion of sensibility which accepts the aesthetic and moral attributes of civilization. He has changed from his puritan New England utilitarian viewpoint to the aesthetical Parisian vision. He exhibits the essence of culture, "a matter of self-overcoming as much as self-realization. If it celebrates the self, it also disciplines it, aesthetic and ascetic together" (Eagleton 5).

Despite James's patronizing tone, his attitude towards his native country was not entirely negative. The younger James was confident that America was "maturing in accord with the same organic germinal process by which European society evolved" and felt it had "pastoral charm" (Furth 15). If there is much to criticize in America, there is also something to praise. If on the one hand society in America is "impoverished"—if it lacks hierarchy and stability, if the past has not endowed the present with an accumulation of enriching deposits—yet, on the other side of that "defect" is the benefit that injustice has not yet been frozen into the social order and that the past has not yet been allowed to dump its corresponding accumulation of corruption into the present. As early as in his letter to Thomas Sergeant Perry (then in Paris) on Sep. 20, 1867, he transforms the denuded condition of his American scene into both a national privilege and an intellectual responsibility for those born into it:

> We are Americans born—*il faut en prendre son parti.* I look upon it as a great blessing; and I think that to be an American is an excellent preparation for culture. We have exquisite qualities as a race, and it seems to me that we are ahead of the European races in the fact that, more than either of them, we can deal freely with forms of civilization not our own, can pick and choose and assimilate and in short (aesthetically, etc.) gain our property wherever we find it. To have no national stamp has hitherto been a defect and a drawback, but I think it not unlikely that American writers may yet indicate that a vast intellectual fusion and synthesis of the various national tendencies of the world is the condition of more important achievement than any we have seen. We must of course have something of our own—something distinctive and homogeneous—and I take it that we shall find it in our moral consciousness, in our unprecedented spiritual lightness and vigour. (*Henry James Letters* Vol. I: 77)

James asserts the importance for the American to encounter other cultures, adopt those virtues of other cultures. He also points out that America must develop a culture of its own, and finally establish an ideal culture. Though he later continually pointed out the defects of America, he aimed to improve its culture.

James eulogized beautiful antiquity in Europe; nevertheless, he warned against a blind worship of the past. Unlike the romantic poets, who wept for a transient and vanished past, James marveled that so much had survived. If there is much to criticize in America, there is also something to praise. "The Americans were the children of the present and perhaps of the future. Europe distinctly was of the past" (Edel, "Henry James: The Americano-European Legend" 327). Both Arnold and James were

convinced that the future was in the hands of America. Arnold said in *Civilization in the United States*, "To us, too, the future of the United States is of incalculable importance. Already we feel their influence much, and we shall feel it more. We have a good deal to learn from them," though he also mentioned many things to beware of (190). James wrote similar prophecy in *The American Scene*: "It was American civilization that had begun to spread itself thick and pile itself high" (263), though he thought the cultural ideal was harder and harder to imagine. Neither the warnings of his brother William nor those of his friend William Dean Howells that he would find many features of American life after his long absence unpleasant, even hateful, could deter him from appeasing a growing desire to return to the land of his birth. In a sense James, the expatriated observer, was like a "foreigner" paying a visit to a strange land, when he returned to America in 1904. For the later James, America had become "Europe"—the strange, romantic, unfathomable land, as he writes, "Nothing could be of a simpler and straighter logic: Europe had been romantic years before, because she was different from America; wherefore America would now be romantic because she was different from Europe" (*The American Scene* 263). Even as he criticizes American cultural deficiencies and capitalist excesses, "James still takes pride in the growing centrality of the American as the type of the cosmopolitan, as the Italian had been in the Quattrocento and the Englishman in the Victorian era" (Rowe, "Henry James and Globalization" 212).

Culture is often a site of conflict for James's characters; therefore, understanding them as they are engaged in this struggle is significant for appreciating James's works, especially his novels with the international theme, in which his concept of culture and attitude towards European and American cultures are projected. The following four chapters discuss four of his international novels: *The American* (1877), *Daisy Miller* (1879), *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), and *The Ambassadors* (1903) respectively.

2. *The American*: Cultural Differences and Conflicts

In the early period of his literary career, James perceived that American society discouraged the search for culture and quest for perfection, since it was dedicated to utilitarian and materialistic goals. He argued in *Hawthorne* (1879) that the items of high civilization, like court, aristocracy, palaces, castles, museums, ivied ruins, and country gentlemen, were absent in American life, which made it difficult for American writers to find rewarding subjects. In contrast, he saw Europe as the epitome of culture, the height of civilization. For James, Europe was not merely a place, a string of cities and landscape and works of art, but also served as a field for the accumulation of cultural, aesthetic, and spiritual capital for future literary creation. "Culture, in the 'accumulated monuments and treasures of art,' was Europe, and Europe was the altar of a culture […] before which the American must come to worship" (Berland 35). James's concept of culture and attitude towards European and American cultures permeate his works, especially the novels with the international theme. James asserts the importance for Americans to encounter other cultures as part of the process of national self-definition. His characters must visit or encounter Europe, its people and culture in order to be refined or perfected.

In *The American*, Christopher Newman, a self-made millionaire from San Francisco, "the most American part of America" (Bryce 892), has given up his business in America, and come to Europe in search of cultural, aesthetical, and social superlatives. His primitive motive to go to Europe is to search for "the best," but the commercial ideology is too deep-rooted. He doesn't really submit to the Old World influences, but wants to acquire choice bits of culture and experience at a good price, as a result his learning of Europe lacks profundity. Fresh from the crudities of his wild western home, ignorant of European culture and history, Newman is confronted with the aristocrats from the most exclusive society of the Old World. The contrast and essential antagonism are two such alien civilizations as those of democratic America and Bourbon France. As a self-made man of action and enterprise, he cannot understand

the notion of leisure in aristocracy. From a society where the beliefs of equality, liberty, and the right to the pursuit of happiness are advocated, he has no idea what social position is, and why one cannot decide on one's own marriage. Newman suffers from a desire to try to fit everything into his preconceived democratic framework. He does not deny that different standards exist in Europe, but he refuses to let them challenge him; therefore, he cannot understand the Bellegardes' values and beliefs. Newman, like James, gets a glimpse of the items of high civilization and also witnesses the decadence of European civilization. Though he exalted European civilization as the best so far, James did not overlook the defects that were hidden behind it. Early in his career, James formed "the habit of comparing" (129), as he expresses in his essay "Occasional Paris," which is very important for the further development of his concept of culture. In the following three sections I will discuss the American's pursuit of "the best" and the obstacles in the process; contrast the values of democracy and hierarchy held by American *Nouveaux Riches* and French Aristocrats; and compare different views of marriage and understandings of kinship bonds in America and France.

2.1. Pursuing "the Best": From California to Paris

First, it is worth noting that Christopher Newman's primitive motive for going to Europe is to search for "the best," the cultural, aesthetical, and social superlatives of Europe. He travels without a definite plan but with the intention of admiring the Old World as much as possible: "I seemed to feel a new man inside my old skin, and I longed for a new world. When you want a thing so very badly you had better treat yourself to it. I didn't understand the matter, not in the least; but I gave the old horse the bridle and let him find his way. As soon as I could get out of the game I sailed for Europe" (22). This is the way he describes his reason for undertaking his journey. He claims to get the best out of Europe. In his words, "I want to see the biggest kind of entertainment a man can get. People, places, art, nature, everything! I want to see the tallest mountains, and the bluest lakes, and the finest pictures, the handsomest churches, and the most celebrated men, and the most beautiful women" (23).

Another important motive for Newman's visit to Europe is to get "a first-class wife" (71). He tells the Tristrams, "What else have I toiled and struggled for all these years? To make it perfect, as I see it, there must be a beautiful woman perched on the pile, like a statue on a monument. […] I want to possess, in a word, the best article in the market" (34). Through the introduction of Mrs. Tristram, an American expatriate, he gets to know French Aristocrats, the Bellegardes. He tells Valentin, the younger son of the family, that he wants to marry a splendid woman with a combination of goodness, beauty, intelligence, a fine education, and personal elegance. Of noble birth, Claire, the widowed countess, is his dream realized, in spite of the warning by Valentin, "Old trees have crooked branches, old houses have queer cracks, old races have odd secrets. Remember that we are eight hundred years old!" He exclaims, "Very good! That's the sort of thing I came to Europe for. You come into my programme" (112). After inquiring with equal frankness about his wealth, the Bellegardes grudgingly agree to consider his pursuit of Claire's hand. At the engagement ball, Newman experiences a sort of "spiritual intoxication" in the environment of high society:

> It was pleasant to be treated with so much explicit politeness; it was pleasant to hear neatly-turned civilities, with a flavor of wit, uttered from beneath carefully-shaped moustaches; it was pleasant to see clever Frenchwomen—they all seemed clever—turn their backs to their partners to get a good look at the strange American whom Claire de Cintré was to marry, and reward the object of the exhibition with a charming smile. (213)

However, he is later dismissed with disdain as a vulgar example of the American *nouveaux riches*, not good enough for the Bellegarde family. Though Newman hopes, by marrying Claire, to cap his fortune with the best the Old World has to offer, he underestimates the Old World's unwillingness to let her go.

2.1.1. Superficial Acquisition and Profound Admiration

Christopher Newman has the "cultural humility" that young Henry James had felt in the presence of European civilization (Raleigh 150). He admits to Mrs. Tristram:

> I am not cultivated, I am not even educated; I know nothing about history, or art, foreign tongues, or any other learned matters. But I'm not a fool, either, and I shall undertake to know something about Europe by the time I have done with it. I feel something under my ribs here

> that I can't explain—a sort of a mighty hankering, a desire to stretch out and haul in. (31)

He reads the guide-books carefully, and marks them with notes, and has been through the whole list of countries, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, and so on. In his letter to Mrs. Tristram, he says, "I know more about Madonnas and church-steeples than I supposed any man could. […] I find that the more I see of the world the more I want to see" (71). With this spirit, Newman explores Europe eagerly.

At a first reading, he may seem rather inexperienced and superficial; he gives the impression of not being particularly interested in his own spiritual edification, but he carefully does everything required by the Grand Tour tourists' duties as quickly as possible: he regards everything that is shown to him as having equal dignity and listens to all stories and anecdotes:

> He stepped into an open cab, made his conductor sit beside him to answer questions, bade the driver to go fast (he had a particular aversion to slow driving), and rolled, in all probability through a dusty suburb, to the goal of his pilgrimage. If the goal was a disappointment, if the church as meagre, or the ruin a heap of rubbish, Newman never protested or berated his cicerone; he looked with an impartial eye upon great monument and small, made the guide recite his lesson, listen to it religiously, asked if there was nothing else to be seen in the neigbourhood, and drove back again at a rattling pace. It is to be feared that his perception of the difference between good architecture and bad was not acute, and that he might sometimes been seen gazing with culpable serenity at inferior productions. (61)

Christopher seems to regard European culture not only as an intellectual heritage to learn, but also as a kind of unknown territory, to be observed, explored, and appropriated, "to get the best out of it I can" (20). His desire to learn is enormous. He tours some four hundred and seventy churches at breakneck speed. He tells Mrs. Tristram in a letter, "[w]herever you find a scratch, or a cross, or a 'Beautiful!' or a 'So true!' or a 'Too thin!' you may know that I have had a sensation of some sort or other" (71). The marginalia scrawled in the guide-books are the marks of Newman's attempted acquisition of European culture.

On the one hand, Newman seems aware of his flaw—knowing little about culture, not being cultivated or well-educated, and even seems willing to struggle against it. Newman is really tired of the game of capitalism after "[he] had spent his years in the unremitting effort to add thousands to thousands, and now that he stood well outside of it, the business of money-getting appeared extremely dry and sterile" (70). His purpose

in coming to Europe is to look around, to see the world, to have a good time, to improve his mind, and if the fancy takes him, to marry a wife. And indeed he has seen the great things, and has given his mind a chance to improve, and he cheerfully believes that it has improved. Before the Bellegardes give him the permission to pursue Claire, he promises them, "I want to do what is customary over here. If there is anything particular to be done, let me know and I will do it. I wouldn't for the world approach Madame de Cintré without all the proper forms" (106).

On the other hand, Newman's learning about Europe shows a lack of profundity, and his commercial ideology is too deeply ingrained; his own reading of Europe—as well as his understanding about Claire—is a too superficial attempt to possess, to purchase. "He says that he wants to improve his mind, but he would have felt a certain embarrassment, a certain shame, even—a false shame, possibly—if he had caught himself looking intellectually into the mirror" (60). James's pursuit of "the best" is not just "the best," but the movement toward it, as a state of becoming, of striving. It is this movement, this striving that counts. Newman makes his own claim for "the best." He, too, claims to believe in "selection," yet he makes no effort to become involved in the selection process. In his pursuit of the best in art, he follows the five stars in his Baedeker, even conned by the French coquette Noémi Nioche out of much money by her shabby copies of famous paintings. To find the best woman, he simply has Mrs. Tristram choose for him. As Mr. Tristram warns Newman about Claire, "It's a kind of beauty you must be intellectual to understand" (38). Such passages show Newman is trapped in a consumer's attitude towards Europe. The American businessman knows only how to acquire new property by money instead of cultivating himself by human effort and creative ingenuity. In James's time, America is too busy with material production to move on to the more sophisticated industries of cultural production. As a result, though they admire and covet the achievements of the European civilization, many Americans abroad during this time lack the knowledge and ability to deal with the social formalisms and complexities of Europe.

A great many critics criticize Newman's imperial posture toward European space and his vulgar commercial attitude towards European culture. In "'I Longed for a New

Word': Colonial Hysteria, *The American,* and Henry James's Paris," Roxana Oltean argues that Christopher Newman, whose name is a transparent reference to Christopher Columbus in the novel, "a colonizer figure, repeats an archaic conquest of Europe by the Westerner" (271). Enrico Botta also argues: "What the new Columbus encounters are the emblems of the cultural achievements of the ancient European civilization" (117). As Mrs. Tristram puts it, "Bravo! That is very fine. You are the great Western Barbarian, stepping forth in his innocence and might gazing awhile at this poor effete Old World, then swoop down on it" (31). Like his creator—James, "Paris surfaces for the American innocent as the image of desirable otherness" (Oltean 272). The discovery of Europe, and of Paris in particular, opens up a New World script in which James's protagonist is overtly cast as the figure of the conqueror in *The American,* with Paris, the object of Newman's desiring gaze, as part of a catalogue of New World lands. By Mr. Tristram's comment that "[n]ow you have the world before you. You have only to enjoy" (31), Newman seems to project an American frontier onto the European scene. Mrs. and Mr. Tristam give him a sense that he is free to do as he pleases.

The Louvre scene with which the novel opens is particularly apt for expressing the game of conquest frequently documented by critics. He is first seen in the Salon Carré in the Louvre. He has spent the entire day looking at every single picture in the museum marked as noteworthy in his guidebook. Tintner argues in *The Museum World of Henry James* that when Newman "enters the Louvre [he] enters Europe" (57), with the issue of possession immediately implied by the museum setting itself, which "opens up Parisian space in colonial directions: the nineteenth-century museum is an imperial institution par excellence" (Barringer and Flynn 5). Torsney states, "Given Newman's commodity-driven motive for his European travel—to secure for himself "the best article in the market" in the way of a wife (71)—*The American* can be described as an imperial fiction with a fiction of translation at its core, as a novel of disappointed cultural imperialism resulting from a failure of translation" (42). In *The American,* Christopher Newman arrives on the European continent with the goals of a cultural imperialist:

> Although he does not want to conquer the territory and literally annex it to his empire, he

> believes the culture of old Europe—its art, its architecture, and its women—to be not only the best available, but eminently importable. His goal is to locate and acquire several of the most valued cultural resources, e.g., paintings and Mme de Cintré, and to transport them to America. (Torsney 42)

The European tour was supposed to be an occasion for education, a chance to be influenced by European civilization, and to round off their sharp American edges. However, in the sixties, seventies, and eighties of the nineteenth century, the chief purpose of many travelling Americans is not to cultivate themselves or to submit to European influences, but to obtain cultural products at a good price or simply enjoy themselves in Europe. This goal is shared by Christopher Newman in *The American*, whose aim in life has been to make money largely, simply to wrest a fortune, the bigger, the better. Even his first words during his stay in Europe are "How much?" (4). As Stowe states in his *Going Abroad: European Travel in Nineteenth-Century American Culture*:

> Education was all very well, and a little polish never hurt anyone, but the new American travelers, the successful capitalists and their wives and children were no longer diffidently, painfully aware of their shortcomings, but proud of their own and their country's newfound economic power and eager to experience the very best that their hard-earned money could buy without earnest cultural, ethical, or educational imperative. (34)

Leon Edel argues in his biography, *Henry James: A Life* (1985), that there is "a strong and vulgar streak of materialistic self-satisfaction" in Christopher Newman (196). His vulgarity resides not in his pretensions—decidedly superficial—to art or architecture; it is in the side of him which shows pride in being "self-made" and his belief that anything can be bought. With his wealth he carries a solid belief that his homeland is "the greatest country in the world" and that Americans "could put all Europe in their breech pocket" (28). He has the belief that "Europe was made for him, and not he for Europe" (60). He tells Claire, "everything that a man can give a woman I will give you. I have a large fortune, a very large fortune; someday, if you will allow me, I will go into details. If you want brilliancy, everything in the way of brilliancy that money can give you, you shall have" (117).

Mr. Babcock, a minor character in the novel and Newman's travel companion for some days, is a very good contrast to Newman. He is a New Englander, a young Unitarian minister from Dorchester, traveling in Europe on funds supplied by his

congregation, who offer him a vacation and an opportunity to enrich his mind with the treasures of nature and art in the Old World. Similar to Newman's early claim, "I want to get the best of it [Europe]," he tells Newman, "I feel, therefore, as if I ought to use my time to the very best advantage" (67). However, they are, indeed, as different as possible. Newman likes everything, accepts everything, finds amusement in everything, and is not discriminating, does not have a high tone. Babcock accuses Newman of a fault which he considers very grave, and which he does his best to avoid: what he would have called a want of "moral reaction" (63). Newman, who never reflects on such matters, accepts the situation with great equanimity, but Babcock often meditates over it privately and considers it conscientiously and impartially. Mr. Babcock is extremely fond of pictures and churches and has an exquisite sense of beauty; unlike Newman, he delights in aesthetic analysis and receives peculiar impressions from everything he sees. He was, furthermore, extremely devoted to "culture" (63).

"Nevertheless in his secret soul Babcock detests Europe and he feels an irritating need to protest against Newman's gross intellectual hospitality" (63). He mistrusts the European temperament, and European life seems to him unscrupulous and impure. Although he cannot bring himself to decide that Europe is utterly bad, "he cannot stand the unregulated epicure" (63). He often tries in conversation to infuse into Newman a little of his own spiritual starch, but Newman's personal texture is too loose to admit of stiffening. "His [Newman's] mind could no more hold principles than a sieve can hold water" (64). Newman still leads his usual life, makes acquaintances, takes his ease in the galleries and churches, and buys a great many bad pictures. Finally, Babcock draws the conclusion, "[w]e don't understand each other" (65). He tries to arrive at the truth about everything, whereas Newman always goes too fast. For him, Newman is too passionate, too extravagant. He tells Newman, "I feel as if I ought to go over all this ground we have traversed again, by myself, alone" (66). A few days afterwards in his letter to Newman, Babcock explains the reason why they should part:

> I feel as if I must arrive at some conclusion and fix my belief on certain points. Art and life seem to me intensely serious things, and in our travels in Europe we should especially remember the immense seriousness of Art. You seem to hold that if a thing amuses you for the moment, that is all you need ask for it; and your relish for mere amusement is also much higher

> than mine. You put, moreover, a kind of reckless confidence into your pleasure which at times, I confess, has seemed to me—shall I say it? Almost cynical. (67)

Newman later confesses to Mrs. Tristram that he was accused by his travel companion of being "a devotee of 'art for art'" (72). "Unlike Newman, Babcock allows the European world to become an intellectual and moral challenge for him. In this Babcock provides a corrective to Newman's ease and foreshadows the preoccupations of the later James" (Schloss 83).

2.1.2. The Obstacles in the Pursuit of "the Best"

One of the important reasons why Newman's European ambitions are thwarted is that he fails to distinguish an abstract admiration for European culture and artifacts from a selfish wish to possess them. He is blinded by his own perception that Europe can be perceived simply as an older and more sophisticated version of America. Provided with famous paintings, old architecture and other cultural products, America can be imagined as the same place as Europe in the future, if American people dedicate themselves to culture as they do to its commerce and industry. The imagined similarities between Europe and America allow American buyers and tourists to acquire their European objects of desire on American terms. Actually, the differences between America and Europe run much deeper than they think. Newman's encounter with Europe is partly a matter of recognizing the fundamental differences and learning to negotiate them. Till the end of the novel, he fails to know all the cultural and social differences that accrue in history. Faced with two snobbish and cruel aristocrats of the Bellegardes, he simply concludes that they are crazy. The consequences of such culturally ignorant acquisition are often, as the novel attests, tragic.

The other reason for the failure in his pursuit is that "the best," which at that time for James means European civilization, is not so easy to acquire or even get access to. Of his first visit to France he remarked in *A Small Boy and Others*: "Had I ever till then known what a charm *was*?—a large, a local, a social charm, leaving out that of a few individual" (159; emphasis in original). To James in the mid-1870s, the spectacle of the American's "assimilation" of Europe was rich ground for reflection, for he had seen

hundreds of American travelers giving Europe the once-over but managing to miss any real experience of its complex culture—treating it "as a vast painted and gilded holiday toy, serving its purpose on the spot and for the time, but to be relinquished, sacrificed, broken and cast away, at the dawn of any other convenience" (*The Art of the Novel*: *Critical Prefaces* 189). During the composition of most of *The American* in the 1870s, James was indeed considering Paris his permanent abode. "Paris was serviceable and comfortable mainly to a young novelist seeking common ground at once exotic and reliable with a readership eagerly seeking the same" (Fussell 172). James lived modestly at Rue de Luxembourg 29, near the Madeleine, a good inexpensive location for tourist-watching as well as for native Parisian ambiance.

However, writing to Arthur George Sedgwick on February 29, 1876, he says: "I know a certain number of people, but all of them slightly & ceremoniously, so that I haven't seen much of them" (*The Complete Letters of Henry James* Vol.Ⅲ: 75). James's inability to enter the exclusive society of aristocracy in the fall of 1875 and the winter of 1876 eventually led him to the frustrated comment in one of his notebooks that, as an observer of French manners in general and of Parisian *haut monde* in particular, he was condemned to be "an eternal outsider" (*The Notebooks of Henry James* 26). As Fussell states:

> [It is] a year during which he was neither American nor French, but a little of each, a year in which he mostly spoke French to people—to concierge, waiter, passersby, but also to Turgenev, Flaubert—while writing a novel mainly in English about a representative man going down to defeat in strikingly similar circumstances (waiving a desire to marry into a French family). (177)

He never had a proper entry into the exclusive society of the Faubourg St. Germain, where the aristocrats lived. He felt his foreignness even at the core sociable evenings with Mme Viardot and Mme de Blocqueville, who, with one or two others, constituted, he confessed as late as April 1876, the "very slender thread of my few personal relations" (*Henry James Letters* Vol II 37). He knew little about the civilization he wished to portray. *The American* was a product of James's mistaken belief that only a few months' residence in Paris had turned him into "an old and very contented, Parisian" who had "struck roots into the Parisian soil," and was "likely to let them grow tangled and

tenacious there" (*Henry James Letter*s Vol. Ⅱ:51).

James's sense of isolation, of his being a spectator rather than an involved participant in the Parisian social scene, accounts in part for the tone he takes with his characters. James was creating a kind of typical American, a type recognizable at home but an object of curiosity abroad. "An American was, in a sense, a mythical figure, a traveler from an unknown land, as in the books of imaginary voyages" (Edel, Afterword 360). James W. Tuttleton offers an interpretation of the book title in his paper "Rereading *The American*: A Century Since": "Whatever its other implications, the name of the book expresses a distinctive attitude toward the hero: that of the Bellegardes and their aristocratic friends. For them, Newman is the American, the only American. There is no other in their circle" (149). Few of them ever met an American, although one of the family friends, M. de la Rochefidèle, remembers once having seen the great Dr. Franklin. "The term 'the American' has the effect of expressing their sense of Newman's difference from them, of denying him an individual identity or name, of effectively placing him in the inferior status signified by his being common, foreign, and commercial" (149). At the end of the novel, the American is repulsed in his desire to appropriate French property. Newman tells his friends that he has brought home no "new ideas" from Europe (352). Significantly, in the Rue d'Enfer, where Newman finally gives up his quest, he "found himself a part of Paris which he little knew—a region of convents and prisons" (355). Viewed in this way, the title reflects the estrangement James himself felt from the society of the Faubourg St. Germain.

The theme of not belonging can be sensed from different kinds of boundaries set between people in the novel. "We are free to imagine both Newman and the Bellegardes as far west or east as we like, so long as we keep them on opposite sides of the Seine" (Fussell 174). Newman realizes that it is easier to cross the natural boundaries, the Atlantic Ocean, the English Channel, or the natural borders of different countries on the European continent than the invisible boundaries erected by humans themselves as a result of principles or ideology to keep their fellows out or their own kind in. The high, blank wall of the convent, where Claire is cloistered, which Newman confronts in the story's final chapter, is a final symbol of the impenetrable human façade. For much of

the novel, Newman stumbles earnestly but ignorantly through Europe as the cultural dividing line moves, shadow-like, perpetually beyond his step. However, such lines can rarely be crossed or dismantled.

2.2. American *Nouveaux Riches* and French Aristocrats: Democracy vs. Hierarchy

As James explains, those who have always lived within one culture are unaware of other cultures and tacitly assume that their form of life is the normal one; actually they do not know how to cope well with people from other cultures. There arise misunderstandings and conflicts. Christopher Newman, a self-made man of action and enterprise, encounters many vicissitudes and various experiences of life in the army and the West, and rises "from rags to riches." He is a democrat innocent of the knowledge of hierarchical class arrangement and ignorant of social forms, a casual optimist with few principles. Therefore, his encounter with the French aristocrats does not go smoothly. Much of the difficulty the Bellegarde elders have with Newman, and that he has with them, results from the expected difference in values, beliefs, occupations, and manners.

2.2.1. To Work or not to Work: Enterprise and Leisure

Time and again, Henry James reminds his readers that Christopher Newman is a figure of the West, where "[w]ork and enterprise [are] 'preached…as a kind of religion,'" and "business [is] in full swing" (qtd. in Saum 5). The locale of Newman's home never emerges in the novel, and St. Louis and San Francisco appear as the only specific Western points of reference. Mining, railroading, and town-building figured in Newman's rise to wealth, and he had become, whatever his origins, a Californian, which also gives a sense of his Western mobility or placelessness. With San Francisco, an epitome of the American West, identified as the American's home base, Henry James avails himself of various means to reinforce Christopher Newman's Westernness.

James tells the reader early in the novel, "it was an intensely Western story, and it

dealt with enterprises" (17-18). Newman begins to make his living very early, in his words, "when I was almost a baby" (132). Necessity pushed him into the street, to earn the next night's supper. He has been enterprising, in an eminent sense of the term; he has been adventurous and even reckless, and he has known bitter failure as well as brilliant success; but he is a born experimentalist. It is under these circumstances that he has his entrance into San Francisco, the scene, subsequently, of his happy strokes of fortune. It must be admitted, rather bluntly, that Christopher Newman's sole aim in life has been to make money; "what he had been placed in the world for was, to his own perception, simply to wrest a fortune, the bigger the better, from defiant opportunity" (19). As Rourke argues in *The Roots of American Culture and Other Essays*, "Puritanism created materialism, both forces were strengthened on the frontier and none of them permitted leisure" (46). Newman has nothing in his head but "enterprise" (69). He cannot be an idler, because "it goes against the grain." As a Westerner, his business habits are too deep-seated; for him, "elegant leisure comes hard" (132). He cares for money-making, but never cared particularly for the money. "There was nothing else to do," and "it was impossible to be idle" (175). Newman considers himself as a good worker, but a poor loafer. He has gone abroad to amuse himself, but he doubts whether he knows how. As Wendy Graham observes:

> Newman's outlook is surprisingly consistent with the psychology of the market revolution, which promoted regular conduct and morality to produce conditions favorable to industry and commerce. Christopher Newman might have been the representative figure in *Democracy in America*, for Newman admits to having gained and lost several fortunes.
>
> In keeping with this joyless personal history, Newman belongs to a culture in which the gratification of desire and the pursuit of happiness are sacrificed to the tireless pursuit of wealth. As Tocqueville argued, the habits of unremitting toil, prudence, and self-restraint cannot be discarded once the individual has attained financial security; they have become fixed character or mental traits. (66)

At that time everyone in the United States, regardless of class, was expected to work and society had little tolerance for what Europeans called "the leisure class." In one example, an English traveler tried to explain the concept of "gentleman of leisure" to an American. The American initially found this idea baffling, but finally brightened when he thought he'd figured out what the Englishman was referring to. "Ah, we call them 'tramps' in America" (qtd. in Rose 22).

Being a man of action and enterprise, Newman cannot understand the European notion of leisure. Therefore, Newman is surprised when M. de Bellegarde tells him that he has no profession, "I do nothing! I am supposed to amuse myself, and, tell the truth, I have amused myself" (92). Obviously M. de Bellegarde knows better the differences between them:

> "Everything is to hinder me. To begin with, I have not a penny."
> "I had not a penny when I began to range."
>
> "Ah, but your poverty is your capital. Being an American, it is impossible you should remain what you were born, and being born poor—do I understand it? –It was therefore inevitable that you should become rich. You were in a position that makes one's mouth water; you looked around you and saw a world full of things you had only to step up to and make hold of. When I was twenty, I looked around me and saw a world with everything ticketed 'Hands Off!' and the deuce of it was that the ticket seemed meant only for me. I couldn't go into business, I couldn't make money, because I was a Bellegarde. I couldn't go into politics, because I was a Bellegarde—the Bellegardes don't recognize the Bonapartes. I couldn't go into literature, because I was a dunce." (92-93)

He is poor, but not supposed to make money, and he cannot choose his occupation freely because he is from an aristocrat family, which sounds ridiculous to Newman.

According to David Higgs's research on "nobles and professions" in his *Nobles in Nineteenth-Century France: The Practice of Inegalitarianism*, from 1770 to 1870 the public hostility of nobles to business ethics and activities under the Old Regime was often commented upon, although research revealed that a minority of the Second Estate was not prevented by those ideas from entering into business and capitalistic activities (105). The assumption that business and money making were, if not despicable, at the least sordid "bourgeois" pastime, derided in literature from M. Jourdain to Ubu-Roi was not restricted to the literati but was frequently found among, if not actually derived from, the nobles. At least until the 1870s and, perhaps, afterwards, noble reticence to take up commerce and industry wholeheartedly fettered French entrepreneurialism (122). As the table "Avowed professions of Nobles 1816-1870" in the book illustrates, few men are listed in 1866 as having a position in the world of manufacturing and commerce—less than half of 1 percent—although many (almost 17 percent) were in the liberal professions (125). The nobles' view on capitalism which set them apart from commoners was reflected in their collective loyalty to the obligation to maintain family

status. Therefore, Valentin is also amused by Newman's idea to offer him a job in America:

> "I wish you would think of what I said to you the other day. Come over to America with us, and I will put you in the way of doing some business. You have got a very good head if you will only use it."
>
> Valentin made a genial grimace. "My head is much obliged to you. Do you mean the place in a bank?"
>
> "There are several places, but I suppose you would consider the bank the most aristocratic."
>
> Valentin burst into laugh. "My dear fellow, at night all cats are gray! When one derogates there are no degrees."
>
> "Do you really think I ought to do something?"
>
> "Do you really think I can make some money?"
>
> "Do what I tell you, and you shall be rich," said Newman. (223)

Being a hardworking and practical businessman, Newman thinks it is obvious that one should do something and make some money, while Valentin, an aristocrat, thinks it is very novel.

2.2.2. Social Status: Flexible or Fixed

The notion of hierarchical social arrangements is also beyond Newman's comprehension. The Bellegarde family, on each side, is of fabulous antiquity; the mother is the daughter of an English Catholic earl. The father's side goes back to "a period that the family antiquaries themselves lose breath. At last they stop, panting and fanning themselves, somewhere in the ninth century, under Charlemagne" (105). That is where they began. The Marquise, Madame de Bellegarde, as James describes, has white, intense, respectable countenance, with its formal gaze, and its circumscribed smile, suggested a document signed and sealed; a thing of parchment, ink, and ruled lines. "She is a woman of conventions and proprieties," as Newman observes, "her world is the world of things immutably decreed, 'This is genteel,' or 'This is improper,' written on a milestone" (126). M. de Bellegarde, the young marquis, is distinguished to the tips of his polished nails, and there was not a movement of his fine perpendicular person that was not noble and majestic. In Valentine's words, "[h]e has the best manners in France. He is extremely clever; indeed he is very learned" (104). Newman has never

yet been confronted with such an incarnation of the art of taking oneself seriously; he feels "a sort of impulse to step backward, as you do to get a view of a great façade" (129). The conduct of Urbain and his mother is entirely consistent with their aristocratic caste, their familial pride, and their passion of blood. The family is very proud of their heritage. Madame de Bellegarde warns Newman:

> "It is proper that I should tell you that I am very *proud*, and that I hold my head very high. I may be wrong, but I am too old to change. At least I know it, and I don't pretend to anything else. Don't flatter yourself that my daughter is not *proud*. She is *proud* in her own way—a somewhat different way from mine. You will have to make your terms with that. Even Valentin is *proud*, if you touch the right spot—or the wrong one. Urbain is *proud*—that you see for yourself. Sometimes I think he is a little too *proud*; but I wouldn't change him. He is the best of my children; he cleaves to his old mother. But I have said enough to show you we are all *proud* together. It is well that you should know the sort of people you have come among." (158-59; emphasis added)

Although she finally agrees to accept Newman's proposal, Mme de Bellegardes still holds the attitude, "I shall not enjoy having my daughter marry you, and I shall not pretend to enjoy it. If you don't mind that, so much the better" (159).

As Tocqueville states, "amongst aristocratic nations the different classes are like vast chambers, out of which it is impossible to get, into which it is impossible to enter. These classes have no communication with each other" (175). Mrs. Tristram got to know Claire de Bellegarde, and they became fast friends, when they were educated at a convent. When she left the convent, Claire had to give her up, because she was not her *monde*, and the family kept a tight rein on her. "They are terrible people—her *monde*; all mounted upon stilts a mile high, and with pedigrees long in proportion" (37). The dowager Marquise de Bellegarde is described as a "feudal countess of a mother" who "rules the family with an iron hand" and who allows Claire to "have no friends but of her own choosing, and to visit only in a certain sacred circle" (37-38). That's the typical way of the old aristocracy.

"In aristocracies men are separated from each other by lofty stationary barriers; in democracies they are divided by a number of small and almost invisible threads, which are constantly broken or moved from place to place" (Tocqueville 176). George Augustus Sala found that while the young English clerk rarely cherished the hope of rising in the hierarchy, the American clerk could not look into the mirror without seeing

the features of a future president of the United States, or of a cabinet minister, or a judge of the Supreme Court (Rose 29). Surely one of the most important constants in American life going back to colonial days was that in America one had the opportunity to succeed or to fail based not on their social class, but on his or her own abilities.

In the United States, as Tocqueville observes, the citizens have no sort of pre-eminence over each other; they owe each other no mutual obedience or respect. Each of them is willing to acknowledge all his fellow citizens as his equals; thus, whatever may be the progress of equality, in democratic nations a great number of small private communities will always be formed within the general pale of political society; but none of them will bear any resemblance in its manners to the highest class in aristocracies (175-76). Egalitarianism continues to be central to American society. Democracy in America is not only political, but also social. Everyone here stands on the same social level with no one towering above another.

America is depicted from afar as an egalitarian realm uninflected by social constraints; by contrast, France in the European context is a cultural realm where categories presumably are fixed hierarchically and strict exclusions enforced. When Newman learns that his social position is to be taken into account, he professes himself utterly incompetent and begs Tristram to relieve him of the care. “I didn’t know I had a social position,” he says, and “and if I have, I haven’t the smallest idea what it is” (72). But he thinks he is equal to the Bellegarde family. Later when Newman confesses to Valentin that he should like very much to marry his sister, Valentin is surprised, even horrified. The following conversation shows the viewpoints of different cultures about social position:

> “Why, you are not noble, for instance,” Bellegarde said.
>
> “The devil I am not!” exclaimed Newman.
>
> “Oh,” said Bellegarde, a little more seriously, “I did not know you had a title.”
>
> “A title? What do you mean by a title? asked Newman. “A count, a duke, a marquis? I don’t know anything about that, I don’t know who is and who is not. But I say I am noble. I don’t exactly know what you mean by it, but it’s a fine word and a fine idea; I put in a claim to it.”
>
> “But what have you to show, my dear fellow; what proofs?”
>
> “Anything you please! But you don’t suppose I am going to undertake to prove that I am noble. It is for you to prove the contrary.”

"That's easily done. You have manufactured wash-tubs."

Newman stared a moment. "Therefore I am not noble? I don't see it. Tell me something I have not done—something I cannot do."

"You cannot marry a woman like Madame de Cintré for the asking."

"I believe you mean," said Newman slowly, "that I am not good enough."

"Brutally speaking—yes!" (107-08)

According to Valentin's theory, it is easy to prove that Newman is not noble, because he is a manufacturer, a businessman; therefore, he is not good enough for his sister. Newman vehemently rejects the Bellegardes' accounting of his place in the world and asserts that "I simply think, if you want to know, that I'm as good as the best" (110). This sounds invidious to the Bellegardes. He later declares again to Claire, "your brother told me that my antecedents and occupations were against me; that your family stands somehow on a higher level than I do. That is an idea which, of course, I don't understand and don't accept" (116). "Newman's rhetoric smacks of a righteous democratic defiance of caste privilege" (Graham 67). Unlike Newman, the Bellegardes cannot easily let go the idea of social status and accept the fact that their daughter will marry a businessman without a title. It also sounds amusing to Newman that Madame de Bellegarde expresses that had she not been told who Newman is, she would have taken him for a duke—an American duke, the Duke of California**.** She might think highly of Newman, if he had a title. Valentin tells Newman humorously, "[t]here were none in your country; but if there had been, it was certain that, smart and active as you are, you would have got the pick of the titles" (150).

With his comic optimism, Newman believes that any desire can be realized—with strong will, good intention, and enough cash, and is never in doubt about his goal to marry Claire. He obviously does not know the height of exclusiveness of which the Bellegardes are capable. When the Bellegardes break the engagement, Newman cannot understand why. He speculates, "have I done anything wrong?" He demands, "have I given you reason to change your opinion? Have you found out anything against me? I can't imagine" (245). Madame de Bellegarde explains:

"Our opinion is quite the same as at first—exactly. We have no ill-will towards yourself; we are very far from accusing you of misconduct. Since your relations with us began you have been, I frankly confess, less—less peculiar than I expected. It is not your disposition that we object to, it is your antecedents. We really cannot reconcile ourselves to a commercial person."

(245)

According to the aristocratic standard, the social status is inherited. No matter how good and rich Newman is, he is just a commoner. Newman suffers from a willingness to try to fit everything into his preconceived democratic framework. He tries again to justify that he is an eligible person for Claire:

> "I'm the most unobjectionable fellow in the world. What if I am a commercial person? I will be any sort of person you want. I never talk to you about business. Let her go, and I will ask no questions. I will take her away, and you shall never see me again. I will stay in America if you like. I'll sign a paper promising never to come back to Europe! All I want is not to lose her!" (247)

All his effort is in vain, because no matter how hard he tries, he cannot change his antecedents, though he might be able to change his occupation. He cannot compete with Lord Deepmere, a rich heir to nobility in England. Mrs. Tristram explains to him that the Bellegardes really could not endure him any longer. They overrate their courage. "I must say, to give the devil this due, that there is something rather fine in that. It was your commercial quality in the abstract they couldn't swallow. That is really aristocratic. They wanted your money, but they have given you up for an idea" (249). Newman just cannot accept the fact "to be turned off because one was a commercial person!" (280).

What's more, Newman's ignorance of polite manners is intolerable for the Bellegardes. It is principally through Urbain de Bellegarde and Newman that James dramatizes the conflict between the manners of the American democrat and the French aristocrat. The Marquis's deportment is always mechanically polite, correct, polished, aristocratic, and impersonal: "His manners seemed to indicate a fine, nervous dread that something disagreeable might happen if the atmosphere were not purified by allusions of a thoroughly superior cast" (149). Even his name, Urbain, in its association with "urbane," suggests a polished, superficial politeness that may be a false veneer. Christopher Newman, as his name suggests, is meant to represent the new man of the New World—a kind of Christopher Columbus in reverse—confronting the complexity and mystery of the Old World. He at first mistakes Urbain for the butler; he is on terms of easy familiarity with cicerones, guides, and couriers. Newman's sense of human equality, his ungraceful eagerness, his tranquil unsuspectingness of the relativity of his own place in the social scale are irritating to M. de Bellegarde, "who so himself

reflected in the mind of his potential brother-in-law in a crude and colourless form, unpleasantly dissimilar to the impressive image projected upon his own intellectual mirror" (165). He is resolved to keep everything immaculate; it is quite enough that the glory of his house should pass into eclipse. Between him and Newman, his whole manner seems to declare that there could be no interchange of opinion; "he was holding his breath so as not to inhale the odour of democracy" (166).

For the straightforward Newman, the ritual or customs in the European context are sociologically fascinating but bizarrely intricate. Invited to the Bellegardes' house for dinner, Newman feels ill at ease, unsure of what to do, or what not to do. The Bellegardes always keep conversation strictly to safe topics, making it more properly a ritual act than a real exchange of ideas or communication. His response to such occasions is usually either to remain quiet or to be very direct, despite the prevailing atmosphere of formalism. Newman fails to see the necessity of the ceremony that underlies the family's extended announcement that they have agreed to consider him as a candidate for Claire's hand. He telegraphs his engagement to America before it is formally announced and then shows off the congratulatory replies in the face of Mme de Bellegarde. He is eager to stage an engagement party at his hotel, unaware that it should be done by the Bellegarde family. He parades Mme de Bellegarde Marquise around the room on the evening of the party, mortally embarrassing her in the presence of her guests. "And the result of these violations of decorum is a comedy which—from the viewpoint of the complicated artifice of European social forms—shows that Newman is indeed a 'barbarian'" (Tuttleton, *The Novel of Manners in America* 66).

Newman is defeated also because he wages his campaign in the arena of European manners and customs. He seeks to appropriate for himself proprieties and amenities which are totally foreign and too complex for him to grasp. As an American, he has not developed a social style that is both expressive of the national character and distinguished and beautiful enough to oppose to the European. "Newman is, from the democratic viewpoint, admirable enough—although we cannot help seeing the ridiculous in his playing the wrong kind of game with the wrong kind of people" (Tuttleton, *The Novel of Manners in America* 68-69).

2.3 Marriage: Personal Freedom vs. Familial Duty

As Higgs observes in *Nobles in Nineteenth-Century France: The Practice of Inegalitarianism*, what set nobles apart from commoners under democracy was their different use and understanding of kinship bonds:

> Their family links were not so much different in kind as they were an extra extension of the feelings of family solidarity normal in France at that time. These emphasized economic support and production and, it need hardly be said, were quite different from twentieth-century European ideas of love and affection. Noble kinship had the same base but also included the custody of ancestral prestige, either real or fictive, which had to be passed on. (Higgs 215)

The noble who abandoned the family gradually ceased to exist as a noble, because one could not continue to be noble outside of the kinship network. Therefore, most nobles accepted and indeed rejoiced in those obligations of kinship that meant a real limit on individualism, including in the matter of marriage. However, "the bourgeois politicians and businessmen were not so limited. Both gloried in essentially individual accomplishments in the nineteenth century, and if the commoner placed himself at the behest of his relations, he was not obliged to do so" (Higgs 215).

2.3.1. Pursuit of Happiness

In Newman's democratic framework, he strongly believes that man has the right and liberty to pursue his own happiness. His mother died when he was young, and his sisters are thousands of miles away, and he began to earn his living when he was a teenager. He then lives a very independent life, the bond among his family is rarely mentioned. One of the motives for his journey to Europe is to get a wife to perfect his life after he has toiled for many years. He thinks he has the freedom to choose "the first-class wife" (71), though in a somewhat commercial way. Newman's pursuit does not deal with the usual marriage theme of upward social mobility, greater wealth, or improved social status. Unlike other social climbers and adventurers, he does not aim to enter the sacred circle of the Faubourg St. Germain but rather to possess Claire, to

draw her out of its narrow confines, and to offer her, in recompense, the whole wide world. He is immensely rich, much richer than the Bellegardes, and he is not interested in the Bellegardes' social status because he has no interest in "society," and as an American democrat, he thinks that he is as good as anybody.

Newman naively thinks that a girl from an aristocratic family, like Claire, can act as an autonomous individual and decide on her own marriage. He asks Mrs. Tristram, "why does she let them bully her? Is she not her own mistress?" (75). Mrs. Tristram answers him, "Legally, yes, I suppose; but morally, no. In France you must never say Nay to your mother, whatever, she requires of you" (75). Because the old marquis died, her brother is the *chef de famille*, as they say, he is the head of the clan. So he also has the final say in her marriage. Newman still can hardly believe that Claire was forced into her unhappy marriage by her family. Mr. Tristram tells him, "[a] great deal of that kind goes on in New York. Girls are bullied or coaxed or bribed, or all three together, into marrying nasty fellows. There is no end of that always going on in the Fifth Avenue! Someone ought to show them up." Newman asserts very gravely, "I don't believe it! I don't believe that, in America, girls are ever subjected to compulsion. I don't believe that there have been a dozen cases of it since the country began" (76). He just refuses to step out of his own preconception. After meeting Claire, Newman tells Valentin Bellegarde, "She [Claire] is exactly what I have been looking for. She is my dream realized" (109), and he decides to marry her. He promises Claire not only her happiness, but also her freedom:

> I will take you to live anywhere in the wide world that you propose. Are you unhappy? You give me a feeling that you are unhappy. You have no right to be, or to be made so. Let me come in and put an end to it. (117)
>
> ….
>
> You ought to be perfectly free, and marriage will make you so. (119)

In his opinion, there ought to be only one thing to think about for their marriage—they love each other. Other people have no right to interfere, let alone bully them.

Newman first negotiates successfully with Madame de Bellegarde by declaring "Well, I'm very rich" (135), and expressing his income in a round number which has the magnificent sound that large aggregations of dollars put on when they are translated

into francs. He adds a few remarks of a financial character, which complete a sufficiently striking presentment of his resources. The heads of the Bellegardes view his proposal from all sides, and weigh one thing against another. Finally they decide to accept Newman's proposal, though grudgingly. In novels where love is obstructed by class barriers, money is of course crucial; however, money does not finally solve the problem in this novel, because Newman's immense wealth, acquired rather than inherited, is looked down upon by the European aristocratic standard.

2.3.2. "Name for Name, and Fortune for Fortune"

By contrast, for the Bellegardes, the French aristocrats, the motivating force of marriage should be maintaining the glory and status of the family, and more often than not it means capitulation to the family's power or sacrifice one's own happiness, as Mrs. Tristram warns Newman, "with those people the family is everything; you must act, not for your own pleasure, but for the advantage of the family" (75).

All nobles viewed marriage as crucial to their status. Each child was a potential link in a chain of contracts, obligations, and understandings between families. After the French Revolution nobles generally subscribed to the view that love or passion that overcame common sense was bad. A desire to marry one's social inferior, either in name or wealth, threatened family stability. An improper marriage which lowered a family's social tone was collectively disapproved. Weddings were generally arranged. Not only the dowry but also the number, influence, and wealth of the spouse's relatives were prime considerations in any decision on future unions. When J. V. A. de Broglie, a future senator of the Second Empire and member of the Académie française, was engaged in 1845 to Mlle de Gallard de Brassac de Béarn, he scarcely knew her: "This union had not been at first, following French usage, anything other than an affair of convenience discussed between friends and relatives, because I was not known to Mademoiselle de Béarn and I had never myself met her, and I even had some difficulty in obtaining permission for us to see each other two or three times in the houses of mutual friends before becoming engaged to each other" (qtd. in Higgs 115). The

notaries of the respective families, however, were certainly on more familiar terms. As the banns were announced for each wedding, the gossips buzzed with speculation about the economic strength not only of the two parties but also of collateral relatives from whom funds might be received in due course. Small wonder that an encyclopedic knowledge of eligible nubile partners and the wealth of their relatives was of paramount interest to older family members.

This kind of European custom of the marriage of convenience can lead to disasters, in which the girl is "sold" for the dowry, or in which her title, if she is noble, is traded for wealth. Take Claire's first marriage as an example, "it was a chapter for a novel," in Valentin's words (104). The marriage had been made in the French way, made by the two families without her having any voice. When she was eighteen, Claire was set up with the rich, despicable sixty-year old man, the Comte Cintré. The Marquise decided to marry her daughter off to the Count because he had fortune, pedigree, and would accept a small dowry. The old Marquis, the sympathetic father of Claire, Valentin, and Urbain, was secretly and ruthlessly murdered by his wife and his eldest son at the family estate at Fleurières, because he tried to stand in the way of the arranged marriage. Claire hardly saw her husband before the wedding and became Comtesse de Cintré one month later. Before the Bellegardes decide to accept Newman's proposal, Valentin tells Newman, "there is a family council" (150); his mother and his brother have put their heads together, and even his testimony has not been altogether excluded. His mother and the marquis sit at a table covered with green cloth; his sister-in-law and he are on a bench against the wall. "It is like a committee at the Corps Legistlatif. We are called up, one after the other to testify" (150).

M. de Bellegarde even admits that he envies Newman's liberty, his wide range, his freedom to come and go, not having a lot of people who take themselves awfully seriously, expecting something of him, and living beneath the eyes of his admirable mother. "I couldn't marry a rich girl, because no Bellegarde had ever married a *roturière*, and it was not proper that I should begin. […] Marriageable heiress, *de notre bord*, are not to be had for nothing; it must be name for name, and fortune for fortune" (92-93). The Bellegardes always married into old families in eight hundred years, only

three or four in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries took wives of the bourgeoisie—married lawyers' daughters. Their women have always done well; they have never even gone into *petite noblesse*. "There is, I believe, not a case on record of a misalliance among the women" (105). The marquis also tells Newman that "the idea that my sister should marry a gentleman—ah—in business, was something of a novelty" (152).

When the Bellegardes break the engagement, Claire tells Newman that she cannot marry him, and he must ask her mother and her brother for the reason. Madame de Bellegarde's answer is very simple, "It's impossible! It is improper" (240). Newman tries to argue with them and begs them to let Claire alone:

> "But you have interfered now, haven't you?" inquired Newman of the marquis.
>
> "Neither then nor now have I attempted to influence my sister. I used no persuasion then, I have used no persuasion to-day."
>
> "And what have you used?"
>
> "We have used authority," said Madame de Bellegarde in a rich, bell-like voice.
>
> "Ah, you have used authority," Newman exclaimed. "They have used authority," he went on, turning to Madame de Cintré. "What is it? how did they use it?"
>
> "My mother commanded," said Madame de Cintré.
>
> "Commanded you to give me up—I see. And you obey—I see. But why do you obey?" asked Newman.
>
> Madame de Cintré looked across at the old marquise; her eyes slowly measured her from head to foot. "I am afraid of my mother," she said.
>
> Madame de Bellegarde rose with a certain quickness crying: "This is a most indecent scene!" (242)
>
> "So you make a distinction?" Newman said at last. "You make a distinction between persuading and commanding? It's very neat. But the distinction is in favour of commanding. That rather spoils it." […]
>
> "My daughter has given you up."
>
> "She doesn't mean it"
>
> "I think I can assure you that she does."
>
> "Poor woman, what damnable thing have you done to her?" cried Newman.
>
> "Gently, gently!" "She told you, I commanded her."
>
> "This sort of thing can't be, you know," he said. "A man can't be used in this fashion. You have no right; you have got no power."
>
> "My power," said Madame de Bellegarde, "is in my children's obedience." (243-44)

He can hardly understand why words, like "authority," "command," and "power" should be used in marriage by the family, because he believes all family members should be equal. After his long-time argument with Mme de Bellegarde and the Marquis,

he still does not want to give up and thinks Claire can be independent from the family, because he believes strongly in the individual's right and duty to act fairly and rationally, and, thus, as a primarily individual agent.

> "Give me a reason—a decent reason. You are not a child—you are not a minor, or an idiot. You are not obliged to drop me because your mother told you so. Such a reason isn't worthy of you." "Your mother and your brother have been false and cruel; they have been so to me, and I am sure they have been so to you. Why do you try to shield them? Why do you sacrifice me to them? I'm not false; I'm not cruel. You don't know what you give up; I can tell you that—you don't. They bully you and plot about you; and I—. […] You told me the other day that you were afraid of your mother. What do you mean?"
> Claire gave her reply, "Nothing. Nothing that you can understand." (272)

He does not know that in aristocracy as long as the mother commands, the daughter has to obey. It is not a matter of being right or wrong.

The problems Newman encounters in his pursuit of Claire's hand are first symbolized by the character of Urbain, the guardian of the threshold, who blocks the Bellegarde doorway on Newman's first visit and simply lies to him that Claire is not at home. Urbain's presence is an implicit discouragement both to Newman's entry and to Claire's exit, mocking Newman's would-be symbolic victory of carrying his bride over the threshold. Whereas Newman has little innate sense of such boundaries, Claire has learned the hard way to obey rules. Newman's final confrontation with the reality of losing Claire comes in the novel's final pages, when he takes a walk to the house of the Carmelites—a dull, plain edifice, with the convent's high-shouldered blank wall all round it. Claire has evidently signed up to be a Carmelite, devoted to cloistered contemplation. The rest of her life will be spent in prayer, fasting, manual labor, and occasional fellowship with her sister nuns. The place looks dumb, deaf, and inanimate; "it told him that the woman within was lost beyond recall" (355). The convent's impenetrable façade is, then, a tougher and more austere version of the Hôtel de Bellegarde in St-Germain-des-Prés. Now, the barrier between Newman and Claire is insurmountable. While Newman wanders across continents in his grief, dissolving his pain in the immensity of the world, Claire takes refuge in ever-smaller chambers behind ever-higher walls.

Some critics discuss the question—how such a proud aristocratic family like the

Bellegardes could have permitted themselves even for a moment to accept Newman's proposal and suffer the lounging, slangy, socially illiterate American manufacturer of wash-tubs and leather goods. In his "Rereading *The American*: A Century Since," James W. Tuttleton even doubts the fictional consistency in James's characterization in the novel. The family descend from the ninth century; they perpetuate the royalist tradition; there has never, as Valentin remarks, been a misalliance among the women. The conduct of Urbain and his mother is entirely consistent with their aristocratic caste, their familial pride, and their passion of blood—except in one respect: They weaken momentarily and countenance Newman's courtship of Claire. He argues, "the lapse from the putative hauteur of the family is the point that fails of realism" (151). However, the ending—the Bellegardes' rejection of Newman "redeems the novel from the fairy-tale conclusion toward which Newman's engagement was heading" (152). In defense of his ending, James told William Dean Howells, the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* pleaded with James to let Newman and Claire be united in the final chapters of the serial, that the demands of realism required a breaking off of the match:

> Voyons; it would have been impossible: they would have been an impossible couple with an impossible problem before them. For instance—to speak very materially—where would they have lived? It was very well for Newman to talk of giving her the whole world to choose from: but Asia and Africa being counted out, what would Europe and America have offered? Mme de C. couldn't have lived in New York; depend upon it; and Newman, after his marriage (or rather *she*, after it) couldn't have dwelt in France. There would have been nothing left but a farm out West. (*Henry James Letters* Vol. II: 104-05)

It would be a mistake to underrate James's objection here, for the question of where such an exotic couple might have lived was a real one. James explained further that he had written his story from Newman's side of the wall, and he understood so well how Mme de Cintré could not really scramble over from her side. If he had represented her as doing so he should have made a prettier ending certainly, as his lady friends in Rome and in London beseeched him to do. However, he should have felt as if he were throwing a rather vulgar sob to readers who do not really know the world and who do not measure the merit of a novel by its correspondence to the same. James could not pander to the sentimentality of the reader, because he is a realist.

James's defense of history and culture seems to conflict with the core value of

democracy. What most struck James about America was the almost unprecedented velocity of change, "what was taking place was a perpetual repudiation of the past" (*The American Scene* 38). What past there was, was being pushed aside as rapidly as possible. The "page" of America is white because democracy continuously erases whatever traces history leaves. Some critics see James's support of differences as the aesthete's love of the picturesque, and reproach him for sacrificing democratic ideals to aesthetic interests. Others view James as an outright snob, who defends social differences to guard the privileges of the elite. Indeed, James had difficulties with the "common man" in America, "the common mean only the reduction of everything to an average of decent suitability" (*The American Scene* 318). In James's opinion, American democracy discourages the human quest for truth and perfection. "The American people seem to have abandoned the search for culture, 'the best that is known and the thought in the world'" (Schloss 59-60).

However, James did not overlook the defects that were hidden behind European civilization, even though he exalted it as the best so far. There are marriages of convenience, murder, and the utterly open negotiation about betrothal money in the novel. Mme de Bellegarde and her elder son run the Bellegarde household with an iron fist. They first secretly kill the old Marquis at their family country house for his attempt to prevent Claire's first marriage to the old Comte de Cintré, who has fortune and is willing to accept a small dowry. They look down upon Newman for being too commercial, but they once allow Newman to court Claire only because he can offer them a huge amount of money, which shows their sheer hypocrisy. Finally, they scheme to manipulate Claire to give up the engagement with Newman for a rich noble without taking her peace or happiness into consideration. "The truth is that the old Marquise de Bellegarde is simply a European version of Newman; she sits upon her aristocratic sanctity with the same tough possessiveness and assurance that Newman sits on his pile of dollars" (Edel, *Henry James: A Life* 196). Porter also concludes, "the charm of James's idea lies in its constitutive irony—that it is finally the Bellegardes, not Newman, who will prove commercial" (40). The charismatic Valentin and the cultured Claire might be the typical and ideal representatives of France, one died of a wound suffered

in a duel, as a point of personal honor, and the other refuses to be "sold" again by cloistering herself in a convent. Like his sister, Valentin does at least function as a symbol of the moral value that ought to inhere in the highest civilization, and his friendship with Newman helps to authenticate the latter's aspiration to believe in something besides money. Newman, like James, gets a glimpse of the items of high civilization and also witnesses the decadence of European civilization.

James sketches an innocent "Western Barbarian," and he shows us also the candor of Newman's innocence and the courage of his ignorance, and his moral superiority. Newman has not been corrupted by his gold; he is still one of "nature's noblemen." Once cruelly wronged by the people who think they are superior to him, he should rise above the revenge he has in his power to inflict. He knows the skeleton in the closet of the Bellegardes, which he could use as revenge by exposing it or blackmailing the Bellegardes to let him marry Claire. However, he decides to give up. This proves his magnanimity, his "remarkable good nature" in Mrs. Tristram's words (359). Newman would prove to be the moral superior of the Bellegardes, exposing as false their pretension "to represent the highest civilization." Though James never had a proper entry into the exclusive society of aristocracy during his stay in France, he formed early in his career "the habit of comparing," as he expresses in "Occasional Paris," "of looking for points of difference and resemblance, for present and absent advantages, for the virtues that go with certain defects, and the defects that go with certain virtues" (129), which is very important for the further development of his concept of culture.

Early in 1867, James expressed his optimistic view in his letter to Thomas Sergeant Perry. He transforms the denuded condition of his American scene into a national privilege, "[w]e are Americans born—*il faut en prendre son parti*. I look upon it as a great blessing: and I think that to be an American is an excellent preparation for culture. […] We can deal freely with forms of civilization not our own, can pick and choose and assimilate and in short (aesthetically, etc.) gain our property wherever we find it" (*Henry James Letters* Vol. I: 77). In the same letter, James also points out an intellectual responsibility for those born into it, "we must of course have something of our own—something distinctive and homogeneous—and I take it that we shall find it in our moral

consciousness, in our unprecedented spiritual lightness and vigour" (Vol. I: 77). Most important of all, Americans should have something of their own and then adopt those virtues of other cultures and finally establish an ideal culture, which was the aim that Henry James pursued most of his life. "Only by collectively evaluating different cultural models can modern society achieve a cultural identity and establish its own tradition" (Schloss 60). However, in *The American* the sophisticated Europeans will not let go of their "property" easily, and James's expectations that America would develop a culture of its own are still unfulfilled when he created *The American*. "What is implicit in this work, however, is the novelist's belief that it is a bad business to try to mix America and Europe. He saw always the need for a choice—such as he himself had made" (Edel, Afterword 366).

In his letter of July 29, 1876, James confides to his brother William "a long encroaching weariness and satiety with the French mind and its utterance," a desire "only to feed on English life and the contact of English mind." He had gotten "nothing important out of Paris nor am likely to" (*Henry James Letters* Vol. II: 58-59). Rather than hang on, he moved from Paris to London in December after *The American* began its serial run in the *Atlantic Monthly* in June 1876. He later warned Edith Wharton that the real material of an American expatriate should be the Anglo-American, not the Franco-American, subject. Furthermore, because he did not know European aristocrats intimately, James later tended to stage his conflicts between Americans traveling abroad and expatriate Americans who had congregated in colonies, as he did in *Daisy Miller* and *The Portrait of a Lady*.

3. *Daisy Miller*: A Study of Manners

> "We know a man imperfectly until we know his society, and we but half know a society until we know its manners. This is especially true of a man of letters, for manners lie very close to literature."
> —Henry James, "Emerson" in *The American Essays of Henry James* 53

In France, James had but walked the periphery of society; in London in 1878 and 1879 he was immediately swept into its center. "He had reached the point where he might still be a foreigner, but he no longer felt he was a stranger" (Edel, *Henry James: A Life* 227). In 1878 *Daisy Miller* established his fame on both sides of the Atlantic. It is one of James's earliest works dealing with the international theme for which he became best known. Americans abroad was a subject very much of the moment in the years after the Civil War. The postwar boom, the so-called Gilded Age, had given rise to unprecedented European travel by Americans to rediscover the civilization of the Old World and to experience its culture and pleasure. They went to Europe in search of the picturesque, the romantic, and their expectations were largely shaped by the most popular literature of the nineteenth century, the great works of European Romanticism. In *Daisy Miller*, James stages the conflicts between traveling Americans who stubbornly retain their American ways and American expatriates who totally adopt European codes of behavior. He observes the strikingly different manners of both of the groups represented by the Miller family and the American colony in Europe respectively.

Daisy becomes the prototype for James's "American girls," free, spontaneous, independent, natural, and scornful of conventions, who comes forth to encounter Europe. Her manners are seriously examined by different characters in the novella and by the reader. William Dean Howells retailed in a letter to James Russell Lowell: "Henry James waked [*sic*] up all the women with his Daisy Miller, the intention of which they conceived, and there has been a vast discussion in which nobody felt very

deeply, and everybody talked very loudly. The thing went so far that society almost divided itself into Daisy Millerites and anti-Daisy Millerites" (74). Daisy is still a riddle unresolved, "At any rate, one can only hold to the way Daisy actually appears to exist in the reading of the story" (Fogel 18). In the following three sections I will inquire into the relationship between manners and morals and discuss the two customs—chaperonage and flirting; observe the manners of the Miller family, an American newly rich family traveling in Europe; and examine the manners of American expatriates in Europe.

3.1 Manners and Morals: External Civility and Internal Cultivation

Nancy Bentley argues in *The Ethnography of Manners: Hawthorne, James, Wharton* that E. B. Tylor and Matthew Arnold are repeating semantic skirmishes from the previous century: indirectly challenging the German nobles, the bourgeois German intelligentsia claimed *Kultur* as a special interior sensibility that contrasted with the merely formalistic civility of the aristocracy, whereas the intellectuals of France and England conceived *civilisation* as an externalized code of manners that their class gradually reformed and appropriated. "The semantic space of 'culture' in the later nineteenth century, we have seen, included versions of both (Arnold's) internal cultivation and (Tylor's) external codes of behavior" (Bentley 74). So does James's concept of culture. Manners fall in the scope of culture. Lionel Trilling defines manners in his *The Liberal Imagination* as follows:

> It is that part of a culture which is made up of half-uttered or unuttered expressions of value. They are hinted at by small actions, sometimes by the arts of dress or decoration, sometimes by tone, gesture, emphasis, or rhythm, sometimes by the words that are used with a special frequency or a special meaning. They are the things that separate them from the people of another culture. They make the part of a culture which is not art, or religion, or morals, or politics, and yet it relates to all these highly formulated departments of culture. It is modified by them; it modifies them; it is generated by them; it generates them. In this part of culture assumption rules, which is often so much stronger than reason. (206-07)

Manners seem subtle, but very important in the discussion of culture. James also argues in "The Question of Our Speech": "The idea of good breeding—without which

intercourse fails to flower into fineness without which human relations bear but crude and tasteless fruit—is one of the most precious conquests of civilization, the very core of our social heritage" (45). To preserve and enlarge the value of good breeding, or "in other words, simply the idea of *secure* good manner," James felt a conscious mission for himself (45). The significance of manners in the scheme of civilization was indeed to concern him more and more as time went on. "In America in the nineteenth century, Henry James was alone in knowing that to scale the moral and aesthetic heights in the novel one had to use the ladder of social observation" (Trilling 212). James studied manners in order to ascertain the nature of individuals and the essence of their civilizations, as he states in his essay—"Emerson": "We know a man imperfectly until we know his society, and we but half know a society until we know its manners" (53).

3.1.1. Manners in America and Europe

Manners to James are something more than patrician decorum. "He knew too well how much conventions of behavior vary with time and place to make them an absolute index of right and wrong" (Wegelin 17). In the nineteenth century, manners differ greatly in Europe and America due to their different history and social systems. Tocqueville makes a very detailed comparison between manners in aristocracy and democracy in *Democracy in America*. In "Some Reflections on American Manners," Tocqueville observes that in democracies no such thing as a regular code of good breeding can be laid down:

> The men who live in democracies are too fluctuating for a certain number of them ever to succeed in laying down a code of good breeding, and in forcing people to follow it. Every man therefore behaves after his own fashion, and there is always a certain incoherence in the manners of such times, because they are moulded upon the feelings and notions of each individual, rather than upon an ideal model proposed for general imitation. (177)
>
> ….
>
> Thus it may be said, in one sense, that the effect of democracy is not exactly to give men any particular manners, but to prevent them from having manners at all. (179)

In a democratic society, manners are neither so instructed nor so uniform, but they are frequently more sincere. "They form, as it were, a light and loosely woven veil, through

which the real feelings and private opinions of each individual are easily discernible" (178). In contrast, in aristocracies the rules of propriety impose the same demeanor on everyone: They make all the members of the same class appear alike, in spite of their private inclinations; they adorn and they conceal the natural human being. As Tocqueville observes, the manners of aristocracy do not constitute virtue, but they sometimes embellish virtue itself:

> It was no ordinary sight to see a numerous and powerful class of men, whose every outward action seemed constantly to be dictated by a natural elevation of thought and feeling, by delicacy and regularity of taste, and by urbanity of manners. Those manners threw a pleasing illusory charm over human nature; and though the picture was often a false one, it could not be viewed without a noble satisfaction. (179)

Tocqueville further comments: "In democracies manners are never so refined as amongst aristocratic nations, but on the other hand they are never so coarse. Neither the coarse oaths of the populace, nor the elegant and choice expressions of the nobility are to be heard there: the manners of such a people are often vulgar, but they are neither brutal nor mean" (178). Tocqueville's opinion about American manners anticipates Arnold's comments in "A Word about America": America is just England, "with the Barbarians quite left out, and the Populace nearly" (*The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold* Vol. X: 7). Arnold argues in *Culture and Anarchy* that there is the spectacle of an upper class materialized, a middle class vulgarized, a lower class brutalized in the social system of England. The burden of Arnold's protest against the Philistine was that he was "vulgarized." For James too, the word "vulgar" expressed the extremest distaste. He uses it emphatically in his description of the traveling Americans he observes.

In the nineteenth century, manners were often thought to carry moral content. In other words, good manners and forms of civility were often seen as outer signs of morality. They were closely related; therefore, an "impropriety" involves both realms, whereby a breach in one is a breach in the other. "Among the classes that thought manners important, a person who followed the rules was considered morally superior to a person who broke them" (Carter 20). However, in James's works, "We can visualize a scissors-like movement between manners and morals, whereby the axis of Europe

moves high in manners but low in morals, while the axis of America goes up in morals but low in manners" (Perosa 233). James is aware that human beings can have "very high-bred manners and very low-born feelings": "the imposing externals may conceal the meanest hearts" (Tocqueville 179). Good manners do not constitute virtue, but they sometimes embellish virtue itself. Beneath the ill manners might be a noble mind and heart. "Sometimes morals and manners are so inextricably mixed that we cannot tell whether characters act as they do because they think it is morally right or because it is socially proper" (Tuttleton, *The Novel of Manners in America* 12).

3.1.2 Two Customs: Chaperonage and Flirting

In *The Novel of Manners in America*, James W. Tuttleton defines a novel of manners as follows:

> [A] novel in which the manners, social customs, folkways, conventions, traditions, and mores of a given social group at a given time and place play a dominant role in the lives of fictional characters, exert control over their thought and behavior, and constitute a determinant upon the actions in which they are engaged, and in which these manners and customs are detailed realistically—with, in fact, a premium upon the exactness of their representation. (10)

According to this definition, *Daisy Miller* is one of them. In the novella, Daisy's behavior is seriously censured by the expatriates in the American colony in America, mainly centering on two customs—chaperonage and flirting, which are quite differently practiced in nineteenth-century Europe and America. First, there is an international contrast of the practice of the custom of chaperonage in America and Europe. Henry James describes this difference in "From a Roman Note-book" of *Transatlantic Sketches* (1875):

> The weather perfect and the crowd (especially to-day) amazing. Such a staring, lounging, dandified, amiable crowd! Who does the vulgar, stay-at-home work of Rome? All the grandees and half the foreigners are there in their carriages. […] Europe is certainly the continent of *staring*. The ladies on the Pincio have to run the gantlet; but they seem to do so complacently enough. The European woman is brought up to the sense of having a definite part (in the way of manners) to play in public. To lie back in a barouche alone, balancing a parasol, and seeming to ignore the extremely immediate gaze of two serried ranks of male creatures on each side of her path, save here and there to recognize one of

> them with an imperceptible nod, is one of her daily duties. The number of young men here who lead a purely contemplative life is enormous. They muster in especial force on the Pincio….The Pincio has a great charm; it is a great resource. I am forever being reminded of the "aesthetic luxury"…of living in Rome. (197-99; emphasis in original)

From the above description, we know that Daisy fails to do as the Romans do. Daisy walks with gentlemen in public, first with Winterbourne in Vevey, then with Giovanelli in Rome rather than modestly offering him no more than "an imperceptible nod" from the security of a carriage. She unwittingly violates the custom that young unmarried women should be constantly under the surveillance of chaperones, which is practiced strictly in England and on the Continent.

However, the system of chaperonage was not followed in the United States, except in some very small circles that imitated European manners, for example, Mrs. Costello's "minutely hierarchical" New York society (18). In *The Light of the Home: An Intimate View of the Lives of Women in Victorian America* (1983), Harvey Green notes that, in contrast to Europe, "[h]ere, unchaperoned social activity was the norm" (12). This observation is confirmed by the testimony of no less authoritative a contemporary observer of American manners and mores than John Hay. He observed of Daisy Miller in 1879:

> She is represented, by a chronicler who loves and admires her, as bringing ruin upon herself and a certain degree of discredit upon her country-women, through eccentricities of behavior for which she cannot justly be held responsible. Her conduct is without blemish, according to the rural American standard, and she knows no other. It is the merest ignorance or affectation, on the part of the anglicized Americans of Boston or New York, to deny this. A few dozens, perhaps a few hundreds, of families in America have accepted the European theory of the necessity of surveillance for young ladies, but it is idle to say it has ever been accepted by the country at large. In every city of the nation young girls of good family, good breeding, and perfect innocence of heart and mind, receive their male acquaintance *en tête-à-tête*, and go to parties and concerts with them, unchaperoned. (qtd. in Fogel 52)

Here, by way of contrast, is an account of the European system as practiced in the upper middle class and upper class in England:

> The restrictions and conventions of Society were designed to make courtship difficult. "An unmarried woman under thirty could not go anywhere or be in a room even in her own house with an unrelated man unless accompanied by a married gentlewoman or a servant" (Davidoff 50). Young girls could certainly not go unchaperoned to the theatre, dances or restaurants. Few public places were open to women alone, especially those

> below the critical age of thirty, so that meetings with young men were usually restricted to the home, under careful observation. Daughters paid social calls only in the company of parents or chaperones and while suitable young men might be permitted to call on Sundays, such visits inevitably implied that their intentions were serious. A young girl also had to be careful not to appear to encourage any one man unless she was willing to marry him. (Jalland 24-25)

Jalland also observes that while "[t]he established aristocracy could perhaps afford to be slightly more relaxed about the rules than the rising middle class," even they "could not expect to ignore Society's rules without risking the sanction of exclusion from desirable drawing-rooms and from sources of alliance and power" (25). In other words, even aristocrats who went against the social code might suffer the kind of ostracism inflicted on Daisy in Rome. "Chaperonage, moreover, also expressed Victorian anxieties about sex and sexuality; the Victorians sought to regulate the bestiality they feared stirred beneath the surface of polished manners and elaborate social rituals" (Fogel 54).

Flirting is another important issue in the novella. Daisy flirts with men in the society in Europe. After racking his brains for quite a while to type Daisy, Winterbourne is inclined to think of her as "a flirt—a pretty American flirt" (15). At Mrs. Walker's soirée Winterbourne says to Daisy, "I'm afraid your habits are those of a flirt." "Of course they are," Daisy replies. "I'm a fearful, frightful flirt! Did you ever hear of a nice girl that was not?"(44). It is important to understand that there is no violation of consistency for Daisy to be at one and the same time an innocent flirt. "Flirting, after all, is a kind of sexual banter or teasing. It is primarily verbal, and it ceases to be flirtation if it proceeds beyond play, which, in Daisy's case, it never does" (Fogel 60). Flirting does not need to be derogatory and base. Daisy's flirtatious behavior and her question—"Did you even hear of a nice girl that was not" a flirt?—are simply in accord with American courtship rituals. Harvey Green observes that "Flirting" was socially acceptable as a way for a young woman to reveal her social grace and her availability to prospective suitors," and he quotes *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine* (July 1860): "Flirting is to marriage what free trade to commerce. By it the value of a woman is exhibited, tested, her capacities known, her temper displayed, and the opportunity offered of judging what sort of a wife she may probably become" (12). Even

Winterbourne seems to acknowledge the customary nature of flirtation in America when he tells Daisy that "Flirting is a purely American custom; it doesn't' exist here" (45). This seems to throw some light upon the matter, for Winterbourne remembers to have heard that his pretty cousins in New York were "tremendous flirts." "But don't they do all these things—the young girls in America?" (19), Winterbourne enquires. In the nineteenth century, American women were under somewhat less strict control and had relatively more freedom than women in England and on the continent, in part because of the comparatively high degree of social mobility and the absence of a rigid social hierarchy in America.

To sum up, manners vary from place to place; therefore, it is impossible to place taste and grace within a universal aesthetics; there are no absolute relations between manners and morals; therefore, the canons of behavior are not necessarily moral imperatives.

3.2. Traveling Americans: "Vulgar, Vulgar, Vulgar"

In his essay in *The Nation* in 1878, Henry James, a man fixated on manners, dress, and deportment, declares that "a very large majority of the Americans who annually scatter themselves over Europe […] are ill-made, ill-mannered, ill-dressed" (qtd. in Levenstein 178). James had very early caught the American newly rich families' manners in Europe. The ignorant and spoiled children could dominate their less cultivated parents. James was charged by his compatriots with having dealt too critically with the traveling Americans. However, even Emerson, for all his proclamations urging complete independence and a rejection of Europe, would admit that in certain spheres the restrains of the older culture were needed, and he said, in "Social Aims": "Much ill-natured criticism has been directed on American manners. I don't think it is to be resented. Rather, if we are wise, we shall listen and mend" (qtd. in Raleigh 6).

3.2.1. Uncultivated and Ungovernable

Like Christopher Newman, the Millers belong to a new class of American businessmen, whose stylish families were eager to make "the grand tour" and expose themselves to the art and culture of the old world "to round off one's sharp American edges, to polish up one's dull American surface" (Stowe 34). Ezra B. Miller, Daisy's father, is preoccupied with his lucrative business in Schenectady, absent from the family journey. He remains at home making more money, while his wife and children are traveling in Europe to get some "culture." He wants Daisy to "see Europe for herself" (32). However, their dependence on their guides is taken as evidence of their ignorance of foreign languages. They are rushed from sight to sight, "in the cars about half the time" (13), which precludes learning anything uplifting about the places they visit.

Randolph, Daisy's younger brother, is loud, ill-mannered, and ungovernable. He has his sister's spirit in a rougher, and even more immature form. He is first introduced through the description of his unruly behavior, "he carried in his hand a long alpenstock, the sharp point of which he thrust into everything that he approached—the flowerbeds, the garden benches, the trains of the ladies' dresses" (8). He approaches Winterbourne, a man he first meets without hesitation, and asks for a lump of sugar, which is definitely a sign of lacking manners. Everything about him is pointed and aggressive: his unnaturally "aged expression of countenance," "sharp little features," "sharp little voice"; the "brilliant red" of his stockings and cravat, and his "bright, penetrating little eyes" (8); above all the sharp alpenstock he carries around, like an emblem of his nature and his narrative function. "Even the sound of the words 'knickerbockers' and 'spindleshanks,' as applied to him, gives an appropriate raw edge to his image, like his pronunciation of the word 'har-r-d'" (Pollak 37).

Daisy claims that Randolph is quite smart for his age, but we are given no clear evidence of that. Instead, his characterization gives us the impression of an overindulged boy, who wants to do anything he likes. When Winterbourne inquires whether his brother has a teacher, Daisy answers that their mother thinks of getting one for him to travel around with the family, but Randolph does not want a teacher traveling with them. His behavior is a strong contrast to the scene at the beginning of the story: "little Polish boys walking about held by the hand, with their governors" (7). Randolph

cannot play with other boys. There is only one boy nearby, but he always goes round with a teacher; they do not let him play. He does not like Europe, and wants to go right back to America. His lack of interest in ancient monuments in Europe has largely confined the Millers to their hotels. Daisy tells Winterbourne that "[Randolph] says he don't [*sic*] care much about old castles. He's only nine. He wants to stay at the hotel. Mother's afraid to leave him alone, and the courier won't stay with him; so we haven't been to many places" (15). It's hard to get him go to bed, "he sat up all night-in the public parlor" (23).

He is the typical vulgar American tourist: boorish, boastful, and stridently nationalistic. As we can see from the following quotes from the text, his speech is all America-centered:

> "It's this old Europe. It's the climate that makes them [his teeth] come out. In America they didn't come out. It's these hotels."
>
> "I can't get any candy here—any American candy. American candy's the best candy."
>
> "American men are the best."
>
> "She's an American girl." (9)
>
> "He's an American man!" (10)
>
> "I don't want to go to Italy. I want to go to America." (11)
>
> "My father ain't in Europe; my father's in a better place than Europe."
>
> "My father's in Schenectady. He's got a big business. My father's rich, you bet!" (12)
>
> "We've got a bigger place than this. It's all gold on the walls." (32)
>
> "The best place we've seen is the City of Richmond!" "It's the best place I've seen." Only it was turned the wrong way. (33)
>
> "You can't see anything here at night, except when there's a moon. In America there's always a moon!" (55)

In his comparison of Europe and America, Europe always falls short. He has a strong sense of American superiority. He is one of the typical ill-mannered traveling Americans that James then in Florence describes to his mother in the letter of October 13th, 1869:

> There is but one word to use in regard to them—vulgar, vulgar, vulgar. Their ignorance—their stingy, defiant, grudging attitude towards everything European—their perpetual reference of all things to some American standard or precedent which exists only in their own unscrupulous wind-bags—and then our unhappy poverty of voice, of speech and of physiognomy—these things glare at you hideously. […] What I have pointed out as our vices are the elements of the modern man with *culture* quite left out. It's the absolute and

> incredible lack of *culture* that strikes you in common travelling Americans. (*Henry James Letters* Vol. I: 152; emphasis in original)

However, some sympathy should be shown to Randolph for the fact that he has been practically abandoned by his busy father and neglected by his foolish mother and young sister.

Mrs. Miller, Daisy's mother, is a model of America's loosely controlling mother figure. She seems obsessed with her health and mostly confined to the hotel. She is utterly incapable of governing the behavior of her children. She allows her daughter to go out with men day and night, and permits her to do as she chooses in Europe. She openly admits that she is not able to persuade her son to go to bed. She agrees easily to Daisy's venture to Chillon with Winterbourne. She often leaves Daisy alone with Giovanelli in and out of the hotel, which becomes the topic of gossip in the society. She cannot do anything when Daisy is frolic with Roman society, which finally invites a snubbing from the American colony. She is "humbly unconscious of any violation of the usual social forms" (46). Though she warns Daisy that if she walks on the Pincio with Giovanelli, "You will get the fever as sure as you live" and that "Your friend won't keep you from getting the fever" (34), she still fails to discourage her from going. She is really silly and clueless, and only when Daisy falls ill, she proves "a most judicious and efficient nurse" (55). James condemns the absentminded Mrs. Miller and the physically absent Mr. Miller for their utter failure to discipline their children, to control them, and ultimately, "to protect them, not just from social evil (e.g. Daisy's ostracism) but from the very real physical danger of the world (the malaria to which Daisy succumbs)" (Fogel 10).

The Millers do not realize that their relationship with their servants might be normal in America, but is truly vulgar in Europeans' or Europeanized Americans' eyes, and violates the custom in the Old World. Rose says in *Unspeakable Awfulness: America through the Eyes of European Travelers, 1865-1900* that the domestic help in America did not like the word "servant." Instead, they preferred to be called lady's helps or companions. "There was probably no profession in the country where workers displayed what Europeans believed was a fitting servility" (Rose 19). One traveler

confirmed that everyone in America should be presumed to be a lady or a gentleman. And this view was slightly endorsed by Mark Twain. Contrasting the English spoken in America with that spoken in Britain, Twain observed, "Your words, 'gentleman' and 'lady,' have a very restricted meaning. With us, they include the barmaid, butcher, burglar, harlot, and horse thief" (497). The Miller family allow the courier to sit with them in the garden in the evening. Their treating their courier, Eugenio, like a friend is probably a function of the democratic American mindset, since Americans did not notice class distinctions the way Europeans did. They speak of him as a friend—trustingly, almost affectionately, which seems ridiculous to the Europeanized American. Randolph likes to talk to waiters, and the courier is the only member of the Miller household who can persuade him to go to bed. Daisy's conversation with the chambermaid about Winterbourne's aunt is also a break with convention. Prying a hotel chambermaid on the habits and character of a fellow guest is simply vulgar, and telling Winterbourne that she has done so is even more vulgar.

Winterbourne agrees with his aunt, "it is very true that Daisy and her mamma have not yet risen to the stage of—what I shall call it?—of culture, […]" (48). As democratic people, they don't have any models of high breeding, and escape the daily necessity of imitation. "They do not require to agree or to copy from one another in order to speak or act in the same manner. Thus not only a democratic people cannot have aristocratic manners, but they neither comprehend nor desire them" (Tocqueville 179).

3.2.2. Daisy Miller: Ignorant or Innocent

Daisy is a girl from the State of New York, who imagines that all which is permissible for a young lady on that side of the Atlantic is equally in accordance with the manners and customs of Continental Europe, or, if not, that there is no reason why she should not act as if it were. She is often seen as a representative of American girls, young, naïve, wayward, scornful of convention, unaware of social distinctions, utterly lacking in any sense of propriety, and unwilling to adapt to the mores and standards of others. These traits have no fixed moral content, and nearly all of them can be regarded

as either virtues or faults.

Daisy is elusive because James does not present her mind directly in the story. James creates an unnamed narrator who acts as an observer to the events described in the story rather than an omniscient narrator who informs the reader of the thoughts of the characters. He offers the external details and leaves the moral judgement to the reader. As he wrote to a reviewer of *Daisy Miller*, "Nothing is my *last word* about anything—I am interminably super-subtle and analytical" (*Henry James Letters* Vol. II: 221; emphasis in original). He leaves us to judge her by what we observe of her speech and action and what we are willing to see through other characters' eyes. Mrs. Costello defines her as a very common, a dreadful girl, hopelessly vulgar. Similarly, Mrs. Walker thinks her a very reckless girl, naturally indelicate. Winterbourne's initial comments on her are: a pretty American flirt, rather wild; completely uncultivated, not a perfectly well-conducted young lady. All of Daisy's critics and censors in the story are American expatriates in Europe, a colony which bends over backwards to ape European practices and judgements. For them, Daisy is an uncultivated tourist just like her brother and mother.

Daisy is vulgar. Her clothes are expensive and elaborate, but they want "finish" and "form" (11). In Europe, she complains, "there ain't any society—or if there is I don't know where it keeps itself." "In New York," she goes on, "I had lots of society," and concludes, "I've always had a great deal of gentlemen's society" (14). For society, she means mixed evening parties with plenty of free "gentlemen." She thinks nothing of picking up strange men in hotel gardens. Her ideas of Europe are limited by her very narrow experience. Her only original remark on the European scene is that it appears to be full of hotels, and Europe to her is "perfectly sweet" (13). "I have never been in so many hotels in my life as since I came to Europe. I have seen so many—it's nothing but hotels" (13). She feels in Europe because even in Schenectady "she had had ever so many dresses and things from Paris" and "felt as if she were in Europe whenever she put on a Paris dress" (14). Her experience with Europe has everything to do with purchases and amusements and nothing to do with "culture."

Daisy is also undereducated. She understands little of the significance of historical

or literary association about what she sees. She seems naively impervious to Winterbourne's lecture when at Chillon he tries to tell her the stories of the castle. When Winterbourne tells her, "the history of the unhappy Bonivard," and she exclaims "Well; I hope you know enough! [...] I never saw a man that knew so much!" (28). Whereupon the narrator observes that "[t]he history of Bonivard had evidently, as they say, gone into one ear and out of the other" (28). She uses the Castle of Chillon only as rendezvous for her flirtation with Winterbourne. Rome to her is also a playground where she can display her dresses, meet her friends, and see the pretty sights. The Colosseum is for her "so pretty" (53). Whatever effect the European scene may have, it is not a social influence Daisy comprehends. Therefore, F. R. Leavis describes Daisy as "uneducated, and no intelligent man could stand her for long since there could be no possible exchange of speech with her: she has nothing to recommend her but looks, money, confidence, and clothes" (166). *Daisy Miller* was first rejected by a Philadelphia publisher probably because the critic thought it was "an outrage on American girlhood" (Pollak 2). As the expatriates express to observant Europeans that "Miss Daisy Miller was a young American lady, her behavior was not representative—was regarded by her compatriots as abnormal" (49).

However, Daisy is far more complicated than she seems to be. After the novel was published, James offered commentaries on Daisy Miller in the letters to his friends. First in the letter of 1880, he assured a correspondent, Eliza Lynn Linton, that "Poor little Daisy Miller was, as I understand her, above all things *innocent*. […] The keynote of her *character* is her innocence" (*Henry James Letters* Vol. II: 303). As James puts the matter in this letter, Daisy was too innocent ever to "take the measure really of the scandal she produced" and too innocent for one to "suggest that she was playing off Giovanelli against Winterbourne" (304). James's statements about Daisy's innocence, combined with Winterbourne's assent to Giovanelli's affirmation of her innocence at the end of *Daisy Miller*, "she was the most innocent" (56), would seem to remove any possible doubt on that score. However, Daisy is still hard to pin down, because *innocent* has different shades of meanings: naïve, ignorant, or not doing any harm or wrong.

For some critics, Daisy's innocence means that she is a child of nature as opposed

to history, unsophisticated. The novella provides plenty of evidence to support this reading. When Winterbourne first meets Daisy, he is struck by her "perfectly direct and unshrinking" glance, "It was not, however, what would have been called an immodest glance, for the young girl's eyes were singularly honest and fresh" (11). When she goes with Winterbourne to the Castle of Chillon, "she blushed neither when she looked at him nor when she felt that people were looking at her" (27). Winterbourne observes to himself that Daisy is "a very different type of maternity from that of the vigilant matrons who massed themselves in the forefront of social intercourse in the dark old city at the other end of the lake" (24). She is uninterested in titles and social climbing and fitting herself into the European mold. This interpretation sees Daisy's innocence as a virtue that separates her from the unnecessarily "stiff" conventions of an excessively traditional society. If it means that she is unsophisticated, it also means that she carries no affectation. She is innocent also in the sense of being guiltless of the charges of vulgarity and impropriety against her. According to this reading, "those charges actually indict Mrs. Walker and all the other self-appointed arbiters of social mores who so cruelly shun Daisy" (Lukas 211).

Yet a second interpretation takes "her innocence to be an inexperience that manifests itself as willful ignorance, and it finds her guilty of the very charges that the expatriate colony brings against her" (Lukas 212). There is also textual evidence to support this reading. Daisy is largely ignorant of her violation of the social code. In Vevey there is no hint whatsoever that she knows how surprising Winterbourne finds her behavior and that of her mother. In Rome she appears to have plunged with gay abandon at first into the pleasures of being "surrounded by a half-dozen wonderful moustaches" (31). Throughout the novel, Daisy simply does not know how to behave properly, and she responds defiantly if anyone bothers to tell her so. Instead of declining Mrs. Walker's suggestion to let her get into her carriage politely, she laughs off the idea. "Daisy gave a violent laugh. 'I never heard anything so stiff! If this is improper, Mrs. Walker,' she pursued, 'then I am all improper, and you must give me up. Goodbye; I hope you'll have a lovely ride!' and, with Mr. Giovanelli, who made a triumphantly obsequious salute, she turned away" (40). Daisy's wayward behavior indeed betrays a

lack of concern for modesty and decency, and inexperience in her contact with other people and the art of conversation.

She shows no signs of adapting to European society, does not think it is necessary to change her habits in other people's houses in another country, and in fact she resists the efforts of those who would help her to blend into the American colony. She goes to Mrs. Walker's house with Giovanelli, and makes a scene in front of other guests. "She rustled forward in radiant loveliness, smiling and chattering, carrying a large bouquet, and attended by Mr. Giovanelli. Everyone stopped talking and turned and looked at her" (43). She is appraised by the expatriates in the American colony for her indelicacy, finally ostracized from the society. "They ceased to invite her" (49). Daisy might have her own reasons to behave in her own way, but her attitude seems very impolite and intolerable, which betrays a lack of skills in social contact. In short, according to this interpretation, Daisy acts both improperly and irresponsibly so that her death results from her own ignorance and vanity. "Continually revealing a lack of standards and principles, she is guilty of willfully ignoring the recommendations of those whose standards are clear" (Lukas 212).

James also states in the same letter that Daisy is ignorant. In addition, he even dismisses the idea that Daisy was consciously "defiant of the conventions of the American expatriate community in Rome." He says, "She was too ignorant, too irreflective, too little versed in the proportions of things." "The whole idea of the story is the little tragedy of a light, thin, natural, unsuspecting creature being sacrificed as it were to a social rumpus that went on quite over her head and to which she stood in no measurable relations" (*Henry James Letters* Vol. II: 303-04). However, readers may reasonably disagree with James about the extent to which Daisy can be viewed as consciously defiant of—and critical of—the social system with which she is confronted. According to the text of the novella, she is significantly more critically aware than James's statement in his letter to Mrs. Linton allows.

Lisa Johnson affirms Daisy's resistance to physical and psychological enclosure in her paper, "Daisy Miller: Cowboy Feminist." She ventures where proper women do not go—into the street, and into frank speech. "If manners are, as Terry Eagleton argues,

a trick of society in which political agendas become disguised and defused as good taste, then Daisy, in rejecting the seemingly superficial domain of etiquette, rejects as well a social structure that hinges on gender and class oppression" (Lisa Johnson 43). In fact, "walking is well-known as a *masculine* motif of freedom and spiritual enlightenment" (43). She further argues that "when Daisy insists on walking in the streets rather than staying home, or at least riding in an enclosed carriage like a 'good' woman, she reveals an inchoate impulse towards a more street-smart femininity" (Lisa Johnson 45). When Daisy is talking with Mrs. Walker about walking with two men in public, she makes clear that she is choosing, as Isabel Archer would wish to do. She tells Winterbourne three days later that she defied Mrs. Walker in order to spare Giovanelli's feelings: "But did you ever hear anything so cool as Mrs. Walker's wanting me to get into her carriage and drop poor Mr. Giovanelli, and under the pretext that it was proper? *People have different ideas!* It would have been most unkind; he had been talking about that walk for ten days" (44; emphasis added). For Daisy, the greater impropriety is not to appear "a very reckless girl" (39) by walking with Giovanelli but to be unkind to her friend by disappointing and abandoning him. Daisy later implies that "there is a moral imperative to be kind that should supersede adherence to the social code" (Fogel 62-63), when she tells Winterbourne, with regard to Mrs. Walker's exclusion of her and Winterbourne's warning that others "will give you the cold shoulder," "I shouldn't think you would let people be so unkind!" (51).

Daisy stands out as an icon of defiance, when she tells Winterbourne, "I have never allowed a gentleman to dictate to me, or to interfere with anything I do" (37). She offers a critique of the reigning sexual ideology when she answers Winterbourne's charge that flirting is not understood "in young unmarried women" with the riposte, "It seems to me much more proper in young unmarried women than in old married ones" (45), which should remind us of Winterbourne's experience of "dangerous, terrible women" who were "provided, for respectability's sake, with husbands" (15). She criticizes the double standard of sexual mores, as Mrs. Costello says, "of course a man may know everyone. Men are welcome to the privilege!" (30). "Most impressively, Daisy intuits that society is much more concerned with appearances than with actuality**,** is concerned above all

with the look of respectability and of innocence" (Fogel 63). "They are only pretending to be shocked," she tells Winterbourne. "They don't really care a straw what I do" (51). What is implicit in this speech is her insight into what concerns the Mrs. Walkers of the world, which is not what she does but what she appears to do. The text endows Daisy with a moral consciousness and with some conscious defiance of the code of behavior that condemns her, regardless of James's statement that "she was not defiant" (*Henry James Letters* Vol. II: 303).

Daisy is a good and pure girl from the beginning to the end of the story. Others do not understand her "in part because they are hidebound" and "blinded by convention and by prejudice," but also in part because of her manners (the external codes of behavior), thus Daisy herself "fail to communicate what she really is" (Fogel 95). Though she has her own idea, she does not have the intellectual complexity and fineness of scruple that characterize later Jamesian heroines, like Isabel Archer or Maggie Verver to confront the people against her.

3.3. American Expatriates: "Superstitious Valuation of Europe"

Young James suffered from "the great American disease"—"the appetite, morbid and monstrous, for colour and form, for the picturesque and romantic at any price" (Tuttleton, *The Novel of Manners in America* 48), in Europe, where life seemed "raised to a higher power, become more richly charged, more significantly composed, and more completely informed" (Croly 29). Europe is an ideal place for those who crave for culture. James ultimately decided: "My choice is the Old World—my choice, my need, my life" (*Henry James Letters* Vol. II: 328). As we can see, the locales of *Daisy Miller*—Lake Geneva, Vevey, the Castle of Chillon, the Roman Pincio, the Colosseum, the Palatine Hill, and the Protestant Cemetery where Shelley and Keats lie buried have "an aura of mysterious fable, ineffable beauty, and stirring heroism" (Fogel 42). James wrote to his friend Charles Eliot Norton on Feb. 4, 1872: "It's a complex fate, being an American, and one of the responsibilities it entails is fighting against a superstitious valuation of Europe" (*Henry James Letters* Vol. I: 274).

Like their author, the American expatriates Mrs. Costello, Mrs. Walker, and Winterbourne are more sympathetic with the European way of life, with its emphasis on culture. They hold in high regard and adopt the social niceties and the rules of propriety that have been laid down by centuries of European civilization. They act like the saying, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do," and align themselves with the observant Europeans. They are disgusted by their traveling compatriots, who are described as boorish, undereducated, and absurdly provincial, unaware of the culture and history in a centuries-old world outside their own new and expanding country.

They know that customs differ from place to place. What can be done in one country without impunity, can be condemned in another. When they go to a foreign society they will be judged through foreign eyes according to the laws or conventions of the place in which they are. To keep their reputation, they must set aside their accustomed American ways, learn European manners under different circumstances, and govern themselves accordingly. Mrs. Walker makes this clear when she tells Winterbourne that Daisy does "[e]verything that is not done here [in Rome]," which indicates that Rome has its own specific set of rules of social conventions and ethical behavior (10). These are rules that Daisy is breaking in her loose association with various men. She enumerates implacably Daisy's violations of customs, "Flirting with any man she could pick up; sitting in corners with mysterious Italians; dancing all the evening with the same partners; receiving visits at eleven o'clock at night. Her mother goes away when visitors come" (41). Winterbourne is also aware of the fact that rules differ from one place to another, as the narrative makes clear when he first meets Daisy; he is aware that in Geneva, a young man is not at liberty to speak to a young unmarried lady except under certain rarely occurring conditions; "but here, at Vevey, what conditions could be better than these?" (10) This also indicates that rules of social conventions are tied to specific locations.

The American expatriates' opinion about the traveling Americans also echoes their author's comment—vulgar. Mrs. Costello comments on the Miller family, "They are hopelessly vulgar. Whether or not being hopelessly vulgar is being 'bad' is a question

for the metaphysicians. They are bad enough to dislike, at any rate; and for this short life that is quite enough" (31). In their eyes, the Miller family's behavior is socially improper, thus vulgar.

3.3.1. The American Colony in Europe: Snobbish Society

Tuttleton explains in *The Novel of Manners in America*: "Society" as used in the study of manners, ordinarily refers to the structure of "classes," cliques, or groups by which specific communities are organized. What is important to this genre is that there be for analysis groups with recognizable and differentiable manners and conventions. These groups need not be stable, in the sense of enduring for centuries (e.g., the English or French hereditary aristocracy). They need not even be typical of the general culture of a particular country (e.g., James's American colony in Rome). For the novel of manners it is necessary only that there be groups large enough to develop a set of differing conventions which express their values and permanent enough for the writers' notation of their manners. Hence it need not be assumed that the novel of manners features only an aristocratic class in conflict with the bourgeoisie; any stratified groups will do (13).

James has something in common with the American expatriates as mentioned above, but he did not overlook their servile imitation of European manners and the worldliness and hypocrisy of the American colony in Europe. Wegelin describes the American expatriates as follows:

> The majority of them, the women who set the social tone, are motivated largely by the convert's zeal to advertise this conversion: they ostracize her [Daisy], as we are told, "for the benefit of observant Europeans," in order to prove their own proficiency in the rules of the social "system" they have adopted, in order to leave no doubt that they are fully aware how "monstrous" the American freedoms of Daisy's conduct are. They are social snobs pure and simple. (61)

Mrs. Costello, Winterbourne's aunt, stands for the snobbish high society of the American colony in Europe. Her circles back in America were exclusive, and she frequently intimated that she would have made a great impression upon her time if it

were not for her frequent headaches. “And her picture of the minutely hierarchical constitution of the society of that city, which she presented to him in many different lights, was, to Winterbourne’s imagination, almost oppressively striking” (18). She perches on the social ladder very high both in America and Europe, and sticks to the system of hierarchy. Therefore, she seems to be obsessed with the fact that the Miller family treat their courier as equal, “like a familiar friend, like a gentleman,” and Daisy’s contact with “third-rate Italians” (30). Without any direct contact with the Millers, she places the Miller family in the low social scale. She declares to Winterbourne, “They are very common, they are the sort of Americans that one does one’s duty by not—accepting” (18). She looks down upon the Miller family because of their new money and unsophisticated conduct, and intimacy with their courier, Eugenio. She even makes fun of them, “Very likely they have never seen a man [Eugenio] with such good manners, such fine clothes, so like a gentleman. He probably corresponds to the young lady’s idea of a count” (18). She warns Winterbourne to avoid the family. When Winterbourne is not in Vevey, she writes to him: “They [the Miller family] seem to have made several acquaintances, but the courier continues to be the most intimate. The young lady, however, is also very intimate with some third-rate Italians, with whom she rackets about in a way that makes much talk” (30).

She never comes into direct contact with Daisy, but instantly judges Daisy based on the stereotype as “the sort of young lady who expects a man - sooner or later - to carry her off” (19). When she knows that Winterbourne and Daisy get to know each other without proper introduction, she draws the quick conclusion about Daisy, “What a dreadful girl!” (19). She feels annoyed when Winterbourne mentions he takes the liberty of telling Daisy that he wants to introduce them to each other. She inspects Daisy and Giovanelli “with her optical instrument” and speculates without solid evidence that Daisy might be engaged to him: “It was the courier probably who introduced him; and if he succeeds in marrying the young lady, the courier will come in for a magnificent commission” (47). Mrs. Costello and her friends of the American colony constantly gossip about Daisy: “She goes on from day to day, from hour to hour, as they did in the

Golden Age. I can imagine nothing more vulgar" (47). The fact that Daisy goes to the Colosseum with a gentleman at night is soon known to every member of the little American circle, and commented on accordingly. In terms of what Daisy appears to be, "'flirt' slides into 'coquette,' an acquaintance becomes a liaison" (Deakin 14). Mrs. Costello appears to care about reputation very much, but spares no effort to damage Daisy's reputation. The rumor that Daisy is engaged to Giovanelli somehow changes Winterbourne's attitude toward Daisy, which more or less accelerates Daisy's waywardness, then her death. All this just proves her hypocrisy and pretension.

In fact, Mrs. Costello's revulsion from the Miller family is more a matter of class prejudice than her indignation over Daisy's ill-mannered behavior. The Millers are *nouveaux riches*. They do not have the class, the sophistication, or the cultural attainments of the older, exclusive families of New York who would constitute good society. Any matters of taste and conduct, therefore, can be what James calls a "battlefield." Here manners become "the subtle internal forces that members of a social caste exert upon each other in their efforts to keep up standards of taste or brilliance, which in turn are the regulating boundaries that determine class power" (Bentley 87). They act as signs of a silent network of social power rather than inherent propriety.

Mrs. Walker exemplifies the values of the European American similar to Mrs. Costello. She is described as "one of those American ladies who, while residing abroad, make a point, in their own phrase, of studying European society, and she had on this occasion collected several specimens of her diversely born fellow mortals to serve, as it were, as textbooks" (42). The narrating voice is clearly satirical of Mrs. Walker and her activities, but despite such self-distancing ploys as "in their own phrase," and "as it were," there is "the sense of an epigrammatic and specimen-collecting stylist behind the very voice that satirizes specimen-collecting and the formulaic cast of the epigram" (Graham 53). However, unlike Mrs. Costello, who seems to get most of her social power by refusing visits and making herself scarce, Mrs. Walker is a bit of a social butterfly, hosting many get-togethers in Rome.

In Vevey, Mrs. Walker is at first friends with Daisy Miller. Once she moves to Rome though, where the moral system is much more rigid, she can no longer condone the frivolity of Daisy's actions. She rushes after Daisy on the Pincio because Daisy is making a scene by walking with two men in public. She wears an excited air, "It is really too dreadful" (38). She tells Winterbourne, "That girl must not do this sort of thing. She must not walk here with you two men. Fifty people have noticed her" (38). She wishes to conventionalize Daisy first rather than exclude her. "Thank heaven I have found you," and with "her hands devoutly clasped," she attempts to persuade Daisy against walking in the company of men (38). She urges Daisy condescendingly to get into her carriage, "to drive her about here for half an hour, so that the world may see she is not running absolutely wild, and then to take her safely home." "It may be enchanting, dear child, but it is not the custom here" (39). Since Daisy does not listen to her admonishment, Mrs. Walker resorts to harsh remarks, "You are old enough to be more reasonable. You are old enough, dear Miss Miller, to be talked about." "Should you prefer being thought a very reckless girl?" (39). Finally, she even blackmails Winterbourne, when he feels bound to accompany Daisy, "Get in here, sir. […] Here, by the way, you have a chance" (41). She declares that if he refuses her this favor she would never speak to him again. She orders Winterbourne to cease his relations with Daisy. If Winterbourne insists on rejoining Daisy, she will put him down because she has made an imperious claim upon his society. After Daisy refuses to give in to the rules set by society, Mrs. Walker casts the girl away, first ignoring Daisy at her party and then pledging to never allow Daisy in her house again. Even Winterbourne, who slowly moves toward a disapproval of Daisy, criticizes Mrs. Walker for her harsh overreaction toward Daisy.

Mrs. Walker reacts to Daisy's action with "*Elle s'affiche*" (43); she is thinking certainly of the public exhibit she believes Daisy is making of herself, but is inferring as well that a public breach of manners is evidence enough of a private lapse of morality. Mrs. Walker and her kind might be influenced by **"**Puritan obsession with separating the good from the bad, secularized here into a code of what is socially right and wrong,"

which makes it easier for them to judge than to understand Daisy (Deakin 25). But though James is aware of the social proprieties, he is not so committed to their value as the expatriates are. “If, like Mrs. Costello, he too had headaches, they would have been caused not so much by the social indiscretions he encountered as by the aesthetic vulgarities he had to endure, which also may help account for his keeping the door to his empathy only part-way open” (Deakin 26).

Daisy’s problem is not really from the Europeans but from the American expatriates in the colony in Europe, who have a cultural inferiority complex. They are ashamed of the unbridled American freedom displayed by Daisy’s free manners; they think Daisy is a disgrace to American identity, and it is their responsibility to curb her liberty. Without considering different characteristics of each individual, they try to establish a single and homogeneous pattern of manners to fit all. When Mrs. Costello speaks of “the minutely hierarchical constitution” (18) of New York society, America appears feudal. The American snobs like Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Walker see nothing in Daisy’s positive qualities which are also typical of American girls. “They conduct themselves in a manner that earlier writers scorned as ‘aping’ European ways: demonstrating a form of adaptability that constitutes a cardinal sin against the American ideals of democracy and equality” (Wadsworth 45).

3.3.2. Europeanized Americans: Amphibious Attachments

At the beginning of the story, the narrator first introduces Winterbourne as “a young American” (7). Then Randolph exclaims to Daisy, “He is an American man!” (10). With this emphasis, it seems that his American identity is important for the story. Yet, oddly he is an American who does not live in America and does not have an occupation, “not in business” (29). He is also closely associated with New England Puritanism: he has been put to school there as a boy, and he has afterward gone to college in Geneva, the little metropolis that James is at pains to identify as the wellspring of Calvinism. Later he makes his home there not out of necessity but by

choice. He lives a life more like a European idler. His being at home with European manners has sort of disrupted his knowledge of American manners.

Through his eyes the reader largely sees Daisy; Winterbourne is preoccupied with analyzing Daisy's character. "If *Daisy Miller* is not about Daisy exactly, it is certainly about recognizably *masculine* ways of looking at women" (Bell 55). He wants to be able to define and categorize her to some known class of woman that he understands and is confused all the time. James introduces him as "a dilettantish aesthete" (Deakin 19), for he is "addicted to observing and analyzing" feminine beauty (11). His habit is to categorize; he sees the type, not the individual. When Daisy first appears before him, his response is not "how pretty she is," but "how pretty they are" (10). Daisy is a novelty to him and hard to define, "Poor Winterbourne was amused, perplexed, and decidedly charmed" (14). He has never yet heard a young girl express herself in just this fashion. He is inclined to think Miss Daisy Miller was a flirt—a pretty American flirt. He has never, as yet, had any relations with young ladies of this category, because Daisy is different, she doesn't appear in Mrs. Walker's "Textbooks." He is charmed by Daisy's candor and spontaneity, but puzzled by her lack of concern for the social niceties and the rules of propriety in Europe adopted by the American colony in Rome.

Winterbourne's relation to Daisy is determined by the question what her freedoms represent, whether she is "innocent" or not, as discussed in the previous section. "Some people had told him that, after all, American girls were exceedingly innocent; and others had told him that, after all, they were not" (14). Out loud he defends Daisy, albeit rather feebly. Throughout the novella Winterbourne attempts and still fails to define Daisy in clear moral terms. He misjudges her because he has lived abroad so long that "his instinct for such a question" is muddled; his "reason" can only mislead him (14). "So that his failure of judgment, too, is the result of a peculiarly American entanglement in the conflict of manners" (Wegelin 62). Winterbourne struggles against stereotyping most of the time, even though he himself is extremely conventional. Winterbourne's story "is essentially about the making of a Europeanized American" (Hocks, "*Daisy Miller*, Backward into the Past: A Centennial Essay" 172).

He is not a snob like his fellow American expatriates. On the one hand, he is charmed by Daisy and her free spirit, and attempts to take adventures with Daisy:

> In Geneva, as he had been perfectly aware, a young man was not at liberty to speak to a young unmarried lady except under certain rarely occurring conditions; but here at Vevey, what conditions could be better than these?—a pretty American girl coming and standing in front of you in a garden. […] He wondered whether he had gone too far, but he decided that he must advance farther, rather than retreat. (10)

As he waits for Daisy in the large hall of the hotel, "he looked at her dress and, on the great staircase, her little rapid, confiding step, he felt as if there were something romantic going forward. He could have believed he was going to elope with her" (27). He passes out with her among all the idle people that are assembled there; they are all looking at her very hard. To Winterbourne their little excursion to Chillon is so much of an escapade—an adventure. He even goes so far as to bribe the custodian to leave them alone: "They had the good fortune to have been able to walk about without other companionship than that of the custodian;[…]. The custodian interpreted the bargain generously—Winterbourne, on his side, had been generous—and ended by leaving them quite to themselves" (28).

Against the imputations of Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Walker, he gallantly defends Daisy. When his aunt ridicules the Millers, he protests, "Ah, you are cruel! She's a very nice young girl." "She is completely uncultivated, but she is wonderfully pretty, and, in short, she is very nice" (19). Daisy might be "common," as Mrs. Costello has pronounced her; yet it is a wonder to him that, with her commonness, she has a singularly delicate grace. In Rome, his aunt mocks and criticizes again the manners of the Millers, "They are very dreadful people" (30). Winterbourne tries to defend them again, "They are very ignorant—very innocent only. Depend upon it they are not bad" (30). On the way to Pincio, when Mrs. Walker charges Daisy for her violations of customs, he also defends her: "The poor girl's only fault is that she is very uncultivated" (41). When Mrs. Walker orders him to cease his relations with Ms. Miller, "not to flirt with her—to give her no further opportunity to expose herself—to let her alone, in short" (41), Winterbourne disobeys her openly: "I'm afraid I can't do that, I like her extremely." "There shall be nothing scandalous in my attentions to her" (41).

On the other hand, Winterbourne holds on to the convention quite tightly. He spends time with his aunt not because of affection or because he takes pleasure in her company, but because it is improper not to do so; he has been taught at Geneva that "one must always be attentive to one's aunt" (17). He has high regard in social hierarchy like his aunt. He is miffed when Daisy says she wished he would stay at the hotel with his brother because their courier will not do that, and later Daisy suggests that he should travel with her family and be Randolph's tutor. Daisy's idea seems to lower his social status. When he first meets Giovanelli, by a quick glance he immediately classifies him: "He is not a gentleman, he is only a clever imitation of one. He is a music-master, or a penny-a-liner, or third-rate artist. […] a presumably low-lived foreigner" (37). He still cares about what other people in the American colony say about the Millers. Gradually, their attacks on Daisy's virtue erode his faith in Daisy. He is vexed with himself that, by instinct, he should not appreciate her justly. He laments that he has just lived so long out of his country that "he had lost a good deal; he had become dishabituated to the American tone" (14). He misunderstands Daisy's behavior on the occasion of her midnight excursion to the Colosseum as a confirmation of the snobbish expatriates' stereotype of her, and decides that Daisy is "a young lady whom a gentleman need no longer be at pains to respect" (53). Winterbourne finally succumbs to the expatriates' way of thinking and becomes the agent to a society that is harmful, even evil, in its determination to classify people and to shun those who do not conform rather than to see and to appreciate them in their unique individuality. Due to his amphibious attachments to both cultures and commitment to neither of them, Winterbourne is at once attracted to and repelled by Daisy's natural American free spirit.

Winterbourne's response to Daisy is rather complicated, also because his character lacks a good deal in integrity. "The simple and awful joke of 'Daisy Miller' is this: that while the expatriate idler Winterbourne worries over the morality of the young American woman, his own behavior constitutes immorality" (Weisbuch, "James and the American Sacred" 218). Winterbourne is rumored to sojourn in Geneva because of "a lady who lived there—a foreign lady—a person older than himself" (8). After Daisy

dies, he goes back to Geneva, "whence there continue to come the most contradictory accounts of his motives of sojourn: a report that he is 'studying hard—an intimation that he is much interested in a very clever foreign lady" (56). He relies on a society of American expatriate women who ape European morality in a grotesque aristocratic parody. Many critics argue that the psychological wound caused by Winterbourne's renunciation of interest in Daisy is no less important a reason for her death. As Tintner says, "*Daisy Miller* is the tragedy of a girl's frustrated love for a stiff and conventional American who has lost his instinct for right and wrong in terms of American culture" (11).

Out of the opposition of Daisy and Winterbourne emerge the great sets of opposing American and European correlatives in the international fiction of James, as Hocks summarizes, "Nature required art; activity and energy required meaning and consciousness; innocence required experience; freedom demanded an awareness of life's limitations; the ethical temperament required its aesthetic understanding; spontaneity must always inhabit the conditions of history and custom" ("*Daisy Miller*, Backward into the Past: A Centennial Essay" 178). *Daisy Miller* exemplifies the complicated relationship between manners and morals. Daisy is declared and shown to be very common and rather vulgar, and her "innocence" of manners is said to betray a notable degree of willful ignorance. She is condemned severely by the Europeanized Americans who mistake her social defiance for moral depravity. Her predicament is clearly indicative of a situation in which breaches of manners are construed as breaches of morality. However, in the novella, morals are on Daisy's side. Before she dies, she stresses the importance that her mother should tell Winterbourne that she is not engaged to Giovanelli, which dismisses the rumor spread in the American colony. Daisy's behavior might be ill-mannered, but she is by no means immoral.

Does James kill Daisy? Is Daisy's death an authorial punishment? Daisy dies of "Roman Fever," malaria, literally. However, many critics think that Daisy's death is mostly the consequence of her disregard of manners in Europe. "[H]er cheerful, free-and-easy disregard of all social conventions makes people first stare at her, then shake

their heads significantly, and finally cut her head" (Hayes 561). Perosa also argues: "The outcome is tragic, because the social force and the constriction of manners, no matter how falsely applied, carry an overwhelming victory" (235). Nancy Bentley asks whether the portrayal of manners in a novel is intended either to reinforce or to subvert the internalized "cosmology" that is the matrix for the controlling laws of decorum. "Does writing about manners defend or undermine the hierarchies they serve?" (8). Is James an "invisible agent of power" or "hero of subversion" (9)? Bentley sees James as ambiguously partaking of both roles, and Lisa Johnson reads "Daisy's death as a particularly rich dramatization of this unresolved tension" (52).

The traveling Americans' manners really troubled James, as Ella W. Thompson says in *Beaten Path* (1874), "O my country, may you not be *judged by your travelling children*!" (qtd. in Wadsworth 107). James distinguished himself among writers of fiction in the exclusiveness of his consecration to beauty. As Sherman points out, "to the religious consciousness all things are ultimately holy or unholy; to the moral consciousness all things are ultimately good or evil to the scientific consciousness all things are ultimately true or not true; to Henry James all things are ultimately beautiful or ugly" (76). As a man fixated on manners, he was ashamed of his compatriots' ill-mannered behavior when they were traveling in Europe. Meanwhile, he was aware that human beings can have "very high-bred manners and very low-born feelings": the imposing external behavior "may conceal the meanest hearts" (Tocqueville 179). Therefore, he also deplores the sophisticated expatriates' attitudes and behavior and condemns their social cruelty. All of Daisy's censors are American expatriates, and none of them the "real thing" (European aristocrats). James is warning, much as Mark Twain would do in limning the pretensions of the Mississippi River culture in *Huckleberry Finn*, of an American attempt to become culturally mature in the wrong way, by grotesquely aping the nightmare aspects of European sophistication. Again, "there is the sense of missed opportunity, not only for Daisy and Winterbourne, but for America and Europe to form that Jamesian compact in which American vitality and European knowledge and manners would combine to save the West" (Weisbuch, "Winterbourne and the Doom of Manhood in *Daisy Miller*" (68).

4. *The Portrait of a Lady*: Individual and Society

In the nineteenth century, there were still complaints that America failed to furnish the kinds of characters and scenes that were readily available to the European writers, and that could only be supplied by the accumulation of much more history than America possessed. Therefore, it was common for American writers at that time to search for inspiration in Europe. Side by side, there existed calls for literary independence, the treatment of themes and materials unique to America or finding their most salient expression here. James pursued his writing career in this literary climate. Most critics think that James belongs to the first group. "He was grateful to the European past not only because it had produced a present whose shapes and forms pleased him, but for itself, for its being to his apprehension a concentrated accumulation of experience in the sense we have just noted" (Holder 194). James lived a remarkably nomadic life for the first half of his life. Zorzi describes him in "Henry James and Italy" as an American expatriate who chose England as his residence, and looked for "romance" in Italy (435). It is in the context of moving around and settling in different places in different countries, while being extremely sensitive and affected by his surroundings that James wrote *The Portrait of a Lady*.

In America, in the study of her grandmother's house at Albany, Isabel Archer, the protagonist, is found by her aunt and taken to Europe. In England, in the great houses and on the expansive lawns of Gardencourt and Lockleigh, she is, in rapid succession, proposed to by Lord Warburton, an English aristocrat and left a large fortune by Ralph Touchett and his father. In Italy, she also is almost immediately attracted and "collected" by Gilbert Osmond, an American expatriate in Europe. Isabel, though an Emersonian character strongly influenced by concepts like "individualism" and "self-reliance," advocated by transcendentalism, exhibits strong fascination with the European past as a repository of experience. At Albany, at Gardencourt, in Florence and Rome, James consistently portrays Isabel's restless imagination as seeking confirmation for its theories of the self and the world, liberty and duty, of good and evil, in the images of beautiful gardens and pestiferous tracts. In the following three sections I will discuss

the relations among place, culture and character; examine American and European influences on James and the characters, like Transcendentalism and Determinism, and the two different concepts of identity—identity as autonomous self and identity as social construction; probe into the reasons for Isabel's choices for her marriage and her return to Rome in the end.

4.1. Place, Culture, and Character: America, Britain, and Italy

Place plays a very important role in James's life and his writing due to his upbringing, his artistic sensibility, and his own search for a place to embody his vision of culture. In the novel, place often serves as a means of placing its characters within given geographical and cultural contexts, which sets each story within a fixed frame of reference so that most readers can recognize at once the expected qualities and tones that James wishes to convey. Place is so integrated into the character's personality and experience as to produce some distinctive interrelations. While perceiving their surrounding environment, the characters also turn their gaze inward. Places therefore can be important representations of the character's mood and feelings. The image of all characters is strongly shaped by where they are from, live, and how they live there. The locales in America (in Albany), Britain (at Gardencourt), and Italy (in Florence and Rome) chronicle the journey of Isabel Archer, the protagonist, into self-knowledge, and the course of her life subtly correlated to them. Like the protagonists in James's earlier stories, Christopher Newman and Daisy Miller, Isabel Archer is a national type of the New World, self-confident and independent, and her optimism and innocence make her unprepared for the sophistication of the Old World. However, as an avid reader since she was young in Albany, Isabel is furthermore characterized by an unrestricted imagination and romantic disposition, which makes her more susceptible to places.

4.1.1. Albany: Isolation and Imagination

Lutwack argues in *The Role of Place in Literature*, "with unfailing literary instinct

James knew that even in fiction having a high degree of verisimilitude settings must only seem to be modelled on actual places, or otherwise the writer's freedom is impaired" (30). The Albany house is asserted by Leon Edel to have been modeled on the James family's home in Albany, down to its fragrant peach trees. "All his memories of Albany had a flavor of peaches," Edel writes in *Henry James: A Life*, and quotes James at 70 reminiscing about the swing on the covered piazza in the rear of his grandmother's house, the long garden, the library of books full of frontispieces in "the 'office' beyond the library with its musty smell and ancient pieces of furniture" (26). The description of James's Albany home in *A Small Boy and Others* is quite similar to that of Isabel's grandmother's house at Albany. As a young writer in Cambridge, James was longing for Europe. He later imbues in the novel freedom-seeking Isabel with the same restless urge to expand her mind, and launches her from an Albany home that provides many happy memories but no firm feeling of belonging. The house in Albany represents her isolation from reality, her innocence, her unstructured imagination, her Americanness, and her longing for European experience.

Isabel is found by her aunt when she is seated alone with a book in the library in her deceased grandmother's house:

> It is an old house at Albany, a large, square, double house, with a notice of sale in the windows of one of the lower apartments. There were two entrances, one of which had long been out of use but had never been removed. They were exactly alike—large white doors, with an arched frame and wide side-lights, perched upon little 'stoops' of red stone, which descended sidewise to the brick pavement of the street. The two houses together formed a single dwelling, the part-wall having been removed and the rooms placed in communication. These rooms, above-stairs, were extremely numerous, and were painted all exactly alike, in a yellowish white which had grown sallow with time. On the third floor there was a sort of arched passage, connecting the two sides of the house, which Isabel and her sisters used in their childhood to call the tunnel, and which, though it was short and well-lighted, always seemed to the girl to be strange and lonely, especially on winter afternoons. (32)

The house is to be sold soon, and it is not a fixed home for Isabel. She has lived there on and off as a child, when her grandmother lived in the house, where Isabel has the happiest memory. She often reads books alone in a mysterious apartment in the house called "office," the library for her self-education. The room is closed off to the world by a bolted door and windows covered in green paper and contains "an echo and a

pleasant musty smell" (33), and "a mysterious melancholy" (34). Though she knows the silent, motionless portal opened into the street, she has no wish to open the door or remove the window paper, "for this would have interfered her theory that there was a strange, unseen place on the other side—a place which became to the child's imagination, according to its different moods, a region of delight or terror" (34). She tries to fix her mind on "the sandy plains of a history of German thought" (34). She imagines herself in this way protected from what she thinks of as "the vulgar street," and gives "as little heed as possible to cosmic treacheries" (34). Self-taught, she seems to enjoy her solitude; in her opinion, "one should try to be one's own best friend and to give one's self, in this manner, distinguished company" (55). Her act represents a symbolic withdrawal from an unstructured world of reality. "Isabel's deliberate choice of this attitude and setting reflects her attempts to express a relationship between the two leading drives of her personality, her desire for knowledge and her allegiance to the independence of her imagination" (Eakin 172).

Like the children in James's family, Isabel receives a liberal education when she is still very young. Her father, who lives a bohemian life himself, wishes his daughters, even as children, to see as much of the world as possible. Before Isabel is fourteen, he has transported them three times across the Atlantic, which whets Isabel's curiosity. Therefore, European tastes grow as much a part of her as American aspirations. "Her bohemian background has broken the hold of the conventional expectations of bourgeois girls" (Pippin 130). Her reputation of reading a great deal hangs about her "like the cloudy envelope of a goddess in an epic"; young men coming to the family to see her sister fear "that some special preparation was required for talking with her" (42). Her paternal aunt, Mrs. Varian, once spreads the rumor that Isabel is writing a book. Isabel's imagination is "by habit ridiculously active; when the door was not open it jumped out of the window" (40). James later suggests that this lack of control over her imagination caused her to "pay the penalty of having given undue encouragement to the faculty of seeing without judging" (40). Sometimes she goes so far as to wish that she might find herself someday in a difficult position, so that she should have the pleasure of being heroic as the occasion demanded. James describes her in a long

passage as follows:

> Altogether, with her meagre knowledge, her inflated ideals, her confidence at once innocent and dogmatic, her temper at once exacting and indulgent, her mixture of curiosity and fastidiousness, of vivacity and indifference, her desire to look very well and to be if possible even better, her determination to see, to try, to know, her combination of the delicate, desultory flame-like spirit and the eager and personal creature of conditions: she would be an easy victim of scientific criticism if she were not intended to awaken on the reader's part an impulse more tender and more purely expectant. (56)

An insatiable and infinite desire has been created in Isabel, a longing not just for what has been offered her, or what she must settle for, but for what might be; for, especially, what simply is not a part of the narrow world of Albany, but part instead of the world of "the music of Gounod, the poetry of Browning, the prose of George Eliot" (42).

Isabel also reflects James's fascination with the European past as a repository of experience. When Mrs. Touchett tells Isabel that it is a very bad house, "very bourgeois" (36). Isabel declares, "I'm very fond of it" (36). She explains to her aunt she likes places in which things have happened—even if they're sad things. "A great many people have died here; the place has been full of life'" (36). By "full of life, she means 'full of experience—of people's feelings and sorrows'" (36). Her aunt suggests that she go to Florence if she likes houses in which things have happened. She says that she herself lives in a palace where at least three people have been murdered, a palace very different from Isabel's grandmother's house. When she knows that, she says almost immediately, "'I should like very much to go to Florence'" (36), though Isabel has always thought highly of her grandmother's house. "She had great desire for knowledge, but she really preferred almost any source of information to the printed page; she had an immense curiosity about life and was constantly staring and wondering" (42). Mrs. Touchett's proposal to enrich Isabel's life by taking her to Europe and introduce her to the world hardly could have reached more eager ears. It is easy to recognize that Isabel's preference is also that of James.

Her thoughts are a tangle of vague outlines which has never been corrected by the judgement of people speaking with authority. In her aunt's words, "she [Isabel] thinks she knows a great deal of it—like most American girls; but like most American girls she is ridiculously mistaken" (48). She spent half her time thinking of beauty and

bravery and magnanimity; "she had a fixed determination to regard this world as a place of brightness, of free expansion, of irresistible action: she held it must be detestable to be afraid or ashamed" (55). She thinks, "It was wrong to be mean, to be jealous, to be false, to be cruel; she had seen very little evil of the world" (55). She has never known anything particularly unpleasant. Here Isabel betrays her innocence or initial failure of experience, the chronic inability to assess the world as distinct from her romantic vision of the world. It is one of her theories that she is very fortunate in being independent, and that she ought to make some very enlightened use of that state. "Characters like Isabel Archer and Daisy Miller were versions of Emerson on the move, making the same journey from the same beginning place of ideas that does not include Evil" (Weisbuch, "Henry James and the Idea of Evil" 105).

4.1.2. Gardencourt: Nature and Civilization

The Portrait of a Lady, as Nicola Bradbury states, is "the novel where James makes the most articulate use of Englishness, in culture, ideology, but first and most memorably in place" (408). James begins the novel by introducing the afternoon tea:

> Under certain circumstances there are few hours in life more agreeable than the hour dedicated to the ceremony known as afternoon tea. There are circumstances in which, whether you partake of the tea or not—some people of course never do—the situation is in itself delightful. […] Real dusk would not arrive for many hours […] the scene expressed that sense of leisure still to come which is perhaps the chief source of one's enjoyment of such a scene at such an hour. (17)

It is upon the lawn of an English country-house, Gardencourt, in the middle of a splendid summer afternoon. The persons concerned in it are taking their pleasure quietly. This delightful pastime not only serves to heighten the tranquility of the house but also reveals the hospitality of its owner. The house in discussion is "the most characteristic object in the peculiar English picture I [the narrator] have attempted to sketch" (17). James leisurely paints a harmonious picture of the house as follows:

> It stood upon a low hill, above the river—the river being the Thames at some forty miles from London. A long gabled front of red brick, with the complexion of which time and the weather had played all sorts of pictorial tricks, only, however, to improve and refine it, presented to the lawn its patches of ivy, its clustered chimneys, its windows smothered in creepers. The house had a name and a history; [...] how it had been built under Edward

> the Sixth, had offered a night's hospitality to the great Elizabeth, […] defaced in Cromwell's wars, and then, under the Restoration, repaired and much enlarged; and how, finally, after having been remodelled and disfigured in the eighteenth century, it had passed into the careful keeping of a shrewd American banker who at the end of twenty years, had become conscious of a real aesthetic passion for it, so that he knew all its points and would tell you just where to stand to see them in combination and just the hour when the shadows of its various protuberances—which fell so softly upon the warm, weary brickwork—were of the right measure. […] Privacy here reigned supreme, and the wide carpet of turf that covered the level hill-top seemed but the extension of a luxurious interior. The great still oaks and beeches flung down a shade as dense as that of velvet curtains; and the place was furnished, like a room, with cushioned seats, with rich-coloured rugs, with the books and papers that lay upon the grass. The river was at some distance; where the ground began to slope, the lawn, properly speaking, ceased. But it was none the less a charming walk down to the water. (18)

Gardencourt, as its name suggests, is an imaginative combination of ordered nature and noble civilization. It embodies an almost ideal integration of garden and house, of outdoors and indoors. The lawn seems "but the extension of a luxurious interior." The trees are likened to "velvet curtains," and the lawn is "furnished, like a room, with cushioned seats, with rich-coloured rugs, with the books and papers that lay upon the grass" (18). The well-tended garden represents man's proper cultivation not only of nature, but also of his own human nature. The setting is not just about the house itself but, more significantly, the expression of Mr. Touchett's personality, both of which are characterized by openness and contentment.

The house witnessed hundreds of years of British history, and is now owned by Daniel Touchett, an American banker in England:

> The old gentleman at the tea-table, who had come from America thirty years before, had brought with him, at the top of his baggage, his American physiognomy; and had not only brought it with him, but he had kept it in the best order, so that, if necessary, he might have taken it back to his own country with perfect confidence. At present, obviously, nevertheless, he was not likely to displace himself […]. (18-19)

Daniel retains his national identity while acclimating wonderfully to his British surroundings. He seems to be contended in his adopted country, but he has no intention of disamericanizing, nor has he a desire to teach his son any subtle art. It has been for himself so very soluble a problem to live in England assimilated yet unconverted that it seemed to him equally simple that his lawful heir should after his death carry on "the grey old bank in the white American light" (44). He is at pains to intensify this light by

sending his only son, Ralph Touchett, back home to an American school for several terms, later to Harvard for a degree, who strikes him as even redundantly native. After that, Ralph is placed for some three years at Oxford. “Oxford swallowed up Harvard, and Ralph became at last English enough. His outward conformity to the manners that surrounded him was none the less the mask of a mind that greatly enjoyed its independence” (44). In this sense Gardencourt suggests also “the best merging of England and America” (Reisbuch 113). It represents a fusion of American and European cultures, a gateway of Isabel’s access to European civilization, to Italy. Sadly, it is declining with its owners; the father is dying, and the son is fatally ill. “One wonders if the American who lives abroad yet remains at heart American is somehow deprived of his life sustenance” (Sabiston 35).

Gardencourt also witnesses Isabel’s debut in European society, her initiation from innocence to experience. Despite her disorganized education and her native Yankee temperament, Isabel is now ready to pursue an enriched life of the emotions and of thought in Europe. “A way of life characterized by its intricate amenity, its depth of emotion, and its richness of traditionally ordered experience cannot be symbolized by the house at Albany. But it can by the Tudor mansion of the Touchetts, to which Isabel is introduced when she arrives in England” (Chase 153). Gardencourt seems a picture made real for Isabel. At the beautiful scene that surrounds her, she explains: “I’ve never seen anything so lovely as this place. I’ve been all over the house; it’s too enchanting” (27). When she is introduced to Lord Warburton there, she marvels, “Oh, I hoped there would be a lord; it’s just like a novel!” In her theory, “a young woman whom after all everyone thought clever should begin by getting a general impression of life” (58). England is a revelation to her, and the rich perfection of Gardencourt at once reveals a world and gratifies a need. All the things about the house are much to the taste of Isabel, whose taste plays a considerable part in her emotions. Isabel’s nature, as James describes, has a garden-like quality, a suggestion of “murmuring boughs,” “shady bowers and lengthening vistas,” and “a lapful of roses” (57). As Virginia Llewellyn Smith maintains, the spaciousness of the scene at Gardencourt suggests “[her] sense of boundless opportunity” (38). Some critics see Gardencourt as Eden. At first the world

seems to Isabel to be that of Eden before the Fall, “a place of brightness, of free expansion, of irresistible action” (55). Though she seems carefree there, Isabel is often reminded that “there were other gardens in the world than those of her remarkable soul, and that there were moreover a great many places which were not garden at all—only dusky pestiferous tracts, planted thick with ugliness and misery” (57).

Instead of secluding herself reading books in the library, as she does in Albany, Isabel now gradually opens her eyes to real life, and enjoys communicating with her new-found relatives. She questions her uncle immensely about England, about the British constitution, the English character, the state of politics, the manners and customs of the royal family, the peculiarities of the aristocracy, the way of living and thinking of his neighbors; and in begging to be enlightened on these points she usually inquires whether they correspond with the description of the books. At Gardencourt Isabel begins to perceive the restrictions imposed on people, especially women, by the society. She cannot live in her own way as in Albany, and she must observe the decorum in Europe. Mrs. Touchett warns her that she must not stay up with men unchaperoned: “You can’t stay alone with the gentlemen. You’re not at your blest Albany, my dear” (68); “young girls here—in decent houses—don’t sit alone with the gentlemen at night” (69). Though reluctantly, she has to take her aunt’s lesson to good use as the first step in her European education by saying: “You were very right to tell me then, I don’t understand it, but I’m very glad to know it” (69). While in the very act of proclaiming her independence, “I’m very fond of my liberty” (30), she is at the same time “being assimilated by Gardencourt, becoming unwittingly associated with an intricate network of verbal patterns established at Gardencourt” (Weinstein 37).

It is at Gardencourt that Lord Warburton’s proposal puts her into philosophical thinking: “Who was she, what was she, that she should hold herself superior? What view of life, what design upon fate, what conception of happiness, had she that pretended to be larger than these large, these fabulous occasions?” (105). She begins to ponder on her own life, her choice. Her declining of an aristocrat’s proposal also draws attention from people around her. First, her cousin persuades her uncle to give her half of his inheritance so that she can live up to her imagination. Then Madame Merle starts

her plan of manipulation. Isabel's meeting with sophisticated and versatile Madame Merle at Gardencourt also marks a turning point in her life, for she imagines her friend to be a model of the great self that she would like to become, which foreshadows what path she might choose to develop herself and what fate she might confront.

Gardencourt is also the last place where Isabel appears. She returns, defying Osmond's direct prohibition, to see Ralph before he dies. While she is waiting to be conducted to her room at Gardencourt, she grows nervous and scared, "as if the objects about her had begun to show for conscious things, watching her troubles with grotesque grimaces" (481). She feels the house keenly:

> The day was dark and cold; the dusk was thick in the corners of the wide brown rooms. The house was perfectly still - with a stillness that Isabel remembered; it had filled all the place for days before the death of her uncle. She left the drawing-room and wandered about—strolled into the library and along the gallery of pictures, where, in the deep silence, her footstep made an echo. Nothing was changed; she recognised everything she had seen years before; it might have been only yesterday she had stood there. She envied the security of valuable "pieces" which change by no hair's breadth, only grow in value, while their owners lose inch by inch youth, happiness, beauty; and she became aware that she was walking about as her aunt had done on the day she had come to see her in Albany. She was changed enough since then—that had been the beginning. (481)

Gardencourt is still the same house, perfectly still, but its inhabitants are beaten by time, with Mr. Touchett deceased and Ralph dying, who mean a lot to Isabel. Lamenting that time is fleeting, she is suddenly struck by the thought what might have happened if her aunt had not gone to Albany to take her to Europe. But there is no going back, because "no chapter of the past was more perfectly irrecoverable" (422). Gardencourt has been the starting-point of her experience in Europe, and "to those muffled chambers it was at least a temporary solution to return. She had gone forth in her strength; she would come back in her weakness, and if the place had been a rest to her before, it would be a sanctuary now" (475). Gardencourt is "the symbol of an innocence now lost forever" (Galloway 50), but has acquired—along with its corruption—wisdom, maturity, and the whole involved and valuable accretion of culture, which mirrors metaphorically Isabel's mind. She at least finds some comfort from her cousin there. He tells her that despite suffering, love remains, "if you've been hated you've also been loved. Ah but, Isabel—

adored!" and "I don't believe that such a generous mistake as yours can hurt you for more than a little" (479). Isabel does find a resolution, while she is at Gardencourt. "She looked all about her; she listened a little; then she put her hand on the latch. She had not known where to turn; but she knew now. There was a very straight path" (499-500). What path Isabel will take might not be sure, but there is no doubt that revisiting Gardencourt helps her regain her courage and self-confidence.

4.1.3. Florence and Rome: Sophistication and Corruption

Henry James traveled in Italy frequently. The "picturesqueness" of Italy, a term used over and over again, both human and architectural, was sufficient for James's imagination. Its inhabitants are "so beautiful, so civil, so charming, and yet so mendacious and miserable! [...] The double image of Italy, which had been present in English literature from Elizabethan times onwards, seems present also in the early James" (Zorzi 436). James often stayed with his friend Francis Boott and his artistic daughter Lizzie Boott at Villa Castellani on the hill of Bellosguardo outside Florence. When James sailed for Italy in early 1880 to start writing a novel whose beginnings he carried in his portfolio, it was to Villa Castellani that he first repaired for a few days of vacation. There are some echoes of *The Portrait of a Lady* in the story of Lizzie Boott and her bohemian painting teacher, Frank Duveneck, who was also visiting at the time, though their story is different from that of Isabel and Osmond. Palazzo Barberini on Quirinal and Palazzo Odescalchi in Piazza dei Santi Apostoli, opposite the Colonna Palace, are also two monumental ancient palaces in Rome that James surely visited, if not for a stay, then at least for parties and soirees. They are described by Leon Edel as being at the time two American artists' colonies that rivaled in entertaining Americans in Rome. Both buildings were designs by Bernini, and "the effect of grandeur went with an effect of gloom" (Edel, *Henry James: a Life* 140).

Dorothy Van Ghent argues in *The English Novel: Form and Function* that 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 reason for their particular richness of significance seems to be that, of all forms that are offered to sight and interpretation, builders are the most natural symbols of civilized life, the most diverse also as to what their fronts and interiors can imply of man’s relations with himself and with the outer world” (274). Osmond’s villa is on a hill outside of the Roman gate of Florence:

> The villa was a long, rather blank-looking structure, with the far-projecting roof which Tuscany loves and which, on the hills that encircle Florence, when considered from a distance, makes so harmonious a rectangle with the straight, dark, definite cypresses that usually rise in groups of three or four beside it. The house had a front upon a little grassy, empty, rural piazza which occupied a part of the hill-top […] for some reason or other, always gracefully invests anyone who confidently assumes a perfectly passive attitude—this antique, solid, weather-worn, yet imposing front had a somewhat incommunicative character. It was the mask, not the face of the house. It had heavy lids, but no eyes; the house in reality looked another way—looked off behind, into splendid openness and the range of the afternoon light. In that quarter the villa overhung the slope of its hill and the long valley of Arno, hazy with Italian colour.[…] The windows of the ground-floor, as you saw them from the piazza, were, in their noble proportions, extremely architectural; but their function seemed less to offer communication with the world than to defy the world to look in. They were massively cross-barred, and placed at such a height that curiosity, even on tiptoe, expired before it reached them. (200)

The house reflects its inhabitant quite well. Like his villa, Osmond wears a mask, not a face; he has heavy lids, but no eyes, showing his indifference to the outside world. James sums up his portrayal of Osmond’s villa and Osmond himself: “[the windows] seemed less to offer communication with the world than to defy the world to look in.” A curious person standing on tip-toe and straining could not see inside Osmond or his villa. Like his studied collection of fine pieces, “he suggested, fine gold coin as he was, no stamp nor emblem of the common mintage that provides for general circulation; he was the elegant complicated medal struck off for a special occasion” (202). He spares no effort to present his aesthetic taste by his house, his collections, the refined and luxury decorations of his room. Only the best ornament is for him; it should adorn him as well as express his inner sensitivity. More than any other character in the novel, Osmond cares about his surroundings and carefully defines the face the world should see. His nature is there for anyone to see, one could suspect the smooth varnished surface of betraying something other than educated leisure, though he pretends to care about nothing but art.

Florence is first mentioned by Mrs. Touchett to Isabel in Albany, when she knows that Isabel likes places full of experience. Since her aunt told her the history of her residence in Florence, Isabel is eager to visit the city; "to go to Florence, I'd promise almost anything" (37). On her first visit to Italy, she performs all those acts of mental prostration and feels her heart beat in the presence of immortal genius:

> She wandered with her cousin through the narrow and somber Florentine streets, resting a while in the thicker dusk of some historic church or the vaulted chambers of some dispeopled convent. She went to galleries and palaces; she looked at the pictures and statutes that had hitherto been great names to her, and exchanged for a knowledge which was sometimes a limitation a presentiment which provoked usually to have been a blank. (216)

Isabel stays with her aunt in her house—a historic building in a narrow street whose very name recalled the strife of medieval factions. "To live in such a place was, for Isabel, to hold to her ear all day a shell of the sea of the past. This vague eternal rumour kept her imagination awake" (217). It is here that Isabel is introduced to Gilbert Osmond by Madame Merle. She listens attentively to them talking about the Florentine, the Roman, and the cosmopolite world. She starts to pay attention to Osmond, his appearance, his voice, and even compares him to the drawing in the long gallery above the bridge of the Uffizi, as if Osmond were not merely a person, but an image out of grand canvas for her.

Through the arrangement of Madame Merle, Isabel decides to visit Osmond, "I shall see Mr. Osmond for myself. […] To go and see his view, his pictures, his daughter" (219). Isabel's visit is set in a charming occasion in a soft afternoon in the full maturity of the Tuscan spring with fragrance of blossoming orchards in the air. However, "[t]here was something grave and strong in the place; it looked somehow as if, once you were in, you would need an act of energy to get out" (222), which implies Osmond's ability of domination. For Isabel, however, there is of course no thought of getting out, but only of advancing, since it is hard to for her to see what injury could arise to her from her first visit. Only much later can she feel it when she openly defies her husband for a short trip to Gardencourt to see her dying cousin. Inside the house, she is shown around by Osmond to the rooms "full of romantic objects," and introduced to some pieces in detail, so that she finds herself oppressed with "the accumulation of beauty and

knowledge" (230). Then she is directed to the garden without more delay to be acquainted with the view, the paramount distinction of the place: "The scene had an extraordinary charm. The air was almost solemnly still, and the large expanse of the landscape, with its garden-like culture and nobleness of outline, its teeming valley and delicately-fretted hills, its peculiarly human-looking touches of habitation, lay there in splendid harmony and classic grace" (231). Swept by her imagination and absorbed in this atmosphere, Isabel falls into Osmond's grip almost immediately. She says to Osmond on the spot, "I shall certainly come back" (231).

Like Daisy Miller's Rome, the ancient city is as hostile and restricting. Palazzo Roccanera, Isabel and Osmond's home in Rome after they get married, is the fortress that embodies all the negative elements. Like the villa in Florence, it is more than just a dwelling place; its structure, style, and atmosphere is also an extension of the owner of the house. Palazzo Roccanera assumes its inhabitant's personality, which permeates the place and transforms the people in it. The first impression of the house is offered by Edward Rosier, Pansy's admirer:

> The object of Mr. Rosier's well-regulated affection dwelt in a high house in the very heart of Rome; a dark and massive structure overlooking a sunny *piazzetta* in the neigbourhood of the Farnese Palace. In a place, too, little Pansy lived—a place by Roman measure, but a dungeon to poor Rosier's apprehensive mind. It seemed to him of evil omen that the young lady he wished to marry, and whose fastidious father he doubted of his ability to conciliate, should be immured in a kind of domestic fortress, a pile which bore a stern old Roman name, which smelt of historic deeds, of crime and craft and violence, which was mentioned in "Murray" and visited by tourists who looked, on a vague survey, disappointed and depressed, and which had frescoes by Caravaggio in the *piano nobile* and a row of mutilated statues and dusty urns in the wide, nobly-arched loggia overhanging the damp court where a fountain gushed out of a mossy niche. (313)

According to Rosier's description, Palazzo Roccanera seems to be an intimidating place: "a dark and massive structure." In addition to its hostile façade, the house, though grandiose as a palace, is as murky as "a dungeon," smelling "of crime and craft and violence." Words like "mutilated statues," "dusty urns," and "damp courts" send out a creepy atmosphere. Influenced by his fervent but frustrated love for Pansy, Rosier looks at Palazzo Roccanera as representing the worst aspect of Roman culture and Osmond's oppressive hold over its inhabitants: "Rosier was haunted by the conviction that at

picturesque periods young girls had been shut up there to keep them from their true loves, and then, under the threat of being thrown into convents, had been forced into unholy marriages" (313). Poor Ned Rosier wants to rescue his princess, Pansy, from the forbidding fortress, lest she be faced with the choice of yet more convent time, or a forced marriage arrangement by her father. Rosier is told by Isabel, now Mrs. Osmond, that they chose this habitation for the love of local color, but it is a taste of Osmond's own—not at all of hers. It is sad to realize that Isabel has extended her influence only to the "warm, rich-looking reception rooms" (313), which do sound inviting for the soirees; the rest of the Palazzo is dominated by Gilbert Osmond's taste and style, and his large collection before and after marriage takes over most of the space. Palazzo Roccanera reflects Gilbert Osmond's personality.

In addition to representing Gilbert Osmond's dehumanized heart and mind, Palazzo Roccanera also reveals Isabel's sentiments and her miserable life in Rome. The incredulous terror pervades her dwelling. She perceives that she is trapped, surrounded, by the four walls of the narrow confinement of his nature. To Isabel it is "the house of darkness, the house of dumbness, the house of suffocation" (367). To drive home the imprisoning nature of Osmond's "beautiful mind," James adds that Osmond gave this house they shared "neither light nor air" (367). The image of unapproachable, narrow windows of Osmond's villa outside Florence appears again: "Osmond's beautiful mind indeed seemed to peep down from a small high window and mocked her" (367).

Palazzo Roccanera is likened to a grave for Isabel: "When she saw this rigid system close about her, draped though it was in pictured tapestries, that sense of darkness and suffocation of which I have spoken took possession of her; she seemed shut up with an odour of mould and decay" (368). Only occasional escapes from the house could provide temporary relief. The mansion and its design and decoration inside work together to symbolize Isabel and Osmond's bad relation or failed marriage. Living for three years in the Palazzo and under Osmond's influence, Isabel's change is dramatic. At his first meeting with Isabel after a long absence, Ralph is taken aback by the change in her disposition, though she tries to hide her misery from him: "Of old she had been curious, and now she was indifferent" (337). He laments woefully that Isabel has been

transformed into a person without soul: “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 was supposed to represent something” (337). Imprisoned in the house as Gilbert Osmond’s *object d’art*, Isabel has become “a representation,” “an advertisement” of the house that manifests Osmond’s cold and dehumanized spell on beautiful minds (336).

There is another scene in Rome that deserves attention: “She sat in her corner, so motionless, so passive, simply with the sense of being carried, so detached from hope and regret, that she recalled to herself one of those Etruscan figures couched upon the receptacle of their ashes” (475). After Isabel has learned of the part Serena Merle has played in her marriage, now deep and tender acquaintance with the city makes her understand it as a place where people have suffered. At that moment, there is something inspiring, “a proof of strength,” “a proof she should someday be happy again” (475). She wondered, “Wasn’t all history full of the destruction of precious things? Wasn’t it much more probable that if one were fine one would suffer?” (475). Like Rome, the ancient city, Isabel should last to the end.

The foundation of Isabel’s knowledge is laid in the idleness of her grandmother’s house in Albany, where she has uncontrolled use of a library full of books with frontispieces. She has “her eyes on her book and tried to fix her mind,” and “no wish to look out” until her aunt comes to take her to Europe (34). Gardencourt, the Touchetts’ residence near London, witnesses Isabel’s debut into the European society. Isabel begins to bud and bloom there. She is protected by the Touchetts and adored by an English aristocrat, Lord Warburton, charmed by versatile Madame Merle. She starts to get in touch with reality. In addition, Isabel’s life takes flight after she inherits a huge amount of money from her uncle through her cousin’s help, for he wants to see that she can live a life to meet her imagination. From England to Italy, Isabel launches her experience on the Continent. Lost in the exquisite Florentine atmosphere, Isabel is inextricably attracted to Osmond, his art collection in his villa, and his taste. Florence becomes an aesthetic maze that disorients Isabel and entices her to fall into Merle’s trap.

Rome intensifies Florence's influence upon Isabel, lures her to accept Osmond's proposal, and finally terminates her preciously cherished liberty. The two cities both embody European civilization and malevolent corruption. The places in the novel not only amplify American and European cultures, but also shape characters, serving as an expression of characters' natures and a condition influencing characters' lives.

4.2. American and European Influences: Transcendentalism and Determinism

While Henry James, Sr., was Emerson's friend and contemporary, and William James's work blatantly shows an Emersonian influence, Henry James seems to have much less in common with the Transcendentalist. Nevertheless, Transcendentalism continued to bear upon Henry James's thought, despite living his adult life abroad and cultivating a European sensibility. James writes in *Hawthorne*:

> He [Emerson] was the man of genius of the moment; he was the Transcendentalist *par excellence*. Emerson expressed, before all things, as was extremely natural at the hour and in the place, the value and importance of the individual, the duty of making the most of one's self, of living by one's own personal light and carrying out one's own disposition. […] He insisted upon sincerity and independence and spontaneity, upon acting in harmony with one's nature, not conforming and compromising for the sake of being more comfortable. He urged that a man should await his call, his finding the thing to do which he should really believe in doing, and not be urged by the world's opinion to do simply the world's work. […]The doctrine of the supremacy of the individual to himself, of his originality and, as regards his own character, *unique* quality, must have had a great charm for people living in a society in which introspection, thanks to the want of other entertainment, played almost the part of a social resource. (79-80)

In James's opinion, in those days, there were no great things to look at, except forests and rivers, and life was not in the least spectacular; society was not brilliant; the country was given up to a great material prosperity, a homely *bourgeois* activity a diffusion of primary education and the common luxuries. Therefore, the Transcendentalists turn to take a picturesque view of one's internal possibilities, and to find in the landscape of the soul all sorts of fine sunrise and moonlight effects. He further writes: "To make one's self so much more interesting would help to make life interesting, and life was probably, to many of this aspiring congregation, a dream of freedom and fortitude" (80). He describes Emerson's orations as "the most poetical, the most beautiful productions

of the American mind, and they were thoroughly local and national" (80).

However, James states there are faulty parts in the Emersonian philosophy as well. There are no absolute autonomy and self-possession, and his unawareness of evil can be a source of potentially tragic illusions. James's portrait of Isabel has been argued by critics as a creative response to Emerson, his literary father in America. Leon Edel reads the novel as a critique of American "self-reliance." Richard Chase also thinks it is "associated with the American traditions of Transcendentalism and Puritanism. Isabel subscribes to the American romance of the self" (160). She believes that the self finds fulfillment either in its own isolated integrity or on a more or less transcendent ground, immune to external circumstances.

Meanwhile, Henry James's writing is also influenced by determinism at that time. Most determinists see the individual as having a specific identity, and recognized that he makes active choices between alternative courses of action. Yet, in conceding this, they stress that his identity and predilections are themselves the product of inherited traits, upbringing and surrounding pressures, past experience and present needs. Moreover, the choices open to him are likewise dependent on circumstances that lay beyond his power to control. The chooser might be "free" to follow his own inclinations, but fundamentally his inclinations are not of his own choosing. Thus, "the phrase 'free will' seemed to determinists to be a misnomer" (Larkin 175).

James's concept of determinism is "not a system of abstract forces, but of a system of human relationships—private and public" (Larkin 16). Without laying too heavy a stress on heredity, James pays more attention to the powerful social pressure. "James's [characters] are often free from the pressure of work, but they are all affected by the most influential factor in the society he portrays—money. Both the absence of money and its surfeit create their own pressures" (King 19-20). Poverty prevents Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond from marrying, and gives them a motive—if not an excuse—for taking advantage of Isabel. Wealth makes Isabel the prey of fortune hunters. Personal relationships are absorbed into the social system. The society imposes the burden of a public persona on the private individual. In order to lead Isabel into their trap, they must fashion their identity to meet her imagination. Serena Merle spares no

effort to learn to act out all the most graceful forms so that she can shine in society, and charm Isabel with her elegant appearance and delicate manner. Gilbert Osmond uses his collection of beautiful art objects, even treats his angelic child as a valuable asset to represent himself.

James emphasizes that the contrast between inner and outer spheres corresponds to the question of private versus public identities as a means to understand subjectivity. In *The Portrait of a Lady*, Madame Merle and Isabel have different concepts of identity. Madame Merle insists that the self is composed through interactions and acquaintances with other things and other people in a world that is, first and foremost, open. Isabel reads what Madame Merle calls "expressions" as limiting. If one's self is no different than one's clothes or one's house or one's books, then Isabel has no choice but to express herself. She insists upon a self that is separate from these externals.

4.2.1. Individualism and Self-Reliance: Identity as Autonomous Self

In social terms, post-Civil War America had made "individualism" a suspect principle; the pioneer and revolutionary dream of untrammeled individuality seemed reduced to ruthless entrepreneurism; however, "the sweetness of an earlier ideal lingered in the American imagination with its attachment to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, terms so frequently on Isabel's own lips as she expressed her personal hopes" (Bell 91). James presents characters from America, especially Isabel, by their passionate belief in freedom, individualism and independence, and other revivifying qualities which, "if not the exclusive property of the New World, might reasonably be regarded by Americans in the century of Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman as their contribution to art and aesthetic debate" (Smith 40). Independence is the most frequently mentioned attribute of Isabel. When Isabel is still in Albany, she is already a topic of conversation among Mr. Touchett, Ralph, and Lord Warburton before Mrs. Touchett's interesting telegram: "Changed hotel, very bad, impudent clerk, address here. Taken sister's girl, died last year, go to Europe, two sisters, quite independent" (24). The father and son are puzzled by Mrs. Touchett's choice of word—"independent." Who is quite independent, and in what sense is the term used? It can suggest many

interpretations: “Does the expression apply more particularly to the young lady my mother has adopted, or does it characterise her sister equally?—and is it used in a moral or in a financial sense? Does it mean that they’ve been left well off, or that they wish to be under no obligations? Or does it simply mean that they’re fond of their own way?” (24). It appears to be merely a casual subject of conversation but “Ralph’s frivolous speculations do in fact state the basic problem to be dealt with in the novel. The point is indeed not yet settled: it will take the whole book to settle it” (Kettle 679).

Isabel’s independence might, for a moment, be thought of as a hereditary determined as well as determining quality, for Mr. Touchett immediately recognizes it as a “family trait,” which Isabel shares with his wife, who “likes to do everything for herself and has no belief in anyone’s power to help her” (25). At their meeting in Albany, Mrs. Touchett seems to recognize the kinship when her niece refuses to promise to do everything she is told so that she can go to Florence with her aunt. Mrs. Touchett then responds, “You’re fond of your own way; but it’s not for me to blame you” (37). Isabel is discovered by her aunt sitting in the family library and reading in solitude German Idealist philosophy in the locked office at Albany that occludes a view of the street; “an overly theoretic, though wonderfully fresh and earnest self-realizer” (Weisbuch, “Henry James and the Idea of Evil” 112). This austere exercise illustrates Isabel’s desire to educate herself and to retain her independence.

She takes her independence very seriously from the beginning of the novel onward. When her cousin mistakenly believes that his mother has adopted her, she answers with a certain visible eagerness of desire to be explicit, “I’m very fond of my liberty” (30), an expression repeated for many times in the novel. The fact that she is an orphan after the death of her parents, responsible to none but herself, completes the severance from her antecedents. She feels that her situation makes her belong “quite to the independent class”—that is, the class of those “independent” of customary plots—when she insists to Caspar Goodwood that she is disqualified for the role which conducts the heroine to the marriage-ending:

> I’m not in my first youth—I can do what I choose—I belong quite to the independent class. I’ve neither father nor mother; I’m poor and of a serious disposition; I’m not pretty.

> I therefore am not bound to be timid and conventional; indeed I can't afford such luxuries. Besides, I try to judge things for myself; to judge wrong, I think, is more honourable than not to judge at all. I don't wish to be a mere sheep in the flock; I wish to choose my fate and know something of human affairs beyond what other people think it compatible with propriety to tell me. (146)

She herself accepts her aunt's invitation to Europe with "a desire to leave the past behind her and, as she said to herself, to begin afresh" (40), and declares her right to be free, which also makes her "the symbolic representative of her nation's ideals—her own declarations never cease to echo the language of the American Declaration" (Bell 97).

Two of Isabel's American friends also have the transcendental disposition, which is unmodified by foreign experience. Henrietta Stackpole, a feminist journalist, is Isabel without her grace but with something of her freshness and American insistence upon independence and self-determination. Gasper Goodwood resembles her in his very American self-sufficiency, being the "self-made man" in material terms as she would be a self-made personality, owing nothing to others.

As a critic of optimistic individualism or self-reliance, James implies that Isabel's inexpressible individuality is really a mystified attempt to make the ego an end in itself. Isabel's glorification of independence or liberty is an unhappy "solution" to particularly American problems, as Beth Sharon Ash states:

> [A] new mobility in relations with others, and an instability or democracy or values, both of which promote a conception of the individual ego as principal arbiter of human experience. American ego psychology stresses adaptive functioning rather than determinism, autonomy defended and clearly defined rather than unknowable subjectivity. (126)

For Isabel the self is autonomous and not defined by external circumstances, "a fully centered, unified individual, endowed with the capacities of reason, consciousness, and action, whose 'center' consisted of an inner core which first emerged when the subject was born, and unfolded with it, while remaining essentially the same—continuous or 'identical' with itself—throughout the individual's existence. The essential center of the self was a person's identity" (Hall 597). With her inflated American ideal of liberty, Isabel refuses to accept any social identity that does not express her true spiritual being, as she states in the novel: "She would be what she appeared, and she would appear what she was" (56). She bluntly refuses to acknowledge that external manifestations or social

displays can reveal her own self. In her discussion with Madame Merle about "circumstances" and "things," she declares: "I don't know whether I succeed in expressing myself, but I know nothing else expresses me. Nothing that belongs to me is any measure of me; everything's on the contrary, a limit, a barrier, and a perfectly arbitrary one. Certainly the clothes which, as you say, I choose to wear, don't express me; and heaven forbid they should!" (179). She cannot believe that the ordinary circumstances of one's life have anything to do with one's self. She finds it inconceivable and rather degrading that anyone should suppose the self to be in any sort of dialectic with the mere things one is surrounded by.

Here James makes Isabel a spokeswoman for the powerful romantic strain in his native culture expressed in Emerson's exaltation of the singular self with its scorn for "circumstance" in "Transcendentalist":

> You think me the child of my circumstances: I make my circumstance. Let any thought or motive of mine be different from that they are, the difference will transform my condition and economy. I — this thought which is called I, — is the mould into which the world is poured like melted wax. The mould is invisible, but the world betrays the shape of the mould. You call it the power of circumstance, but it is the power of me. Am I in harmony with myself? My position will seem to you just and commanding. (196)

Identity, insofar as Isabel can conceptualize it at all early in the novel, is an individual consciousness, and she remains blind to the deceptive complexity of minds outside her own. Paradoxically, "although Isabel would chastise those who judge her by appearances, she forms her opinions of others on just such a superficial basis" (Sicker 56). She conceives of individuals as types and so rejects Lord Warburton and Gaspar Goodwood, who, she perceives to be "a collection of attributes and powers" (97). Therefore, she imagines they would impose a false social identity upon her. Instead, she is attracted to Osmond, who, as Madame Merle describes, has "[n]o career, no name, no position, no fortune, no past, no future, no anything" (176). He appears to her to be pure personality, having no specific social position and material circumstances to define or fix him. Isabel utterly fails "to grasp the economic consequences of her entry as a wealthy heiress into Europe's *beau monde* because of her romantic, Emersonian assumption that an individual's ideas ought to prevail over social forms" (MacCormack 3).

She withdraws herself from a world of reality into a theater of the inner life governed by a theory of her imagination and introspection. Isabel has "a certain nobleness of imagination which rendered her a good many services and played her a great many tricks" (55). She feels that she should try to be her own friend, "and to give one's self, in this manner, distinguished company" (55). Lord Warburton is right about her, "You judge only from the outside—you don't care. You only care to amuse yourself" (79). Isabel does not care. She thinks she cares, but her egotism is too great to allow her that kind of concern. She confesses this in a way: "I'm absorbed in myself," and she ruefully adds, "I look at life too much as doctor's prescription" (179). Henrietta has also told her, "you can't always please yourself; you must sometimes please other people" (192). In her self-absorption and egotism, Isabel has overlooked the reciprocities of life, the delicate balance of societies, which is the essence of civilization. Brought up to respect the virtues of society, she thinks "it was wrong to be mean, to be jealous, to be false, to be cruel." James adds, "she had seen very little of the evil of the world" (55). Her intentions have been pure; her innocence has taken account of no possible evil. The portrait of the young Isabel suggests how poorly she had been prepared for the more violent and primitive things of life, or the deceitful and the Machiavellian people, like Madame Merle and Osmond.

Edel argues in "The Myth of America in *The Portrait of a Lady*": James uses these brush strokes to reveal to us the fundamental egotism and self-centeredness of his heroine, the narcissistic elements in the American "style," foreshadowing American "isolationism" (13). Henry James is quietly undermining the Emersonian doctrine that expressed one of the deepest myths of the frontier. "The frontier perforce had to be self-reliant: it was acting out the old utopias, seeking new worlds to conquer. But in the civilized world any attempt at such reliance had to take account of rules and standards, customs, traditions, centuries of history, a vast history of knowledge" (Edel 14). Isabel had apparently listened too well to the philosophical optimism of Transcendentalists. "To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men, – that is genius. […] Trust thyself. […]" (Emerson 259-60). By becoming Osmond's wife, Isabel believes she will elude the fixedness of a definitive

social role. Only after her marriage does she relinquish her sense of the immutability of other personalities. In the remote isolation of an English country house, when Isabel shares the fullness of her knowledge with Ralph, the dying apostle of the creed of Emersonian idealism upon which they have both staked their lives, he tells her poignantly that they are looking at the truth together: "You wanted to look at life for yourself—but you were not allowed; you were punished for your wish. You were ground in the very mill of the convention!" (488). Endowed with a notion of her self-reliance and high morality, supported by the power of her wealth, she has nevertheless blundered into darkness and stagnation. Now she has to learn that there are no absolutes of autonomy and self-possession, no roads of escape from responsibility and co-existence with others, and liberty, which she cherishes so much, is sometimes won at the expense of the freedom of others.

America has to discover it could not be self-reliant and isolationist and to take a larger account of its relations with its friends and its enemies among the nations of the world; likewise, Isabel has to learn that there exist other people possessing their dreams and aspirations and that these are engaged also in an elusive quest for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In that sense, "Isabel is a symbol of her country, and the national banner in which Ralph wraps her speaks for the myth she lives out. […] There resides in the pages of James's best-known novel, as we can discern, an allegory built around a profound American myth" (Edel, "The Myth of America in *The Portrait of a Lady*" 16). Having made her choice, Isabel sticks to it and faces the consequences bravely. "She is very American in this—in her tenacity and in her puritan idea of lying in the bed she has made" (Edel 17). The young lady from Albany has transformed into maturity. Her portrait is conveyed to us in the magnificent chapter 42 in which Isabel, in her retrospection in solitude late at night, gradually decodes the true relationship between Madame Merle and Osmond, relives her life, looks at her mistakes, recognizes that the choice of her fate has not been altogether hers, and that she has no control over the circumstances. Isabel moves from the plane of her youthful imagination and presumptuous dreams into a true engagement with life and living, and she is deceived but uplifted, bereaved but stoical. "Ultimately, though, the Jamesian heroine must rely

on herself. Which is why Isabel's story—her voyage of self-expression—ends somewhere between life and art, like a portrait left incomplete" (Smith 42).

4.2.2. The Importance of Circumstances: Identity as Social Construction

In contrast, Madam Merle is "too perfectly the social animal that man and woman are supposed to have been intended to be" (171), and she exists only in her relations, direct or indirect with her fellow mortals. Madame Merle has spent her life in learning to act out all the most graceful forms to present her best image to society:

> When Madame Merle was neither writing, nor painting, nor touching the piano, she was usually employed upon wonderful tasks of rich embroidery, cushions, curtains, decorations for the chimney-piece; an art in which her bold, free invention was as noted as the agility of her needle. She was never idle, for when engaged in none of the ways I have mentioned she was either reading (she appeared to Isabel to read 'everything important'), or walking out, or playing patience with the cards, or talking with her fellow-inmates. And with all this she had always the social quality, was never rudely absent yet never too seated. She laid down her pastimes as easily as she took them up; she worked and talked at the same time, and appeared to impute scant worth to anything she did. She gave away her sketches and tapestries; she rose from the piano or remained there, according to the convenience of her auditors, which she always unerringly divined. She was in short the most comfortable, profitable, amenable person to live with. (171)

In Isabel's eyes, Madame Merle is "charming, sympathetic, intelligent, cultivated," "rare, superior and pre-eminent" (168). If for Isabel she has a fault it was that she was not natural. Her nature has been too much overlaid by custom and her angles too much rubbed away. She has rid herself of every remnant of the tonic wildness which we may assume to have belonged even to the most amiable persons in the ages before country-house life was the fashion. Madame Merle has been a dweller in many lands and had social ties in a dozen different countries. It is difficult to think of her in detachment or privacy. "One might wonder what commerce she could possibly hold with her own spirit" (172). Mrs. Touchett says Merle is "one of the most brilliant women in Europe," a phrase more appropriate in its scope perhaps to the great actresses who were, in fact, the most visible women in Europe.

In Madame Merle's view, identity is formed in the interaction between self and society. It is formed and modified in a continuous dialogue with the cultural worlds

"outside" and the identities which they offer. As Stuart Hall defines:

> Identity, in this sociological conception, bridges the gap between the "inside" and the "outside"—between the personal and the public worlds, the fact that we project "ourselves" into these cultural identities, at the same time internalizing their meanings and values, making them "part of us," helps to align our subjective feelings with the objective places we occupy in the social and cultural world. (597-98)

In her eyes, without a career, an American who lives in Europe signifies absolutely nothing, a faceless nonentity. She warns Isabel of the danger of an expatriate existence: "You should live in your own land; wherever it may be you have your natural place there. If we're not good Americans, we're certainly poor Europeans; we've no natural place here. We're mere parasites, crawling over the surface; we haven't our feet in the soil" (175). She argues that it is fortunate for Ralph, who does nothing in life, to have consumption. "His consumption's his *carrière*; it's a kind of position. You can say: 'Oh, Mr. Touchett, he takes care of his lungs, he knows a great deal about climates.' But without that who would he be, what would he represent?" (175). The old Mr. Touchett, a successful banker, is different; he has his identity, and it is rather a massive one. "He represents a great financial house, and that, in our day, is as good as anything else" (175). She also laments women's identity in society, "a woman, it seems to me, has no natural place anywhere; wherever she finds herself she has to remain on the surface and, more or less, to crawl" (175).

Madame Merle herself does not let the issue of identity, male or female, rest entirely on the question of active achievement. Her conversation with Isabel at the end of chapter 19 complicates the notion of identity, suggesting that it arises not just from action but from the entire "envelope of circumstances" in which we live. Clothes, belongings, surroundings—all these, she maintains, are important in establishing who we are. She argues with Isabel:

> There is no such thing as an isolated man or woman; we're each of us made up of some cluster of appurtenances. What shall we call our "self"? Where does it begin? Where does it end? It overflows into everything that belongs to us—and then it flows back again. I know a large part of myself is in the clothes I choose to wear. I've a great respect for things! One's self—for other people—is one's expression of one's self; and one's house, one's furniture, one's garments, the books one reads, the company one keeps—these things are all expressive. (179)

In her opinion, the self constitutes itself only in constant interaction with its

circumstances; following this view, James elaborates on how people look, what they wear, what they have, and where they live.

Presumably there can also be a discrepancy between the way characters think of themselves (what they perceive as their identity) and the way the world perceives them. Knowingly or unknowingly, they may project an identity to the world that is not the same one by which they define themselves to themselves. Though cultivated and civilized as she appears, Madame Merle's ambitions fail to some extent, as the judicious Ralph has noted:

> [S]he had been yearningly ambitious and that what she had visibly accomplished was far below her secret measure. She had got herself into perfect training, but had won none of the prizes. She was always plain Madame Merle, the widow of a Swiss *négociant*, with a small income and a large acquaintance, who stayed with people a great deal and was almost as universally "liked" as some new volume of smooth twaddle. The contrast between this position and anyone of some half-dozen others that he supposed to have at various moments engaged her hope had an element of the tragical. (221)

In spite of her efforts, Madame Merle achieves little, while Isabel inherits a vast fortune unexpectedly, which will enable her to get into high society. Madame Merle covets her money and determines to make use of her without her knowledge.

Similar to Madame Merle, Osmond sees identity as a social construction. He tries to impress Isabel with the image of a clever man leading a pleasant life in solitude. First, he pretends to care about nothing but art. He tells Isabel, "Not to worry—not to strive nor struggle. To resign myself. To be content with little" (231). He is even a better performer than Madame Merle: "He spoke these sentences slowly, with short pauses between, and his intelligent regard was fixed on his visitor's with the conscious air of a man who has brought himself to confess something" (231). Isabel marvels, "That's a very pleasant life, to renounce everything but Correggio!" (232). He claims himself to be simply the most fastidious young gentleman living. "There were two or three people in the world I envied! –the Emperor of Russia, for instance, and the Sultan of Turkey! There were even moments when I envied the Pope of Rome—for the consideration he enjoys. I should have been delighted to be considered to that extent; but since that couldn't be I didn't care for anything less, and I made up my mind not to go in for honours" (232). Walder argues that Osmond in his vain sense of superiority over the

rest of the world may be seen as a "mock version of a transcendentalist," whom Emerson describes as intelligent, aloof from common labors, not as yet showing any evidence which would justify this detachment, but feeling a keen sense of the disparity between his faculties and the opportunities offered them (122).

Osmond, in fact, does not value art but opinion, and he employs art objects as he does other people, to achieve a social recognition that is the only basis of his negative being. His taste is the absolute principle of his life, and Isabel is sincerely impressed by its exquisiteness. When Ralph tries to warn Isabel that Osmond might be a sterile dilettante, she argues for him: "Mr. Osmond has never scrambled nor struggled—he has cared for no worldly prize. […] He knows everything, he understands everything, he has the kindest, gentlest, highest spirit. […] Mr. Osmond's simply a very lonely, a very cultivated and a very honest man—he is not a prodigious proprietor" (299). Ralph has listened with great attention, but he is quite sure that she is wrong, but she believes in what she says; she is deluded, but she is dismally consistent. "It was wonderfully characteristic of her that, having invented a fine theory about Gilbert Osmond, she loved him not for what he really possessed, but for his very poverties dressed out as honours" (299).

In order to extract from it some recognition of one's own superiority, Osmond has talked to Isabel about "his renunciation, his indifference, the ease which he dispenses with usual aids to success; and all this has seemed to her admirable," "a grand indifference, an exquisite independence" (367). To find the fulfillment of self through superiority to mere things and without attention to what others may think about one does—this is the feat Isabel supposes Osmond to have accomplished. However, indifference is really the last of Osmond's qualities. Actually as she comes tragically to see, Osmond is above all men enslaved by things and by what he supposes others to be thinking of him. He actually renounces nothing. He tells Isabel at the end, "I think we should accept the consequences of our action, and what I value most in life is the honour of a thing!" (455). Honour, for Osmond, is clearly only the observation of form and convention. "There is no self in void. The danger, of course, is when things absorb the self, and the self abandons itself to thinghood" (Tanner 45).

Both his wife and his daughter are stakes for him to achieve recognition from society. Osmond tells Isabel complacently, "I have succeeded in two things. I'm to marry the woman I adore, and I've brought up my child, as I wished, in the old way" (304). It is true that he hopes to acquire Isabel as he would a portrait, and sets a high price on his daughter's marriage. That Pansy would always be a child was "the conviction expressed by her father" (303-04). She is finished admirably as "a consummate piece" like a "Dresden-china shepherdess" (308), but as an individual she has no will nor independent mind, knowing no better than to obey her father. Osmond is determined to marry Pansy into high society. When his plan to marry her to Lord Warburton fails, he sends her abruptly back to the convent. He justifies his decision: "Convents are very quiet, very convenient, very salutary. I like to think of her there, in the old garden, under the arcade, among those tranquil virtuous women. Many of them are gentlewomen born; several of them are noble" (451). His tone is not so much offering an explanation as putting a thing into words—almost into pictures—to see, himself, how it would look. "He considered a while the picture he had evoked and seemed greatly pleased with it" (451). Actually, his intention is to keep Pansy away from the "unsatisfactory" suitors, like Rosier, and from the "undesired" influence from society, like Isabel's defiance against him. Isabel is shocked to find that her husband is indifferent to his daughter's feeling and treats her like a work of art:

> It seemed to show her how far her husband's desire to be effective was capable of going—to the point of playing theoretic tricks on the delicate organism of his daughter. She could not understand his purpose, no—not wholly, but she understood it better than he supposed or desired, […]. He had wanted to do something sudden and arbitrary, something unexpected and refined; to mark the difference between his sympathies and her own, and show that if he regarded his daughter as a precious work of art it was natural he should be more and more careful about the finishing touches. If he wished to be effective he had succeeded; the incident struck a chill into Isabel's heart. (451)

Isabel is a ladder for Osmond to climb up in society. After Madame Merle's strong recommendation of Isabel, he pretends to be indifferent and reluctant to work on the plan proposed by her. Nevertheless, one thing is still on his mind—money: "Did you say she was rich?" "She has seventy thousand pounds." "*En écus bien comptés*?" "There is no doubt whatever about her fortune. I've seen it, as I may say" (213). The dialogue,

especially the use of French, just betrays his hypocrisy. He perceives a new attraction in the idea of taking to himself Isabel, who definitely belongs to a rare kind declining so noble a hand as that of Lord Warburton, a Duke. "He had never forgiven his star for not appointing him to an English dukedom, and he could measure the unexpectedness of such conduct as Isabel's. It would be proper that the woman he might marry should have done something of that sort" (263). As James states later in the novel, Osmond's ideal is "a conception of high prosperity and propriety, of the aristocratic life," which he deems himself always, "in essence at least, to have led" (368).

Osmond also treats Isabel as one of his collections of choice objects. He tries to shape Isabel into a lady as he wishes to show his style to the world. He is described as "fond of originals, or rarities, of the superior and the exquisite" (263). She would have been as smooth to his general need of her as "handled ivory to the palm," and "do the thing *for* him, and he would not have waited in vain" (264-65; italics in orginal). His egotism had never taken the crude form of desiring a dull wife, in his words:

> [T]his lady's intelligence was to be a silver plate, not an earthen one—a plate that he might heap up with ripe fruits, to which it would give a decorative value, so that talk might become for him a sort of served dessert. He found the silver quality in this perfection in Isabel; he could tap her imagination with his knuckle and make it ring. (302)

He has expected Isabel to feel with him and for him, to enter into his opinions, his ambitions, his preferences. "The real offence, as she ultimately perceived, was her having a mind of her own at all. Her mind was to be his—attached to his own like a small garden-pot to a deer-park" (369). Osmond is only partly successful. He does change Isabel in some way; as Rosier notices, she is "framed in the gilded doorway," "the picture of a gracious lady" (316). However, she refuses to give up her own idea totally to fit Osmond. Her independent spirit is not dying. She is still brave enough to disobey Osmond by going back to Gardencourt to be with her dying cousin.

As Rahv suggests, in the novel James is still hesitating between the attitude of Madame Merle and that of Isabel, and his irony is provoked by the excessive claims advanced by both sides. But in years to come he is to be drawn more and more to the "European" idea of the self, his finer discriminations being increasingly engaged by the "envelope of circumstances" in which it is contained (143). However, Fluck argues that

Merle is not James's voice in the novel. On the contrary, she most clearly represents the dangers of a development about which Isabel as well as the reader have to be warned:

> If the relationship between a sign and its referent is no longer stable, then signs can easily be manipulated for the purposes of impression-management. In order to counter this and to become thus a match for the Mme Merles and Osmonds of this world, Isabel—and with her the reader—must learn to develop a sense for the increasingly complex relations between sign and referent. As she finally comes to realize, appearance and reality, sign and referent can no longer be linked in any fixed and stable way. (Fluck 190)

Isabel should finally understand that seemingly charming appearance does not necessarily connect with good nature. Isabel and Madame Merle and Osmond have different concepts of identity, which lead to their different choice of expression of themselves. Isabel is very fond of her liberty, her autonomous self. Madame Merle has throughout recognized society's demands as to the representation of her identity as involving an inherently theatrical process. In the end, Isabel's recognition of Madame Merle's practice is part of a process whereby she has to come to terms with the performativity implicit in the world around her, with the importance of "things" in that world, and with the necessity of participating in a system she finds inimical, if not overtly damaging. Madame Merle and Osmond have come to understand that one cannot always project the identity to the world one wishes to.

4.3. The Choice of a Lady: Liberty and Duty

Although more than one hundred years have passed since the publication of *The Portrait of a Lady*, critics are still puzzled by the two questions: Why does Isabel marry Osmond? Why does she choose to return to Rome at the end? Many readers are surprised by her decision, as Meier states, "out of three apples offered, [she] chooses the rotten one" (48). Shortly before her marriage Isabel tells her cousin, "I have only one ambition—to be free to follow out a good feeling" (298). She wants to be free and to choose freely to feel. Lord Warburton has his great complicated system which would burden Isabel's freedom; Goodwood has a character dominant enough to suffocate her. Isabel refuses Warburton because she fears the confinement of a "system" alien to the requirements of her imagination, and Goodwood because he has no "system" at all.

Though Lord Warburton and Goodwood are different, the reason why she refuses them is similar; neither of them would please her "sublime soul" (97). She accepts Osmond because she mistakenly identifies his "system" as an embodiment of her own most fundamental beliefs. Isabel does not only have the spirit of independence but also the moral power. As James states, "[t]he desire for unlimited expansion had been succeeded in her soul by the sense that life was vacant without some private duty […]" (303). Similarly, Cargill argues, "[d]uty has meaning for Isabel—this is the lesson she has derived from her experience—and sheer liberty has none" (283).

4.3.1. The Needs for Independence and Free Play of Imagination

Caspar Goodwood, as his name suggests, solid and rigid, is Isabel's most dedicated suitor in America and the son of a prominent cotton-mill proprietor in Massachusetts. Though still young, he has been running the family business and accumulated a considerable fortune in the exercise of this industry. He has a sharp eye for the mystery of mechanics, and has invented an improvement in the cotton-spinning process which is now largely used and is known by his name. He is described as "the late nineteenth-century variant of the modern American tycoon" (Krook 33). Goodwood's charisma, capability, and lack of sophistication make him the purest symbol of James's conception of America at that time. He is a strong character, a "natural" force, nurtured by and serving nothing but what James elsewhere calls the "world of grab." "His power is too little shaped or nurtured by the complex structure of civilization which might realize his spiritual and moral possibilities. He represents a tremendous energy hurled at a world she sees to be limited by the goals of money, of business, of power" (Berland 129). Isabel's good friend, Miss Stackpole thinks highly of him. Goodwood is extremely attentive to Isabel—just as devoted to her as he can live. In Miss Stackpole's opinion, Goodwood is a "splendid man and a perfect gentleman" in the American style (114), and the only man she has ever seen whom she thinks worthy of Isabel. What's more important is that Isabel's union with Goodwood would help to preserve her American tie. Isabel herself used to encourage Goodwood, for he was the finest young

man she had ever seen before she left Albany.

However, Isabel rejects his proposal. It is because of her aesthetic needs, her cherished liberty and her pursuit for high culture. Goodwood is too stiff, too sober, too inflexible; too much lacking in the qualities of naturalness, easiness, grace—the last in particular. She can admire his integrity, his solidity, his seriousness; but she cannot help feeling just a little irritated by his manners. Goodwood always dresses in the same manner which Isabel dislikes. "[H]is garments had a way of looking rather too new. But they all seemed of the same piece, the figure, the stuff, was so drearily usual" (109). She sometimes thinks he would be rather nicer if he looked, for instance, a little differently. "His jaw was too square and set and his figure too straight and stiff: these things suggested a want of easy consonance with the deeper rhythms of life" (109). Goodwood has never corresponded to her idea of a delightful person. "He showed his appetites and designs too simply and artlessly; when one was alone with him he talked too much about the same subject, and when other people were present he talked too little about anything" (110). And he is supremely strong, clean make—which is so much: "she saw the different fitted parts of him as she had seen, in museums and portraits, the different fitted parts of armoured warriors—in plates of steel handsomely inlaid with gold" (110). For Isabel, Goodwood is related directly to the imagery of physics, the machine culture. "His vitality is a thing of mass, weight, and power, something like the impersonal potential of a fire-and-steam driven mechanism" (Stein 173). This type of man is not so attractive to a young woman of sensibility and imagination like Isabel.

Aesthetic needs is only part of the reason for her dislike of Goodwood. The more important is that Goodwood might hinder her pursuit of liberty and high culture. Isabel attaches great importance to independence; therefore, the idea of diminished liberty was disagreeable to her. However, Caspar Goodwood expresses for her an energy of assertion and domination. She has already felt it as a power—that is of his very nature. It is in no degree a matter of his "advantages"—"it was a matter of the spirit that sat in his clear-burning eyes like some tireless watcher at a window. She might like it or not, but he insisted, ever, with his whole weight and force: even in one's usual contact with him one had to reckon with that" (108). In Goodwood's opinion, "an unmarried

woman—a girl of your age—isn't independent. There are all sorts of things she can't do. She's hampered at every step" (146). She has been haunted at moments by the image, by the danger, of his disapproval and has wondered—a consideration she has never paid in equal degree to anyone else—whether he would like what she does. Such a sense was particularly unacceptable for Isabel. Goodwood's dominant character is strong enough to pull Isabel under as an image of drowning as James describes in the "kiss" scene:

> His kiss was like white lightning, a flash that spread, and spread again, and stayed; and it was extraordinarily as if, while she took it, she felt each thing in his hard manhood that had least pleased her, each aggressive fact of his face, his figure, his presence, justified of its intense identity and made one with this act of possession. So had she heard of those wrecked and under water following a train of images before they sink. (499)

Goodwood's kiss is an epiphany to her, which has set in motion a moment of enlightenment for her. She realizes that Goodwood wants to be in total possession of her. Edel also argues that "Isabel fears Caspar Goodwood's wooing because sex may be another form of enslavement" ("The Myth of America in *The Portrait of a Lady*" 15). Besides that, Dorothea Krook surmises that Isabel's fear of the kiss could also be justified on the ground that "it is intrinsically incompatible with all that is *civilised* in the ideal that Isabel aspires to realise in her life in the Victorian Age. In that case, it would seem that the element of violence in sexual passion is being equated with the uncivilised or anti-civilised; and in the passages cited this indeed appears to be Isabel's attitude" (363; italics in original). Isabel resists the acquisitive sex and rigorous form of identity Caspar Goodwood represents. As James writes, "each aggressive fact of his face, his figure, his presence, justified of its intense identity and made one with this act of possession" (489). Goodwood does not unequivocally represent sexuality as "such an imperializing arrogance that characterizes what we might describes as the 'tyranny' of American culture" (Lamm 256), can be detected in his words to Isabel: "we can do absolutely as we please," Goodwood exclaims, "to whom under the sun do we owe anything?" (498).

Goodwood exists in Isabel's eyes more as an image, an image of America, than a man. Thus, "in her rejection of Caspar Goodwood, Isabel is rejecting America, or at

least that part of America that Goodwood represents, young, strong, and uninhibited" (Kettle 680-81). All the qualities he has can be associated with "industrialized America—its mechanical strength, its ostentatious wealth, its insensitivity to man's spiritual needs, its lack of cultural variety—coalesce in this vision" (Sicker 56). He has received the better part of his education at Harvard College, where, however, he has gained prestige "rather as a gymnast and an oarsman than as a gleaner of more dispersed knowledge" (108-09). As a man of resolute will, he is completely single-minded in his pursuit of particular ends and incapable of being deflected from his purpose, as we can see from his unremitting chase after Isabel from America to England, then to the Continent. He has all the gifts and energies required for conceiving and executing large practical projects, e.g., the Goodwood patent in cotton-spinning machines. "He is a man in whom the practical intelligence and the practical imagination predominate to the exclusion of other sorts of intelligence and imagination," which Isabel has (Krook 33). Gasper Goodwood also represents some part in Isabel's past, but she states early in the novel that "she had a desire to leave the past behind her and, as she said to herself, to begin afresh" (40). As Berland argues, "she has chosen Osmond in preference to Goodwood because, simply put, in her quest Goodwood represents what she is moving from, rather than toward" (129).

In their final meeting, Goodwood gives an offer of complete freedom and a restoration of independence to Isabel—a very typical indulgent American offer to an American woman, backed by his considerable means. He tries to persuade Isabel to give up her unhappy marriage, "The world's all before us—and the world's very big" (499). The association of the words has a terrible import for Isabel; she realizes that Caspar is offering her "the very independence, the very liberty, which has cost her so much" (Cargill 282). Therefore, she beseeches him to go away. Her rejection of Goodwood's proposal, though, can be a matter of her fear of sex or being possessed, but is the rejection of the fantasy of utter independence as well.

Lord Warburton is an aristocratic neighbor of the Touchetts who falls in love with Isabel during her first visit to Gardencourt. Just as Goodwood is viewed as the representative American businessman at that time, so Warburton is the British lord.

Ralph best describes Warburton's appeal: "He occupies a position that appeals to my imagination. Great responsibilities, great opportunities, great consideration, great wealth, great power, a natural share in the public affairs of a great country" (72). In Mr. Touchett's eyes, Lord Warburton is also "a very amiable young man—a fine young man" (74). He owns fifty thousand acres of the soil of his little island and ever so many other things besides. He has half a dozen houses to live in, and a seat in Parliament. He is a nobleman of the newest pattern, a reformer, a radical, condemning of ancient ways. He has elegant tastes—cares for literature, for art, for science, for charming young ladies. He has traveled through the United States and knows much more about them than Isabel, and he thinks that America is the most charming country in the world. To sum up in Ralph's words, "Warburton's such a thorough good sort; as a man, I consider he has hardly a fault. And then he's what they call here no end of a swell. He has immense possessions, and his wife would be thought a superior being. He unites the intrinsic and the extrinsic advantages" (136). Even the fastidious Osmond admits that Lord Warburton is "a very fine example of his race and order" (263).

Lord Warburton seems to be exceedingly likeable. Unlike Goodwood, who is refused for his lack of culture, "Lord Warburton is the product of a culture which, compared with the primitive simplicities and crudities of the American culture that has produced her American suitor Caspar Goodwood, is infinitely complex and full of subtle variety" (Krook 29). Therefore, in contrast to Goodwood, it seems easy for Lord Warburton to win Isabel. Initially, Isabel is fond of him when they meet in Gardencourt for the first time. She is excited to know the identity of Lord Warburton—"Oh, I hope there would be a lord; it's just like a novel!" (27). He is a liberal aristocrat, who "embodies the aristocratic culture of Europe, which has so attracted Isabel at Gardencourt, and adds his own reforming ideas—a combination which Henry James, had he been the kind of aesthetic snob he is often held to be, might have found irresistible" (Kettle 681). Therefore, what disturbs Isabel, as well as the reader, in the sense that it strikes her with wonderment, is the very fact that "it cost her so little to refuse a magnificent 'chance'" to marry Lord Warburton (104).

Isabel feels very deeply the attraction of the aristocratic standards, but she feels

also the limitations of Warburton. "Although Warburton is the product of a civilization infinitely more complex and subtly diversified than Isabel's own, she views him simply as the embodiment of a social class and fears that marriage to such as man would fix narrow limits upon her ever-expanding consciousness" (Sicker 57). The following quotation may have an explanation for her fear of constraint:

> Lord Warburton loomed up before her, largely and brightly, as a collection of attributes and power which were not to be measured by this simple rule, but which demanded a different sort of appreciation—an appreciation that the girl, with her habit of judging quickly and freely, felt she lacked patience to bestow…what she felt was that a territorial, a political, a social magnate had conceived the design of drawing her into the system in which he rather invidiously lived and moved. A certain instinct, not imperious, but persuasive, told her to resist—murmured to her that virtually she had a system and an orbit of her own. (97-98)

Although, by all indications, Lord Warburton is liberal and generous and likely to be a very permissive husband, it seems for Isabel that Warburton's "system and orbit" is stronger than hers. It is clear enough that Isabel is a young woman of independent mind and of bold spirit. Naturally, she does not wish to be dominated and to be encaged. Though she is lost in admiration of her opportunity offered by Warburton, "she managed to move back into the deepest shade of it, even as some wild, caught creature in a vast cage. The 'splendid' security so offered her was not her greatest she could conceive" (103). Henry James's attitude toward the British aristocracy is by no means uncritical. "James implied that the refusal (Isabel's refusal of Warburton's proposal) had its roots in America's refusal, in the Declaration of Independence, to accept British institutions" (Edel, "The Myth of America in *The Portrait of a Lady*" 9).

The other reason is that Lord Warburton fails to satisfy her imagination. Lord Warburton represents the world of power, of action, of position. He may minister to civilization but is not the representative of the culture which Isabel seeks. Isabel's response to Warburton is typically evasive. By reducing him to a sign in a conventional social order, a generic Englishman, she keeps him at a distance. "She couldn't marry Lord Warburton; the idea failed to support any enlightened prejudice in favour of the free exploration of life that she had hitherto entertained" (104). This rejection represents the first crucial step in Isabel's experiment, her attempt to explore life without

sacrificing the requirements of her imagination, and its essentially negative character frightens her: "who was she, what was she, that she should hold herself superior? What view of life, what design upon fate, what conception of happiness, has she that pretended to be larger than these large, these fabulous occasions? If she wouldn't do such a thing as that then she must do great things, she must do something greater" (105). Isabel is patently romantic in the sense that she has highly imaginative dreams which prove to be beyond the possibility of fulfillment. A realistic young woman or a conventionally romantic one, would have accepted Lord Warburton as a good catch, for he is, after all, an excellent man as well as a rich and noble lord. In her own words, "nineteen women out of twenty, would have accommodated themselves to it without a pang (104). It is really hard to renounce such a chance for worldly satisfaction. But Isabel has higher ideals than any she thinks can be realized by marrying Lord Warburton. "Her personal romance includes strenuous abstractions that lead her to aspire to far more than the conventional romance of marrying an English nobleman" (Chase 158).

On the basis of some unexpressed view of herself, incomprehensible to Warburton, she rejects not so much her lover but rather an imagined version of herself as "the heroine of the situation," the central figure of a conventional romance that would feature "the park of an old English country-house, with the foreground embellished by a 'great' (as she supposed) nobleman in the act of making love to a young lady who, on careful inspection, should be found to present remarkable analogies with herself" (99). However, "remarkable" the "analogies" may be, they remain only superficial, pictorial correspondences, for Isabel, who is "so original" as her sister describes (38), is convinced that she is to have an original story of her own. Warburton's direct appeal to the heart fails because he has not captured the girl's imagination which controls her emotions. At the close of their inconclusive interview both Warburton and Isabel recognize that it is her "remarkable mind" that separates them.

In this first phase of the courtship of Isabel Archer, James makes it clear that her self-absorption leaves no room for a second and complementary figure to love her: she is in love with the romantic images she has fashioned of herself. Convinced that "she had a system and an orbit of her own" (98), Isabel shrinks from Warburton because his

presence challenges the autonomy of her imagination. Her thoughts, instead of moving forward to explore Warburton's character, turn inward upon herself: the lady rehearses her preferred means of self-expression, the exercise of her taste, which James describes as a "simple rule" of perception and judgement on the basis of the aesthetic pleasure produced in her imagination by "moral images" (97). Isabel's feelings are not only disciplined by her imagination but they are directed toward the expression of the ideals to which it is devoted. Preoccupied with the play of her own consciousness, she can only regard as "an aggression" the possibility of a love that might interfere with her enjoyment of herself. "Only a man she took to be her own ideal reflection could find a place in the crowded mirror of the young woman's imagination" (Eakin 170).

4.3.2. The Quest for Perfection and Moral Integrity

The most important reason for Isabel to marry Gilbert Osmond is her desire to be perfect, her ardent desire to enlarge and enrich her experience of life, to grow in wisdom and virtue. Like other protagonists in James's novels focusing on the international theme, Isabel comes to Europe to be refined and perfected. "She was always planning out her development, desiring her perfection, observing her progress" (57). She always tries to appear as perfect as possible. Isabel's romance of the self, as is suggested above, requires that self-fulfillment shall take place only at a high level of abstraction, where the disinterested pursuit of perfection may be carried on. In the process, Madame Merle plays an important role. Initially, Madame Merle appears, in Isabel's eyes, as a living avatar of the highlights in European culture. "She found herself desiring to emulate them, and in twenty ways this lady presented herself as a model. 'I should like awfully to be *so*!'" (169; italics in original). "To be so cultivated and civilized, so wise and so easy, and still make so light of it—that was really to be a great lady, especially when one so carried and presented one's self. It was as if somehow she had all society under contribution, and all the arts and graces it practiced […]" (170). It is through Madame Merle's recommendation that Isabel gets to know Gilbert Osmond, "the most delightful," "exceedingly clever," "distinguished" man with "no career, no name, no position, no

fortune, no past, no future, no anything" (176). She further points out that "[h]e was easily bored, too easily, and dull people always put him out; but a quick and cultivated girl like Isabel would give him a stimulus which was too absent from his life" (215). Isabel believes that Osmond must be a male counterpart to Madame Merle, and she is chosen by Madame Merle because of her own superiority.

In order to draw Isabel's attention to Osmond, Madame Merle sings high praise of him before her: He is "artistic through and through" (215) and has "a great dread of vulgarity; that's his special line; he hasn't any other that I know of" (218). She knows that Isabel is a romancer, who refuses to impute significance to human actions unless they are conceived as being exempt from the ordinary vulgar circumstances of life. Madame Merle has also expected that Isabel's decision might be challenged by her family and friends. Therefore, she pretends to encourage Isabel to be disinterested:

> We know too much about people in these days; we hear too much. Our ears, our minds, our mouths are stuffed with personalities. Don't mind anything anyone tells you about anyone else. Judge everyone and everything for yourself. […] You are not to mind them—that's precisely my argument; not to mind what they say about yourself any more than what they say about your friend or your enemy. (219)

Actually, she wants Isabel to be deaf to other people's opinions, which might be helpful for Isabel, but a hindrance to her intrigue. She knows too well Isabel's personality—she always wants to choose herself. Isabel does what Madame Merle tells her. She does not want to be influenced by opinions from her aunt and other people in the family. As Ralph says, "she has listened to several parties, as his father would have said, but had made them listen in return" (239). Mrs. Touchett's prediction is right that nothing can prevent Isabel from marrying Mr. Osmond if she only looks at him in a certain way. "She's capable of marrying Mr. Osmond for the beauty of his opinions or for his autograph of Michelangelo. She wants to be disinterested: as if she were the only person who's in danger of not being *so*! […] She ought to marry someone of whose disinterestedness she shall herself be sure" (240; italics in original).

Isabel decides to see Osmond for herself and pay him a visit. Meanwhile, Madame Merle connives with Osmond to lure Isabel. She arranges for Isabel and the formidable Gilbert Osmond to meet in his "sorted, sifted, arranged world, thinking about art and

beauty and history" (229). Osmond and his little villa meet the requirements of Isabel's imagination:

> She had carried away an image from her visit to his hilltop which her subsequent knowledge of him did nothing to efface and which put on for her a particular harmony with other supposed and divined things, histories within histories: the image of a quiet, clever, sensitive, distinguished man, strolling on a moss-grown terrace above the sweet Val d'Arno, and holding by the hand a little girl whose bell-like clearness gave a new grace to childhood. The picture had no flourishes, but she liked its lowness of tone and atmosphere of summer twilight that pervaded it. It spoke of the kind of personal issue that touched her most nearly; of the choice between objects, subjects, contacts—what might call them? – of a thin and those of a rich association; lonely, studious life in a lovely land; of an old sorrow that sometimes ached today; of a feeling of pride that was perhaps exaggerated, but that had an element of nobleness; a care for beauty and perfection so natural and so cultivated together that the career appeared to stretch beneath it in the disposed vistas and with the ranges of steps and terraces and fountains of a formal Italian garden […]. (242)

Isabel inclines to the Arnoldian reading of Osmond, tasking him as an example of "stands and touchstones other than the vulgar" (229). Osmond is so perfect at an imitation that only a connoisseur could be expected to tell the difference. Isabel mistakes Osmond in this setting as a refinement of high culture, perfectly consistent with his best breeding. She marvels at Osmond's idea that "one ought to make one's life a work of art" (266). For others, art is art itself. It is something one can possess, such as antiques, ancient drawings. Instead, for Osmond, art is a way of living. Life is a matter of art, which is the keynote in Mr. Osmond, and everything is in harmony with it. Such a life style meets Isabel's idea of culture.

Besides, Isabel thought Osmond had what both Goodwood and Warburton lacked: a high seriousness, a distinguished character which pleased her "sublime soul" (97). She thinks "there is nothing higher for a girl than to marry a person she likes" (297). Later Osmond also promises her a beautiful life in the future: "You're remarkably fresh, and I'm remarkably well-seasoned. We've my poor child to amuse us; we'll try and make up some little for her. It's all soft and mellow—it has the Italian colouring" (303). He speaks much of Italy and art and literature in a way that Isabel of course finds enchanting but also peculiarly touching. This view of Osmond inspires in Isabel a correlative vision of herself, defines for her the role of a self-sacrificing wife and mother,

quietly advancing, under her husband's guidance, in the cultivation of wisdom and beauty. She even envisions her future with his company: "It was in Italy that they had met, Italy had been a party to their first impressions of each other, and Italy should be a party to their happiness. Osmond had the attachment of old acquaintance and Isabel the stimulus of new, which seemed to assure her a future at a high level of consciousness of the beautiful" (303).

Another reason is her sense of duty, her desire to serve. More specially, it is the desire to do something with her money that will be at once useful and imaginative; to use her money in the service to someone she loves. What touches her is Osmond's noble contentment, as she sees it, in the pursuit of his cultivated tastes in spite of the poverty, which, she thinks, gives her a great opportunity to help him cultivate further. She thinks she should be able to be of use to him. "She could surrender to him with a kind of humility, she could marry him with a kind of pride; she was not only taking, she was giving" (303). In her reflection, "he [Osmond] was like a skeptical voyager strolling on the beach while he waited for the tide, looking seaward yet not putting to sea. It was in all this she found her occasion. She would launch his boat for him; she would be his providence; it would be a good thing to love him" (364). Ironically, the fortune through which Ralph intends to liberate Isabel from all self-limiting choices and help her meet the requirements of her imagination has just the opposite effect. "The money becomes the distinguishing fact about her and thus imposes upon her the burden of a widely recognized social stereotype—she finds that, in the world's eyes, she has become an heiress" (Sicker 59), as her aunt tells her, "now that you're a young woman of fortune, you must know how to play the part—I mean play it well" (301). Her aunt means that Isabel should learn to deal with these supposed external manifestations of character.

> At bottom her money had been a burden, had been on her mind, which was filled with the desire to transfer the weight of it to some other conscience, to some more prepared receptacle. What would lighten her own conscience more effectually than to make it over to the man with the best taste in the world? [...] there was no charitable institution in which she had been as much interested as in Gilbert Osmond. (365)

Osmond, she believes, is a man to whom her fortune will be of real service, whose enjoyment of it she can intimately share. At the same time, she also believes he will in

turn share her desire for self-development, for perfection, and by virtue of his superior talents, tastes, and accomplishments will contribute to the enlargement of her mind, the refinement of her sensibilities, and the most splendid extension of her life's experience. "It is through sympathy, generosity, and intellectual development that Isabel believes she will produce, both for society and herself, her most pleasing impression" (Sicker 61).

Sigi Jottkandt argues that Isabel's choice is the result of "her mystified idea of the relation between ethics and aesthetics" (75). Osmond appears to Isabel as an ideal figure to emulate, "whose exquisite taste is simply the visible, outward reflection of his equally exquisite morals" (74). This, more than anything else, convinces her of the rightness of her choice: "You might know a gentleman when you see one," Isabel chastises Ralph, "you might know a fine mind. Mr. Osmond makes no mistakes! He knows everything, he understands everything, he has the kindest, gentlest, highest spirit" (299). Isabel frames Osmond as an unchanging portrait, a drawing of Uffizi, in her imagination. This fatal distortion of reality is born of a need so extraordinary that it promotes an almost willful self-deception. Although Ralph Touchett warns his cousin that Osmond is a "sterile aesthete" (298), she sees in him at once the high priest, the devoted custodian, and martyr of the life of perfection. Later in her self-reflection, she finally realizes that "her notion of the aristocratic life was simply the union of great knowledge with great liberty; the knowledge would give one a sense of duty, and the liberty a sense of enjoyment. But for Osmond it was altogether a thing of forms, a conscious calculated attitude" (368).

Many critics think that the three possible reasons for Isabel's return to Rome are her promise to Pansy, the preservation of appearances, and her pride that she cannot make her mistake public. There is still more speculation and reasoning. Together with Mathiessen, Fred B. Millett in his introduction to the novel argues: "But perhaps James's most explicit pronouncement on Isabel Archer's ultimate fate is put in the mouth of her dying cousin, the most concerned and responsible observer of her unhappiness" (xxxiv-xxxv): "I don't believe such a generous mistake as yours can hurt you for more than a little" (489). Ralph may be saying simply that she will have the

courage to "[affront] her destiny" and the fortitude to rise above the pain of her situation—it can hurt her only a little while.

Ralph's influence cannot be neglected. However, I tend to agree with Krook that Isabel's deepest and most decisive reason for going back to Rome is to be inferred from those passages in her midnight vigil in which she comes to her painful self-knowledge, in particular the knowledge of the degree to which she herself has been responsible for Osmond's self-deception about her, and the extent therefore to which she has contributed to the failure of their marriage. "She had made herself small, pretending there was less of her than there really was" (364). What she comes to feel is that, having this degree of moral responsibility, she must accept the consequences. She views her marriage as the most serious act—the single sacred act—of her life. That's why later on, after she has found out about Osmond's falseness and extremeness, she is determined to maintain her marriage. Furthermore, the sense of duty which James depicts most in his novels, works on Isabel again. Before her marriage, she is glad to be able to help Osmond who she thinks is poor but noble and pure. After her marriage, faced with other possible futures ahead of her, she chooses to return to Rome to fulfill her responsibility, her promise to her step-daughter Pansy to come back. Most of all, it is the responsibility for her own choice. "One must accept one's deeds. I married him before the world; I was perfectly free; it was impossible to do anything more deliberate. One can't change that way" (415).

Compared with Newman and Daisy, Isabel has better cultural literacy. She reads extensively before going abroad, keeps her mind open to different cultures, and begins to learn to compare and judge instead of accepting or rejecting all. Her problem lies in "the inability to tell the factitious from the real" (Porte 15). She is too susceptible to fine appearances, to a brilliant surface, and believes the appeal of the merely aesthetic to be morally sound altogether. For this Isabel has to suffer, and through her suffering learn that "the aesthetic is not necessarily coexistensive with the moral, and that the touchstone of taste is not the touchstone by which a good life can be lived" (Krook 59). That is why James has sent her to Europe—not, with her presumably superior intellect, to mock her fellow Americans' pretension to "culture," but to learn the true meaning of

the concept. This conflict of the aesthetic and the moral in a highly civilized society is to emerge in James's later novels as one of his great themes, like *The Ambassadors*.

5. *The Ambassadors*: Becoming a Cosmopolitan

After experiments with other genres and topics, James switched back to his early and preferable international theme in his late literary career. *The Ambassadors*, as James's masterpiece on the theme in his later years, comprehends almost all main issues of James's international novels, such as wealth, freedom, aesthetics, experience, and morality. Matthew Arnold's concepts, of which James had high opinion, especially such recurrent Arnolidan ideas as the "dedication to culture," the partiality to French culture, the "disinterested free play of mind," the rejection of "provincialism" in favor of becoming a "cosmopolite," and art as "aesthetically appealing and morally sound," are all projected into the novel. The clearer binary opposites between Europe and America in James's earlier works are blurred. "New England may hate Paris, may not see what is splendid about Paris, but it is responding to unseriousness, failure of responsibility" (Diamond 251). There are genuine attractiveness and limitations or inadequacies in both the aestheticism associated with Paris and the moralism of New England. Like "the seeker of the light," in the Arnoldian sense, Strether represents the complete merging of the best elements in American and European cultures, which James's protagonists in other novels strive for, but never attain.

The Ambassadors, as Edel argues, spoke for the central myth of Henry James's life. "James had long before made up his mind that his choice of Europe was wise, that Woollett and Mrs. Newsome—that is, the U.S.A.—could not offer him the sense of freedom he had won for himself abroad. Woollett was all constraints—it was Puritan" (*Henry James: A Life* 537). James struggled to free himself from the authority figure of his past, his mother in America, to pursue his own life abroad. "In the symbolism of the book two motherlands of James's life take primary place—beneficent Europe, exigent America" (537). However, like Strether, James ultimately cannot forgo his deep sense of responsibility to his origin, and finds himself positioned "somewhere outside both systems, seeing into and appreciating both and not quite at home in either" (Hadley 90). In the following three sections I will contrast the money-grabbing values of industrial

Woollett and the civilized, diversified cosmopolitan Paris; compare two different ambassadors' attitudes toward Chad's situation in Paris—disinterestedness and provincialism, and discuss attractiveness and limitations or inadequacies in both the aestheticism associated with Paris and the moralism of New England.

5.1. "The World of Grab" vs. "The World of Culture"

Arnold observes that the "besetting danger" of modern civilization is "faith in machinery," whereby greatness and success are equated with industrial output of coal or iron, with the accumulation of wealth, viewing these as ends in themselves (*Culture and Anarchy* 16). He believed culture to be the only antidote for the evils of an industrial society; it was a force to preserve and promote human values. The function of culture is to purge our mind of the effects of such material and narrow preoccupations, and to stem "the common tide of men's thoughts in a wealthy and industrial community" (*Culture and Anarchy* 20). Without this purging, Arnold warns, the future as well as the present "would inevitably belong to the Philistines," who are devoted to the pursuit of wealth (*Culture and Anarchy* 19). In his essay, "A Word about America," Arnold says, "whereas our society in England distributes itself into Barbarians, Philistines, and Populace, America is just ourselves, with the Barbarians quite left out, and the Populace nearly" (*The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold* Vol. X: 7). This would leave the Philistines for the great bulk of America, who are known by their mundane wisdom, expert of industry, and found busy in industrialization and commerce. Their eternal inclination is to the progress and prosperity of the country by building cities, railroads, and running the great wheels of industry. According to his critique, with the Philistine predominating, American society was apathetic to the powers of beauty, intellect, and social life. He also mentions in the essay James Russell Lowell, a contemporary critic, who describes his own nation, America, as "the most common-schooled and the least cultivated people in the world" (93). As Arnold records in his letters, Henry James, being asked by Knowles to write a reply to Arnold's essay, found the argument unanswerable, because it was so true, and agreed with him on this point.

The antidote to all this "vulgarity" and lack of culture was, for both Arnold and James, a knowledge of the French. They tended to regard France as a cultural and intellectual beacon and to advocate, without abdicating nationality or individuality, learning from French sweetness and light. Thus, "the Arnoldian tradition almost invariably involves, expatriation or not, a preoccupation with French culture" (Raleigh 258). At the turn of the twentieth century, Paris became a metropolis, where miscellaneous people, aristocrats, artists, tourists from all over the world lived. Parisian society was more or less polyglot, a sign of plurality. In *The Ambassadors*, James vividly contrasts the money-grabbing values of industrial Woollett and the civilized, diversified cosmopolitan Paris.

5.1.1. Unbridled Materialism in Woollett

In the essay, "A Word about America," Arnold's Boston friend talks of the "elegant and simple social order established in almost every small town in America, and of the group, in each, of people of good taste, good manners, good education and self-respect, peers of any people in the world," he cannot help thinking that things are not quite so bright as his friend paints them (*The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold* Vol. X: 7). He questions the credibility of his friend's description. According to his experience, he thinks that his Boston friend is mixing two impressions together, the impression of individuals scattered over the country, real lovers of the humane life, but not yet numerous enough or united enough to produce much effect, and the impression of groups of worthy respectable people to be found in almost every small town of the Union, people with many merits, but not yet arrived at that true and happy goal of civilization, "an elegant and simple social order" (7).

Henry James's analysis of America, so close to Arnold's, is the frustration a man of culture feels for his ideal of culture in a country where "[t]he narrow concentration on business diminishes the character of the man, and that in turn diminishes the woman; the possibilities of social interaction thus foreclosed diminish the complexity and the possibilities for forms and manners—for culture—in the society as a whole" (Sterner

185). The devastating monotony of monetary standard flattens and constrains variety in society. In his autobiography, *Notes of a Son and Brother*, James wrote that commercial exchange defined the social order and the human relationships within it; the New England culture of his boyhood was "a social order (so far as it *was* an order) that found its main ideal in a 'strict attention to business,' that is to buying and selling over a counter or a desk, and in such an intensity of traffic as made, on the part of all involved, for close localisation" (Bellringer 9). The small-scale retail commerce of James's boyhood was replaced, in the economic expansion that swept the United States after the Civil War, with large-scale industrialization. Whereas before the Civil War American industry was based on hand labor, now products were turned out by the thousands by machines. The cities of New England, stoked by the influx of millions of European immigrants, became major manufacturing centers. In fin-de-siècle America, the idea of wealth and the values of the emerging consumer culture all played a role in structuring individual consciousness and imagination, which was an inevitable outcome of the development in late-nineteenth-century capitalism. It is a time when "codes of meaning related to business dominated both the American consciousness and the rhetoric of the age" (Garcia 154).

Although no part of *The Ambassadors* takes place in Woollett, a small town in Massachusetts, where Strether, the protagonist, is from, it is nonetheless always lurking in the background. It is the epitome of its people; it gives all sorts of knowledge about their likes, dislikes, habits, and behaviors. The Newsome family has "a big brave bouncing business there. A roaring trade. […] a workshop; a great production, a great industry. The concern's a manufacture—and a manufacture that, if it's only properly looked after, may well be on the way to become a monopoly" (31). They have quite a number of buildings; almost a little industrial colony. Strether mentions it to Miss Gostrey as a "vulgar" product, but doesn't want to tell her exactly what it is: "Only as a small, trivial, rather ridiculous object of the commonest domestic use, it's just wanting in—what shall I say? Well, dignity, or the least approach to distinction" (31). A gray street scenery of a factory town, a visual ugliness can be pictured. Life in Woollett is dull and bleak, a social order in which everyone is hurled straight upon an office or

store since people find their main ideal in a strict attention to business, which means to be invariably there, on a certain spot in a certain place. Disconnected from business in New England, one can only be connected with the negation of life. In Paris pleasure is pleasure itself, intense experience and precious mental acquisition, which is of "no practical account" according to Woollett's perception. "With its differences of measure, its so narrow and rigid standards and convictions, such beatitude on the part of the blandly idle and the supposedly accomplished is depreciated—denounced as a departure from the career of business, of industry and respectability, the so-called regular life" (Marks 70-71). When they first met, Miss Gostrey says to Strether that he seems not to enjoy his time as much as he should. He admits it, "Precisely. Woollett isn't sure it ought to enjoy. If it were it would. But it hasn't, poor thing, any one to show it how" (8).

Unlike Christopher Newman, a millionaire, Daisy Miller, a daughter of a newly rich family, or Isabel Archer, an heiress, Lambert Strether is a common man, and his mission as an ambassador is to go to Paris on his fiancée's behalf and "save" her son, Chad Newsome, from the clutches of a presumably wicked French woman, and bring the young man back to the family business. Strether's mission to Europe is like a business trip, because Mrs. Newsome is not just his fiancée, but also his business superior. From the beginning of the novel onward, Strether's mission is constantly mentioned as "the business." It is not surprising that Strether's dominant metaphor for his rescue mission should be business-related, as Garcia argues, "[a]lthough Mrs. Newsome has two compelling reasons to desire her son Chadwick's return to the United States—to get him into the family business and to get him married—it is the business interest that predominates" (157). Strether's mission has the air of an attempt at moral salvation, because Mrs. Newsome, whose rigorous vision is the epitome of Woollett's values, imagines the woman involved with Chad as very "bad"; however the concern seems to be more about the effect of this liaison on the family business than on the state of Chad's soul. A preoccupation with industry and commerce is a fundamental characteristic of the culture and consciousness of New England. Therefore, Chad's lover is not "bad" because she threatens Chad's sexual purity, for even Woollett has

gradually accommodated itself to the spirit of the age and the increasing mildness of manners, and accepts the fact that young men, especially if they go to Paris, are going to acquire sexual experience. The cardinal sin of the unknown woman is that she prevents Chad from fulfilling his function as a man in capitalist society: obeying his father's will and increasing the prosperity of the business.

In Woollett, if Chad doesn't immerse himself in the family business, certainly he will have no accepted place. "As the unnamed product of the Woollett manufacture seems to wait for Chad's advertising to grant it a name and a price, even Chad himself can find his identity and self-importance only through economics" (Peiffer 101). On Chad's head, in Woollett, certain high hopes are placed. There are signs of his having inherited a natural turn for business, and it will be much better if Mrs. Newsome has her own man in the firm. The thing has so developed that an opening scarcely apparent three years ago now simply waits for him, a place in the top management of marketing. His mother has kept it for him, holding out against strong pressure, till the last possible moment. "Chad's of real importance—or can easily become so if he will—to the business" (58). The field of activity that is congenial to Chad's personality and talents and in which he has qualifications for functioning with professional competence, indeed in which he shows promise of becoming exceedingly proficient, is the business. During their last conversation, Chad indicates a strong interest in advertising and in learning the mechanics of running his family's business. He has already lost interest in what Europe can give him. He has now turned his attention to the financial excitement awaiting him in the United States, under his mother's control in Woollett.

In his critique of contemporary American society in *The American Scene* (1907), James describes a society, which is divided into two sections— the economic and social realms according to gender. The American man, preoccupied by business and by the accumulation of money, can "never hope to be anything *but* a businessman" and so leaves the most important "two-thirds of apparent life"—the social—to the women (247-48). In the upper classes, the male laborers liberate the females of the family so that the females may busy themselves with "the more interesting and significant aspects of life" (Garcia 164). However, in *The Ambassadors*, in Woollett even women are

dedicated to business. Mrs. Newsome, "the vigilant, rich, powerful, threatening, puritanical and provincial (if always absent) New England mother-figure," runs the family business successfully after her husband's death (Geismar, *Henry James and His Cult* 283). Her daughter, Sarah Pocock seems to be a powerful businesswoman, too. As Strether tells Maria Gostrey, "Ah they couldn't have come—either of them. They are very busy people and Mrs. Newsome in particular has a large full life" (30).

Jim Pocock, the son-in-law of the Newsome family, represents the successful Woollett businessman who worships material gains at the cost of his dignity. Geismar observes that Jim Pocock is another caricature of the American businessman: "a pre-Babbitt or pre-Dodsworth figure, […] the victim and puppet of the dominating New England women" (*Henry James and His Cult* 283). Jim seems to remain always an auxiliary and is excluded from the core of the society that women dominate. However, this is only partially true; in fact, he develops his own philosophy of survival under the Newsome women's despotic power. Being sympathetic toward Strether and Chad but detached from Sarah's mission remains Jim's principle in Paris. He hopes to succeed through his double-sided friendliness in promoting his position in business. Persuading Chad to stay in Paris to enjoy life will help him to have "more of the free hand" in the family business (16). By not interfering with Sarah's business, he secures his own position in the Woollett society. Strether sees through him: "I don't think he [Jim] really wants Chad back. […] He's very decent and won't be a traitor in the camp. […] he'll sniff up what he supposed to be Paris from morning till night, and he'll be, as to the rest, for Chad, well, just as he is" (216). Jim makes Strether reflect on his future role as a husband in the Newsome family.

Material acquisition and reward in the form of profit or money are overemphasized and used as the standard to define success. In Woollett, success means the power to exercise economic freedom. At the beginning of the novel, Strether, fresh from Woollett, does not oppose the values of the American Philistine class. He envies his friend Waymarsh, a wealthy lawyer, who is able to maintain his dignity despite being deserted by his wife because he "had made a large income," for the figure of the income he [Strether] had arrived at had never been high enough to look any one in the face" (14).

The suggestion here is that "in the social milieu Strether aspired to, a man's value is identified with his income" (Garcia 162). He talks with Maria Gostrey about Waymarsh, a wealthy lawyer, "he may buy everything," "he has struck for freedom" (22). "He's a success of a kind that I haven't approached." "Do you mean he has made money?" "He makes it—to my belief" (23). Waymarsh's success is measured in cash. He rebels against the sophisticated influence which Maria Gostrey is having on Strether during their cultural pilgrimage in Chester by striking out on his own to buy something expensive at a jeweller's. He later goes with Ms. Barrace into shops and wants to shower her with expensive presents, not so much because he likes her as he likes to spend the money. Ms. Barrace tells Strether, "I do know why he's not banal. But I do prevent him all the same—and if you saw what he sometimes selects—from buying. I save him hundreds and hundreds" (141). Strether sees Waymarsh's behavior as an assertion of his purchasing power, a "sacred rage" (24, 141), or "a demonstration of independence, the independence that American money can buy" (Bellringer 104).

Maria declares that she likes Strether for not being a vulgar American success, for not fulfilling "the compulsory American male plot, which consists of a career of moneymaking" (Bell 335), different from his friend Waymarsh, who has just done that. If a man's identity in Strether's world is commensurate with his ability to generate money, Strether is really a failure as a man. He confesses to Maria that he doesn't touch the Newsome family business. His only "presentable little scrap of an identity" is an editor of the Review, "which Mrs. Newsome, for the most part, magnificently pays for" and which he, "not at all magnificently edit[s]" (34). Unlike his predecessors in James's novels, Strether is neither a millionaire, like Christopher Newman, nor an inheritor of a large fortune, like Isabel Archer. He is a failure economically, "a purchased commodity maintained by Mrs. Newsome and later 'handed over' or 'given away'" (Peiffer 127). Strether's debt is so large that Mrs. Newsome can direct his movements, appointing him to Paris, for instance. He has to report to Mrs. Newsome about things in Paris immediately and frequently.

In this respect, Strether seemingly resembles James, who admitted more than once an ignorance of American business, as in his memorable letter to the wife of Robert

Louis Stevenson, "my ears tingle with pain so abnormally *not* am I a man of business or acquainted with the rudiments of any business transaction whatever, I have always had a constitutional incapacity for everything of the sort and insurmountable aversion to it, and circumstances have happened, from the first, to confirm me in my habits of ignorance and helplessness" (*Henry James Letters* Vol. III: 499). Although an examination of James's *Notebooks* and dealings with literary agents and publishers would surely render this declaration disingenuous, there is at least a broader representative truth about it. James was never the amateur and dilettante in these areas, like his father, Henry Sr., was, but neither was he like his grandfather, William of Albany, the business tycoon, who created the James family fortune. Strether, it may be said, is far less knowledgeable and "at home" in business dealings than was Henry James himself; however, like James, he is spiritually an alien to that world. This aspect of Strether helps to explain why he is unwilling to name for Maria Gostrey the "vulgar domestic" article that the Newsome factory complex in Woollett manufactures (60)—vulgar in the sense of common, perhaps, rather than distasteful, although Strether's reluctance to speak of it allows for dual meaning.

In fact, Strether is not quite out of "the plot." Millicent Bell argues, "his Woollett-instructed mission is, curiously, a version of the female plot of marriage, but this Cinderella is male" (335). If he successfully gets Chad back to Woollett to take over the family business, Strether will "get Mrs. Newsome" (58). Waymarsh, the businessman, correctly understands the result of Strether's efforts, "You'll marry—you personally—more money. She's already rich, as I understand you, but she'll be richer still if the business can be made to boom on certain lines that you've laid down" (58). Strether admits that he wants what his future wife wants, so he is "fierce for the boom" (58). He weighs a moment in silence the justice of Waymarsh's charge. Maria asks him what he stands to lose by failing in his mission, and he says, first, "nothing," then admits, "everything" (39-40). His trip to Europe is also like a risky investment.

However, Strether changes his idea of success during his stay in Paris. He finds that people can get the finer "profit" in Paris, intense experience and precious mental acquisition; so he decides to persuade Chad to stay. It is Waymarsh who first sees that

the "rescue" of Chad is the wrong plot for Strether's character. "You're being used for a thing you ain't fit for" (58), he tells his friend. Strether himself also has often enough wondered "to what degree his interference might pass for interested" (96). Only by embracing failure in Woollett's terms does he, paradoxically, gain. His final resolution, "not, out of the whole affair to have got anything for myself" (327), rejects any gain at all of visible kind—even the consolation offered by Maria—"in a recoil of severest consistency from Woollett's calculus of profit-making" (Bell 335-36). Without getting his "reward" by marriage, Strether has got the belated height of feeling reached by his experience and imagination.

Though she praises Strether for being a "failure," ignorant of business or money making, Maria Gostrey sees herself as working to support the Philistine system of values in her own subtle way. James characterizes her as a professional shopper: "I'm a general guide—to 'Europe,' don't you know? I wait for people—I put them through. I pick them up—I set them down. I'm a sort of superior 'courier-maid.' […] It's a dreadful thing to have to say, in so wicked a world, but I verily believe that, such as you see me, there's nothing I don't know. I know all the shops and prices" (9). Her knowledge and skills as primarily consumerist reveal the interests of her "clients," who may purport to come to Europe in order to be exposed to old civilizations, and to educate themselves, but who end up attempting to acquire culture and history through purchasing it. "James's description also reveals the place of consumer information on Gostrey's scale of values: to possess an intimate and unerring knowledge of shops and prices is somehow awful, yet it defines her identity" (Garcia 160). When Strether first visits Gostrey in Paris, he is struck by how crowded her apartment is with "*things"*:

> Her compact and crowded little chambers, almost dusky, as they at first struck him, with accumulations, represented a supreme general adjustment to opportunities and conditions. Wherever he looked he saw an old ivory or an old brocade, and he scarce knew where to sit for fear of a misappliance. The life of the occupant struck him of a sudden as more charged with possession than Chad's or than Miss Barrace's; wide as his glimpse had lately become of the empire of "things," what was before him still enlarged it; the lust of the eyes and the pride of life had indeed thus their temple....objects all that caught, through the muslin, with their high rarity, the light of the low windows. Nothing was clear about them save that they were precious. (63)

Maria Gostrey recognizes and pays homage to the power and appeal of things; her

relentless appetite for bargains. That she acquires the rare and the beautiful for less than they are worth is testimony to that recognition. Her apartment is a "shrine," a "temple" to "precious" objects, suggesting that she endows them with an almost religious importance. Strether later names Gostrey's house as "little museum of bargains" (128). She represents the American female consumer par excellence, who not only purchases but also encourages others to purchase.

At the time *The Ambassadors* was written, the question of the value of money had a particular power over the American consciousness. Many discussions among the characters are centered on money. When asked by Ms. Gostrey whether Mrs. Newsome has money, Strether replies, "Oh plenty. That's the root of the evil. There's money, to very large amounts, in the concern. Chad has had the free use of a great deal. But if he'll pull himself together and come home, all the same, he'll find his account in it. […] He'll take up his definite material reward" (31). Chad appreciates the allowance his mother has hitherto made him. Even if Mrs. Newsome threatens to cut off his allowance, he can still stay there, because "he has unfortunately, and on no small scale, his independent supply—money left him by his grandfather, her [Mrs. Newsome's] own father" (32). He can enjoy his carefree life in Paris because he has money. In fact, he is neither interested in arts in Paris nor endowed for them. What he wants, and has been all the while occupied with, is simply a disencumbered and irresponsible "good time," which his money can buy. Money might even furnish people with the accoutrements of culture. Strether is almost fooled by his "improved" veneer. But in James's view, money could not buy the real thing. Money could aid beauty but could not call it into being; beauty is cherished by taste, and taste is grown only in the ground of true culture—it cannot be bought, as James expresses in *The American Scene*. "Money can widen the field in which taste can operate; but, lacking taste, money can do no more. It can do even less: it can widen the field in which a lack of taste can operate. Where taste is rendered subservient to commerce, as in New York, money tears down churches to build skyscrapers" (Sterner 196).

James exposes the cultural impoverishment of America by giving his observation of the sacrifice of "society" and "manners" to the prevailing materialism. To be sure,

exposure of the spiritual bankruptcy of the governing value of culture is far from providing a solution. But it is necessary for people to be convinced that their situation is desperate before they look for remedies. "James's value as cultural medicine is precisely of this preliminary sort, more purgative than cure" (Sterner 252). He was sensitive to the need but still in no position to offer solutions. His dramatic portrayal of the consequences of the preoccupation with materialism heightens Americans' awareness of what has been lost, especially as contrasted to the richer possibilities conceived by James's own yearning imagination. However, as Sterner points out, "James was no Luddite (nor was Arnold)," though he attacks materialism severely (253). Without money the American characters in his works cannot have the chance to go to Europe and be exposed to European culture. He was grateful for the advances material progress and abundance brought; he did not want to go back to "the days of buggies and bearskins" (253). The target of James's attack was the absence of some higher governing principle in America which, without destroying material advance, would regulate it so as to preserve other values equally important.

5.1.2. Seductive Metropolitanism in Paris

"'Europe'—this yearned-for, imaginary identity of his [James's] youth—persisted forever and ever in an endless and untouchable dream of 'art' and culture high above the mundane events of ordinary life" (Geismar, "The Achieved Life à la Henry James" 96). The same fantasy persisted in his maturity and old age, and now in a heightened form in *The Ambassadors*, which is often read as James's nostalgic return to the Paris where he sojourned during his early literary career. Paris, the city of light and beauty as well as the epitome of European culture, has become a magnetic metropolis attracting miscellaneous people from different social and cultural origins. With "the vitality, the variety, the liberating diversity and mobility of the city" (R. Williams 43), it contrasts very sharply with "the persistence of traditional social, cultural and intellectual forms in the provinces and in the less developed countries," like Woollett, the provincial town in New England (R. Williams 45). It represents a mode of life very different from that

of Woollett with "more things than had been dreamed of in the philosophy of Woollett" (Preface xii). Paris symbolizes the social, intellectual, and imaginative freedom of Europe.

Like James, Strether is attracted by the beauty and antiquity of Paris, both the old and the refined. It is rich in the items of "high civilization" mentioned in *Hawthorne*, like the Luxembourg Gardens, the Tuileries, opera houses, Notre Dame Cathedral, Louvre Museum on both banks of the River Seine. Strether is mesmerized by the magnificent beauty of the architecture, the chic dress of the people on the boulevards in bright early-spring weather. Lingering in the garden of the Tuileries, he feels even the air has "a taste of something mixed with art, something that presented nature as a white-capped master-chef" (42). The challenge here is in the fullness, not in the meagerness, of aspects, and he is responsive to every item: it is all a fresh revelation, an aesthetic adventure and a deep joy, the flower of civilization at its finest. "The great dim social complexity is all bathed in the golden glow of the city's scenic appeal, which makes almost a new light to see by, the physical felicity of the face of Paris" (Marks 62).

However, in contrast to the physical charm, what is more important for Strether is that Paris recalls his irretrievable past, awakens his dormant passion for life, and implies "an overflow of imagination which immediately supplements and supplants reality" (Pana-Oltean 188). In a nook of the Luxemburg Gardens, he loses himself in meditation and reminiscence, "[o]ld ghosts of experiments came back to him" (45). Strether had been to Europe with his young bride. It had been a bold dash, for which they used their money set apart for necessities. They treated their trip as a pilgrimage, "a relation formed with the higher culture" (45). Coming back to New England with a dozen books, he believed that he had gained something great, and his theory—with an elaborate innocent plan of reading, digesting, coming back to Europe from time to time to preserve, cherish, and extend it. However, his plan failed consequently. He succumbed immediately to the pressures of the New England milieu. The promise was never kept and finally forgotten in his life of drudgery in New England during which his wife died early, and subsequently his son died. But the pledge in his youth is a handful of seed:

"Buried for long years in dark corners at any rate these few germs had sprouted again under forty-eight hours of Paris" (45). The early promise is aroused which makes him realize his emptiness and unhappiness in those years back home. Strether is sadly aware that he has never really enjoyed—"he had lived only for duty and conscience—his conception of them; for pure appearances and daily tasks—lived for effort, for surrender, abstention, sacrifice" (Berland 186). In his return to Europe, he feels "the full sweetness of the taste of leisure," which presents him the possibilities of a fuller and richer life (20). Some appreciative faculty in Strether that has lain dormant is awakened by Paris's beauty; it appeals by its most inward principle to his taste; a hunger in him is gratified by it; the suppressed artist in him is released by Paris; a new dimension, in which he takes a critical delight, is introduced to his life:

> His great uneasiness seemed to peep at him out of the imminent impression that almost any acceptance of Paris might give one's authority away. It hung before him this morning, the vast bright Babylon, like some huge iridescent object, a jewel brilliant and hard, in which parts were not to be discriminated nor differences comfortably marked. It twinkled and trembled and melted together, and what seemed all surface one moment seemed all depth the next. (47)

His sip of pleasure and freedom during his short revisit to Paris is sufficient to intrigue him, though still not strong enough to delude him to forget his mission.

In contrast to Woollett, where everybody is monotonously dedicated to business, Paris encourages people to enjoy life. Chad thoughtfully introduces Strether to his friends in Paris, painters, sculptors, and other celebrities; puts him in relation with them—superficial, momentary, but very interesting to Strether, who enjoys all very much. "They were occasions of discussion, none the less, and Strether had never heard so many opinions on so many subjects" (92). Chad brings about in particular an occasion of contact with a prime celebrity, a first-rate artist, the great Gloriani, who has all the appearance, the external marks and signs and fame. Strether is invited by Chad to Gloriani's garden. The place itself is a great impression:

> a small pavilion, clear-faced and sequestered, an effect of polished parquet, of fine white panel and spare sallow gilt, of decoration delicate and rare, in the heart of the Faubourg Saint-Germain and on the edge of a cluster of gardens attached to old noble houses. Far back from streets and unsuspected by crowds, reached by a long passage and a quiet court, […] grave hôtels stood off for privacy, spoke of survival, transmission, association, a

> strong indifferent persistent order. (102)

Gloriani's garden is an aristocratic haven. Here comes a description of his fellow guests—"the people before him [Strether], in whose liberty to be as they were he was aware that he positively rejoiced" (102). They were multiplying, and these things, their liberty, their intensity, their variety, their conditions at large, are in fusion in the admirable medium of the scene. Strether is greatly impressed by the great artist:

> He was to remember again repeatedly the medal-like Italian face, in which every line was an artist's own, in which time told only as tone and consecration; and he was to recall in especial, as the penetrating radiance, as the communication of the illustrious spirit itself, the manner in which, while they stood briefly, in welcome and response, face to face, he was held by the sculptor's eyes. […] as the source of the deepest intellectual sounding to which he had never been exposed. (103)

Gloriani is older than Strether, but his aging displays only his grace and his vitality is worthy of envy. Seeing the very exquisitely designed garden, feeling the great artistic atmosphere, meeting the various highly cultured people are equivalent to tasting the essence of European civilization for Strether.

Gloriani's garden party serves as a microcosm of life in metropolitan Paris, where different people of different classes and races live harmoniously together. His entourage exhibits a diversity of ethnic and national origin, which Strether evidently finds intriguing. There are "types tremendously alien, alien to Woollett" (104). The ladies, as Strether observes, are even more unlike those of Woollett than the gentlemen. Little Bilham describes to Strether: "Oh they're every one—all sorts and sizes; of course I mean within limits, though limits down perhaps rather more than limits up. There are always artists—he is beautiful and inimitable to the *cher confrère*; then *gros bonnets* of many kinds—ambassadors, cabinet ministers, bankers, generals, what do I know? even Jews" (104). When Strether asks whether there are "'any Poles'" among the "'*femmes du monde*,'" Bilham replies "'I think I make out a 'Portuguese.' But I've seen 'Turks'" (105). Different languages are spoken at the party. "Strether consistently finds the ability to maneuver with grace and elegance between languages the hallmark of the successful diplomat—and the admirable individual" (Bender 129). Maria describes Madame de Vionnet, Chad's lover, in school days "as polyglot as a little Jewess (which she wasn't, oh no!) and chattering French, English, German, Italian" (121). He is

charmed by Madame de Vionnet's accent. "[T]he freedom, diversity, mobility and immeasurable range of metropolitan modernity are in dialectic most importantly with the provincialism James calls Woollett" (DeKoven 120-21).

With his Woollett mission in mind, Strether goes to Gloriani's party to learn more about "the virtuous attachment" (95), which Little Bilham applies to the relationship between Chad and Madame de Vionnet. But once at the party he is immediately fascinated by the refined people, and he directs his mental energies towards the recreation and enjoyment of the place, its manners, speech, and intercourse. It is all as new to Strether as it is picturesque and agreeable; a beautifully civilized, even romanticized thing. He yields to the seduction of so appointed a nook, which opens his eyes to an exquisite scene that he has never experienced before. The garden lures him away from his Woollett conscience, though he is aware that Europe is "an elaborate engine for dissociating the confined American from that indispensable knowledge" (41). In the garden, Strether finally meets the long-anticipated Madame de Vionnet, and the encounter with this graceful and charming lady lures him further away from his mission.

However, before long Strether feels himself extremely as an outsider in this milieu, because the congregation in the garden of distinguished artists, critics, dramatists and "so happily and hatefully young" people exposes the futility of his own life and his lost chance in life (114). Strether's life, like James's, has been cut off almost completely from the sensations, passions, impulses, and pleasures that the people in the garden fully display. Europe has opened his eyes to unexpected importance and values; makes him feel his mistakes. Confronted with his irretrievable loss, "Better early than late!" Strether immediately warns Bilham and admonishes him not to miss his chances:

> Live all you can; it's a mistake not to. It doesn't so much matter what you do in particular, so long as you have your life. If you haven't had that what have you had? […] I haven't done so enough before—and now I'm too old; too old at any rate for what I see. […] What one loses one loses; make no mistake about that. […] Still, we have the illusion of freedom; therefore don't be, like me, without the memory of that illusion. I was either, at the right time, too stupid or too intelligent to have it; I don't quite know which. Of course at present I'm a case of reaction against the mistake; […] Do what you like so long as you don't make my mistake. For it was a mistake. Live! (114-15)

James quotes this speech almost verbatim from William Dean Howells's words to a

young artist Jonathan Sturges, lamenting his sudden awareness in his old age of time gone and lost. At that time Howells had gone to Paris to assist his son's matriculation at the École des Beaux Arts, but whose visit was cut short by family concerns that required an abrupt departure for America. Just before leaving, Howells encountered Sturges (at the Parisian residence of the painter James McNeill Whistler) and expressed to him his disappointment at having to forsake the opportunity—possibly his last—to luxuriate in the refined culture and atmosphere of the Belle Époque (Anesko 61). From this experience, James felt inspired to create a fictionalized account of an older man, one who has not lived life to its full potential, who realizes what he has been missing, and who expresses this newfound wisdom to a younger friend. The older man, in this scene, is Strether. The younger man is little Bilham. Once the novel was finished, James acknowledged his debt to Howells in a letter, rehearsing yet again the circumstances of the book's inspiration.

Strether is attracted to Paris further after his first visit to Madame de Vionnet's house:

> [T]he first floor of an old house to which our visitors had had access from an old clean court. The court was large and open, full of revelations for our friend, of the habit of privacy, the peace of intervals, the dignity of distances and approaches; the house, to his restless sense, was in the high homely style of an elderly day, and the ancient Paris that he was always looking for—sometimes intensely felt, sometimes more acutely missed—was in the immemorial polish of the wide waxed staircase and in the fine boiseries, the medallions, mouldings, mirrors, great clear spaces, of the greyish-white salon into which he had been shown. He seemed at the very outset to see her, in the midst of possessions not vulgarly numerous, but hereditary cherished charming. (127)

This "ancient Paris that he was always looking for" is aristocratic and secluded from Parisian modernity. This emphasis on lasting architecture and on long perspective within empty space as metaphor "not only of freedom from bourgeois consumerism but also of the distance between classes, makes the aristocratic provenance of the house seem independent of the activities of its contemporary occupant, with aristocratic tradition and family superseding the bourgeois democratic individual" (DeKoven 114). Strether establishes a series of contrasts to the domestic interiors of the consumerists Chad Newsome's "lovely home" and Maria Gostrey's "little museum of bargains" in order to emphasize the difference of Madame de Vionnet's residence (128). Once inside,

Strether notices, not objects, which Chad Newsome and Maria Gostrey have "rummaged, and purchased and picked up and exchanged, sifting, selecting, comparing" (128), but rather beautifully passive heritage, "transmission from her father's line" (128). The long history and the deep-rooted culture help situate Madame Marie de Vionnet within a system of class and heredity while at the same time bestowing on her the "air of supreme respectability, the consciousness, small still, reserved, but none the less distinct and diffused, of private honour" (128), which for Strether, is infallibly the mark of virtue. His initial suspicion of Madame de Vionnet belonging to the class of fallen women dissolves. At the end of his visit, he promises her, "I'll save you if I can" (128), which foreshadows that he will try to persuade Chad to stay in Paris, instead of going back to America. Although Strether arrives from Woollett as "an appropriate envoy, loyal to his 'superiors' and committed to his mission, he is equally imbued with romantic nostalgia for the Paris of his youthful and foreshortened artistic ambitions" (Bender 129). Paris is charming for Strether not just because of its culture, its tradition, but also its varieties and possibilities.

5.2. Disinterestedness and Provincialism

The protagonists in James's novels with the international theme are often confronted with foreign cultures whose meanings are not easily disclosed. In some instances, the protagonists, who have always lived within one culture, are unaware of other cultures, fail to gain insights into the other culture because they refuse to engage in an interpretative process. Only if they interact with other cultures, will they overcome the limitations of their own perspective and become what Arnold called a "cosmopolitan." If an object is to be understood, it has to be viewed in the right "light," in the proper perspective. Strether repeatedly states that he must "see things for what they are," in order to fulfill his mission, which is one of Arnold's core ideas about culture (205). According to Arnold, one should not be bound by one's cultural prejudice. One should compare different representations of an object to gain a more complete view. The object is thus interpreted from a plurality of perspectives. His notion of

"disinterestedness" implies the possibility of a somehow timeless and universal perspective, which James had also adopted.

Throughout the novel, Strether tries to unravel the conundrum—the relationship between Chad and Madame de Vionnet. He feels the need to be disinterested, to gain a more complete view of Chad's situation before he can act as an ambassador, so he decides to see for himself first. At Woollett things are most comfortably defined and differences are clearly marked. "There were opinions at Woollett, but only on three or four subjects" (92). In iridescent Paris Strether suddenly finds himself "in the presence of new measures, other standards, a different scale of relations" (60), which renders discrimination difficult, even impossible. Strether has to learn to discriminate among the surfaces and depths, an endeavor Woollett has not prepared him for. People in Woollett indulge in their own preconceptions; therefore, the "Boston 'reallys'" are obviously categories inadequate to interpret Parisian experience (109). Strether finds himself quite at a loss: "I came out to find myself in the presence of new facts—facts that have kept striking me as less and less met by our old reasons. The matter's perfectly simple. New reasons—reasons as new as the facts themselves—are wanted" (175). Before Strether can assess what is "really" behind the Parisian surfaces, he has to "acquire the Parisian cultural grammar and become a member of the Parisian interpretive community" (Schloss 106). What happens to Strether is that he is thoroughly emancipated from the "dreadful little old tradition" (Preface to *The Ambassadors* xi). Finally, Strether achieves knowledge through a continuous interaction with the people, the culture around him. Again and again he finds it necessary to revise his opinions, his plans. "The capacity for liberal appreciation is what distinguishes Strether from the rest of the Woollett clan" (Wegelin 90).

5.2.1. Confronting Prejudice: Liberal Appreciation

Knowledge, which is necessary for judgment, is not a sudden acquisition of experience, but is possessed only through reflection. "In James's view, knowledge is not achieved by freeing the mind from prejudice, but by testing prejudice in reality"

(Schloss 104). The most obvious example of this process is Strether's revised knowledge of Woollett. The Newsome family in Woollett has always supposed that the sinister influence holding Chad in bondage is female—a supposition soon verified by Strether; but the verification, the recognition of some sort of a binding relation between Chad and Madame de Vionnet does not help Strether to complete his mission. The preconception "only provides him with confusing impressions, with endless contrasting and conflicting thoughts, feelings, and speculations, all serving rather to emphasize the wrongness of Woollettt's judgment than the correctness of its gross suspicions" (Logan 25). In France, he readjusts his viewpoint and relocates his moral seriousness contextually and constantly instead of a priori.

In his effort to understand at the beginning what has happened to Chad, Strether has brought with him from Woollett "trite narrative preconceptions of the young man's likely entrapment and degeneration in Paris, conceptions compounded of Puritan prejudice and Victorian cliché" (Bell 336). During his early stay in Paris, he is still suffering from a belief in polarities common to Woollett, where one is either good or bad, and any compromise would negate the meaning of words. When Maria Gostrey admits her ignorance about Chad and surmises the woman in question might be "charming," Strether immediately expresses his opinion from the Woollett perspective, "charming? She is base, venal—out of the streets" (28). However, Strether later hears a lot about Chad from his friends, Bilham and Miss Barrace, before meeting him in person. "They spoke of him repeatedly, invoking his good name and good nature" (62). Strether doesn't shut his eyes to the new facts he encounters in Paris. He decides to see more and judge by himself:

> One thing was certain—he saw he must make up his mind. He must approach Chad, must wait for him, deal with him, master him, but he mustn't dispossess himself of the faculty of seeing things as they were. He must bring him to *him*—not to go himself, as it were, so much of the way. He must at any rate be clearer as to what—should he continue to do that for convenience—he was still condoning. It was on the detail of this quantity—and what could the fact be but mystifying?-that Bilham and Miss Barrace threw so little light. So there they were. (62-63)

Chad makes a well-planned appearance by walking into a box at the Français, the theater, thus creating for Strether an enforced period in which to observe him without

being able to speak to him much because of the performance, as James describes:

> It was truly the life of high pressure that Strether had seemed to feel himself lead while he sat there, close to Chad, during the long tension of the act. He was in presence of a fact that occupied his whole mind, that occupied for the half-hour his senses themselves all together; but he couldn't without inconvenience show anything—which moreover might count really as luck. What he might have shown, had he shown at all, was exactly the kind of emotion—the emotion of bewilderment—that he had proposed to himself from the first, whatever should occur, to show least. The phenomenon that had suddenly sat down there with him was a phenomenon of change so complete that his imagination, which had worked so beforehand, felt itself, in the connexion, without margin or allowance. It had faced every contingency but that Chad should not *be* Chad, and this was what it now had to face with a mere strained smile and an uncomfortable flush. (72-73)

Strether considers the new Chad nothing less than "a strong case, as people nowadays called such things, a case of transformation unsurpassed" (73). A part of Chad's display of new "refinement" lies in his "marked streaks of grey, extraordinary at his age, in his thick black hair" (78). "Do I strike you as improved?" Chad asks him (78). Though he sees and feels the "change so complete," Strether really does not know what to reply. What he thought of Chad beforehand was exactly what Woollett imagined him, and Woollett's mind does not leave any margin for surprise.

The sight of an improved Chad Newsome originally brought the mould image to Strether's mind:

> Chad was brown and thick and strong; and of old Chad had been rough. Was all the difference therefore that he was actually smooth? Possibly; for that he *was* smooth was as marked as in the taste of a sauce or in the rub of a hand. The effect of it was general—it has retouched his features, drawn them with a cleaner line. It has cleared his eyes and settled his colour and polished his fine square teeth—the main ornament of his face; and at the same time it has given him a form and a surface, almost a design, it had toned his voice, established his accent, encouraged his smile to more play and his other motions less. […] It was as if in short he had really, copious perhaps but shapeless, been put into a firm mould and turned successfully out. (80)

His recollection of the old awkward and unattractive Chad who sailed for Europe three years earlier is that he was "rough"; now he is actually "smooth" (80). What impresses Strether is how the "raw material" of a rough youth has been transformed into a civilized young man of sophistication. He is totally bewildered by Chad's transformation. He strives to verify the "truth" of the identity of this new being with the previous Chad through recourse to sensory verification. "If Chad is a hallucination,

Strether muses, he is a remarkably vivid one, appealing not only to Strether's sense of sight but to the more embodied, tactile, and trustworthy senses of taste and touch" (Wayland-Smith 129). Bilham, who is not sure Chad was "meant by nature to be quite so good" (94), offers an alternate simile for Chad's transformation. "It's like the new edition of an old book that one has been fond of—revised and amended, brought up to date, but not quite the thing that one knew and loved" (94).

In Paris one cannot simply tell because of the various facts, the ambiguity of language and the intricacy of personal relationships. It is not easy to make out over here what people do know. "It's all so vague. One is when one isn't. One isn't when one is" (83). The following conversation among little Bilham, Miss Barrace, and Strether is a very good example of the ambiguity of language:

> "Dear old Paris!" little Bilham echoed.
> "Everything, every one shows," Miss Barrace went on.
> "But for what they really are?" Strether asked.
> "Oh I like your Boston 'reallys'! But sometimes—yes."
> "Dear old Paris then!" Strether resignedly sighed while for a moment they looked at each other. Then he broke out: "Does Madame de Vionnet do that? I mean really show for what she is?"
> Her answer was prompt. "She's charming. She's perfect."
> "Then why did you a minute ago say 'Oh, oh, oh!' at her name?"
> She easily remembered. "Why just because---! She's wonderful."
> "Ah she too?"—Strether had almost a groan.
> But Miss Barrace had meanwhile perceived relief. "Why not put your question straight to the person who can answer it best?"
> "No," said little Bilham; "don't put any question; wait, rather—it will be much more fun—to judge yourself. He has come to take you to her." (109)

When words are not definite, when there is not an established and shared meaning—as there is in Woollett—then the possibilities of interpretation are allowed to play to and fro with an alarming freedom. Strether is in fact so often confused because his sense of the range of reference was merely general, and on many occasions he has to guess and interpret, even doubt what he sees. It is his guessing, interpreting and doubting which accomplishes his appreciation of things in Paris, the people around.

Although Maria Gostrey tells Strether that Chad might not be so good as he thinks, Strether believes "he couldn't but be as good from the moment he wasn't as bad" (91). At this stage, Strether is still greatly vexed by Chad's "good relations" with Mme de

Vionnet:

> "I mean *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 shock. "Is that what's implied—?"
> "When relations are good?" Strether felt a little silly, and was even conscious of a foolish laugh, at having it imposed on him to have appeared to speak so. What indeed was he talking about? (126)

In fact, Strether just wants to determine Mme de Vionnet's sexual interest in Chad. Chad simply cannot subscribe to Woollett's vocabulary—he cannot call Mme de Vionnet a "bad woman"—because Woollett's narrowly defined terms cannot describe the complexity of human affairs in Paris. Bilham plants an ambiguous phrase, "a virtuous attachment" (95), in Strether's mind, and Strether spends much of his imaginative energy deciphering it. The phrase, on one level, merely implies that Chad's relationship with the still-unspecified woman is chaste. Yet it is deliberately more suggestive than "platonic," for instance, would have been. "A virtuous attachment suggests a noble devotion, a morally commendable friendship that even Woollett must approve" (qtd. in Bachmann 61). Chad and his friend Bilham try to cater to this desire in order to distract Strether from the affair. "Bilham's circle derives its allure not only from its capacity to fulfill the expectation created by Strether's reading but also from the possibility it presents for Strether to live out his fantasy, of recovering his lost youth by assuming the role of the eternally youthful student of the Left Bank" (Menton 288). However, the effort to distract Strether succeeds only in postponing his perception of a quite different "typical tale of Paris" (298).

Determining the moral status of a French lady like Madame de Vionnet is no easy task for an American like Strether, for her position in society has no exact counterpart in Woollett. At Gloriani's party, Madame de Vionnet impresses Strether as a socially distinguished, handsome, and cultured lady, a status which Mrs. Newsome lags far behind. Moreover, her short appearance successfully captivates Strether and lures him away from his more rational Woollett thinking. "She certainly had been a fact of rapid growth; but the world was wide, each day was more and more a new lesson. There were

at any rate even among the stranger ones relations and relations" (132). Strether finds himself more deeply drawn to Madame de Vionnet after their encounter at Notre Dame Cathedral. Lacking a friend with whom to process his worries, Strether often seeks refuge inside the Catholic cathedral of Notre Dame. During his visits, he finds himself impressed by the focused devotion of a conspicuously dressed lady who is often praying when he visits:

> She wasn't prostrate—not in any degree bowed, but she was strangely fixed, and her prolonged immobility showed her, while he passed, and paused, as wholly given up to the need, whatever it was, that had brought her there. She only sat and gazed before her, as he himself often sat; but she had lost herself, he could easily see, as he would have liked to do. She was not a wandering alien, keeping back more than she gave, but one of the familiar, the intimate, the fortunate, for whom these dealings had a method and a meaning. She reminded our friend—since it was the way of nine-tenths of his current impressions to act as recalls of things imagined—of some fine firm concentrated heroine of an old story, something he had heard, read, something that, had he had a hand for drama, he might himself have written, renewing her courage, renewing her clearness, in splendidly-protected meditation. (155)

One day, on closer inspection, he realizes that this woman is none other than Madame de Vionnet, who says to him, "I come often" (156). In the dim sanctity of this particular church, "had he had a hand for drama," Strether might himself have written something similar to Victor Hugo. The "great romancer and the great romance" are foremost in Strether's imagination (157), especially because of his recent purchase of seventy bound volumes of Hugo's works, which "conjures up the selfless heroism of Quasimodo and the sad beauty of Esmeralda" (Bachmann 26), then promotes Strether's further commitment to Mme de Vionnet, "if he happened to affect her as a firm object she could hold on by, he wouldn't jerk himself out of her reach" (158). Mme de Vionnet becomes for him "the lady of his quest"; "she was romantic for him far beyond what she could have guessed" (156).

The cathedral is for Strether both soothingly religious and unassailably romantic, a perfect place for deep reflection and unrestrictive imagination. Madame de Vionnet's silent meditation in front of the glimmering altar immediately engages Strether in incessant reflections and imaginations about Madame de Vionnet's relation with Chad:

> It helped him to stick fast at the point he had then reached; it was there he had resolved that he *would* stick, and at no moment since had it seemed as easy to do so. Unassailably

> innocent was a relation that could make one of the parties to it so carry herself. If it wasn't innocent why did she haunt the churches?—into which, given the woman she could believe he made out, she would never have come to flaunt an insolence of guilt. She haunted them for continued help, for strength, for peace—sublime support which, if one were able to look at it so, she found from day to day. (157)

Strether is charmed by Madame de Vionnet's veiled presence in the church, and her pious images, matching perfectly with the virtuous identity that he has conceptualized for her. He ascribes to her "a Madonna-like ability, sacrificing her own pleasure for the welfare of Chad" (Despotopoulou 148). Viewing her as a heroine in some great romance and regarding her church-going as a proof of her innocence, Strether decides to fail the Woollett mission and to support Chad and Mme de Vionnet. The Notre Dame incident seems like a romantic accident, but there can be no doubt that it is also part of Chad's plan, as some critics argue. Strether's deep involvement with Chad and Mme de Vionnet along with his undue indulgence in his own narcissistic world makes him reluctant to take seriously some of the slips in his judgment. He even defends them before Sarah. Strether's judgment is put under severe trial when Sarah Pocock disagrees with his observation. Her perspectives serve to expose some of Strether's blind spots.

However, Strether is not a dupe, even though he misjudges Chad's behavior and motive on a number of occasions, and frequently misreads the facts laid before him. "As his subconscious affinity for Europe gains ascendancy, Strether begins to fear his vision playing tricks on him and desperately seeks outside sources to verify the reality of what he sees—to verify that he has not, in fact, lost 'the faculty of seeing things as they are'" (Wayland-Smith 129). The supreme test comes after Strether's accidental discovery of Chad and Marie together in the French countryside. The shock to Strether is that Chad and Marie are no platonic lovers. Marie is not selfless as he think; actually she derives personal gratification from her intimate liaison with Chad. Like Paris, Chad Newsome seems "all surface one moment, all depth the next" (47). Chad's European transformation now appears possibly to have been a show, "a quintessential case of masterful American proto-advertising" (Hocks, *The Ambassadors: Consciousness, Culture, Poetry* 57). He persists in "exploring new and still newer horizons, and trying to organize a system of complementary insights, until he eventually achieves a healthily

skeptical regard, both for Chad himself and for his professions" (M. Williams 64).

One of the most precious experiences he has had in Paris is liberal appreciation. Unlike Mrs. Newsome or Sarah Pocock, "Strether unlearns his understanding of Chad" (Ku 93), when he tries to figure out his nature. Initially, he calls Chad a "Pagan" and "wretched boy," condemning his recklessness. But in Paris Strether finds Chad rapidly matured—rather than ruined or arrested by Madame de Vionnet. He comes to regard Chad as "that rare youth he should have enjoyed being 'like'" (178). Later he finds out that Chad's revision is primarily a matter of a new cover. His improvement is superficial, a making of impressive entrances and introductions, an ability of maneuvering elegantly in social intercourse. Chad has not, though, been re-moulded morally, "he was none the less only Chad" (305). With his readiness to acknowledge his mistakes and his sustained curiosity, Strether is able to deal with different facts until he arrives at a fully realistic view of Chad at the end of his educative adventure, a richer clarity of understanding. "The misidentifications do not constitute irredeemable waste, but rather a succession of hard-won markers on the way to ascertaining what, in the fullest possible sense, is involved in the process of judging" (M. Williams 65). Strether's tolerant and open-ended approach to people, his detached observation and his disinterestedness all attribute to the thought of Arnold, "seeing things as they are."

5.2.2. Confirming Prejudice: Narrow-Minded Judgement

Besides Strether, there are a number of American "ambassadors" who for the most part reject Europe, judging, condemning, and never trying to appreciate it. Their judgement is "neither improper nor irrelevant, but rather partial and deficient" (Bachmann 80). They are also enthusiastic purchasers or collectors, reducing Europe to a shop and treating it like a contemptuous patron. For most of them, Chad's issue is not a matter of interpretation, but a statement, unequivocal and blessedly simple. Chad's way of life in Paris has already been judged by his family in Woollett before Strether's mission begins: a wicked woman has got hold of him. When asked by Strether why he does not want to leave Paris if he is not entangled, Chad accuses his family: "Do you

think one's kept only by women?" "Is that what they think at Woollett?" "I must say then you show a low mind!" (84). Chad's pride seems nonetheless a little wounded. His words have a disconcerting force, which evokes Strether's embarrassment and prompts him into reflection: "They hadn't a low mind—nor any approach to one; yet incontestably they had worked, and with a certain smugness, on a basis that might be turned against them" (84). Woollett judges Chad without knowing how dramatically his mode of conduct had changed. "The Woollett 'machinery'—perhaps placed too far a distance to register accurately the signals being beamed at it across the Atlantic—had failed to receive an accurate impression of Chad" (Wayland-Smith 129). The smugness and narrowness of many of Woollett's presuppositions can be identified. A global view of the situation is needed to do justice to Chad.

Waymarsh is not easily subject to the influence of Europe. He cannot stand anything European. He simply accompanies Strether during his stay in Paris to accomplish his ambassadorial mission. Both Strether and Waymarsh have been to Europe before. This European trip reaffirms Waymarsh's previous antipathy to Europe, which becomes even more intolerable. At the beginning of the journey, Waymarsh's realistic view of Chester is contrasted with Strether's romantic view. While walking in the medieval town, Strether is arrested immediately by its splendor:

> The tortuous wall—girdle, long since snapped, of the little swollen city, half held in place by careful civic hands—wanders in narrow file between parapets smoothed by peaceful generations, pausing here and there for a dismantled gate or a bridged gap, with rises and drops, steps up and steps down, queer twists, queer contacts, peeps into homely streets and under the brows of gables, views of cathedral tower and waterside fields, of huddled English town and ordered English Country. (8)

By contrast, Waymarsh, although he admits that there are plenty of pretty places and remarkable old things, never feels anywhere in tune and never enjoys his stay in Europe: "Look here—I want to go back" (15). Here he echoes Daisy's brother, Randolph in *Daisy Miller*, who does not like Europe and always wants to go back to America during their family stay in Europe. Chester Cathedral, for instance, overwhelms and fascinates Strether, but Waymarsh looks at it as representing an institution antagonistic and intimidating: "The Catholic church for Waymarsh—that was to say the enemy, the monster of bulging eyes and far-reaching quivering groping

tentacles—was exactly society, exactly the multiplication of shibboleths, exactly the discrimination of types and tones, exactly the wicked old Rows of Chester, rank with feudalism; exactly in short Europe" (21). Strether notes with some disappointment after his first conversation with his friend that "Europe…[had]failed of its message to him" (70); as Wayland-Smith states, "Waymarsh is one for whom Europe and European mores remain a cipher "(130).

To emphasize his aversion to European culture, Waymarsh always carries a kind of "sacred rage" that makes him not only unmoved by the attractive Parisian landscape but also hard to be entertained by Parisian hospitality (24). His "sacred rage" represents his angle, the Woollett angle, at which he is to "sit through his ordeal of Europe" (13). The "sacred rage" reflects a kind of emotional awareness and mistrust that Strether likewise exhibited when he first arrived in England and when the Woollett influence on him was the strongest. As time goes by during their stay in Paris, while Waymarsh remains obstinately detached, Strether is drawn near and nearer to the people and the new environment. As a representative from New England, between the voice of Milrose and the voice even of Woollett, Waymarsh warns Strether, "I told you so—that you'd lose your immortal soul" (91).

It is worth noting that Waymarsh, who also knows the "old Chad," sits in the same theater box and seemingly sees nothing in particular, while Strether is greatly impressed by Chad's transformation. Strether thereupon surmises that the "social sightlessness of his old friend's survey marked for him afresh, and almost in a humiliating way, the inevitable limits of direct aid from this source" (73). Waymarsh's senses are sealed to the impressions that Strether's hyper-receptive consciousness is capable of picking up. The great irony, however, is that although Waymarsh misses what Strether sees, he also of necessity is not vulnerable to Chad's "theatrical" performance, which will, by the end of the novel, propel him into the new "art of advertisement." Waymarsh's lack of response also anticipates the similar non-reaction by Sarah Pocock, Mrs. Newsome's daughter and the leader of the second batch of ambassadors sent later to rectify Strether. While Strether represents Mrs. Newsome's nominal agent, Waymarsh carries the mission out in action. He communicates secretly with Woollett regarding Strether's

progress and induces Mrs. Newsome to send her ultimatum and a second team of ambassadors to replace Strether. Not only will Sarah echo Waymarsh regarding Chad, she will express fierce, open hostility to Strether for his allegiance to Chad and Marie.

The most important symbol of Woollett is the distant figure of Mrs. Newsome, though she does not appear in the novel, but her image looms large in the conversations, especially in Strether's thought. For Mrs. Newsome there can be only one narrative:

> "That's just her difficulty—that she doesn't admit surprises. It's a fact that, I think, describes and represents her; and it falls in with what I tell you—that she is all, as I've called it, fine cold thought. She had, to her own mind, worked the whole thing out in advance, and worked it out for me as well as for herself. Whenever she has done that, you see, there's no room left; no margin, as it were, for any alternation. She's filled as full, packed as tight, as she'll hold and if you wish to get anything more or different either out or in—" (281)

His reassessment of Mrs. Newsome is pointed: *she* has not changed; she is "more than ever the same. But I do what I didn't before—I *see* her" (325). Mrs. Newsome can be represented best by Sarah Pocock. In a way Sarah brings Woollett's atmosphere with her to Europe and tries to impose influence on Paris. Sarah's salon becomes a kind of Woollett courtroom: "He [Strether] saw themselves under her direction, recommitted to Woollett as juvenile offenders recommitted to reformatories. It wasn't of course that Woollett was really a place of discipline; but he knew in advance that Sarah's salon at the hotel would be" (184). Just as the physiognomy of Paris is embodied in Madame de Vionnet, Sarah brings with her Woollett's values. Mme de Vionnet encounters an unprecedented setback trying to invite Sarah to visit her house. Sarah even declines help from her: "Oh you're too good; but I don't think I feel quite helpless. I have my brother—and these American friends. And then you know I've been to Paris. I *know* Paris" (201). Strether feels unnerved and is deeply troubled by Sarah's deliberate display of politeness and distance. From Sarah's attitude, Strether perceives not only the full presence of Woollett's grip on him but also the chasm widening between him and Woollett.

At one point in the novel, Sarah Pocock declares, "we've plenty of reasons for everything we do" (203), and Woollett does have a reason for its marginless approach to life. "The absolute code of Woollett provides its citizens with a security from the

unknown, for the unknown is truly hazardous" (Bachmann 47). Strether tries to use Paris to charm the Pococks, but fails, too. Paris does not stand a chance to move the Pococks because of their inherent immovability. As he says to Madame de Vionnet, "[t]hey simply won't give any, and as a policy, you know—what you call a *parti pris*, a deep game—that's positively remarkable" (211). Therefore, instead of successfully pleading his case to the Pococks, Strether's judgment and reliability are brought under severe attack. Sarah is especially outraged by Strether's high compliments regarding Marie de Vionnet's character. "A 'revelation'—to *me*: I've come to such a woman for a revelation? You talk to me about 'distinction'—*you*, you who've had your privilege?—when the most distinguished woman [Mrs. Newsome] we shall either of us have seen in this world sits there insulted, in her loneliness, by your incredible comparison?" (261).

The final confrontation between Strether and Sarah Pocock becomes a showdown of all their contradictions. Strether cannot surprise the Pococks into the smallest sign of Chad's not being the same old Chad three years ago in America. The Pococks give absolutely no indication of recognizing—let alone appreciating—Chad's conspicuous improvement. Every aspect of Chad and Mme de Vionnet's life in Paris is brought under Sarah's severe criticism.

> "I think tremendously well of her, at the same time that I seem to feel her 'life' to be really none of my business. It's my business, that is, only so far as Chad's own life is affected by it; and what has happened, don't you see? is that Chad's has been affected so beautifully. The proof of the pudding's in the eating. […] It's as if you had some motive in not recognizing all she has done for your brother, and so shut your eyes to each side of the matter, in order, whichever side comes up, to get rid of the other." […] "you don't on your honour, appreciate Chad's fortunate development?" (262-63)

Chad's development and transformation, which Strether is deeply charmed by and obsessed with, is regarded by Sarah as "hideous" (263). Sarah thinks that Mme de Vionnet is not even "an apology for a decent woman" (261). In a word, Sarah's opinion about Madame de Vionnet is unequivocal: She represents the kind of dissipated and licentious woman whom the whole Woollett society, especially Mrs. Newsome, despises. Charm, culture, and love don't count anything when it is connected with adultery. The clash between Strether and Sarah brings out and intensifies the

incompatibility between Wollett and Paris.

As James says, "[h]e and his neighbors are watching the same show, but one seeing more where the other sees less, one seeing black where the other sees white, one seeing big where the other sees small, one seeing coarse where the other sees fine" (*The Art of Criticism* 290). Strether sees fine, while the Pococks see coarse because they have different points of view. Faced with two kinds of facts, Sarah knows which one to choose and which one to ignore; she chooses the one she understands and her being "right" justifies her ignorance of the other. Strether is finely aware of both facts and the resulting paradox deprives him of peace. He has managed to dispel the disturbingly unsavory reputation in which Woollett has contrived to define Madame de Vionnet. He responds to her as a woman of charm and accomplishment, someone whose demeanor unquestionably qualifies her to stand comparison with the ladies of New England, while Sarah Pocock, with her sheer personal prejudice, will never learn to appreciate her. Unlike Strether, who thinks that part of Paris's charm resides in its foreign location, Sarah thinks the beauty of Paris is purchasable and transferable, and she wants Chad to move the whole "Europe" back to Woollett "with an important exception," Madame de Vionnet (240). Like a businesswoman, Sarah treats European culture as a commodity, as something that can be owned by those who are financially capable. As a conservative model citizen of Woollett, Sarah deems it her duty to eliminate all moral impurity if the culture is to be brought back to the New World. "Europe, its beauty, and Chad's transformation all 'fail' to deliver their impressions to the likes of Waymarsh and the Pococks, as they are not equipped with adequately sensitive receiving instruments to pick up its pulses" (Wayland-Smith 135). While they are blinded by their preconceptions and make their beliefs subservient to their own desires, Strether's motives are rather impartial.

5.3. (Un)attainable Cultural Ideal: Aesthetically Appealing and Morally Sound

Arnold states in *Culture and Anarchy* that Hellenism speaks of thinking clearly, seeing things in their essence and beauty, as a grand and precious feat for man to achieve,

while Hebraism speaks of becoming conscious of sin, of awakening to a sense of sin, as a feat of this kind. "The governing idea of Hellenism is *spontaneity of consciousness*; that of Hebraism, *strictness of conscience*" (147). In his conclusion, Arnold points out that "man's two great natural forces, Hebraism and Hellenism, will no longer be dissociated and rival, but will be a joint force of right thinking and strong doing to carry him on towards perfection. This is what the lovers of culture may perhaps dare to augur for such a nation as ours" (*Culture and Anarchy* 264).

Like Arnold, James treats European high culture as a redemptive social force. Both of them are often assumed to adore Paris and French culture in general and venerate French culture as the height of civilization. "But toward most other French writers, in general attitude toward French culture, James and Arnold shared an equivocal and peculiarly Anglo-American point of view, simultaneously admiring the French for their aesthetic craft and seriousness and for their high level of general culture and distrusting them for what was considered their immorality or amorality" (Raleigh 27). James once gave up Paris in disgust early in his literary career. While in Paris he was personally acquainted with France's great literary circle, consisting of Flaubert, Turgenev, Zola, the Goncourts, Daudet, and Maupassant, but even before his visit he had become convinced that the very air they breathed was unclean: "Novel and drama alike betray an incredibly superficial perception of the moral side of life. It is not only that adultery is their only theme, but that the treatment of it is so monstrously vicious and arid. It has been used now for so many years as a mere pigment, a source of dramatic color, a *ficelle*, as they say, that it has ceased to have any apparent moral bearings" ("The Parisian State" 24). The same attitude toward the French recurs again and again in *French Poets and Novelists*, in which James, like Arnold, considers himself a kind of moral watchdog, and says of Baudelaire: "He tried to make fine verse on ignoble subjects, and in our own opinion he signally failed" (65).

However, like Arnold, James remained a devotee of French intelligence and integrity in art. He admired the French for their preoccupation with the artistic life and their "high seriousness." He admired their critics, such men as Scherer and Sainte-Beuve. In a letter to Howells on Aug. 17, 1908, James says about the French: "They

are, in general, a sort of pleas for Criticism, for Discrimination, for Appreciation, on other than infantile lines—as against the so almost universal Anglo-Saxon absence of these things; […]" (*The Letters of Henry James* Vol. II: 99). Of French literature in general James had written to Howells from Paris in 1884, after he had regained some of the perspective he had lost in 1876:

> I have been seeing something of Daudet, Goncourt, and Zola; and there is nothing more interesting to me now than the effort and experiment of this little group, with its truly infernal intelligence of art, form, manner—its intense artistic life. They do the only kind of work, today, that I respect; and in spite of their atrocious pessimism and their handling of unclean things, they are at least serious and honest. The floods of tepid soap and water under the name of novels that are being vomited forth in England seem to me, by contrast, to do little honour to our race. (*Henry James Letters* Vol. III: 28)

Both condemned the simple-minded morality of the official nineteenth-century English and American culture, but they were equally vehement in utter distrust of its antithesis, "Art for art's sake." As Jerome Buckley says in *The Victorian Temper*, a "moral aesthetic" was at the heart of Victorian theory and practice of art, and Arnold was its prime spokesman: "perhaps more insistently than any other critic, Matthew Arnold demanded for his time a subject matter sound in moral values and a style designed quietly to convey larger truths than private feeling could intuit" (26). James expressed similar views in *French Poets and Novelists*:

> To deny the relevance of subject matter and the importance of moral quality of a work of art strikes us as, in two words, very childish. […] The crudity of sentiment of the two advocates of "art for art" is often a striking example of the fact that a great deal of what is called culture may fail to dissipate a well-seated provincialism of spirit. They talk of morality as Miss Edgeworth's infantile heroes and heroines talk of "physic"—they allude to its being put into and kept out of one's appreciation of the same, as if it were a coloured fluid kept in a big labelled bottle in some mysterious intellectual closet. It is in reality simply a part of the essential richness of inspiration—it has nothing to do with the artistic process and it has everything to do with the artistic effect. (64-65)

This equivocal attitude which both James and Arnold have toward the French stems from their deepest concern, namely that art should be both aesthetically appealing and morally sound.

Though gesturing toward a separation between the two cultural forces, Hellenism ("*spontaneity of consciousness*") and Hebraism (*"strictness of conscience*") and his preference for Hellenism in his early published novels, like *Roderick Hudson*, Henry

James later draws on "the fertile overlap between consciousness and conscience" in *The Ambassadors* (Held 33). At the end of his adventure, Strether hesitates between those two conceptions of life. He is "not only disengaged from graceless American cant, but able to see through the most charming European mirage" (Bender 134). He has changed from his puritan New England utilitarian viewpoint to the aesthetical cosmopolitan Parisian vision, and finds that the New England conscience is "excessively narrow and life-denying," and "the rich aggregation of life's possibilities that Paris represents" can be both "fine" and "fraudulent" (Tanner 108).

5.3.1. "Spontaneity of Consciousness": Beauty and Truth

Strether's story figures an initiation rite, but it also reflects **"**two other familiar motives for European travel, the search for sensual and aesthetical stimulation unavailable in puritanical America and the seductions of personal freedom, the possibility of constructing a new, original self outside the constraints of a restrictive culture" (Stowe 191). "The failure of Woollett," James makes very clear, is "the failure to enjoy" (8). One of the attractions of Europe is the possibility of "giving oneself up" to enjoyment (67), of "letting [one]self recklessly go" in the hope of overcoming one's "odious ascetic suspicion of any form of beauty" (101). Coming from New England to Paris and without something to do immediately, some responsibility to meet, Strether experiences a large increase in the sense of rest and refreshment, amusement and ease. In Paris, there is "a social tone that does not equate pleasure with sin" (Marks 105). "[H]e went to Chartres and cultivated, before the front of the cathedral, a general easy beatitude; he went to Fontainebleau and imagined himself on the way to Italy; he went to Rouen with a little handbag and inordinately spent the night" (184). He discovers also in Paris "a state of civilization providing for the beauty and dignity of art," which cannot be realized in "the dryness of the New England soil or its icy ambient air" (Marks 105). Paris furnishes an outlet for him that Woollett had cramped and repressed. His inner pressures are released. The sophistication of the "cosmopolitan culture" of Parisian society make an atmosphere beneficial to Strether, an air in which he blooms

and flourishes—recuperates from the long strain of difficult living and hard working in Woollett. “Europe” is an aesthetic banquet spread out in front of poor Strether, a beauty to which one simply has to intelligently open one’s eyes and bask in its light in order to enjoy and assimilate. The novel is “a revolution of consciousness in Strether, a revolution that has nothing to do with any carnal temptations offered by Paris, but is rather about its power to stimulate the sensitive and appreciative imagination, to free the senses with rich and novel impressions” (Tanner 108).

In Paris, Strether lounges, passive to the surge of culture that breaks upon him in waves, and indifferent to the stern realities of Woollett. He observes Chad enjoying unashamedly his round of pleasure with a grand good conscience. And Strether himself cannot think of a life of art and enjoyment, and taste by a couple financially and aesthetically capable of it, immoral. Europe is what culture represents best; the social attitudes and the personal styles of the people “around” Chad suggest what life is capable of at its fullest. The “improved” Chad, too, is an exemplar of this fine range and order of life. And the youth shines in the light of his friends’ distinction. “An existence of advertising as the youth’s true vocation and the sordidness of the idea of the false-hearted lover are possibilities scarcely conceivable to Strether’s kindly disposed mind, are defamations of a gratuitous meanness” (Marks 109). Strether finds nearly irresistible, despite the fact that he has been taught all his life to resist them, Chad’s indisputable “improvement.” His polish, his elegance, and his physical, sensual vitality pose an even more formidable challenge to his New England standards. Europe has rubbed off the hard edges of Chad and given him serenity. He thinks these things are evidently what Madame de Vionnet usefully taught and what Chad intelligently learned. The lad, once away from the heavy hand of Woollett, has already mastered the charming manners in Paris, by the mere aid of his own native gaiety and sociability. The miracle of the young man’s redemption becomes for Strether the positive and living proof of what the civilizing process can do at its best even with comparatively unpromising material as Chad.

As the major “pure” European character, Marie de Vionnet embodies Parisian culture and history and represents the very essence of the aesthetic sensibility. Strether’s

recognition of Chad's *femme du monde* has become adoration, expressed in a supreme poetic reverie:

> Her bare shoulders and arms were white and beautiful; the material of her dress, a mixture, as he supposed, of silk and crape, were of a silvery grey so artfully composed as to give an impression of warm splendor; […] Her head, extremely fair and exquisitely festal, was like a happy fancy, a notion of the antique, of an old precious medal, some silver coin of the Renaissance; while her slim lightness and brightness, her gaiety, her expression, her decision, contributed to an effect that might have been felt by a poet as half mythological and half conventional. He could have compared her to a goddess still partly engaged in a morning cloud, or to a sea nymph waist-high in the summer surge. Above all she suggested to him the reflexion that the *femme du monde*—in these finest developments of the type—was, like Cleopatra in the play, indeed various and multifold. She had aspects, characters, days, nights—or had them at least, showed them by a mysterious law of her own, when in addition to everything she happened also to be a woman of genius. (142-43)

To create Marie de Vionnet's image of absolute femininity, James gives such a detailed description of her beauty. He invokes the highest associations of myth and poetry: She is like some divinity on a "silver coin of Renaissance," a goddess or "sea nymph," and like Shakespeare's unparalleled "Cleopatra" (142-43). Strether can hardly find enough comparisons for her splendor.

The longer Strether remains in Paris, the more he gives in to "the impulse to let things be, to give them time to justify themselves or at least to pass" (154). He gradually develops into "an accomplished *flâneur*, seeking out amusement for its own sake and allowing chance to guide his footsteps" (Menton 295). Strether's wandering becomes so spontaneous that he almost selects trains at random—with no other goal in mind than to get off the train when he feels like it and enjoy a day of pastorally idyllic idling, "that French Ruralism" (285). Looking through "the oblong window of the picture frame," he sees a "land of fancy," "the background of fiction, the medium of art, the nursery of letters, practically as distant as Greece," romance rather than reality (284). He finds the surroundings to be entirely charming and feels as if he is walking inside a Lambinet painting of the Barbizon school he had admired, but could not afford a long time ago at a Tremont Street gallery in Boston:

> The oblong gilt frame disposed its enclosing lines; the poplars and willows, the reeds and a 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 grey; it was all there, in

> short—it was what he wanted: it was Tremont Street, it was France, it was Lambinet. (285)

He feels extremely content, full of joy, and in harmony with the natural world. Since the retreat of the Pococks, free of his Woollett mission, "the taste of idleness for him shouldn't need more time to sweeten; […] it had been sweetening in truth" (285). Strether, an impressionist himself, has mended the ellipsis of his lost youth by an adventure of the generous imagination. "The Lambinet that so obligingly stretched to take Strether into its picture has at the same time temporarily taken him by limiting his view of the hard facts of reality" (Cosgrove and Mathees 208).

While waiting for his meal, Strether is enjoying the pleasant view of the river at the garden of the Cheval Blanc. Such a river sets one afloat "almost before one could take up the oars—the idle play of which would be moreover the aid to the full impression" (290). The picture is completed by a boat with a couple:

> What he saw was exactly the right thing—a boat advancing round the bend and containing a man who held the paddles and a lady, at the stern, with a pink parasol. It was suddenly as if these figures, or something like them, had been wanted in the picture, had been wanted more or less all day, and had now drifted into sight, with the slow current, on purpose to fill up the measure. (290)

Strether's aesthetic response to the scenery reaches its summit at the sight of the boat. Here comes the epiphany that he recognizes the figures in "the picture," who are no other than Chad and Marie, "the right thing," which abruptly brings Strether from the painted world to the real one. It is "too prodigious, a chance in million" (290). James's handling is most striking in this episode in that "everything about it that is articulated and rendered as 'art' serves to conspire in Strether's discovery of Chad and Marie's sexual relationship, which is an embodiment of the fundamental requirement and expression of nature" (Hocks, *The Ambassadors: Consciousness, Culture, Poetry* 108). In this sense, "not only is reality always already mediated by art, but surfaces—painterly, painted—create the hallucinating play of reality" (Pana-Oltean 189).

Now he realizes that the revised Chad, the work of Madame de Vionnet's hand, as he had been pleased to think it—is baser, however gilded, than he had supposed. However, he does not deny the fact of Chad's improvement over the prime version back in America, the raw youth, who "has made a quick spring out of juvenility into elegance and smartness" (Marks 101). On first acquaintance this acquired polish is what most

immediately and iridescently shows. Chad has picked up the graces in Europe and from Madame de Vionnet, if not the primary principles of conduct. “She had made him better, she had made him best, she had made him anything one would; but it came to our friend with supreme queerness that he was none the less only Chad” (305). After his discovery, Madame de Vionnet herself becomes conventional, no longer has the superior splendor of his recent view. When the three of them sit together, her nervous chattering in her own French with “an unprecedented command of idiomatic turns” has the effect of “veiling her identity, shifting her back into a mere voluble class or race” (293).

Through his reflection during a sleepless night in the hotel, “[h]e was, at that point of vantage, in full possession, to make of it all what he could. He kept making of it that there had been simply a *lie* in the charming affair—a lie on which one could now, detached and deliberate, perfectly put one’s finger (294). The tale of her relationship with Chad relapses almost to its earliest formulation before Strether had met her—it is, after all, “a typical tale of Paris” (298). Though aesthetic experience was primary for him, James is also a moralist. “[W]hat distinguished him from French naturalists and English aesthetes alike was that he never forgot the further kind of seeing, the transcendent passage to the world behind appearance and beyond the senses” (Matthiessen 229). Like his creator, Strether cannot let go of his moral feeling. But what strikes him above all now is the “ease” not only with which Chad and his lover have managed their affair but also with which he himself accepts the situation. The lesson of this ease is what finally puts the period to his whole education.

As Stowe states, “cultivating distinction by travelling to Europe is risky business. The European experience as James describes it can be genuinely revelatory and deeply disconcerting, teaching travelers things they did not know and really did not want to know, subverting their sense of self and of place in the world” (193).Through the Lambinet scene, the perceptive Strether recognizes “his inability to apprehend or structure the world around him, much as *The Ambassadors* itself lacks finality or conclusion” (Hutchinson 48). During his stay, Strether develops gradually his understanding of Parisian pleasures. He has come to value the personal freedom and the aesthetic richness of Parisian life, and to understand what he takes to be Chad’s

"virtuous" if unconventional "attachment" to Madame de Vionnet. Virtue in France is not the same thing as it is defined by New England puritanism.

5.3.2. "Strictness of Conscience": Asceticism and Obedience

Puritanism was originally the reaction in the seventeenth century of the conscience and moral sense against the moral indifference and lax rule of conduct which in the sixteenth century came in with the Renaissance. According to Arnold, it was "a reaction of Hebraism against Hellenism," which has been "so great a power in the English nation" (*Culture and Anarchy* 163). James himself, as Matthiessen argues, did not have the heritage of American Puritanism, "Boston is absolutely nothing to me—I don't even dislike it" (*The Notebooks of Henry James* 43). Nevertheless, James did not cut "the silver cord that bound him to Quincy Street, to Boston and New York" completely (Edel, *Henry James: A Life* 537). He could, at the end of the novel, send Strether back to Woollett—for he was quite prepared to re-visit America himself. His transatlantic roots had made possible his life of art and involved him in a constant balancing of the good and the bad of America and Europe.

France in James's *oeuvre*, in his cultural mapping, is to stand for "the sensual and the beautiful, for pleasure, with whatever complications that brings for Anglo-Saxon propriety and its preference for resignation, heroism, asceticism" (Hadley 89). In New England, where business is supreme and people are busy making money, pleasure is deprecated, facilities for enjoyment are scant. The ultimate vacuity and futility of a life without work is unimaginable. The interests and occupations of Chad seem the reverse of arduous, and one can imagine that what he is doing will become sated and bored by leisure, and guilt-ridden by the consciousness of not doing anything. "Civilization, if Strether speaks of that, is founded upon effort of various kinds, not upon voluptuous languorousness" (Marks 92). In New England, one takes things hard, and wants always to know what its duty is, and is unwilling to enjoy unless it is certain it ought to. "The New Englander feels the iniquity of the world and in Europe is painfully aware of iniquity ignored" (Diamond 247-48). Europe is seductive, something to be resisted, to

be on one's guard against. New England places under suspicion whatever might elude the authority of morality. That habit of suspicion or judging is an essential element in what James calls "taking things hard." Here is a society, in which morality is flagrant, a conscious propriety, and a wanting in proportion and taste. "What is not charmlessly commercial in Woollett is too shrilly moral: all sacrifice and service to others, selflessness stressed to excess by Puritanism" (Marks 67).

As a spokesperson of Woollett, Mrs. Newsome is devoutly conscientious, strenuously high-minded, nervous, intense, full of social ideals and activities in respect to her late husband's hard career. She is essentially "all moral pressure, the presence of this element was almost identical with her straight presence" (259). Even in Paris, Strether can feel the moral power, as if "she was reaching him somehow by the lengthened arm of the spirit" (259). Strether says that he has not touched her, and she will not be touched. She always shows a perfection of her own, which suggests a kind of wrong in any change of her composition. Strether tells Maria, "It was at any rate, the woman herself, as you call her, the whole moral and intellectual being or block, that Sarah brought me over to take or to leave" (281). In Woollett, she rules over the family concern with "a delicacy and a discretion" beyond words (34), and after the fashion of the benevolent tycoon, she supports the green Review of which Strether is the editor. She is a figure of much importance there with her name much in the local papers, and the most remarkable woman, the most distinguished, within Strether's contracted social range. Mrs. Newsome's achievements and her earnestness have been almost wholly in the moral order.

The Newsome women think in terms of Woollett, and they are unable to appreciate variety. They lack those qualities of sophisticated refinement with which James endowed his more favored female characters, usually Europeanized Americans, and which Strether appreciates in Marie de Vionnet. They envision "a version of Marie as a *femme fatale*, a sexually assertive woman who brings moral atrophy and degeneration" (Despotopoulou 150). In contact with the complex social order of Paris, Strether softens to the elegant speech and manners of the *femme mondaine*, gradually constructing her counterparts in Woollett as nightmarish, threatening tormentors or predators: Sarah

"loom[s] at him larger than life […]. He saw himself, under her direction, recommitted to Wollett as juvenile offenders are committed to reformatories" (184); "What is she coming for?—to kill me?" (253). In the gynocentric world James imagines for Woollett, "the women are full (even too full) of a conviction of their rights and their privileges, and feel under no obligation to charm; […]. They are not afraid that they will be boring" (Hadley 110). In contrast, there is more charm and less tedium all around in Paris, and even the women whose "attachments" are not "virtuous" can enjoy their life; however, as he basks in its life-giving sensuality Strether cannot help thinking that this happiness, this pleasure, is also vulnerable, free from the protection of socially imposed conscience and responsibility, which can be seen in Madame de Vionnet.

Before defining or judging the relationship between Marie and Chad, it is important to note that the discourses of sexuality and the handling of relations between men and women in Continental novel tradition and Anglo-Saxon novel tradition differ. The widely accepted earlier views of Victorian sexual repression and covert or even overt acknowledgements of sexual behavior or desire were incompatible in social and cultural texts of that time. On the Continent, upper-middle-class women could construct a sexual sense of self while remaining respectable. "To love intensely and passionately is [a Frenchwoman's] ideal. It is so much her ideal that if marriage does not enable her to attain it, it is a virtue rather than a demerit in her eyes to seek it elsewhere" (Brownell 81). In Paris, "relations between men and women were often flirtations and were never based on an assumption of women's asexuality" (Plott 532). It indeed appears that "the discreet infidelities of upper-middle-class women were increasingly tolerated in Paris at the end of the 19th century" (Plott 532). Therefore, according to Parisian culture, the affair between Chad and Marie is not very unusual or immoral at all. Indeed, "without adultery, it would not be too much to say, the Continental novel would scarcely be possible" (Yeazell 78). But in Anglo-Saxon novel traditions, the case is treated differently, as Hadley says, "nothing could 'happen' to the young women after marriage" (90). As Anthony Trollope writes in his *Autobiography*:

> I find such to have been the teaching of Thackeray, of Dickens, and of George Eliot. […] Can anyone by search through the works of the six great English novelists I have named,

> find a scene, a passage, or a word that would teach a girl to be immodest, or a man to be dishonest? When men in their pages have been described as dishonest and women as immodest, have they not ever been punished? (138)

Both in England and in America, there were clear moral boundaries about sexuality. The obsession with and fear of women's sexual knowingness was often illustrated in literary texts, which included stereotypical depictions of the adulterous wife, the prostitute, or the *femme fatale*, who by the end of the novel had to be punished not only for her ethical transgressions but also for the potential for rebellion that she personified.

According to the New England morality, the relationship between Chad and Marie is undoubtedly immoral, and Marie should definitely be punished. James describes her passion as "mature, abysmal, pitiful" (306). She is suddenly so much older, and as "vulgarly troubled" in truth, as the Jamesian maidservant crying for her young man (306). Madame de Vionnet's self-image now reveals only the weakness of her wisdom, the dishonor and depths of her shames. The splendor somewhat fades from her, even to Strether's vision, and her charm is still undeniable, but it has lost some of its fineness of quality. The possessive passion toward the loved object she represents and the possibilities of wrongdoing for its gratification she betrays strike him as a sorry state. Geismar argues that James, "like the prurient Victorians in general, "apparently identified the 'lower passions' with the lower classes; or sometimes even, as we see in the literature of this period, with 'the lower races'" ("The Achieved Life à la Henry James" 102). Marie de Vionnet's doom is the outcome of the typical late Victorian fate of the fallen woman: disowned by the man who led to her fall. From an Anglo-Saxon perspective, as a fallen woman, she is not worth sacrificing one's career for; therefore Chad can forsake her with an easy conscience. Madame de Vionnet's end is also to be tragic. She has learned from life that no real happiness comes from taking: "the only safe thing is to give" (304). Such a nature is far too good for Chad, and she realizes now that "the only certainty" for the future is that she will be "the loser in the end" (307).

As a person from Woollett, Strether also tends to sort his experience in terms of a language of "duties," "responsibilities," "scruples," and the need to "justify himself." "Further, as his consciousness is sharpened, his conscience, his moral sensitivity, makes him stay for his "punishment," however subjectively conceived" (Held 38). In

Luxembourg Garden, the narrator pinpoints the radically interiorized operations of Strether's conscience, in both the near and distant past. In reviewing his recent time ashore, he recalls that "more than once, during the time, he had regarded himself as admonished" (42). This sense is "formidably sharp" when Mrs. Newsome's letter comes. Rather than referring directly to society's censure or to some external standard, Strether centers his conscience on his own regard of his actions. Strether's analysis of his conscience emerges and remains principally within his unstable conception of himself, as evidenced in the frequent reflective pronouns and the verbs of perception that litter the middle section of his chapter: "He felt" (61), "It seemed" (62), "He appeared to himself" (Held 41). As Strether progresses into the aesthetic life of Paris, Waymarsh illustrates for him danger of floral suffocation. He is most of all afraid of encountering Waymarsh, who represents "the conscience of Milrose," "the real tradition" of New England from which Strether seems to be straying (256, 14), and "in whose presence, so far they had mixed together in the light of the town, he had never without somehow paying for it aired either his vocabulary or his accent. He usually paid for it by meeting immediately afterwards Waymarsh's eye" (286). The intimidation which Strether feels is really "his anxiety that he may have sacrificed his moral sense to his aesthetic appreciation" (Bachmann 95).

Strether gradually develops his own concept of morality during his stay in Paris, and finally he has outgrown the rigid criteria of Woollett moralism. The stance of sympathetic interest and that of judgment are opposed, as is illustrated by the contrast between him and Sarah Pocock in relation to the complicated but highly interesting relationship between Chad and Marie. Strether has abandoned the moral "laws" of Woollett, Mrs. Newsome's cold virtues, for some other criteria of what is "right," something which he can hardly name but which is represented for him by Madame de Vionnet's distinction, her charm, her amiability. It is important to note that Strether is not attempting to escape from unpalatable facts by weaving around them a halo of romantic fantasy. Even though he finally sees Mme de Vionnet's unflattering weakness, neither Strether's sympathy for nor his appreciation of her accomplishments diminishes. "It is rather that the paradox of vulgarity so mysteriously combined with

the surest subtlety enhances her for him as a vital, fallible person; Mme de Vionnet becomes ordinary, yet touchingly rare" (M. Williams 70). And the irony of Strether's predicament is that Sarah's view turns out to have been right as far as the mere physical facts are concerned. He has arrived at a point where his moral superiority has vanished, which is hard to swallow. But even under the pressure of this shock, there is not an automatic reversion to the standards of Woollett. He does not abandon his attempt to understand, and tries to figure out his misconception about the "virtuous attachment." It is increasingly difficult to make simple moral judgements about a given character, for both sides have the sympathy they deserve.

The contribution to the moral content of the novel is "to free Strether for the appreciation of Madame de Vionnet's virtues, which to him prove themselves in the beauty which she salvages from the wreck of her life" (Wegelin 100-101). Strether is aware that there are virtues which cannot always be measured by the bundle of moral notions with which he started from Woollett. "In fine to estimate the Frenchwoman's moral nature with any approach to adequacy it is necessary entirely to avoid viewing her from an Anglo-Saxon standpoint. Apart from his *milieu*, she is not to be understood at all. The ideals of women in general held by this *milieu* are wholly different from our ideals" (Brownell 77). Chad is the one who should be reprimanded, as Tanner maintains, "it is the 'exploitation' of people that is the cardinal sin in the Jamesian world: evil is the callous manipulation and selfish appropriation of other people's lives—of life itself" (110). For him, it is not a matter of "living all you can," but rather of "getting" all you can.

At the end of the novel, Strether's rejection of Maria Gostrey and his seeking a comfortable corner for himself in Europe also betray his conscience's resurgent force, "to be right" (327). The concluding conversation between Strether and Maria reflects his concern for duty. He has not completely relinquished his New England sensibility, and the realm of appreciation for him is not merely of the visual but of moral judgement. More important, "if Strether despite his moral revolution retains an eye for what 'makes' him right, almost puritan in its 'horrible' sharpness, James, too, despite expatriation, never lost the deep moral bias of his origins" (Wegelin 102). That explains also why

Strether, at the end, decides to go back to America, where he might lose everything, his job and Mrs. Newsome. He is finally able to see the merits and drawbacks of the opposing values without committing himself entirely to one set of characters or another. It is not simply a matter of choosing one side over the other, but getting beyond sides altogether. He must not get any material gain for himself, even if there does seem to be something excessively ascetic in this attitude. “What he has acquired are gems of appreciation, understanding, and a range of sympathy that transcends any fixed moral schemes” (Tanner 111).

With his acquired vision and refined morality, Strether finally comes very close to the Jamesian view of culture, and, indeed the values of character and author would seem to overlap to a large extent. Lambert Strether is James’s persuasive tribute to the idea of culture and also embodies one of James’s great achievements in art. “His story is of the conjunction of the moral and aesthetic, the Hebraic—to look back to Matthew Arnold—and the Hellenic” (Berland 191). Through his experiences in Europe, Strether’s consciousness has spontaneously expanded, while his conscience also guides him, or complements, its enjoyment of that experience. For Strether, “the status of consciousness and conscience are directly related: greater conscious experience evokes, even demands, profounder conscience” (Held 42). He remains immune to the great threat to culture embodied in “the world of grab.” He proves himself capable of that fullest expansion of sensibility which accepts the aesthetic and moral attributes of civilization. Strether becomes a cosmopolitan, who has gained insight into the different cultures, recognized that vices and virtues are underneath the cultural forms in all cultures, and emancipated himself from absolute black-versus-white contrasts. “Europe comes closer than America, perhaps, but both fall so far short of the ideal that Strether prefers to forego them both” (Crews 56). Strether’s or James’s vision is too wide and comprehensive to be limited to commitment to any country.

Conclusion

James's works seldom give solutions. The endings often leave the reader with an uncertain sense of the character's future and with the feeling that the character is at some kind of crossroad in life. "Europe starts as a goal for many of these characters, but it becomes a moving target, representing an elusive satisfaction, a series of disappointments, a lesson learned in some cases, but never a treasure neatly recovered or a life clearly redeemed" (Stowe 194). The only certainty is that something has happened to the character and made a great difference for or influence on the protagonist, very often by his or her encountering different people from different cultures and nations. Culture is often a site of conflict for James's characters, therefore, understanding them as they are engaged in this struggle is significant for appreciating James's works, especially his novels with the international theme.

In the previous chapters, my analysis has shown how Henry James explored, developed, and perfected the concept of culture in the historical contexts of Europe and America, in which he lived and worked, and how the concept is projected into his works. Chapter One gives a brief survey of different definitions and usages of the term culture, examines the historical and cultural contexts of Europe and America in which James lived and worked, highlights the uniqueness of James's transatlantic perspective of approaching cultures, and explores James's attitude toward European and American cultures and his cultural ideal. The following chapters discuss different aspects of his international novels from the earlier to the later period of his career: the cultural differences and conflicts between democratic America and Bourbon France in *The American* (1877); the strikingly different manners of two groups of people represented by traveling Americans and American expatriates respectively in *Daisy Miller* (1879); the relationship between individual and society, place, culture and character, liberty and duty in *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881); and many main issues recurrent in James's international novels, such as wealth, freedom, experience, aesthetics, and morality in *The Ambassadors* (1903).

Culture, broadly speaking, can be used in three ways exemplified in the works by

Matthew Arnold, Edward Tylor, and Franz Boas, who elucidated most clearly the concept and exerted great influences on later critics. Arnold claims that culture is the pursuit and study of perfection and the development of all sides of human nature; an inward condition of the mind and spirit cannot be objectified. In Arnold's definition, this sense of culture is more closely related to aesthetics or literary criticism than to social science. Edward Tylor defined it in a wide ethnographic sense, a complex whole including knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by human beings as members of society. It refers to a quality possessed by all people in all social groups, who nevertheless could be arrayed on an evolutionary continuum from "savagery" through "barbarism" to "civilization." The point is simply that cultural hierarchism is not incidental but crucial to Tylor's ethnology. The third usage of culture developed in anthropology in the twentieth-century work of Franz Boas, a German American anthropologist, and his students. He emphasized the uniqueness of the many and varied cultures of different peoples or societies. Moreover, he dismissed the value judgments he found inherent in both the Arnoldian and Tylorean views of culture; for Boas, one should never differentiate high from low culture, and one ought not to differentially valorize cultures as savage or civilized. Through the survey of the very different usages and understandings of culture, it is not hard to see the difficulty in defining the term. The difficulty is not merely conceptual or semantic, but also lies in the context in which it is used.

My study of the concept of culture is mainly in the field of literature; therefore, it will mostly, but not exclusively, follow the Arnoldian tradition. Among the literary intellectuals in the nineteenth century, Arnold was the one who gave its clearest and most forceful expression in the mid-Victorian period in England. In *Culture and Anarchy*, he claims that culture is the pursuit and study of perfection and the development of all sides of human nature. The main three features of Arnold's concept of culture are as follows: first, that it is a social idea; second, the notion of getting to know the best that has been thought and said; and third, the need to turn a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits. The essence of his cultural theory is the dialectic of cultural forces: Hebraism and Hellenism. What is needed, in

Arnold's view, is a proper balance of these forces, both in the individual and in society. It is intended to provide the source of authority both for the life of the individual and for the social order. In Arnold's writings the concept of culture affirmed a hierarchical vision of society. The basic conflict in Arnold's position, as Lesley Johnson points out, "appears to be between his liberal commitment to the idea of equality and his basic fear, or nervousness, about the masses" (26). Throughout the twentieth century, Arnold's "humanistic" (aesthetic and humanist) definition generally was viewed, especially though not exclusively by anthropologists, as an elite definition. However, as a founding figure in the celebration of "culture," an "apostle of culture," "slayer of Philistines," Arnold identified key issues that remain unresolved in our own time and continue to provoke our attention and our search for answers, though he is not the author of solutions to the problems. He has influenced many later critics, and his concept of culture is also relevant and very important for my study because it exerts great influence on James and his works.

The ideas of Arnoldian tradition such as pursuing "the best," the "dedication to culture," the partiality to French culture, the "disinterested free play of mind," the rejection of "provincialism" in favor of becoming a "cosmopolite," and that art should be "aesthetically appealing and morally sound" are all projected into James's works. Characters in James's novels are like Arnold's man of culture, a seeker after the light. However, unlike Arnold, whose concern is also on public reform or social order and religion besides the personal quest, James cared a great deal about his literary calling, which more or less anticipated F. R. Leavis's notion of culture with its focus on art and literature. Arnold's "culture," as a name for general human perfection or an "inward condition of the mind and spirit," cannot be objectified; in contrast, James's concept of culture also included Tylor's external codes of behavior, or later Williams's expression of "a whole way of life" (*Culture and Society* xvi). To Arnold, culture was "at variance with the mechanical and material civilization in esteem with us" (*Culture and Anarchy* 15). For James, the two words can be used interchangeably.

James's unusual family background, early exposure to European culture, unorthodox transatlantic education, and later expatriation, also contribute to his gradual

evolvement of his concept of culture. Therefore, his assessment of the value of American culture exists in a dialectical relationship with his experience of Europe. The complexity of this relationship is central to his writing. A cosmopolitan by nature and upbringing, James has formed the habit of comparison and promoted tolerance, an acceptance of difference, and a recognition of similarities to undermine the smug nationalistic arrogance that emanated from both sides of the Atlantic. The cosmopolitanism endorsed by Henry James is exemplified both in his own life and his writing.

Chapter Two discusses the American's pursuit of "the best" and the obstacles in the process; contrasts two such different civilizations as those of democratic America and Bourbon France; and compares different understandings of kinship bonds and views of marriage in America and France. It points out that James's pursuit of "the best," similar to Arnold's study of perfection, is not just "the best," but the movement toward it, as a state of becoming, of striving. Newman makes his own claim for "the best," yet he knows only how to acquire new property by money, instead of cultivating himself by human effort in the process of searching. The other reason for the failure in his pursuit is that "the best," which at that time for James means European civilization, is not so easy to acquire or even get access to. Therefore, Newman's pursuit fails at the end. As James explains, those who have always lived within one culture are unaware of other cultures and tacitly assume that their form of life is the normal one; actually they don't know how to cope well with people from other cultures. There arise misunderstandings and conflicts. It is safe to conclude that though he exalted the European civilization as the best so far, James did not overlook the defects that were hidden behind it; if there is much to criticize in America, there is also something to praise. These two points are exemplified in the Bellegarde family and Christopher Newman respectively.

Chapter Three inquires into the relationship between manners and morals and observes the two customs—chaperonage and flirting, which are quite differently practiced in nineteenth-century Europe and America; observes the manners of the Miller family, an American newly rich family in Europe, who are eager to make "the

grand tour" and expose themselves to the art and culture of the old world; and examines the manners of American expatriates in Europe, who hold in high regard and adopt the social niceties and the rules of propriety that have been laid down by centuries of European civilization. As a man fixated on manners, James was ashamed of his fellow country people's ill-mannered behavior when they were traveling in Europe. Meanwhile, he was aware that humans can have "very high-bred manners and very low-born feelings": the imposing external behavior "may conceal the meanest hearts" (Tocqueville 179). Therefore, he also deplores the sophisticated expatriates' attitudes and behavior and condemns their social cruelty. To sum up, manners vary from place to place, therefore, it is impossible to place taste and grace within a universal aesthetics; there are no absolute relations between manners and morals; therefore, the canons of behavior are not necessarily moral imperatives.

Chapter Four discusses the relations among place, culture and character; examines American and European influences on James and the characters, like Transcendentalism and Determinism, and two different concepts of identity; probes into the reasons for Isabel's choices about her marriage and her return to Rome in the end, and argues that Isabel does not only have the spirit of independence but also the moral power. It points out that the places in the novel not only amplify American and European cultures, but also shape characters, serving as an expression of characters' natures and a condition influencing characters' lives. Place is also integrated into other characters' personalities and experiences as to produce some distinctive interrelations. All his life James had weighed his relation to his homeland and his adopted country. He received both American and European education, which initiated him in different ways, offering him the opportunity to find virtues and defects in different cultures. Compared with Newman and Daisy, Isabel has better cultural literacy. She is too susceptible to fine appearances, to a brilliant surface, and believes the appeal of the merely aesthetic to be morally sound altogether, and for this Isabel has to suffer. She has to go to Europe to learn the true meaning of the concept of culture: The aesthetic does not necessarily or always coexist with the moral.

Chapter Five contrasts the money-grabbing values of industrial Woollett and the

civilized, diversified cosmopolitan Paris; argues one should not be bound by one's cultural prejudice in order to gain a more complete view of an object by contrasting different ambassadors' attitudes toward Chad's situation in Paris, and discusses the dialectic of cultural forces: Hellenism ("Spontaneity of Consciousness") and Hebraism ("Strictness of Conscience") proposed by Arnold. James exposes the cultural impoverishment of America by giving his observation of the sacrifice of "society" and "manners" to the prevailing materialism. The antidote to all this "vulgarity" and lack of culture was, for both Arnold and James, a knowledge of the French. They tended to regard France as a cultural and intellectual beacon. James still trusted in the power of culture. One of the most precious experiences Strether has had in Paris is liberal appreciation. He has learned "seeing things as they are," or Arnold's notion of "disinterestedness," which James had also adopted. Some characters in James's works, who have always lived within one culture, are unaware of other cultures, fail to gain insights into the other culture because they refuse to engage in an interpretative process. Only if they interact with other cultures, will they overcome the limitations of their own perspective, become a cosmopolitan. Things have to be interpreted from different perspectives. Both Strether and his creator, James, acknowledge the sense of responsibility and Puritan morality as the primary elements of American culture. In the meantime, they desert the rigorous and abstinent aspects of Puritanism and adopt the pleasant, the agreeable, the sensitive and so forth from Europe which would make a culture rich and full. It is not simply a matter of choosing one side over the other, but getting beyond sides altogether. Strether's or James's vision is too wide and comprehensive to be limited to commitment to any country. With his acquired vision and refined morality, Strether finally comes very close to the Jamesian view of culture.

James lived a remarkably nomadic life for the first half of his life, searching for a place to embody his vision of culture. In his early career, James had in mind an ideal vision of cultural harmony and synthesis—the synthesis of American and European virtues; later he realized that one culture cannot be totally merged with another in complete harmony because it is not so easy for people from one culture to appreciate another culture properly. He pointed out the difficulty of fusion or integration;

nevertheless, he also saw the possibility of mutual understanding and complementarity, based on "the virtues that go with certain defects, and the defects that go with virtues" in every culture ("Occasional Paris" 129). Culture needs new blood to keep itself alive and develop toward its perfection. Therefore, he continued to hold the cosmopolitan sentiment and tried to bridge the worlds on both sides of the Atlantic. He anticipated the choice of such American expatriates as Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Ernest Hemingway, and F. Scott Fitzgerald to live outside the United States.

I cannot claim originality when applying the cultural theory of Arnoldian tradition to the discussion of James's works, because some research has already been done in this area. However, the different uses of "culture" and "civilization" have not yet been discussed thoroughly. Distinguished from previous research, different texts are chosen in this study. This study aims to contribute to a better understanding of James's concept of culture, thus also to help shed some light on how to reduce cultural conflicts, the harmonious coexistence of different cultures, and to improve cross-cultural communication in the world. However, not all his works with the international theme, such as *The Wings of the Dove* (1902) and *The Golden Bowl* (1904), the novels of his later period, and short stories, such as "An International Episode" (1879) and "Lady Barbarina" (1884), are included in the discussion. Though his book of travel writing, *The American Scene* (1907), in which James also discusses about culture directly, is referred to, it is not thoroughly discussed in this study, either. Therefore, some ideas of his concept of culture are missing and deserve further studies. In addition, Henry James was a prolific writer, and his oeuvre is a huge network of complicated ideas; therefore, a thorough reading of all of James's works is far beyond the scope of my doctoral research project and perhaps needs lifelong study.

Bibliography

Anesko, Michael. *Generous Mistakes: Incidents of Error in Henry James*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2017. Print.

Apte, M. "Language in Sociocultural Context." *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistic.* Vol. 4. Ed. R. E. Asher. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1994. 2000-10. Print.

Arnold, Matthew. *Civilization in the United States: First and Last Impressions of America*. 1888. Calise: Applewood, 2007. Print.

---. *Culture and Anarchy*: *An Essay in Political and Social Criticism*. London: Smith, Elder & Company, 1869. Print.

---. *Essays in Criticism*. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1964. Print.

---. *Mixed Essays*. London: John Murray, 1903. Print.

---. *Poetry and Prose,* London: Rupert Hart Davis, 1954. Print.

---. *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*. Vol. X. Ed. Robert H. Super. Ann Arbor: The U of Michigan P, 1965. Print.

Ash, Beth Sharon. "Frail Vessels and Vast Designs: A Psychoanalytic Portrait of Isabel Archer." *New Essays on the Portrait of a Lady*. Ed. Joel Porte. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990. 123-62. Print.

Avruch, K. *Culture and Conflict Resolution*. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998. Print.

Bachmann, Richard. "Perception and Responsibility in *The Ambassadors*." MA thesis, McMaster University, 1978. Print.

Barringer, Tim, and Tom Flynn, eds. *Colonialism and the Object*: *Empire, Material Culture and the Museum*. London: Routledge, 1998. Print.

Bell, Millicent. *Meaning in Henry James*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1991. Print.

Bellringer, Alan W. *The Ambassadors*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1984. Print.

Bender. Eileen T. "'The Question of His Own French': Dialect and Dialectic in *The Ambassadors*." *The Henry James Review* 5.2 (Winter 1984): 128-34. Print.

Bentley, Nancy. *The Ethnography of Manners: Hawthorne, James, Wharton*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995. Print.

Berland, Alwyn. *Culture and Conduct in the Novels of Henry James*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981. Print.

Boas, Franz. *Race, Language and Culture*. New York: The Free Press, 1966. Print.

Botta, Enrico. "The Wavering Ruins of *The American*." *Henry James's Europe: Heritage and Transfer*. Ed. Dennis Tredy et al. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2011. 113-20. Print.

Brooks, Van Wyck, and Otto L. Bettmann. *Our Literary Heritage: A Pictorial History of the Writer in America*. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1956. Print.

Brownell, W. C. "French Traits—Women." *Scribner's Magazine* 5.1 (1889): 74-87. Print.

Bryce, James. *The American Commonwealth*. vol. 2. New York: Macmillan, 1927. Print.

Buckley, Jerome. *The Victorian Temper*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1951. Print.

Cargill, Oscar. "The Portrait of a Lady." *Perspectives on James's* The Portrait of a Lady*: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. William T. Stafford. New York: New York UP, 1967. 256-96. Print.

Carter, Stephen L. *Civility: Manners, Morals, and the Etiquette of Democracy*. New York: Basic Books, 1998. Print.

Caufield, James Walter. *Overcoming Matthew Arnold: Ethics in Culture and Criticism*. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2012. Print.

Chase, Richard. "The Lesson of the Master." *Perspectives on James's* The Portrait of a Lady*: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. William T. Stafford. New York: New York UP, 1967. 148-65. Print.

Cosgrove, William, and Irene Mathees. "'To See Life Reflected': Seeing as Living in *The Ambassadors*." *The Henry James Review* 1.3 (Spring 1980): 204-10. Print.

Crews, Frederick C. *The Tragedy of Manners: Moral Drama in the Later Novels of Henry James*. Hamden: Archon Books, 1971. Print.

Croly, Herbert. "Henry James and His Countrymen." *The Questions of Henry James*. Ed. F. W. Dupee. New York: Octagon, 1973. 28-39. Print.

Da, Nan Z. "*The American*'s Options and Futures." *Transforming Henry James*. Ed. Anna De Biasio et al. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013. 291-313.

Print.

Davidoff, Lenore. *The Best Circles: Society Etiquette and the Season*. London: Croom Helm, 1973. Print.

Deakin, Motley. "Two Studies of Daisy Miller." *The Henry James Review* 5.1 (Fall 1983): 2-28. Print.

DeKoven, Marianne. "Walking on Water: The Metropolitan Feminine in *The Ambassadors*." *The Henry James Review* 18.2 (Spring 1997): 107-26. Print.

Despotopoulou, Anna. "'What Woman Was *ever* Safe?' Dangerous Construction of Womanhood in *The Ambassadors*." *A Companion to Henry James*. Ed. Greg W. Zacharias. Malden: Willey-Blackwell, 2007. 139-55. Print.

Diamond, Cora. "Henry James, Moral Philosophers, Moralism." *The Henry James Review* 18.3 (Fall 1997): 243-57. Print.

Dupee, F. W. Ed. *The Questions of Henry James*. New York: Octagon, 1973. Print.

Eagleton, Terry. *The Idea of Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006. Print.

Eakin, Paul John. *The New England Girl: Cultural Ideals in Hawthorne, Stowe, Howells and James*. Athens: The U of Georgia P, 1976. Print.

Edel, Leon. Afterword. *The American*. 1877. By Henry James. New York: Signet Classic, 2005. 360-68. Print.

---. *Henry James: A Life.* New York: Harper & Row, 1985. Print.

---. "Henry James: The Americano-European Legend." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 36.4: (July 1968): 321-34. Print.

---. "The Myth of America in *The Portrait of a Lady*." *The Henry James Review* 17.2 (Winter-Spring 1986): 8-17. Print.

Edgar, Andrew, and Peter Sedgwick. *Cultural Theory: The Key Thinkers*. New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.

Eliot, T. S. *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*. London: Farber, 1962. Print.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Essays and Lectures*. New York: Library of America, 1983. Print.

---. *The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson.* Vol. VII. Ed. Eleanor M. Tilton. New York: Columbia UP, 1990. Print.

Fluck, Winfried. “Fiction and Fictionality in American Realism.” *Romance with America?* Ed. Laura Bieger and Johannes Voelz. Heidelberg: Winter, 2005. 179-98. Print.

Fogel, Daniel Mark. *Daisy Miller: A Dark Comedy of Manners*. Boston: Twayne, 1990. Print.

Freedman, Jonathan, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Henry James*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.

---. “Henry James.” *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Literature*. Vol.2. Ed. Jay Parini. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004. 292-305. Print.

Furth, David L. *The Visionary Betrayed: Aesthetic Discontinuity in Henry James's* The American Scene. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1979. Print.

Fussell, Edwin. “Time and Topography in *The American*.” *The Henry James Review* 10.3 (Fall 1989): 167-78. Print.

Galloway, David. *Henry James: The Portrait of a Lady*. London: Edward Arnold, 1967. Print.

Garcia, Claire Oberon. “The Shopper and the Shopper’s Friend: Lambert Strether and Maria Gostrey’s Consumer Consciousness.” *The Henry James Review* 16.2 (Spring 1995): 153-71. Print.

Geismar, Maxwell. *Henry James and His Cult*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1964. Print.

---. “The Achieved Life à la Henry James.” *Twentieth Century Interpretations of the Ambassadors: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Albert E. Stone. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969. 96-105. Print.

Graham, Kenneth. *“Daisy Miller*: Dynamics of an Enigma.” *New Essays on Daisy Miller and The Turn of the Screw*. Ed. Vivian R. Pollak. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993. 35-64. Print.

Graham, Wendy. “Growing Up Absurd: The Search for Self in Henry James’s *The American.*” Ed. Greg W. Zacharias. *A Companion to Henry James*. Malden: Willey-Blackwell, 2007. 51-67. Print.

Green, Harvey. *The Light of the Home: An Intimate View of the Lives of Women in Victorian America.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1983. Print.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1992. Print.

Hadley, Tessa. *Henry James and the Imagination of Pleasure.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. Print.

Hall, Stuart. "The Question of Cultural Identity." *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*. Ed. Stuart Hall et al. Malden: Blackwell, 1996. 596-634. Print.

Hayes, Keven J., ed. *Henry James: The Contemporary Review*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 1996. *Saturday Review* [England] 47 (3 May 1879): 75-78. 561. Print.

Held. Joshua. "Conscience and Consciousness in *The Ambassadors*: Epistemology, Focalization, and Narrative Ethics." *The Henry James Review* 34.1 (Winter 2013): 33-46. Print.

Holder, Alan. *Three Voyagers in Search of Europe: A Study of Henry James, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1966. Print.

Higgs, David. *Nobles in Nineteenth-Century France: The Practice of Inegalitarianism*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1987. Print.

Hobbs, Michael. "Reading Newman Reading: Textuality and Possession in *The American.*" *The Henry James Review* 13.2 (Spring 1992): 115-25. Print.

Hocks, Richard A. "*Daisy Miller*, Backward into the Past: A Centennial Essay." *The Henry James Review* 1.2 (Winter 1980): 164-78. Print.

----. *The Ambassadors: Consciousness, Culture, Poetry*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997. Print.

Howells, William D. "Letter to James Russell Lowell." *Henry James: The Critical Heritage*. Ed. Roger Gard. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968. Print.

Hutchinson, Hazel. "James's Spectacles: Distorted Vision in The Ambassadors." *The Henry James Review* 26.1 (Winter 2005): 39-51. Print.

Jalland, Pat. *Women, Marriage and Politics, 1860-1914*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986. Print.

James, Henry. *Daisy Miller and Other Stories*. Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 1994. Print.

---. "Emerson." *The American Essays of Henry James*. Ed. Leon Edel. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1989. 51-76. Print.

---. *French Poets and Novelists*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964. Print.

---. *Hawthorne: A Critical Essay on the Man and His Time*. New York: Collier Books, 1966. Print.

---. *Henry James: Autobiography*. Ed. Frederick W. Dupee. New York: Criterion Books, 1956. Print.

---. *Henry James Letters.* Vol. I: *1843-1875*. Ed. Leon Edel. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1974. Print.

---. *Henry James Letters.* Vol. II: *1875-1883*. Ed. Leon Edel. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1975. Print.

---. *Henry James Letters*. Vol. III: *1883-1895*. Ed. Leon Edel. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1980. Print.

---. *Henry James Letters.* Vol. IV: *1895-1916*. Ed. Leon Edel. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1984. Print.

---. *Henry James: Selected Letters*. Ed. Leon Edel. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1987. Print.

---. *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers*. New York: Library of America, 1984. Print.

---. Preface. *The Novels and Tales of Henry James*. Vol. XIII. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936. v-xxi. Print.

---. Preface. *What Maisie Knew, In the Cage, The Pupil*. By Henry James. New York: Scribners, 1908. v-xxii. Print.

---. *The Ambassadors.* 1903. New York: Dover Publications, 2002. Print.

---. *The American.* 1877. New York: Signet Classic, 2005. Print.

---. *The American Scene*. 1907. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987. Print.

---. *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces*. Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 2011. Print.

---. *The Complete Letters of Henry James, 1872-1876*. Ed. Pierre A. Walker and Greg. W. Zacharias. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2011. Print.

---. *The Letters of Henry James*. Vol. II. Ed. Percy Lubbock. New York: Scribner, 1920. Print.

---. *The Notebooks of Henry James*. Ed. F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981. Print.

---. “The Occasional Paris.” *Americans in Paris: A Literary Anthology*. Ed. Adam Gopnik. New York: The Library of America, 2004.

---. *The Portable Henry James*. Ed. Morton D. Zabel. New York: The Viking Press, 1951. Print.

---. *The Portrait of a Lady*. 1881. Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 1999. Print.

---. “The Question of Our Speech.” *Henry James on Culture: Collected Essays on Politics and the American Social Scene*. Ed. Pierre A. Walker. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1999. 42-57. Print.

---. *Transatlantic Sketches*. Boston: James R. Osgood, 1875. 197-99. Print.

Jobe, Steven. “Rousseau, James, and the Bellegardes: A Source for The American?” *American Literary Realism* 40.2 (Winter 2008): 167-72. Print.

Johnson, Lesley. *The Cultural Critics: From Matthew Arnold to Raymond Williams*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979. Print.

Johnson, Lisa. “Daisy Miller: Cowboy Feminist.” *The Henry James Review* 22.1 (Winter 2001): 41-58. Print.

Jottkandt, Sigi. “Portrait of an Act: Aesthetics and Ethics in *The Portrait of a Lady*.” *The Henry James Review* 25.1 (Winter 2004): 67-86. Print.

Kettle, Arnold. “Henry James: *The Portrait of a Lady.*” *The Portrait of a Lady: An Authoritative Text, Henry James and the Novel, Review and Criticism*. Ed. Robert D. Bamburg. New York: Norton, 1975. 671-89. Print.

Kroeber A. L., and Clyde Kuckhohn. *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*. Cambridge: The Museum, 1952. Print.

Krook, Dorothea. *The Ordeal of Consciousness in Henry James*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1962. Print.

Ku, Chung-Hao. “Returns: Youth, Time and Maturity in *The Ambassadors*.” *The Henry James Review* 37.1 (Winter 2016): 82-99. Print.

Lamm, Kimberly. “A Future for Isabel Archer: Jamesian Feminism, Leo Bersani, and Aesthetic Subjectivity.” *The Henry James Review* 32.3 (Fall 2011): 249-58. Print.

Larkin, Maurice. *Man and Society in Nineteenth-Century Realism*. London: Billing and Sons, 1977. Print.

Leavis, F. R. *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture*. Cambridge: Minority Press, 1930. Print.

---. *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad*. Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1983. Print.

Leavis, F. R., and Denys Thompson. *Culture and Environment*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1977. Print.

Lee, Brain. *The Novels of Henry James: A Study of Culture and Consciousness.* Michigan: Edward Arnold, 1978. Print.

Levenstein, Harvey. *Seductive Journey: American Tourists in France from Jefferson to the Jazz Age*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998. Print.

Logan, Annie R. M. "Review of *The Ambassadors*." *The Nation* 4 Feb. 1904: 95. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of the Ambassadors: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Albert E. Stone. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969. 24-25. Print.

Lowe, Ryan Stuart. "Tourist Love: The Erotics of Travel in James's Early Fiction." *The Henry James Review* 37.1 (Winter 2016): 33-50. Print.

Lowell, James Russell. "On a Certain Condescension in Foreigners." *The Atlantic Monthly* Jan. 1869: 82-94. Print.

Lukas, Paul. "Unambiguous Ambiguity: The International Theme of Daisy Miller." *Studies in American Fiction* 6.2 (Autumn 1988): 209-16. Print.

Lustig, T. J. "James, Arnold, 'Culture,' and 'Modernity'; or, A Tale of Two Dachshunds." *Cambridge Quarterly* 37.1 (2008): 164 -93. Print.

Lutwack, Leonard. *The Role of Place in Literature*. Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1984.

MacCormack, Peggy. *The Rule of Money: Gender, Class, Exchange Economics in the Fiction of Henry James.* Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1990. Print.

Marks, Robert. *James's Later Novels: An Interpretation*. New York: The William-Frederick Press, 1960. Print.

Matthiessen, F. O. "The Ambassadors." *The Questions of Henry James*. Ed. F. W. Dupee. New York: Octagon, 1973. 218-35. Print.

McWhriter, David. "Young Henry James: The Outsider." *Transforming Henry James*. Ed. Anna De Biasio, et al. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013. 10-

23. Print.

Meier, Jürg. *Emotions and Narrative in Jane Austen and Henry James*. München: Herbert Utz Verlag, 2003. Print.

Menton, Allen W. "Typical Tales of Paris: The Function of Reading in *The Ambassadors*." *The Henry James Review* 15.3 (Fall 1994): 286-300. Print.

Millett, Fred B. Introduction. *The Portrait of a Lady*. By Henry James. New York: Modern Library, 1966. Print.

Mitchell, Lee Clark. "A Marriage of Opposites: Oxymorons, Ethics, and James's *The American.*" *The Henry James Review* 19.1 (Winter 1998): 1-16. Print.

Oltean, Roxana. "'I Longed for a New World': Colonial Hysteria, The American, and Henry James's Paris." *The Henry James Review* 24.3 (Fall 2003): 269-80. Print.

---. "From Grand Tour to a Space of Detour: Henry James's Europe." *The Henry James Review* 31.1 (Winter 2010): 46-53. Print.

Pana-Oltean, Roxana. "'The Extravagant Curve of the Globe': Refractions of Europe in Henry James's 'An International Episode' and *The Ambassadors*." *The Henry James Review* 22.2 (Spring 2001): 180-99. Print.

Parrington, Vernon Louis. *Main Currents in American Thought 1620-1920.* New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1930. Print.

Peiffer, Siobhan. "Commerce and Freedom in *The Ambassadors*." *The Henry James Review* 23.2 (Spring 2002): 95-104. Print.

Perosa, Sergio. "Manners and Morals: Henry James and Others." *Civilizing America: Manners and Civility in American Literature and Culture*. Ed. Dietmar Schloss. Heidelberg: Winter, 2009. 229-42. Print.

Pippin, Robert B. *Henry James & Modern Moral Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2000. Print.

Plott, M. "The Rules of the Game: Respectability, Sexuality, and the *Femme Mondaine* in Late Nineteenth-Century Paris." *French Historical Studies* 25.3 (2002): 531-56. Print.

Pollak, Vivian R. Introduction. *New Essays on* Daisy Miller *and* The Turn of the Screw. Ed. Vivian R. Pollak. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993. 1-34. Print.

Porte, Joel. Ed. *New Essays on the Portrait of a Lady*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990. Print.

Porter, Carolyn. "'Gender and Value' in *The American.*" *Henry James: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Ruth Bernard Yeazell. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1994. 39-59. Print.

Putt, S. Gorley. *Henry James: A Reader's Guide*. New York: Cornell University, 1966. 112. Print.

Rahv, Philip. "From 'the Heiress of All the Ages.'" *Perspectives on James's The Portrait of a Lady: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. William T. Stafford. New York: New York UP, 1967. 139-47. Print.

Raleigh, John Henry. *Matthew Arnold and American Culture*. Berkeley: U California P, 1957. Print.

Rose, Kenneth D. Introduction. *Unspeakable Awfulness: America through the Eyes of European Travelers, 1865-1900*. New York: Routledge, 2014. 1-37. Print.

Rourke, Constance. *The Roots of American Culture and Other Essays*. Ed. Van Wyck Brooks. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942. Print.

Rowe, John Carlos. "Henry James and Globalization." *The Henry James Review* 24.3 (Fall 2003): 205-14. Print.

---. "Henry James and the United States." *Tracing Henry James*. Ed. Melanie H. Ross and Greg W. Zacharias. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008. 14-30. Print.

Sabiston, Elizabeth. "Isabel Archer: The Architecture of Consciousness and the International Theme." *The Henry James Review* 7.2-3 (Winter-Spring 1986): 29-47. Print.

Saum, Lewis O. "Henry James's Christopher Newman: 'The American' as Westerner." *The Henry James Review* 15.1 (Winter 1994): 1-9. Print.

Schloss, Dietmar. *Culture and Criticism in Henry James*. Tübingen: Narr, 1992. Print.

Sherman, Stuart P. "The Aesthetic Idealism of Henry James." *The Questions of Henry James*. Ed. F. W. Dupee. New York: Octagon, 1973. 70-91. Print.

Sicker, Philip. *Love and the Quest for Identity in the Fiction of Henry James*. Princeton:

Princeton UP, 1980. Print.

Smith, Virginia Llwellyn. *Henry James and the Real Thing: A Modern Reading's Guide*. London: MacMillan, 1994. Print.

Stafford, William T., ed. *Perspectives on James's* The Portrait of a Lady*: A Collection of Critical Essays*. New York: New York UP, 1967. Print.

Sterner, Douglas W. *Priests of Culture: A Study of Matthew Arnold & Henry James*. New York: Peter Lang, 1999. Print.

Stocking, George W., Jr. "Matthew Arnold, E. B. Tylor, and the Uses of Invention." *American Anthropologist* 65.4 (Aug, 1963): 783-99. Print.

Storey, John. *Culture Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. 7th Edition. New York: Routledge, 2015. Print.

Stowe, William W. *Going Abroad: European Travel in Nineteenth-Century American Culture*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994. Print.

Tanner, Tony. *Henry James: The Writer and His Work*. Amherst: The U of Massachusetts P, 1989. Print.

Taylor, Andrew. "Nineteenth-Century America (1843-1870)." *Henry James in Context.* Ed. David Mcwhirter. London: Cambridge UP, 2010. 3-13. Print.

Tintner, Adeline R. "Daisy Miller and Chaucer's 'Daisy' Poem: The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women." *The Henry James Review* 15.1 (Winter 1994): 10-23. Print.

---. *The Museum World of Henry James.* Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986. Print.

Tocqueville, Alexis de. *Democracy in America*. 2 vols. Ed. Phillips Bradley. New York: Knopf, 1953, Print.

---. "Some Reflections on American Manners." *Democracy in America*. Champaign: Project Gutenberg. 177-79. 1999. Print.

Tosney, Cheryl B. "Translation and Transubstantiation in *The American.*" *The Henry James Review* 17.1 (Winter 1996): 40-51. Print.

Trilling, Lionel. *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society*. New York: Viking Press, 1950. Print.

---. *Matthew Arnold*. New York: Columbia UP, 1949. Print.

Trollope, Anthony. *An Autobiography*. London: The Trollope Society, 1999. Print.

Tuttleton, James W. *The Novel of Manners in America*. Charlotte: U of North Carolina P, 1972. Print.

---. "Rereading *The American*: A Century Since." *The Henry James Review* 1.2 (Winter 1980): 139-53. Print.

---. "The Early Years." *A Companion to Henry James Studies*. Ed. Daniel Mark Fogel. Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1993. 106-10. Print.

Twain, Mark. *The Complete Humorous Sketches and Tales of Mark Twain*. Ed. Charles Neider. New York: Da Capo Press, 1996. Print.

Tylor, E. B. *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom*. 2 vols. London: John Murray, 1871. Print.

Van Ghent, Dorothy. *The English Novel: Form and Function*. New York: Harper and Row, 1953. Print.

Wadsworth, Sarah. "Innocence Abroad: Henry James and the Re-Invention of the American." *The Henry James Review* 22.2 (Spring 2001): 107-27. Print.

---. "What Daisy Knew: Reading against Type in *Daisy Miller: A Study*." *A Companion to Henry James*. Ed. Greg W. Zacharias. Malden: Willey-Blackwell, 2007. 32-50. Print.

Walder, Dennis. *The Nineteenth-Century Novel: Identities*. New York: Routledge, 2001.

Walker, Pierre A. "Henry James, Cultural Critic." *A Companion to Henry James*. Ed. Greg W. Zacharias. Malden: Willey-Blackwell, 2007. 249-60. Print.

---, ed. *Henry James on Culture: Collected Essays on Politics and the American Social Science.* Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2003. Print.

Wayland-Smith, Ellen. "'Conductors and Revealers': Henry James's Electric Messengers in *The Ambassadors*." *The Henry James Review* 32.2 (Summer 2011): 118-39. Print.

Wegelin, Christof. *The Image of Europe in Henry James*. Dallas: Southern Methodist UP, 1958. Print.

Weinstein, Philip M. *Henry James and the Requirements of the Imagination*. Cambridge:

Harvard UP, 1971. Print.

Weisbuch, Robert. “Henry James and the Idea of Evil.” *The Cambridge Companion to Henry James*. Ed. Jonathan Freedman. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998. 102-19. Print.

---. “James and the American Sacred.” *The Henry James Review*22.3 (Fall 2001): 217-28. Print.

---. “Winterbourne and the Doom of Manhood in *Daisy Miller*.” *New Essays on* Daisy Miller *and* The Turn of the Screw. Ed. Vivian R. Pollak. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993. 65-90. Print.

Williams, Merle A. *Henry James and the Philosophical Novel: Being and Seeing.* Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1993. Print.

Williams, Raymond. *Culture and Society*: 1780-1950. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1960. Print.

---. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. London: Fontana, 1981. Print.

---. “Metropolitan Perceptions and the Emergence of Modernism.” *The Politics of Modernism*. London: Verso, 1989. 37-48. Print.

---. *The Long Revolution*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1961. Print.

Winnett, Susan. “Henry James.” *Handbook of Transatlantic North American Studies*. Ed. Julia Straub. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016. 162-77. Print.

Yeazell, Ruth Bernard. *Fictions of Modesty: Women and Courtship in the English Novel*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991. Print.

Young, Robert J. C. *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, London: Routledge, 1990. 133. Print.

Zabel, Morton D., ed. *The Portable Henry James*. New York: Viking, 1951. Print.

Zorzi, Rosella Mamoli. “Henry James and Italy.” *A Companion to Henry James*. Ed. Greg W. Zacharias. Malden: Willey-Blackwell, 2007. 434-55. Print.