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THE TREATMENT OF MARRIAGE
IN THE EARLY NOVELS
OF HENRY JAMES

by

STEPHEN EMILE TEICHGRAEBER

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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B.E., P.P.,

and

James Thurber
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INTRODUCTION

Henry James is the finest American novelist of manners, if the category implies a writer who can capture the "half uttered or unuttered or unutterable expressions of value"\(^1\) by individuals in a society. James has no peer in defining the subtlest impressions, the highest sensitivities, and the most complicated motives. What interested James for fictional treatment was not so much entire societies, or the interplay between the strata of a society, but the movement of an individual in society and the relationships he might have with other individuals in that society. With the possible exception of *The Princess Casamassima* and *The Bostonians*, social reform and movements of society as a unit have only a secondary importance in James's fiction. This is not to say that the manners, morals, and culture of the society are not focused upon. It is simply the study of the individual placed within these forms which affirms or calls into question their validity. The individual is never completely free from society, nor does society completely determine the actions of the individual.

The relationships of individuals fascinated James in their usefulness and richness as material for his novels. He found that relations between individuals can complicate or resolve their lives. A character can
"vibrate" or respond to the complexity of a relationship, or the relationship can "bristle" with meaning for the character who has achieved or is experiencing a growth of knowledge and awareness. Thus, Isabel Archer soon finds that her relationship with Osmond complicates her life and does not resolve her search. Other relationships existing without her knowledge further complicate her own relationship to Osmond. In *Confidence*, however, relationships are seen to resolve the characters' needs, once these needs have been discovered, and the four major characters are suitably paired off. But in both novels, consciousness is opposed to dullness; mutual awareness is necessary for the relationship to exist and take on meaning. But at the same time, growth in awareness is impeded by *a priori* judgments and preconceptions. Both Isabel Archer and Bernard Longueville's judgments made about themselves and others without full knowledge must be swept aside before valid knowledge and understanding of the relationship can exist.

The aesthetic values of a relationship are often in direct proportion to the complexity of that relationship. Complexity demands intelligence in order that a person can understand it; and the higher the degree of mutual understanding is, the more rewarding, the more beautiful the relationship becomes for the partners and for the artist attempting to render the relationship. Thus James avoids the adventure-romance because he sees
fewer possibilities in this genre for the existence of such relationships. James's own characters are dis-
ponibles and ficelles when they are simply devices for the artist and are not necessary in any major way for the important relationships he is defining and describing. His characters who can have the richest relationships are those who most nearly approximate James's ideal artist—a person on whom nothing is lost. It is in light of this close relation between life and art that James writes in his preface to The Golden Bowl that "to 'put' things is very exactly and responsibly and interminably to do them. Our expression of them, and the terms on which we understand that, belong as nearly to our conduct and our life as every other feature of our freedom."² James avoids promoting interest in character "types," such as Dickens's grotesques. He is primarily occupied with allowing for the character the freedom to be de-
finite and to develop by means of his relationships with others. As he writes in his preface to The Awkward Age, "The relations of a human figure or a social occurrence are what make such objects interesting."³

Human relationships can, in all their complexity, frustrate or reward, depending upon the viability of the intellectual, social, moral, and aesthetic engagements between the individuals. The satisfactory marriage can allow for human intercourse in all these aspects of the partners' lives. The relationship with the most promise
is one which will provide greatest permanence both in time and in spirit; and, hopefully, the most consistent potential for growth. Marriage, by virtue of the public and private nature of the contract which formalizes it, is such a relationship.

For a relation to be valid, its substance or content must in no way belie its form. James intermingles aesthetic and matrimonial imagery when he speaks of the "successful" novel as one which "the sacrament of execution indissolubly marries /form and substance/, and the marriage, like any other marriage, has only to be a 'true' one for the scandal of a breach not to show. The thing 'done' artistically, is a fusion, or it has not been done." Similarly, a successful marriage is one which maintains freedom, love, and honesty between partners to the extent that their relationship is not only communion, but actual union with each other as the formal marriage contract asserts. In other words, in the satisfactory marriage, the law is kept both in letter and in spirit. There is no discrepancy between form and content.

Such a concept of marriage is admittedly an idealistic one, but nevertheless one which is grounded in very real human needs and desires. James is idealistic in his concept of the potential growth and fulfillment marriage offers, but he is very realistic in his treatment of the individual situation. He purposely grants his
main characters as much physical freedom as possible: freedom from financial struggle, social climbing, and even intellectual dullness. By freeing, in such a way, his characters who search for the satisfactory marriage, James allows them a greater range for choice and the possible development of their awareness of their own and others' requirements in marriage. Operating under conditions of such freedom, their choices take on a heightened, magnified reality. For the most part, they are not hindered by deterministic forces of society; for they are themselves in the highest stratum of society.

Recent critical works which deal with subject matter related to my own are those of Naomi Lebowitz and Richard Poirier. Miss Lebowitz has discussed at length the relationships in the major fiction of James, but concentrates on the later works. She examines relationships in general, without dealing specifically with marriage. Richard Poirier has examined with great care the "scenes" of the early novels, with attention primarily paid to discovering exactly what makes for comedy and humor in early James: irony, wit, intellect confronted by the fool, and the like.

I have chose to do a study of James's treatment of marriage in the early novels since it is that relationship which all the characters seek in these novels. To ascertain what James's concept of marriage is will
provide the reasons for the characters' failure or success in entering upon such a relationship or in renouncing it. My study will furthermore offer some solutions to problems critics often have in trying to explain the multitude of renunciations not only in the early works, but in later ones as well.

My thesis is essentially an examination of James's first seven novels, from Watch and Ward to The Portrait of a Lady, with an eye to marriage specifically. The reason for my concern with the subject of marriage here is that in each of the seven novels, marriage provides the motivation and impetus for the unifying action; the characters themselves can be precisely "placed" for the reader by their attitudes toward marriage; marriage, in short, becomes the all-consuming interest of characters possessing the greatest amount of freedom, intelligence, fortune, and other advantages enabling them to live the most enriched and enriching life. A firm grasp of the language of the novels--their diction and figures of speech--is also essential in understanding attitudes toward marriage. Whether the epic tone of The American or the costume imagery in The Europeans, patterns of language form an important network of ideas for the various approaches to marriage and for the values marriage holds for its participants. In fact, many of James's own fictional techniques develop concurrently with his ideas on the great relationship, thus allowing
the form of the novel to justify and be justified by its content. Techniques such as the uses of center of consciousness and "picture and scene" develop as James becomes more interested in his subjects' growth in self-knowledge and awareness of others, in their experimentation with modes of knowledge. Seeing becomes at least as important as doing.

Each protagonist in the early novels has his own plan for attaining the satisfactory marriage. Roger Lawrence in Watch and Ward wants to mold a wife to his own aesthetic concepts; Roderick Hudson attempts to apply his own aesthetic principles directly to life and his beloved Christina; Christopher Newman believes he can buy the finest wife. The succeeding four novels approach the question of marriage largely from the feminine point of view: Eugenia has a false concept of a golden freedom which she thinks can be found through marriage to an American; Angela Vivian's innate consciousness provides her with the means whereby she can preserve her own integrity and elicit honest responses from others; and Isabel Archer, whose pride and Emersonian self-reliance cause her to disregard warnings about and inconsistencies in her quest for and final choice of a husband. By examining this all-encompassing relationship in the early novels, I seek to arrive at a more meaningful point of view from which to analyze the characters and their relations with one another--the
all-important element in James's subject matter—and apply this analysis to the acceptances and renunciations these characters make at the point where James feels it is opportune to cut off the "neverending" relations.

Judging from his repeated condemnation of the materialistic marriage, I would not place James in a tradition which was unreservedly interested in marriage as the final goal of life, such as is prevalent in fiction of the genteel tradition. In this latter tradition, a marriage of money, title, and position implies happiness and is to be sought after for its own sake, with no particular concern about the life after marriage. James could easily have been influenced by the genteel tradition's ideals for marriage, which were uncomfortably similar to the situation in English fiction. That is, the "moral" concerns had become largely externalized, and the "decent" became the emphasized concept: it was "best" that a girl should marry "well." Remnants of earlier Calvinism appear in such dogma, as Santayana points out in his lecture on the American genteel tradition. Such dicta are condemned in James's fiction.

But James, like Emily Dickinson, has a greater concern in his fiction for the spiritual coalescence of partners than their sheer, physical comfort. In this respect he is like his father, Henry James, Sr., who felt there was not even any need for the public marriage contract: marriage was entirely a spiritual, private
relationship between two mutually loving people. But in his fiction, Henry James, Jr., realized marriage has both public and private aspects, it is both a personal and a social relationship. This later feature itself occasionally creates grave problems.

In each chapter of my thesis I have examined the novels treated therein from the point of view of the theme James seems to emphasize. Thus, in Watch and Ward, and Roderick Hudson, marriage is related to the theme of life and art; James's concern is with the moral and the aesthetic forces present in a relationship. Here art is seen as mimetic and static and not, as will occur later, as process—dynamic and organic. The first edition of the former novel was used for discussion, but I chose the New York Edition of Roderick Hudson since, as Leon Edel states, "it is here that we can see Christina at her best," one of James's most original characters whom he held in such high interest that he returned to her in The Princess Casamassima.

In the next two novels, The American and The Europeans, marriage is discussed in relation to the international theme, and treated in its social context as well as its private. Here both Americans and Europeans seek opportunistically on opposite sides of the Atlantic for the perfect candidate for marriage. Confrontations of various codes of manners are of utmost importance here; and the relation of manners to the psyche, as seen
in Eugenia's discovery of self through her aversion to a new code of manners, provides the reason for her renunciation. Much costume imagery is employed in these novels. This technique functions as a means of enabling the novelist of manners to delineate more delicate relationships and sensibilities. The first edition of *The American* will be referred to since its emphasis on Newman's approach to marriage is in no way altered, as it is in the New York Edition, where James attempts to reveal a greater intimacy between Claire and Newman.\(^9\)

The earlier edition reveals more clearly the stage in James's development in his ideas on courtship and marriage.

In *Confidence* and *Washington Square*, marriage is discussed in its relation with what I shall call the "epistemological" theme; that is, the confrontation of the unconscious by the conscious, producing a growth in self-knowledge. At the same time, a growth in awareness of others occurs. A progression from deception to openness and a progression from a mathematical calculation or pharmaceutical prescription to genuine humanistic interest in and understanding of the other person in the relationship reveal James's interest in modes of knowledge and their relative validity when put to use in regard to human relationships, courtship, and marriage. Thus Angela Vivian is the polari opposite of Dr. Sloper. The former gives her subject the freedom
to arrive at his own answers; the latter restricts his daughter to the point of all but stifling her. I regard the epistemological theme as an outgrowth of the moral-aesthetic theme insofar as people are mistaken for things in both lights.

The Portrait of a Lady presents marriage through an intimate combination of all three themes. The concept of the "successful," materialistic marriage, as an end in itself, has been superceded by the idea of marriage as a mutual exploration and growth—through encountering art, society, and the psyche, and through sharing ideas and emotions—for the gradual enrichment of the spirit and sensibilities. The validity of the public contract is upheld; the choice of Isabel's husband is absolutely free and deliberate. She hears advice from all quarters, and relies solely upon herself. She soon begins to derive the seen from the unseen, however, by piercing through the aesthetic, social and psychological costumes which surround her. In this chapter, my references are to the New York Edition, since James's alterations are relatively minor; and it is the standard critical text. James was to intensify this point of view of marriage in the later periods, and his changes in the text were not basic ones.

I shall not be concerned with the shorter works of the period, since James's ideas on marriage receive their fullest treatment in the novels. I have chosen
the early novels in order to examine the germinal thought and treatment of marriage which, in the later period, would be extremely complex and not so easily defined. The early themes are clearly announced, and the hierarchy of relationship and of marriage is quite readily discoverable. It is a hierarchy consistent with the values upheld in the late novels.
CHAPTER ONE
MARRIAGE AND THE THEME OF LIFE AND ART

In his first two novels James's treatment of marriage is closely linked with the theme of life and art, the relationship of the moral and the aesthetic. Heroes in *Watch and Ward* (1871) and *Roderick Hudson* (1875) consider marriage from the point of view of the artist moulding or creating an artifact as his bride. Roger Lawrence and Roderick Hudson both develop a kind of monomania to sculpt a human being into an unchanging, and therefore predictable, aesthetic delight. The problems arising in both novels are to a great extent a result of thinking such craftsmanship could be permanent. Were it not for the melodramatic conclusion of Roger Lawrence's aesthetic conquest of Nora, both situations would reveal the misdirection, idealism, and egotism of their searches. But the attitudes toward marriage in the earlier novel reveal an author still naive and idealistic himself, and a craftsman not yet capable of allowing his characters to develop freely in their own right. The technical developments which were to appear in the later works, such as the creation of a center of consciousness and the use of picture and scene, would remove the author much farther from his characters, giving them a greater objectivity and substantially increasing their freedom for natural
development. But in *Watch and Ward*, James allows Nora to escape Roger's hothouse only to have her confront an inordinately harsh outside world so that she will literally rush back to Roger's open arms.

In his search for the ideal marriage to the ideal bride, Roger Lawrence comes to an abrupt and rather immature halt when he makes the decision to create and own the "perfect wife." Even though he not only gives Nora Lambert a chart from which to act, as James suggested in his essay on the manners of American women, he considers it not a means but an end towards which she must work. As Isabel Archer was desired by Osmond to be but a reflection of his own tastes and thought, Nora was to spurn all worldly advice and experience in order to stay within the bounds of Roger's prescriptions. Rather than go out into the world and retrieve and come to know a woman nurtured and trained in its society, Roger was content and sufficiently self-assured to sit at home and make one. The germ of the novel is contained in the letter he writes to Isabel Morton, now Mrs. Keith, at the end of Chapter II:

This is the easiest way to account for my conversion to a worthier state of mind. You know that two years ago, I adopted a homeless little girl. One of these days she will be a lovely woman. I mean to do what I can to make her one. Perhaps, six years hence, she will be grateful enough not to refuse me as you did. . . .

I have begun at the beginning; it will be my fault if I have not a perfect wife.²

Such a statement of purpose reveals the egotism of Roger's "worthier" state of mind. It also reveals him as cajoling
and slightly bitter because of Mrs. Keith's earlier refusal of him as a possible husband; but above all, he has become a manipulator of human beings, a type James will later condemn as in the case of Gilbert Osmond. Roger wishes to create his wife, to own her, to ask from her in return not so much love as "grateful" duty. Later in the novel when Roger reveals his intent to Nora, she resents it: "that Roger, whom all these years she had fancied as simple as charity, should have been as double as interest, should have played a part and laid a train, that she had been living in darkness, on illusion and lies, all this was an intolerable thing" (171-172). Thus none of the ingredients is present which James will consider later as necessary for the ideal marriage: not love, freedom, or honesty.

A brief glance at the language and events of the first chapter of this apprentice work will shed light upon many difficulties which arise in the novel as a whole. A disappointed Roger appears to us first with "ardour rapidly ebbing," a man "sustained by despair," who has a "genius" for "common-sense," but, symbolically enough, is "extremely shortsighted" (5-6). He is a fastidious, hypochondriacal bachelor and "a cunning economist" (6). He dislikes the "fumes" of smokers and wears lavender gloves. In this condition, he is the passive character in the first action of the novel, the confrontation by Nora's father who asks him for a hundred dollars.
James here notes that Roger lacks any imagination, but has a great deal of discretion.

The second "scene" of this chapter is the confrontation between Roger and Isabel Morton. Half apologizing for the qualities he has already attributed to Roger, James writes that our hero was by no means lacking in

les grandes curiosités; but from an early age his curiosity had chiefly taken the form of a timid but strenuous desire to fathom the depths of matrimony. He had dreamed of this gentle bondage as other men dream of the "free unhoused condition" of celibacy. He had been born a marrying man, with a conscious desire for progeny. (11).

James further notes that Roger was the most "natural" of men while Isabel was "pre-eminently artificial" and "keenly ambitious" (11). With Isabel is her little "golden-haired" niece, to whom James devotes almost as much descriptive detail as to Isabel herself. After kissing the niece goodnight, Roger "proceeded to business." She refuses him, and he melodramatically avows to "espouse her memory and live in intimate union with her image" (15). He decides to "cast his lot with pure reason" and live for comfort and pleasure.

In the final scene of the chapter, a return to the first scene is accomplished by the presence of Nora's father, now a suicide victim. Standing over him, "her long hair on her shoulders" (16), is Nora Lambert who falls into the arms of the pitying Roger. He later ex-
presses the wish that Mr. Lambert would have taken his ten dollars proffered earlier. Listening to Nora's story, Roger judges that "the most salient fact . . . was her absolute destitution" (18). The proprietress says something about the living being more important than the dead and that she must attend to her business. Roger assumes that the driving force which had led Mr. Lambert from St. Louis to New York had been "to make money" and "find business" (19). He feels new emotion as "the child's fingers were fumbling with the key" to his heart, and he decides he can be "a protector, a father, a brother" (21). In deciding to adopt her, he asks:

Should he speak and rescue her? Should he subscribe the whole sum, in the name of human charity? He thought of the risk. . . . "Do you think you could love me?" (22-23)

James has, in the first chapter alone, drawn us a portrait of a not overly imaginative aesthete, who, though charitable to a degree, is not so unconscious of money that he does not expect a good return on his investment. Later when he offers George Fenton money, the return expected is sole ownership of Nora (81, 84). He has a somewhat inordinate desire for children, an interest in them greater than professed for matrimony or an enlarging relationship. This is borne out by the bare facts of the first chapter. As a business man he will buy a child in order to have children; as an aesthete, he will "create" out of this "vague spot of light on a dark background" (22)
the perfect wife—an image of himself—and thus arrive at the perfect marriage. As a husband, he wishes to remain a familial relative, a protective father or brother. But his passivity and lack of imagination make his roles of artist and savior difficult ones to play effectively. Furthermore, his judgment is not to be trusted, since in each scene he misjudges the major participant: Mr. Lambert is not a "dissolute scoundrel" (10) so much as he is actually desperate; Isabel is not so artificial that she cannot become a peculiarly sensitive and valuable confidante later in the novel; and Nora herself is not the simple, passive tabula rasa to be trained and polished into the ideal wife, but has distinct emotions and a free will of her own.

Roger is a relatively static person who would like to create a wife just as static. Once the final ingredient of European initiation had been added, he would wish her not to change. Thus although the "key" imagery has been noted to be unconsciously phallic, it is also used on another level—a mechanical means by which the user can set the used into action: "Roger thought of Nora . . . as a kind of superior doll, a thing wound up with a key, whose virtues would make a tic-tic if one listened" (42). The idea of possession and ownership is paramount in Roger's view of marriage. When Roger speaks to Nora of his duty to his little girl, she answers, "I am not your little girl." He replies, "Don't talk
nonsense" (50) Where Nora, being pursued by her "cousin," George Fenton, was "expanding in the sunshine of her cousin's gallantry" (67-68), she is at the same time kept within "Roger's hothouse" (69), a position which Fenton finds intolerable. In fact, Roger's introversion is pointed up several times in imagery of fireplaces, quiet rooms sealed off from the outside world, a device which allows our view of Roger as passive possessor to be further clarified. When he first "bought" Nora, "he withdrew altogether from his profession, and prepared to occupy his house in the country" (25). We often view "Roger in his slippers, by the fireside in the winter evenings gazing at Nora/ with an anxious soul..." (31). After all, as he says later, "...this young friend of mine is, to me, the most interesting object in the world" (110).

Roger's manipulation of Nora is partly caused by his feeling of inferiority, so strongly noted in the first chapter. In order that he might have "for her that charm of infallibility, that romance of omniscience," he contemplates scolding her,

/telling her she's deplorably plain, --treat/ing/ her as Rochester treats Jane Eyre. If I were a good old Catholic, that I might shut her up in a convent and keep her childish and stupid and contented! (53-54)

This sentiment is strongly suggestive of Dr. Sloper's actual treatment of Catherine. Such a policy backfires when Nora seeks freedom in her relations with George Fenton and Hubert. It is noteworthy that Roger and Nora finally
return to each other not through Roger's manipulation, but through that of James's first confidante, Mrs. Keith, to whom "Nora is under a very peculiar obligation" (219). For her intercessions on Nora's behalf. When Nora decides to leave Roger, her primary concern is for the freedom it will bring her:

A day's freedom had come at last; a life time's freedom confronted her. . . . On the old terms there could be no clearing up; she could speak to Roger again only in perfect independence. She must throw off those suffocating bounties which had been meant to bribe her to the service in which she had so miserably failed. (173-174)

She wishes to be independent not only from her filial duties to Roger, but from his money as well. Had Roger been honest with her and "told her that she wore a chain . . . she would have kept the bargain" and "taught herself to be his wife" (172) solely from duty. But she has discovered that love and duty are of two different orders. One might compare her yearnings here for independence and freedom with her earlier desire to settle the debt she felt she owed Roger. She conceives of her retribution not so much in terms of love, as of duty; for, upon arriving from Europe to find Roger seriously ill, she wished to do something, she hardly knew what, not only to prove, but for ever to commemorate, her devotion. She felt capable of erecting a monument of self-sacrifice. Her conscience was perfectly at rest. (149)

After her very melodramatic launching from Roger's hot-house into the cold, less than luxurious world, Nora discovers that her feelings of filial duty and search for
freedom have been quickly metamorphosed into love for
Roger and an undeniable realization of her former security.
She has made, as Mrs. Keith would say, a "sensible" choice.

The germ of the novel, the moulding of an adopted
daughter into a wife, is not particularly reflective of
the genteel code, but the melodramatic structure and
ending are: the deprived girl arrives at wealth and
position through marriage to a "decent" man after success-
fully warding off unpleasant, dishonest suitors with
spurious backgrounds and overtly passionate natures.

Watch and Ward is as much the sentimental romance as the
satirized The Heir of Redclyffe which Nora reads at least
twenty times. The archetypal dark lady of passion, Dona
Teresa with her "coil of crinkled blue-black hair," (42)
a woman whose major attribute was the ability to be kissed
(44), is discarded in favor of the golden-haired Nora (156).
Leo B. Levy has noted the melodramatic features of the
novel such as specifically named character traits, em-
phasis on the external and factual, lack of internal
reflection, and sensational scenes such as suicides and
the burning of money.5

Nora at one point asks Roger if he does not see the
"strangeness" of their relationship (58) and their living
together. Later, when Hubert suggests breaking a law
for Nora, Nora replies, "I dream of the beauty of keeping
laws" (147). She is the object of Mrs. Keith's sincere
concern over whether or not she will marry wealth when
she marries Roger. Roger sets her mind at ease: "I am rich . . . for the last six years, I have been saving and sparing and counting. My purpose has sharpened my wits, and fortune too has favored me." (163). When Nora discovers that "she was in the secret of the universe which was, that Roger was the only man in it who had a heart" (217), a genteel audience could also know the secret that Roger had a fortune. Mrs. Keith can rest assured; Nora can love securely and legally. The genteel code was breached as long as Roger was living with his unmarried ward, but it is now soundly reaffirmed. Roger's creation somehow had been successful; his idea for an ideal marriage, with aid from confidantes and curiously contradictory characters, had become a reality. After noting the welcoming words of Roger to Nora upon her return, one can question how much growth of individual partners will take place after the marriage: Roger says, "My own poor child" (219).

Roger is both an artist and a materialist who launches out with a plan for the perfect marriage which replaces an actual courtship. In Roderick Hudson this single quest is reflected in three interlinking campaigns. Roderick mistakenly equates the ease with which he successfully sculpts Christina with a successful relationship with her, but soon discovers that she does not respond to his love as the marble had to his touch. Rowland has the wealth necessary to "adopt" Roderick and aid
him in his artistic development, thereby creating a relationship which is a substitute for his heretofore unsuccessful courtships. Finally, Mrs. Light's treacherous quest for material security becomes focused upon marrying Christina to a wealthy, titled European. James reveals through this campaign the fallacy in the genteel code which presumes that, if a marriage involves money, it must be the "proper" one, the best one.

The latter two of these quests initiate the main action of Roderick Hudson; both are direct results of consciously formulated plans made by avowedly well-meaning characters. Rowland Mallet launches Roderick Hudson upon a quest for art: a tour of Italy and other parts of Europe where he may develop his taste, talent, and sensibility. As it happens, this quest evolves into a quest for life which ends in disaster. Secondly, Mrs. Light has carefully trained her daughter for one moment in life: Christina must marry a prince. Regardless of development afterwards, Christina's sole end in life is the "good" marriage itself. Whatever elements intrude upon the lives of these individuals which were not directly advantageous to their quests had to be gotten rid of. So Roderick had to leave Mary Garland behind to search out his career as an artist; while Christina Light had to deny her true feelings and be true only to her mother's charted course for herself.

Centering attention upon the latter quest for a
moment, one can ascertain James's growing distaste for the materialistic marriage, the marriage which, when enacted as an end in itself, means the cessation of an individual's life as exploration or growth. Madame Grandoni explains to Rowland a few intricacies of Mrs. Light's plan:

... Mrs. Light told me in Florence that she had given her child the education of a princess... Christina, I imagine, has plenty of wit—also of will... She has been told twenty times a day by her mother, since she was five years old, that she's a beauty of beauties, that her face is her fortune, that she was born for great things, and that if she plays her cards she may marry God knows whom... Mrs. Light having failed to make her own fortune in matrimony, has transferred her hopes to her daughter and nursed them till they've become a craze... She promises the girl a prince—a reigning prince.7

James throughout the novel delivers the details of this quest in harsh, jarring tones; for, as Wasserstrom notes, Christina, "tutored by her mother in pretense and envy," is for James another paradigm of his statement that "materialism of whatever society... violates love hence corrodes life."8

Christina herself crudely gives voice to her mother's materialistic sentiments when she tells Rowland:

... you know very well we're hunting for a husband and that none but tremendous swells need apply... Mr. Mallet won't do, because, though he's rich, he's not rich enough. Mamma made that discovery the day after we went to see you, moved to it by the promising look of your furniture. (180)

Her mother later in great detail tells Rowland of her
cause: Christina must "capture a prize." James speaks of the cause in religious imagery, describing how Mrs. Light had "gathered her maternal and social appetites together into a sacred parcel, to which she said her prayers and burnt incense. . . . These things had been her religion" (248). This imagery immediately combines with commercial imagery when Christina, her "priceless treasure," as a result of her "pious duty," carried "herself, 'marked' very high and in the largest letters, to market"; and Mrs. Light "worshipped her" (249-251). But her "worship" is a manifestation of her materialism, which is boundless. Probably the shrillest note of this sort is struck when Mrs. Light recounts the means by which she saved herself financial embarrassment:

I've raised money on that girl's face! I've taken her to the Jews and bidden her put off her veil and let down her hair, show her teeth, her shoulders, her arms, all sorts of things, and asked if the mother of that young lady wasn't safe! (252)

That Christina herself did not regard her marriage as such a solemnity is obvious in her remark to Madame Grandoni: "It's what they call a marriage of reason. . . . that means, you know, a marriage of madness!" (367) The marriage was, of course, to Prince Casamassima, a well-chosen name on James's part—a prince of the highest house. The Cavaliere firmly places himself with Mrs. Light when he says, "It's a magnificent marriage. The girl should be reasonable" (412).
Christina is nominally American, but has had "twenty years of Europe to make her what she is" (188). She appears in physical array shining brighter than her name: "dressed simply in vaporous white relieved with half a dozen white roses, the perfection of her features and of her person, and the mysterious depth of her expression, seemed to glow with the white light of a splendid pearl" (201). It is no wonder Roderick was inspired to make a white marble bust of her. He is naturally attracted to her by her aesthetic potentialities and actualities: "I'm damnably susceptible, by nature, to the grace and the beauty and the mystery of women, to their power to turn themselves 'on' as creatures of subtlety and perversity" (142). He was not alone; James himself often compared his countrywomen to "fine pieces of statuary," "creatures of mystery and consequently of danger;" but a woman of flesh and blood could also "be a source of grave anxiety and bewilderment." As Snow notes, Christina can easily take on a Mephistophelean role and Roderick, that of Faust. He refers to her as a "transcendant perfection," a "phantom, a vapour, an illusion.../Sten-torello, her dog,/ too may be a grotesque phantom, like the black dog in Faust."

"I hope at least that the young lady has nothing in common with Mephistopheles." (95-96)

Later Madame Grandoni declares, "There's the veritable sorceress... and her necromantic poodle" (373-374). Roderick, one of James's earliest examples of the artist
seeking knowledge, taste, and the ultimately refined subjects for his work, develops an overwhelming desire to sculpt her and finally to marry her. For him, she is knowledge and light. Unfortunately his artistic ability is more sufficient than his emotional capabilities or his power to attract her. He cannot establish a relationship with her powerful enough to counterbalance her mother's demands upon her. In the world of art he can capture her in marble, but in life there are too many external forces and campaigns for him to counteract adequately. Even though, in Roderick's eyes, she is knowledge and light, the ultimate goals he had originally sought in Europe, Christina insists to Rowland that she is "corrupt, corrupting, corruption" (407). She feels she cannot marry Roderick out of pity. She fears she would ruin him.

She has what in Boston one would call her "higher self" (407), which prevents her from marrying Roderick and avoiding the Prince. This will, her internal consciousness, along with the truth about her father, the Cavaliere, cause her to make the sacrificial decision, finally, to marry the Prince. Expressing a desire similar to that of Nora Lambert, who tells Roger she would like never to marry, but to live with him always, Christina makes a statement implying that the familial relationship allows a greater latitude of action and freedom of experience than the matrimonial. She says:

I should like Mr. Hudson as something else.
The world's idea of possible relations, either for man or woman, is so poor--there would be so many nice free ones. I wish he were even my brother, so that he could never talk to me of marriage. Then I could adore him. I would nurse him, I would wait on him and save him all disagreeable rubs and shocks. I'm much stronger than he, and I would stand between him and the world. Indeed with Mr. Hudson for my brother I should be willing to live and die an old maid. (409)\textsuperscript{12}

Tutored and fashioned by her mother into an instrument to achieve material security for her family through the marriage bond, Christina has never found an outlet for her deeper thoughts, her more intense emotions. The quest for marriage made the contract, in her eyes, a stifling bond, a dutiful sacrifice which she must make to placate her parents. Her marriage to the prince is certainly not a sacrifice which will result in enlarging her generosity of spirit, as might the free, "brotherly" relationship she speaks of having with Roderick; nor is it a means conducive to any mutual exploration of life. Christina was sincere in her statement to Rowland. She could not have been happy married to either man; but she sacrifices the better and, at the end of the novel, admittedely doubts the prospect for any future happiness. She will "cultivate delight" in the external world. James leaves no doubt: "from the moment she was forced to marry him she had detested him" (493).

In his article on fate and free will in James's fiction, Arnold L. Goldsmith writes that characters are superior to their destinies when they "withdraw into their
consciousnesses which contain the finite world in microcosm." Only here can Christina be free from her destiny. She had stated she had "something here," while touching her heart," which was "bigger and brighter than all the Casamassima diamonds" (407). Her destiny had often been mentioned both by the Cavaliere (206, 245) and Mrs. Light; and, as Leon Edel states, she finally is "sacrificed to a world of values as false as they are destructive . . . while at the same time being captive of the great society of which she speaks"\(^{14}\) Her duty would cause her "moral nature," with its "painful effort and tension of wing," as Rowland thought of it, to be "rudely jerked down to the base earth" (410). Thus the quest for marriage for materialistic gain and public approval only is profoundly condemned by James when it lacks any private meaning or fulfillment for the united partners.

Roderick Hudson's growing love for Christina causes his feelings for Mary Garland of West Nazareth, Massachusetts, to contract while Mary expands with the new knowledge and vistas Europe allows her. His statue of a youth, entitled Δίψα, Thirst, typifies his Faustian desire to drink in the forbidden knowledge of the "great society" Christina is caught up in. In this sense, tasting the forbidden fruit leads him, like Faust and others, to death. He needs Christina's love, not her pity. He starves from the lack of any internal sustenance derived
from a rewarding human relationship. It is not only Christina herself who indirectly causes him to die; but, as Spender says, he "dies because he is surfeited with all the things that were new and rare to him. . . . he is drowned by the excess of riches"\textsuperscript{15} to which, after all, Rowland had introduced him when he began to manipulate his life. Thus it is not surprising that Mary Garland's cry at hearing of his death "still lives in Rowland's ears" (526).

Rowland's introducing Roderick to Europe is a conquest roughly analogous to Mrs. Light's campaign. For Mrs. Light had failed in marriage and wished her daughter to reap benefits she herself could never attain. So Rowland, incapable of marriage, "takes on a protegee instead--adopts life, as it were,"\textsuperscript{16} as did Roger Lawrence in the preceding novel. But Roderick soon sacrifices his art for his passion, Christina, and the two quests are artistically united where Rowland's ward falls in love with Mrs. Light's ward, the entire affair leading to death. At the same time, Rowland begins to have more perspicacious, mature thoughts concerning Mary Garland, whom he watches as she expands her natural moralistic sense in the European atmosphere and experience. The only true marriage in the novel is intellectual--the one existing in Rowland's mind. As an observer he can appreciate Mary, but in life he has nothing. Due to his interference in Roderick's life, Rowland knows he can
never merit Mary's love; and he is left at the close of the novel in an impossible, frustrating position. Roderick could also observe Christina, but could only merit her pity. The artist as observer and the artist as sculptor are both unable to find fulfillment in real life, in an actual marriage.

More carefully drawn than Nora Lambert, the inviolate Mary is closer to being a predecessor of Isabel Archer and even Maggie Verver in that she understands her own limitations and operates within them while developing her own particular, advantageous characteristics. Mary of Backwoods, as Madame Grandoni refers to her (366), daughter, granddaughter, and sister of ministers, now has more tone and expression; she, unlike Christina, was in a position to choose "on the scene of her life any channel to waste itself;" and, unlike Roderick, who could produce nothing, Mary could produce art in the form of "exquisite embroidery" (324). She was more "pliant to social uses" (346) and, by developing within her former limitations, came to have "really a finer sense of human things and had made more, for observation and for temper, of her scant material of experience, than Christina had ever made of the stuff of her wild weaving" (450).

But Rowland must live, after all, with the cold stoicism of Mary after Roderick's death. As a consequence he himself develops a large degree of foolishly
hopeful patience. As Richard Poirier points out, "it is a patience akin to death, in which fineness of impulse loses confidence in its social efficacy,\textsuperscript{17} a destiny similar to Christopher Newman's in \textit{The American}. However one senses Rowland is innately too passive, too satisfied with the familiar and the known, to make very meaningful his renunciation of the world of action for the world of observation.
CHAPTER TWO
MARRIAGE AND THE INTERNATIONAL THEME

Although the international theme is present to a small degree in Watch and Ward, where James suggests that one need only dip himself in the vat of tradition and taste in Europe and return to America knowledgeable and polished, it becomes a more integral force in the characters and action of Roderick Hudson, where Europe takes on the ambiguous nature of a redeeming or ruinous experience for its immigrants from America. The problems of transferring aesthetic theories and skills into successful metaphysical bases for achieving a profoundly meaningful marriage are uppermost in James's treatment of his subject matter in his first two novels. The succeeding two novels were to provide closer examinations of the difficulties and rewards possible in the international courtship and marriage. Both The American (1877) and The Europeans (1878) have as their germ the quest for marriage to a partner from the opposite side of the Atlantic. James delights in analyzing the ambiguities of opportunism which both Christopher Newman and the Baroness Eugenia reveal. Slowly their preconceptions are falsified or changed, and their national characteristics are gradually subsumed by their unique, individualistic traits. In adopting this new approach to the problem of marriage, James discovers still more profound problems
in achieving a marriage than the happy blending of two cultures; namely, that of relating two psyches, two complicated networks of sensibilities, in such a way as to be mutually fulfilling. Finally, through the use of the international theme, James has added the third contending force moulding his characters' views on marriage. The social consideration now becomes more emphatic and joins the moral and aesthetic aspects of marriage.

The idea and the realization of marriage are antipodal in *The American*. The tragedy of the novel exists in the search for the ideal marriage, a melodramatic, romantic, quixotic quest, which is never brought to a conclusion by the event itself. At the end of the novel, only a "quixotic ideal of personal honor"¹ remains. As Edward Stone says, we are shuttled "between pedestrian actuality and fabulous possibility" throughout the novel.² James notes in his preface that "anything more liberated and disconnected . . . than his prompt general profession, before the Tristrams, of aspiring to a 'great' marriage . . . could surely not well be imagined."³

Christopher Newman has, in a relatively short span of time, amassed a large fortune by means of his Yankee shrewdness. He is dissatisfied, however, with the business of making money for its own sake, and concludes that the most profitable and enjoyable way he can convert his wealth into personal happiness is by seeking out and
purchasing the "best," the most cultivated woman Europe can offer. James has at the outset provided his hero with the physical requirements for freedom, a kind of carte blanche for a satisfactory marriage. That marriage is the primary goal of Newman's quest for the rewarding life is in itself indicative of James's own opinion of the paramount importance of the matrimonial relationship even for those who have the wealth and initiative to acquire any other "commodity" in life.

After arriving in France from America, Christopher Newman meets an old acquaintance, Mr. Tristram, and tells him and his wife of his already formulated plan. Tristram calls it a *caprice de prince*; Newman is going into semi-retirement from business, in order to get

> the biggest kind of entertainment a man can get. . . . I want to see the tallest mountains, and the bluest lakes, and the finest pictures, and the handsomest churches, and the most celebrated men, and the most beautiful women. (34)

Christopher Newman seems able to think only in superlatives, particularly concerning women and marriage. The reader feels the idealism of such superlatives, however, for Newman never mentions much positive experience in the field. He is a practical Yankee from the world of business; nevertheless his "idea . . . has undefined and mysterious boundaries, which invite the imagination to better itself on his behalf." (6), an idea of Emersonian magnitude. He has spent his time earning his fortune
and has only now suddenly decided to get married even though he says that "early in life" he had made up his mind: "that a beautiful wife was the thing best worth having, here below" (48). Newman has come to Europe simply to widen the field of selection in order to bring his "choice to a finer point" (50). The young Madame de Bellegarde remarks that Newman "chooses as if he were threading a needle" (275), a simile which, besides its perhaps ludicrous domestic associations, is appropriate in defining the fineness and deliberateness which have been basic in Newman's selection of a wife.

Newman is a romantic hero, his practical, business-like nature notwithstanding; and much is made of it in the novel itself. Mrs. Tristram compares him to the "heroes of the French romantic poets, Rolla and Fortunio and all those other insatiably gentlemen for whom nothing in this world was handsome enough" (49). Mr. Tristram calls him another Sardanapulus. James himself, in an ironic litotes, writes that, although his eye: "was by no means the glowing orb of a hero of romance, you could find in it almost anything you looked for (8). This "super-American" prince, flying eagle-like (103) on his romantic search, is accused by Valentin de Bellegarde of not being noble. With overtones of Rousseauistic and Emersonian thought, Newman proclaims his natural nobility (143). False and true gentilesse are embodied in Urbain and Newman respectively. A title and a fine soul are
not necessarily symbiotic; but Newman declares himself to be "as good as the best" (146) in a not infrequent assertion of his belief in the democratic, "American" primacy of self.

Spender calls Newman "James's version of Rousseau's savage." Newman, however, does not admit his idealism; he believes he has chosen Claire, not necessarily out of love, but out of supreme wisdom which was "sound, serene, well directed" (215). His romantic nature is further revealed in his impressionistic view of the Bellegardes' announcement ball which he finds delightful in its beauty, brilliance, even mystery:

The savor of success had always been highly agreeable to him, and it had been his fortune to know it often. But it had never before been so sweet, been associated with so much that was brilliant and suggestive and entertaining. The lights, the flowers, the music, the crowd, the splendid women, the jewels, the strangeness even of the universal murmur of a clever foreign tongue, were all vivid symbol and assurance of his having grasped his purpose and forced along his groove. (282)

His curiosity about the mysterious complexities of French mores is understandable in face of his own naturalness and lack of such formal intricacies. His active conquest is curiously combined with his passive nature. The recurrent picture of Newman is that of a lanky American sprawled quietly upon a comfortable seat, legs outstretched, waiting or serenely staring as he does in the opening scene at the Louvre. Consequently,
he often takes the role of observer more than participant in a social situation. When he first goes to Madame de Cintré's home, he finds that "she was pleasing, she was interesting; he had opened a book and the first lines held his attention" (106). In his conversations with her, he "felt as if he were at the play, and as if his own speaking would be an interruption; sometimes he wished he had a book, to follow the dialogue" (131). Even at the engagement party, "if he could have looked down at the scene, invisible, from a hole in the roof, he would have enjoyed it quite as much" (282).

Stone has pointed out the fairy tale motif in the novel, a motif which serves to support the idea of the mythic American hero,⁷ apparent in the references to Beauty and the Beast (Claire and Newman), in the Duchess d'Outreville's reference to Claire as a princess in a fairy tale (280), and in Mrs. Tristram's reference to the Bellegardes' "fabulous antiquity" (51). Newman's relationship with Claire is fabulous in the strict sense; he is also given the stature of a knightly hero of the classical and romantic tradition. He walks among the Bellegardes' guests "overtopping most people by his great height" (286) and, as the waiting lover, is compared to the "knight-at-arms,/Alone and palely loitering" of Keats's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" (283).

His similarity to the latter figure does not end here; Newman's love will never be consummated. He later finds
it difficult to believe; his "satisfaction had been too intense, his whole plan too deliberate and mature, his prospect of happiness too rich and comprehensive, for this fine moral fabric to crumble at a stroke" (368-369). Plan, love, ambition occupy the first fifteen chapters; action, death, futility, the last eleven. A similar structure underpins many of James's novels, particularly *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Wings of the Dove*. It is also principal in several American novels which contain quests by practical yet idealistic Americans for exulted goals such as Lily Bart's in Wharton's *The House of Mirth* and Gatsby's in *The Great Gatsby*.

Rather than Claire's existence instilling in Newman the thought of marriage, his preconceived plans and romantic notions of his future bride find their crystallization in Claire. He tells her, "Really I had seen you before; I had seen you in imagination; you seemed almost an old friend" (155). His idea of the wife as a kind of queen reminds us of James's own statements about the difficulties this often produced in the actual marriage. James increases our sense of Newman's nationality by instilling in Newman the American businessman's notion of the woman. He accuses this "epic hero" of being responsible for many specifically American problems in marriage such as the desire for her to play a queenly role and bestowal upon her of godess-like qualities. However this does not include ideas of
"emancipation;" Newman generally "thought very little about the 'position' of women; and he was not familiar, either sympathetically or otherwise, with the image of a President in petticoats" (38). In this respect, at least, he is similar to Basil Ransom in The Bostonians who rescues Verena Tarrant from her career in the female emancipation movement. Newman thought "women ... who were weaker than paupers ... should be maintained, sentimentally, at the public expense" (38). He ultimately found his "metaphysical inspiration in a vague acceptance of final responsibility to some illumined feminine brow" (39). Specifically, this "brow" is made concrete through metaphors of queenliness, of pure statuesque beauty: "To make it perfect, as I see it, there must be a beautiful woman perched on the pile, like a statue on a monument" (48). This metaphor becomes even more extravagant, as Poirier notes, in the revised edition: "like some shining statue crowning some high monument." The woman must be a combination of the good, true, and beautiful—certainly noble metaphysical concepts. Tristram later remarks that Claire's beauty is the kind "you must be intellectual to understand" (53). On first sight, Newman sees her as "the loveliest woman in the world, the promised perfection, the proposed idea" (54). Growth of relationship in this courtship is almost nonexistent. Claire simply fills the foreplanned idealistic bill. As he tells Valentin, she has "goodness, beauty,
intelligence, a fine education, personal elegance—
everything, in a word, that makes a splendid woman" (145).
Newman's imagination, writes James, "had learned the
trick of piling up consistent wonders" (130). Claire
later tries to correct this view when she tells him she
has "very little courage; I am not a heroine" (197) like
Florabella in a romance she had been reading earlier.
Mrs. Tristram warns Newman that she is a "supersubtle
Parisian" (164); no woman can be as good as the one
dwelling in Newman's imagination. When Newman tells
Claire, "you come up to the mark, and, I can tell you,
my mark was high," she responds, "I am a much smaller
affair. She is a magnificent woman, your ideal" (270).
But Newman continues in his mind's eye to stare at
Claire; like "a rose-crowned Greek of old, gazing at a
marble goddess with his whole bright intellect resting
satisfied in the act," he "could not have been a more
complete embodiment of the wisdom that loses itself in
the enjoyment of quiet harmonies" (216).

Of course we may attribute some of Claire's remarks
to her own self-effacing humility. Nevertheless, it is
still obvious that Newman has displaced much of the reality
of the situation and events with the enormity of his
own idealistic plans. If we cannot find fault with his
actions themselves, we can easily point them out in
his metaphysics. His idealism is not sufficiently
diluted by temporal, actual contingencies. For Newman this
fault lies to some extent in his American characteristics of idealism, opportunism, and self reliance; for Roger Lawrence and Roderick Hudson errors in vision are due to a superabundance of aestheticism. In Roger Lawrence's conquest, Nora is freed from familial restraint and is in effect bought to be molded into a work of art. Many difficulties occurred because Roger ignored her free will and her emotional growth. Roderick Hudson's quest for Christina was hindered in real life by another superimposed quest set into motion by Mrs. Light. Thus Christina was Roderick's inspiration in the realm of art--his bust of her was an enormous success; but in life, she was his demise. On the other hand, Roderick could not successfully capture Christina in actual life whereas he could encase her beauty and spirit in marble. She could not be his possession any more than she would ultimately be her mother's. Similarly Newman does not take into consideration the amount of control the Bellegardes hold over Claire and Claire's consequent lack of freedom. Edwin T. Bowden suggests in regard to Newman's attempt to take Claire to America with him, that Newman had a "tendency... to dissociate objects and people from their surrounding and traditional background." Thus Newman is "ironically enough, partially responsible for his own failure." Looking upon her not only as goddess, but as a brilliant possession which he might obtain by virtue of his "natural" nobility--his good
nature, as Mrs. Tristram calls it—and his millions, he committed a crime major in proportion in James's eyes, a crime in part due to American opportunism. Frederick Hoffman writes that for James there was "no evil greater than to reduce another to the status of the possessed, collected object." At one point, Mrs. Tristram calls this kind of marriage "rather a matter of vanity" (48). Imagery of ownership and possession of Claire qua article is frequent throughout the novel. Before specific plans are even formulated, Newman announces with absolute certainty, "I want to possess, in a word, the best article in the market!" (48) Thus Newman exhibits two specifically American faults which are both related to the opportunistic, American business world: possession of the "article" and a concomitant worshipful adoration of the thing possessed.

His materialism is emphasized very early in the novel. His "sole aim in life had been to make money" (29). When sitting in the Louvre staring at Veronese's marriage feast of Cana, he could only think that "it satisfied his conception, which was ambitious, of what a splendid banquet should be" (19). He becomes, in the second chapter, what he himself calls a "collector" (19). He can have the agreeable satisfaction, as Mrs. Tristram says, "of having bought your pleasure beforehand and paid for it" (43). Terms such as "desire to stretch out and haul in" and "swooping down on" (44) the Old World
are valid construings of his plans. Later he can hardly control his pride after swooping triumphantly down on Claire and hearing her affirmative answer. He immediately telegraphs friends in America as if he had closed a great business deal (245), suggestive of the business world of "telegrams and anger" in Forster. He, "now that his prize was gained," begins to make plans for the grandest party: he will "hire all the great singers from the opera, and all the people from the Theatre Francais . . ." (248). Mme. de Bellegarde is understandably disturbed by such flamboyant, tasteless decisions.

When Newman visits Claire, he decides it was her social "authority," such as that of the artist over his material, that especially impressed and fascinated him; he "always came back to the feeling that when he should complete himself by taking a wife, that was the way he should like his wife to interpret him to the world" (152). Such a statement is surprisingly similar to one Gilbert Osmond will make later, who would have Isabel simply mirror him and interpret him to the world. Newman elaborates upon Claire's formative experience including her "elaborate education . . . mysterious ceremonies and processes of culture in her youth," a fashioning and flexibility "to certain exalted social needs" (152). Such workmanship

made her seem rare and precious--a very ex-
pensive article . . . which a man with an ambition to have everything about him of the best would find it highly agreeable to possess . . . and /would/ examine its only mechanism afterwards at leisure. (152-153)

This points up the dichotomy between Newman as collector and Madame de Cintré as artist. Newman, as Hoffman states,

has had none of the experience which would make him a connoisseur of anything. . . . /H/e cannot distinguish the best from its copy, and he is interested almost solely in the maneuverability of his person, not at all in testing the acuteness of his perceptions.12

For James, "seen" objects always relate to the quality of the mind of the one who sees: "if they are 'borrowed' or 'collected' objects, they can only suggest the closed mind of the unimaginative and the possessive soul. . . ."13

Newman's statement after losing Claire is reminiscent of Mrs. Tristram's response concerning Newman's approach to marriage as a "matter of vanity": "To lose Madame de Cintré after he had taken such jubilant and triumphant possessions of her was as great an affront to his pride as it was an injury to his happiness" (327). Such a sentiment lends further irony to Mrs. Tristram's remark to Newman that "it was /his/ commercial quality in the abstract they couldn't swallow" (329).

There is more to say about Newman than simply to classify him as an idealistic, commercially-minded American or as a potential owner-husband. Where Roger Lawrence was little else but the financial savior of
Nora, and Roderick was too weak to be any sort of savior, Christopher Newman is the first marriageable hero in James's major fiction who takes on the role of protective savior after his arrival in Europe. Sadly he is unable to "save" either Valentin or Claire; but he does attempt with an abundance of charity and longsuffering, interest and objective understanding, to liberate them from familial, traditional bonds. Mrs. Tristram ascribes the apt image of the American eagle to Newman when she tell him:

"The spread eagle ought to use his wings... Fly to the rescue of Madame de Cintré!"
"To her rescue?"
"Pounce down, seize her in your talons, and carry her off. Marry her yourself." (103)

Others repeat in the form of a request the demand Mrs. Tristram makes. Mrs. Bread tells Newman the Countess has too long been in the sad house of the Bellegardes. She hopes Newman will take her as far away as possible, for "it is better... that she were out of it" and into "another and brighter one" (225, 226). When the young Mme. de Bellegarde tells Newman that she wishes him to come into the Bellegarde family by marrying Claire, he answers, "Oh no, I don't... I only want to take Madame de Cintré out of it" (207). He believes he offers her freedom by marrying her, whereas his "ownership" theory of marriage would appear to prohibit to some extent such freedom. Newman's role as melodramatic
rescue party or savior never quite becomes what Mrs. Tristram would like it to. It is modified to the point of being almost maternal. His tenderness to Claire is a result of her pleasing him so much, "exactly as she was, that his desire to interpose between her and the troubles of life had the quality of a young mother's eagerness to protect the sleep of her first-born child" (216). Valentin's idea about marriage is quite different from Newman's in the latter's role as protector. Valentin says that Claire is free and is given consideration because she is a widow; she would not "put her head into the noose again" (147). Newman believes in marriage as a means to greater freedom, growth, expansion of the soul and sensibilities. He tells Claire

If you are afraid of losing your freedom, I can assure you that this freedom here, this life you now lead, is a dreary bondage to what I will offer you. You shall do things that I don't think you have ever thought of. I will take you to live anywhere in the wide world that you propose. . . . You give me a feeling that you are unhappy. You have no right to be, or to be made so. Let me come in, and put an end to it. . . . You ought to be perfectly free, and marriage will make you so. (157, 159)

After hearing this proposal for a marriage which implies something other than dreary duties, Claire "had the air of a woman who has stepped across the frontier of friendship and, looking around her, finds the region vast" (160). James here quite dextrously uses imagery derived from American geography, its size and its West, and applies it
to the moral landscape of the individual spirit. Our European-American choral character, Mrs. Tristram, appears immediately to comment on the scene: "[Claire] turned about on a thousand gathered prejudices and traditions as on a pivot, and looked where she had never looked hitherto" (165). Again the idea of the explorer in the West, amazed at his initial vision of the vast potentiality of a new, uncharted area, is brought to mind. James thus employs the international theme to express the possibility of enlarged freedom and personal expansiveness through the international marriage. The marriage of two societies, preserving the finer qualities of each, can be considered a metaphor for the possible benefits which can accrue to two individuals conjugally united. The individual proposing such a marriage is thys a protective figure in that he could preserve and unite the attributes of both and thereby discover the best of all possible worlds, the marriage itself becoming a kind of microcosm containing the best of Western civilization in the moral, aesthetic, and social senses.

The salvation and the freedom are, however, only proposed. They never in fact can be realized. The ironic turning point of the novel occurs approximately in the middle, Chapter XVI, allowing the book to have that structural symmetry James constantly sought after. Preceding the engagement ball given by the Bellegardes, the novel is concerned with plans. But just when the plans
for the event itself are formally announced to the Bellegardes' Faubourg society, we learn that the event will not take place. The novel turns from the central emotion of love in the first half, to concern with death in the second. A symbol important for its irony and foreshadowing appears in the form of young Madame de Bellegarde's crimson crape dress decorated with "thin crescents and full disks" of silver moons. Newman comments on the strange choice she has made which reminds him of "moonshine and bloodshed," the latter of which is emphasized further by the silver dagger she is wearing in her hair. The "moonshine" of his romantic, idealistic plans for a marriage of freedom and love is soon to be replaced by "bloodshed," both symbolic and actual, which appears in the exposing of the true circumstance regarding the death of M. de Bellegarde, and in the actual death of Valentin in his duel. Of even more major concern to the novel are the symbolic deaths and sacrifices of Claire and Christopher. None of these events had been planned, projected, or expected in the first half of the novel. But now black crape would replace red in the remaining chapters of the novel.

This bloodshed is, to a large extent, cause... by the elder Mme. de Bellegarde, who embodies views which cause her to represent the old guard's position, totally adamant to change, and which cause her to be, finally, Newman's major opponent. Mme. de Bellegarde is a "fixed"
character, and Newman is "free". She refuses to yield to change by allowing the old guard of France to become violated by new "commercial" blood, although she would allow her daughter to be "sold" to a member of her own race. Claire is one of the first totally European women in James's fiction, and she is drawn as supremely obedient to the will of her mother. Madame tells Newman that her power rests solely in her children's obedience (322), and Mrs. Tristram expands upon it:

In France you must never say nay to your mother, whatever she requires of you. She may be the most abominable old woman in the world, and make your life a purgatory; but after all, she is ma mère, and you have no right to judge her. You have simply to obey. . . . Madame de Cintré bows her head and folds her wings." (101)

The "wings" of Claire seem prophetic of the spirituality of Milly Theale and are given a definite value by Valentin when he describes his sister to Newman as

half a grande dame and half an angel; a mixture of pride and humility, of the eagle and the dove. She looks like a statue which had failed as stone, resigned itself to its grave defects, and come to life as flesh and blood, to wear white capes and long trains. (136)

This imagistic description goes far in explaining her eventual submission to the edicts of the family. It further explains why Newman, who seems to be all "eagle," has a more difficult time in accepting the national traditions Mme. de Bellegarde literally represents.

But even though Claire is the thoroughly "European" woman, she is not the forbidding, fixed person that her
mother is:

Madame de Cintré'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. But her mother's . . . suggested a document signed and sealed; a thing of parchment, ink, and ruled lines. . . . ‘/H/e said to himself . . . "her world is the world of things immutably decreed. . . . She walks about in it as if it were a blooming park, a Garden of Eden; and when she sees 'This is genteel,' or 'This is improper' written on a mile-stone she stops exstatically." . . . Madame de Bellegarde wore a little black velvet hood tied under her chin, and she was wrapped in an old black cashmere shawl (168-169)

It is the latter who, in spreading her black pall over all she touches, reduces Claire's vast prairie to the controlled hortus conclusus of a walled nunnery. The impersonal European tradition, as embodied in Madame de Bellegarde, is regarded by Newman and James as an unnatural monstrosity which, as Ward points out, while it has "the maturity and wisdom of age," also carries with it the "evil which James usually associates with age, for it holds as a first premise that a belief in happiness is fallacious. To the Bellegardes personal contentment is neither a desirable nor an attainable goal." 15

Without knowing actual facts, Newman declares Madame de Bellegarde capable of murder from a sense of duty (219). Forms, once they have been cut away from true morality are more than meaningless and hollow; they are dangerous. The Bellegardes and other leaders of society are their own religion; the Carmelite convent itself is a "fright-
Forms which are not used as means to enhance and lubricate life stifle it instead and become involuted, closed systems in which activity lacks all freedom and choice. Like hatred feeding upon itself, they devour their devotees and become still more inflexible; when Claire tells Newman her familial feeling was like a religion, he realizes "it was the religion simply of family laws, the religion of which her implacable little mother was the high priestess" (370). In the Bellegarde family, while marriage was simply an even exchange of "name for name, and fortune for fortune" (124), and while there has never been "a misalliance among the women" (141), nevertheless beneath the formal surface were "crooked branches . . . queer cracks . . . odd secrets" (149).

The church and the home become symbols of death. Newman watches Valentin succumb to the "mysterious and sacred" yet "superannuated image of honor" (127). The yellowed paint and chipped gilding of the Bellegardes' home, the "rusty arms and ancient panels . . . faded tapestries . . . the obstructive and fragmentary character of the furniture" (128) are standard images in the novel revealing the exclusion of meaning from form. As Spender says, "all the family are dead, or ghosts."

As Mme. de Cintré enters the convent, she says, "I can't call it peace--it's death" (318); and, when Newman enters and hears their chant, he calls it "their dirige
over their buried affections and over the vanity of earthly desires' (421). The "moonshine" of his hopes, the brilliant candlelight of the Bellegardes' engagement party has been reduced to "a twinkle of tapers and here and there a glow of colored glass" in the chapel of the convent; but behind the screen—in the real convent—there is no light at all. For Newman the convent

looked dumb, deaf, inanimate. The pale, dead, discolored wall stretched beneath it, far down the empty side street—a vista without a human figure. Newman stood there a long time; there were no passers. . . . The barren stillness of the place . . . told him that the woman within was lost beyond recall, and that the days and years of the future would pile themselves above her like the huge immovable slab of a tomb. (467-468)

Newman's idealistic, beautiful ambitions, the forms under which he operates in the first half of the novel are reduced in the realm of action to futility and death; the Bellegardes' formal code, shimmering and mysterious in its convolutions, is revealed as hollow and dead at its core. Newman's idea of the "wise" marriage has been replaced, as Poirier says, with a "sense of the irrationality of experience." 18 His plan, which he has attempted to bring into reality, seems just as romantic as the story of the young prince who "married the beautiful Florabella . . . and carried her off to live with him in the Land of the Pink Sky" (196).

There is a structure of actual marriages in the novel which points up even more clearly the idealism
of Newman in projecting the happy marriage for himself. Valentin speaks of that "small and superior class--that exquisite group--composed of persons who are worthy to remain unmarried" (246). Christopher and Claire's relationship would seem to fall within this group, and be separate from other married couples seen or referred to in the novel. In the past Monsieur de Bellegarde stated that he would prefer death to being Madame's husband again (397); Mrs. Bread tells Newman, "They were not a loving couple" (392). M. de Bellegarde writes that Madame's plans to marry Claire to M. de Cintré are as great a cause of his death as her refusing him his medicine (406). Claire was married "in the French fashion," (51) a phrase which implies that she was "sold" (102) to a corrupt old Frenchman who was such a spectre that she swooned at the ceremony (139). In the present, Urbain de Bellegarde writes a history of "The Princesses of France Who Never Married" (139); Urbain's own wife tells Newman, "I have no pleasure, I see nothing, I do nothing" (297); Madame Dandelard is separated from a "rake and a brute" who "spent all her money" and beat her (133); and the Tristrarms constantly argue and give each other not so graceful concessions: "She despised her husband . . . she had married a fool . . . she was full of beginnings that came to nothing. . . ." (37). Valentin believes in a double standard which says that women, but not men, should marry, a standard which can conceivably arise
from his own adoration of his sister (246). In the future the outlook is hardly optimistic. Noémie Nioches paints—and loves—for money; she "will not marry at all if /she/ can't marry well" (78). In the penultimate chapter, she appears unable to break into the European society, but is perfectly able and willing to be "used" by representatives of that society such as Lord Deepmere (457). Such a structure of marriage, when juxtaposed with Newman's plan of conquest, clearly belies his romantic pursuit.

James clearly reveals the public problems of marriage between members of different social, religious, and national codes; but these become metaphors for private problems between individuals seeking to unite in marriage. Claire, with all her strengths, nevertheless allows other forces to subjugate her will totally. Newman leaves the scene with a sense of the magnitude of his disappointment, but also of his love for Claire. He renounces any future hopes of marriage and will live out his days "married" to the memory of Claire, his ideal "article," to which no real woman can ever measure up. With all her limitations, Claire has provided him with a consciousness so enriched that it can never be satisfied with a real marriage to anyone else. Furthermore, he renounces the chance for revenge when he realizes it would serve absolutely no purpose; his only true connection with the Bellegarde family has been forever
removed from his world.

Newman's refusal to marry anyone else is reminiscent of Rowland's futile patience in waiting for Mary Garland, but is even more suggestive of Catherine Sloper's maintaining an ideal and refusing to align herself with the fallible real. Actual marriage in James often falls short of this marriage in mind which occurs in works such as *The Portrait of a Lady*, "The Story in It," *The Awkward Age*, *The Ambassadors*, and *The Wings of the Dove*. The richest consciousnesses often seem to preclude actual marriage. In attempting the international marriage, Newman has gained more benevolence of spirit in refusing to take vengeance against prohibitive forces; he has lost some of his preconceptions about marriage and money; but he has still retained his "unregenerate good nature," which is his most generous, most innately American characteristic.

In *The Europeans* a similar quest for a successful, international marriage is made by a penniless sister and brother who offer title, art, and manners for their dowry rather than any "fortune" such as Newman had. Curiously enough, the problems standing in their way are analogous to those confronting Newman. For Claire found she must be obedient to her family, of which the maternal was the strongest member, and her church; she was bound by a complicated code of manners. Familiar and religious duties caused her to be caught in an ineluctable position from
which all Newman's persuasion could not budge her. Duties separated her from life, and James employed imagery of death to reveal the starkness of her position. American opportunism was seen to be romantic and idealistic in conception but futile in action. Similarly for Eugenia-Camilla-Dolores Silberstadt-Schreckenstein, both the Wentworth and Acton families uphold a code involving loyalty and duties to the family and church, not the Catholic, in this case, but one embodying the Unitarian tradition. Their code of manners is in many ways just as unswerving as the Bellegardes'. It includes typical dicta of the genteel tradition: forms no longer bearing any discernible meaning are nevertheless vigorously followed; morals are considered to have dominion over culture and, indeed, are the primary concern of culture; manners are impersonal in the sense that individuals should not stand out from the homogeneous society; and finally devotion to the father or, in Acton's case, the mother should be upheld in all areas.

In the case of Mrs. Acton, James again employs imagery of death to describe the Puritanical code and the perennial invalid who exercises such strong control over her passive son. Mrs. Acton is the extreme of her culture in a way reminiscent of the Duchess d'Outrville in the preceding novel. We see them both in their spacious armchairs hollowly echoing amenities which could only arise from, and be accounted for by, their
immediate, respective cultures. The other characters, to James's credit, are not always that easily placed. In fact, the most highly sensitive and complex character yet to appear as a marriageable subject is set down in The Europeans. Eugenia is the center of the novel or "sketch;" and it is from her, who is the only one not married at the end of the tale, that we can best discover growth in James's concept of marriage. It is largely she who prevents the novel from becoming the comic counterpart to the tragic melodrama preceding it. James imposes fewer limits on his characters by "non-dramatic analytical intrusions or by allegory" than in any of the previous novels considered; and, as a result, his subtler method enables him to depict this highly sensitive and aware character. The revealing feature here is that, although Newman and Claire are both left isolated, we seldom have a very direct vision or impression of their sensibilities and disappointments. They are either expanded and overstated in melodramatic terms or not mentioned at all.

However, Eugenia's isolation seems to arise directly from her own inclusive vision and sensitivity, which cause her to be disappointed in and dissatisfied by those less blessed. The reader is allowed a direct vision of her difficulties in communicating completely with either of her prospective husbands. The reader can objectively see and be fully aware of the reasons for her failure to marry. Both methods James had previously considered for
obtaining the perfect spouse—molding a person into one's own ideal form, or seeking out by a quest—fail for the Baroness as they are directed respectively towards Clifford Wentworth and Robert Acton.

On her quest for the wealthy American husband, the European-American Baroness first of all confronts Mr. Wentworth, the most authentic representative of the American genteel tradition. Felix describes him as "hightoned" and "undergoing martyrdom not by fire but by freezing" (48). His pallor is "cadaverous," a result of "the special operation of conscience within him" (52). His scrupulous conscience causes him to be cautious and defensive in the face of the Europeans; he warns his family not to become excited over their arrival (75). He refuses to be sensitive to any physical beauty or charm they may have. Their appearances are not representative shadings, but are realities beyond which one need not investigate. Thus he can see no need for Felix to interpret his features in a portrait when his children already have a daguerreotype of him (98). Felix defines Mr. Wentworth's view of life as "painful;" he is made "unhappy too easily" in spite of his wealth and the consequent freedom it allows him (103). He believes firmly in the "great standard of morality, which forbade that a man should get tipsy, play at billiards for money, or cultivate his sensual consciousness" (172). As Ward points out, "innocence does not imply freedom; the
family's hostility to free experience makes moral maturity impossible."

But a denuded system of morals is more important than culture in Mr. Wentworth's hierarchy, though not to the complete exclusion of the latter; His limited cultural interests are apparent when we see him reading the "North American Review" and "The Boston Advertiser," and his office houses such objects of the connoisseur as law books and "glass cases containing specimens of butterflies and beetles" (245). Against the "blunt candor" of the genteel Mr. Wentworth and his morals, Eugenia's "manner" and manners seem rich and complex.

Acton, though to a lesser degree, also is a product of the genteel tradition. Although he has travelled to China, he is nevertheless "conventional" (122). He feels a "subjective emotion of gratitude" for his mother (135) and does not understand Eugenia's European "manner" as an acquired and polished social grace, but rather condemns it as "fibbing" and her as thereby morally reprehensible. As Poirier concludes, he is not "a man of the world," but in reality "a man who is at home with his mother" and whose "constricting standards of public honesty" often cause him to misjudge Eugenia. Poirier further notes that his relation with his mother coupled with the many instances (61, 65, 185, etc.) of his characteristic pose of hands in pockets signify a sexual incapacity in Acton. This is not explicit in the novel, but a high
degree of passivity is implied when Acton thinks of himself as a castle into which Eugenia should walk and be held captive after he takes up the drawbridge (184). She has entered, but he does not act. His suggestion late in the novel that she go to Niagara with him does not carry much weight as a proposal for Eugenia (195). In fact she is vaguely annoyed by it. He does not feel emotions suggestive of love towards her, but something closer to curiosity:

It was true, as Acton with his quietly cogitative habit observed to himself, that curiosity, pushed to a given point, might become a romantic passion; and he certainly thought enough about this charming woman to make him restless and even a little melancholy. It puzzled and vexed him at times to feel he was not more ardent. ... It was part of his curiosity to know why the deuce so susceptible a man was not in love with so charming a woman. If her various faces were, as I have said, the factors in an algebraic problem, the answer to this question was the indispensible unknown quantity. The pursuit of the unknown quantity was extremely absorbing; for the present it taxed all Acton's faculties. (184-185)

Acton has seen enough of the world to make him restless, and Eugenia arouses his interest. But within the frame of the novel, his devotion to duty in caring for his mother precludes any real growth in consciousness. Only after his mother's death does he marry "a particularly nice young girl" (281), with "nice" in this case carrying connotations similar to those in Hemingway's use of the word in the last chapter of The Sun Also Rises: pleasing on the surface and, in The Europeans, approved of by the
genteel society.

Thus the conflict between life as opportunity and life under the American genteel restrictions and habits of mind is the paramount theme in *The Europeans*. An important conversation between Felix and Gertrude expresses this major conflict:

"I don't think it's what one does or one doesn't do that promotes enjoyment," /Felix/ answered. "It is the general way of looking at life."

"They look at it as a discipline—that's what they do here. I have often been told that."

"Well, that's very good. But there is another way," added Felix, smiling: "to look at it as an opportunity."

"An opportunity—yes," said Gertrude. "One would get more pleasure that way." (105)

But even within the terms themselves there is ambiguity which makes the conflict increasingly more difficult for Eugenia to resolve as she progresses through the situation. In the opening pages we see her ready to renounce her European background—manners, title, morganatic marriage—for the money and "natural affection" she may obtain through marriage to an American. The opportunity seems greater than the price she would pay. But, unlike Christopher Newman, Eugenia as opportunist begins to have doubts almost immediately. In the opening scene, she has watched a snowstorm in Boston and is hesitant in admitting that the steps she has already taken have been entirely satisfactory. She assumes the responsibility for proposing the quest. It is awkward
for Eugenia to admit their poverty; and she suggests that Felix's "charming nature" is their "capital" which allows her to take the "risk" (7-8). The prevalence of economic imagery early in the book reveals the major reason for the quest. Sheer necessity underlies her opportunism. She admits that her "ambition" restrains her from escaping these surrounding of "vulgar nudity"; if the Wentworths had not been rich, she would never have come (13-14). She considers the possibility of a "good" marriage as equivalent to making "her fortune," but she is neverthe less "conscious of a good deal of irritation and displeasure" (17). Even though she sees promise in the West, made concrete by her staring with Felix at the sunset, seeing the "gorgeous purity of the Western sky" (19), she also describes the Bostonian charivari as a "bariolé" fairground and the landscape and roadside objects as "affreux." Just as she alternately smiles and shrinks when viewing the American scene, so she considers the various contradictory aspects of her quest.

In one aspect, Eugenia, as Poirier points out, closely approximates classic American opportunists. She tries to sell herself and attain a fortune, but what she finds are "possibilities for self-dramatization and self discovery." This gain in knowledge of herself is the fortune she attains at the end of the novel. She differs from the American opportunist in preferring this
"fortune" to an economic one. Even when one removes her disguised opportunism, Eugenia remains the most complex character in the novel. She is complex enough to have the critical statements about her range from those of Peter Buitenhuis and F.W. Dupee, who think of her as a materialistic adventuress who will develop into a Madame Merle in later James, to that of Poirier, who subtly presents her as James's first highly sensitive, artful heroine who is comparatively free to act and judge, and one who puts into full service her education and experience in society and the world of art. In fact, she is the most mature, responsible character in the novel. But her "manner" has caused other characters and even critics to think of her as inscrutable, mysterious, and demonically conniving.

To the Americans, the strictures of the European society appear ambiguous and artificial. Eugenia herself says she left behind artificial relations for natural ones (122), whereas the genteel Americans know of her morganatic marriage and have a "natural aversion to suppose that this meant anything less than absolute wedlock" (123). But Eugenia admits to Acton that her marriage may be annulled after her formal consent by the stroke of a pen (127). Felix, however, tells Gertrude the story of the marriage, and to her it is a strange, "darkly romantic tale!" (42). The truth of the situation is simply that the marriage contract is arti-
ficial by Wentworth standards, but the Baroness herself is natural insofar as "natural" is defined by Ward as meaning "giving full expression to the imagination;" she is natural in that she is "endowed with the manners of a rich civilization" and uses them as a means for self expression. Poirier discusses James's development "in the direction of making his characters less subservient to 'type' and of revealing that their personalities are often at variance with the 'types' to which they would ordinarily be consigned." In other words, the ambiguity present in Eugenia and her culture points up a movement in James towards realistic appraisal and comparison of two cultures, and away from a romantic one in which specific differences are pared away.

At the same time, American strictures have a qualified ambiguity about them. They appear "natural," but at their core they are hollow and rather dull. Eugenia's first impressions of the "land of opportunity" are formed by its surface ugliness and lack of variety; she looks down from her hotel room window and watched Bostonians board a streetcar, a "boat" which is "huge, low," and "painted in brilliant colors," and has "jangling bells" and is "dragged . . . rumbling, bouncing and scratching;" the entire episode was repeated every three minutes. Such a description, filled with shrill onomatopoetic imagery, colors the scene in distasteful and cloying tones. The homogeneity of the
society represented is unmistakable; it is prophetic of similar descriptions in *The American Scene* of public transit systems. It is in keeping with the subsequent description of a "row of small red brick houses showing a series of homely, domestic-looking backs" (4). James reinforces this lack-luster scene with the specific mention of "anthracite coal" in the hotel room fireplace (6) whereas the Baroness is certain to prefer wood (211). When she asks Felix for a recounting of his visit to the Wentworths', she demands something more specific than the term "angels" (46). Their "symptoms of wealth" are nonexistent aside from a "primitive . . . patriarchal . . . ton of the golden age" (47). Eugenia has an intense dislise for the barreness and monotony of the American scene. But she continues to hope that the external simplicity of the scene in Boston and at the Wentworth house is only appearance, and that some complexity and depth will be revealed from beneath it. As Poirier noted, the converse of this is also true insofar as the Americans believe that very simple motives lay behind the apparently complex exterior Eugenia presented.

Eugenia tells Clifford not to be misled by the "proper" opinions about her. What appears "improper" to the Puritan society might not be articulated, but it is thought. She tells him,

When you are not extremely improper you are so terribly proper. I dare say you think that,
owing to my irregular marriage, I live with loose people. You were never more mistaken. . . . They say to each other I am on my good behavior. . . . If they think they had better spy them." (176-177).

She thus accuses Clifford—and the quasi-Puritan society—of a lack of manners, judgment, and tolerance. In such a uniform society, any exception or variation from the norm is held suspect. Furthermore, the Americans’ appearance of propriety contradicts their actions and intentions. Even their advice is riddled with contradictions. Mr. Wentworth tells Felix that "it is natural . . . that one should desire to prolong an agreeable life. We have perhaps a selfish indisposition to bring our pleasure to a close" (140). He does not find any harm in this selfishness apparently, for he immediately urges Felix to marry since it will be conducive to his happiness (141). Felix wonders at this from a man continually grave, sententious, and stoic. Eugenia later wonders at standards which suggest that Lizzie Acton and Clifford should marry, when there has been "nothing beyond an exchange of the childish pleasantries characteristic of their age" (199), while at the same time Mr. Wentworth has made no suggestion of marriage for two more mature and spiritually similar people, Charlotte Wentworth and Mr. Brand. In fact, Charlotte later admits that the family had tried to "arrange" a marriage between Gertrude and Mr. Brand, a practice which reminds Felix of the European system and the meaninglessness (248) of
marriage without love. This kind of contract was just what he and particularly his sister had sought to escape by coming to America.

The marriage of sentiment, such as between Felix and Gertrude, ironically is not approved of at least in its inception; but rather it causes Gertrude to feel guilty (253) for disobeying her family. Mr. Wentworth is not certain whether or not, on moral grounds, it is best for Gertrude to marry Felix; he doubts that Felix can offer her "a place to do her duty" (259). Just what her "duty" might be is never made quite clear because of the sudden entrance on to the scene of the other contender for Gertrude's hand, Mr. Brand. What is clear is that the genteel social code of America is surprisingly analogous with the older strictures present in European society. A strict obeisance to an unwritten code, regardless of its inherent intolerance and provinciality, belies the pastoral freedom which appears on the American surface. Eugenia's and Felix's earlier vision of America as the land of opportunity is an illusion which is foreshadowed in the early scenes of the novel. It is provincial to the point of being afraid to allow change; its code implies a restraint and emptiness hardly congenial to either Felix's or Eugenia's "flamboyant self-expression" and results in the restlessness of both Gertrude and Eugenia. 35 Valentin in The American had said that in the United States, every man was a duke. 36
Mr. Wentworth asserts "we are all princes here" (71). The obvious meaning of democratic freedom and stature of the individual is apparent, but on the opposite side of the coin is the impression that a prince or duke has responsibilities to his people, in this case, "proper" society, and must lead an exemplary life in their eyes. This kind of duty is not so clearly defined, but perhaps for that very reason its general aura becomes more prohibitive and confining than that of its European counterpart.

The marriages which actually take place at the end of the novel require little attention here. They are, as Ward points out, largely due to comic convention and give the whole work the "aspect of a fairy tale." Clifford and Lizzie are well matched. Eugenia asserts that neither of them has nay manners (132, 175). Clifford's own vision of his future—"as the well-known and much-liked Mr. Wentworth of Boston, who should, in the natural course of prosperity, have married his pretty cousin, Lizzie Acton; should live in a wide-fronted house, in view of the Common; and should drive, behind a light wagon, over the damp autumn roads, a pair of beautifully matched sorrel horses" (171)—bears no relation to Eugenia's "aesthetic ideal" for him (173). Charlotte, the one marriageable woman who is not restless (25), will make Mr. Brand "comfortable" (270). Charlotte, who denies that there can be any "good reason for telling
an untruth" (87), can easily communicate with a Unitarian minister who "could neither simulate nor dis-simulate" (224-225). Both couples will most likely lead comparatively uneventful, disciplined lives. James repeatedly points up their restricted capacity for understanding language and gesture or the meanings they can embody.

Felix Young--"happy youth"--appropriately meets Gertrude in the Wentworth garden reading the story of Prince Camaralzaman and Princess Badoura from The Arabian Nights. Felix's nationality is left vague: he is neither Sicilian, French, nor Viennese, but simply European (38) in Gertrude's eyes. Gertrude has a taste for the adventurous, the romantic, the not-overly exotic; Felix is only faintly Bohemian and extracts "entertainment from all things," and with all his faculties--"novelty and chance were in themselves a delight to him" (81). They both free themselves from reality as easily as, in Chapter VII, they leave the constraint of the shore and seek liberty on the "pink and yellow: water (159) by unfastening the boat from its moorings. Felix's romantic "I adore you" (161) suitable ends a scene remarkably similar to James's own analogy for a literary romance--the cutting free from reality the balloon of experience in his preface to The American. In the final scene, Eugenia kindly congratulates him and expresses the wish that he will be a reasonable husband, to which he replies, "I hope not
to be thrown back on my reason!" (272). Felix is not that concerned with Eugenia's prospects. He only vaguely hopes that she will "make a comfortable and honorable marriage" (217). Eugenia calls him a clever child throughout the tale, and his selfishness is that of a child—not cruel and demanding, simply lacking in sensitivity and sympathy. Gertrude, too, can be selfish and cruel. After curtly telling Mr. Brand to avoid her, Gertrude cries only briefly. James notes, "there was something a little hard about Gertrude; and she never wept again" (43). Contrary to Buitenhuys's theory of their marriage as the ideal union of innocence and experience, Felix and Gertrude both have a real degree of innocence which is revealed among other ways in their belief that they can manipulate Charlotte, Brand, and Mr. Wentworth. Mr. Wentworth is gravely distraught when Felix announces his plans, and can only ask, "Where are our moral grounds" (267) and consents to the marriage only after the representative of these grounds, Mr. Brand, has recommended it.

Poirier writes that "all the novels from Roderick Hudson to The Portrait of a Lady show the ultimate failure of romantic love and the frustration of its social fulfillment in marriage." 39 Although the three marriages just mentioned do occur, the inadequacies of the partners are grave. The center of interest in the novel, from the sheer space James devotes to her, and from the
superiority of her sensitivities and capabilities, is certainly the Baroness who ironically is unable to make a "successful" marriage. 40 James's consideration of a quest for marriage in The Europeans becomes a semi-comic parody of Newman's romantic quest in The American due to Eugenia's final decision. Unlike Newman who will never marry after he has found and lost the best "article," Eugenia decides she does not even want a marriage with Acton. She reveals, in James's development, a growth of interest in the creation of a character with a highly complex consciousness and its mysterious unconscious complements, and thus a growth in realistic technique. In creating a more complex character, James has, at the same time, increased his qualifications for a fulfilling marriage both in quantity and in quality. In looking over the genteel Americans, Eugenia decides it would be absurd to attempt marriage with anyone from such a limited society. As she states in her final line, "Europe seems to me much larger than America" (281).

Probably the most important change in James's views on marriage concerns why the Baroness does not marry, and does not take advantage of her opportunities. Descriptive details about her alert us at the outset that she is a very complex woman. Her "much trimmed skirts were voluminous" and the braids of her hair were "multifold" (2). She is a "brimming wine cup" who is not so pretty as she is interesting (4). For her it was more important
to act pretty than to be pretty. She bids Felix to observe everything at the Wentworth house in order that she can make suitable preparations. When she arrives there, she wins the Wentworths by simulating a "natural" manner which enables her to say through smiles and tears, "I am very tired; I want to rest" (65). Her emotion here is not completely genuine; she had hardly come to America to rest. As James writes later, "her declaration that she was looking for rest and retirement had been by no means wholly untrue; nothing that the Baroness said was wholly untrue. It is but fair to add, perhaps, that nothing she said was wholly true" (78). Even her brother Felix is not capable of fully understanding her. When he reminds her not to forget Acton's fortune and position, the Baroness wonders in what "manner" he understands her at all: "there were several ways of understanding her: there was what she said, and there was what she meant, and there was something between the two, that was neither" (215). These three "manners" might be roughly equivalent to social consciousness, self awareness, and the unconscious. Robert Acton is blessed only with a "vivid consciousness" and thus takes her "manner" with his mother, whose conversations she abhors but strives to make somehow aesthetically agreeable, as outright and unforgivable lying. To Robert her surface speech and gestures bear the full weight of meaning; he cannot understand the third dimension of depth underlying them. Finally her complexity
and superficial falsity are connoted in the abundance of theatrical and costume imagery James employs. Her clothing and household decor are abundant and colorful, multilevel and curious. Her "copious provision of the element of costume" bedims the "garish" cottage Mr. Wentworth charitably allows her (80-81). The relative privacy (70) of her cottage is preferable to the large "dove-colored" house of the Wentworths (78). In The American Scene James will have much to say concerning the value of privacy which permits good "talk" between individuals; and it is noteworthy that the major confrontation of Acton and Eugenia takes place in this comparatively private cottage. Imagery of theatricality and of complexity in dress and appearance describes a woman whose manner is artful and beautiful, yet considered deceptive and false from the genteel point of view. As Poirier says, this marks an important stage in James's changing view of the mannered lady of the world from the villainess that culminated in Madame Merle to the spiritually rich Madame de Vionnet of The Ambassadors: "James for the first time conceives of manners and deception as evidence not of social fixity or personal grotesqueness, but of the desire to protect one's own inner freedom and allow others the least difficulty and the least fear in fully expressing themselves."44

Eugenia's relation with Clifford is that of "preceptress" to student, although she is coquettish
enough to entice him into listening to her instruction. Again an aesthetic relationship is misconstrued by Mr. Wentworth, who thinks of it only in moral terms. The Baroness is married and such a relationship would be closer to "flirtation" or "intrigue" (148-149). Felix realizes at this point "that nothing exceeds the license occasionally taken by the imagination of very rigid people" (149). That such a plan had never occurred to Acton indicates his lack of understanding of the complex Eugenia's "numerous social uses" (173). But again the truth lies somewhere between the two views: Eugenia "remembered that a prudent archer has always a second bowstring. . . . Eugenia was a woman of finely-mingled motive" (173). But unfortunately Clifford crudely thinks of the Baroness as an interesting "old" woman, nothing more; and he abruptly turns from her invitation to visit her in Europe to investigate a creaking wagon wheel.

The relationship between Eugenia and Acton is more complicated. Acton offers Eugenia love, wealth, and position; and Felix reminds Eugenia of this (214). But for Eugenia these attributes are meaningless in the face of his passivity and lack of understanding. She finds he is too often in a reclining position, both literally and figuratively. When she leaves Mrs. Acton's bedroom, which reaks of death, Eugenia discovers Acton lying outside on the lawn. He is thinking of her while in this
supine position, a combined activity which she does not consider particularly complimentary. He tells her he has often wanted to come to see her, but

"... I stayed away because"--
"Ah, here comes the real reason, then!"
"Because I wanted to think about you."
"Because you wanted to lie down!" said the Baroness. "I have seen you lie down--almost--in my drawing room." (238)

When she lies to him by saying she had consented to the annulment of her European marriage, James writes "he turned away" (240). He seems duty bound to his mother, as noted above, and to his sister. Eugenia had earlier noted that Acton "would put his hand into his pocket every day in the week if that rattle-pated little sister of his should bid him" (78). On the same evening, after telling him of her liberation, she observes him leaving the Wentworth house with Lizzie, avoiding any confrontation with herself, and reflects "even that mal-élève little girl ... makes him do what she wishes" (241). Eugenia will not "stop" (274) for such a marriage with its highly uncertain rewards, but will return to Europe if her relationship with Acton now seems like a "play," as she calls it (278), his had been a kind of experimenting with some sort of curiosity piece. If he does love her, as he tells himself (239), he still cannot bring himself to any proposal other than that of enjoining her to be his mistress and accompanying him to Niagara (195).

But the reader may well doubt that Acton would ever
have carried out this plan; for, immediately after Acton has articulated it, Clifford comes bounding out of Felix's study; and Acton is shocked and thinks the worst.

Acton's lack of understanding of Eugenia is not ever repaired in the novel, but is apparent even in their final interchange. He tells the Baroness he wishes she might have stayed:

"I don't make so many differences," said the Baroness. "I am simply sorry to be going."

"That's a much deeper difference than mine," Acton declared; "for you mean you are simply glad!" (280)

But again, neither what the Baroness said nor the opposite—what Acton thinks she means—is actually true, but something between the two extremes. She is not glad or happy about her own doubtful future in Europe, with or without the Prince; but she is not sorry to have discovered the truth about Acton, the genteel American male. As Poirier puts it, he is representative of the "constricting standards of public honesty"⁴⁵ in America; further he uses "morality as an excuse for inadequacy of feeling."⁴⁶ Eugenia's launching on a conquest for the happy marriage, and her subsequent failure to attain it is, after all, a felix culpa. She has learned that wealth, position, and "love" are not necessarily adequate as requirements for the "successful" marriage. She has come to new knowledge of her own depth, sensitivities,
and capabilities; and a marriage with a person so much the less blessed would be an intolerably restrictive contract rather than a means to her own and her husband's fulfillment, growth, and contentment. She has learned that other, more important bases for marriage exist. Such an opportunity as Acton represents must be renounced. The genteel America she has come into contact with seems greatly inadequate by comparison with what Europe might offer. After all, it was there that her manners and perfections had been formed.

In both The American and The Europeans, James treats marriage with an eye primarily set on the relationship between international variations of manners and the problems of marriage itself. The protagonists have made certain discoveries about themselves which cause them to make a renunciation. Newman renounces any marriage at all in the future because he has found his ideal spouse. Eugenia renounces Acton, whom she has found, for an ideal or at least someone of a "larger" nature whom she has not yet met. In both cases, the protagonists, with their consciousnesses enriched from their international experiences, remain unmarried.
CHAPTER THREE
MARRIAGE AND THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL THEME

In *Confidence* (1879-1880) and *Washington Square* (1880), James's use of the international theme becomes negligible. James's new interest, one which will be all-encompassing in the later periods, is the epistemological theme. James has an ever-increasing interest in the individual's arriving at an understanding of his own self, of the interdependence of conscious and unconscious abilities, motives, and needs. This theme at the same time implies the growth in knowledge necessary to perceive the proper relationship of these abilities, motive, and needs with those of other members of their immediate circle, and of society as a whole. This latter relationship must include the granting to others the freedom to be and to act within the limits of their own individual capabilities. Thus the epistemological theme is highly functional in James's treatment of both the private and public aspects of marriage.

James's growing interest in it is most apparent in *The Europeans*, where Eugenia grows in self-awareness and discovers the integral relationship between her conscious and unconscious. James's concern for this approach grows out of the earlier theme of life and art, areas in which he discovers the limitations of one area
mistakenly applied to the freedoms of the other. A person is mistaken for a thing, and a thing is the object of the person's emotions. But the epistemological theme can also be seen developing in the "international" novels just considered. A person cannot be categorized by nationality any more than he can be totally unaffected by his national traditions, tastes, and manners.

Confidence could be considered James's first comedy since Watch and Ward, which is comic only by virtue of its deus ex machina ending. Eugenia's process of self-discovery does not compensate in terms of a strict comedic structure for her inability to make a suitable marriage which would have completed the quartet of marriages at the close of The Europeans. In confidence the marriages are successfully brought about by three different types of quest. The first, the ambitious, opportunistic quest, is familiar by now. This is under Mrs. Vivian's direction. The second is that curious quest by means of experimentation which we saw developing with Acton in The Europeans. Here Gordon is guilty of experimenting with the agreeable qualities of Angela Vivian, with Bernard Longueville as his trusted, confidential assistant. The third is a new sort undertaken by Angela to repair Gordon and Blanche's marriage—an altruistic quest by psychotherapy.¹

Poirier writes that "all the early novels are about romantic ambition and its disappointments."² They are
also about the perils of opportunism. Mrs. Vivian's plan for her daughter to attain a good marriage, meaning a financially beneficial one, is frustrated in her initial choice of a husband for Angela. Mrs. Vivian, less strident than Mrs. Light in *Roderick Hudson*, is a product of the New England genteel tradition. According to Bernard, who has taken her under his close scrutiny, she exemplifies "the Boston temperament sophisticated . . . perverted a little—perhaps even corrupted. . . . a Puritan grown worldly—a Bostonian relaxed." 3 Even the obtuse Captain Lovelock can see through her machinations. He tells Blanche that Mrs. Vivian would like to make a match between her daughter and Gordon since the latter has an income of six thousand pounds a year. Bernard finds this definitely true and concludes that "whether or no Miss Vivian were in love with Gordon Wright, her mother was enamoured of Gordon's fortune" (99). Mrs. Vivian places her "confidence" in Bernard by allowing him to be a caretaker for herself and Angela. She has, according to her daughter, huge amounts of this commodity, which at this point in the novel, is roughly equivalent to optimistic ambition. As Angela puts it,

Ah, mamma's confidence is wonderful. . . . There was never anything like mamma's confidence. I am very different; I have no confidence. And then I don't like being deposited, like a parcel, or being watched, like a curious animal. I am too fond of my liberty. . . . I have no confidence—
none whatever, in anyone or anything. Therefore, for the present, I shall withdraw from the world—I shall seclude myself... Let the parcel lie until it's called for... I shall assume that, metaphorically speaking, Mr. Wright, who, as you have intimated, is our earthly providence, has turned the key upon us." (114, 115)

Ideologically Angela does not resemble her mother. She does not feel in any way confident of the outcome of the two quests of which she is the object. On the contrary, she unhappily accepts, at this point in the novel, the total isolation and alienation from that liberty for which she constantly pleads and which her mother has, for the time being, denied to her. She does not want to be treated as an object or as a "case" which her suitor must investigate. But, after, his long interior monologue, Bernard cannot see at this point that she is simply being used (176-177); and he concludes that she is an opportunist and a coquette (141), whereas Angela later tells him that under his scrutiny at Baden-Baden, she "hated the idea of [Bernard's] pretending to pass judgment upon me; of your having come to Baden for the purpose. It was as if Mr. Wright had been buying a horse and you had undertaken to put me through my paces" (252). At this point Bernard has confessed his love to Angela; Gordon has married Blanche. Now Mrs. Vivian gently touches his arm and tells him that, while earlier she had had "views," she now approves heartily of Bernard and has something better: "I have
confidence" (247). Obviously "confidence" here means something more than ambitious, opportunistic optimism; more than Poirier's suggested meaning of "essential goodness of fate," it seems to suggest an affirmation of Bernard and his natural, not arranged, relationship with Angela. Mrs. Vivian has gone through an anagnorisis from a belief that people can be manipulated, to a greater faith in the validity of growth of natural affection between two people. As Leo B. Levy states, "Mrs. Vivian, at first an opportunist who seeks an advantageous marriage for her daughter, becomes a believable human figure." Mrs. Vivian has lost some of her "Bostonian" social prejudice; but it ought to be noted that Bernard is not such a bad catch himself. He does nothing but travel from spa to spa in Europe and, when bored with that, journeys to the far East; he is relatively wealthy in his own right.

As Levy suggests, "confidence" can also have the meaning of "self-knowledge." Although nationalities no longer matter to any great degree in Confidence, Europe has become the "ground of desolate migration and querulous inspection" where at first Bernard sees a "scheming mother" and a "mysterious enchantress." He watches them transform into more complete human beings with faults, admissions of them, sympathies, and ultimately an understanding of themselves. But Europe
initially provides the laboratory for Gordon when he calls upon Bernard to assist him in his experiments. As James originally planned the novel in his notebooks, Gordon has asked Bernard "to experiment" upon Angela "to endeavor to draw her out and make her, if possible, betray herself." Gordon writes Bernard in the novel:

> I am making love . . . I don't mean to say that this experiment itself has gone on very fast; but I am trying to push it forward. I haven't yet had time to test its success; but in this I want your help. You know we great physicists never make an experiment without an "assistant"--a humble individual who burns his fingers and stains his clothes in the cause of science, but whose interest in the problem is only indirect. (22)

Gordon Wright was lacking in any "winged" imagination, and his letter could not have better expressed "his attachment to the process of reasoning things out than this proposal that his friend should come and make a chemical analysis--a geometrical survey--of the lady of his love" (24). There is "no atmosphere" in Gordon's mind; all "his premises are neatly arranged, and his conclusions are perfectly calculable" (24). It is a mind just as rigid scientifically as was Acton's morally and Newman's idealistically. In his own way Gordon "plays" just as rakishly as Captain Lovelock. He tells Bernard, "I have played a little. I wanted to try some experiments. I had made some arithmetical calculations of probabilities, which I wished to test" (55). But Angela soon realizes she has a "systematic suitor" and
that Gordon is a "speculative" scrutinizer; and this idea "was not agreeable to her independent spirit, and she placed herself boldly on the defensive. She took her stand upon her right to defeat his purpose by every possible means—to perplex, elude, deceive him—in plain English, make a fool of him" (124). Bernard hesitatingly fills the role assigned him. But when he decides Angela is an opportunist and a coquette, he nevertheless feels "like a grizzled old book-keeper, of incorruptible probity" as he "wiped his pen, mentally speaking" (128). Gordon, when he learns of Bernard's own love for Angela, feels Bernard has betrayed the confidence he has placed in him, which Bernard has tried to fulfill in all honesty. Like Mrs. Vivian's, however, Gordon's "confidence" had faulty premises—an inherently fallacious means for setting out on a quest; and Gordon, with the help of Angela herself, discovers that he has made the right marriage in that he has married the woman he really loved rather than the one about whom he, like Acton, felt an intellectual curiosity. As Poirier points out, this "experimentation" is not far distant from Hawthorne's "unpardonable sin," the violation of the human heart.8 James continually asserts that human beings are discrete individuals, and that to experiment upon them, operating solely from theories which involve categorizing, is to blunt their sharpened, particular sensitivities and perfections, and ultimately to place limitations on
their integrity and personal freedom.

Angela avoids such experimentation in her psycho-
therapeutic session with Gordon which lasted a fortnight.
Her quest involves revealing knowledge to Gordon who,
at this stage, has a definite lack of self-knowledge.
She tells her mother that Blanche, regardless of
protestations, is intensely in love with Gordon (308),
and Gordon with his wife (322). Blanche keeps Lovelock
around to arouse jealousy in Gordon. Angela's en-
lightening, therapeutic conversations are revealed
indirectly through her letters to Bernard, one of the
earliest lengthy examples of James's later method of
foreshortening. Here James's technique is as discreet
and indirect as Angela's. She explains to Gordon that
he and Blanche simply misunderstand each other. She
provokes his thinking more about Blanche. Finally
Gordon comes around to accepting Blanche and, rather
facilely, though quite seriously, tells Bernard that "a
man should value his wife. He should believe in her.
He has taken her, and he should keep her--especially when
there is a great deal of good in her. I was a great fool
the other day . . ." (343). Angela does not manipulate
or experiment on Gordon, but accomplishes her task by
by causing him to think and to try to understand him-
self and Blanche more fully. She does not try to change
him, but only to make him see what had always, in fact,
been before his eyes.

Of the three quests, Mrs. Vivian's receives the least attention. The public aspect of marriage, which here concerns the suitability of the partners regarding their wealth and position, is not so much James's center of interest in *Confidence* as the private aspects, the coalescence of spiritual and mental activities of the partners. Thus, Bernard early in the novel sees only two kinds of women—"the acutely conscious and the finely unconscious," types represented by Blanche and Angela respectively. Blanche "was a spectator; almost any male biped would serve the purpose..." he addressed, for the moment, the whole volume of her being...in her glances, her attitudes, her exclamations, in a hundred little experiments of tone and gesture and position" (39). James very clearly draws her as spiritually akin to the reasonable but unimaginative Gordon, who says, "I don't want to be fascinated—I object to being fascinated" (82). He thus finds Angela Vivian inexplicably "strange," and for that reason wants Bernard to "investigate" her. Angela does not appeal to his consciousness; as he tells Bernard, "To be fascinated is to be mystified. Damn it, I like my liberty—I like my judgment!" (83). But he is later "fascinated" with Blanche (164); however, this time it is for her "simple, trusting, child-like nature." He finds her "natural and fresh" (163). Now it is not scientific
curiosity, but love.

However, what limits the freedom of one individual expands another's vision. So it is that Bernard, a "clever," imaginative person, defines the loved object as being of necessity "complicated" (75). Angela has an intelligent and complex nature which far exceeds the "unwinged" mind and imagination of Gordon, and outstrips her mother's "Boston sophistication." For her, as with Eugenia, there can be "charm without virtue" and "virtue without charm" (62-63). She combines "Bovarysme" with morality; the beautiful is the moral. Bernard agrees with and is touched by this view, and finds Angela extending his vision of action and perception. He soon discovers, appropriately during contemplation of the sea, that he is "in love with Angela Vivian, and his love was a throbbing passion!" (217-218). The awe that arises from his emotion and her being amazes him; his "perception that a great many things had been taking place in his clever mind without his clever mind suspecting them" (221) is a great confrontation of the unconscious by the conscious. It is this feature of his love—and its importance in revealing Angela Vivian as the most fulfilling partner for him in marriage—which James is emphasizing. The unconscious blends with the conscious and Bernard strolls alone above Blanquais-les-Galets with his happiness—"the satisfaction of thought, the bliss of mere consciousness" (225). James seems to be
saying in both Gordon's and Bernard's cases that after the quest for the unconscious, it is in the successful communion of the two that we may place most confidence in the success of our actions, in the success of marriage or life. As Poirier notes, both Gordon and Bernard come to know feelings "beyond reason and calculation;" human "vampirism" is ultimately useless.9

When James introduces Dr. Sloper in Washington Square, he moves from the study of a physicist to one of a physician. In Washington Square the human quest James portrays is one in which the subject does not wish to calculate the emotional properties of his object so much as he wants to cure them. His quest is one whose end is not to promote but to prevent the marriage of his daughter. In the process he must somehow counter the opportunistic quest that the suitor, Morris Townsend, is setting out upon to gain Catherine.

In effect, Dr. Sloper considers Catherine "such as she was"10 ugly and practically "inanimate" as a replacement for his own wife, Catherine, who died in giving birth to their daughter. He had hopes of never "losing" his daughter. When he learns of Morris's attentions and discovers him to be an opportunist and adventurer, he takes Catherine in his arms and tells her "to give him up" (135). Catherine had money from her mother, who herself was a "rich woman" (10), and
position owing to her father's fame in the medical profession, one which "in America has constantly been held in honor" (7). Dr. Sloper is described at the outset as a "clever" man, who combines theory with practice, explanation with prescription; and it is with this combination that he tries to cure Catherine. He carefully explains to Catherine that Morris is a "selfish idler" (136) and suggests that to continue a relationship with him not only will be disastrous for her but will imply her impatience for his death, since he will refuse to place his blessing on her marriage (137) and will otherwise limit her freedom from guilt by disinheriting her.

Mrs. Penniman sees Dr. Sloper's limitations in a very melodramatic light. Throughout the novel she pursues a maternal, match-making role with a loyalty to Catherine that is fierce though not always clear-sighted. Her logic is as romantic and idealistic as Sloper's is ironic and realistic, especially when it concerns what she calls the "sacred subjects" of young people in love (199). When she tries to employ irony with Dr. Sloper, he sees it is as coarse as "pugilism" (200). She informs him that by refusing consent to Catherine's engagement, he is killing his own daughter. In high seriousness she points out in what are very likely shrieking tones that he has already failed as a physician in permitting his wife and son to die.
But Mrs. Penniman is only heavyhandedly employing a tactic the good doctor has already used on Catherine. He speaks of her porposed marriage as a lethal move, mortally wounding both himself and Catherine. After their trip to Europe has failed to remove Morris as the primary object of Catherine’s emotions, he declares the trip has only served to fatten "the sheep for him before he kills it" (182). But Catherine refuses to consider him in the class of adventurers in which her father has catagorized him. She tells her father, "He writes beautifully;" and he answers, "They always write beautifully" (181). After his return to America, Dr. Sloper visits his sister, Marion Almond, who informs him of Catherine's firmness of purpose. Dr. Sloper tells her only that "Catherine has given me up" (201). In trying to effect an impossible cure, he has lost the patient. He tells his sister, "I have tried everything upon her; I really have been quite merciless. But it is of no use whatever; she is absolutely glued" (201). He says he was first moved by "curiosity," but found he must use "preventive" measures. Such an admission reveals the scientist-doctor who considers human beings as "cases" which must be experimented upon, treating individuals with remedies known to be effective for the "type." As he tells Mrs. Penniman, he is fond of "induction" (198). Frederick J. Hoffmann notes that with all his "Yankee shrewdness," however, he is "blind
to change" in individuals, particularly in his own daughter, who, at his deathbed, refuses to give up what is now her "ideal" of Morris Townsend. Thus when her father describes Morris as middle-aged, "fat and bald," his words "presented a strange image to Catherine's mind, out of which the memory of the most beautiful young man in the world had never faded" (247). With all his calculation, he cannot understand her ideal vision of Morris Townsend. His formalized opinions of Morris's type fail to take in the individual attractions Morris held for Catherine. She was without experience in the world and without much knowledge of its people. The Morris she loved was not a Morris who actually existed in the world of action but one whom she had admitted into the world of her contemplation and delicate, though uncomplicated, emotions. Dr. Sloper's cure could be considered a demonic reversal of Mrs. Light's in Roderick Hudson; he has tried to prevent Morris from taking his "prize," and one method has been to try to destroy Catherine's image of him.

Poirier sees Morris's quest as a paradigm of a major motif in Washington Square, that of "moving up" in a rapidly burgeoning New York. Dr. Sloper candidly accuses Morris of the mercenary nature of his courtship in the confrontation scene in Chapter XII. The entire scene is an example of what Beach calls "liaison" conversation between antagonists; that is, during the
confrontation the doctor allows Morris to say whatever he wishes, to play the aggressive role, but at the same time he subtly places Morris in a completely defensive position by grasping the very words which he uses, and immediately repeating them in a slightly different tone or context so as to change their meaning completely. Morris apologetically shuttles the blame for his lack of communication with Dr. Sloper onto Dr. Sloper himself. Morris suggests that, if Sloper "had not had so much the appearance of leaving his daughter at liberty," he would have seen him earlier. (87). Sloper replies, "I have left her at liberty, but I have not been in the least indifferent" (87). Morris senses that the doctor's attitude is equivalent to an active dislike. He abruptly asks Sloper if his reason for disapproving of the relationship stems from Morris's penury. Sloper answers,

"Your absence of means, of a profession, of visible resources or prospects, places you in a category from which it would be imprudent for me to select a husband for my daughter, who is a weak woman with a large fortune. In any other capacity I am perfectly prepared to like you. As a son-in-law, I abominate you."

..."And, therefore, you mean, I am mercenary--I only want your daughter's money."

"I don't say that. I am not obliged to say it; and to say it, save under the stress of compulsion would be in very bad taste. I say simply that you belong to the wrong category." (89)

Sloper reminds him that his "lifelong devotion," which
Morris promises for Catherine, can be measured only "after the fact;" it cannot be contracted. Some "material securities," however, would be present before the fact. Although Dr. Sloper says he is not like "a father in an old fashioned novel" (93), he nevertheless is concerned only with the public aspect of the marriage and completely disregards the private. The proprieties which must be met in his eyes are precisely those belonging to the genteel tradition; namely, the suitable or comfortable fortunes and the "decent" social positions of the partners in marriage. These he judges as a sufficient statement of private harmony between the partners. The scene ends with Sloper's asserting that his daughter's developed "sense of duty" to her father will far outweigh any plea from Morris. Although there is some truth in Sloper's argument, he limits himself and his position by thinking in terms of categories. That he is finally correct in his judgment of Morris still does not completely justify the means he uses to reach his conclusion. Similarly the position Morris takes that a man falls in love with an individual, not a category, in no way wholly exonerates him in his very real role of adventurer. The reader is alerted from the beginning that their love relationship is surprisingly instantaneous on Morris's part, and not love as process, meaningfully developed and thriving upon itself. Morris spots Catherine as a likely captive, a
likely end to his quest and, in this respect, makes Catherine less an individual and more a symbol of future luxury and ease. Thus he is just as guilty as Sloper in his own relationship with Catherine. Both tend to disintegrate the individual either by categorizing him or by using him as an object. Morris's sister, Mrs. Montgomery, reaches the same conclusion about Morris as Sloper in the following chapter, when she tearfully pleads with Dr. Sloper not to allow his daughter to marry him (111). However, her thoughts about Morris proceed from a consideration of him as an individual, not one of a type; and her conclusions are the result of a full awareness of her brother's spending and sponging habits, and the resultant struggle in her own life to support him.

When Morris learns that Catherine will most likely lose her inheritance if she marries him, he thinks of himself as a high-priced commodity. Although "the prize was certainly great," he nevertheless "with his fine parts ... rated himself high, and he had a perfectly definite appreciation of his value, which seemed to him inadequately represented by the sum" (161-162) of Catherine's own ten thousand per annum. Human values do not enter into Morris's plan; he regards the relationship algebraically. Whether or not Dr. Sloper would disinherit Catherine was an "unknown quantity,"
but Morris feels marriage is not the best way to force a resolution. He remembers only that "in mathematics there are many shortcuts," and he might discover one by postponing the ultimate contract and continue "playing with her" (163) as one might use diversionary tactics with a pawn in chess. The irony is quite blatant when a few pages later he feels it "mathematically proved" (206) that he will never get a penny of Dr. Sloper's money and must therefore give up Catherine "'for a wider career. . . . A woman should never keep a man dangling,' he added, finely" (211). Our shortsighted Mrs. Penniman hears his formula of refusing to step between father and daughter, a move which will deprive the daughter of her rights, and comments "that's so like you . . . it's so finely felt" (209). Morris's ideas on marriage remain static in the novel; in the final chapter, at his brief, final visit with Catherine, he says he understands why she has not married: "Yes, you are rich, you are free; you had nothing to gain" (265). For Morris, money and position are the major concerns in any marriage.

Morris's quest has such a prize as its goal that he can put up with all the foolishness of the imper- turbable Mrs. Penniman. Her hand in the plot is more than slight. She arranges "interviews" between Morris and Catherine, and Morris and herself. Her knowledge of Catherine's dual loyalties and finer sensitivities
is in no way complete. She only urges Catherine to act: "in your situation the great thing is to act" (116), relishing the thought of a "secret marriage, at which she should officiate as brideswoman or duenna . . . in some subterranean chapel" (116). The next best thing seems to be setting up a secret meeting in the dusky corner of a remote oyster saloon (117). Mrs. Penniman's insight can never penetrate beyond the most artificial of surfaces. She tells Dr. Sloper that Morris has no friends, and Dr. Sloper replies that his sister, Mrs. Montgomery, seems to take a great deal of interest in him, an interest which is carried to the point of providing him with food and shelter. To this statement Mrs. Penniman can only respond with "the sister is not a very attractive person" (66). Her melodramatic imagination, with only the most superficial conditions to spur it on, leads her down unnecessarily treacherous paths. She is one of James's first fools. By writing the letter in Chapter XXVIII falsely stating Catherine's plans for an imminent marriage, Mrs. Penniman becomes the immediate instrument in causing Morris's departure for New Orleans. She comes to regard Morris as her son; and, in doing so, she hastily adopts the position he takes, one which denies the value of a marriage from which no material gain seems forthcoming. A fitting conclusion to such advice is her parting line at their "interview" in Morris's "business" office: "'Ah, but
you must have your last parting!' urged his companion, 
in whose imagination the idea of last partings occupied 
a place inferior in dignity only to that of first meetings" 
(211). Mrs. Penniman will never escape her restricted 
pleasure gained from watching or instigating action, 
regardless of its purpose, meaning, or effects. She 
can only enjoy the fragments of the whole situation. 
Her own experience is limited to her brief marriage to 
a clergyman who used flowery rhetoric. This marriage 
was curtailed by his early death. She inherited only 
a memory of his figures of speech, "a certain vague 
aroma of which hovered about her own conversation" (12-13).

Her sister, Mrs. Almond, is the only married woman 
in the novel, aside from Dr. Sloper's late wife, who 
seems at all satisfied. Both Mrs. Almond and the latter 
are depicted as "comely" and eminently "reasonable," 
reason always appealing to Dr. Sloper. Both Mr. Almond, 
a merchant, and Dr. Sloper were financial "successes." 
Early in the novel, Mrs. Almond gives a party for her 
daughter who was to marry a stockbroker of twenty. The 
marrige "was thought a very good thing" (26). This 
party and its raison d'etre properly set the stage 
for the meeting of the success-seeking Morris. Mrs. 
Almond later tells Dr. Sloper that men shy away from 
Catherine due to her seeming age and bearing because they 
are too young and innocent to "calculate" her value (50). 
Such a statement is abrasive to Dr. Sloper, not on
account of its materialistic source, but his fear of losing his carefully earned fortune to predators of the kind who would live upon their widowed sisters (51). But even the materialistic Mrs. Almond is infinitely more rational than her sister Lavinia, who thinks Morris would make a "lovely" husband. Mrs. Almond replies that she believes only in "good" ones; good in the sense that they provide for their wives and not take out their disappointment in the lack of a dowry on their helpless brides (174).

Still, Sloper, his sisters, and Morris all conceive of marriage as a materialistic goal which, once it has been reached, will provide comfort and therefore happiness to the spouses involved, thus making for a successful situation such as may be found in Jane Austen. But Catherine herself, limited though she is in worldly experience, considers marriage and the love preceding it as an intellectual and emotional process. For her, the private aspect of marriage is paramount; a relationship implies reciprocal organic growth of understanding and allegiance between the persons involved. She discovers she loves Morris "more and more" (229). Although Sloper derogatively considers her absolutely "inanimate" (68), James assures us that "she was the softest creature in the world" (20). She feels great pains when she hears in later years from Aunt Lavinia that Morris considered her the "real romance" of his life (255).
His romance was with her wealth and position; it had nothing to do with her as a human being. Furthermore, it was only an extension of a narcissistic love which had led Morris to his premise that he deserved only the best of material ease. The truly "inanimate" character, then, is Morris himself, who will never act on behalf of another, who will maintain only artificial allegiances and, upon their failure, will always blame his selfish inertia on his "evil star" (255). It is noteworthy here that Morris had made a "marriage of reason" while in Europe, which is what he had attempted in America, and had evidently squandered all that it had netted him. The term is again reminiscent of Mrs. Light's quest in Roderick Hudson. A marriage of reason in James denies the necessity of growth in relationship. It means little more than a joint bank account which can be depleted more easily than increased.

Catherine's idea of marriage is superior to that of a "marriage of reason" because of its inclusion of the complexity of a private human relation involving honor, love, and loyalty. Morally and intellectually, Catherine has the capability of developing a fulfilling, even rich relationship. Throughout the novel, of the three persons living in the Sloper house, she alone "acts" primarily on the contemplative plane. She is easily placed in the following comparison of herself with her father and Lavinia. The adverbs themselves define clearly her
self possession:

She held up her head and busied her hands . . . and when the state of things in Washington Square seemed intolerable, she closed her eyes and indulged herself with an intellectual vision of the man for whose sake she had broken a sacred law . . . If Catherine was quiet, she was quietly quiet . . . and her pathetic effects, which there was no one to notice, were entirely unstudied and unintended. If the doctor was stiff and dry, and absolutely indifferent to the presence of his companions, it was so lightly, neatly, easily done, that you would have had to know him well to discover that, on the whole, he rather enjoyed having to be so disagreeable. But Mrs. Penniman was elaborately reserved and significantly silent. . . . (164)

In Catherine's idea of marriage, growth or action implies sacrifice. Upon her decision that marriage to Morris could be a richer relationship than a filial one with her father, she sees a point of honor involved. Since she had violated "her father's wish, it seemed to her that she had no right to enjoy his protection. . . . Catherine felt she had forfeited her claim to it" (163). But it is Catherine's nature to avoid, if at all possible, a sudden rupture in any human relationship. She holds the relationship between her father and herself as sacred. If she should cause him displeasure, this act "would be a misdemeanor analogous to an act of profanity in a great temple; but her purpose had slowly ripened, and she believed that her prayers had purified it of its violence" (132). Nevertheless, she is willing to turn against the genteel tradition and
its stricture of constant devotion to her father if she should find a chance for a fulfilling marriage with Morris. She tells her father, "If I don't marry before your death, I will not after" (137). This statement is simply a negative phrasing of her refusal to promise Sloper on his deathbed that she would never marry Morris. With his continual reference to his own death as a result of her marriage (136), her father is not much help in minimizing the rupture. Morris also states the choice in the sharply defined terms of father or lover, black or white. Sloper cleverly reverses the sacrificial nature of the affair by referring to Catherine herself as the sacrificial victim. When they are about to return from Europe, he tells her, "I have done a mighty good thing for him in taking you abroad; your value is twice as great, with all the knowledge and taste that you have acquired. A year ago, you were perhaps a little limited—a little rustic; but now you have seen everything and appreciated everything, and you will be a most entertaining companion. We have fattened the sheep for him before he kills it" (181-182).16 The strength of Catherine's beliefs and commitments can be gauged by her unswerving desire and willingness for marriage in the face of such real or imagined sacrifices which confront her.

Remembering Morris's ironic accusation, which he makes to Lavinia, that Catherine was playing with him
by keeping him dangling, we can see the higher level of cruelty in Dr. Sloper's directly confronting Catherine with it. It is his moment of high revenge when he tells her that her dismissal of Morris was rather abrupt: "You are rather cruel, after encouraging him and playing with him for so long" (238). Catherine's renunciation, occurring after this point, of all prospects for marriage is an outgrowth of her idea of marriage which remains unchanged even after Morris's departure. She no longer loves Morris for what he is but for what he might have been, for what she believed he was when she first met him. Years later when he returns, she understands herself better, for now in her drawing room "it seemed to be he, and yet it was not he; it was the man who had been everything, and yet this person was nothing" (260). Time plays a great role in her renunciatory life. Her initial intellectual vision of him is not immediately destroyed upon his giving her up, but only slowly grows dim until it is nothing in face of the reality she comes to see more clearly. She feels upon his return that "she had lived on something that was connected with him, and she had consumed it in doing so... he had made himself comfortable, and he had never been caught... he had no desire to catch him...." (260). Her earlier vision of him has transformed itself into a kind of ideal which can never be met by a real suitor. She has "nothing to gain" by another
marriage (265). Catherine has gone through a single
initiation into the evil of the world from which, some-
what like young Goodman Brown, she can never quite
recover. She tells Morris on this occasion that she is
not angry, but she cannot forget the past: "Impressions
last, when they have been strong" (265). At the same
time she cannot promise her father never to marry Morris.
The freedom to develop or renounce a human relationship
cannot be subjected to a promise to an outside party
whose opinions reveal a total lack of comprehension of
what that relationship means to the person making the
decision. To make such a promise to her father would
destroy Catherine's free will and choice in the matter.

Her father's failure ultimately to understand her
initiation, growth in knowledge, and constant love for
a Morris whose true motives were as yet undiscovered,
reveals itself in the final codicil of his will. Here
he bequeaths only a fifth of his estate to her, since
"her fortune is already more than sufficient to attract
those unscrupulous adventurers whom she has given me
reason to believe that she persists in regarding as an
interesting class" (250). He never could comprehend
her love for Morris as being a love for an individual
and not a type or "case." Moreover he denies Catherine's
individuality by assuming that no one would love her
were it not for her position and fortune. His concern
is with the public aspects of marriage; hers with the
Catherine's renunciation of subsequent "opportunities" reminds us of Newman's in *The American*. Both fell in love with an ideal, but both were tragically unaware at the outset of the lack of freedom in the beloved one's actions and choices. Neither Claire nor Morris were able to surmount their innate aversion to change. Claire could never disregard her sense of duty to her family and native institutions regardless of the shallowness and hypocrisy beneath their lustre. Morris could not rise above his selfish drive to provide for his own comfort and ease regardless of the means he used to obtain them. But in both cases, the renunciators grow in moral and intellectual knowledge through a figurative marriage to a sacred and beautiful mental vision of the beloved. In the earlier novel, Newman does not sufficiently recognize the ineluctable position into which Claire's national traditions had forced her. In the latter, Catherine does not realize soon enough hidden motives and Morris's own psychological and emotional growth. Her own honesty--and generosity--naively presupposed his. The final lines of *Washington Square* contain a metaphor of Catherine's quiet, beautiful inner life in the "morsel of fancywork" which she picks up and continues to embroider "for life, as it were" (266) after Morris departs for the last time. Renunciation again is the Jamesian vehicle for expressing the Greek pathos-mathos formula:
from her suffering Catherine has attained self knowledge. The experience and life she might have had with Morris are richer and more beautiful than the actual which she could have with someone else. She must live with this imagined beauty and marriage and not allow the actual to violate her vision.
CHAPTER FOUR
MARRIAGE: QUEST AND CONTRACT

Before the appearance of *The Portrait of a Lady* in 1881, Henry James's treatment of marriage was primarily confined to studies of the search for the fulfilling marriage. He had yet to attempt any full treatment of the actual state of marriage. Almost the entire second volume of *The Portrait of a Lady* gives us an intense study of this condition of life. The major portion of the first volume projects ideas and ideals of marriage which are later grounded in the agonizing reality of Isabel and Osmond's actual marriage, one of the few marriages actually to take place in the entire corpus of James. Themes which James has related to the search for marriage in the earlier works reappear in *Portrait* with new variations and are skillfully interlinked to provide for the most complex study of the subject in the early period. The themes of life and art, of international initiations and of epistemological exploration have immediate bearing upon Isabel Archer's quest for marriage, a quest almost synonymous with her quest for the most complete life.

James grants Isabel all the material freedoms necessary for her search, but she unfortunately "affronts" a miserable destiny. James sets forth ideals for what marriage should be by describing what it should not be.
F. W. Dupee writes that marriage is "the axis on which the Portrait turns . . . not as a specific social situation . . . but as a condition of existence—of Isabel's existence in particular." Isabel's marriage thus becomes subject to moral, aesthetic, social and psychological examination. James deemed these the most important questions one could ask about human relations. Conceptual fallacies such as complete self reliance and actual inadequacies like Osmond's are elucidated and are often accompanied by hints of their converses. Although some treatment of the more physical aspects of love appears, including a kiss, rare in James, the major concern is, as usual, epistemological; Isabel's anagnorisis involves primarily the downfall of many egocentric views held early in the novel and their replacement by altruistic motives and values. Her richest relationship, as it turns out, is one which is a marriage in mind. But Isabel does not always act in a completely blameless way. Her "manner" is indicative more of the maturity of a Baroness Eugenia than the cleverness of an Angela Vivian, more of the growing self-honesty of a Christina Light than the saintliness of a Catherine Sloper.

James was beginning to see more and more the close relationship of art and life. As his view of art became increasingly organic, so evident in his prefaces to the New York edition, it naturally approaches his view
of life as process and growth. In his letter to the Deerfield Summer School, he advises the students to "do something with the great art and the great form; do something with life." Two principles should be firmly upheld: "life" and "freedom." The novel must have "liberty; give it its head, and let it range." The view James now gives his audience of the artist as molder or sculptor of a static object which they saw in the concrete characters of Roger Lawrence or Roderick Hudson is the frightening view of a Gilbert Osmond who needs a marionnette more than a wife. James's more mature view of the artist in life is that of Ralph Touchett, who intervenes in Isabel's life only once and wishes to observe her thenceforth completely detached, allowing her perfect freedom. He thereby allows for dynamism and organic growth to take place within the provided circumstances or the données. Probably the greatest irony in the book, of course, is the tragic result of even so slight a "touch" upon another's life, as generous as it was.

James is less interested in discussing cultural differences implied in the "international" marriage than in the social and psychological effect of national conventions and modes of thought. James writes in his preface that "the first thing she'll do will be to come to Europe; which will in fact form, and all inevitably, no small part of her principal adventure. . . . /But/
without her sense of them, her sense for them, as one may say, they are next to nothing at all."\(^4\) Thus Isabel's "sense" for conventions is to be confronted seriously by Osmond, who adopts them, but cannot rise above them; with Warburton, who can see no other way of life than the one which they prescribe; and with Goodwood, who can see no merit in them whatever. As Edwin T. Bowden suggests, James's emphasis "lies not in the definition of the contrast but in a more direct fictional exploitation of its effect upon the sensibilities of the heroine, Isabel Archer. The earlier theme has become a means rather than an end in itself."\(^5\) James is also concerned with its effect on Isabel's modes of knowledge, with the European experience correcting or reinforcing Isabel's preconceptions.

Therefore both themes, in a sense, are embraced by the growth of self-knowledge. James had his "vivid individual . . . not confined by the conditions, not engaged in the tangle, to which we look for much of the impress that constitutes an identity."\(^6\) He compares her with Portia, whose interest for us is not in her "high social position" but in her personal nature, her private drama. He places the heaviest emphasis on Isabel's "relation to herself," even though she is interested in the "things that are not herself; thus "this relation need n't fear to be too limited."\(^7\) James concludes for this reason that, in trying to "show
what an 'exciting' inward life may do for the person leading it even while it remains perfectly normal," the long "vigil of searching criticism" in Chapter XLII is the finest thing in the book. It has "all the vivacity of incident and all the economy of picture."³ This representation of her "motionlessly seeing" is the apogee of his combination of form and theme in order to achieve a fine statement of her internal conflict. His use of "picture" and "scene" will become increasingly important in the later novels. The picture has to do with "seeing," coming to a knowledge of self and perceiving the truth of particular situations. The scene is the dramatic rendering of "being" or "doing" and provides the more overtly social context. In light of this technique, it is perhaps easier to see how Isabel's marriage to Osmond can exist in "act' while, at the same time, she can have a marriage in mind to Ralph. It is noteworthy that Isabel discovers the latter relationship after the long "picture" in Chapter XLII.

James still considers the search for marriage a quest, but there is greater concentration on the infinite subtleties and variations in the individual relationship. The value of a fulfilling human relationship will become in the later novels paramount even when that relationship is not an actual marriage, such as occurs in The Ambassadors and The Wings of the Dove. It is obvious in Portrait that Isabel is in many ways a
female Christopher Newman who sets out on a quest, not only for marriage, but for her "destiny." It is a quest for more than Newman's "finest article;" it is an "exploration,"9 to use Dorothy Van Ghent's phrase, a "campaign to live," with the "highest affirmation of life /being/ the development of the subtlest and most various consciousness."10 It is noteworthy that James treats such a campaign as a quest for marriage. To allow Isabel the full use of her faculties, this quest is carried out "in the uppermost levels of material opportunity where presumably there is most freedom and where therefore freedom becomes most threatening; and where necessity wears its most insidious disguise, the disguise of freedom."11 Here the most exciting "adventures" are those of the mind. Thus Isabel chooses Osmond because he will provide definite channels or charts for her knowledge and merits while, at the same time, he will use her money to its fullest advantage by transforming it into beauty.

Nevertheless, a degree of acquisitiveness is connoted in her quest. She wants knowledge, experience and marriage; she is adventurous in mind, which is itself a kind of opportunism, but an opportunism without the implications of being unprincipled. As Laurence B. Holland states, "What the plot does is to connect monetary transactions with both marital and parental concerns and with aesthetic concerns as well, and to reveal a pro-
found displacement which is of particular importance in American cultural history: a movement in which the possibilities for experience of one generation are shifted to seek their fulfillment in the prospect of a younger.\textsuperscript{12} It is true that Isabel's own prospects are gradually dimmed and destroyed at the end of the novel, but the shift of possibilities seems not so much emphasized as Isabel's own growth and understanding of the public view of marriage—a solemn, deliberate vow—and realization that her true relationship, her most fulfilling relationship had been with Ralph Touchett.

One of the earliest images in the novel applied to Isabel is that of a queenly figure. Isabel is the Spanish (or Portuguese)\textsuperscript{13} equivalent of Elizabeth. In his description of Gardencourt, James makes a point of mentioning "the great Elizabeth's/s/"\textsuperscript{14} visit and the hospitality she had received there. Isabel Archer, Diana-like herself, shares many of Elizabeth I's characteristics. She is a "lady" and yet demands freedom from many social constrictions. She is "quite independent" (I. 13), Ralph's father is told. Mr. Touchett immediately ascribes three levels of meaning to "independent": financially or morally independent, or simply "find of her own way" (I. 13). She is "used to a great deal of deference, and . . . /she/ had a high spirit" (I. 19); she admits to her own beauty and tells Mr. Touchett, "I'm very fond of my liberty" (I. 24). Such a queenly
role as James here grants Isabel is suggestive of his later essay on "The Manners of American Women" 15 in which he depicts the American woman as a queen with no particular realm.

Like Elizabeth I, Isabel had a fertile love of knowledge and her "imagination was strong" (I. 27). Mrs. Touchett first sees her seated alone with a book. But Isabel realizes her mind "was a good deal of a vagabond" especially as it trudges "over the sandy plains of a history of German thought" (I. 31). It is worthwhile to keep such a fact in mind when we see her later choosing Osmond because he will provide, she hopes, a solid base for her ideas and ideals. When her quest offers to take her to Europe, she expresses the hope that her family's house will not be torn down since it is full of "life" and "experience" (I. 35). In Europe she will find places such as Florence, Mrs. Touchett tells her, which are even more replete with experience. But even with such an offer, Isabel, like Catherine Sloper, cannot "promise" to do everything her aunt tells her to do for this would be a severe limitation on her freedom.

The feature of Isabel's personality which James stresses in the early chapters is that she is American, certainly, but, at the same time, a very original, unique person. Her brother-in-law, Edmund Ludlow, says that she is like an original "written in a foreign tongue" (I. 39). Her knowledge is large, but her experience
limited. In a brilliant use of school-girl diction, James captures her attitude toward suffering: "it was an advantage never to have known anything particularly unpleasant. It appeared to Isabel that the unpleasant had been even too absent from her knowledge, for she had gathered from her acquaintance with literature that it was often a source of interest and even of instruction" (I. 42). She arrives in Europe, then, as a queen, but also as a self-confident schoolgirl who is eager to learn from an entire world spread out before her like encyclopedias copy. James carefully refrains from calling her a "lady" as he terminates his description of her: "she had everything a girl could have: kindness, admiration, bonbons, bouquets, the sense of exclusion from none of the privileges of the world she lived in, abundant opportunity for dancing, plenty of new dresses, the London Spectator, the latest publications, the music of Gounod, the poetry of Browning, the prose of George Eliot" (I. 46). Thus she is still a "girl" who does not know treachery, hatred, or deceit; nor is she capable of adopting disguises or roles in society itself. The new clothes and allusive conversation which had captivated her American friends will not suffice; she learns later, when she tries to close off her private world from a European public world which is continually peering in at her after her marriage just as much as she had examined it earlier. Now, however, she has only the desire that her life
should always be in harmony with the most pleasing impression she should produce; she would be what she appeared, and she would appear what she was. When she arrives in Europe, she is "natural" in the sense that Gertrude Wentworth and Christopher Newman were. She is immediately at ease and maintains her self-assurance upon her arrival in England. James takes great care to present her in greys, rather than in sharp black or white contrasts. She is afraid of suffering (I. 64); she has self-esteem (I. 67) to the point of being a "rank egoist" (I. 72). Her imagination and theories are evidence of a "general impression of life" and full of inconsistency (I. 73); yet we are warned not to analyze her (I. 69) or judge her at this point.

The novel is the story of a girl's growth into a lady, of a young queen finally accepting the real responsibility for herself. Her contradictions are those proceeding from a child who learns anew each day until an original theory has been totally falsified. Thus, when she arrives in England, she "found herself as diverted as a child in a pantomime" (I. 73). Europe is not the real world to her yet: it is only a picturesque stage. Mr. Touchett tells her that, as an American, she belongs to no class in Europe (I. 78). Isabel finds this an exclusion quite to her satisfaction. She can view Europe even more objectively; she speaks
often of certain "specimens" she has discovered there. When told that Lord Warburton might launch a revolution, her remarks are sympathetic since she thinks revolutionaries "behave so exquisitely. I mean picturesquely" (I. 100). She does not yet have a "personal" point of view, but a "thoroughly American" one (I. 81). Ralph even calls her "Columbia" and draws "a caricature of her in which she was represented as a very pretty young woman dressed, on the lines of the prevailing fashion, in the folds of the national banner" (I. 83). James reiterates her concern that her appearance reflects her being: "Isabel's chief dread in life at this period of her development was that she should appear narrow-minded; what she feared next afterwards was that she should really be so" (I. 83). In such a spirit of self-conscious independence, Isabel launches out on her "exploring expedition" (I. 396) as Ralph calls it, her "adventure" (I. 321) in which she must find a truly meaningful existence. She admits to Ralph that she looks at life too much "as a doctor's prescription" (I. 319), trying to decide what in life is "good" for her, playing a role somewhat similar to a combination of those of Dr. Sloper and Catherine, of doctor and patient. Nevertheless, implicit in this view of life is the freedom to decide. This freedom is basic for her consideration of suitors, her ultimate choice of a husband, and her final, renunciatory decision. It provides,
finally, the bases for James's concept of marriage. Even within a public bond, there must be private freedom. Furthermore, Isabel's search for knowledge and experience is spurred on by this freedom which is necessary for the ultimately wise choice. James succinctly places this primary motivation at the close of the scene involving Isabel's first evening with Warburton. Mrs. Touchett has told her of the custom preventing her from remaining below with the men once she, Mrs. Touchett, has retired.

"Young girls here—in decent houses—don't sit alone with the gentlemen late at night."
"You were very right to tell me then," said Isabel. "I don't understand it, but I'm very glad to know it."
"I shall always tell you," her aunt answered, "whenever I see you taking what seems to me too much liberty."
"Pray do; but I don't say I shall always think your remonstrance just."
"Very likely not. You're too fond of your own ways."
"Yes, I think I'm very fond of them. But I always want to know the things one shouldn't do."
"So as to do them?" asked her aunt. "So as to choose," said Isabel. (I. 93)

Thus James assures the reader that whatever choices Isabel will make, she will be an absolutely free moral agent, acting within the bounds of her knowledge.

It is not her knowledge which finally misleads her but her assertion of herself and her freedom of choice in the face of every possible warning. This assertiveness causes her to revolt against any restraining orders. Due to an exalted notion of what marriage
could offer and also a close knowledge of the failings inherent in Warburton and Goodwood, Isabel, like a queen, refuses offers of marriage which most "girls" would have jumped at. By examining her relationships with four men before her marriage, we can discover her reasons for choosing Osmond and more accurately ascertain her idea of marriage and what requirements the "right" marriage should fulfill.

Her first suit is made by Lord Warburton, and it is in this relationship that James makes fullest use of the international theme. Isabel says early in the novel, "Imagine one's belonging to an English class" (I. 78). At this point she still feels no real kinship to the Europe before her, nor to any exponent of its class system or conventions. She has a romantic, picturesque view of Europe and regards Warburton not so much as personal friend or suitor, but as "a hero of a romance" (I. 91). But Warburton, too, makes cultural generalizations which are faulty when applied to the individual. He accuses Isabel of being, like other Americans, "grossly superstitious" and "rank Tories and bigots" (I. 95). Isabel reveals a certain superiority when she toys with him by asking him "artless questions for the pleasure of hearing him answer seriously" (I. 96). But, when she meets his sisters, the Misses Molyneux, she senses, finally, their "sweetness and shyness of demeanor" reflected in their eyes which were "like the
balanced basins, the circles of ornamental water, set, in parterres, among the geraniums"; she sees them, above all, as "satisfied" (I. 105). As Dorothy Van Ghent notes, images of eyes in James often reveal the kind of insight that person has.  

16  Isabel senses Warburton's innate satisfaction with the status quo, beneath all his talk of abolishing the class system. She sees the Misses Molyneux as clear representatives of Warburton himself. She realizes they are more capable of emotion but had a "want of play of mind" (I. 106). She finally tells Warburton she thinks him "quaint", to which accusation he "protests." His protest seems to Isabel all the more "quaint" (I. 112). The thought of marriage to a member of such a closely structured class system provides her with a "certain fear" (I. 113). This fear is something more than the psychological fear of sex which William Stein has suggested.  

17  It is a fear of the loss of freedom of self. Warburton's nationality is a definite limitation to the freedom Isabel desires in marriage. She feels that "a territorial, a political, a social magnate had conceived the design of drawing her into the system in which he rather invidiously lived and moved. A certain instinct, not imperious, but persuasive, told her to resist—murmured to her that virtually she had a system and an orbit of her own" (I. 144). She dislikes social confinement almost as much
as Newman dislikes the Parisian restrictions.

Whether Isabel recognizes it or not, however, Warburton is revolting from his traditions to a certain extent by asking for the hand of a woman of little fortune and of not outstanding beauty (I. 145). For him it was, in all appearances, a marriage of sentiment (I. 147), not one of "reason." And his offer to live in any "climate, the whole world over" uses almost the precise words Newman had spoken to Claire. But in no sense is the "splendid security" of Warburton's wealth and position: "the greatest /goal/ she could conceive;" and, consequently, Isabel feels like a "caught creature in a vast cage" (I. 153). Had she been a heroine in Jane Austen, she might have accepted. But she still regards Warburton as a specimen, Europe as an object; accordingly, when he suggests that he could remove the moat to alleviate any dampness in his house, she replies, "I adore a moat" (I. 155), thus ignoring Warburton's personal solicitousness.

One of Isabel's interior psychological examinations immediately follows this scene. She, at first, reasons that she did not choose Warburton because he would prohibit her "free exploration of life," as reason which she immediately discounts as a very prideful one; and pride holds for her the "horror of a desert place" (I. 155-156). At this point in the novel, she refuses to acknowledge one of her basic flaws. She finally admits
a sentiment which is, by now, familiar to the reader of early James: "she liked him too much to marry him;" she did not want to inflict upon him her "tendency to criticise" (I. 156). Nora Lambert and Christina Light had expressed similar sentiments about strength of feeling being necessarily outside the bond of marriage. At the end of her own examination, Isabel is "really frightened" that she might be, after all, only "cold, hard, priggish" (I. 157). Since James has asked his audience not to judge, we can only add that Isabel does not want exploration truncated; if she became dissatisfied with her life with Warburton, she could severely blame herself for marrying before gaining a suitable amount of knowledge of the world and herself. She tells him later that her marriage to him would be equivalent to escaping her "fate," giving up the experience of "unhappiness" which she has only read about. She cannot gain happiness by separating herself from "life," from the "usual chances and dangers, from what most people know and suffer" (I. 187). What on the surface appears to be what psychologists would call a death instinct is, in reality, just the reverse. The almost certain protection and security offered by Warburton is, to the person desiring freedom and experience, a stifling, almost material safety from which one would emerge not having experienced life at all. For Isabel such security would
be an escape from life.

In a conversation with Ralph, Isabel reveals that a marriage to Warburton—or, perhaps, at this point in her growth, any marriage—would mean the end of a life of exploration and growth rather than the most suitable means for such a life. She tells him, "I don't want to begin life by marrying. There are other things a woman can do." Ralph tells her that she wants to drain the "cup of experience," but she replies she wants only to see it, to see Europe. Ralph replies, "You want to see, but not to feel... /T/he world interests you and... you want to throw yourself into it" (I. 212-213). He concludes that such an adventure is "fine."

Ralph and Isabel are shown to be kindred spirits in such a passage; but Ralph, by virtue of his illness, is forced into a role of observer. Isabel chooses it (the role of observer) at this point in her growth, and she chooses only to see Warburton as a specimen of English gentility, not to feel so much response to him as a human being offering her his love and devotion. She hopes later to hear that he has married someone else in order that such a marriage might be proof in her eyes that "he believed her firm," (I. 324) a belief which would be "grateful to her pride." Such a sentiment reveals to the reader simply her own pride and uncertainty in the affair and, thus, her lack of any real
love, at this point, for Warburton.

James stresses, by her refusal of Warburton, her idealism regarding the possibilities of self unrestricted by any social, political, or national limits. Thus, as Richard Poirier suggests, he tries to make her choice of a husband a sign of her superiority to customary social values." Ralph, a Europeanized American, respects her fear of the conventional and agrees with the decision of Isabel, who is in the process of becoming "Europeanized." She rejects him ultimately, not so much because of her "Puritan spirituality," as Richard Chase suggests, but more out of an Emersonian ideal of self and even, as Wegelin points out, an Emersonian criticism of social forms and systems existing for no particular reason.

Caspar Goodwood is, on the other hand, Isabel's very American, not "Europeanized" suitor whose protestations reveal a totally new facet of Isabel's character, besides compounding those we have already had a chance to view. But, as James writes in his preface, the novel has the "power . . . to range through all the differences of the individual relation to its general subject matter, all the varieties of outlook on life, of disposition to reflect and project, created by conditions that are never the same from man to man . . . from man to woman." In this way, James reveals in scenes involving Isabel and Caspar, new variations
on Isabel's motives and desires, her capacity for love and her emotional responses, which are the "general subject matter" of the portrait he is painting. In this relationship, James delves deeper into, and clarifies, Isabel's psychological make-up. He reveals her as remaining true to herself and her values, thereby granting her an integrity not particularly emphasized in the Warburton relationship.

In the past, Goodwood has smothered her with constant attention. In fact, this is one reason for her dislike of him. Her view of him as a selfish, overbearing, crude American is supported amply in the novel with each appearance. Isabel accuses him of being "simpleminded" (I. 137) and "drearily usual" (I. 165). He "showed his appetites and designs too simply and artlessly" (I. 165); in short, he has many of the defects Eugenia found in Clifford Wentworth. Even so, she admits this is a frivolous objection if she were in love with him; but "she was not in love with him and therefore might criticise his small defects as well as his great" (I. 165). She frankly tells him, "You don't fit in; not in any way, just now" (I. 219).

One reason he does not "fit in" is his obvious desire to possess her physically not as an art object, as Roger Lawrence might love, but as a woman for whom he feels a definite sexual attraction. This desire frightens Isabel first of all because she has a certain
distaste for his physical appearance. Secondly, she is afraid that he will stunt her intellectual and experiential growth. The two fears are interconnected. She feels that Caspar deprives her "of the sense of freedom," a charge similar to the one levelled at Warburton, at the same time that she senses "a disagreeably strong push, a kind of hardness of presence, in his way of rising before her." Caspar Goodwood expressed for her an energy—and she had already felt it as a power—that was of his very nature. "The idea of a diminished liberty was particularly disagreeable to her" (I. 162). The fact, however, of his "managing men" in the cotton mill industry did not displease her nearly so much as his jaw, which was "too square and set and his figure too straight and stiff; these things suggested a want of easy consonance with the deeper rhythms of life" (I. 165). He was socially, intellectually, and physically offensive to her more finely developed sensibilities. His un-tutored, blunt methods of social intercourse and courtship cause her often to think of him in terms of an armoured warrior.

His selfish desire to possess her denies her "personal independence" (I. 228); but he also hampers her freedom in that he represents the restrictions inherent in the genteel American code which decrees what is or is not decent. When he tells her that a
woman of her age is not independent, that there are
"all sorts of things she can't do," Isabel replies,
"I can do what I choose--I belong quite to the independ-
ent class. . . . 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 com-
patible with propriety to tell me" (I. 228-229). Isabel
is, at this point, completely removed from American
social restrictions.

Caspar's relationship has never advanced beyond
his own immediate physical attraction to her. His love
for her is selfish to the point that he tells her he
would rather see her dead than married to another man
(II. 44)--a cliché, yes, but nevertheless indicative of
the limits of his emotional capacity. He comes back
to see her after her marriage but leaves with Ralph for
England still having gained no knowledge of her; in his
view she is still "imperturbable, inscrutable, impene-
trable" (II. 313).

Isabel feels not love, but pity for him until he
could recover from his "heartache" (II. 292). Ironically,
before he leaves Rome, she requests his pity (II. 320).
But in the last scene, her old distaste for his physical
passion returns, but with an added dimension. He presses
against her and tells her "the world's very big," but
she responds, as she had earlier to Ralph, that it is
really "very small" (II. 435). Actually "the world,in
truth, had never seemed so large, it seemed to open out
all around her, to take one form of a mighty sea, where
she floated in fathomless waters. . . . /S/he believed
just then that to let him take her in his arms would
be the next best thing to dying" (II. 435). Aside from
the obvious Freudian overtones, like those noted earlier
in my discussion of The Europeans and Confidence, in
similar scenes with Felix Young and Bernard Longueville,
the passage just quoted describes a simple temptation to
succumb to a purely physical relationship whose physical
release would ultimately be pointless, given Isabel's
hierarchy of what a relationship should consist of on
the moral, aesthetic and social levels. Such a surrender
at this point would be a denial of her entire exploration
and basis for action. The relationship Goodwood offers
would be little better in its private limitations than
the stifling one she now shares with Osmond since Caspar
could offer her nothing beyond the physical. But, in
the public view, she would have denied the respon-
sibilities and duties which marriage had placed upon her
and which human beings had universally accepted as
necessary to be upheld. The blinding flash of Caspar's
kiss is replaced by darkness. Similarly his act of
possession, were she to allow it, would be followed by
an existence without light. As it was, there were lights
at the end of "a very straight path" (II. 436), the path
to growth through generosity and integrity of spirit,
through the cultivation of her own "corner" of the world. As Blehl says, she knows she cannot escape unhappiness by running from the responsibility her actions have entailed.\textsuperscript{22} A relationship is just as fulfilling as the degree of freedom it permits for intellectual exploration; the relationship is just as rewarding as the range of moral growth it allows for the imagination and sensibilities. Isabel sees no growth in exchanging one stifling relationship for another. She cannot return his devotion and she would receive, as Van Ghent says, passion without relation, aggressive energy without responsibility.\textsuperscript{23} Civilization had developed complexities and refinements far beyond the range of a Caspar Goodwood; and, with regard to Isabel's development within this civilization, Goodwood appears some what of a throwback.\textsuperscript{24} As Joseph A. Ward suggests, Goodwood, in the last chapter, is at the same point as Isabel at the beginning of the novel, so far as any knowledge of the world is concerned.\textsuperscript{25}

Far from being a "throwback," Ralph Touchett is Isabel's intellectual guide for her exploration of life. James makes an interesting juxtaposition at the end of Chapter IV and the beginning of Chapter V. Having just described Caspar Goodwood's square jaw and personal resolution, James immediately opens the next chapter with "Ralph Touchett was a philosopher . . ." (I. 48). Isabel's relationship with Ralph is the most enlarging
one of the novel. At this point in the discussion, however, remarks will be limited to incidents and developments preceding Isabel's marriage.

Ralph Touchett, Isabel's first cousin, initially appears as a "sick-nurse" to his father. His relationship with Isabel is in some ways an extension of this role. The functions of a nurse are to observe, to advise, and to aid. He renounces any active involvement in the world for a position of observation. Ralph lightly refers to himself as Caliban when Henrietta Stackpole accuses him of "Europeanizing" Isabel. He has made Isabel too critical, in Henrietta's eyes, of American traditions, values, and ideals; She tells him he is too sophisticated; he is more like Prospero in his ability to change people. She lucidly tells him he has changed her by his sheer passivity, and charges him to step in and prevent any further change by inducing Caspar to pay Isabel a visit. (I. 170). Ralph, in his role of observer, provides Isabel with much thoughtful comment on her intellectual development and actions in the novel. In his passivity he can help her to understand herself and those in whom she takes great interest, such as Madame Merle and Osmond. The fact of his passivity prevents him, in James's view, from inhibiting the freedom on which Isabel's decisions and deeds are based.

But he is not always content to observe, when he
thinks he can benefit someone. So it is that, when he discovers Isabel's possibilities for self-enrichment, he asks his father to give her half of his own inheritance. He wants to make her rich so that she can "meet the requirements of her imagination" (I, 261). He will observe her for his own amusement, a small enough recompense for not being able to marry her. Hopefully the risk of her falling prey to a fortune hunter is a negligible factor in his "calculation" (I, 265), a term reminiscent of Robert Acton, Gordon Wright, and even Dr. Sloper. His own reward in observing her is the gratification of these calculations by Isabel's proving them correct. It should be noted here that his calculations are not condemned by James since they do not delimit Isabel's freedom of imagination, but genuinely seek to provide for it.

Ralph's motives involve more than deciding on a prescription which will provide the patient with the full use of her "faculties." His motives are those of the artist; he tells his father, "I shall get just the good I said a few moments ago I wished to put into Isabel's reach—that of having met the requirements of my imagination" (I, 265). As Mrs. Touchett tells Isabel, Ralph does not "abuse" people (II. 57). When he advises, it is to prevent suffering. He warns Isabel of Madame Merle; he calls her a "pathless desert of virtue" (I, 361), an image reappearing throughout the novel to connote a
wasteland of possibilities, a dearth of spiritual enrichment. He tells Isabel that Madame Merle is not human; where leopards have spots, she has "nothing, nothing, nothing." She is not only worldly, but "she's the great round world itself" (I. 362). Isabel would prefer to interpret this last warning as further reason to develop her friendship with Madame Merle, but for Ralph it means that Madame Merle is the evil tree of worldly knowledge itself. Ralph later tries to calm his mother and persuade her that Isabel will not marry Osmond. Ralph's speeches are among the most metaphorical in the book; they are rendered in a style James no doubt felt appropriate for his role as observer-artist. Ralph tells Mrs. Touchett that Isabel will have more "beseigers" than Osmond at her gates, which, he says, she will keep "ajar and open a parley" (I. 395). He goes on to say, "She has started on an exploring expedition, and I don't think she'll change her course, at the outset, at a signal from Gilbert Osmond. She may have slackened speed for an hour, but before we know it she'll be steaming away again. Excuse another metaphor" (I. 396).

Ralph's ability to view life objectively is also evident in his sense of humor. He is superior, in this respect, to Isabel in the early sections of the novel. Henrietta Stackpole confronts him with the statement:

"You think you're too good to get
married. . . . It's everyone's duty to get married. . . . In America it's usual for people to marry."
"If it's my duty," Ralph asked, "is it not, by analogy, yours as well . . . ?"
"You're not serious yet. You never will be," Henrietta said. (I. 126-127)

When Isabel hears of this conversation, she replies to Ralph's jocularity with considerable gravity: "She has a great sense of duty . . . and it's the motive of everything she says. That's what I like her for. She thinks it's unworthy of you to keep so many things to yourself. That's what she wanted to express. If you thought she was trying to--attract you, you were very wrong" (I. 129). Ralph's humor is social, and neither Henrietta nor Isabel can yet appreciate his subtle wit. His sense of humor is directly related to his objective view of life, to his refusal to participate in it actively, and thus to his refusal to marry.

His wit is also cerebral; most of his activity, in fact, is intellectual. He admits to his father that he would be in love with Isabel if "certain things were different" (I. 258), perhaps meaning, as F. W. Dupee suggests, that Ralph, like James, thinks too little of life to consider marriage; but, presumably, he refers to his physical disorder. Therefore he has now, as in the past, considerable opportunity to develop his mental capacities in liberty, exactly the kind of development Isabel comes to Europe to gain. In America he had attended Harvard, but, when he came to England, "Oxford
swallowed up Harvard, and Ralph became at last English enough. His outward conformity to the manners that surrounded him was nonetheless the mark of a mind that greatly enjoyed its independence, on which nothing long imposed itself, and which, naturally inclined to adventure and irony, indulged in a boundless liberty of appreciation" (I. 49). He is one of James's ideal characters who has combined the independence and adventurous features of the American intelligence with the polish gained from experiencing European tradition and culture. Is is of this set that James writes with fond reminiscence in The American Scene in his chapter on Newport: "a collection of the detached, the slightly disenchanted and contented, of the socially orthodox: a handful of mild, oh delightfully mild, cosmopolites, united by three common circumstances, that of their having for the most part more or less lived in Europe, that of their sacrificing openly to the ivory idol whose name is leisure, and that, not least, of a formed critical habit." All these features are present in Ralph. His "formed critical habit" begins operating upon his first meeting with Isabel: "his cousin was a very brilliant girl, who would take, as he said, a good deal of knowing, and his attitude with regard to her, though it was contemplative and critical, was not judicial" (I. 86-87). He sees her in aesthetic terms; she was an "edifice" whose "proportions" were "fair:"
Throughout the first half of the novel, Ralph's relationship with Isabel is non-sexual, entirely intellectual and social. He remains on the plane of "seeing" while she exists on the plane of "doing." His first actual intrusion into her life occurs behind the scenes when he urges Daniel Touchett to change his will to provide her with "power" to "put a little wind in her sails" (I. 260). Once he has taken this step, he cannot maintain disinterest. When he hears the news of Isabel's engagement he is "shocked and humiliated; his calculations had been false and the person in whom he was most interested was lost. He drifted about the house like a rudderless vessel in a rocky stream" (II. 61). He now cannot decide at what point her actions are none of his business, since he is related to her in another way. He tells her that his thoughts of her and Osmond "lead to nothing. The road's long and I never arrive" (II. 64). He then lapses into metaphor and tells her that he never expected to see her caught and "put into a cage" (II. 65).

Ralph's use of metaphors here and elsewhere is a device by which he can refrain from stating things too boldly, prevent himself from actively intervening in someone's life. When Isabel suggests he might be trying to dissuade her, she remarks, "it seems to me too touching." She feels he does, however, have some "special idea" which she is sure is "disinterested" (II. 67). Ralph then breaks away from his metaphorical diction and his
"language of activity" suddenly strikes the reader as being of tremendous sincerity! He wishes she would marry someone of more "importance." He tells her, "I had amused myself with planning out a high testing for you... You were not to come down so easily or so soon." He had expected her to marry a man of a "more active, larger, freer sort of nature... he's narrow, selfish" (II. 69-70). From Ralph such adjectives take enormous weight, and Isabel is visibly shaken. She can respond only by adopting a position of didactic haughtiness, such as is revealed in her concern with pleasing Osmond's tastes: "I hope it may never be my fortune to fail to gratify my husband's tastes" (II. 71). As the scene nears its conclusion, Ralph admits

"I've said what I had on my mind--and I've said it because I love you!"

Isabel turned pale: was he too on that tiresome list? She had a sudden wish to strike him off. "Ah, then, you're not disinterested!"

"I love you, but I love without hope," said Ralph quickly, forcing a smile and feeling that in that last declaration he had expressed more than he intended. (II. 71-72)

Isabel here sees Ralph in the new light of his very real love for her. She is stunned to see him as a suitor, outside his position as cousin, as sick-nurse, as observer. Previously she thought it only normal that "one's cousin always pretended to hate one's husband; that was traditional, classical; it was part of one's cousin's always pretending to adore one" (II. 60-61).
She now discovers that neither hatred nor adoration is feigned. She has lost another categorizing preconception. Her relationship with Ralph will grow far beyond this point after she is married to Osmond.

As aesthetic observer, Ralph is alarmingly similar to Osmond. But it is only an external similarity. As Poirier says, although Isabel "sees in Ralph a capacity for appreciation not unlike that which makes her fall in love with Osmond, she cannot recognize in the humour with which he expresses it the guarantee that, with him, her own tastes and predilections will not be insidiously stifled." Ralph's concern is with what can be freed; Osmond's with what can be used or controlled. A comparison of two passages will make their polaric opposition even more apparent. When Isabel worries about whether her sudden inheritance from Daniel Touchett is good for her, Ralph tells her:

\[ \sqrt{\text{Take things more easily. Don't ask yourself so much whether this or that is good for you. Don't question your conscience so much--it will get out of tune like a strummed piano. Keep it for great occasions. Don't try so much to form your character--it's like trying to pull open a tight tender young rose. Love as you like best, and your character will take care of itself. (I. 319) \]

Later, in a conversation with Madame Merle, Osmond says that Isabel's fault lay in her too numerous ideas.

"Fortunately they're very bad ones," said Osmond.
"Why is that fortunate?"
"Dame, if they must be sacrificed." (I. 412)
In her long introspection in Chapter XLII, Isabel realizes that when he told her "she had too many ideas and that she must get rid of them," it was "like the bell that was to ring up the curtain upon the real drama of their life" (II. 194). In James, the greatest crime in life and in marriage is to seek to control someone's mind and consciousness.29

In Osmond's case, James defines the relationship with Isabel by relating Osmond's incapacies to the psychological theme and the theme of life and art. Gilbert, like Ralph, is the completely Europeanized American; but, unlike Ralph, he cannot be considered among the elite of the set. James emphasizes from the beginning that, as a human being, on the scale of developed capacity for feeling, Osmond registers zero. His primary concerns are those of the aesthete. Isabel misjudges the fact that he has, in Madame Merle's words, "no career, no name, no position, no fortune, no past, no future, no anything" (I. 281) and infers that he is, as a result, completely free from trivia which would inhibit his freedom to experience the truly valuable life. For Isabel, at this point, his lack of connection with any particular social structure or career, which she feels are the goals of Warburton and Goodwood respectively, could, like the whiteness of Moby Dick, be everything just as easily as nothing. She feels that her growth in liberty, knowledge, and experience could be unending with
such a person.

The reader, however, gains just the opposite view. Osmond denies freedom in life by trying to make life a work of art. Again, he does not represent the organic view of art, but rather a highly stylized, conventional kind of art which is static, not dynamic. Part of Osmond's ruse in his courtship of Isabel is his leading her to believe in the identity of their views. He asks her, "Don't you remember my telling you that one ought to make one's life a work of art? You looked rather shocked at first; but then I told you that it was exactly what you seemed to me to be trying to do with your own" (II. 15). This identification with her own ideas is so strong that even when he tells her a few pages later that he is "convention itself" (II. 21) and we are reminded that Madame Merle is the "world itself"—she feels no sense of danger to her own freedom.

What the reader would wish her to sense in Osmond's relationship with her is similar to her response to his dealings with Pansy: "Isabel was impressed by Osmond's artistic, the plastic view, as it somehow appeared, of Pansy's innocence—her own appreciation of it being more anxiously moral. But his aesthetic view is intimately united with his psychology. He believes people can be molded like objects. He asks Merle what she wants to "do" with Isabel (I. 345); she has told him Isabel will "amuse" him in his "indolence" (I. 342–343), and please
his "adorable taste" (I. 348). Osmond's role in courtship seems to be that of a cicerone. He shows Isabel all his art objects while developing a plan to acquire her for his collection. The scene in which he leads her through his house is notable in its presentation of the dominance of his pride in his collection rather than in his interest in her. This reversal is apparent especially when one compares Osmond's tour with Warburton's earlier, in which Isabel herself is her guide's center of interest. But Isabel sees his "curtains and crucifixes," as the Countess Gemini refers to them, and thinks they are "beautiful and precious" (I. 367). But finally she is "oppressed . . . with the accumulation of beauty and knowledge" which was shown her by this "kindest of ciceroni" (I. 378). Isabel does not realize his ambitions of proprietorship, even when he picks up this one fact about Warburton. When he learns Warburton owns great quantities of land, he says, "Ah, he's a great proprietor? Happy man" (II. 4).

Osmond's "curtains and crucifixes" take on symbolic value when his relationship with Isabel is considered. Regarding the first genre, Osmond's layers of disguise are reflected in his house itself, with its "incommunicative character," its "mask" of "heavy lids, but no eyes" (I. 325). Madame Merle accuses him of being "heartless" (I. 346), and James describes him as "a fine gold coin," both without "stamp" of "common mintage that
provides for general circulation" (I. 329). His every act is highly conscious, in one sense of being feigned for the proper effect it may have on his audience. His crucifixes connote no religious sentiment, but only add to the reader's sense of his unmoved spirit in the face of human sacrifice. Even his sister realizes that his marriage to Isabel will result in the sacrifice of her inner freedom and growth (I. 392).

His ability and desire to control the inner lives of people is reflected in James's repeated references to his desire to be Machiavelli or the pope. His sister tells him, "You yourself are Machiavelli" (I. 373). "I envied the Pope of Rome--for the consideration he enjoys" (I. 382), which reveals his consummate egotism. In St. Peter's itself, Osmond is disturbed by its effect on him in making him feel like an "atom." Isabel tells him he should indeed have been the Pope, and he responds, "Ah, I should have enjoyed that" (I. 427); and, later, he tells her his envy is not dangerous since he only wishes to be his idols, such as the Pope, not destroy them (II. 6). This is a self-contradictory statement which passes over Isabel. Thus his desire for control and possession is part of his "proprietorship" theory of relationship. Later, meeting Lord Warburton, Osmond perceived a new attraction in the idea of taking to himself a young lady who had qualified herself to figure in his collection of choice objects by declining so noble
a hand" (II. 9). For him, marriage means "success—the most agreeable emotion of the human heart" (II. 11). Isabel, as his wife, would be a reflection of his good taste; his "desire to have something or other to show for his 'parts'—to show somehow or other—had been the dream of his youth" (II. 12). This desire causes his marriage to Isabel to be a good "bargain."

But whereas Madame Merle thinks he is an "un-fathomable" abyss (I. 412), Isabel considers him, and James's word choice is vital here, a "specimen apart:"

Isabel "had never met a person of so fine a grain" (I. 376). As Poirier points out, Isabel believes she belongs to the "independent" class; and Osmond "is a man without social identity . . ./he/ has so polished he aloofness that she sees in its /sic/ a reflection of her own idealized aspirations."30 Poirier goes on to show that Osmond is only a mock transcendentalist, on his public side, whereas Isabel is the authentic transcendentalist. The former appears to be completely self-reliant but actually is a slave to society and convention; the latter is actually aloof from society and believes in the "transcendental personality" which is far greater than the vulgar trivia the world offers.

Isabel's inability to see through Osmond at this point in the novel is heightened in effect when the truth dawns on her in Chapter XLII. It is that her passion for Osmond is so deep that she does not take in his "tone of
almost impersonal discretion" (II. 18) when he tells her that he loves her "absolutely." Her own passion, like a "large sum stored in a bank," would all "come out" when touched (II. 18). Soon she is completely taken in by Osmond and discovers her "passion" lacks any fulfillment whatever. However, Osmond, as is Isabel for James, is a figure in the "international light"31 though hardly the combination of Goodwood and Warburton that Dorothea Krook suggests;32 and her sight or insight is somewhat blurred. As F. O. Matthiessen writes, any "mystification" about Osmond is only Isabel's, not James's.33

Isabel's ideas about marriage, before her own takes place, are intimately involved with her ideas on the self, society, and happiness. She does not appear particularly eager for marriage upon her arrival from America. She felt she could rely on herself—"there was something pure and proud in her"—until "a certain light should dawn [and] she could give herself completely" (I. 71-72); and this is precisely the way she feels with Gilbert Osmond. Her idea of marriage is one of giving, not growing. She senses that her intellectual growth must precede her marriage. For the same reason she tells Ralph that she does not want "to begin life by marrying" (I. 212). Ralph encourages her desire for growth by telling her to "rise above the ground" (I. 319); but Isabel's desire to give herself and her money to a person
she believes will appreciate it causes her to disagree
with Ralph. She says, "You talk about one's soaring
and sailing, but if one marries at all one touches the
earth. One has human feelings and needs, one has one's
heart in one's bosom, and one must marry a particular
individual" (II. 74). She admits she has "needs" which
her own self-reliance cannot satisfy.

She has changed from her earlier belief in total
self-reliance to a realization that the marital re-
lationship would be the more fulfilling. It is partially
her hatred of a marriage of ambition that promotes this
private view of marriage to a person who, she admits,
has nothing in the eyes of society. Marriage will
allow her to continue to grow by providing her with
responsibility and direction: it is a means for mutual
growth. But Isabel is destined to discover what Poirier
calls the "specifically American" tragic mistake of
correlating the "internal world of heroic imagination
and the external, historical world" such as Newman had
in The American. In the early works, there is a con-
sistent pattern of "entertainment before there is the
knowledge, the romance before the reality."34

So in the period before her marriage, Isabel finds
happiness in drifting without direction for a time (I. 235);
as Henrietta tells her, "the peril for you is that you
live too much in the world of your own dreams. You're
not enough in contact with reality--with the toiling,
striving, suffering, I may even say sinning, world that surrounds you. You're too fastidious; you've too many graceful illusions" (I. 310). Isabel states rather bluntly, in the face of all her friends' warnings about Osmond, "I don't marry for my friends" (II. 46). What one does marry for is "to share" one's ideas and self "with someone else" (II. 195). She does not realize, as Crews points out, that the soul, as a "fixed entity," is vulnerable to the external force of society, or at least to other individuals. She had earlier felt that marriage itself would diminish her "liberty" (I. 162) when suited by Warburton and Goodwood; and she had told Goodwood, "I don't need the aid of a clever man to teach me how to live. I can find out for myself" (I. 223). What she discovers, after "drifting" for a time, is the merits, both moral and aesthetic, in social forms. She sensed their gradual excrescence came from man's need for communication and beauty. Thus she feels that Osmond's presence hints "that nothing but the right 'values' was of any consequence." Isabel deduces that "perfect simplicity was not the badge of his family. Even Pansy ... had a kind of finish that was not entirely artless" (I. 367). What she does not discover, however, is the dual nature of forms. Like her inheritance, they can be instruments for growth or freedom; or they can provide destruction by stifling the creative life of their adherents. They can reveal or conceal. Isabel enters
upon marriage with the presumption that forms imply content, a means for rewardingly directing one's life along certain paths; but she discovers that forms--and their devotees--can be completely hollow and stifling. For Isabel, before her marriage, forms imply perfection and responsibility, and Osmond is their high priest: "Mr. Osmond makes no mistakes," she tells Ralph (II. 73).

Her belief in the absolute sacredness of the self and its development overrides her concern about the familial and social dissatisfaction with her choice: "it was the tragic part of happiness; one's right was always made of the wrong of someone else" (II. 78). In him she believes she can find a relation which will more than compensate for her separation from everyone but the beloved (II. 77), and find both a suitable, dynamic sharer of her "ideas" and a teacher of new ones. Ironically Osmond narcissistically thinks of her only as a reflector of his static ideas. Her mind would be a "silver plate" upon which "he might heap up . . . ripe fruits, to which it would give a decorative value, so that talk might become for him a sort of served dessert. . . . /H/ε could tap her imagination with his knuckle and make it ring" (II. 79). It is noteworthy that earlier his "ideas" are described in the same way--static and solidified, unreceptive to change: "ε/Hi/ε uttered his ideas as if, odd as they often appeared, he were used to them and had lived with them; old polished knobs and
heads and handles, of precious substance, that could be fitted if necessary to new walking-sticks—not switches plucked in destitution from the common tree and then too elegantly waved about" (I. 400). Osmond is unwilling to change; Isabel desires growth. Osmond describes their marriage as "soft and mellow—it has the Italian colouring" (II. 82), a description faintly connotative of death in its static peace and lack of activity. For Isabel the "desire for unlimited expansion had been succeeded in her soul by the sense that life was vacant without some private duty that might gather one's energies to a point... She could surrender to him with a kind of humility, she could marry him with a kind of pride; she was not only taking, she was giving" (II. 82). This is perhaps one of the closest statements one can find concerning James's belief in marriage as a mutual giving and taking in its private dimensions. The statement implies the idea that the husband should provide the wife with certain duties and give her a chart or guide along which she may develop her own particular abilities. The presumably "American" idea is a reversal of roles: Isabel says, "In America the gentlemen obey the ladies" (I. 189). In the novel, unfortunately, such a mutual interchange is tragically distant from the true situation.

Love, freedom, and honesty become hatred, imprisonment, and total falsity. In her marriage, they are rewards for her generosity. Rather than leading to
anything remotely approximating candor, it leads to concealment and disguise. Isabel herself begins to use forms to hide behind rather than to build upon. She conceals her deep sorrow and sense of hopelessness from all her acquaintances, even from Ralph for considerable length of time. Osmond "wished her to have no freedom of mind... He was her appointed and prescribed master" (II. 245). Isabel had lost her spontaneity, "something of that quick eagerness to which her husband had privately taken exception" (II. 105). In the last quarter of the novel there is great emphasis on patience, in regard to Pansy's, Isabel's and even Goodwood's situations. Patience implies suffering and enduring, and this is what Isabel finds "to do" in her marriage. Isabel and Osmond watch each other, as if a "gulf" were between them, "with eyes that were on either side a declaration of the deception suffered" (II. 189). Osmond has been deceived by his inability to see beyond his own falseness; in other words, he fails to realize Isabel's candor and ideas are delivered up without particular form or deception. Isabel, on the other hand, has believed Osmond was as frank as herself. Osmond's deception is caused by placing too much faith in his own selfish proprietorship; Isabel's, by a too generous faith in her own perspicacity, in her belief that his appearance was his reality. But Osmond's deception is even more complex. He readily admits his
true situation in life—his lack of fortune and position—but it is a conscious admission. Osmond is well aware that Isabel is too intelligent to be swayed by anything by the truth. The truth he gives her; but he subordinates its unsavory aspects by offering his own emotions which the reader knows are not genuine. Thus, even though both are deceived, it is Osmond, not Isabel, who practices deception; Isabel "only admire[s] and believe[s]" (II. 189) Osmond when he tells her, "I won't pretend I'm sorry you're so rich; I'm delighted. I delight in everything that's yours—whether it be money or virtue" (II. 80).

Isabel recalls that her attitude in entering upon marriage had a maternal aspect. She wished to "launch his boat for him; she would be his providence; it would be a good thing to love him. And she had loved him, she had so anxiously and yet so ardently given herself—a good deal for what she found in him but a good deal also for what she brought him and what might enrich the gift" (II. 192). But she finds that her "gift" only increases his attachment to the world whose servant he really is: "he was unable to live without it . . . he had looked at it out of his window even when he appeared to be most detached from it" (II. 198), an image suggestive of the "house of fiction" theory James himself was to propound later in his preface to Portrait. James writes there, "Tell me what the artist is, and I
will tell you of what he has been conscious. Thereby I shall express to you at once his boundless freedom and his moral reference. Osmond, himself a kind of artist, is materialistic "convention itself," as we have seen; and, looking down from his window, he reveals that "his ideal was a conception of high prosperity and propriety, of the aristocratic life" (II. 198). Compare this ideal with Isabel's: "Her notion of the aristocratic life was simply the union of great knowledge with great liberty; the knowledge would give one a sense of duty and the liberty a sense of enjoyment" (II. 198). One is tempted to substitute "marriage" for "aristocratic life" in such a statement; the difference between their views on marriage can be measured in the same terms.

In a figure combining Osmond's aesthetic and moral formalism, James writes of the effect of formulae lacking any humanistic content upon Isabel: "When she saw this rigid system close about her, draped though it was in pictured tapestries, that sense of darkness and suffocation . . . took possession of her; she seemed shut up with an odour of mould and decay" (II. 199). Osmond's forms include tolerance for the indecent, if not the immoral; Isabel "was not a daughter of the Puritans, but for all that she believed in such a thing as chastity and even as decency" (II. 200). She thus discovers that evil as well as beauty can inhere in the same form. In an appropriate reference to form and ritual, Osmond tells
Goodwood that Isabel and he are "as united, you know, as the candlestick and the snuffers" (II. 309).

Like Morris Townsend, Osmond is "a vulgar adventurer," Isabel realizes, who had married her solely "for her money" (II. 330). Isabel cannot, however, break off her marriage, however stifling, for the simple reason that she believes firmly that the marriage vow is sacred in a moral sense; it is a vow sworn before the entire world to be upheld. The marriage contract, the form itself, is treated by James as something inviolable. Isabel had been a "free agent" (II. 160), and now "constantly present to her mind were all the traditionary decencies and sanctities of marriage. The idea of violating them filled her with shame as well as with dread" (II. 245). Marriage is for Isabel, "the most serious act--the single sacred act--of her life" (II. 246). There can now be no "formal readjustment . . . no conceivable substitute" for such an act. She tells Henrietta, "I married him before all the world; I was perfectly free; it was impossible to do anything more deliberate" (II. 284).

Where Isabel emphasizes the vitality and affirmation of life which the contract presupposes, Osmond sees it as another form which must be maintained for its own sake, its own "honor." Osmond speaks "in the name of something sacred and precious--the observance of a magnificent form" but it is a "form" isolated from the human context. He has dissociated it from any idea that implies a mutual
relationship between the parties it binds together. For Isabel, with her strength of belief in the paramount importance of free will and free choice, the "tremendous vows . . . at the altar" (II. 361) were totally binding. But for Osmond, with his utter adherence to the letter, but not the spirit, of the law created by the society whose servant he is, the contract was just as binding.

Far from holding any private values, Osmond lives completely for the public view. The description most vital to our understanding of Osmond's methods and motives is Ralph's perception of Osmond's high degree of calculation, a method we see James condemn in The Europeans, Confidence, and Washington Square. Ralph realizes that

under the guise of caring only for intrinsic values, Osmond lived exclusively for the worldly. Far from being its master as he pretended to be, he was its very humble servant, and the degree of its attention was his only measure of success. . . . Everything he did was pose--pose so subtly considered that if one were not on the look-out one mistook it for impulse. . . . The thing he had done in his life most directly to please himself was his marrying Miss Archer; though in this case indeed the gullible world was in a manner embodied in poor Isabel, who had been mystified to the top of her bent. (II. 144-145)

It is noteworthy that James chooses a noun, not a verb, to describe Osmond's actions. Pose connotes a definite lack of vitality and originality. It is static and more dependent on the artful, consciously dissimulating nature rather than on an artistic, creative one.

The theme of life and art is thus seen in a new
dimension in Portrait. Osmond's treatment of people, as in the specific case of Lord Warburton, is "adequate . . . measured . . . punctilious . . . it was everything but natural" (II. 125). Osmond's blight in this respect finally touches Isabel. Ralph, on his return to Rome, sees his effects in Isabel who had formerly been lively, straightforward, and free. Now, "if she wore a mask it completely covered her face. There was something fixed and mechanical in the serenity pointed on it; this was not an expression, Ralph said--it was a representation, it was even an advertisement" (II. 142). It was a disguise to conceal her sorrow and mistake from the world, and she had learned of it from Osmond. Ralph continues his observation: "Her light step drew a mass of drapery behind it; her intelligent head sustained a majesty of ornament . . . she represented Gilbert Osmond" (II. 143-144). Osmond's art is one of copying, of making imitations. Just as he adopted conventions, since he had none of his own, so he makes representatives of himself out of human beings, rather than allowing them any sort of original growth. In this context the passage, which describes Osmond's task of copying the drawing of an antique coin, takes on a symbolic flavor: "A box of water-colours and fine brushes lay before him, and he had already transferred to a sheet of immaculate paper the delicate, finely tinted disk" (II. 352). The coin appropriately appears
in an aesthetic setting. Osmond has disguised his own financial necessity for marrying Isabel in an artfully contrived speech in which he tells her of his disdain of money (II. 80-81). For Osmond, art is static, it is ornament and disguise; his life is consumed in ownership and imitation of objets d'art, without thought of their meaning or of what, if anything, they themselves represented. Marriage to such a man makes impossible any life as discovery or spontaneity. Neither art nor life can be separated from each other without loss of beauty and meaning. Osmond feels both should exist for the sake of his own amusement and entertainment (II. 311). He also wants to be a stage director in both Isabel's and Fanny's lives; he wishes to "arrange" Fanny's marriage and asks Isabel to help "manage" it (II. 172, 185).

The pattern of artful disguise is also associated with the international theme. Osmond thought of himself as "the first gentleman of Europe" (II. 197). Even though of American stock, Osmond "knew more about Italy than anyone except two or three German professors" (I. 352), an ironic allusion, since that is exactly Osmond's relation to the Italian, and to all, cultures. Osmond is more German than Italian in his pedantry and dold analysis. He studies cultures objectively but never becomes identified with them. His life is made up of a myriad of roles and disguises, as is the artful Madame Merle's, who is "after all something of a public per-
former, condemned to emerge only in character and in
costume. She had once said that she came from a distance,
that she belonged to the "'old, old world" (II. 39).
She is the immediate cause for the complete initiation
of Isabel into the Old World through her matchmaking.
In the process of her initiation, Isabel too dons a
mask. Thus when she takes on to some degree the duties
Osmond has thrust upon her in discouraging Rosier,
Isabel "felt as if her face were hideously insincere"
(II. 257).

Isabel's marriage is related to the international
theme more by virtue of her imagination than by Osmond's
European characteristics. Her imagination, like her
inheritance, has been a means of growth and destruction.
It has enabled her to temper her exalted view of self
with a vision of the self's place in society; it "had
traversed half Europe; it halted, panting, even trembling
a little in the city of Rome" (II. 408), where, as it
so often occurs in James, the ruins take on symbolic
overtones. Like flowers growing in cracks of the
Coliseu1, James's characters must often find means of
growth in the ruinous situations in which they find
themselves.

Isabel's imagination causes her to maintain a
great interest in her self and, as she gains more in-
sight into others, she, at the same time, understands
herself and her own limitations to a greater extent.
But her major "recognition scenes" occur after her marriage. She sees Osmond for what he really is; she learns of Madame Merle's machinations; she understands Ralph's great love for her. Marriage as a means for psychological growth is underlined throughout the novel. Isabel realizes that even with Madame Merle's machinations she herself made the choice and must bear the burdens of the choice (II. 159). Even though she becomes less spontaneous after marriage, her sensitivity and understanding become more penetrating, accurate, and inclusive. As in James's preceding novels, suffering leads to wisdom. But Isabel's suffering is not passive like Catherine Sloper's; passive suffering was, for Isabel, equivalent to the state of "unhappiness" (II. 173-174). She must "do" something which brings some degree of happiness; before the total disintegration of her relationship with Osmond, she is astonished by "what happiness she could still find in the idea of procuring a pleasure for her husband" (II. 175). The happiness Isabel finds in "giving" and "doing" causes her to speak of marriage as an "occupation" (II. 305), implying something dynamic, something being accomplished. Osmond tells Rosier that Marriage is an occupation, in the sense of a relief from boredom, something to "occupy" one's mind with when there is nothing else to think about.

At any rate, Isabel soon discovers there is nothing really to "do" for Osmond, who would prefer
supplying the stimulus for her every action. Thus her major activities in the last sections of the novel become intellectual and spiritual, and it is in this way that she comes to realize that her true marriage is one of mind to Ralph. Isabel is a person in whom Ralph is "most interested" (II. 145), and it is noteworthy that Isabel risks breaking the contract of her own marriage when she leaves for England to visit Ralph on his deathbed. Ralph's visit to Rome "was a lamp in the darkness; for the hour that she sat with him her ache for herself became somehow her ache for him. She felt . . . as if he had been her brother" (II. 203). Ralph is a symbol of freedom and intelligence for Isabel. She realizes he is "much more intelligent" than Osmond (II. 204). Where Osmond "wished her to have no freedom of mind . . . Ralph was an apostle of freedom" (II. 245).

She, at first feels an absolute "passion, exaltation, religion" (II. 204) in preventing his knowledge of her suffering. However, she finally admits to Ralph that she is "afraid of herself" (II. 306), finally confirming for Ralph that her marriage to Osmond has been so disastrous that it has ultimately caused the proud Isabel to doubt herself. Ralph responds, "It was for you that I wanted to live" (II. 307).

When Isabel arrives in England, Mrs. Touchett says that Ralph's life has not been "successful." Isabel responds that it has been only "beautiful" (II. 405).
For her, Ralph proves the possibility of combining art and life. He wears no disguises; he does not "manage" people; he combines manners and naturalness. Thus it is in this relationship that she finds love, honesty, and freedom. This is implied in her statement, "Oh Ralph, you've been everything" (II. 413). Ralph tells her that after his death, she will "keep" him in her heart; he says that the tragedy of death is that there can be no love. The spirituality of love, however, transcends death and Isabel says, "For me you'll always be here." Ralph finally agrees that, although life passes, "love remains." The scene concludes

"And remember this," he continued, "that if you've been hated you've also been loved. Ah but, Isabel—adored!" he just audibly and lingeringly breathed.
"Oh my brother!" she cried with a movement of still deeper prostration. (II. 417)

This scene reveals the ultimate transcendence of the spiritual marriage over an actual marriage. Rendered in familial terms it recalls the earlier speeches of Nora Lambert, Christina Light and others. "Brother" takes on the deeper meaning of spiritual husband, with whom everything is shared and there exists complete understanding and love. For James this is the richest relationship possible, and one which farther clarifies Isabel's final renunciation of a physical relationship with Goodwood. As an alternative to her actual marriage to Osmond, it is preferable in every way. Both Isabel
and Ralph have given to and taken from each other.

Isabel's unhappy marriage is mirrored on all sides by other unsuccessful marriages in the novel. James had used a similar technique earlier in *The American*. James paints a very depressing picture of the other marriages in the novel. The marriages which are successful seem to be those in which one or both members have definite limitations. Isabel's oldest sister, Lily Ludlow, whose "imagination was all bounded on the east by Madison Avenue" (II. 281), had "successfully" married a lawyer; her "beautiful" sister, Edith Keyes, was happily married, an "ornament" to her husband's status, he being a member of the United States Engineers. Mrs. Touchett's marriage involves little more than joint ownership of Gardencourt. Her idea of marriage is not "sentimental," but "political" (I. 394). The successful marriage in her eyes is one offering money and position. Madame Merle had always hoped to marry "Caesar," as the Countess Gemini puts it, (II. 370), but never found anything but a "horrid little Swiss (II. 363). The Countess Gemini herself had been married by her mother to an Italian nobleman "who had perhaps given her some excuse for attempting to quench the consciousness of outrage" (I. 402); he is a kind of parody of Osmond, a "local coin of the old Italian states, without currency in other parts of the peninsula" (II. 223). Henrietta Stackpole's marriage to Mr. Bantling holds promise of success, but James depicts them both as having
limitations. Henrietta is opinionated and irrationally optimistic; and Mr. Bantling is "not intellectual, but he appreciated intellect" (II. 399). Rosier fails to marry Pansy; even though he loves her, she will always obey her father. Warburton marries a "member of the aristocracy," and Isabel feels that she has heard of his "death" (II. 409).

Isabel's final renunciation of Goodwood, then, only partially rests in her decision "not to neglect Pansy, not under any provocation to neglect her--this she had made an article of religion" (II. 162). Secondly, it rests on the realization that it is "much more probable that if one were fine one would suffer" (II. 392-393). Third, like Newman, she knows she will never find another relationship such as she had with Ralph; her mental vision of him and the transcendent nature of their love will be of some comfort. But finally, there is a "very straight path" (II. 436) back to Osmond, because the deepest thing Isabel understands is the binding nature of the marriage contract. Her marriage is a failure in its private dimensions; but, if Isabel has learned anything in the course of the novel, it has been that the self must compromise with society. By keeping her pledge, she is remaining true to both self and society. The self cannot be totally aloof, as both Emerson and Thoreau knew. The public aspect of marriage--the contract itself--has been made and must be maintained.
The private vow which she made by a completely free choice must also be respected. Isabel has learned another important fact about the world: everything has a dual nature. Marriage can be the most enriching, rewarding relationship; but, if it is not, there are nevertheless duties and responsibilities which must be accepted. Any contract involves a taking a calculated risk. Isabel took that risk; James himself was never so optimistic.
CONCLUSION

During the early period of James's major fiction, the primary motivation for the actions of his characters is the pursuit of the fulfilling marriage. In the span of little more than ten years, James's treatment of marriage developed rapidly in complexity; but he always remained consistent in his views on the subject. Marriage is finally a microcosmic relationship for James in which he sees available for the artist's examination man's creativity and activity, man's place in society with its attendant manners and customs, and man's internal, spiritual and intellectual growth. From this view, James develops his major themes: the relationship of the moral and the aesthetic, the social or international theme, and the theme of psychological and intellectual development of the individual. James sees marriage as the ultimate human relationship insofar as it involves man's creativity, his society, and his inward growth. Thus marriage has nothing to do with "things," although wealth is of course a means for greater freedom. But proprietorship, the treatment of people as things, has no place whatever in marriage or any other human relationship. Ultimate prosperity is measured in human terms— an individual's growth, his manners, his values. Thus the "successful" marriage, a marriage of reason, as Mrs. Light calls it—an arranged marriage—has no validity
in James's idea of the social contract.

Henry James, as revealed through examining his treatment of marriage, is a novelist of manners, a psychological novelist, and a metaphysician. He sees a law of compensation at work much of the time in marriage. This law can be seen in the freedom and growth the relationship can provide, but also in the responsibilities and duties the contract—a social form—places on the partners. The ideal is that the form be inseparable from, and identical to, its content; that the appearance of marriage will bespeak its reality. Unhappily the beauty apparent in the form itself is belied by the suffering which the vow causes one or both partners insofar as that vow is binding even if those bound by it are not suited for each other. Both in its public and private meaning marriage is binding: it is a free and deliberate human promise and must therefore be entered upon with the greatest of care. The morality involved in such a promise is not directly related to religious dogma, but grows out of the personal dignity in human beings themselves and out of a respect for the social contracts created by man as a means for freedom. In discussing the problems of the American woman, James asserts that it is a lack of any "chart" provided by her husband which prevents her from living to the fullest of her expectations and capabilities. James's theory of form is involved with the duality of form: what binds may at the same time
release. Precisely as he had described the "high price of the novel as a literary form--its power not only, while preserving that form with closeness . . . but positively to appear more true to its character in proportion as it strains, or tends to burst, with a latent extravagance, its mould,"¹ so he desire the form, the contract of marriage to contain similar growth and beauty.

The theories about marriage which evolve in the early works are continuously apparent throughout the whole corpus of James's major fiction. The coherence of his treatment of the subject enables us to place, even to judge, his characters by their attitudes toward marriage. And, since marriage is a microcosm of life, we can simultaneously see in these same attitudes their approach to life--their goals, their motives, their joys and suffering. James's personal pessimism about marriage nevertheless reveals the importance that he ascribed to it: "I am unlikely to marry. . . . One's attitude toward marriage is a fact--the most characteristic part doubtless of one's general attitude toward life. . . . If I were to marry I should be guilty in my own eyes of inconsistency--I should pretend to think quite a little better of life than I really do."²

In the richest relationship, being and appearing must be one and the same; the fault in a marriage is often equal to the discrepancy between these two
simultaneous states. Freedom in the relationship exists to the same degree as imagination, intelligence, and sensibility are mirrored in the partners. There can be no barriers, no deception existing between them if there is to be growth and fulfillment. Their sensibilities must form an interlocking network through which they can "give and take."

James's next two novels after Portrait reveal the ill effects of extolling one of man's social relations to the exclusion of private and spiritual growth. Verena Tarrant in The Bostonians (1885-1886) is almost destroyed in devoting herself to the feminine emancipation movement and to the use of Olive Chancellor. As James hints at the end of this novel, Basil Ransom has his intolerant preconceptions, too; and their marriage will not be without discontent. Man's social relationship should preempt the private; the two must exist in symbiosis. Similarly, Hyacinth Robinson, a quasi-aristocrat in The Princess Casamassima (1885-1886), is crushed by a revolutionary force; and the irresponsibility and innate weakness of Christina Light, the princess, and the narrowness of Millicent's provincial, untutored views make his private relationships stifling. Either marriage would lead to great suffering. In both novels, a brand of proprietorship provides for the deception of the victim.

In three other novels from the middle period,
attitudes towards life are revealed in those toward marriage. In these novels, the international theme is not present, but the theme of life and art, and the psychological theme take on new importance. In The Spoils of Poynton (1896) Mrs. Gereth confuses people with things and values "things" more highly. But Fleda Vetch, like Isabel Archer, respects the promise Owen had made to Mona Brigstock and refuses to take advantage of Owen in his dilemma. In What Maisie Knew, (1897), the evil of regarding marriage as strictly a physical relationship is made clear by showing the impermanence and lack of fulfillment of such relations. When there is no hierarchy of levels of intercourse between parties, dissatisfaction is the result for the "larger" partner. Such dissatisfaction leads almost to the point of disaster for Maisie herself, who is used by first one, then the other, parent. In The Awkward Age (1898-1899), the sole motivation of the action is courtship and marriage. Aggie's marriage to Mitchy which ends in separation is a direct denial by James of the validity of the "successful" marriage. Disillusioned about marriage in such a society, Nanda responds to the evil she sees by finally entering into a more comfortable familial relationship, as a substitute for marriage, in the form of her paternal friend, Mr. Longdon.

In his final three completed novels, James returns to the international theme to reveal the great com-
plexities of the human relationship, and weaves this theme together with the themes of life and art and the psychological theme, into three of the most complicated fabrics yet to appear. Characters and situations are no longer black and white in their moral clarity, but rendered in an infinite variety of grays. In The Ambassadors (1903), marriage is only one of several kinds of relationships considered. Through observing its attitudes on marriage, Woollett, Massachusetts, is revealed as intolerant and narrow with its fallacious approbation or condemnation, based firmly in the genteel tradition, or relationships. However, Strether's view is that generosity and patience are extolled; domination and proprietorship are damned. The contract of marriage is discussed in even greater aesthetic terminology, and the reader knows that Chad and Madame de Vionnet's relationship should not only be private, but also be publically approved, formally sworn to before society. But growth in perception is not the irresponsible Chad's, but Strether's.

Freedom is the overriding concept in The Wings of the Dove (1902). The deception practiced by Kate and Densher destroys Milly; it causes her symbolically to "turn her face to the wall." Aunt Maud maintains the view of the "successful" marriage which ultimately results in Kate and Densher's separation. The generosity of Milly is contrasted throughout with the acquisitive-
ness of those who use her. The innocent American is the victim of European opportunism.

In *The Golden Bowl* (1904), the European is seemingly the object of American opportunism when Adam Verger buys the Prince for Maggie. But deception exists on both sides, since the Prince carries on a private relationship with Adam's wife while Maggie deceives everyone in the quadrangle to protect her own public relationship with the Prince. Here, as in *Portrait*, the marriage contract is upheld at practically all costs; and marriage is discussed in terms of aesthetic beauty. Interestingly enough, since the procreative function of marriage is for the most part not ignored, but simply taken for granted in James's fictive marriages, the appearance finally of the Principino as an additional force in uniting the marriage adds a warmth to a marriage heretofore filled with deception and mistrust. With the shaded grays of morality all four characters exhibit, perhaps James saw the necessity for a child who could reap the benefits provided for him by the suffering of his parents as one had always wished Pansy in *Portrait* could do. And, though a human being, the Principino can nevertheless act in the novel as a symbol of the newly found aesthetic beauty that was the preserved unity of the marriage, whose contract now truly represented a private relationship as well as a public. The public form and private content of the marriage are one.
INTRODUCTION

1 Lionel Trilling, The Liberal Imagination (Garden City, 1950), p. 200.


3 Ibid., p. 101.


CHAPTER ONE


4 Roger's domesticity is often noted. At one point Hubert Lawrence remarks to Nora: "You describe him perfectly when you say that everything in the house here sings his praise,—already, before he has been here ten days! The chairs are all straight, the pictures are admirably hung, the locks are oiled, the winter fuel is stocked, the bills are paid! Look at the tidies pinned on the chairs. I will warrant you he pinned them with his own hands!" (134).


6 Ward, 615.

7 Henry James, Roderick Hudson (New York, 1907), pp. 164-165. Hereafter page references from this edition will appear in the text itself.

8 William Wasserstrom, Heiress of All the Ages: Sex and Sentiment in the Genteel Tradition (Minneapolis, 1959), p. 57. Newton Arvin also notes the number of marriages in James which reveal the "prevalence of rapacity," often by the woman's parents, in "James and the Almighty Dollar," Hound and Horn, VII (1934), 440.

9 The malapropism, delivered by Mr. Leavenworth, of "Prince Cantimasher" (302) is certainly ironic considering the succeeding developments in the relationship.


11 Lotus Snow, "The Prose and the Modesty of the Matter": James's Imagery for the Artist in Roderick
A similar statement will be made by Isabel in a much franker way concerning her relationship with Ralph whom she calls "brother."


Dupee, p. 75.

CHAPTER TWO


4 Stone, p. 158.


7 Stone, p. 158.

8 He is an "epic hero seamed all over with the wounds of market and the dangers of the field, launched into action and passion by the immensity and complexity of the general struggle, a boundless ferocity of battle--driven above all by the extraordinary, the unique relation in which he for the most part stands to the life of his lawful, his inimitable womankind, the wives and daughters who float, who splash on the surface and ride the waves, his terrific link with civilization, his social substitutes and representatives, while, like a diver for shipwrecked treasure, he gasps in the depths and breathes through an air-tube." Henry James, "The Question of Opportunities" in Morton Dauwen Zabel, ed., Literary Opinion in America (New York, 1962), p. 54.


10 Frederick J. Hoffmann, "Freedom and Conscious Form: Henry James and the American Self," Virginia
Quarterly Review, XXXVII (1961), 280.


12 Hoffman, 279.

13 Ibid., 279.

14 Poirier, p. 54.


16 Bowden, p. 35.

17 Poirier, p. 90.

18 Spender, p. 40.


21 Poirier, p. 96.

22 Henry James, The Europeans (Boston, 1878), p. 48. Hereafter, all references from this edition will appear in the text itself.


24 F. W. Dupee, Henry James (Garden City, 1956), p. 103.

25 Poirier, p. 130.

26 Ibid., p. 136.


28 Weather imagery heightens the Baroness's emotions in many instances, as Ward points out in his article on The Europeans cited above. When she discovers she has come all this way only to see Felix married, it is "doggedly" raining (213). Following the rain—and the mention that her fortune, once found, should not be left lying—another sunset, "flaming, flickering, trickling," briefly appears, but rapidly begins to fade (216).
29 Poirier, pp. 139, 124.

30 Peter Buitenhuis, "Comic Pastoral: Henry James's The Europeans," University of Toronto Quarterly, XXXI (1962), 156-157; Dupee, 102; Poirier, 95-144.


32 Poirier, pp. 95-96.

33 Henry James, The American Scene (London, 1907), pp. 81, 86.

34 Poirier, p. 144.

35 Ibid., p. 113.


37 J. A. Ward, "James's The Europeans and the Structure of Comedy," 1-16.

38 Poirier, p. 97.

39 Ibid., p. 99.

40 Poirier devotes most of his chapter on The Europeans to an extended analysis of Eugenia and her attributes.

41 Poirier, p. 110, calls her capacity to see experience aesthetically "Bovarysme," a term coined by T. S. Eliot. This Bovarysme extends, in many instances, to making the experience aesthetically pleasing.

42 Poirier, pp. 111 ff.


44 Poirier, p. 115.

45 Ibid., p. 130.

46 Ibid., p. 135.
CHAPTER THREE


2Poirier, p. 155.

3Henry James, Confidence (Boston, 1880), p. 85. Hereafter paginal references from this edition will appear in the text itself.

4Poirier, p. 154.


8Poirier, pp. 147-148.

9Ibid., pp. 158, 160.


11The italics are mine.


13Poirier, p. 178.


15The italics are mine.

16The irony of this statement and the degree to which Dr. Sloper is trying to manipulate Catherine is fully apparent later when Sloper tells Mrs. Almond that Catherine has returned from Europe "exactly the same; not a grain more intelligent. She didn't notice a stick or a stone all the while we were away--not a picture nor
a view, not a statue nor a cathedral" (201).
CHAPTER FOUR

1F. W. Dupee, Henry James (Garden City, 1956), p. 121.


6The Art of the Novel, p. 47.

7Ibid., pp. 50-51.

8Ibid., pp. 56-57.


10Ibid., p. 211.

11Ibid., p. 212.


16 Van Ghent, pp. 216 ff.
17 Stein, 179.
18 Poirier, p. 208.
21 The Art of the Novel, pp. 45-46.
23 Van Ghent, p. 225.
24 Isabel cannot be the "earth mother" figure Stein seems to think she should be; see Stein, 184.
28 Poirier, p. 200.
30 Poirier, p. 218.
31 The Art of the Novel, p. 58.
34 Poirier, pp. 221-222.
36 The Art of the Novel, pp. 46-47.
CONCLUSION


LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED

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Emerson, Ralph Waldo. Essays. Boston, 1883.


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