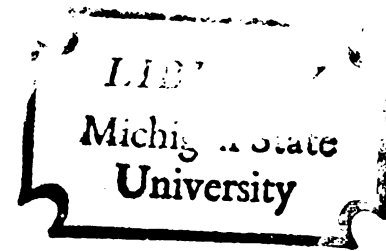


EXPERIENCE DISENGAGED :
HENRY JAMES'S USE
OF THE ROMANCE

Thesis for the Degree of Ph.D.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
DENNIS S. GARN
1970



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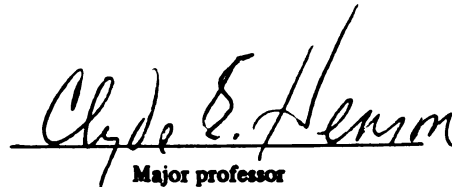
EXPERIENCE DISENGAGED:
HENRY JAMES'S USE OF THE ROMANCE

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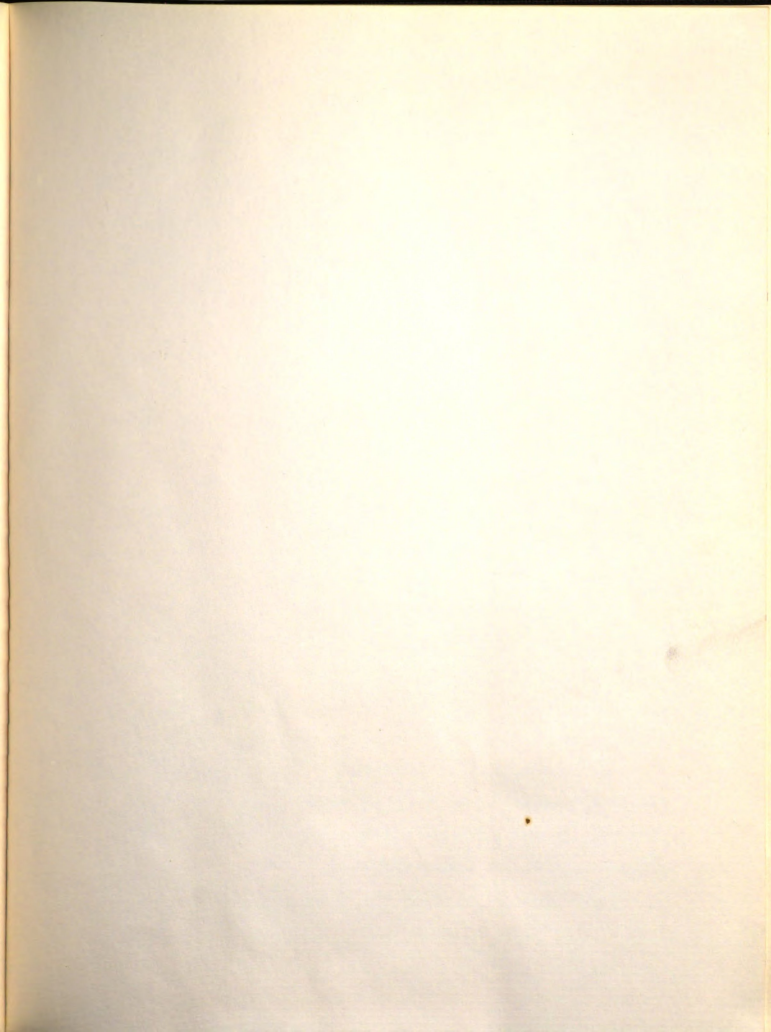
Ph.D. degree in English


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THE ROMANCE IN THE FICTION OF
HENRY JAMES

Dennis L. Mack

Henry James has long been regarded as an eminent writer of American literary realism. What few readers and critics have realized is that James makes no explicit use of the conventions of the romance. The focus of this study is on James's use of the romance particularly as it shapes his early fiction. The purpose of this paper is to illustrate: (1) that James uses elements of the romance in ways that are essential to his works; (2) that the romance in James's work is not limited to any specific period of his development--one can therefore find elements of the romance adding texture to the late or "vintage" James; (3) that James's realism is enhanced by his use of the romance because at no time does James regard the realistic novel and the romance as totally exclusive literary forms.

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ABSTRACT

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Henry James has long been regarded as an eminent writer of American literary realism. What few readers and critics have realized is that James makes quite explicit use of the conventions of the romance. The focus of this study is on James's use of the romance particularly as it shapes his early fiction. The purpose of this paper is to illustrate: (1) that James uses elements of the romance in ways that are essential to his works; (2) that the romance in James's work is not limited to any specific period of his development--one can therefore find elements of the romance adding texture to the late or "vintage" James; (3) that James's realism is enhanced by his use of the romance because at no time does James regard the realistic novel and the romance as totally exclusive literary forms. reconcile the demands of the romantic and realistic modes.

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The basic method of analysis used in this study was to apply James's own definition of the romance as "experience disengaged" to his fiction. The first chapter of the study defines the problem of the artist having to reconcile the demands of the romantic and realistic modes. Each of the subsequent chapters is an attempt to show James working toward that reconciliation. In the chapters on Roderick Hudson, The American and The Europeans, the study shows James using the conventions of the romance essentially as structural devices with the emphasis upon incident and action. The chapter on The Portrait of a Lady reveals an important shift in James's art from an emphasis upon incident to an emphasis on character. Once the shift occurs the romance in James's art becomes less a part of structure or plot and much more a part of his development of character through the point of view of a center of consciousness. From this point on the conventions of the romance function to give texture to James's art, not primarily to shape the text.

The last chapter focuses on The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl as representatives of James's late style. The purpose of looking at James's late novels is to support the thesis that James uses the elements of the romance throughout his literary career. All his life James worked at presenting a full picture of life. In his attempt to reconcile the demands of the romantic and realistic modes,

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James discovered that a full picture of life requires both the "air of romance" and the depiction of the "whole matter in the element of reality." Consequently the elements of the romance are present in the later novels and their function is primarily to give texture to James's picture of life.

HENRY JAMES'S USE
OF THE ROMANCE

BY DENNIS S. GARN

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English

1979

EXPERIENCE DISENGAGED:

HENRY JAMES'S USE

OF THE ROMANCE

By

Dennis S. Garn ^{Stewart}

A THESIS

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Michigan State University
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1971

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks

My deepest and sincerest thanks go to Professor Clyde Benson who has been more than a chairman of my committee; he has been a friend. It was largely his own interest in the broad patterning of the romance in fiction that precipitated my study of Davis's use of the romance. Certainly no one could have been better qualified to direct such a study specifically in relation to Davis's fiction.

Additional appreciation and thanks go to Professors Russell Nye and James Richardson for serving as my committee, for reading the thesis and for making helpful suggestions. To Professor Delvin Covey, once a colleague of mine, I give my warm regards for the innumerable ways in which he encouraged and aided me during my study. And finally, my special thanks to my wife, Beth Ann, for her patient endurance and for her typing of all but the final draft of the thesis.

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Chapter

I. THE ROMA

II. RODERICK
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III. THE AMER

IV. THE EURO

V. THE PORT
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VI. THE LATE
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CONCLUSIONS

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All of these definitions of the romance are of course essentially accurate. I do not intend to discount them and dogmatically repeat James's view of the romance. I do intend, however, to call to those considerations James's own definition and the personal experience and definition suggests. In the Preface to *The American* James defines the romance:

CHAPTER I

THE ROMANCE DEFINED

The only general attribute of a projected romance that Critics of Henry James generally discuss him as a writer of realistic fiction. Relatively few critics have written about the non-realistic element in his fiction--the romance. Those who have written concerning the presence of the romance generally fall into one of the following categories: (1) Those who merely acknowledge the romance as if it were a superficial part either of the work itself or of the James canon in total; (2) those who regard the romance in James as simply his use of traditions and conventions directly or indirectly associated with the romance--for example, the Gothic tradition, pastoral imagery, and conventional character types. These critics also tend to regard the romance in James as the offspring of the ghost story; (3) those who discuss the romance in a particular tale or novel--for example The American--as exceptions in the canon to the Jamesian technique; (4) and those who loosely designate anything as romantic that is not part of the objective method of the realist.

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All of these definitions of the romance are of course essentially accurate. I do not intend to discount them and dogmatically redefine James's use of the romance. I do intend, however, to add to these considerations James's own definition and the patterns of experience his definition suggests. In the Preface to The American James defines the romance: *The first criterion of a hero who is disenchanted*

The only general attribute of projected romance that I can see, the only one that fits all its cases, is the fact of the kind of experience with which it deals--experience liberated, so to speak; experience disengaged, disembroiled, disencumbered, exempt from the conditions that we usually know to attach to it and, if we wish so to put the matter, drag upon it, and operating in a medium which relieves it, in a particular interest, of the inconvenience of a related, a measurable state, a state subject to all our vulgar communities.¹

The pattern of the romance that is most consistent with James's definition is a pattern that is both common to man and symbolic of the experiences of mankind. In the terms of Scholes and Kellog, James wants to "illustrate" reality and, at the same time, "represent" reality.² The connection between the fictional world and the real world, as Scholes and Kellog suggest, can be either representational or illustrative:

The images in a narrative may strike us at once as an attempt to create a replica of actuality just as the images in certain paintings or works of sculpture may, or they may strike us as an attempt merely to remind us of an aspect of reality rather than convey a total and convincing impression of the real world to us, as certain kinds of visual art also do. That kind of art, literary or plastic, which seeks to duplicate reality we will designate by the word 'represent' in its various forms. For that kind of art which seeks only to suggest an aspect of reality we will use the word 'illustrate.'³

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Because James wants to give a full picture of life he uses techniques that are representational and illustrative, or, in other words, the techniques of the romance within his realistic fiction.

The characteristics of the romance can be generally defined in a way that is consistent with James's use of the romance. The first criteria is a hero who is disenchanted with his home or homeland. James typically describes the hero briefly in his setting in order to provide a basis for a later contrast with the lands the hero visits. Secondly, when the hero leaves home he undertakes a trip during which he inevitably encounters a strange environment. It is in the new culture that the hero finds his strengths tested. Without the familiar ties of his homeland, the hero is left completely upon his own resources. In one sense, the romance is a study of the experiences of a person who has disengaged himself from his familiar environment in order to pursue his education elsewhere. In another sense, the romance is a journey through life during which the hero travels from youth to manhood, from innocence to experience. Thirdly, the tests which the hero encounters (often three in number) help him to discover himself and the nature of experience. In more primitive forms of the romance such as the fairy-tale the tests require the discovery of some magical "key" before the hero is successful. In the romance the technique of the discovery still prevails. However, the discovery is less magical and more within the

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normal course of human capabilities. At any rate, the discovery technique enables the hero to overcome the last obstacle, at which point the plot of the story is soon resolved. Another essential part of the series of tests is a retreat to nature during which the hero prepares for the next encounter. The counterpart in James's work of the retreat to nature is the meditation scene--a scene very much in keeping with the type of test James's heroes confront. Finally, in the romance the hero tends to resolve his series of tests in a successful, triumphant manner. Like the comedy, the romance moves toward the integration of the hero into a new society. Characteristically, the marriage is the appropriate symbol of the resolution of the romance. Because James's hero does not encounter the conventional physical foe, and encounters instead types of experiences which test his moral and intellectual capacities, his triumph may best be understood as a moral one.

The purpose of this paper is to illustrate (1) that James uses elements of the romance in ways that are essential to his work; (2) that the romance in James's work is not limited to any specific work or period of his development. Therefore one can find elements of the romance in the late or "vintage" James; (3) that James's realism is enhanced by his use of the romance because at no time does James regard the realistic novel and the romance as totally exclusive literary forms. In his Preface to The American any technique that suggests an authorial intrusion.

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James says that "it is as difficult . . . to trace the dividing-line between the real and the romantic as to plant a milestone between north and south."⁴

At no time in this paper do I intend to make James out to be only a writer of the romance. I intend to discuss James's use of the romance always as it complements and relates to his realistic techniques. Never in his literary career does James allow the romantic genre to dictate the form his fiction was to take. He uses the romance, as any superb craftsman should, as a means to imaginative ends.

The greatest problem in discussing James's use of the romance in its relation to the realism of the novel is that of reconciling the subjectivity of the romance to the objectivity of the realistic novel, and, at the same time, illustrating how these two approaches to fiction writing can serve to complement each other. The most difficult technical problem for the writer of realistic fiction is to find the way to objectify his material so that the reader has a direct confrontation with the experience of the literature. He must, in Joyce's terms, find a way of "refining himself out of existence," of staying out of the world he is creating. It is a difficult problem because, in a sense, all literature ultimately assumes an omniscient author. If the realistic writer is going to objectify at all his role in the presentation of a fictional world, he should therefore avoid any technique that suggests an authorial intrusion.

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Specifically, How can James possibly use the subjectivity of the romance and meet the demands of realistic fiction at the same time? All his life James sought to give a full picture of reality. To do so, he discovered that one needed to use more than just the empirical approach of realistic fiction. In order to convey a sense of "felt" experience, James employs the subjectivity of the romance. In another sense, the answer to the question is found in James's masterful technique of allowing the romance and its conventions to serve as an on-the-scene guide for the reader. Because James adapts the romance and its conventions so appropriately to the modern world and because the reader recognizes these familiar patterns of human experience, the reader is led somewhat unsuspectingly through a strangely familiar world. Even in The American, a novel in which the point of view is often omniscient, James's use of the romance and his certainty that the reader recognizes the pattern of the romance allows him to fade into the background of the novel. In other words, James's employment of literary conventions heightens his objectivity and enhances his picture of life.

Most of this paper is an analysis of the early novels of James in which I attempt to show that James relies quite heavily upon the romance and its conventions for the structure of his novels. In Chapter II the emphasis is largely on Roderick Hudson as a kunstlerroman and

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specifically as an enlargement of the type of dilemma faced by the artist-hero Benvolio. Roderick has to choose between two demands of art--the romantic and the realistic. To complicate his dilemma he is part of a conventional love triangle. The structure of the novel is built around the relations of the persons of the triangle. At the point in the novel where the triangle changes to include Christina Light instead of Mary Garland, there is a significant change in Roderick's conception of his role as artist and his creation of art. In effect, James uses a structural change in the novel as an important device for characterization of Roderick. When Roderick shifts his affections from Mary Garland, the picture of Puritan simplicity and frugality, to the adventuress Christina Light, he suddenly loses his innocence of character and the integrity of his art. The pursuit of the beautiful Christina leads to his spiritual and physical disintegration. Christina turns out to be one of James's American expatriates who has lost her native American innocence; she has acquired the air of European sophistication without its substance. Mary Garland, on the other hand, whose "earthiness" makes her a rather uninteresting character, remains dutiful to the end and represents the potential in James's fiction of the best possible love relation--one which is based on freedom, not on demands and restrictions. When Mary agrees to let Rowland Mallet take Roderick to Europe with him, she admonishes him only with the statement,

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"make him do his best." This statement is best understood when one sees the selfish demands of Christina Light and recognizes her as one of the evil characters in James--one of those whose livelihood thrives upon the souls of others.

Chapter III on The American is the longest chapter in this paper because in this novel James comes the closest to writing pure romance. In the Preface to The American James discusses the definition of the romance, the role of the romancer, and the relation between the romance and the novel.

When the germ of The American came to him, James was not aware, as he was to say later, that he had been plotting "arch-romance."⁵ The germ came to him as that of "an aristocratic society, of some robust but insidiously beguiled and betrayed, some cruelly wronged compatriot, the point being that he should suffer at the hands of persons pretending to represent the highest possible civilisation and to be of an order in every way superior to his own."⁶ The structure of The American is built on a conventional romantic situation--the affront done Christopher Newman as a lover. Yet, James says, "not that done by his mistress herself, since injuries of this order are the stalest stuff of romance."⁷ Interestingly enough, James compares the fate of Newman and Madame de Cintr  to that of Romeo and Juliet.

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James's definition of the romance in the Preface to The American illustrates his approach to the romance as a genre that allows him a great deal of freedom. This freedom in the romance becomes apparent in James's emphasis upon the archetypal nature of the experience with which the romance deals. Hence, the romance contains a truth that is both common and real to the experiences of all mankind. When James analyzes his role in The American as that of the romancer, he implicitly suggests the need for both the romantic and the realistic in his work:

The art of the romance is, 'for the fun of it,' insidiously to cut the cable [of realistic experience], to cut it without our detecting him. What I have recognized then in The American, much to my surprise and after long years, is that the experience here represented is the disconnected and uncontrolled experience--uncontrolled by our general sense of 'the way things happen'--which romance alone more or less successfully palms off on us.⁸

The rest of Chapter III deals with Christopher Newman as a conventional romantic hero in typical romantic trials, whose triumph over the Bellegardes is romantic in spite of the realistic resolution of the plot. Newman's triumph is romantic because his superior moral nature asserts itself in the end. The resolution is realistic because the novel does not end, as a romance should, with the marriage of Newman and Madame de Cintré--much to the dismay of the sentimental reader. It is realistic because it does not have the conventional happy-ever-after ending.

The fourth chapter is an analysis of The Europeans showing the unifying thesis to be that of the romance as

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social comedy. The structure of this novel is also essentially romantic. It moves toward the integration of a new society made up by a number of marriages which take place only after the younger generation and the older generation can reconcile their differences. Most of the characters are conventional types. The setting is largely pastoral. The major theme is a reversal of James's usual treatment of the international situation. It is a variation of the basic fairy tale of the country mouse going to visit the city mouse, only the city mouse in this case happens to be the sophisticated Europeans going to visit their country cousins. Within this framework James analyzes the nature of experience when a traditional, sophisticated culture meets an innocent, rustic culture.

Because the balance between the romantic and the real in The Portrait of a Lady is most delicate, Chapter V is an important chapter. The controlling idea of this chapter is James's art in transition. In some respects the structure of The Portrait is like that of the conventional romance. Isabel is the youngest of three sisters brought up by their widowed father, who gives them a haphazard education including three trips to Europe. Very much like the fairy godmother that she is, both in terms of authorial manipulation and her magic power, Mrs. Touchett, Isabel's aunt, enters dramatically into Isabel's life. This event, contrived as it may be, shapes Isabel's destiny.

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The number three has always been a significant number in the romance and it is a significant part of the structure of The Portrait. Not only is Isabel one of three sisters who take three trips to Europe, but her progress is associated with three different houses and three different suitors both of which function symbolically to characterize different points in Isabel's growth. However at some point in the novel Isabel breaks out of the mold of conventional "princess" and becomes one of the best portraits of the woman in fiction. This breaking out is largely due to James's handling of the delicate balance between the two forms--the romantic and the realistic. Because of the subtle balance between the romantic and the realistic in The Portrait there is a tension created which the other novels lack in such intensity. From another perspective the tension is seen as arising from a situation with its overtones of the romance simplified to the extent that Isabel is free--disengaged from debilitating conditions--to pursue her liberty. "The conception of a certain young woman affronting her destiny" was the germ or general idea from which James's story of Isabel Archer grew. The simplified plot structure of the romance which the reader readily recognizes frees him in turn so that his greatest attention can be devoted to the reaction of Isabel to the different "types" of experience she encounters.

In the final chapter, the major theme is "the romance: from text to texture." In the analysis of the early

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novels the emphasis is, as I have said, upon James's use of the romance in structuring and forming the text of his story. In the later novels--for example, The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl--when James uses the romance it is not primarily to structure the novel. The elements of the romance are there to add a romantic texture to the work. One sees the romance in aspects of the novel other than the plot. Its presence is there essentially in themes, figures and images. In the Preface to The American James asks a question concerning the different techniques involved in romantic fiction and realistic fiction: "By what art or mystery, what craft of selection, omission or commission, does a given picture of life appear to us to surround its theme, its figures and images, with the air of romance while another picture close beside it may affect us as steeping the whole matter in the element of reality?"⁹ It is the purpose of this paper to help define the "air of romance" in James's novels. In the later novels, James manages to retain the "air of romance" and at the same time to create a desirable tension in the work by "steeping the whole matter in the element of reality."

Perhaps the best place to begin the analysis of James's use of the romance is not with the novels but with an early tale. Written in 1875, "Benvolio" is James's only deliberate allegory of his long career. Because it was excluded from the New York Standard Edition and because of the

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somewhat playful tone and fairy-tale structure of the tale, critics have tended to ignore "Benvolio." In doing so they have overlooked its biographical and thematic significance.

James wrote "Benvolio" during the months of 1875 that he spent in New York City. It was the only tale he wrote during that time, although he published a number of reviews in his attempt to live off the American literary marketplace. The experience was unsatisfactory, and it was immediately after this period that James decided to settle in Europe. Like Benvolio of his tale, James's artistic temperament demanded the balance of contrasting cultures. For James the balance was found in the cultures of Europe and America; for Benvolio the contrast was found in the Countess and Scholastica or, in a broader framework, in the contrast between the romantic and realistic demands upon art.

It is the thematic significance of this tale, however, that interests us most, for it illustrates that as early as 1875 James uses both romantic and realistic elements in his work. It is the allegorical quality of the tale which suggests that, while Benvolio needs the balance of contrasts to make his life worthwhile, James needs the techniques of both the romantic and the realistic in order to give his picture of life fullness.

The first striking feature of "Benvolio" is its fairy-tale quality, indicated in a rather amusing way by

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an omniscient author-narrator in the opening paragraph:

"Once upon a time (as if he had lived in a fairy-tale) there was a very interesting young man. This is not a fairy tale, and yet our young man was in some respects as pretty a fellow as any fairy prince."¹⁰ It is, moreover, this fairy-tale quality of "Benvolio" that has led some critics to ignore its basic seriousness. Like its related literary form, the romance, the fairy-tale is a serious art form. The rest of "Benvolio" conforms to the essential pattern of the fairy-tale. The names of the characters--Benvolio, Scholastica and Countess--are suggestively allegorical. Benvolio's resemblance to the fairy prince is underlined by his physical appearance: "Benvolio was slim and fair, with clustering locks, remarkably fine eyes, and such a frank, expressive smile that on the journey through life it was almost as serviceable to its owner as the magic key, or the enchanted ring, or the wishing-cap, or any other bauble of necromantic properties."¹¹ The Countess is presented to us in the conventional rhetoric and imagery of the fairy princess:

She was rich, extremely pretty, and free to do as she listed. She was passionately fond of pleasure and admiration, and they gushed forth at her feet in unceasing streams. Her beauty was not of the conventional type, but it was dazzlingly brilliant; few faces were more expressive, more fascinating. Hers was never the same for two days together; it reflected her momentary circumstances with extraordinary vividness. . . .¹²

James adds that "if a man could have half a dozen wives . . . the Countess would do very well for one of them . . . but

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she would not serve for all seasons and all moods; she needed a complement."¹³ Benvolio finds that complement in Scholastica. As her name suggests, Scholastica is a studious, "quiet garden-nymph," who lives with her blind professor-father in a house which looks like a convent or a prison.

Benvolio, a young poet of immense talent, divides his life between the elegant social world of the Countess and the quiet secluded garden of Scholastica. Division is what characterizes Benvolio's life. As long as he has the advantages that divided interests offer him, he is able to create significant art. The division in Benvolio is characterized in a number of ways. First, of course, is his divided interest in the Countess and Scholastica, and the completely different worlds that they represent. The conflict in him is further symbolized by the two chambers in Benvolio's house:

One was an immense room, hung with pictures, lined with books, draped with rugs and tapestries, decorated with a multitude of ingenious devices (for of all these things he was very fond); the other, his sleeping-room, was almost as bare as a monastic cell. It had a meagre little strip of carpet on the floor, and a dozen well-thumbed volumes of classic poets and sages on the mantelshelf. On the wall hung three or four coarsely-engraved portraits of the most exemplary of these worthies. These were the only ornaments.¹⁴

In the sumptuously decorated room, Benvolio receives and entertains guests, but he does his poetic composition in the monastic cell.

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Contrasts and division are necessities for Benvolio. He needs the contrasts of life with some degree of balance in order to create art. Krishna Vaid says of Benvolio that "a poet, in order to do full justice to his poetic genius and temperament, must achieve a balance between the world [Countess--romance] and the closet [Scholastica--realism] for both are indispensable to the proper fruition of his genius."¹⁵ The author-narrator describes Benvolio explicitly as a "young man . . . [who] was a mixture of inconsistencies. I may say more exactly that he was a tissue of contradictions."¹⁶ The sole source of these contradictions lies in Benvolio's poetic imagination.¹⁷ "Everything that fancy could do for him was done in perfection. It gave him immense satisfactions: it transfigured the world; it made very common objects radiantly beautiful, and it converted beautiful ones into infinite sources of intoxication."¹⁸ Contradictions permeate Benvolio's whole nature. "It was as if the souls of two very different men had been placed together to make the voyage of life in the same boat, and had agreed for convenience sake to take the helm in alternation. The helm, with Benvolio, was always the imagination, but in his different moods it worked very differently."¹⁹ His behavior was "all a matter of fancy; but his fancy was a weather-cock, and faced east or west as the wind blew."²⁰ Ironically it is precisely this vacillation in life that gave Benvolio his creative powers. In James's

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Krishna Vaid regards the moral of Benvolio's "vacillation between the Countess and Scholastica as his failure to achieve a workable harmony . . . between the rival claims of the world and the muse."²¹ Cornelia Kelley comes closer to the point when she says of Benvolio that "it is not difficult to see that Benvolio represents Henry James, not a poet, but a story teller who dallied between Romance and Realism, who courted sometimes one, sometimes the other, but was most happy when he was by himself, dreaming of the charms of each and effecting a reconciliation of them."²² This statement on the problem of reconciling the romance and realism is the most concise expression of the growth and direction of Henry James's art.

Not only does "Benvolio" illustrate James's use of the romance and realism, but it also contains a number of devices which James was to develop more fully in his novels. The recurring suggestion that Benvolio is on a journey through life is a pattern which James often uses as part of the romantic structure of his works. The symbolic journey through life is most explicitly seen in the water imagery associated with Roderick Hudson; but, in a wider usage, it is a pattern which is the basis of James's use

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of the international theme. Consequently, even in a work as realistically depicted as The Ambassadors, the journey motif helps to explain the nature of Strether's experience. In a general sense, Strether travels, like Roderick Hudson, from innocence to experience. Another important device in "Benvolio" is the way in which James uses objects to symbolize aspects of his characters. By noting how James characterizes the persons of his fiction, we have an excellent insight into the nature of his art. Benvolio is characterized by the rooms he lives in. James uses this same device in The American where the rooms of Newman and Valentin Bellegarde clearly characterize the two men and the larger types of experience they represent. In The Portrait of a Lady, Madame Merle says that "one's house, one's furniture, one's garments, the books one reads, the company one keeps,"²³ are expressive of character. At the end of his career when James writes The Golden Bowl, he still relies upon symbolic objects for full characterization. Even though the Prince and the Princess are presented to us as centers of consciousness, it is entirely impossible to understand the nature of their relationship without understanding the function of the golden bowl.

Another means of characterization that James uses in "Benvolio" is a pattern that persists throughout his art. It is a pattern that helps to clarify his use of the romance within the realistic novel. James characterizes

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the Countess in a style that is part of the conventional romance. He tells us what she is. She is "rich, extremely pretty," her beauty is not of the "conventional type." In short, she is the conventional princess of the romance. Scholastica, however, is characterized primarily in the thoughts of Benvolio. She is a more realistically rendered character because we are shown how her relationship with Benvolio grows and changes. These different ways of characterizing explain a number of relationships in James's art. In The American, Newman's relationship with Claire de Cintré is presented in the conventional manner. Since the basic structure of the novel is romantic, we accept without question the way in which James tells us that Newman courts Claire and, at the end of six months, she accepts his proposal. We simply expect the hero of the romance to marry the princess. A much more realistically presented relationship is that of Newman and Valentin. This is a relationship that we watch develop. Isabel of The Portrait is actually presented to us in two ways. In the first half of the book she resembles, to a certain extent, the typical princess. James tells us that she is the youngest of three sisters who is courted by three suitors. After rejecting the first two suitors because they do not meet her ideal expectation, Isabel marries the third suitor. In the second half of the book Isabel is characterized almost exclusively as a fine central intelligence, whose consciousness, in effect, tells

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Finally, when we look at "Benvolio," we see that even though James makes it deliberately romantic, it contains the elements of both his romantic and realistic techniques--elements that were to persist throughout his art in a way that not only reconciles the romantic and the realistic, but, at the same time, provides James the means of giving a full picture of life.

¹ Melcher, Prelude to The American, p. 12.

² Ibid., p. 21.

³ Ibid., pp. 21-22.

⁴ Ibid., p. 24.

⁵ Ibid., p. 34.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Henry James, "Benvolio," in The Complete Tales of Henry James, ed. by Leon Edel, III (Philadelphia, 1962), p. 111. (Benworth referred to as "Benvolio.")

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 357-358.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 361.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 353-354.

¹² Krishna B. Vaid, Technique in the Tales of Henry James (Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 151.

¹³ "Benvolio," p. 352.

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³Ibid.

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⁵Ibid.

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FOOTNOTES

¹Henry James, "Preface to The American," in The Art of the Novel, ed. by R. P. Blackmur (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), p. 33. (Henceforth referred to as Blackmur, Preface to The American.)

²Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative (Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 84.

³Ibid.

⁴Blackmur, Preface to The American, p. 32.

⁵Ibid., p. 25.

⁶Ibid., pp. 21-22.

⁷Ibid., p. 24.

⁸Ibid., p. 34.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Henry James, "Benvolio," in The Complete Tales of Henry James, ed. by Leon Edel, III (Philadelphia, 1962), p. 351. (Henceforth referred to as "Benvolio.")

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., pp. 357-358.

¹³Ibid., p. 361.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 353-354.

¹⁵Krishna B. Vaid, Technique in the Tales of Henry James (Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 151.

¹⁶"Benvolio," p. 352.

¹⁷Unlike Coleridge, James uses the terms "fancy" and "imagination" interchangeably.

¹⁸"Benvolio," p. 352.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 353.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Vaid, p. 148.

²²Cornelia P. Kelley, The Early Development of Henry James (University of Illinois, 1930), p. 233.

²³Henry James, The Portrait of a Lady, ed. by Leon Edel ("Riverside Edition"; Houghton Mifflin Co., 1963), p. 173. (Henceforth referred to as The Portrait.)

Roderick Hudson was Henry James's second novel but, in later years, he always spoke of it as his first, comparatively distancing the earlier Watch and Ward. That James acknowledged Roderick Hudson as his first novel is significant. It is his attempt to clarify for himself in fiction his concept of art and the function of the artist. Roderick Hudson was, to borrow a phrase from Joyce, Henry James's "portrait of the artist as a young man"--as an American young man. As an American the Jamesian artist confronts new difficult problems. The conflict in the life of Roderick Hudson is a romantic one; it is essentially a conflict between the artistic life and the passionate life. Unfortunately for Roderick, the two are not compatible and the passionate life destroys his artistic ability.

In Roderick Hudson, as in "Benvolio," James reveals the progress of his inner debate; what kind of artist should

CHAPTER II

RODERICK HUDSON: THE ROMANCE AS

KUNSTLERROMAN--THE DILEMMA

OF THE ARTIST-HERO

Roderick Hudson was Henry James's second novel but, in later years, he always spoke of it as his first, completely disowning the earlier Watch and Ward. That James acknowledged Roderick Hudson as his first novel is significant. It is his attempt to clarify for himself in fiction his concept of art and the function of the artist. Roderick Hudson was, to borrow a phrase from Joyce, Henry James's "portrait of the artist as a young man"--as an American young man. As an American the Jamesian artist confronts some difficult problems. The conflict in the life of Roderick is a romantic one; it is essentially a conflict between the artistic life and the passionate life. Unfortunately for Roderick, the two are not compatible and the passionate life destroys his artistic ability.

In Roderick Hudson, as in "Benvolio," James reveals the dilemma of his inner debate; what kind of artist should

he (James) be? What kind of artist could a young romantic American like Roderick Hudson become? What was the relationship between Europe, with its culture, traditions and manners, and the United States where the culture, which the American artist sought, was yet to come? Roderick Hudson does not, of course, provide James with all the answers, nor does "Benvolio," the tale which immediately followed the writing of Roderick Hudson. What Roderick Hudson does show is that James is aware of the tension between the romantic traditions of art in Europe and the realistic demands on the individual in the United States. James was to work on the reconciliation of this dilemma in all of his fiction up to and through The Portrait of a Lady. In The Portrait the direction of his art suddenly seems to become clear to James and the romantic mode in his fiction becomes more and more subservient to his realistic demands. However, in Roderick Hudson the dilemma remains unsolved for James. He is not yet consciously aware that the two modes of fiction can so thoroughly enhance each other. Leon Edel says in his introduction to the Torchbook Edition of Roderick Hudson, concerning James's handling of the two modes, that "in the process of writing out the dialogue of the Self, he created an early--and significant--piece of American romantic realism."¹ Edel's description of James's work as "romantic realism" is significant and accurate. However, in reading the early novels

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of James, in which he makes great use of the romance, and the Prefaces to the same novels written between twenty and twenty-five years later, one has the distinct impression that while James was writing the novels he was not fully aware that he was making such thorough use of the romance. As an apprentice learning his craft, James relies upon the accepted, familiar conventions of the romance for shaping his early fiction.

At this point a synopsis should precede further analysis of Roderick Hudson because in many ways the plot outline reveals James's use of the romance as a structural device. Roderick Hudson, a young American living at Northampton, Massachusetts, feels that he has a gift for the artistic and idealistic representation of life, but does not know the significance of his talent. He receives the opportunity of developing his talent when a new-found friend and patron of the arts, Rowland Mallet, offers him the chance to go to Europe, the home of art and culture. Roderick happily goes, aware all the while that the journey may be either a peril or an opportunity.

Although the story is about Roderick Hudson, it is presented almost exclusively through the consciousness of Rowland Mallet. Many critics, in fact, regard Rowland as the real hero of Roderick Hudson. James himself said in his Preface to the New York Edition of Roderick Hudson that "the centre of interest throughout 'Roderick' is in

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Rowland Mallet's consciousness, and the drama is the very drama of that consciousness. . . . "2 Rowland is one of a number of Jamesian characters who has money enough to assume a "habit of ease" and travel widely. In many ways he is the counterpart to Roderick. He is a connoisseur of the arts, yet is not an artist himself. He characterizes himself as "a man of genius half-finished" in whom the "faculty of expression is wanting; but the need for expression remains."3

Rowland first meets Roderick when he goes to Northampton to visit his cousin Cecilia a widow whose plight he pities: "Her misfortunes were three in number: first she had lost her husband; second, she had lost her money, or the greater part of it; and third, she lived at Northampton, Massachusetts."4 In the midst of what the author describes as typical Puritan provincialism, Cecilia finds a diversion from the drab life in her bright, young friend Roderick of Hudson. When Rowland meets Roderick he is immediately struck by how out of place Roderick seems in the quaint Puritan and utilitarian surroundings. Roderick completely neglects his legal studies because, he says "there's something inside of me that drives me. A demon of unrest."5 It is this demon of unrest which distracts Roderick from his legal studies to the art of sculpture. Rowland is astounded at the proof of Roderick's genius in one of Roderick's works--a statuette called "Thirst," representing a demon that Roderick has both the strength of character

youth drinking from the cup of experience. Rowland is convinced that Roderick ought to pursue his studies in Rome and he offers to subsidize his study abroad. It is not, however, simply a matter of Roderick's accepting Rowland's offer. Roderick's family and friends feel that Rowland is meddling in their affairs. Before they consent to let Roderick go to Rome, they ask that Rowland guarantee them not only the development of the artist but the security of the man as well. Mallet is aware of the risk but he thinks the risk must be taken or the talent will not develop. Rowland describes the risk in one of James's favorite metaphors: "Of course if a silk balloon is inflated very suddenly and very fast there is always danger of its bursting."⁶

The person least opposed to Roderick's departure for Rome is Mary Garland, the person who has the most to gain by his staying home. She is the picture of Puritan simplicity, virtue and innocence. Her self-sacrifice and magnanimity induce her to agree to Mallet's proposal. She asks only for Rowland to "make him do his best." On their passage to Rome Roderick announces to Rowland as an additional pledge of his purpose that he is engaged to Mary Garland: "I'm sure" he says, "that I shall run a smoother and swifter course for knowing that there's a person so good and clever and charming, to whom my success will make the grand difference. . . ."⁷

For some time after their arrival in Rome, it appears that Roderick has both the strength of character

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and the command of genius that leads to great accomplishments. No one ever "made a fairer beginning than Roderick." All the great art in Italy excites his genius and he sculpts a life-sized figure which he calls "Adam." It is a work which astonishes everyone for its idealism and strength, but it is a work which Roderick was "never afterwards to surpass."⁸ After his creation of "Adam" Roderick is a well-known fellow. As a result of his popularity, Roderick is introduced to a view of Europe he had not seen before--a Europe of sensual and egotistical realities which immediately appeals to the passionate life lying for so long dormant in him. His character quickly shows its flaws--too quickly as James himself points out in the Preface--and with the loss of his innocence of character he loses the command of his genius and the integrity of his art.

Roderick's disintegration quickly follows its course during a summer of dissipation in Baden-Baden and completes itself in a passionate, infatuated pursuit of the beautiful, but dangerous, Christina Light. In many ways an antithesis to Mary Garland, Christina Light is not at all the virtuous woman her name suggests. However, she is sufficiently and subtly ambiguous enough that Roderick never perceives her as anything other than "ideal beauty." He does not realize that she symbolizes everything in Europe that causes his destruction.

Fearful that Roderick's "silk balloon" may burst from breathing too deeply of experience, Rowland has

Mrs. Hudson and Mary come to Europe in hope that their presence will recall in Roderick his sense of duty to his art and his obligation to Mary. The experiment fails, and Roderick breaks all ties with his past. Although by now Christina Light has been maneuvered by her mercenary mother into marriage with an Italian prince, Roderick persists upon his infatuated pursuit of her until his death, by accident or suicide, during a storm in the Swiss Alps.

For the most part the plot of Roderick Hudson follows the pattern of the conventional romance. Roderick is a young man who, for a number of reasons, becomes disenchanted with his homeland. His artistic temperament is thwarted by the social milieu in general. His upbringing with its Puritan emphasis on the work ethic, together with the American measure of success expressed in pragmatic, materialistic terms, completely alienate Roderick from the American way of life. The only inhabitant of Northampton, Massachusetts perceptive enough to understand Roderick is Rowland Mallet's cousin Cecelia. Her description of Roderick to Rowland precisely reveals the nature of Roderick's dilemma and his reaction to the American environment.

'He's hopelessly disenchanted, but he doesn't know where to look for help. Then his mother, as she one day confessed to me, has a holy horror of a profession which consists exclusively, as she supposes, in making figures of people divested of all clothing. Sculpture, to her mind, is an insidious form of immorality. . . .

The ideal of manhood which is held up before Roderick is Mr. Barnaby Striker, esq., a typical self-made American man

who has little use for artists. In talking to Rowland, Mr. Striker's rhetoric completely characterizes himself and all that appalls Roderick:

I'm a plain practical old boy, content to follow an honourable profession in a free country. I didn't go to any part of Europe to learn my business; no one took me by the hand; I had to grease my wheels myself, and such as I am, I'm a self-made man, every inch of me! Well, if our young friend's booked for fame and fortune I don't suppose his going to Rome will stop him. But, mind you, it won't help him such a long way neither. If you've undertaken to put him through there's a thing or two you had better remember. The crop we gather depends upon the seed we sow. He may be the biggest genius of the age: his potatoes won't come up without his hoeing them. If he takes things so almighty easy as--well, as one or two young fellows of genius I've had under my eye--his produce will never gain the prize. Take the word for it of a man who has made his way inch by inch and doesn't believe that we wake up to find our work done because we have lain all night a-dreaming of it: anything worth doing is plaguy hard to do!¹⁰

Throughout the novel Roderick is described as a romantic hero. In a style similar to that used by James to describe Benvolio, Rowland describes his first reaction to Roderick:

Hudson was a tall slim youth, with a singularly mobile and intelligent face. Rowland was struck at first only with its responsive vivacity, but it had presently affected him as full of a beauty of its own. The features were admirably chiselled and finished, and a frank smile played over them as gracefully as a breeze among flowers.¹¹

James apparently felt there was some of the fairy prince in Roderick, because like Benvolio, Roderick's magic key on his journey through life is his imagination. As a romantic hero Roderick occasionally seems to possess extraordinary traits. Rowland imagines that he is made up more of a

spiritual essence than of a physical essence. Like many romantic heroes, Roderick has no father. Cecilia tells Rowland that Roderick "grew up à la grâce de Dieu."¹² She seems to suggest that his father may be God, not the Christian God that his Puritan mother worships, but a god more like the ancient muse that inspired poets to write. The main reason Christina finds Roderick attractive is because she suspects that he possesses the "sacred fire."

At the beginning of his novel, James has presented a disenchanted character and the setting which is the source of the disenchantment. The description of the setting in particular will later prove significant in its contrast with another setting in which the real nature of Roderick's character is to be tested. What is always more important in the romance than a disenchanted here in his early surroundings is what happens to the hero after his departure from familiar terrain. In other words, the romance (in James particularly) is primarily concerned with the effect of different experiences upon the hero once he has disengaged himself from familiar ties. The hero characteristically travels from home and on his trip he encounters a series of tests or trials which he must overcome. Without recourse to external support--without family or homeland--the hero must rely entirely upon his inner strength. Roderick's trip, like those in many romances, is presented symbolically as a journey from adolescence to manhood. To

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become a man he must overcome the series of trials along the trip. Interestingly enough, James characterizes Roderick's maturation process as that of a journey by sea. ~~pre-~~ Roderick does literally journey by sea from the United States to Europe but the journey by sea is an image that recurs so frequently throughout the book that it not only contributes to the structural unity of Roderick Hudson but it also suggests quite explicitly that this is also a journey through life.

Rowland, in particular, conceives of their journey as a voyage with symbolic implications. Once Roderick has obtained permission to go to Europe Rowland discusses the matter with Roderick in this fashion: "I've launched you, as I may say . . . , and I feel as if I ought to see you into port. I'm older than you and know the world better and it seems well that we should voyage a while together."¹³ Later in Rome Rowland's reflections reinforce his earlier thoughts and image patterns. "Rowland's theory of his own duty was to let him run his course and play his cards, only holding himself ready to point out shoals and pitfalls and administer a friendly propulsion through tight places."¹⁴ Because of his innocence Roderick's adjustment to a new culture is not entirely smooth; here and there as he went, the author states, "he took on a reef in his sail."¹⁵ Once ~~that~~ Roderick has become infatuated with the beautiful Christina, he forgets about his need as an artist for some detachment ~~like she's living--she's a phantasm, a vapour, an~~

from life and "plunges" as Rowland says, into the "deep sea" of experience. Although he is accustomed to the intense life inspired by the sacred muse, Roderick is not prepared for the intense life of the real world. Participation in the real world threatens to engulf and destroy him. Rowland, as always, is more aware of the danger than is Roderick: "For forty-eight hours there swam before Rowland's eyes a vision of a wondrous youth, graceful and beautiful as he passed, plunging like a diver into a misty gulf. The gulf was destruction, annihilation, death."¹⁶ Roderick's desire for intense experience is likened to another, more famous, traveler. Rowland describes the situation as-- "another case of Ulysses and the Sirens; only Roderick refuses to be tied to the mast."¹⁷

Like the hero of the romance Roderick encounters a series of tests on his voyage. However unlike the hero of the romance, Roderick becomes increasingly less effective as he encounters each new test. The first test Roderick encounters is shortly after his arrival in Rome and he emerges, it seems, more or less successful. At a time when his enthusiasm and idealism are never higher, Roderick catches his first glimpse of Christina Light. Roderick's reactions fully reveal both his innate American innocence and his naiveté. "'Immortal powers,' cried Roderick, 'what a vision! In the name of transcendent perfection who is she?' She's beauty's self--she's a revelation. I don't believe she's living--she's a phantasm, a vapour, an

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another side of the artistic temperament. He is the disillusioned artist, hardened by the treatment the world gives an artist who starts with impossibly high ideals. It is Gloriani's view of art which helps to give fullness to the picture of the artist and his role. Gloriani offers some kind advice to Roderick:

'My dear fellow, passion burns out, inspiration runs to seed. Some fine day every artist finds himself sitting face to face with his lump of clay, with his empty canvas, with his sheet of blank paper, waiting in vain for the revelation to be made, for the Muse to descend. He must learn to do without the Muse! When the fickle jade forgets the way to your studio, don't waste any time tearing your hair and meditating on suicide. Come round and see me, and I'll show you how to console yourself.'²⁴

Roderick never does "come round" to Gloriani, nor does he accept the warnings of Madame Grandoni, a long time patron and critic of the arts. She offers Roderick an anecdote which proves altogether too accurate in its applicability. Roderick gets the point but fails to see that the anecdote is directed toward him personally. Upon looking at a photograph of Roderick's statuette called "Thirst" she remarks:

'It resembles . . . the things a young man used to do whom I knew years ago, when I first came to Rome . . . His name was Herr Schafgans. He never painted anything so profane as a man taking a drink, for none of his people had anything so vulgar as an appetite. They were all angles and edges--they looked like diagrams of human nature. They were figures if you please, but geometrical figures. He wouldn't have agreed with Gloriani any more than you. He used to come and see me very often, and in those days I thought his tunic and his long neck infallible symptoms of genius. His talk was all of gilded aureoles and beatific visions; he lived on weak wine and biscuits and wore a lock of Saint Somebody's hair in a little bag round his neck.

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If he was not a Beato Angelico it was not his own fault. I hope with all my heart that Mr. Hudson will do the fine things he talks about, but he must bear in mind the history of dear Mr. Schafgans as a warning against high-flown pretensions. One fine day this poor young man fell in love with a Roman model, though she had never sat to him, I believe, for she was a boxom, bold-faced, high coloured creature, and he painted none but pale and sickly women. He offered to marry her, and she looked at him from head to foot, gave a shrug and consented. But he was ashamed to set up his ménage in Rome. They went to Naples, and there, a couple of years afterwards, I saw him. The poor fellow was ruined. His wife used to beat him, and he had taken to drinking. He wore a ragged black coat and had a blotchy red face. Madame had turned washerwoman and used to make him go and fetch the dirty linen. There was nothing, unfortunately, to be done, in the 'doing-up' way, with his genius--that wouldn't 'wash,' and he was getting his living by painting views of Vesuvius in eruption on the little boxes they sell at Sorrento.²⁵

Roderick, of course, has no vision of his work as "high-flown pretensions." He has listened impatiently to Madame Grandoni and his reply shows his irritation: "Moral: don't fall in love with a buxom Roman model. . . . I'm obliged to you for your story, but I don't mean to fall in love with anyone."²⁶ Again James's use of irony reinforces Roderick's inability to cope with complexity of a different culture. Unlike the typical hero of the romance, Roderick does not openly combat a physical foe. James's heroes do not ever have to rely upon physical prowess for overcoming their series of tests. They must, however, be aware of the subtle types of evil that appear in forms other than the physical to test their strength. Roderick never does perceive Christina as a woman who can destroy him. It takes the more acute sensibility of Rowland Mallet to see that

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she is surface without substance. She incarnates the sophistication of Europe--its knowledge gained through experience--without the acquisition of the virtues of its culture and civilization. She represents one of the worst forms of evil in James's fiction: she is one of those Americans who has lost all native innocence in Europe and who uses the knowledge of evil that accompanies that loss to personal advantage.

Each encounter with Christina Light is another in a series of tests of Roderick's character; and each significant encounter is balanced in the novel by a counter-movement on the part of Roderick. The counter-movement in the novel is away from the confrontation with Christina. Each time James appears to be preparing Roderick for another test by having him retreat to nature for a regrouping of his forces. Another way of characterizing Roderick's retreat to nature is as a meditation scene. The meditation scene is characteristically a scene of little action and much introspection--the most suitable type of preparation in James for each new encounter. Immediately following each meditation scene is a highly dramatic scene whose intensity is heightened by its juxtaposition in the structure of the novel with a meditation scene. In Roderick Hudson and other early novels the meditation scene functions primarily as a contrast to the highly dramatic scenes which follow; and since James did conceive of many of his incidents as dramatic scene, one might also view these meditation

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scenes in the early novels as providing a bit of comic relief for more intense action to come. In later novels--for example, The Ambassador--the meditation scene, which is still very often set as a retreat to nature, functions in a significantly different manner. James's different handling of these scenes illustrate an altering in his conception of the function of his art. In the later works, the meditation scenes do not function primarily as a structural device. James does not use them in the later novels primarily to offset more dramatic scenes. The meditation scenes become, in fact, the dramatic scenes. This shift in focus shows a significant change in James's structure of his work. James becomes less and less concerned with the action involved in an incident and more concerned with the effect of incident upon character. It is in the meditation scenes that James is able to analyze very closely the nature of the effect of an incident on a character. When James becomes less concerned with action in the plot and more concerned with growth of character the balance of the romantic and realistic modes in his work tips more toward the realistic. While it appears that the meditation scenes in Roderick Hudson should prepare Roderick for another encounter in the series of tests, they, in fact, do not. Ironically Roderick is never prepared for another encounter with Christina. Each time she comes upon Roderick he is caught

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by surprise; and each encounter brings him closer to moral disintegration and total physical destruction. Nearly a year after Roderick has been in Rome he sees Christina for the second time. This time in his studio, "the door of the studio promptly flung open, and a lady advanced to the threshold. . . ." ²⁷ This incident begins Roderick's downfall. Christina has come to have a bust made of herself, and during the lengthy process, Roderick becomes hopelessly infatuated with her. A few months later the next significant encounter occurs in the wooded hills outside Rome where Roderick is dozing while Rowland sits by his side. Into this setting come, quite by chance, Christina and her consorts, Mrs. Light, the Cavaliere and Prince Casamassima. Christina's remark, made partly in jest, upon seeing Rowland sitting beside the sleeping Roderick ironically characterizes very accurately the nature of the incident and the relationship between Christina and Roderick: "Don't you know that Mr. Mallet's Mr. 'Hudson's sheep dog? He was mounting guard to keep away the wolves." ²⁸ Very shortly Roderick and Christina leave the rest for a stroll together in the wood, an action whose inpropriety shocks the rest of the party. Roderick, in fact, is the only one there who would not have recognized the inpropriety. Christina, of course, is fully aware of the effect of this stroll upon the others. When she and Roderick rejoin the party Christina says, "Bless my soul, how they're all looking at us! One would think we were prisoners of the Inquisition!"

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What is it, pray? Have I been very improper? Am I ruined for ever? Dear Prince you're looking at me as if I had committed the unpardonable sin!'²⁹

Not long after this Christina marries the Prince.

Roderick's balloon is burst, his good faith has been betrayed. No longer will he ever think of trying to sculpt. Rowland, however, wishes to restore the former enthusiasm to Roderick. He proposes that they, along with Mrs. Hudson and Mary, leave Rome for a sojourn in what he describes as the "fine tonic climate" of Switzerland. At first the idyllic retreat seems to work some magic even on Roderick.

It was impossible not to hang upon the perpetual rich picture of Apennine and Alp, and there was a tacit agreement among the travelers to sink every other consciousness. The effect of this discretion was of the best; it made them shipwrecked swimmers who had clambered upon a raft.³⁰

The idyllic retreat is the major one both in the structure of the novel and in the life of Roderick. Within the structure of the novel this last retreat to nature constitutes three chapters and more than forty pages. It is also Roderick's last opportunity to prove himself. In every test thus far he has failed. The length of the last retreat is significant. It is preparation for the most severe of Roderick's encounters with corrupt Europe, symbolized in Christina Light.

In every previous encounter Roderick has been unaware of the danger Christina represented. Ironically his innocence has thus far been the source of his strength. Once Christina marries, however, there is a drastic change in Roderick's

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perception of her. Always before he conceived of her as "Ideal Beauty," the "Muse in Flesh and Blood." He now realizes that she is a mortal woman after all and that his interests in her were not primarily artistic but passionate. With Christina's last, unexpected appearance in the Alps Roderick's moral disintegration is completed. When Roderick comes upon Christina talking with Rowland he is left speechless. "He stopped short, astonished; his face and figure were jaded, his garments dusty. He looked at Christina from head to foot, and then, slowly, his cheeks flushed and his eyes darkened."³¹ Once again Roderick is caught off guard by Christina's unexpected appearance--a favorite tactic in the triumph of a corrupt European over an innocent American.

The next morning Roderick asks to borrow a thousand francs from Rowland. His unabashed intentions are to follow Christina boldly across Europe. At this point Roderick's loss of innocence is complete because for the first time he knows the full implication of evil in his relation with Christina, yet he still chooses to pursue her. It is this knowledge of himself and of his relationship with Christina that leads to Roderick's downfall. Roderick's reaction to such knowledge of himself is strangely like another innocent young man when he is first confronted with the stark reality of evil. Like Billy Budd, Roderick is annoyed at the existence of evil in one who appears to be so well-meaning. Unlike Billy Budd, however, Roderick cannot strike

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out at anything other than himself. It is his own choice which makes him evil. Usually what happens in a romance when the hero faces his last and most difficult test is the "discovery" of some important knowledge or aid which helps him to overcome. James makes use of a discovery scene at the end of Roderick Hudson but it is not for the purpose of providing a somewhat artificial, external solution to Roderick's problems. In the discovery scene, Roderick learns, in a conversation with Rowland, the true estimate of his behavior. When Roderick first sees himself from the perspective of others he is both astonished and dismayed. During the course of their last conversation Rowland calls Roderick a "remorseless egotist." Such a charge surprises Roderick: "'I'm a remorseless egotist?' He repeated the words in a singular tone; a tone that denoted neither exactly indignation nor incredulity, but (strange as it might seem) a sudden violent curiosity for news about himself."³² Rowland goes for Roderick's "edification":

'You're selfish . . ., you think only of yourself and believe only in your own history. You regard other people only as they play into your own hands. You've always been very frank about it, and the thing seemed so mixed up with the nature of your genius and the very breath of your life that often one was willing to take the evil with the good and be thankful that, considering your great talent, you were no worse. But if one was to believe in you as I've done one was to pay a tax on one's faith.'³³

Never before this final encounter with Christina could Rowland speak in such a straight-forward manner to Roderick. Since, as James says, this novel is the drama of

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Rowland's consciousness, it is not surprising that Rowland also has discovered some things about Roderick, Christina and himself. In fact the discovery scene in which Roderick sees a new appraisal of himself by Rowland, grows directly out of a mediation scene in which Rowland comes to some significant conclusions. The scene is brief enough to speak for itself:

His interview with Christina had left him all vibrating, and he was haunted with the memory of her almost blameless bitterness and of something sinister in this fresh physiognomy she had chosen to present. These things were immensely appealing, and he thought with richly renewed impatience of Roderick's having again become acquainted with them. It required little ingenuity to make it probable that certain visible marks in him had also appealed to Christina. His consummate indifference, his supreme defiance, would make him a magnificent trophy, and she had announced with sufficient distinctness that she had said good-bye to scruples. It was her fancy at present to treat the world as a garden of pleasure, and if hitherto she had played with Roderick's passion on its stem there was little doubt that she would now pluck it with a more merciless hand and drain it of its acrid sweetness. And why in the name of common consistency--though indeed it was the only consistency to have looked for--need Roderick have gone marching back to destruction? Rowland's meditations, even when they began in rancour, often brought him comfort; but on this occasion they hurt him as if they had been sharp-cornered objects bumped against in darkness. He recognized a sudden collapse of his moral energy; a current that had been flowing for two years with a breadth of its own seemed at last to submit to shrinkage and thinness. He looked away at the sallow vapours on the mountains; their dreariness had an analogy with the stale residuum of his own generosity. At last he had arrived at the very limit of the deference a sane man might pay to other people's folly; nay, rather, he had transgressed it, he had been befooled on a gigantic scale.³⁴

The scene which follows this--what I've already designated as the discovery scene--in which Roderick learns

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the truth of himself is the emotional climax of the book. During the course of the conversation both men become quite angry. "Rowland suddenly felt the cup of his own ordeal full to overflowing, and his long-gathered bitterness surged into the simple clear passion of pain at wasted kindness."³⁵ "I'm not talking for your entertainment," Rowland declares. "Of course not, for my edification!" Roderick responds. "And as he spoke the air seemed colder for his breath."³⁶ Rowland and Roderick discuss many things in their relationship: Roderick's nonchalant treatment of Mary Garland, Rowland's long interest in Mary, and the future of Roderick. In effect, this scene also serves as a dénouement in which all the complications of the plot are pulled together and resolved to the extent that they are openly discussed for the only time by Roderick and Rowland.

At this point in his novel James can conclude his work in one of two ways, romantically or realistically. The discovery scene technically has presented him the means to a rapid solution of Roderick's adventure. It is precisely at this point in the structure of each of his novels that James chooses not to use the conventions of the romance for the resolution of the plot. In the romance the discovery scene characteristically leads to the successful resolution of the conflict by the hero and his subsequent integration into the culture which has been the source of his trials.

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The discovery scene in Roderick Hudson has had a different effect upon Roderick. The newly learned truth of himself has left him strangely passive and introspective. Like many tragic heroes, Roderick finds the truth too difficult to bear. He feels he must purge himself of the burden of guilt and in a manner that recalls the decision of Oedipus to inflict self-punishment, Roderick's action suggests that his death was suicide. James however does not explicitly state that Roderick's death was at his own hands. Rowland cannot justifiably see into the mind of Roderick to show us exactly what Roderick is thinking before his death. Their last moments together are notably handled for subtlety of meaning and ambiguity of intention:

They were both silent a while, and at last Roderick gave a long, subdued exhalation, the discharge of a consciousness too suddenly overloaded, and began to move off. 'Where are you going?' Rowland then demanded. 'Oh, I don't care! To walk, to look about, to "commune with nature." You've given me an idea, and I nowadays have so few that I'm taking this one with me. I don't quite know what I can do with it, but perhaps I shall find out. Leave me to try--though I've already been so stupid.' This seemed a salutary impulse, yet Rowland felt a nameless doubt. 'That, you know, damns me more than anything,' Roderick went on. 'Certainly I can shut up shop now.'³⁷

It is particularly in the handling of the ending of Roderick Hudson that James proves himself the master of the craft of fiction. Throughout the book he has used the convention of the romance. Yet the ending is not dictated by convention; it is sufficiently ambiguous enough to reflect the subtleties and complexities of reality. A reexamination

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of the novel, however, reveals that James has carefully prepared for a shift at the end from a conventional, romantic ending to a more open-ended realistic conclusion. The journey motif, presented in the images of a sea voyage, has had numerous references to shipwrecks. It is significant that Roderick's death occurs during a violent rain storm. The consequence of Roderick's journey through life has been symbolically presented in the three principal statues he sculpts. The symbolism of these three statues ironically suggest the direction and conclusion of the course of Roderick's life. The first work, done while Roderick is in Northampton, Massachusetts, and completed before he meets Rowland Mallet, is representative of Roderick's innocence and his naive faith in the goodness of life.

The statuette, done in bronze, something more than two feet high, represented a naked youth drinking from a gourd. The attitude was perfectly simple. The lad was squarely planted on his feet, with his legs a little apart; his back was slightly hollowed, his head thrown back; his hands were raised to support the rustic cup. There was a loosened fillet of wild flowers about his head, and his eyes, under their dropped lids, looked straight into the cup. On the base was scratched the Greek word . . . thirst.³⁸

Roderick's description of the statuette is an excellent self-portrait. "He's youth, . . . he's innocence, he's health, he's strength, he's curiosity, yes, he's a lot of grand things. . . . The cup is knowledge, pleasure, experience. Anything of that kind."³⁹ Rowland's remark, "then he's drinking very deep," is ironic because he is the one

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who, in a sense, fills the cup and provides Roderick with his chance to drink deeply from the cup of experience.

The second significant work is Roderick's "Adam"--a statue which Roderick does shortly after his arrival in Rome. It is during this period that his artistic powers are at their height. Roderick has not yet become infatuated with Christina, so his work reflects the innocence of prelapsarian Adam. Ironically, this statue also foreshadows the outcome of Roderick. Like Adam, the first man, whose course of life reflects a passage from innocence to experience--Roderick is also due to suffer from the consequences of a fall. And in both cases the fall involves a woman whose intentions are ambiguously misleading.

The last creative work that Roderick ever does is significantly different from all the rest of his work. It is a bust of his mother. To Roderick the task is "a discharge of his filial debt."⁴⁰ The bust strikes him as hopelessly mundane and uninspired. Ironically, the one most pleased by this work is Gloriani:

The bust of Mrs. Hudson touched Gloriani as he was seldom touched; the beauty of it bloomed like a flower that had grown in the night. The poor lady's small, neat, timorous face had certainly no great character, but Roderick had presented its sweetness, its mildness, its minuteness, its still maternal passion, with the most unerring art. The truth was all tenderness, the tenderness all truth.⁴¹

Unfortunately Roderick cannot see beauty in the mundane realm. He must deal with grand romantic things; he cannot create art from trivial, everyday items. Unlike Benvolio,

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Roderick cannot live with the contrast that the realistic and romantic modes of art offer. Roderick is incurably romantic to the point of his own destruction. Like Benvolio Roderick has two women completely antithetical to each other, but Roderick never realizes the necessity for a balance in what the two represent. His desire to pursue only Christina, his total idealization of her is a foreshadowing of the ultimate fulfillment of his latent death wish.

To simply state that James changes from the romantic mode to the realistic at the end of his novels is an oversimplification. The ironic manner in which Roderick's death is foreshadowed creates an ambiguous ending. James does not simply shift from the romantic to the realistic. What does take place in the ending of James's novels is an interesting mixture of the two modes. James never allowed the conventions of fiction writing to dictate to the extent that he was not free enough to represent life realistically. Each of James's novels ends with a mixture of triumph and defeat, although the sense of failure for his hero usually seems predominant. The triumph is characterized as an assertion of moral character which takes place after the discovery scene. In the case of Roderick, his triumph is apparent to us only after his death. Even then it is not entirely clear to us because we do not know what goes on in the mind of Roderick before he falls from the cliff to his

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death. As always in James's ending the only thing we are sure of is the irony and ambiguity of the situation. It is, as I've already said, significant that Roderick's death occurs in a violent rain storm. It is ironic that the same storm is the instrument and source of imagery which James uses to suggest a return to innocence in Roderick.

He had fallen from a great height, but he was singularly little disfigured. The rain had spent its torrents upon him, and his clothes and hair were wet as if the billow of the ocean had flung him upon the strand. An attempt to move him would attest some fatal fracture, some horrible physical dishonour, but what Rowland saw on first looking at him, was only a noble expression of life. The eyes were the eyes of death, but in a short time, when he had closed them, the whole face seemed to revive. The rain had washed away all blood; it was as if violence, having wrought her ravage, had stolen away in shame. Roderick's face might have shamed her; it was indescribably, and all so innocently, fair.⁴²

In one sense the journey of Roderick ends where it begins, with his innocence. Around this journey, James has structured his novel. Roderick has passed from innocence to experience and with the aid of the purging both in the discovery scene with Rowland and in the rains, Roderick returns to innocence. He is perhaps a better man now for having failed and, for realizing the nature of his limitations, having the moral strength to inflict self-punishment. Like Oedipus and Othello, Roderick is a wiser, better man after he learns the truth of his limitations. And like them his sense of guilt leads to self-punishment. In choosing to punish himself he salvages some triumph over the forces that caused his defeat.

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In many ways, then, James's first novel reveals his use of the romance. The plot is conventional; it is built around the rise and fall of Roderick Hudson or, in another sense, the education of Roderick Hudson. In either case James conceives of Roderick as a romantic hero and his journey is patterned after the elements of the romance. Roderick, however, is not the only hero of this novel. A very important part of the story does not directly concern Roderick, but is the part of Rowland Mallet. Despite the title, James wrote in the Preface that the center of interest in Roderick Hudson is the drama of Rowland Mallet's consciousness. The subject of James's first novel is not only the adventures of Roderick but Rowland's view and experience of him. In effect, Roderick and Rowland represent the romantic and realistic modes in James's work. Rowland is the first of those characters through whose consciousness the situation and the action of a novel are revealed. James developed this technique to perfection and it becomes, in fact, his greatest contribution to the novel. James's novels, particularly those of the major phase, are dramas of the consciousness because the interest lies in the mind of the characters. The reader is privileged to experience their reactions to impressions, to feel their sensitive adjustments, and share their analysis of what is happening to them. This type of experience provided the greatest form of romance to James. To an extent, he conceives of the

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drama of consciousness in terms of the romance. As he delved into the heart of his material the center of interest emerged as a moral struggle. This was so because what chiefly interested James about experience was the struggle between good and evil. He proceeds in his fiction to express his sense of the struggle as it manifested itself in experiences, bringing suspense, curiosity and anxiety into play, building up tensions and posing the final question of victory or failure. By directly sharing in the experience of the character, the critical reader of James is aware of James's consciousness shaping each event, of James's moral sense pervading the work and shaping it towards some culmination that is morally beautiful. It is not entirely surprising then that Rowland's role in the novel also involves a struggle in which he accuses Roderick of being a "remorseless egotist," but also views Roderick's body at the foot of the mountain in mental images that suggest Roderick's return to innocence.

Rowland may be called James's choice of hero. Without Rowland there would be no story. Although such concern is not a legitimate part of the critical study of literature, it is interesting to conjecture what the book Roderick Hudson would have been had James written it during his major phase. Perhaps it would have been called Rowland Mallet? Everything that happens in Roderick Hudson is seen as Rowland sees it, is seen through Rowland. There is not a scene

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recorded in the book in which James does not have Rowland present, even though his presence is sometimes rather awkward or contrived. Between scenes Rowland thinks and the story is given continuity. The technique of telling a story through a center of consciousness was so attractive to James that he frequently used it in the rest of his work. It afforded him an aura of reality which he could not achieve from the conventions of the romance alone. In addition, the centers of consciousness enable James to treat the mind of one of his characters, to go, as he likes, beneath the surface and see the drama, just as interesting as the outer action, which took place there. When James's interest shifts to the drama of consciousness he has not completely rejected the elements of the romance. In fact, it is in the drama of consciousness that James finds a more sophisticated form of romance, albeit without the great show of action. When his career was in full stride, James reached a point of permitting a gesture, a phrase, a chance observation to do the work in which other novelists would have lavished screams, wounds and the divorce courts. There is one very effective example of this technique in Roderick Hudson at the end of the book when Christina comes upon Rowland and Roderick in the Alps. As she walks away from them Roderick's "eyes followed her until she reached the door of her inn. Here she stopped and looked back at him."⁴³ It is this brief glance which causes Roderick to relinquish

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all moral restraints and determine to pursue her openly across Europe. Rowland who has overheard the entire conversation between Roderick and Christina is astonished to hear Roderick say that Christina has asked him to follow her. "She has asked you?" Rowland says. "Yesterday, in so many words," is Roderick's reply.

Because Roderick's romantic pursuits are so ostentatious, Rowland's romantic interests go unnoticed until he admits them in the end to Roderick. Another part of the romantic structure of the novel is built around the conventional love triangle, handled by James without the suggestion of illicit love. Early in the novel the triangle consists of Roderick, Mary Garland, and Rowland. The relationship between Roderick and Mary characterizes the early innocence of Roderick. Later Roderick's interest in Christina complicates the triangular love affair, but Rowland's silent love remains faithful to Mary. The one constant factor in all of the complications of the love triangle is the theme of unrequited love. Mary's love for Roderick eventually goes unheeded. Rowland's sense of propriety will not allow him to pursue his love, and Roderick's infatuation with Christina is abhorring to Mrs. Light and the Cavaliere--the father of the illegitimate Christina. The reaction of the two heroes, Roderick and Rowland, to their unrequited love clearly represents James's handling of the two modes of fiction. Roderick's response is to

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fall into fits of melancholy and despair or to break out in passionate outbursts. Rowland's reaction is handled in such a subtle way in his conversations with Mary that she never realizes his love. In a sense, the pair of Roderick and Christina are the romantic lovers in Roderick Hudson, and Rowland and Mary the realistic. Because Mary's love is never passionately revealed to Roderick he never estimates the true worth of her character. She is a much more complex character than Roderick accords her. It is Rowland, however, who brings the best out of Mary while he escorts her around Rome. It is he, and not Roderick who develops her sensibilities. By the end of the novel Mary has been strongly affected by Europe. Its subtleties puzzle her and please her:

'I used to think,' she said to Rowland, 'that if any trouble came to me I should bear it like a stoic. But that was at home, where things don't speak to us of enjoyment as they do here. Here it's such a mixture; one doesn't know what to choose, what to believe. Beauty stands there--beauty such as this night and this place and all this sad strange summer have been so full of--and it penetrates to one's soul and lodges there and keeps saying that man wasn't made, as we think at home, to struggle so much and miss so much, but to ask of life as a matter of course some beauty and some charm. This place has destroyed any scrap of consistency that I ever possessed, but even if I must myself say something sinful I love it.'⁴⁴

Rowland's answer is one which describes reality in a fashion that characterizes James's own view--a view which accounts for his liberal use of the romantic and realistic mode in his fiction: Rowland says, "We shouldn't be able to enjoy, I suppose, unless we could suffer, and in anything that's

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worthy of the name of experience--that experience which is the real taste of life, isn't it--the mixture is of the finest and subtlest."⁴⁵ This is a perception Roderick could not have had but it is a perception needed to give fullness to James's view of reality. The view of reality in Roderick Hudson is a complex thing; James attempts to enhance that view by using both the romantic and realistic mode of fiction. As always James presents his important ideas through his development of character. The same is true of Roderick Hudson where Roderick and Rowland represent the dual nature of man and the dual modes of fiction.

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FOOTNOTES

¹Henry James, Roderick Hudson, ed. by Leon Edel
"The Torchbook Edition," 1960, viii.

²Blackmur, Preface to Roderick Hudson, p. 16.

³Roderick Hudson, p. 25.

⁴Ibid., p. 21.

⁵Ibid., p. 32.

⁶Ibid., p. 50.

⁷Ibid., p. 69.

⁸Ibid., p. 87.

⁹Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 57-58.

¹¹Ibid., p. 34.

¹²Ibid., p. 37.

¹³Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 79.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 80.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 206.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 144.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 76.

- ¹⁹Ibid., p. 77.
- ²⁰Ibid.
- ²¹Ibid., p. 88.
- ²²Ibid., p. 89.
- ²³Ibid.
- ²⁴Ibid., p. 93.
- ²⁵Ibid., p. 91.
- ²⁶Ibid.
- ²⁷Ibid., p. 108.
- ²⁸Ibid., p. 159.
- ²⁹Ibid., p. 171.
- ³⁰Ibid., p. 296.
- ³¹Ibid., p. 314.
- ³²Ibid., p. 322.
- ³³Ibid., pp. 322-323.
- ³⁴Ibid., pp. 315-316.
- ³⁵Ibid., p. 321.
- ³⁶Ibid., p. 323.
- ³⁷Ibid., p. 325.
- ³⁸Ibid., p. 31.
- ³⁹Ibid., p. 36.
- ⁴⁰Ibid., p. 235.
- ⁴¹Ibid.
- ⁴²Ibid., p. 332.
- ⁴³Ibid., p. 314.
- ⁴⁴Ibid., p. 292.
- ⁴⁵Ibid.

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CHAPTER III

THE AMERICAN: PURE ROMANCE

Within a year and a half of the serialization of Roderick Hudson, Henry James began The American. It is The American which represents most explicitly James's use of the romance. The germ of the story came, James says, as:

. . . I was seated in an American 'horse-car' when I found myself, of a sudden, considering with enthusiasm, as the theme of a 'story,' the situation, in another country and an aristocratic society, of some robust but insidiously beguiled and betrayed, some cruelly wronged, compatriot: the point being in especial that he should suffer at the hands of persons pretending to represent the highest possible civilization and to be of an order in every way superior to his own. What would he 'do' in that predicament, how would he right himself, or how, failing a remedy, would he conduct himself under his wrong? This would be the question involved. . . .¹

In this statement one can see the essentials of James's concept of the romance: He has first of all postulated a hero who has disengaged himself from his homeland and leaves to confront another culture. In the new culture the hero's trials or "predicaments" arise. However, what is equally important in James's germ is his interest in the effect this experience would have on the hero. The use of the

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romantic mode provides for James the plot or situations in which his hero will be tested, the realistic mode gives him the means, with his particular emphasis upon the center of consciousness used as point of view, to analyze the reaction of the hero in each situation. In other words, James's germ contains what amounts to the mixing of the romantic and realistic modes. In his interest in the effect an experience has on his hero James is essentially attempting to provide for the reader a direct confrontation with the experience of literature and life as told through the center of consciousness. The fact that James is not interested in writing about the affront done to Newman by his mistress because ". . . injuries of this order are the stalest stuff of romance," seems to be further proof that James found the elements of the romance functioning best in his work when they complemented his realistic mode.

Like Roderick Hudson, Christopher Newman is not confronted simply by a trial in the form of a lover. In each case the trial represents the clashing of two conflicting cultures. James was always free enough from the dictates of conventions so that he could create imaginatively in his fiction. In fact, James was not always fully aware of the extent to which he used the conventions of the romance in his fiction. In rereading The American after a number of years James says "The thing is consistently, consummately--and I would fain really make bold to say charmingly--romantic; and all without intention, presumption, hesitation,

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contrition." "I had been plotting arch-romance without knowing it."² According to James the romantic effect of the novel was ". . . equally undesigned and unabashed. . . ." ³ James is not at all apologetic for his unintentional use of the romance. Quite to the contrary, he feels:

. . . a certain sad envy of the free play of so much unchallenged instinct. One would like to woo back such hours of fine precipitation. They represent to the critical sense which the exercise of one's whole faculty has, with time, so inevitable and so thoroughly waked up, the happiest season of surrender to the invoked muse and the projected fable.⁴

James seems to imply in this statement that his use of the elements of the romance is an "instinctive" impulse. George Knox, in his article on James's use of the romance in The American says that "James was from the start a Romancer, inclined to go below the surfaces of life to psychic depths, and above to levels of ideals and principles. His narratives and details are built solidly on fable bases."⁵ In his study of James, Lyon Richardson indicates that James was convinced that the novel was the best form of art to represent the whole truth of life:

. . . though James defended Realism, he did not practice Realism in any narrow sense. He drew away from the Naturalism of Zol  ; he did not even follow the path of Garland's 'veritism.' There was too little of the reporter in him, too little of the social critic, and too much of the creative artist and speculative philosopher for him to follow the way of Realism to farthest limits. He accepted and used some of the liberties and services of Romanticism, though he never would have called himself a Romanticist.⁶

Some brief attention to James's own views of the romance will perhaps clarify his reasons for using it along

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with the realistic mode. James defines the romance broadly in terms of the kind of experience with which it deals:

. . . experience liberated so to speak; experience disengaged, disembroiled, disencumbered, exempt from the conditions that we usually know to attach to it and, if we wish so to put the matter, drag upon it, and operating in a medium which relieve it, in a particular interest, of the inconvenience of a related, a measurable state, a state subject to all our vulgar communities.⁷

Like Hawthorne, James felt that the romance must concern the "truth of the human heart." Although it deals with experience liberated from the conditions we usually attach to it, it must still satisfy "our general sense of the way things happen." The balance between the realistic and romantic demands of fiction is subtle: the experience represented must be both individual and general. It was also Hawthorne who recognized the different demands made by the romance and the realistic work on the novelist. In his Preface to The House of Seven Gables, Hawthorne wrote:

When a writer calls his work a Romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim a certain latitude, both as to fashion and material, which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume had he professed to be writing a Novel. The latter form of composition is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience. The former--while, as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonable so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart--has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing. . . .⁸

James distinguishes between the real and the romantic in terms very similar to Hawthorne's:

The real represents to my perception the things we cannot possibly not know, sooner or later, in one way or another . . . the romantic stands, on the other hands, for the things that, with all the facilities in the world, all the wealth and all the courage and all the wit and all the adventure, we never can directly know; the things that can reach us only through the beautiful circuit and subterfuge of our thought and our desire.⁹

The proper setting is important in both Hawthorne and James for the working out of the balance between the romantic and the real. In his Preface to The Blithedale Romance, Hawthorne states that "his present concern with the socialist community is merely to establish a theatre, a little removed from the highway of ordinary travel, where the creature of his brain may play their phantasmagorical antics, without exposing them to too close a comparison with the actual events of real lives."¹⁰ For his distinction between the real and the romantic James chooses a metaphor which describes art as a balloon floating above the earth, to which it is tied by a cable:

The balloon of experience is in fact of course tied to the earth, and under that necessity we swing, thanks to a rope of remarkable length, in the more or less commodious car of the imagination: but it is by the rope we know where we are, and from the moment that the cable is out we are at large and unrelated.¹¹

In James's fiction the balloon of experience has a rope of "remarkable length" which allows him much latitude in his use of artistic conventions. The art of the romancer, James says is "'for the fun of it,' insidiously to cut the cable, to cut it without our detecting him." In his discussion

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of the use of the romantic mode in James's works, Richard Poirier indicates that he does not find it at all surprising that both James and Hawthorne needed to establish a "theatre" or "balloon of experience" somewhat removed from the travels of everyday life. This technique explains the art of a number of important American artists and their works:

Such a conception of the romantic removal of experience to a position where it will not be exposed to 'too close a comparison with the actual events of real lives' explains in large part the 'raft' of Huckleberry Finn, the Pequod of Moby Dick, the screened 'office' within an office of Melville's Bartleby, and, later, the 'woods' in The Bear and the 'bullring' in Hemingway. Each of these places of removal sets the stage for a reordering of the social hierarchies which exist outside it. The reordering is accomplished in terms of aspirations and achievements which cannot express themselves in a society based upon practical utility and traditional manners. In every case, however, the "removed stage" of action, the 'balloon' is, in fact, tied to earth, to a society in which characters would ordinarily live. Huck's raft is not, for example, cut off from civilization. He carries inside him the vocabulary and the values of that civilization, and the dramatic excitement of the novel is partly a linguistic one. There is a question of Huck's being so caught up in other people's words that he will forfeit that freedom of feeling which his idyllic existence with Jim has given him. The novel is, in that sense, about Huck's enslavement to the kind of world to which his 'balloon,' his raft, is tied in the hard knots of words and phrases, and their attendant values, which bewilder him whenever he tries to unravel his impulses.¹²

The use of the romance presents special problems for the artist. It must not stray from essential human truth; it must present real experience and yet the sense of conflict produced by a confrontation with evil in the romance must not be too specific or too clearly documented. It

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must deal with a truth that is representative of all men; the one way in which James manages to do this is by describing experience disengaged from limiting circumstances.

In describing the romance James sharply checked those critics who insist upon the superiority of his early fiction on the grounds of its allegedly greater reality or vitality, by writing in the Preface to The American, "I value, in my retrospect, nothing so much as the lively light on the romantic property of my subject that I had not expected to encounter."¹³ Although James admits that the romantic element is discovered only in his retrospect, its presence has served to enhance the work. In discussing the problem of an artist giving a sense of fullness and truth to his work, James states, ". . . I have ever failed to see how a coherent picture of anything is preducible save by a complex of fine measurements."¹⁴

James never did try to make a complete distinction between the romance and the novel. Many times, however, he remarked about the necessity of both. For himself, as an artist, a complete separation was unnecessary.

The novel and the romance, the novel of incident and that of character--these clumsy separations appear to me to have been made by critics and readers for their own convenience, and to help them out of some of their occasional queer predicaments, but to have little reality or interest for the producer, from whose point of view it is of course that we are attempting to consider the art of fiction.¹⁵

Since both the realist and the romanticist are attempting to present a truthful picture of human experience, the

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question of artistic integrity is not, for James, one of which mode to use. "I can think of no obligation to which the 'romancer' would not be held equally with the novelist; the standard of execution is equally high for each."¹⁶

The novel of incident and the novel of character, these were not important separations for James. At one time James posed the question, "What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?"¹⁷ In James's work the attention to incident is synonymous with his use of the romance; the emphasis upon the character's response to the incident is James's particular contribution to the realistic mode. The plot of The American is based upon incident--the adventures of Christopher Newman. As always, however, the romantic element serves James as a literary device toward the development of a full picture of life. Merely to write of the adventures of Christopher Newman was to overlook the subtle refinements needed in order to give James's picture of life fullness and a sense of reality. James's use of the romance merges with his use of the realistic mode at the point where he records the effect, the impressions, and the moral dilemmas posed by the incidents upon the consciousness of his hero.

James's hero in The American is Christopher Newman whose name suggests his character and whose actions and rhetoric make him a representative of the general type of

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the American. Throughout his early life, Newman's sole intention has been to make money and by the time he is thirty-five is a wealthy man. He has however thought very little on the uses of money. He is an eminently practical man who believes in himself and in his power to do anything he wishes. After amassing a fortune, he has come to France as a first step in enjoying his great wealth. In Paris he runs across Tristram, a former acquaintance, and in the hands of Mrs. Tristram Newman's adventures begin. Newman makes his intentions perfectly clear to Mrs. Tristram. He intends to see the world, to have a good time, to improve his mind, and, if it suits his fancy, to marry a wife. It is on the latter intention that Mrs. Tristram offers to help him. She has a friend, Madame de Cintr  , who is a member of the ancient and aristocratic Bellegarde family. As a young girl Claire de Cintr   was coerced into marrying an old count but now, a widow, Claire is being pressured by her family into another distasteful marriage in order to bring more money into the impoverished family. What Newman wants is the ideal wife; he tells Mrs. Tristram that his wife must be a "magnificent woman." Mrs. Tristram arranges a meeting between Newman and Madame de Cintr   which terminates with an invitation to Newman to call at the Bellegarde home. Although Claire belongs to the remnants of an old noble family, Mrs. Tristram sees this difficulty as merely added interest in the obstacles Newman will face

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in courting her. Like so many of James's characters who for one reason or another cannot exploit their own chances in life, Mrs. Tristram sees in the fortunate young American someone in whose career she can enjoy a vicarious triumph.

Newman first becomes aware of the obstacles to his courtship of Claire when, on his first attempt to call, he is told by a superior sort of person, who later proves to be the Marquis de Bellegarde, that Madame de Cintr  is not in. Newman realizes that he may have a formidable, even treacherous adversary. After a summer of travel throughout Europe, Newman returns to Paris and with his characteristic boldness he begins to court Claire. The Bellegardes disapprove highly of Newman because he is a "commercial person," but his wealth is so great that they cannot afford to object flatly. Claire's mother, the daughter of an English earl, and Claire's older brother, Urbain, the head of the family, are insanely proud of their nobility. Even though Newman's natural qualities are apparent to them, the Marquis and Urbain cannot completely accept Newman's lack of noble birth. Although she is deeply disturbed that Newman does not care for her mother or older brother, Claire finally decides to marry Newman. The younger members of the family--Claire's brother Valentin and her sister-in-law--like Newman and favor the marriage. Upon hearing Claire's decision, Newman responds with immoderate happiness. His time

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for discretion is past, and true to his American type, he telegraphs his good fortune to friends in America and announces to the Bellegardes his intentions of giving a great celebration for them and his friends in his Paris lodging. The Marquise is scandalized. She proclaims that since a party seems necessary she will give one, introducing him to her friends.

It is the party which proves to be Newman's downfall. With an air of happiness and arrogance he brazenly roams through the house where all the old families are assembled, and accepts his good fortune too noisily for the dignified Marquise. During the party the Marquise and Urbain decide that they cannot suffer the Bellegarde name to be tainted by such an alliance. In all the long history of their family, which goes as far back as the rule of Charlemagne, there is "not a case on record of a misalliance among the women." Consequently, old Madame Bellegarde uses her authority and forces Claire to renounce her marriage plans. The Bellegardes try to arrange a match between Claire and a distant cousin, the wealthy Lord Deepmore, but Claire refuses. In order to escape the disgrace that her mother forces upon her, Claire enters a Carmelite convent and becomes a nun.

A sub-plot which has been appearing at intervals merges with the main plot at the point where the party is given by the Marquise. The sub-plot functions mainly to

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emphasize the enormous difference between the American and the Europeans. A fast friendship has developed between Newman and Valentin whose only part in life is to amuse himself. More than any of the rest of the Bellegardes, Valentin represents the bright romantic possibilities of the ancient family. He resents the restrictions that nobility imposes upon him. He encourages Newman's suit and envies his free and independent condition. He recognizes that it is Newman, and not the Bellegardes, who is thoroughly at home in the world. Newman hopes to transplant Valentin to America, where he can begin a life free from the restricted routines of the Bellegardes. When he first arrived in Paris, Newman foolishly ordered some paintings done by an inferior copyist, Noémie Nioche. Later, Newman introduces her to Valentin who promptly becomes interested in her. On the evening after the engagement party, Valentin gets involved in a quarrel with a man over Noémie. A challenge to a duel follows, and despite Newman's attempt to interfere, Valentin goes recklessly off to Switzerland to settle the affair. A telegram comes to Newman in Paris calling him to the deathbed of Valentin. Like Claire's escape to the convent, Valentin's death is another sacrifice to the vain code of honor which so rigidly binds the Bellegarde family. Newman is appalled that two lives so close to him should have been sacrificed by such an inconsequential thing as a code of

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honor. What Newman does not realize is that his real adversary throughout his adventures is not the Marquise or Urbain de Bellegarde but the more formidable code of honor.

Before he dies, Valentin tells Newman, in the form of an apology for his family's behavior, of a dark family secret which he can use to force the Marquise to allow him to marry Claire. From an old English servant in the Bellegarde household, Newman learns that old Madame Bellegarde and Urbain hastened the death of the old Marquis de Bellegarde, when he opposed the marriage of Claire to the decrepit Marquis de Cintr . The English servant woman, Mrs. Bread, gives Newman a note written by the late Marquis on his death bed charging his wife with his death. However, when Newman threatens the Bellegardes with disclosure, they refuse to allow his marriage to Claire, and imply that the Marquis was insane when he wrote the note. Finally even the thought of revenge seems repulsive to Newman because it places him on the same base level as the Bellegardes. At last he burns the letter. His magnanimity has been great enough to spare them, as they have counted on all along. In the end, then, Newman seems to triumph over the Bellegardes. His decision has been a moral one; he has proven his nobility and their baseness.

Newman is one of James's free, economically independent characters who can travel at will. "I've come to

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Europe, to get the best out of it I can," he tells the Tristrams. "I want to see all the great things and do what the best people do."¹⁸ Newman himself conceives of his sense of freedom as a grand thing.

'I want the biggest kind of entertainment a man can get. People, places, art, nature, everything! I want to see the tallest mountains, and the bluest lakes, and the finest pictures, and the handsomest churches, and the most celebrated man, and the most elegant women.'¹⁹

James frequently uses the remarks of other characters as a means of characterizing the romantic nature of Newman. Mr. Babcock, an American minister travelling in Europe, sees Newman as one of "nature's noblemen." Mrs. Tristram calls him a "child of nature," and characterizes him in images that suggest both his innocence and his heroic qualities: "You're the great Western Barbarian, stepping forth in his innocence and might, gazing a while at this poor corrupt old world and then swooping down on it."²⁰ The image of Newman's swooping to conquest appears again in the book at the point where the Tristrams talk of his marrying Claire:

'The spread eagle should use his wings,' said Mrs. Tristram.

'He should fly to the rescue of the woman of whom advantage is being taken!'

'To her rescue--?' Newman seemed to wonder.

'Pounce down, seize her in your talons and carry her off. Marry her yourself.'²¹

In addition to being called throughout the book by the omniscient narrator as "our hero," Newman's heroic qualities are suggested by his large physical frame. To make

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himself comfortable in an unfamiliar situation, Newman stretches out his long legs. Valentin, in particular, is impressed by Newman's size. "The way you cover the ground! However, being as you are a giant, you move naturally in seven-league boots."²² Newman is the only Jamesian hero whose romantic qualities are suggested by a large physique. He comes nearer than any other Jamesian character to grappling in physical combat with his opposition. And more than any other of James's heroes, Newman conceives of his opposition and the evil in his encounters solely in terms of physical adversaries--the Marquise and her son Urbain. Newman is the closest in James's conception of a hero to being the prince of the pure romance.

Newman, however, is not simply a conventional prince. He is conceived by James to represent the quality of the romance that James most admired--the sense of experience disengaged. What Valentin admires most about Newman is his air of being at home in the world; he envies his freedom.

'What I envy you is your liberty,' Count Valentin found occasion to observe; 'your wide range, your freedom to come and go, your not having a lot of people, who take themselves all too seriously, expecting something of you. I live,' he added with a sigh, 'beneath the eyes of my admirable mother.'²³

The author has allowed Newman a rope of remarkable length for his participation in experience. Again his freedom is contrasted to Valentin's restriction: Valentin ". . . had long been tied with so short a rope . . . that he had now

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a mortal grudge against family discipline."²⁴ Quite seriously Valentin adds, "I think I shall tie a rope around my waist and go into a monastery."²⁵ Attached to James's balloon of experience it is extremely important that there be a long enough rope. In characterizing Newman and Valentin, James's use of the rope imagery clearly relates Newman's freedom and Valentin's restriction to his conception of the romance.

One of Newman's reasons for coming to Europe is to marry well. What Newman wants is the ideal wife. He conceives of her in idealistic terms that suggest that she must be the princess of the romance. "My wife must be a pure pearl," Newman tells Mrs. Tristram. Fortunately Mrs. Tristram happens to number among her friends "the finest creature in the world." Newman makes the mistake of believing that such an ideal woman can be purchased:

'I want a great woman. I stick to that. That's the one thing I can treat myself to, and if it's to be had I mean to have it. What else have I toiled and struggled for all these years? I've succeeded, and now what am I to do with my success? To make it perfect, as I see it, there must be a lovely being perched on the pile like some shining statue crowning some high monument. She must be as good as she's beautiful and as clever as she's good. I can give my wife many things, so I'm not afraid to ask certain others myself. She shall have everything a woman can desire; I shall not even object to her being too good for me. She may be cleverer and wiser than I can understand, and I shall only be the better pleased.²⁶ I want, in a word, the best article in the market.'

Like the princess of the romance, Claire is not presented as a complex, individual character. She remains a flat,

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conventional character throughout the book. In Newman's attempt to elevate Claire to the level of the ideal princess, he ironically diminishes her individuality and humanity by the conventional manner in which he conceives of her. It is always in grand, sweeping strokes that Newman characterizes her. "Madame de Cintre's face had, to Newman's eye, a range of expression as delightfully vast as the wind-streaked, cloud-flecked distance on a Western prairie."²⁷ What diminishes her humanity even more is Newman's unwitting view of her as "the best article on the market." One of Claire's admirable qualities, Newman thinks, is that "she was . . . as distinct as the big figure on a banknote and of as straight-forward a profession."²⁸ Newman's business rhetoric keeps Claire from becoming a real person even to him. She always remains in abstract ideal. Furthermore, the relationship between Newman and Claire does not develop; at least the reader is unable to see it. James simply says that at the end of six months of courtship, Claire accepts Newman's proposal. We are told that the relationship grows, but we do not see it rendered to us realistically. However, neither we nor James can feel this to be a serious flaw in the book. It is one of the conventions of the romances that the hero and the princess fall in love. No other explanation is needed.

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romance so explicitly, neither Newman or the sentimental reader is prepared for anything but the conventional happy ending of the romance. There are, however, important clues to the character of Claire and consequently to the outcome of the book which Newman overlooks. In describing the long family history to Newman, Valentin suggests the difficulty that Newman will face in attempting to marry Claire. As a rule the Bellegarde family has always married into the "ancient houses!" There have been some exceptions which Newman feels will work entirely in his favor. The intention of Valentin's remarks, however, are not to encourage Newman of his chances, but to provide a realistic appraisal of what he confronts:

'Three of four Bellegardes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centurie, took wives out of the bourgeoisie--accepted lawyers' daughters.'

'A lawyer's daughter--that's a come-down?' Newman asked.

'A condescension. But one of us, in the Middle Ages, did better: he married a beggar-maid, like King Cophetua. That was really more convenient; it was like pairing with a bird or a monkey; one didn't have to think about her family at all. Our women have always done well; they've never even gone into the petite noblesse. There is, I believe, not a case on record of a misalliance among ces dames.'²⁹

Valentin advises Newman to be prepared for strange things from so ancient a family: "We're fit for a museum or a Balzac novel. My mother's strange, my brother's strange, and I verily believe I'm stranger than either. You'll even find my sister a little strange. Old trees have crooked branches, old houses have queer cracks, old

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racers have odd secrets. Remember that we're eight hundred years old!"³⁰ Newman simply accepts this well-intended advice as a challenge to be overcome.

There are two other significant incidents in the book that should have warned Newman of the difficulty he faces. Both of the incidents reveal something in Claire's character that Newman overlooks. The first incident concerns Claire's reaction to the irregular practices of Madame de Cintr  's relatives after his death. The family "pounced upon his money, brought a lawsuit against his widow, pushed things very hard."³¹ Claire's reaction is typical of her response in a later difficult situation when she is being ordered by her mother not to marry Newman. "In the course of the suit some revelations were made as to his [Marquis de Cintr  's] private history which [Claire] found so little to her taste that she ceased to defend herself and washed her hands of all her interests."³² Claire is a weak person who flees from embarrassing confrontations. Her "washing her hands of all her interests" foreshadows her escape to the Carmelite convent when some of her own distasteful private history is uncovered.

The second incident appears in the form of an anecdote or a fairy tale which Claire tells to her niece Blanche. The tale reinforces Claire's tendency to escape or flee from the uncomfortable situations in her life. The tale also serves to satisfy the sentimental reader's desire for a happy ending. We hear only the last part of the tale Claire narrates:

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'But in the end the young prince married the beautiful Florabella, and carried her off to live with him in the Land of the Pink Sky. There she was so happy that she forgot all her troubles and went out to drive every day of the life in an ivory coach drawn by five hundred white mice. Poor Florabella,' she mentioned to Newman, 'had suffered terribly.'³³

During their last conversation together before she goes into the convent, Claire reveals to Newman what a weak creature she is in the face of suffering. For the first time Newman begins to see Claire in realistic fashion. In fact, it has been his idealization of her that has been the source of his misunderstanding her. Ironically, it is Claire who welcomes a more realistic appraisal of her:

'One good at least has come of this; I've made you judge me more fairly. You thought of me in a way that did me great honour; I don't know why you had taken it into your head. But it left me no loophole for escape--no chance to be the common weak creature I am. . . . I'm timid and cold and selfish. I'm afraid of being uncomfortable.'³⁴

Although Newman has had a number of clues which should have warned him that the difficulty in courting Claire concerned more than just strange family habits, Newman never does conceive of his opposition as any other than the typical physical adversary of the conventional romance. His mental images of the Marquise suggest his view of her. When Newman implies to the Marquise that she is guilty of murdering her husband, the image pattern on the consciousness of Newman's mind reinforces his idea of her as a sinister, physical adversary: "the Marquise gave a hiss that fairly evoked for our friend some vision

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of a hunched back, an erect tail and a pair of shining evil eyes."³⁵ Newman has made the Marquise out to be the devil-in-flesh. Ironically, Newman does not really fear this type of evil. He is fully confident that he can overcome any such adversary. What Newman does not understand is that his opposition is not simply the Marquise and her son Urbain. What is responsible for the failure in his attempt to marry Claire is the irreconcilable differences in manners, tastes and cultures. These are the differences that Valentin has tried to make Newman see. Because he does not understand that there are differences, Newman's failure is one of shortsightedness and over-confidence in his own ability. In "The Art of Fiction" James calls for the serious participant in life to be a man of fine sensibilities. Newman lives life intensely but does not have the finely developed sensibilities needed to perceive the subtle form of evil which confronts him.

The contrast between the two conflicting cultures is handled very economically and explicitly by James in his description of the rooms maintained by Newman and Valentin. As in the tale "Benvolio," the choice of rooms precisely characterize the men and furthermore represents the presence of the two modes of fiction in James's work.

It is characteristic of Newman to want the largest or the grandest; this is his main criteria of quality.

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One evening very late . . . Newman's servant brought him a card which proved to be that of young M. de Bellegarde. When a few moments later he went to receive his visitor he found him standing in the middle of the greatest of his gilded saloons and eyeing it from cornice to carpet. Count Valentin's face it seemed to him, expressed not less than usual a sense of the inherent comedy of things. 'What the devil is he laughing at now?' our hero asked himself.³⁶

Valentin has come to visit and smoke, but as he looks about he states, "Surely I mayn't smoke here." ". . . It's too large. It's like smoking in a ball-room or a church."

"That's what you were laughing at just now?" Newman asked; "the size of my room?"³⁷

Valentin's rooms are equally baffling to Newman:

The place was low, dusky, contracted, and was crowded with curious bric-a-brac. Their proprietor, penniless patrician though he might be, was an insatiable collector, and his walls were covered with rusty arms and ancient panels and platters, his doorways draped in faded tapestries, his floors muffled in the skins of beasts. Here and there was one of those uncomfortable tributes to elegance in which the French upholsterer's art is prolific; a curtained recess with a sheet of looking-glass as dark as a haunted pool; a divan on which, for its festoons and furbelows, you could no more sit down than on a dowager's lap; a fireplace draped, flounced, frilled, by the same analogy, to the complete exclusion of fire. The young man's possessions were in picturesque disorder, and his apartment pervaded by the odour of cigars, mingled, for inhalation, with other dim ghosts of past presences. Newman thought it, as a home, damp, gloomy and perverse, and was puzzled by the romantic incoherence of the furniture.³⁸

The two rooms reflect completely different ways of life; one founded upon a pragmatic, utilitarian view, and the other upon the ancient traditions of the romantic past.

In a slightly different vein, Max Schulz discusses James's use of architectural imagery as a means of

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characterizing the Bellegardes: "The historical associations of the castle image, used in reference to the Bellegardes, gives them a context, a modus operandi, for their actions. Mirrored thus in terms of 'antiquity' their antiquated values appear more reasonable."³⁹ However, to Newman the historical associations of the castle imagery do not make the Bellegardes' actions seem more reasonable. He never can appreciate the weight of influence the past has on a family founded in antiquity. What James has achieved by the use of castle imagery is a way of giving his use of a romantic convention an air of validity.

While Newman is not fully aware of the differences in the cultures, the Bellegardes are extremely aware of the differences. At first the differences are a source of their amusement at the expense of Newman. Even at so solemn an occasion as the dinner party where it is announced to Newman that he is accepted as a candidate for the hand of Claire the Bellegardes' amusement with Newman is apparent. This time it is Valentin who enjoys the humor at Newman's expense: "In the good old times," the young man said, "marquises and counts used to have their appointed buffoons and jesters to crack jokes for them. Nowadays we see a great strapping democrat keeping one of 'us' about him to play the fool."⁴⁰ Valentin is mocking the naïvely confident manner in which Newman conducts himself. On a number of times when Newman is the source of entertainment for the

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Bellegardes, James describes the situation in terms of circus imagery. In each case, Newman provides the show at center ring. When Newman announces to the family that Claire has consented to marry him, Valentin responds: "The Marquis and I are charmed. I can't marry myself, but I can understand it in others when the inducements to it are overwhelming. I can't stand on my head, but I can applaud a clever acrobat when he brings down the house."⁴¹

At the engagement ball, Newman is 'exhibited' for all present.

Every one gave Newman extreme attention, everyone lighted up for him regardless, as he would have said, of expense, everyone was enchanted to make his acquaintance, everyone looked at him with that fraudulent intensity of good society which puts out its bountiful hand but keeps the fingers closed over the coin. If the Marquis was going about as a bear-leader, if the fiction of Beauty and the Beast was supposed to show thus its companionpiece, the general impression appeared that the bear was a very fair imitation of humanity.⁴²

Newman himself has the uncomfortable feeling that he is being put on exhibition:

'Am I behaving like a blamed fool?' he wondered. 'Am I stepping about like a terrier on his hind legs? . . . Am I holding my head too high and opening my mouth too wide?' he demanded. 'Do I look as if they were saying 'Catch' and I were snapping down what they throw me and licking my lips?'⁴³

All of this animal/exhibition imagery associated with Newman is of a diminutive nature. It is an ironic contrast with the heroic/conquest imagery associated with him at other times. The impression which James gives of Newman's situation as the companion-piece of the fiction of the

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Beauty and the Beast is an apt one. In effect, this metaphor is another comment on the basic romantic structure of the book. Newman is the beast--the great Western Barbarian--who hopes that by some magic happening he will be able to marry the Beauty--Claire de Cintr  . The Bellegarde family, of course, do not want such a marriage; consequently, it is significant that it is the Marquis who is leading Newman about making introductions when the comparison to the Beast is made. Unfortunately for Newman there is no magic physical transformation. Furthermore, a physical transformation is not what is needed, even though Newman conceives of his opposition solely as physical adversaries. The transformation that is needed for Newman to lose his beastly qualities is widened perception, greater sensibilities, and better understanding of the differences between his culture and theirs. James's heroes confront their greatest opposition in terms of subtleties, not in terms of obvious physical foes. Newman is an admirable physical specimen, and while being a fine physical specimen is suitable preparation for some types of opposition, he is entirely unprepared for the subtlety and complexity which is the nature of his opposition. Newman is defeated, not because he isn't strong enough, but because he isn't perceptive enough.

In each of the encounters in the series of tests which confront Newman, he is defeated because of his innocence and na  vet  . At the same time it is these same qualities which eventually allow Newman to be morally triumphant.

In The American, as in Roderick Hudson, the ending is a mixture of modes suggesting a combination of triumph in defeat. Like Roderick Hudson, Newman's opposition confronts him mainly in terms of a woman, or, more specifically, for Newman, in terms of a series of women. And in each case the women symbolize, like Christina Light, the mannerisms and habits that are part of the European way of life.

Newman's first encounter is shortly after his arrival in Paris. In fact his first experience shows him to be foolishly unaware of Europe. Although he wishes to cultivate the arts, Newman is pathetically lacking in artistic judgement. In Brussels Newman's first stoping place after leaving Paris for a tour of Europe, Newman was ". . . greatly struck with the beautiful Gothic tower of the Hôtel de Ville and wondered if they might n't 'get up' something like it in San Francisco."⁴⁴ When Newman encounters Noemié Nioche painting along the Louvre, he is ironically attracted to her work because he is ". . . baffled on the aesthetic question and guilty of the damning fault of confounding the aspect of the artist with that of his work."⁴⁵ In other words, as James adds parenthetically, Newman ". . . admires the squinting Madonna of the young lady with the hair that somehow also advertises 'art,' because he thinks the young lady herself uncommonly taking."⁴⁶ Newman pays a very high price for Mlle. Nioche's poor copy,

and shortly after, he engaged her to do copies of six of the most beautiful paintings of the masters. At first Mlle. Nioche sees this engagement as a lucrative business venture, but after Newman casually selects six difficult paintings, Mlle. Nioche cannot tolerate this folly any longer.

'Ah, ca, I don't understand you,' she bravely broke out. 'I don't understand how a man can be so ignorant. . . . I paint like a cat; I can't draw a straight line. I never sold a picture until you bought that thing the other day.' And as she offered this surprising information she continued to smile.

Newman met it with a grimace of his own. 'Why do you make that statement?'

'Because it irritates me to see a clever man so bête. My copies are grotesque. . . . This commande of yours is impossible, you know. What do you take me for? It's work for ten strong men. You pick out the six most difficult pictures in the place and you expect me to go to work as if I were sitting down to hem a dozen pocket handkerchiefs.'⁴⁷

It is, however, precisely this naïveté and innocence which eventually prevent Newman from being duped again by Noemié Nioche in a much more serious proposition. Because Newman is such a wealthy man, Noemié openly makes herself available to him. Ironically, it is not Newman but Valentin who falls victim to the devious designs of Mlle. Nioche.

Newman's most severe test comes at the hands of the Marquise de Bellegarde. She is his most worthy and formidable adversary. When Newman confronts her with the letter from Mrs. Bread in which the late Marquis charges his wife with murder, Madame de Bellegarde remains surprisingly

collected. Her only concession to self-defense comes when she asks if Mrs. Bread weren't the "accomplice in this clumsy fraud." "You' re a mighty plucky woman, madam," Newman says to her. "It's a great pity you've made me your enemy. I should have been one of your greatest admirers."⁴⁸ When the Marquise leaves Newman, he sees her stoop and kiss her grandchild: "'Damn it, she is plucky!' he sighed; and he walked home with a sense of having been almost worsted. She was quite heroically impenetrable."⁴⁹

Two days after the engagement ball, Newman returns to the Bellegarde house to see Claire. Upon entering he is approached by Mrs. Bread who tells him that Claire is unexpectedly leaving town. Newman hastens to Claire's room and there he finds her dressed for traveling and in the company of her mother and Urbain. He instinctively feels threatened: "He knew himself, as he entered, in the presence something evil; he was as startled and pained as he would have been by threatening cry in the stillness of the night."⁵⁰ Newman accuses them of treachery. "You stab me in the back . . . is it I who am offensive?"⁵¹ Newman's greatest defeat is at the hands of the Marquise de Bellegarde, but, ironically, the Marquise is not fully triumphant for her daughter forsakes her and goes to the Carmelite Convent rather than marry Lord Deepmore. Once Claire joins the sisters in the convent, neither Newman nor the Marquise ever see her again.

If John Clair's reinterpretation of The American is at all noteworthy it is for its revelation that the role of Mrs. Bread in the novel is far more devious than the straight-forward wholesomeness her name suggests. The last test of Newman's character is so concealed by such a benevolent appearing person that he never suspects the implications of Mrs. Bread's information. In a sense this is the most serious test of Newman's character, for if he follows Mrs. Bread's advice he will, in effect, prove himself no better than the treacherous, deceiving Bellegardes.

To accept the popular interpretation of the work as a transparent story of the victimization of a 'good natured' American by a Borgia-like Parisian family seems to involve an oversight of much explicit and implicit information in the novel, which suggests that Mrs. Bread, the true mother of Claire de Cintr , was a black-mailer claiming both Newman and the Marquise de Bellegarde as victims; that Newman, by dint of his characteristic American naivete and his opacity as a judge of character, was completely 'taken in' by her ruse; and that Claire's refusal to accept Newman in marriage came as a direct result of her having been informed by the Bellegardes of her true parents--the Old Marquis and his 'meanest of mistresses,' Catherine Bread.⁵²

Once again, however, Newman's innocence protects him from choosing to do evil; he unwittingly triumphs in defeat. His final instinct is to burn the evidence of their guilt and forget his intentions of gaining revenge.

Newman's moral triumph in the end--what I have called his triumph in defeat and what James calls Newman's fate--is essentially a romantic resolution to the plot. In his Preface to The American James describes the creative process he followed in shaping Newman's fate:

. . . the essence of the matter would be that he should at the right moment find them in his power, and so the situation would reach its highest interest with the question of his utilisation of that knowledge. It would be here, in the possession and application of his power, that he would come out strong and was, however, that my conception unfurled, with the best conscience in the world, the emblazoned flag of romance.⁵³

In large, sweeping strokes James resolves the adventures of Newman, strokes that are not at all inconsistent with the grand, heroic conception of his American. In fact, at the end of the book, James turns to melodrama as a means of heightening the texture of his romance. Within the course of no more than two days, Newman learns that his engagement has been canceled, that Valentin lies mortally wounded from a duel, and that there is a dark family secret which, when he is able to obtain it from Mrs. Bread, can be used to revenge the wrongs that the Bellegardes have done him. The death-bed scene where Valentin tells Newman of a terrible family secret strikes one at first as exaggerated and somewhat contrived. Were it not for the fact that James is writing a romance, the author's creative hand appearing in the work ex machina would seriously flaw the work. However, the melodramatic turn at the end is an appropriate conclusion for a hero whose life has been fashioned after a grand design.

In a story whose plot is largely based upon the adventures of the hero, it is not unusual for the journey to be used as an important structural device. In Roderick Hudson the journey motif was used quite obviously in a

symbolic manner showing Roderick's passage through life. In The American the plot is also structured by a journey. At the beginning of the book Newman has just traveled to Paris and in the end Newman leaves Europe to go back to America. The journeys in The American function symbolically to represent Newman's passage from innocence to experience and back to innocence again. It is immediately after he magnanimously burns the incriminating letter that Newman returns to America. His moral triumph marks his passage back to innocence. There have, however, been brief allusions to two other journeys Newman takes which foreshadow his final passage back to innocence. The brief allusions serve mainly to give the final journey plausibility and the structure of the plot artistic balance. The first allusion is to a trip Newman made which proved to shape the rest of his life. Newman had intended to 'get ahead of another party on a big [business] transaction,' when he realized that his motive was entirely revenge. He has a sudden "most extraordinary change of heart, a mortal disgust for the whole proposition."⁵⁴ This change of heart occurs on his trip to Wall Street to carry out the transaction. Newman narrates the rest of the incident to the Tristrams:

'We pulled up in front of the place I was going to in Wall Street, but I sat still in the carriage, and at last the driver scrambled down off his seat to see whether his hack hadn't turned into a hearse. I couldn't have got out any more than if I had been a corpse. What was the matter with me? Momentary brain-collapse, you'll say. What I wanted to get out of was

Wall Street. I told the man to drive to the Brooklyn ferry and cross over. When we were over I told him to drive me out into the country. As I had told him originally to drive for dear life down town, I suppose he thought I had lost my wits on the way. Perhaps I had, but in that case my sacrifice of them has become, in another way, my biggest stroke of business. I spent the morning looking at the first green leaves on Long Island. I had been so hot that it seemed as if I should never be cool enough again. As for the damned old money, I've enough, already, not to miss it--you see how that spoils my beauty. I seemed to feel a new man under my old skin; at all events I longed for a new world. When you want a thing so very badly you probably had better have it and see. I didn't understand my case in the least, but gave the poor beast the bridle and let him find his way. As soon as I could get out of harness I sailed for Europe. That's how I come to be sitting here.'⁵⁵

Newman's choice in the business transaction foreshadows another more important action at the end of the novel. It is also significant that James has his hero's transformation take place "among the green leaves on Long Island." James's heroes characteristically retreat to nature for their most serious meditation. George Knox claims that the transformation incident in the country side of Long Island prefigures a cycle of trials en route to Newman's spiritual realization: "The loss of his egoistic, naive, vengeful, and innocent selfhood, dramatized in a seasonal ritual of metamorphosis, results in an unexpected kind of victory, a gain in moral strength. In other words, our hero earns his hitherto adventitious name."⁵⁵

The second journey described is the short trip Newman takes in Paris to visit for the last time the convent of the Carmelite nuns. Although little has been made of

this incident by James's critics, this brief trip represents Newman's harrowing in Hell; it is symbolically a trip into the Underworld:

Suddenly there arose from the depths of the chapel, from behind the inexorable grating, a sound that drew his attention from the altar--the sound of a strange, lugubrious chant uttered by women's voices. It began softly, but it presently grew louder, and as it increased it became more of a wail and a dirge over their buried affections and over the vanity of earthly desire. At first he was bewildered, almost stunned, by the monstrous manifestation; then, as he comprehended its meaning, he listened intently and his heart began to throb. . . . It was hideous, it was horrible; as it continued he felt he needed all his self-control. He was growing more agitated, the tears were hot in his eyes. At last, as in its full force the thought came over him that this confused, impersonal wail was all that he or the world she had deserted were ever to hear of the breath of those lips of which his own held still the pressure, he knew he could bear it no longer. He rose abruptly and made his way out.⁵⁶

Strangely enough after this experience, Newman feels somewhat purged of his anger. He leaves "with a heart lighter than the one he had brought." Again Newman experiences a miraculous rebirth. The imagery surrounding his return to his Paris quarters is quite explicitly religious:

Everything was over and he too at last could rest. He walked back through narrow, winding streets to the edge of the Seine and there he saw, close above him, high and mild and grey, the twin towers of Notre Dame. He crossed one of the bridges and paused in the voided space that makes the great front clear; then he went in beneath the grossly-imaged portals. He wandered some distance up the nave and sat down in the splendid dimness. He sat a long time; he heard far-away bells chiming off into space, at long intervals, the big bronze syllables of the Word. He was very tired, but such a place was a kingdom of rest. He said no prayers; he had no prayers to say. He had nothing to be thankful for and he had nothing to ask; nothing to ask because now he must take care of himself. But a great church offers a very various hospitality, and he kept

his place because while he was there he was out of the world. The most unpleasant thing that had ever happened to him had reached its formal conclusion; he had learnt his lesson--not indeed that he the least understood it--and could put away the book. He leaned his head for a long time on the chair in front of him; when he took it up he felt he was himself again. Somewhere in his soul a tight constriction had loosened. He thought of the Bellegardes; he had almost forgotten them. He remembered them as people he had meant to do something to. He gave a groan as he remembered what he had meant to do; he was annoyed, and yet partly incredulous, at his having meant to do it: the bottom suddenly had fallen out of his revenge. Whether it was Christian charity or mere human weakness of will--what it was, in the background of his spirit--I don't pretend to say; but Newman's last thought was that of course he would let the Bellegardes go.⁵⁷

The mood contrasts remarkably in its pensiveness and restfulness with Newman's frame of mind at the Carmelite chapel. He walks back across the Seine--the river surrounding the kingdom of the dead?--and immediately approaches Notre Dame. James's use of juxtaposition is again structurally and symbolically significant. The church offers him comfort and peace; it is a place where he can be "out of the world." In a meditation scene which balances with the transformation of Newman on the country-side of Long Island, Newman's moral obligations once again become clear to him and he earns once more the right to be called "Newman." His rebirth is completed. The passage across the Seine symbolizes his return to innocence. He is now ready to voyage back to America.

In James's view of reality it is ultimately character which matters most. In Roderick Hudson James presents, in the two heroes, the dual nature of man. At the end of

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The American James had Newman triumph over the Bellegardes.

But is Newman's final instinct purely an altruistic one?

Floyd Watkins analyzes Newman's instinctive glance back at the fire to see if the note is burned:

Perhaps Newman turns to the fire for a last glance at the burned symbol of the severe moral struggle which he had undergone. Again, he may turn to see that all the evidence is really destroyed. But he did turn "instinctively," and this adverb seems to imply that his final action is not so generous and unavenging after all.⁵⁸

In the revised version of The American, James has Newman respond to the burning paper in a way that also suggests that the decision was not without a moral struggle:

"Leaning against the chimney-piece [Newman] seemed to grasp its ledge with force and to draw his breath a while in pain."⁵⁹ In either the original or the revised version James leaves Newman's final instinct ambiguous enough that we are left wondering if Newman regrets having burned the paper--or is simply facing the last part of a long moral struggle.

James says in "The Art of Fiction" that "experience is never limited, and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility. . . ."⁶⁰ For this reason he cannot simply and artificially resolve any of his works of fiction. In giving his picture of life fullness, James relies on both the realistic and romantic mode. In his creation of incident James felt he could use the extravagant or the extraordinary which the romantic mode allowed, as long as his realistic

portrayal of the hero's reactions seemed plausible. In other words, the extraordinary, romantic incidents of The American do not strike us as unusual so long as Newman's reactions to them are reasonably enough presented. The validity of James's use of the romance in The American depends entirely upon his depiction of Newman. In his Preface to The American James reflects on the importance of his character's response:

If Newman was attaching enough, I must have argued, his tangle would be sensible enough; for the interest of everything is all that is his vision, his conception, his interpretation: at the window of his wide, quite sufficiently consciousness we are seated, from that admirable position we 'assist.' He therefore supremely matters; all the rest matters only as he feels it, treats it, meets it.⁶¹

Finally what we have in The American is a romantically conceived hero who encounters some unusual experiences in life, but whose reactions are depicted by the author in a convincing, realistic manner.

FOOTNOTES

¹Blackmur, Preface to The American, p. 22.

²Ibid., p. 25.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵George Knox, "Romance and Fable in James's The American," Anglia, LXXXII, 308.

⁶Lyon Richardson, Henry James: Representative Selections (New York: American Book Co., 1941), xxxiii-xxxiv.

⁷Blackmur, Preface to The American, p. 33.

⁸Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Preface to The House of Seven Gables," p. 5.

⁹Blackmur, Preface to The American, pp. 31-32.

¹⁰Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Preface to The Blithedale Romance," p. 21.

¹¹Blackmur, Preface to The American, pp. 33-34.

¹²Richard Poirier, The Comic Sense of Henry James: A Study of the Early Novels (Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 34.

¹³Blackmur, Preface to The American, p. 30.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Richardson, "The Art of the Novel," p. 87.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 86.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Henry James, The American (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), p. 29. (Henceforth referred to as The American).

¹⁹Ibid., p. 33.

²⁰Ibid., p. 45.

²¹Ibid., p. 112.

²²Ibid., p. 302.

²³Ibid., pp. 134-135.

²⁴Ibid., p. 134.

²⁵Ibid., p. 136.

²⁶Ibid., p. 49.

²⁷Ibid., p. 183.

²⁸Ibid., p. 145.

²⁹Ibid., p. 154.

³⁰Ibid., p. 162.

³¹Ibid., p. 151.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid., p. 216.

³⁴Ibid., p. 411.

³⁵Ibid., p. 489.

³⁶Ibid., p. 126.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 126-127.

³⁸Ibid., p. 140.

³⁹Max Schultz, "Bellegarde's Feud with Christopher Newman: A Study in Henry James's Revision of The American," American Literature, XXVII (March, 1955), 43.

⁴⁰The American, p. 222.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 277.

⁴²Ibid., p. 322.

⁴³Ibid., p. 323.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 86.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 4.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 81.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 496.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 362.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 373.

⁵²J. A. Clair, "The American: A Reinterpretation,"
PMLA, LXXXIV (December, 1959), 613.

⁵³Blackmur, Preface to The American, p. 25.

⁵⁴The American, p. 31.

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 31-32.

⁵⁶Knox, p. 321.

⁵⁷The American, pp. 480-481.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 533-534.

⁵⁹Floyd Watkins, "Christopher Newman's Final Instinct,"
Nineteenth Century Fiction, XII, 86.

⁶⁰The American, p. 537.

⁶¹Richardson, "The Art of Fiction," p. 83.

⁶²Blackmur, Preface to The American, p. 37.

CHAPTER IV

THE EUROPEANS: THE ROMANCE AS SOCIAL COMEDY

The Europeans, the novel which followed The American, appeared for publication in The Atlantic in serial form from July through October, 1878. James first revealed his ideas for The Europeans in a letter to William Dean Howells, dated March 30, 1877. Howells must have suggested that James's readers had not been satisfied with the unconventional ending of The American and advised his contributor to try a lighter, gayer touch. James's response shows that he was apparently ready to comply, and already was considering an idea which would be suitably romantic:

Of course you couldn't have, for the present, another evaporated marriage from me! I suspect it is the tragedies in life that arrest my attention more than the other things and say more to my imagination; but, on the other hand, if I fix my eyes on a sunspot I think I am able to see the prismatic colors in it. You shall have the brightest possible sunspot for the four-number tale of 1878. It shall fairly put your readers' eyes out. . . . I agree to squeeze my buxom muse, as you happily call her, into a 100 of your pages. I will lace her so tight that she shall have the neatest little figure in the world. It shall be a very joyous little romance. I am afraid I can't tell you at this moment what it will be; for my dusky fancy contains nothing joyous enough: but I will invoke the jocund muse and come up to time. I shall

probably develop an idea that I have, about a genial, charming youth of a Bohemianish father, who comes back from Foreign parts into the midst of a mouldering and ascetic old Puritan family of his kindred . . . and by his gayety and sweet audacity smooths out their rugosities, heals their dyspepsia and dissipates their troubles. All the women fall in love with him . . . , but even for a happy ending he can't marry them all. But he marries the prettiest, and from a romantic quality of Christian charity, produces a picturesque imbroglio . . . under cover of which the other maidens pair off with the swains who have hitherto been starved out: after which the beneficent cousin departs for Bohemia . . . in a vaporous rosy cloud, to scatter new benefactions over man--and especially womankind!¹

The "joyous little romance" that James intended to write turns out to be The Europeans. James's own attitude toward The Europeans seems to have ranged from the casual and almost flippant through the defensive and somewhat touchy to an abrupt dismissal of it from the New York Standard Edition of his works. James apparently regarded the novel as an experiment in literary form. When James received the critical opinion of his brother William, who seems to have felt that Henry had not, this time, done himself justice, Henry replies somewhat apologetically; "Being 'very artistic,' I have a constant impulse to try experiments in form, in which I wish not to run the risk of wasting or gratuitously using big situations."² Apparently no one except James and Howells knew that James had promised his editor to write a brief, cheerful romance. Not realizing that his brother intended to experiment in literary forms, William, by taking The Europeans too seriously was, perhaps, too critical in his assessment of the book.

A synopsis of The Europeans reveals that the end result of James's work was indeed a "joyous little romance." As the novel opens, the Europeans, Felix and his sister Eugenia, have just arrived in America to visit their only living relatives, the Wentworths. The Europeans are actually of American descent but they have been born and brought up in a rather uninhibited way in Europe. They are a pair of fortune-hunters who come to America looking for the opportunity to settle down with their rich American cousins. Felix's imperturbably gaiety, an assurance that he will not get involved in any serious complications, is a guarantee of his eventual success. With his various entertaining talents he has managed to get through life in a harmless, Bohemian way. Felix tells his cousin Gertrude, "I am a species of Bohemian."³ When she asks what a Bohemian is he tells her of his life's adventures:

He told Gertrude how he had walked over France and Italy with a painter's knapsack on his back, paying his way often by knocking off a flattering portrait of his host or hostess. He told her how he had played the violin in a little band of musicians--not of high celebrity--who traveled through foreign lands giving provincial concerts. He told her also how he had been a momentary ornament of a troupe of strolling actors, engaged in the arduous task of interpreting Shakespeare to French and German, Polish and Hungarian audiences.⁴

The success of Eugenia is not quite so predictable as her brother's. Because she is the morganatic consort of the younger brother of a German princeling, Eugenia is held in suspicion by her relatives in America. The Americans, in fact, are not quite sure what a morganatic marriage is.

Mr. Wentworth, in particular, is bothered by what seems to him to be a serious lapse of morals. "The strange word 'morganatic' was constantly in his ears; it reminded him of a certain Mrs. Morgan whom he had once known and who had been a bold, unpleasant woman."⁵ The morganatic marriage does provide Eugenia with a title; in Europe she is known as the Baroness Munster, but her place in the European scale of social degrees is not very exalted nor very secure. Her brother-in-law wants her husband to annul their marriage and form a more illustrious union.

When the mercenary Europeans arrive in Boston, they find the Wentworths to be typical New Englanders of the upper class. Felix and Eugenia are quite unable to understand the Americans because their social code, Puritanism, makes them a pensive lot. Felix, who visits the Wentworths first, reports to The Baroness that "they are a pensive cast; they make things hard. I think there is something the matter with them; they have some melancholy memory or some depressing expectation."⁶ Mr. Wentworth is the oldest of the relatives and the most influenced by the Puritan way of life. Of him Felix says, "Mr. Wentworth is a tremendously high-toned old fellow; he looks as if he were undergoing martyrdom, not by fire, but by freezing."⁷ Mr. Wentworth's cold rigidity is difficult to be penetrated, but Felix must eventually do so if he is to marry Gertrude Wentworth. The rest of the Wentworth family comprises

Charlotte who is pretty and very proper, but not at all imaginative. Gertrude is not so pretty but is a source of worry for the rest of the family because of her "difficult temperament"; she has too much imagination. The youngest of the family, Clifford, has been dismissed from Harvard for becoming intoxicated with alcohol. He is the family reprobate. In addition to the Wentworths, the Actons belong to the family circle--being also cousins of the Wentworths, but on the other side of the house than that related to the European cousins. Robert Acton is a wealthy and traveled bachelor; his younger sister Lizzie is a very pretty but impertinent girl.

The main business of the book is to exhibit the comic efforts of the two parties to understand each other, especially the efforts of the Europeans to ingratiate themselves into the favor of the Americans. Because he is genuine and likable, Felix succeeds. Eugenia, however, fails to convince even the most worldly member of the community, Robert Acton, that she is to be trusted. When she fails to snare him as promptly as she wishes, she tries unsuccessfully to flirt with Clifford. When this also fails, and Clifford becomes engaged to Lizzie Acton, she hastily departs for Europe to patch up the affairs with her husband. With the possible exception of Eugenia, none of the characters in the novel have to suffer. Eugenia is so capable of assuming different roles that her impatience

at the end to leave America for Europe does not affect us as being out of character. Her vanity has been wounded by Acton's refusal to propose to her, but she is returning to Europe to salvage her marriage. Knowing the self-sufficient Eugenia as we do by the end of the novel, we have no reason to believe that she does not succeed in securing her marriage and her title.

Eugenia's departure immediately clears the air for a number of marriages. Felix proposes to Gertrude, forcing Mr. Brand the local minister, to recognize that it is Charlotte, and not Gertrude as he once thought, whom he actually loves. Charlotte, who has urged all along that Gertrude marry Mr. Brand, suddenly discovers that she loves him and consents to marry. Clifford finally marries Lizzie Acton, as everyone has assumed he would. The final line of the novel remarks that Robert Acton eventually married "a particularly nice young girl." Even Eugenia is accorded some happiness by James, for her marriage to the German princeling will apparently never be annuled. The four marriages and the way they are brought about, none of them involving a very complicated effort, account well enough for the plot.

Viewed in several ways, one can see that the structure of The Europeans is essentially romantic. In his study of James, J. A. Ward states that "any analysis of the structure of The Europeans should begin with the observation

that it is essentially a comic novel."⁸ In structuring The Europeans, James draws freely upon those conventions of the comic mode whenever they can complement his "little romance." Like the romance, the comic mode basically constitutes a clash of opposing cultural sensibilities and the eventual, successful resolution of the differences by the hero. With the differences overcome, the hero triumphantly marries his lover and they are accepted into the traditional society. Their acceptance, however, forces upon the older members of the traditional society a fresher view of life and an evaluation of sacred beliefs. The successful resolution of both the romantic and comic modes is usually symbolized by the marriage of the young lovers. The marriage is a particularly appropriate symbol because in it we see the end of the hero's struggle to overcome his "tests" in order to be integrated into the new society, and because the marriage also suggests a beginning. The young lovers will eventually replace the older members of the society and in so doing, "act out another part." Because of the fashion in which they present human experience, both the romantic and comic modes are ultimately life-affirming and life-renewing.

The clash of opposing social groups provides the central plot situation. The comic structure of the book, rendered scenically, involves the attempts of Felix and Eugenia to marry one of the Americans. Viewed in this

fashion Felix is the hero of the novel. He manages to overcome the difficulties posed by the society of Americans. His most formidable adversaries are, quite naturally, Mr. Wentworth who represents more than anyone else the Puritan New England mind and Mr. Brand, a minister, who courts Gertrude more out of a sense of duty to change her ways than out of love. Felix's severest test comes in the "persuasion scene" where he asks Mr. Wentworth for Gertrude's hand in marriage. Before he is successful, Felix has received the "aid" of several others, without which he probably would have failed to convince Mr. Wentworth of his own worthiness. Felix's aid comes from Charlotte whom he has asked to plead his cause, and, not surprisingly, from Gertrude who enters at the proper moment. What does surprise Felix (and the reader) is the entree of Mr. Brand ex machina. The persuasion scene is the longest, most fully developed scene in the book. This scene, along with the resolution of the book literally and symbolically with four marriages, reinforces James's use of the comic mode in structuring The Europeans. Before the resolution can be completed, however, the opposition to the marriages and the happy ending must be removed before a new society can be formed. It is Eugenia who is excluded from a harmonious resolution of the difficulties at the end. She has proved to be the one who cannot be trusted. In the language of ancient comedy, Eugenia is what Northrop Frye

calls the pharmakos⁹--the rascal who endangers the well-being of society and who is driven out as a scapegoat in the comic resolution of the drama. Eugenia, however, does not simply embody the evil existent in the novel. In permitting her expulsion, James is implicitly censoring the rigid moral code of the New Englanders. Eugenia's expulsion results more from her misunderstood European's manners than from her lack of morals.

Eugenia's primary role in the comic structure of the novel is not to provide for a happy ending but, by symbolizing the manners of Europe, to create a sense of tension in the novel. Because this novel contains a clash on manners and not of morals, the presence of evil is notably lacking. Felix, the hero in the comedy of manners, does not have to overcome an evil adversary, not even in the subtle forms that James's evil characters often appear. Felix's greatest test is to ingratiate himself into the favor of the Americans. His triumph is the triumph of European manners over the American rigid view of life.

The difference in the European and the American outlook on life can clearly be seen in the response to situations which the Americans interpret morally and the Europeans aesthetically. The Americans, with the exception of Gertrude, regard Eugenia's lying as morally evil. To Eugenia, lying is merely a role one sometimes has to play during social conversation. Consequently, when she

lies to Mrs. Acton in her son's presence, she is only being courteous. Gertrude is the only American who responds to the civilizing influences of the Europeans; one of the clearest indications that Gertrude is not overly moralistic and yet very imaginative is that she tells harmless lies. Even Felix's flattering portraits of the Wentworth family are basically lies. J. A. Ward discusses the differences in the European and American outlooks on the questions of moral and artful behavior:

The New Englanders can regard forms of artfulness only in terms of ethics because they can express themselves only by a moralistic rhetoric. But the Europeans convert moral questions to aesthetic ones. Thus to Mr. Wentworth Clifford's alcoholism is a moral failing, while to Eugenia and Felix it represents a lapse in manners.¹⁰

That James conceived of the clash of cultures in The Europeans in terms of manners and not in terms of morals is significant. The Europeans is James's only novel in which the presence of evil is notably missing.¹¹ The comic structure of the book creates a tension resulting from a misunderstanding of manners. None of the characters is morally evil. Consequently, the main difference in James's use of the comic and the romantic mode in structuring his novels is that in comic mode the hero confronts an adversary who is different only in manners, while the hero of the romantic mode confronts an adversary who is morally evil. In his Preface to The American James clearly states that one of the necessary elements of the romance is the presence of evil. ". . . I am not sure an infallible sign of the

latter [the romance] is not this rank vegetation of the 'power' of bad people that the good get into. . . ."12

There are no "bad people" in The Europeans; that the Americans regard the Europeans' behavior as evil only indicates that the Americans are narrow and self-righteous. The point in the novel at which James's use of the comic and the romantic most overlap is in his handling of the resolution. Here both the comic and the romantic mode reinforce each other in the resolution of the hero's trials and his integration into the opposing society.

Viewed in another manner, however, one can see that the structure of The Europeans is very much like that of the pure romance. From this perspective the main concern in the structure of the novel is with the relationship of Felix and Gertrude. In fact, the reason that James does not use pure romance for his primary structural technique is that it concerns Felix and Gertrude almost to the exclusion of our interest in the others.

The first glimpse of Gertrude creates the impression that she is the forlorn princess who is awaiting the day for her prince to come and sweep her away. One Sunday when the rest of the family has gone to church, Gertrude stays home and decides to read a book. James's allusions to the romance are quite explicit:

She possessed herself of a very obvious volume--one of the series of the Arabian Nights--and she brought it out into the portico and sat down with it in her lap. There, for a quarter of an hour, she read the

history of the loves of the Prince Camaralzaman and the Princess Badoura. At last, looking up, she beheld, as it seemed to her, the Prince Camaralzaman standing before her. A beautiful young man was making her a very low bow--a magnificent bow, such as she had never seen before. He appeared to have dropped from the clouds; he was wonderfully handsome; he smiled--smiled as if he were smiling on purpose. Extreme surprise, for a moment, kept Gertrude sitting still; then she rose, without even keeping her finger in her book. The young man, with his hat in his hand, still looked at her, smiling and smiling. It was very strange.¹³

Gertrude does not need to keep her "finger in her book," because the rest of this romance will enact itself in real life. As Gertrude listens to Felix tell of his travels in Europe, she "lived in a fantastic world; she seemed to be reading a romance that came out in daily numbers."¹⁴

Early in the story James describes Felix in a style that recalls his conception of the romantic prince Benevolio:

He was eight and twenty years old; he had a short, slight, well-made figure. Though he bore a noticeable resemblance to his sister, he was a better favored person: fair-haired, clear-faced, witty-looking, with a delicate finish of feature and an expression at once urbane and not at all serious, a warm blue eye, an eyebrow finely drawn and excessively arched--an eyebrow which, if ladies wrote sonnets to those of their lovers, might have been made the subject of such a piece of verse--and a light moustache that flourished upwards as if blown that way by the breath of a constant smile. There was something in his physiognomy at once benevolent and picturesque.¹⁵

Felix arrives to awaken Gertrude from a dreamy, wistful reverie. She is a kind of Sleeping Beauty waiting only for the right touch to bring her to life. It is, of course, Felix the romantic hero who provides that touch. Charlotte is amazed at the change Felix's appearance has made in Gertrude: "Felix," she cried, "what have you done to her?"

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"I think she was asleep; I have waked her up!"¹⁶ Later when Felix describes Gertrude's difficult temperament to Mr. Brand, he says, "she has always been a dormant nature. She was waiting for a touchstone. But now she is beginning to awaken."¹⁷ Gertrude's own meditations reinforce James's conception of Felix as a prince come to awaken the Sleeping Beauty:

What had happened the day before seemed to her a kind of dream. He had been there and he had changed everything; the others had seen him, they had talked with him; but that he should come again, that he should be part of the future, part of her small, familiar, much-meditating life--this needed, afresh, the evidence of her senses.¹⁸

In the purely romantic structure of The Europeans the source of interest of tension lies mainly in whether or not Felix will be able to persuade Mr. Wentworth to let him marry Gertrude. Consequently, the persuasion scene is precisely placed to represent the greatest test Felix has to face. The persuasion scene is also the point at which the comic structure and the romantic structure meet. When the persuasion scene is reached the comic and romantic modes work together to bring about a quick resolution to the plot complications. Felix confronts his opposition openly; Mr. Wentworth, who symbolizes most thoroughly the rigid Puritan morality, reacts to Felix's request to marry his daughter "with a light in his face that might have been flashed back from an iceberg."¹⁹ The images of frigidity that characterize Mr. Wentworth aptly represent the Puritan antipathy toward the easy, carefree attitude with which Felix enjoys life.

Mr. Brand also figures prominently into the romantic structure of The Europeans. It is Mr. Brand who has been chosen by Mr. Wentworth to marry his daughter; he "had always thought Mr. Brand would be just the thing for a younger daughter with a peculiar temperament."²⁰ Felix's greatest obstacle to marrying Gertrude is eliminating Mr. Brand as his competition and then persuading Mr. Wentworth to allow the marriage. Felix very cleverly convinces Mr. Brand that Charlotte Wentworth loves him and it is she who is most deserving of his love since she is more of his temperament. She would make an excellent minister's wife. We learn, quite unexpectedly, that Mr. Brand has been convinced by Felix when he appears to the astonishment of everyone at the Wentworth's home precisely at the moment when Felix is proposing. The drama of the persuasion scene is at its height when Mr. Brand enters:

Gertrude turned to her father. '. . . I know what I want; I have chosen. I am determined to marry this gentleman.'

'You had better consent, sir,' said Felix very gently.

'Yes, sir, you had better consent,' added a very different voice.'²¹

Like the romantic structure in James's other novels, The Europeans also reaches its resolution with the "discovery" or the aid of someone whose entrance into the plot seems somewhat artificial and contrived. Mr. Brand's unexpected entrance and change of heart is as surprising as Valentin's announcement on his deathbed that Mrs. Bread

has a letter which Newman can use to gain his revenge on the Bellegarde family. Roderick Hudson also has a point in its structure where the resolution is quickly reached by the aid of an important "discovery." However, in Roderick Hudson, as we have seen, the "discovery" is reached after much introspection and meditation on the part of both Rowland Mallet and Roderick. Consequently, the "discovery" or aid to the hero in Roderick Hudson seems to be a more organic, and hence, realistic part of the plot.

Once Felix has overcome the opposition of Mr. Wentworth and Mr. Brand the novel ends very shortly. Furthermore, in the truly romantic fashion that James predicted in his letter to Howells, the marriage of Felix and Gertrude precipitates several other marriages. Clifford Wentworth marries Lizzie Acton; this union, which has long been expected by everyone, has needed but small encouragement for its consumation. A short time later we are told that Charlotte marries Mr. Brand. Robert Acton, who has been disappointed by Eugenia, marries a "particularly nice young girl." The ending to The Europeans comes closer than any other of James's novels to being the conventional happy-ever-after ending. Because its tension is built more upon a conflict of manners than of morals, the novel lacks the intensity and interest of the morally ambiguous endings of James's other works. At the end of Roderick Hudson, we are left wondering whether Roderick's death symbolizes moral

degradation or moral renewal. The end of The American leaves us equally uncertain about Newman's moral character. What exactly is Newman's final instinct? James does not clearly resolve that question. Newman's moral character remains somewhat ambiguous to us. Only in The Europeans does James appear to use the conventional romantic ending to such great extent.

The purely romantic plot of The Europeans seems to exclude Eugenia from the happy ending but ironically it is Eugenia who interests us most at the end because she is the most ambiguous character in the book. Throughout the book we have been led to believe that Eugenia's charms would triumph and she would marry Robert Acton. When Eugenia meets Robert Acton for the first time she instinctively feels that he is "intrinsically, the most important person present." Robert Acton begins to call frequently on the Baroness. When Eugenia goes to visit the home of Acton she believes that she has finally found her fortune in America. Acton has a large house, filled with treasures, the product of his China trade. Acton's house is exactly the kind of house Eugenia would have if she were to stay in America: "Comme c'est bien!" . . . she had thought of just such a house as this when she decided to come to America."²² However, when she is taken by Acton to see his invalid mother, Eugenia makes a bad blunder. Seeking to please, Eugenia remarks that her son has talked immensely of his

mother. Acton is vividly conscious that he has scarcely mentioned her to the Baroness. Eugenia knows instantly that her fibbing has disturbed Acton. "She had struck a false note. But who were these people to whom such fibbing was not pleasing? If they were annoyed, the Baroness was equally so."²³ From this point on Acton's feelings toward Eugenia are ambivalent. He is charmed by her but, at the same time, disturbed by her lying. In the end his rigid Puritan view of lying wins out over his more natural instincts and he never asks her to marry. Ironically, Acton is the person most capable of appreciating Eugenia and accepting her into the New England society, but it is he who turns out to be the exorcist for the preservation of the social order. Robert Acton becomes the champion of the New England way of life and it is he who has seen the world.

To view the structure of The Europeans as simply comic or purely romantic is to overlook the interesting portrayal James gives of Eugenia's character. She is much more complex than either the comic or purely romantic modes present her. In the comic mode she functions primarily as the pharmakos whose presence in New England threatens the social order. In the romantic mode, Eugenia's role seems slight because she is the only one who appears to be left out of the happy ending. James does, however, use the character of Eugenia in a way that helps to structure the novel--a structure that further illustrates James's

innovations with different elements of the romance. The element of the romance that most informs the characterization of Eugenia is James's use of the pastoral romance. It is the use of this aspect of the romance that brings Eugenia to her rightful place in the forefront of our interest in the novel. As James uses the pastoral romance it becomes a device for portraying Eugenia's mental landscape. While the rest of the characters in The Europeans are presented to us as types by an omniscient author, Eugenia is, at times, James's center of consciousness. We do not, however, see everything that happens to the Europeans through the eyes of Eugenia; the novel is, after all, called The Europeans. On the one hand, it is partly the story of Felix's attempt to marry Gertrude. On the other hand, James's method of characterizing Eugenia is by allowing us to enter into her thoughts and to watch as she reflects on her surroundings.

The main body of the novel takes place during a New England summer in a rural area seven or eight miles from Boston. The mood is sunny and gay; the imagery is predominately of the natural surroundings. During the summer months in New England, Eugenia is essentially content. She enjoys the fresh change of life that America offers: "She wrote to a friend in Germany that it was a return to nature; it was like drinking new milk, and she was very fond of new milk."²⁴ The imagery of the pastoral romance provides the clearest indication of Eugenia's frame

of mind. The long peaceful summer during which Eugenia is largely content cannot, of course, last forever. When Eugenia first arrives in America it is not yet summer, and when she leaves the summer is over. The first images of the book serve to characterize Eugenia and to contrast with the later idyllic life at the Wentworths. Even in the first paragraph of the novel James makes it quite explicit that there is a connection between the natural landscape and Eugenia's mental landscape:

A narrow grave-yard in the heart of a bustling, indifferent city, seen from the windows of a gloomy-looking inn, is at no time an object of enlivening suggestion; and the spectacle is not at its best when the mouldy tombstones and funeral umbrage have received the ineffectual refreshment of a dull, moist snow-fall. If, while the air is thickened by this frosty drizzle, the calendar should happen to indicate that the blessed vernal season is already six weeks old, it will be admitted that no depressing influence is absent from the scene. This fact was keenly felt on a certain 12th of May . . . by a lady who stood looking out of one of the windows of the best hotel in the ancient city of Boston. She had stood there for half an hour--stood there, that is at intervals; for from time to time she turned back into the room and measured its length with a restless step.²⁵

The depressing scenery is at once the source of Eugenia's irritation and the objective correlative for her frame of mind. "It is the darkest day of my life," she tells Felix, "and you know what that means."²⁶ If the weather does not get better she plans to return to Europe at once. By evening a miraculous transformation in the weather brings Eugenia and Felix out for a walk:

The sunset was superb; they stopped to look at it; Felix declared that he had never seen such a gorgeous

mixture of colors. . . . Eugenia's spirits rose. She surrendered herself to a certain tranquil gayety. If she had come to seek her fortune, it seemed to her that her fortune would be easy to find. There was a promise of it in the gorgeous purity of the western sky.²⁷

The first trip to the Wentworth's coincides with the first day of summer. The shift from urban Boston to the rural home of the Wentworth's is like a change from winter to summer. James accounts for a change in place as a change consistent with a seasonal change: "If winter had suddenly leaped into spring, the spring had for the moment as quickly leaped into summer."²⁸ When the action shifts to the home of the Wentworth's the idyllic pastoral imagery becomes the primary picture of the setting. It is a Sunday morning and Gertrude Wentworth goes out of the house for a stroll in the "spacious garden." "The flowering shrubs and the neatly-disposed plants were basking in the abundant light and warmth; the transparent shade of the great elms seemed to thicken by the hour; and the intensely habitual stillness offered a submissive medium to the sound of a distant church-bell."²⁹ Felix, who has gone on ahead of Eugenia, returns to tell her that the "inhabitants are charming," and that the home and entertainment are "company for a king." He describes the New Englanders' style of living; "It's primitive; it's patriarchal; it's the ton of the golden age."³⁰ All of the Wentworth circle are enchanted with their visitors and treat them royally throughout the summer. When Gertrude tells her father that Eugenia must

have a private home of her own because "she is the wife of a Prince," Mr. Wentworth replies, "we are all princes here . . . and I don't know of any palace in this neighborhood that is to let."³¹

As long as the summer lasts Eugenia is in high spirits. She playfully flirts with both Robert Acton and Clifford Wentworth. Her playful mood changes, however, when Acton catches her lying to his mother. At this point, the summer is over for her. She knows she has been unsuccessful in her attempt to find her fortune by marrying Robert Acton. A few nights later Felix comes in a rain storm to find his sister in a pensive mood. "Les beaux jours sont passés," she declares. She has decided to return to Europe. Eugenia's stay in America began with a snow storm and is balanced at the end with a rain storm which determines her departure. In between she has played the part of a charming lady. With the summer over, Eugenia feels that she cannot continue to play a role any longer:

'My maid shall pack up,' [she tells Felix].
'Bonté divine, what rubbish! I feel like a strolling actress; these are my "properties."'
'Is the play over, Eugenia?' asked Felix. She gave him a sharp glance. 'I have spoken my part.'
'With great applause!' said her brother.
'Oh, applause--applause! she murmured. And she gathered up two or three of her dispersed draperies. And glanced at the beautiful brocade, and then, 'I don't see how I can have endured it!' she said.³³

From this point on in the novel, Eugenia's role is explained best by the comic mode as the pharmokos driven out by an unbending society. For a time, however, she has

been the center of attention in the novel. Were it not for the fact that James relies so heavily upon the different conventions of the romance Eugenia could have developed into a very interesting study of a center of consciousness. As it is, however, the most we see of her consciousness is presented to us largely in terms of the imagery of the pastoral romance.

Although the comic mode, the pure romance and the pastoral romance characterize the romantic structure of The Europeans, James's does not limit his use of the romance to structure alone. In fact, his definition of the romance as "experience disengaged" refers as much to his conception of character as it does to the romantic structure of his novels. Once again, in The Europeans, James is interested in presenting a portrait of the free, disengaged characters who so preoccupy his novels. In his preface to The Spoils of Poynton, James describes his disengaged characters as the "free spirits" of life, and the fools as the "fixed constitutants.":

We get perhaps a vivid enough little example, in the concrete, of the general truth, for the spectator of life, that the fixed constitutents of almost any reproducible action are the fools who minister, at a particular crisis, to the intensity of the free spirit engaged with them. The fools are interesting by contrast, by the salience they acquire, and by a hundred other of their advantages; and the free spirit, always much tormented, and by no means always triumphant, is heroic, ironic, pathetic or whatever, and . . . for instance, 'successful' only through having remained free.³⁴

The free spirits in The Europeans are Felix and Gertrude. They are the only ones capable of being happy in any situation. The Puritan outlook on life keeps the rest of the New Englanders rigidly inflexible. Once the golden age of the summer is over Eugenia cannot bear to stay in America any longer. She feels free only so long as the Americans do not see through the role she is playing.

What Mr. Wentworth has all along called Gertrude's difficult temperament has merely been her desire to be free from the oppressive Puritan morality. Felix comes and provides the touchstone for her dormant spirit. "To enjoy . . . to take life--not painfully, must one do something wrong?"³⁵ she asks Felix. "I don't think it's what one does or one doesn't do that promotes enjoyment," her companion answered. "It is the general way of looking at life."³⁶ Gertrude has been taught to see life as a "discipline." Felix suggests that she try "to look at it as an opportunity." That Felix is able to convince Gertrude to his way of seeing life is apparent when she chooses to marry him rather than Mr. Brand; her choice is for opportunity and against discipline. Gertrude tries to explain to Mr. Brand the reason she could not possibly marry him:

'I am trying for once to be natural,' cried Gertrude passionately. 'I have been pretending, all my life; I have been dishonest; it is you that have made me so!' . . . why shouldn't I be frivolous, if it's one's nature. No, I don't care for the great questions. I care for pleasure--for amusement. Perhaps I am fond of wicked things; it is very possible!³⁷

Mr. Brand's puzzled reply is simply, "I don't think you know what you are saying!"³⁸ There never has been anything wrong with Gertrude's temperament; her family has only insisted upon the wrong standard for judging her. Mr. Brand has been teaching her to stifle her normal wish for a different life; he has been assisting in the cruel task of forcing conformity on a free spirit. Gertrude's innocence, as with a number of James's characters, has been the source of her strength. Innocence is not, as Blake has shown us, a passive state, but a positive and lively one, full of curiosity and essentially creative. By remaining free and innocent of the oppressive Puritan morality, Gertrude is able, with the help of Felix, to rebel against the restrictions of her father's rigid way of life. In a sense, all of James's heroes are free to the extent that they are non-conformists. Neither Gertrude nor Felix is the exception. They retain our interest in The Europeans not merely because they are the main characters in a romantic plot, but because they are examples of James's characters who lead a life of "experience disengaged."

It would perhaps have been a simple matter for James to have made his novel The Europeans merely a comedy of manners, or a pure romance, or a pastoral romance. It is, however, his artistic use of all these different elements of the romance which makes The Europeans a successful novel. Furthermore, at no point does the conventional

romance dictate the form for James to follow. It would have been a simple matter for him to arrange the marriage of Eugenia and Acton (as he arranged the unconvincing acquiescence of Mr. Brand to Gertrude's marriage to Felix) but James is unwilling to submit totally to the demands of the romance for his resolution. He refuses to sacrifice his artistic freedom to the a priori requirements of a conventional form. Although he employs elements of the romance, he refuses, as always, to employ them for their own sake. His work must remain organic, not mechanical, if it is to give a full picture of life. Perhaps the fact that there are so many conventional comic and romantic devices in The Europeans explains James's later deprecation of the novel. Never again was he to rely so heavily upon so many conventions of the romance for structuring his novel.

FOOTNOTES

¹Leon Edel, ed., The Selected Letters of Henry James (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Cudahy, 1955), pp. 69-70.

²Percy Lubbock, ed., The Letters of Henry James (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920, 2 vols.), I, pp. 65-66.

³Henry James, The Europeans (Houghton Mifflin Co., 1884), p. 106. (Henceforth referred to as The Europeans).

⁴Ibid., pp. 107-108.

⁵Ibid., p. 53.

⁶Ibid., p. 48.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Joseph A. Ward, The Search for Form (University of North Carolina Press, 1967), p. 95.

⁹Northrup Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton University Press, 1957), see especially pp. 148-149.

¹⁰Ward, The Search for Form, p. 110.

¹¹Evil in James's novels is by nature a social phenomenon. James does not identify it with cosmic evil. For a fuller discussion see page 154 of this text.

¹²Blackmur, Preface to The American, p. 37.

¹³The Europeans, p. 33.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 108.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 9-10.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 251.

- ¹⁷Ibid., p. 226.
- ¹⁸Ibid., p. 57.
- ¹⁹Ibid., p. 257.
- ²⁰Ibid., p. 267.
- ²¹Ibid., p. 265.
- ²²Ibid., p. 235.
- ²³Ibid., p. 135.
- ²⁴Ibid., pp. 78-79.
- ²⁵Ibid., p. 1.
- ²⁶Ibid., p. 6.
- ²⁷Ibid., p. 19.
- ²⁸Ibid., p. 23.
- ²⁹Ibid., p. 29.
- ³⁰Ibid., p. 47.
- ³¹Ibid., p. 71.
- ³²Ibid., p. 208.
- ³³Ibid., p. 278.
- ³⁴Blackmur, Preface to The Spoils of Poynton, pp.
129-130.
- ³⁵The Europeans, p. 104.
- ³⁶Ibid., p. 105.
- ³⁷Ibid., p. 166.
- ³⁸Ibid.

CHAPTER V

THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY: THE ROMANCE IN TRANSITION

The beginning of the 1880's marked the end of James's early fictional development. The appearance of The Portrait of a Lady in Macmillan's Magazine and The Atlantic Monthly from late 1880 to late 1881 represents a change in James's fiction from an art that has been predominately a romantic conception to an art that is more thoroughly realistic. In all of his work before The Portrait of a Lady James has relied heavily upon the conventions of the romance for the shaping of his novels. He has been more concerned with the creation of incident as the means by which and from which he depicts character. Hitherto his emphasis on incident has revealed his inclination, not always intentional, to use the conventions of the romance. What happens in The Portrait of a Lady is quite simply, but ultimately very significantly, a shift in emphasis from James's conception of art based on incident to art based on character. This is not to say, however, that James excludes characterization from his earlier,

more romantically conceived works, nor that after The Portrait James does not present his characters in romantic situations. The insistence upon a difference between character and incident is, for James, a needless definition. One is reminded again of what James says in "The Art of Fiction":

What is character but the determination of incident?
What is incident but the illustration of character?
What is either a picture or a novel that is not of character? What else do we seek in it and find in it?
It is an incident for a woman to stand up with her hand resting on a table and look at you in a certain way; or if it be not an incident I think it will be hard to say what it is. At the same time it is the expression of character.¹

The Portrait of a Lady is not the first time that James uses incident to reveal characterization. All of his previous novels have been structured on this basic formula. Roderick's character is revealed by his response to the life in Europe. Newman is presented as a man who has been "insidiously beguiled" by corrupt Europeans. In The Europeans, character is revealed almost solely in terms of the romantic plot of getting every one married. What makes The Portrait of a Lady essentially different from the rest of these early works is that characterization determines incident. In other words, for the first time in his fiction, James's use of the romantic conventions subserves his greater realistic demands. From this point on James's fiction can be described as realism extended into romance rather than romance extended into realism. In the early

novels, romance had served quite adequately and explicitly as a structural device. In The Portrait and after, the romance becomes a quality in James's work that is distinguished only by looking more at the texture of the work and less at the structure of the text.

In his Preface to Roderick Hudson and The American James reveals his early conception--the germ--of those works. It is significant that, in both, his emphasis is upon incident rather than character. In The American, James says he recalls the germ came to him "as the theme of a 'story,' the situation, in another country and an aristocratic society, of some robust but insidiously beguiled and betrayed, some cruelly wronged compatriot."² The emphasis is upon the incidents surrounding the character of Newman. In Roderick Hudson James says he is concerned with the incidents that will illustrate the special gifts of Roderick. Roderick's character is revealed almost entirely through his various encounters in Europe. It is the character of Rowland Mallet, however, that points the way toward The Portrait of a Lady. In another sense, Roderick Hudson is about the drama of Mallet's consciousness. The emphasis in characterizing Mallet is upon his reaction to various incidents. The germ to The Portrait of a Lady comes to James not as a vague idea concerning a story or an incident. The germ comes to him "altogether in the sense of a single character."³

In trying to recover the germ of his novel, James says, "I see that it must have consisted not at all in any conceit of a 'plot,' nefarious name, in any flash, upon the fancy, of a set of relations, or in any one of those situations that, by a logic of their own, immediately fall, for the fabulist, into movement, into a march or a rush, a patter of quick steps."⁴ The germ is not at all conceived first as incident. Its conception, James says, came "altogether in the sense of a single character, the character and aspect of a particular engaging young woman, to which all the usual elements of a 'subject,' certainly of a setting, were to need to be super-added."⁵ One of the reasons James elevates the sense of character to such high position in his fiction is the influence of Ivan Turgenieff. Turgenieff's experience with the origin of his own fiction "began for him almost always with the vision of some person or persons who hovered before him, soliciting him, as the active or passive figure, interesting him and appealing to him just as they were and by what they were."⁶ The sense of character preceded the necessity of incident. James continues to describe Turgenieff's creative process, a process that is analagous to his own:

He saw them, in that fasion, as disponibles, saw them subject to the chances, the complications of existence, and saw them vividly, but then had to find for them the right relations those that would most bring them out; to imagine, to invent and select and piece together the situations most useful and favourable to the sense of the creatures themselves, the complications they would be most likely to produce and to feel.⁷

To find just the right situations most useful and favorable for depicting Isabel is precisely what James must do. Because his emphasis is upon character, James says that "I'm often accused of not having 'story enough.'"⁸ James, in fact, desires to play down the role of incident in The Portrait as much as possible:

I seem to myself to have as much as I need--to show my people, to exhibit their relations with each other; for that is all my measure. If I watch them long enough I see them come together, I see them placed, I see them engaged in this or that act and in this or that difficulty. How they look and move and speak and behave, always in the setting I have found for them, is my account of them--of which I dare say, alas, que cela manque souvent d'architecture. But I would rather, I think, have too little architecture than too much.⁹

A further look at James's Preface to The Portrait clarifies how he attacked the problem of surrounding his character with incidents without losing track of his primary emphasis upon character.

By what process of logical accretion was this slight 'personality,' the mere slim shade of an intelligent but presumptuous girl, to find itself endowed with the high attributes of a Subject?--and indeed by what thinness, at the best, would such a subject not be vitiated? Millions of presumptuous girls, intelligent or not intelligent, daily affront their destiny, and what is it open to their destiny to be, at the most, that we should make an ado about it? The novel is of its very nature an 'ado,' an ado about something, and the larger the form it takes the greater of course the ado. Therefore, consciously, that was what one was in for--for positively organizing an ado about Isabel Archer.¹⁰

To intensify the interest in Isabel, James "super-adds" the proper incidents--incidents which describe her affronting her destiny--and by so doing he enhances his story with the quality of the romance.

The proper incidents James discovers, must be a natural projection of the consciousness of Isabel Archer:

'Place the centre of the subject in the young woman's own consciousness . . . and you get as interesting and as beautiful a difficulty as you could wish, Stick to that--for the centre; put the heaviest weight into that scale, which will be so largely the scale of her relation to herself. Make her only interested enough, at the same time, in the things that are not herself, and this relation needn't fear to be too limited. Place meanwhile in the other scale the lighter weight . . .: press least hard, in short, on the consciousness of your heroine's satellites, especially the male; make it an interest contributive only to the greater one. See, at all events, what can be done in this way. What better field could there be for a due ingenuity?'¹¹

As one can see by the way James attacks the problem of balancing character and incident the emphasis is predominantly upon the mind--that is, the character--of Isabel Archer. At another point in the Preface to The Portrait James describes this work as a house of fiction. It is a work of very careful architecture which has many windows. In effect, Isabel is his house of fiction and through the windows of her sufficiently wide consciousness she presents the incidents of the work. Isabel is the origin and center of his architecture and over this magnificent edifice James erects a "careful and proportioned pile of bricks that arches over it and that was thus to form, constructionally speaking, a literary monument."¹² In later years, James was to regard The Portrait of a Lady as the most proportioned of his productions after that of The Ambassadors.

The incidents which James uses to portray Isabel Archer are relatively easy to account for. The story opens

at an old English countryhouse where Isabel has been brought from America by her aunt, Mrs. Touchett. Through a conversation carried on by Mrs. Touchett with her son Ralph, we learn a brief history of Isabel's background in America. Like Roderick Hudson, Isabel has been brought to Europe by a patronizing friend who feels that the native American genius can best be expressed in the opportunities found in Europe. For the most part the rest of the portrait of Isabel is her pursuit of those opportunities. James structures Isabel's opportunities around a series of courtships. Each of the three gentlemen who court Isabel represent different aspects of her encounter with experience. Isabel rejects the first two suitors because to marry either of them would cause her to relinquish her cherished sense of liberty in finding her "destiny." When Isabel marries Gilbert Osmond, whom she feels will allow her the liberty to follow her opportunities, the first half of the portrait of Isabel comes to an end. The overall structure of the first half of The Portrait, reveals a basically conventional romantic plot. In the second half of the book, Isabel's story becomes closely involved with the future of her step-daughter Pansy. Pansy's marriage is a matter of great concern to Gilbert Osmond who has high hopes for his daughter, and interestingly enough, some of Pansy's suitors are former lovers of Isabel. The romantic structure of the second half of The Portrait essentially concerns the business of

getting Pansy married to someone who meets Osmond's high expectations. Isabel is a somewhat different person in the second half of the book. Once she has been removed from the center of a conventional romantic plot, she is able to understand Pansy's plight with much greater insight. Isabel is of course the center throughout the novel, but in the second half James places greater emphasis upon her mental activity and, now that she is married, less emphasis upon her romantic activities.

A closer look at the first half of The Portrait shows how James establishes the appropriate situations, the right chain of events, in short, the objective correlative, for filling out the picture of his young lady. When we first see Isabel, we learn that she is the youngest of three sisters brought up by their widowed father, who gives them a haphazard education including three trips to Europe. The older sisters, of whom we know very little, have managed to marry successfully. After the death of her father, Isabel is left entirely alone. Into this situation Isabel's aunt, Mrs. Touchett arrives and like the fairy godmother whisks Isabel off to Europe to fulfill her destiny. That destiny is presented romantically and symbolically by the three different houses and three different suitors who function to characterize different points of Isabel's progress. Throughout the first half of the book, and indeed the whole novel, the use of the romance is relegated to the background

where it provides a sense of coloring or texture to James's picture of Isabel. It is always the developing consciousness of Isabel that stays in the foreground. What James achieves by using the simplified plot structure of the romance in the first half is a framework which the reader somewhat easily recognizes, but which also frees the reader so that his greatest attention can be devoted to the reaction of Isabel to the different "types" of experience she encounters.

Like the other Jamesian heroes in this study, Isabel's progress is characterized by James as a growth from innocence to experience; and, as in the other novels, James presents Isabel's progress as a symbolic manner. The first half of The Portrait, the half concerned with the courtship and marriage of Isabel, is largely a study of Isabel's innocence. The second half, after her marriage to Osmond, is the record of Isabel's reaction to her loss of innocence and her greater awareness of the evil surrounding her which she had overlooked before in her innocence. Isabel is the first of James's characters whose life is presented after she has lost her innocence. Before this James ended his novels when each of his main characters--especially Roderick Hudson and Christopher Newman--became aware of the loss of innocence and, consequently, the state of experience. In a sense, James's use of the romantic mode corresponds to his depiction of his character's innocence and his emphasis on the realistic mode implies a need

to present characters with greater awareness, that is, a greater insight into the nature of experience. One of the primary differences, then, between The Portrait and James's earlier novels, is that in The Portrait James studies the reactions of a character to the overwhelming recognition of his own nature. For such a study, James needs a sufficiently strong and intelligent character. Roderick's recognition of his loss of innocence led directly to his death; Newman's recognition led him to assert his moral superiority over the Bellegardes but he also promptly returned to America. It is in The Portrait that James completely breaks away from the restrictions of the romantic mode. He finally realizes that to present the full picture of the consciousness of his characters, he must continue the portrait of Isabel beyond her state of innocence into the greater knowledge and understanding that comes with experience.

While, on the one hand, Isabel is the most realistically presented character in James's fiction, up to this point she is, at the same time, perhaps the most romantic. More than any of the earlier Jamesian characters, Isabel cherishes her liberty. She is the clearest example of James's conception of a character who leads a life of "experience disengaged." In creating Isabel, James's main concern was to present her as one who desired to affront her destiny. The most consistent characteristic of Isabel

throughout the first half of The Portrait is her desire for freedom. To fulfill her desire for freedom Isabel feels she must experience life. At the outset of the story, Isabel confesses to Mrs. Touchett that she is very fond of her liberty. Mrs. Touchett's decision to take Isabel abroad is largely based on her approval of Isabel's independent hearing. Isabel, who has "a great desire for knowledge," and an immense curiosity about life, finds that her "deepest enjoyment was to feel the continuity between the movements of her own heart and the agitations of the world."¹³ In Mrs. Touchett Isabel sees a chance to live, to escape from mere existence, which it seems would be her lot if she remained in America and married Caspar Goodwood. To go with Mrs. Touchett is to escape from the boredom and oppression that faces all of James's young romantic heroes. After Mrs. Touchett announces that she intends to take Isabel to Europe, Isabel:

. . . was restless and even agitated; at moments she trembled a little. The importance of what had happened was out of proportion to its appearance; there had really been a change in her life. What it would bring with it was as yet extremely indefinite. . . . She had a desire to leave the past behind her and, as she said to herself, to begin afresh. This desire indeed was not a birth of the present occasion; it was as familiar as the sound of the rain upon the window. . . .¹⁴

When Caspar Goodwood comes to London to propose to Isabel, she rejects him because, she says, "I like my liberty too much. If there's a thing in the world I'm fond of . . . it's my personal independence."¹⁵ Isabel, however, is not fond of independence because of what it allows her to do:

'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.'¹⁶

What impresses Ralph most about his cousin is her desire to remain free to confront her destiny:

Most women did with themselves nothing at all; they waited . . . for a man to come that way and furnish them with a destiny. Isabel's originality was that she gave one an impression of having intentions of her own. 'Whenever she executes them,' said Ralph, 'may I be there to see!'¹⁷

Isabel rejects Lord Warburton's proposal for the same reason that she rejects Goodwood's. She cannot relinquish her freedom. It is ironic that Isabel who has such a romantic conception of her freedom should reject the most conventionally romantic of her suitors. Mrs. Touchett's description of Lord Warburton characterizes him as the ideal prince:

'Lord Warburton's a very amiable young man--a very fine young man. He has a hundred thousand a year. He owns fifty thousand acres of the soil of this little island and ever so many other things besides. He has half a dozen houses to live in. He has a seat in Parliament. He has elegant tastes--cares for literature, for art, for science, for charming young ladies.'¹⁸

Isabel conceives of her romance, her destiny on a grander scale even than that of marriage to a wealthy English Lord. Her rejection of Lord Warburton's proposal, however, troubles 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, had she that pretended to be larger than these large, these fabulous occasions?"¹⁹

James provides Isabel the chance to pursue her destiny when old Mr. Touchett dies, leaving Isabel nearly seventy thousand pounds. This stroke of James's pen fulfills the last requirement for his conception of the romantic hero who encounters life as "experience disengaged." He has provided Isabel with the economical means that all his characters have in pursuing their desire for experience. The thought of an inheritance overwhelms Isabel: "She had never had a keener sense of freedom, of the absolute boldness and wantonness of liberty. . . . The World lay before her--she could do whatever she chose. There was a deep thrill in it all. . . ." ²⁰ With her new-found sense of liberty, Isabel decides to travel: "Isabel travelled rapidly and recklessly; she was like a thirsty person draining cup after cup. Madame Merle meanwhile, as a lady-in-waiting to a princess circulating incognita, panted a little in her rear."²¹ James uses the same figure of speech to describe Isabel's desire for experience as he used to describe Roderick's desire--the cup of experience. It is also significant that here, as elsewhere, James associates his hero drinking deeply from the cup of experience with the romantic mode. Madame Merle is called the "lady-in-waiting" to the "princess" Isabel. Isabel is a princess,

however, only in the general terms of James's use of the romance--his definition of romance as "experience disengaged."

Isabel's innocence and the romantic structure of The Portrait is suggested by the different houses in which Isabel lives. The first house, her grandmother's house in Albany, New York, is the source of Isabel's early romantic views. "Even as a child she thought her grandmother's home romantic."²² It is "a place which became to the child's imagination, according to its different moods, a region of delight or of terror."²³ It is in her grandmother's home that Isabel's romantic views first become associated with her desire to experience life. When Mrs. Touchett arrives Isabel describes her feelings about the house:

'I like 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.'

'Is that what you call being full of life?' [Mrs. Touchett asks.]

'I mean full of experience--of people's feelings and sorrows.'²⁴

Most of the time that Isabel lives in England with the Touchetts, she stays at their country estate, Gardencourt. Isabel's stay at Gardencourt proves to be the happiest period of her life. The affectionate tone with which James describes Gardencourt in turn reflects Isabel's affection for the home:

Her uncle's house seemed a picture made real; no refinement of the agreeable was lost upon Isabel; the rich perfection of Gardencourt at once revealed a world and gratified a need. The large, low rooms, with brown ceilings and dusky corners, the deep embrasures and curious casements, the quiet light on

dark, polished panels, the deep greenness outside, that seemed always peeping in, the sense of well-ordered privacy in the centre of a 'property' . . . these things were much to the taste of our young lady, whose taste played a considerable part in her emotions.²⁵

The order and harmony of Gardencourt gave Isabel a feeling of security. The images of greenness that surround the house reinforce Isabel's native innocence.

In the second half of The Portrait, when Isabel is living in Osmond's house, her view of the house reveals not only her own loss of innocence and internal distress over an unfortunate marriage, but also Osmond's condescending, oppressive view of his wife's desire for a life of fulfillment. The four walls of Osmond's house "were to surround her for the rest of her life. It was the house of darkness, the house of dumbness, the house of suffocation. Osmond's beautiful mind gave it neither light nor air; Osmond's beautiful mind indeed seemed to peep down from a small window and mock at her."²⁶

Ralph, who finds himself completely fascinated and puzzled by Isabel, contemplates her in imagery that reinforces James's use of houses as symbols of Isabel's progress:

He surveyed the edifice from the outside and admired it greatly; he looked in at the windows and received an impression of proportions equally fair. But he felt that he saw it only by glimpses and that he had not yet stood under the roof. The door was fastened, and though he had keys in his pocket he had a conviction that none of them would fit.²⁷

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It is not surprising that James uses the symbolism and imagery of houses to characterize Isabel when we recall that in his Preface to The Portrait, James describes Isabel as an "edifice," and The Portrait, as his "literary monument." In fact, it is altogether typical of James to characterize his characters by the objects that surround them. This technique is simply another extension of his statement that "what is character but the determination of incident or incident but the illustration of character." It is the words of Madame Merle, the "wisest woman in Europe," that perhaps best describes James's technique of characterizing by the use of surrounding objects and incidents:

'When you've lived as long as I you'll see that every human being has his shell and that you must take the shell into account. By the shell I mean the whole envelope of circumstances. There's 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.'²⁸

We can see quite clearly in Madame Merle's views that she thinks that incident expresses character. Isabel does not, however, agree with Madame Merle:

'I think just the other way. I don't know whether I succeed in expressing myself, but I know that 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.'²⁹

Both Madame Merle and Isabel represent James's own view and style. While Madame Merle feels that incident is the illustration of character, Isabel supports James's idea--indeed the whole book supports James's idea--that character is the determination of incident.

The appropriate culmination of the first half of The Portrait is, of course, the marriage of Isabel to Gilbert Osmond. Isabel's most explicit motive in marrying Osmond is the deluded notion that it will be a relationship in which she will be able to retain her great desire for freedom and dispense bounties to others. What attracts Isabel to Osmond even more than the romantic Warburton or the successful Goodwood is Osmond's air of not demanding anything of her. It is interesting, and perhaps quite significant that Isabel justifies her decision to marry Osmond in a way that reminds one of James's justification for his use of the romance in the Preface to The American:

She had told Ralph she had 'seen life' in a year or two and that she was already tired, not of the act of living, but of that of observing. What had become of all her ardours, her aspirations, her theories, her high estimate of her independence and her incipient conviction that she should never marry? These things had been absorbed in a more primitive need--a need the answer to which brushed away numberless questions, yet gratified infinite desires. It simplified the situation at a stroke, it came down from above life the light of the stars, and it needed no explanation.³⁰

When Isabel decides to marry Osmond she sees it as the romantic fulfillment of her desire to shape her own destiny; she describes that decision as a "primitive need." It is also precisely at this point in The Portrait when Isabel

decides to consummate her romantic vision that the shift is from the romantic mode to the realistic mode. James seems to be suggesting that the romantic mode is the more "primitive" impulse in his work. In his Preface to The American James recalls writing The American during his "happiest season of surrender to the invoked muse."³¹ What he envies is "the free play of so much unchallenged instinct." [Italics mine] Isabel follows the "primitive need" to include the romantic into her life and James envies the "unchallenged instinct" which allows him to include the romantic mode in his art.

Isabel's marriage to Osmond marks the end of the romantic structure of the first half of The Portrait as well as Isabel's innocence. It is the end of Isabel's innocence not only because it is the loss of her virginal chastity, but because it also forces Isabel to realize that she has lived with a number of romantic illusions. The greatest illusion Isabel has to face is her notion that "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."³² Ironically, her marriage to Osmond provides her great knowledge of a sort she never expected, but it accords her no liberty. Marriage to Osmond widens her sensibilities, and makes her much more perceptive of the evil in the world which she has hitherto overlooked. She begins to see both Osmond and Madame Merle in a different light. During the

year of Osmond's courtship, "she had seen only half his nature then, as one saw the disk of the moon when it was partly masked by the shadow of the earth. She saw the full moon now--she saw the whole man."³³ The recognition of the evil in Osmond leads Isabel to a re-evaluation of Madame Merle: "Madame Merle had ceased to minister to Isabel's happiness, who found herself wondering whether the most discreet of women might not also by chance be the most dangerous."³⁴ Because James carries his characterization of Isabel beyond her loss of innocence, he is able to endow her with a greater perception of evil than either Roderick Hudson or Christopher Newman ever possesses. In effect, the second half of The Portrait is the presentation of Isabel's reaction to her more romantic impulses before her marriage. James's use of the romance in the second half of The Portrait is largely through the "subjective adventure" of Isabel's dramatic awareness of the nature of evil. Isabel's subjective adventure becomes thoroughly entangled with another romantic development, however, in the attempt to get Pansy married.

In the second half of The Portrait the element of the romance presented in incidents surrounding Isabel's life is slight. The romantic incidents of the second half have to do almost entirely with Osmond's attempt to get Pansy married. The romantic treatment of Pansy and Claire de Cintr  of The American is remarkably parallel. Like

Madame de Cintr , Pansy is courted by a young American who makes his living in a commercial way. Osmond cannot tolerate Ned Rosier and prefers his daughter to marry an English lord, the former suitor of Isabel, Lord Warburton. Like Claire de Cintre, Pansy is torn between her sense of duty to family wishes and her desire to marry the man she loves. When Osmond becomes insistent that Pansy cannot marry Rosier and Warburton returns to England, Pansy goes into the convent. The melodramatic nature of the plot involving Pansy, though not developed to the proportions of the intrigue in The American, serves as another incident to make Isabel more aware of Osmond's evil nature. In the second half of the novel the function of the romance is clearly intended to illustrate the consciousness of Isabel, it does not function in any particular way to structure the text.

Perhaps the most conclusive way of illustrating the functions of the romance in the second half of The Portrait is done by looking at one of the novel's special achievements, one which James himself singled out in his Preface. The achievement to which James refers is the famous chapter forty-two, which he calls Isabel's "extraordinary meditative vigil."³⁵ It is the presentation of this "exciting inward life"³⁶ that "throws the action further than twenty 'incidents' might have done."³⁷ This presentation of Isabel's "inward life," James says, is

"obviously the best thing in the book."³⁸ James never gets quite so much inside Isabel's consciousness either before or after this chapter. Chapter forty-two is the most realistic, most prolonged appearance in an early novel of the depiction of a character's flow of consciousness. A closer look at this famous chapter--a chapter that points the way to the later James style--shows that even when James is most interested in characterization, he enhances his technique with a sense of the romance. An extraction of some of the central metaphors of this chapter will show how thoroughly the rhetoric of the romance had permeated James's art:

. . . her soul was haunted with terrors which crowded to the foreground of thought as quickly as a place was made for them.³⁹

. . . her short interview with Osmond . . . was a striking example of his faculty for making everything wither that he touched, spoiling everything for her that he looked at. . . . It was as if he had had the evil eye; as if his presence were a blight and his favour a misfortune.⁴⁰

She had had a more wondrous vision of him [before their marriage.] He was like a sceptical voyager strolling on the beach while he waited for the tide, looking seaward yet not putting to sea. It was in all this she had found her occasion. She would launch his boat for him; she would be his providence; it would be a good thing to love him.⁴¹

She could live it over again, the incredulous terror with which she had taken the measure of her dwelling. Between those four walls she had lived ever since; they were to surround her for the rest of her life. It was the house of darkness, the house of dumbness, the house of suffocation.⁴²

Under all his culture, his cleverness, his amenity, under his good-nature, his facility, his knowledge of life, his egotism lay hidden like a serpent in a bank of flowers.⁴³

Each of these extracted quotes reinforces James's conception that a hero of the romance, the one who leads a life of "experience disengaged," will confront experiences that teach him the nature of evil. One is again reminded that in his Preface to The American James discusses the presence of evil in the romance as the "rank vegetation of the 'power' of bad people that good get into. . . ." ⁴⁴

It is significant that James carries the portrait of Isabel beyond the romantic structure of the first half of the book to the point in the second half where Isabel can, in fact, recognize the nature of evil. It is additionally significant that James depicts Isabel's recognition of evil in metaphors that remind us of his use of the romantic mode. From this point on in James's novels, the function of the romance is to enhance the texture of James's work; James does not rely any longer upon the conventions of the romance to structure his text.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹Richardson, "The Art of Fiction," pp. 86-87.
- ²Blackmur, Preface to The American, p. 22.
- ³Blackmur, Preface to The Portrait of a Lady, p. 42.
- ⁴Ibid.
- ⁵Ibid.
- ⁶Ibid., pp. 42-43.
- ⁷Ibid., p. 43.
- ⁸Ibid.
- ⁹Ibid.
- ¹⁰Ibid., p. 48.
- ¹¹Ibid., p. 51.
- ¹²Ibid., p. 52.
- ¹³The Portrait, p. 41.
- ¹⁴Ibid., p. 39.
- ¹⁵Ibid., p. 140.
- ¹⁶Ibid., p. 141.
- ¹⁷Ibid., p. 63.
- ¹⁸Ibid., pp. 71-72.
- ¹⁹Ibid., p. 101.
- ²⁰Ibid., p. 267.

- ²¹Ibid., p. 268.
- ²²Ibid., p. 32.
- ²³Ibid., p. 33.
- ²⁴Ibid., p. 35.
- ²⁵Ibid., p. 56.
- ²⁶Ibid., p. 353.
- ²⁷Ibid., p. 63.
- ²⁸Ibid., pp. 172-173.
- ²⁹Ibid., p. 173.
- ³⁰Ibid., p. 291.
- ³¹Blackmur, Preface to The American, p. 25.
- ³²The Portrait, p. 354.
- ³³Ibid., p. 350.
- ³⁴Ibid., p. 396.
- ³⁵Blackmur, Preface to The Portrait, p. 57.
- ³⁶Ibid., p. 56.
- ³⁷Ibid., p. 57.
- ³⁸Ibid.
- ³⁹The Portrait, pp. 348-349.
- ⁴⁰Ibid., p. 349.
- ⁴¹Ibid., p. 351.
- ⁴²Ibid., p. 353.
- ⁴³Ibid.
- ⁴⁴Blackmur, Preface to The American, p. 37.

CHAPTER VI

THE LATE NOVELS: THE ROMANCE--

FROM TEXT TO TEXTURE

"Romance could weave itself, for Strether's sense, out of elements mild enough." Henry James, The Ambassadors

The rest of James's novels after the publication of The Portrait of a Lady are similar in their emphasis upon James's preference for dealing with subject matter through the consciousness of an intelligent character. Consequently, rather than dealing with all of the rest of James's later novels, I am selecting two--The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl--as representative of the late James period. More than twenty years elapsed between the writing of The Portrait of a Lady and the writing of The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl. In the 1880's James began to deal with more complicated matters such as social institutions and political issues in such works as The Princess Casamassima, 1885; The Bostonians, 1886; and The Tragic Muse, 1887. During the 1890's James turned for a time to writing for the theater. This brief point in an otherwise brilliant literary career was marked with noticeably bad luck. A very poor audience

reception of his play Guy Domville forced him back into fiction. It was during this period, because James was constantly experimenting in the desire to develop his technique, that the reputation of James as a difficult writer first arose. His longer, more complicated sentences became his standard way of writing in this period--a way that is evident in both The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl. The turn of the century marked for James what F. O. Matthiessen calls "The Major Phase."¹ With an enormous burst of energy James wrote three major novels in this period: The Ambassadors, 1903 (but completed in 1901); The Wings of the Dove, 1902; and The Golden Bowl, 1904. These are James's maturest efforts; they are complex, massive, and difficult novels, but they are among the best in the English language. It was also during this period that James began editing his own novels and writing his Prefaces for the New York Edition of his works. Because The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl are among James's maturest efforts, it is appropriate that they be examined along with the early novels to see how James uses the elements of the romance at the end of his career. The purpose of this paper, as stated in the first chapter, is to illustrate that James uses elements of the romance in ways that are essential to his work. Therefore, the romance is not limited to any specific period in James's development of his technique. In the later novels when James uses the romance it is not essentially a structural

device. James's later novels are structured around a "centre of consciousness." Consequently, the "air of romance" which James wishes to add to his "picture of life" is presented as a texture of the mind of his center of consciousness. In other words, it is an outgrowth or extension of his realistic technique. Surprisingly enough, James's use of the romance often coincides in the later novels with scenes that are also most clearly examples of his realistic technique. The discovery scene in The Ambassadors when Strether accidentally comes across Chad and Madame de Vionnet--a scene that confronts us directly with the interior of Strether's mind--is remarkably like Isabel's famous meditation in chapter forty-two of The Portrait of a Lady. The two scenes are alike in that both are clearly among the best examples of James's realistic technique, but, as we have already seen in the analysis of Isabel's reactions, both scenes also reveal the presence of the elements of the romance. It is particularly significant that James should retain the elements of the romance--even if it is only an "air of romance"--in scenes that are his most realistic.

While it is a realistic technique--the depictions of a "centre of consciousness"--that shapes The Ambassadors, the basic source of interest in that consciousness is created by James's uses of the romance. Strether, in the typical pattern of the romance, has disengaged himself

from the ties of his familiar society. Our interest in Strether is a result of his encounter with an entirely new social environment. One may even suspect that if we were to see Strether presented only from within the boundaries of Woollett, Massachusetts, we would find him rather uninteresting. He readily admits himself that he has not "lived." Strether, however, is not at all stupid. Our interest in him increases as we watch his perception of his Paris experiences expand his consciousness. The Paris experiences are designed by James to test Strether in a way that all of James's heroes have been tested. Strether is relatively naïve and innocent even though he is one of the oldest of James's heroes. Simply speaking, Strether's test is one which forces him to recognize the complex nature of experience; he discovers that is more than life in Woollett, Massachusetts.

Perhaps a significant insight into the necessity for experience, and consequently James's emphasis upon it, can be attained by looking at James's description of it in "The Art of Fiction":

Experience is never limited, and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spiderweb of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness, and catching every air-bourne particle in its tissue. It is the very atmosphere of the mind; and when the mind is imaginative . . . it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations.²

What happens to Strether during the course of The Ambassadors is the developing awareness of experience. Strether

catches and retains our interest because he is an imaginative mind; he does come to see life as an "immense sensibility"; and he does "convert the pulses of the air into revelations." In other words, Strether's empirical perceptions are converted into romantic, subjective insights by means of his imaginative mind. In this sense, it is not surprising that James called The Ambassadors "quite the best, 'all round,' of my productions."³ When James calls The Ambassadors his best production he is speaking of more than the rounded structure of the novel. He is referring as well to the rounded, that is, fully presented character of Strether. It is a full presentation because it is both realistic and romantic.

The germ of The Ambassadors came to James in a way that emphasizes the necessity of experience. It is a germ which subtly reflects James's definition of the romance as "experience disengaged."

The whole case, in fine, is in Lambert Strether's irrepressible outbreak to little Bilham on the Sunday afternoon in Gloriani's garden, the candour with which he yields, for his young friends' enlightenment, to the charming admonition of that crisis. . . . The remarks to which he gives utterance contain the essence of 'The Ambassadors': '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'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, like me today, be with the memory of that illusion. I was either, at the right time, too stupid or too intelligent to have it, and now I'm a case of reaction against the mistake. Do what you like so long as you don't make it. For it was a mistake. Live, live!'⁴

What Strether regrets at the age of fifty-five is never having disengaged himself from the restraints of a comfortable life in order to confront the romantic possibilities of "experience disengaged." His greatest self-condemnation is that his pattern of experience is somewhat atypical of the rest of James's humanity. His character has never really been tested; hitherto he has lived a life of experiences which have been narrowly defined. Strether's desire to break out of the narrow restriction Woollett, Massachusetts imposes on life is the beginning of the basic pattern of the nature of experience in the romance. The first impression that Strether has upon his arrival in Europe establishes as the basic pattern in the novel the pattern of experience suggested by the romance:

. . . such a consciousness of personal freedom as he hadn't known for years; such a deep taste of change and of having above all for the moment nobody and nothing to consider, as promised already, if headlong hope were not too foolish, to colour his adventure with cool success.⁵

That this impression is strange to Strether is suggested by his reflections on the subject:

Nothing could have been odder than Strether's sense of himself as at that moment launched in something of which the sense would be quite disconnected from the sense of his past and which was literally beginning there and then.⁶

Strether's hesitant welcome of the impression of personal freedom is a result of a deeply ingrained fear on the part of the social milieu of Woollett, Massachusetts that experience is somehow equated with evil. Ironically, a broad

definition of the nature of evil in James's fiction shows that evil is the conservative impulse within any society which limits or restricts the pursuit of one's own freedom; or, in the terms of Isabel Archer, evil is what prevents one from "affronting his own destiny." Consequently, the greatest evil in James can be seen in those characters who manipulate the lives of other characters in the fashion of a Madame Merle or a Fanny Assingham. What characters of this type are basically attempting to do is to create or maintain a social order which they feel is best for themselves. To create or maintain such a social order requires the presence of evil in the form of limiting the possibilities of human freedom.

The uneasiness of Strether in his conversations with Maria Gostrey, the "general guide to Europe," clearly indicates the equation of evil with experience.

He looked repeatedly at his watch, and when he had done so for the fifth time Miss Gostrey took him up.

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

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

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

'I see'--he appeared thoughtfully to agree.

'Great is my privilege.'

'Oh it's not your privilege! It has nothing to do with me. It has to do with yourself. Your failure's general.'

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

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

'Precisely. Woolett isn't sure it ought to enjoy. If it were it would. But it hasn't, poor thing.' Strether continued, 'anyone to show it how. It's not like me. I have somebody.'⁷

Because evil is equated with experience in the social milieu of Woolett there is an ironic tension created in the novel. Strether is sent upon a mission which is to save Chad from an evil woman. What happens to Strether is that his empirical perceptions of Europe reveal that the nature of experience is not at all consistent with the narrow views of Woolett, Massachusetts. He shortly discovers that the evils of Woolett are more explicit than the evils of Europe. A double irony is created when Strether equates for himself the aesthetic life of Europe with moral life. The most severe test Strether faces is the recognition of the subtle forms of evil in Europe. It is toward this recognition that the novel moves; and as we have seen, such a recognition is an essential element in the pattern of the romance if the hero is not only to be a worthy subject in the series of tests but also if he is ever to be triumphant.

Strether is the only Jamesian hero in this study who confronts evil so thoroughly both in the culture from which he has come and the culture in which he finds himself. In the novels before The Ambassadors, James has had his hero confront evil primarily in the new culture to which he travels. Perhaps this is another sense in which James meant The Ambassadors was the "best, all round" of his works. Strether's situation is somewhat unique in that his perception of evil in Europe grows out of his

earlier perception of evil in Woolett. Although Strether does not have to confront directly the evil of Woolett, he is never unconscious of the influence of Mrs. Newsome--the symbol of the Woolett way of life. He feels her influence restraining and tempering all of his activities in Europe. In fact, the primary reason that Mrs. Newsome does not need to come to Paris is that she is the symbol of all that Woolett stands for. Consequently, Strether feels as restrained by the Pococks or by Waymarsh as if Mrs. Newsome were in Paris herself. Though comic at first in their provincialism, the second ambassadors along with Waymarsh, emerge in the course of the novel as sinister characters whose distorted sense of values and perverted notion of duty cause them to betray their friendship to Strether by surreptitiously reporting his activities to Mrs. Newsome.

A short scene in which Strether attends a melodrama with Maria Gostrey provides rather early in the novel a concise comment upon the basic romantic pattern of the novel:

It befell that in the drama precisely there was a bad woman in a yellow frock who made a pleasant weak good-looking young man in perpetual evening dress do the most dreadful things. Strether felt himself on the whole not afraid of the yellow frock, but he was vaguely anxious over a certain kindness into which he found himself drifting for its victim. He hadn't come out, he reminded himself, to be too kind, or indeed to be kind at all, to Chadwick Newsome.⁸

Maria Gostrey quite perceptively suspects that Strether identifies the young man in the play with Chad:

'I seem with this freedom, you see, to have guessed Mr. Chad. He's a young man on whose head high hopes are placed at Woolett; a young man a wicked woman has got hold of and whom his family over there have sent you out to rescue. You've accepted the mission of separating him from the wicked woman. Are you quite sure she's very bad for him?'⁹

It is Maria Gosgrey's assessment of Strether's reactions which gives a romantic interpretation of the nature of Strether's mission. Later on she accurately guesses that if Strether is successful in his mission--his test--he will be rewarded by receiving the hand of Mrs. Newsome in marriage. However, before that ever happens, Strether discovers that Madame de Vionnet is not after all so "very bad" for Chad.

In his analysis of The Ambassadors, Maxwell Geismar comments upon the romantic melodrama in the novel and its relation to the realistic technique:

Here [as in other James novels] . . . the central figures of the novel are soon transfixed by their 'prearranged destinies.' They are trapped again by the relentless coils of the romance melodrama. In one sense indeed the three main figures can be viewed as an aging, desperate and manipulative woman; a rich, slippery and callous young American bounder; and a perpetually adolescent, rather pruriently old-maidish and inordinately 'innocent' middle-aged voyeur. For Strether also 'spies out,' with a kind of childish wonder, and a certain curious loverlike jealousy and envy, all the 'intimate' sexual behavior of Chad and Mme. de Vionnet. In a more realistic chronicle, this after all barely more than middle-aged literary man, completely entranced as he is by the maturing French lady, might well have married her. And the well-matched couple might then have left their wealthy, handsome, cultivated and 'pagan' young American friend to go his own way.¹⁰

The most important element of the romance in James's novels after The Portrait of a Lady is the hero's recognition

of evil. The manner in which James handled this scene in The Portrait became a favorite technique in later works. Like Isabel, Strether recognizes the nature of evil in a meditative scene during which James confronts us most directly with the mind of Strether. Once again, in the later novels as in The Portrait, the elements of the romance are present at the same time that James's art is most realistic.

The presence of the romance in James's realistic depiction of Strether's recognition of the true relationship between Chad and Mme. de Vionnet adds a texture to James's picture of life that could not be achieved by the realistic mode alone. It is not surprising that what concerned James most in his development of Strether as a center of consciousness was a desire to perfect a device both for framing and for interpreting experience. All art must give the effect of putting a frame around its subject in order for us to concentrate upon it without being distracted by irrelevant details. The frame for The Ambassadors becomes the mind of Strether; it is this frame which surrounds James's picture of life.

The scene in The Ambassadors which represents best in miniature the whole of James's art is the scene in Book Eleven where Strether leaves Paris for a day in the French countryside. What the reader sees is a very convincing picture of rural France; it is furthermore convincing because we know that it is the imaginative, perceptive mind

of Strether which is the frame of the picture. What is equally significant is that Strether is prompted to visit rural France because he had once seen a picture by Lambinet of the French countryside. When Strether departs from his train he discovers that he has selected the right spot. Everything around him reminds him of Lambinet's picture in real life:

The oblong gilt frame disposed its enclosing lines; the poplars and willows, the reeds and river--a river of which he didn't know, and didn't want to know, the name--fell into a composition, full of felicity, within them; the sky was silver and turquoise and varnish; the village on the left was white and the church on the right was grey; it was all there, in short--it was what he wanted: it was Tremont Street, it was France, it was Lambinet.¹¹

It is Strether's desire to find a part of rural France which reminds him of Lambinet's picture that precipitates his journey into the countryside. However, what precipitates Strether's desire to find a countryside in France that reminds him of Lambinet is basically a romantic impulse. "He could thrill a little at the chance of seeing something somewhere that would remind him of a certain small Lambinet that had charmed him, long years before, at a Boston dealer's and that he had quite absurdly never forgotten."¹² In other words, as James says, "romance could weave itself, for Strether's sense, out of elements mild enough."¹³ It is particularly significant that the ensuing scene in which Strether's thoughts are never more clearly before us is a scene which originates as a result of romance woven from

"elements mild enough." After James wrote The Portrait of a Lady the use of incident in his work is secondary to his use of character and the elements of the romance are secondary to James's realistic techniques. However, the elements of the romance are needed to give texture to James's picture of life.

When we turn to The Golden Bowl and find that we are presented with a real Prince and Princess, we are not surprised to find other elements of the romance. The presence of a Prince and a Princess is not enough in itself to say that James uses the elements of the romance. As always, what is important in James is the type of experience with which he deals. Because The Golden Bowl is one of the most controversial of James's major works, there are a number of ways of reducing the plot structure of the novel so that it resembles the conventional romantic plot. One of the ways in which Maggie can be viewed is in terms of the medieval allegory. This view makes Maggie virtually a saint. She has never known evil before her marriage. She gradually discovers the nature of evil as she becomes more and more sure that her husband, Amerigo, is having an affair with her close friend, and now stepmother, Charlotte. Through the exercise of forgiveness and perfect love, Maggie leads her husband to repent and return to the ways of virtue. Another simplified way of seeing Maggie is that she is a good wife who finds that she is about to lose her husband to a rival and so she sets out with all her skill to fight

for her rights and the cause of virtue. She is justified in doing so and the story ends with her success. Here the plot of The Golden Bowl is reduced to the conventional love triangle and the simple, expected victory of good over evil in a conventional happy ending with the lovers' embrace. The danger of both of these simplified plot outlines is the injustice done to James's novel. In the first case, we see Maggie as someone who is incapable of evil in herself. Such a person in all of James's fiction does not exist. Maggie is a much more complex figure than this. In the second case, we must overlook the fact that Maggie is largely responsible herself for the Prince and Charlotte having so much time at their disposal. A good wife does not sacrifice the needs of her husband to an affection for her father. In neither of the simplified plot outlines can one claim that the element of the romance in The Golden Bowl is used as a structural device. To make such a claim is to overlook some very important parts of the novel.

When both Adam and Mr. Assingham say that Maggie has never known evil, they place her in the Garden of Eden, and the only dramatic necessity is that she eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge. In this framework Maggie becomes a sensitive, innocent girl who is capable of understanding by stumbling her way through her ignorance to knowledge of the nature of evil. In a sense, Maggie is very much a part of the humanity that populates James's

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fiction. The pattern of her experience is the pattern from innocence to experience; or in other terms, Maggie's experience is what James describes as "experience disengaged." What happens to Maggie is what happens to all of James's heroes who develop an awareness of the nature of evil.

Throughout the book Maggie's innocence is contrasted with her father, Adam Verver, whose name suggests his primal character. Although he is forty-seven years old at the beginning of the story, Adam's youth is repeatedly insisted upon throughout. He is an Adam, emphatically green, in the sense of being perpetually fresh and full of vitality. Like an earlier American, Christopher Newman, Adam wants to buy the best articles that Europe has on the market. However, unlike Newman, Adam Verver's innocence is the source of his own evil. Always before in James's novels, a character's innocence has ultimately been the source of his greatest strength. It is this innate innocence that allows most of James's characters to triumph in spite of defeat. Repeatedly throughout the novel Verver's innocence is associated with images of gold or golden objects. There are, for example, recurrent references to the Golden Age. Adam and his daughter are often described in terms suggestive of an ideal pastoral state prior to the Fall of Man, especially in the scenes at Mr. Verver's country estate, Fawns. Everything at Fawns is surrounded

by a "general golden peace." The association of Adam and Maggie with prelapsarian innocence has an ironic effect. Adam and Maggie are not, after all, living in a golden age, but in a fallen world. All of their behavior is motivated by a naive belief in human perfection to the point that Adam buys for Maggie an ideal husband, Prince Amerigo. Maggie explains her father's behavior to the Prince in a way that characterizes the danger of Adam's innocence:

"'You're . . . a part of his collection, . . . one of the things that can only be got over here. You're a rarity, an object of beauty, an object of price. . . . You're what they call a morceau de musée.'"¹⁴ Mr. Verver's Osmond-like appreciation of art is warped to the point that he dehumanizes all those around him with the exception of his daughter Maggie. Mr. Verver is proof that innocence invested with power and riches can become a sinister, dangerous thing; dangerous not in spite of but because of that very innocence. In another sense, Mr. Verver's innocence is dangerous because he is incapable of changing. He is one of the few characters in James's work who is never able to perceive the nature of evil. It is precisely because he does not comprehend the complexity of experience that he is dangerous.

Maggie, on the other hand, is able to change in the course of the novel. Her experience is more typical of human experience and of all the main characters of this

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study. Like Roderick Hudson, Christopher Newman, and Isabel Archer, Maggie journeys from innocence to experience. The knowledge of experience brings with it a sense of defeat, but like the rest, Maggie is a better person after her recognition of the nature of experience. At the end of the novel Maggie had achieved a relationship with her husband that is much more satisfactory and natural. Once Charlotte and Adam leave for America, Maggie and Amerigo can begin to live as husband and wife. It is interesting that James records Maggie's feelings as Adam and Charlotte depart in words that he uses to describe the romance as "experience disengaged": "Yet this above all--her just being there as she was and waiting for him to come in, their freedom to be together there always--was the meaning most disengaged."¹⁵ In a sense Maggie is the most successful, the most triumphant of James's heroes because she has learned the nature of experience and has managed to achieve a sense of freedom that none of the others could achieve. While she is as realistically presented as Isabel Archer, Maggie is, at the same time, a more romantic character in the manner with which she triumphs over evil.

In the Preface to The Golden Bowl, James reiterates his concern for the realistic demands of his art:

I have already betrayed, as an accepted habit, and even to extravagance commented on, my preference for dealing with my subject-matter, for 'seeing my story,' through the opportunity and the sensibility of some more or less detached, some not strictly involved,

though thoroughly interested and intelligent, witness or reporter, some person who contributes to the case mainly a certain amount of criticism and interpretation of it.¹⁶

As might be expected, James's art is primarily a depiction of character; the romance is used only to enhance his realistic picture of life. Once again, James comments on the relation of the romance to his realistic demands when he says in the Preface to The Golden Bowl: "Among many matters thrown into relief by a refreshed acquaintance with 'The Golden Bowl'; what perhaps most stands out for me is the still marked inveteracy of a certain indirect and oblique view of my presented action."¹⁷ After The Portrait of a Lady James's treatment of incident has clearly been supplementary to his depiction of character. Although The Golden Bowl is a clear example of James's realistic art, it is a novel whose complex meanings are lost without the complex symbolism surrounding the characters, especially the symbolism of the golden bowl. To understand the symbolism of the golden bowl is to understand somewhat the complex relationship of the principal characters of the book. The bowl stands mainly for Maggie's marriage. The flaw in the bowl represents the factor which makes the marriage bad. To define the flaw is, in a sense, to define not only the characters of the novel but the evil as well. Once again, James's art gives us evidence that a full picture of life could be presented only by combining the subjective and the objective, the romantic and the realistic.

When James asks himself in the Preface to The American what is involved in giving a full picture of life he realizes that the list of questions and concerns is formidable: "The who? the what? the where? the when? the why? the how?--"¹⁸ to be able to answer these questions is to be able to see experience as James describes it in "The Art of Fiction" as "never limited," "never complete," an "immense sensibility," which "catches every air-bourne particle" of meaning and "takes to itself the faintest hints of life." All his life James worked at understanding the complex nature of experience. When James asks, "by what art or mystery, what craft of selection, omission or commission, does a given picture of life appear to us to surround its them, its figures and images, with the air or romance while another picture close beside it may affect us as steeping the whole matter in the element of reality."¹⁹ James answers his own question thus: "I have ever failed to see how a coherent picture of anything is producible save by a complex of fine measurements."²⁰

Because James himself felt that a distinction between romantic and realistic fiction was unnecessary, perhaps we all do him an injustice to call him simply a "realist," or even a "romancer"; the most accurate acknowledgment would be "Henry James: Writer."

FOOTNOTES

¹F. O. Matthiessen, Henry James: The Major Phase (Oxford University Press, 1944).

²Richardson, "The Art of Fiction," pp. 83-84.

³Blackmur, Preface to The Ambassadors, p. 309.

⁴Ibid., pp. 307-308.

⁵Henry James, The Ambassadors (2 vols.; Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), p. 4. (Henceforth referred to as The Ambassadors).

⁶Ibid., Vol. I, p. 9.

⁷Ibid., pp. 16-17.

⁸Ibid., pp. 53-54.

⁹Ibid., p. 54.

¹⁰Maxwell Geismar, Henry James and the Jacobites (Houghton Mifflin Co., 1965), p. 98.

¹¹The Ambassadors, Vol. II, p. 247.

¹²Ibid., p. 245.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Henry James, The Golden Bowl, Vol. I (2 vols.; Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904), p. 12.

¹⁵Ibid., Vol. II, p. 367.

¹⁶Blackmur, Preface to The Golden Bowl, p. 327.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Blackmur, Preface to The American, p. 23.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 30.

²⁰Ibid.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study has been to show that James uses the elements of the romance throughout his literary career in ways that enhance his art. The underlying principle of organization has been that James uses the romance in his early novels as a rather obvious structural device, and that in the late novels he uses the romance to give a romantic texture to his picture of life. In the early novels, as I have shown, James relies quite heavily upon the elements of the romance for the shaping of his fiction. It is perhaps not so surprising for an apprentice artist to make use of the material with which he is familiar. In fact, the emphasis in both the tale "Benvolio" and the novel Roderick Hudson is somewhat biographical. The dilemmas which Benvolio and Roderick Hudson face can be seen as James's attempt to reconcile the demands of the realistic and romantic modes of fiction. The characterization of Roderick is largely presented in relation to the romantic structure of the novel, especially to the external action or plot. In the late Jamesian novels, characterization becomes structure as it is presented through the center of consciousness.

The analysis of The American shows that in this novel James comes close to writing pure romance. The structure of The American is built on the conventional romantic situation of the injustices done to the romantic lover. The tension in the novel is an outgrowth of the romantic structure. The tension is created by Newman's attempt to "win" the approval of the Bellegarde family and Claire's hand in marriage. As in Roderick Hudson, the romantic structure of the novel serves to characterize the hero. The hero is defined in terms of his relation or response to a series of tests or external actions.

In The Europeans the emphasis is once again upon James's use of the romance as a device for structuring his text. James uses the romance in a number of different ways to shape The Europeans. In writing The Europeans, James seems to be consciously employing the various possibilities of the romantic structure. James was perhaps much more aware of the desire of the American reading audience for romantic, even sentimental literature than most critics will admit. His correspondence with William Dean Howells reveals that he intends to experiment with a "joyous little romance." The result is that the romance can be seen structuring The Europeans in a number of different ways. Viewed from different perspectives, the structure of The Europeans can be seen as pure romance, the romance as social comedy, pastoral romance or as James's concept of

romance as "experience disengaged." In this novel, more than in any other, James uses the romance to structure his fiction.

Perhaps the most important chapter in this study is the chapter on The Portrait of a Lady. In this novel James finally seems to reconcile the demands of the romantic and realistic modes and to use the romance henceforth as a complement to his realistic technique. James no longer uses the romance to structure his fiction. From this point on, James's fiction is structured primarily around character rather than around incident. The shift is a significant one because the action of the novel, the elements of the romance are now presented as a part of the sensibility or mental landscape of the novel's center of consciousness. In the novels that precede The Portrait of a Lady, James first conceives of the "germ" in terms of incident or plot. The "germ" of The Portrait of a Lady, however, comes to him in the "sense of a single character."

Because the novels which follow The Portrait of a Lady are similar in their emphasis upon James's preference for dealing with subject matter through a center of consciousness rather than by incident, The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl were chosen as representatives of the late James novels. In these novels James uses the elements of the romance primarily in themes, symbols and images in ways that give texture to his realistically conceived art.

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James the mature artist does not have to rely upon the conventions of the romance for shaping his text. He does feel, however, that the "air of romance" is necessary if he is to give his picture of life fullness.

As James progresses in his literary career he becomes increasingly more in control of his materials. There are times in the early novels when James relies quite heavily upon the conventions of the romance for shaping his fiction. His retrospective view of The American suggests that his reliance upon the romance was, at times, more than he suspected. However, James, all his life, reconciles the demands of the realistic and romantic modes. By the end of his literary career James still uses the conventions of the romance, but by this time he is clearly in control of his material. He uses the romance in ways that enhance his realistic fiction. When the romance functions artistically to complement his realistic techniques, James is able to present a full picture of life. In effect, he becomes "Henry James: Writer."

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