INFORMATION TO USERS

This material was produced from a microfilm copy of the original document. While the most advanced technological means to photograph and reproduce this document have been used, the quality is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help you understand markings or patterns which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or “target” for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is “Missing Page(s)”. If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting thru an image and duplicating adjacent pages to insure you complete continuity.

2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a large round black mark, it is an indication that the photographer suspected that the copy may have moved during exposure and thus cause a blurred image. You will find a good image of the page in the adjacent frame.

3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., was part of the material being photographed the photographer followed a definite method in “sectioning” the material. It is customary to begin photoing at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue photoing from left to right in equal sections with a small overlap. If necessary, sectioning is continued again — beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.

4. The majority of users indicate that the textual content is of greatest value, however, a somewhat higher quality reproduction could be made from “photographs” if essential to the understanding of the dissertation. Silver prints of “photographs” may be ordered at additional charge by writing the Order Department, giving the catalog number, title, author and specific pages you wish reproduced.

5. PLEASE NOTE: Some pages may have indistinct print. Filmed as received.

Xerox University Microfilms
300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106
SEBOUHIAN, George, 1931-
THE EMERSONIAN IDEALISM OF HENRY JAMES.
The Ohio State University, Ph.D., 1973
Language and Literature, general

University Microfilms, A XEROX Company, Ann Arbor, Michigan

© 1973
GEORGE SEBOUHIAN
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

THIS DISSERTATION HAS BEEN MICROFLIMED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED
THE EMERSONIAN IDEALISM OF HENRY JAMES

DISSertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

George Sebouhian B.A., M.A.

The Ohio State University
1972

Approved by

Julian Markels
Adviser
Department of English
VITA

November 29, 1931 . . .

Born—New York City

1959 . . . . . . . . .

B.A., Murray State University, Murray, Kentucky

1960 . . . . . . . . .

M.A., Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee

1960-1965 . . . . . .

Teacher, Florida and Ohio Public Schools

1965-1968 . . . . . .

Instructor, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio


NDEA Fellow, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio


Teaching Assistant, Department of English, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

PUBLICATIONS


"Two Poems," Ararat, 31 (Summer 1967), 34.

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: American Literature

Studies in Restoration and Eighteenth Century British Literature

Studies in Nineteenth Century British Literature

Studies in Twentieth Century British and American Literature
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

VITA .................................................. 11

Chapter

I. SOME COMMON GROUND .......................... 1

II. EMERSONIAN IDEALISM .......................... 11

III. HENRY JAMES'S IDEALISM ...................... 45

IV. THE SEEKERS .................................... 75

RODERICK HUDSON
THE AMERICAN
THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY

V. THE SEERS ....................................... 135

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA
THE SPOILS OF PONYTON
THE AMBASSADORS

VI. THE SYMBOL: THE WINGS OF THE DOVE ........ 160

VII. EPILOGUE: THE GOLDEN BOWL ................ 195

BIBLIOGRAPHY ...................................... 208
I. SOME COMMON GROUND

Stuart Sherman was one of the first critics to claim a common ground for Emerson and James when he called James’s mind "truly 'Emersonian.'"¹ Joseph Warren Beach was another early critic who included James in the "idealist tradition" that comprised Wordsworth, Emerson, and Hawthorne.² Later, T. S. Eliot placed more emphasis on James’s New England heritage,³ an emphasis given climactic stress in Matthiessen’s characterization of James: "No son of a transcendental philosopher could have emulated more closely Emerson’s desire of becoming a transparent eyeball."⁴ Recently, Quentin Anderson, in his study of the influence of Henry, Sr. on Henry, Jr.'s novels, refers frequently to Emerson, and says that Henry, Jr. was "ultimately an Emersonian."⁵ And, in later work, Anderson locates, in

---


the exaltation of consciousness by writers like Emerson and James, the baleful source of the Woodstock mentality among many of today's youth.

Only a few studies, however, attempt to document or analyze the relationship between Emerson and James. Two are short articles. The first, W. T. Stafford's "Emerson and the James Family," establishes the facts about when and where Emerson saw the Jameses. The second, Earl Rovit's "James and Emerson," argues that James's attitude toward Emerson changed from unfavorable to favorable in the 1890s.

The most complete work to date on the Emerson-James relationship is a dissertation by Richard Baldwin, "The Influence of Emerson on the Fiction of Henry James." In his first chapter, Baldwin cites the meetings between Emerson and James and the references they make to each other's work. Baldwin's purpose in this chapter is to show that by 1866 James knew and liked Emerson's essays. Chapter two is an examination of the complex interrelationships among the elder James's Swedenborgianism, Emerson, and Henry, Jr. Baldwin concludes: "While the elder James' interest

---

7 American Literature, 24 (January 1953), 433-461.
8 The American Scholar, 33 (Summer 1964), 434-440.
10 Ibid., p. 29.
with only the highest cause had cut his 'relations' off from those of his son, Emerson's concern with both the lowest objects and the highest causes united the two sets and led him to create a suitable conception of the individual and a psychology which explained how the individual was related to the external world. It is this conception of the individual and its accompanying psychology which is the core of what the younger James drew from Emerson. The rest of Baldwin's dissertation traces this "core" as the "growth of consciousness" treated in Emerson's essays and in James's fiction. In the fiction, Baldwin sees growth of consciousness as an isolating phenomenon, exemplified in Isable Archer and Lambert Strether. But The Golden Bowl, according to Baldwin, is a climactic exception, for in that novel two centers of consciousness exist in mutual relationship without diminishing each other. Baldwin puts it this way: "The Prince and his Princess achieve true union only because they are capable of treating each other as sovereign state with sovereign state."

I have several objections to Baldwin's study. First, to assert that Henry liked Emerson's work almost from his first acquaintance with it is to ignore his generally unfavorable criticism of Emerson in his review of Cabot's

---

11 Diss., p. 71.
12 Ibid., p. 205.
Second, to argue that Henry picked up from Emerson what he could not get from his father is to commit the either-or fallacy. Third, Baldwin over-emphasizes the social relationships of James's main characters, seldom going beyond love-marriage-friendship themes. It is my argument that the external relationships among people have meaning only in so far as the reader understands internal realities, and that it is with the internal, with consciousness, that Emerson and James have the most to do. Fourth, Baldwin's thesis leads him to see a nicely sequential development in James's characters, climaxed by Maggie and the Prince in *The Golden Bowl*. I agree that there is a climactic movement to *The Golden Bowl* in James's fiction, but I think that movement has more to do with complexity and ambiguity than Baldwin allows. Baldwin's view of Maggie and the Prince as "sovereign states" is an oversimplification, especially in relation to the Prince whose great virtue, the willingness to be manipulated, is also his great vice.

I cite these studies for two reasons. One is to show that a substantial critical consensus points to a common ground between Emerson and James. The other is to show that the most extensive study of the common ground—Baldwin's—is incomplete and in some ways unsatisfactory.

The common ground between Emerson and James is idealism. I call it Emersonian idealism because of Emerson's role in shaping it into something secular and experiential. The
Puritan extraordinary moment in which one has a personal experience of God becomes for Emerson an apotheosis of consciousness. Philosophical systems of thought count for little in Emerson's insistence on immediate, individual experience. Stephen Whicher sums it up this way:

The term "idealism" denoted first to Emerson the "Ideal Theory" associated with Berkely and Hume—that is, that all we can know are impressions "in the mind" and not things themselves; second the asseration of Germans like Fichte and Schelling that the mind is metaphysically primary, that the external world can be derived dialectically from the Self; third, the Platonic assertion that intellectually concepts are more real than changing physical things; and lastly, the pantheistic feeling, associated with the Hindus, that Spirit is the "one and all." That these various strains of Idealism are not consistent with each other is not important to Emerson's purpose, which was never "philosophical" in any but the widest poetic sense. 13

James himself did not at first acknowledge any common ground with Emerson; and though he found some things in Emerson worthy of praise, his scoring of Emerson's faults is conducted with such energy that the praise, by contrast, is tame, polite, even condescending. In his early review of Cabot's memoir, James finds too much lacking in Emerson. The young reviewer complains of Emerson's "ripe unconsciousness of evil." 14 He deprecates Emerson's inability to find his form, 15 and charges him with stylistic rigidity: "He

15 Ibid., p. 9.
had only one style, one manner, and he had it for ever­
thing—even for himself, in his notes, in his journals.16
James accepts without question Cabot's judgment that
Emerson could "see nothing in Shelley, Aristophanes, Don
Quixote, Miss Austen, Dickens"17; and adds his own judg­
ment—based on his tour of the galleries of the Louvre and
Vatican with Emerson in 1872—that "there were certain
chords in Emerson that did not vibrate at all."18

But toward the end of the century, James shifted his
position. He became less insistent on the role of the
intellect in the artist and in the critic, and more
favorably disposed to the expression of passionate vision.

Note, for example, his changed assessment of Whitman. In
1865 he strongly denounced Drum-Taps for its indulgence of
feeling at the expense of intellect, for its lack of taste,
and for its egotism.19 In 1898, however, in a review that
seems to reflect different critical criteria, James praises
the "personal passion" that he finds in R. H. Bucke's
dition of Whitman's letters: "The beauty of the natural

16 "Emerson," p. 17.
17 Ibid., p. 29.
18 Ibid.
19 "Mr. Walt Whitman," Selected Literary Criticism:
Henry James, ed. Morris Shapira (New York: McGraw-Hill,
1964), pp. 1-5.
is, here, the beauty of the particular nature, the man's overflow in the deadly dry setting, the personal passion, the love of life plucked like a flower in a desert of innovative, unconscious ugliness." And in 1905 the sympathy for Whitman is evidenced again, this time for the poetry, when he reads aloud to Edith Wharton from, among other things, "Song of Myself."21

This changed attitude toward Whitman is paralleled by James's changed attitude toward Emerson. In The American Scene, based on James's visit to the United States in 1904-05, he writes: "I open Emerson for the same benefit for which I open Goethe, the sense of moving in large intellectual space, and that of the gush, here and there, out of the rock, of the crystalline cupful, in wisdom and poetry, in Wahrheit and Dichtung. . . . Emerson's genius . . . the first, and the one really rare, American spirit in letters."22 Instead of the intellectually detached voice of cool judgment and formal criteria that controls the review of Cabot's Memoir, the response here is personal, passionate, and metaphorical, as it is with Whitman. Thus James drinks of the Emersonian "gush"--

---

21 Ibid., p. 489.
that comes, as if my miracle, "out of the rock"—of "wisdom and poetry."

It is James's own attraction for the extraordinary consciousness and the extraordinary moment that leads him to acknowledge sympathy with Whitman and Emerson. But James's work throughout his career is peculiarly marked by a concern for the quality of consciousness and the importance of intense subjective experience, concerns that are fundamental to Emerson and characteristic of what I call Emersonian idealism.

These common concerns are illustrated in the following examples from Emerson and James. In his essay, "The Transcendentalist," Emerson distinguishes between the materialist and the idealist. The idealist is solitary, an observer rather than an actor, a believer in human perfectibility, a lover of beauty. Above all, the idealist is one to whom the world is not a distant fact, but an intimate event involving his own consciousness. Emerson says:

The idealist, in speaking of events, sees them as spirits. He does not deny the senuous fact: by no means; but he will not see that alone. He does not deny the presence of this table, this chair, and the walls of this room, but he looks at these things as the reverse side of the tapestry, as the other end, each being sequel or completion of a spiritual fact which nearly concerns him. This manner of looking at things transfers every object in nature from an independent and anomalous position without there, into the consciousness.\(^{23}\)

The important sentence is the last, and the key word is "transfer." In his "Preface" to The Portrait of a Lady, James explains a similar view of the role of consciousness:

Without her sense of them for them, as one may say, they are next to nothing at all; but is n't the beauty and the difficulty just in showing their mystic conversion by that sense, conversion into the stuff of drama or even more delightful word still, of "story"?  

James continues, citing Isabel's coming upon Madame Merle at Gardencourt as an example of "conversion": at that moment she "recognises . . . a turning-point in her life." James's "conversion" corresponds to Emerson's "transfer"; both suggest the active experience of consciousness as the source of value and meaning. Without the "transfer" for Emerson, things retain their "independent and anomalous position without there"; without the "conversion" for Isabel (and for James—"in showing their mystic conversion"), even "adventures" "are next to nothing at all."

It is the extraordinary mind that is aware of the extraordinary moment, the moment of conversion. And though Emerson does not couch his description of the idealist above in terms to suggest the "extraordinary," when he talks of the poet as idealist, the sense of the extraordinary is marked, as in the following: "Insight, which expresses itself by what is called Imagination, is a

---

24 (New York: Scribner's, 1908), I, xx.
very high sort of seeing, which does not come by study, but by the intellect being where and what it sees. . . . 
The condition of true naming, on the poet's part, is his resigning himself to the divine aura which breathes through forms, and accompanying that,"25 Here the poet is idealist in that his consciousness sees because it, as "intellect," is "where and what it sees."

The phrase "divine aura" conveys some of the excitement and significance of consciousness in the act of seeing and expressing, "naming." For both Emerson and James, it is the poetic consciousness that experiences life the most intensely. In another statement James explains what it means to him to see and to name: "His case as I see it, is easily such as to make him declare that if he were not constantly, in his commonest processes, carrying the field of consciousness further and further, making it lose itself in the ineffable, he shouldn't in the least feel himself an artist. As more or less one myself, for instance, I deal with being."26

Emerson and James both turn to religious and mystical language would be adequate to express the importance of his role.


26"Is There a Life After Death?" The James Family, p. 611.
II. EMERSONIAN IDEALISM

Many critics recognize the pervasiveness of some form of idealism in American literature. Among them are A. N. Kaul in *The American Vision*, Leo Marx in *The Machine in the Garden*, and Tony Tanner in *The Reign of Wonder*. Charles Feidelson, Jr. recognizes idealism in his *Symbolism and American Literature* and traces it back to Puritan New England. His chapter, "An American Tradition," explains that the Puritans saw the physical world in terms of the spiritual by turning all phenomena into an expression of divine intention and intelligence.\(^1\) I think one of the important sources of Emersonian idealism is to be found in the Puritans; therefore an examination of this source should help to illuminate Emersonian idealism in itself, and as it appears in James.

The Puritans practiced an intense internal and external scrutiny. The devout were constantly looking for signs of divine favor or wrath. God controls the world, and whatever happens, whether it be storm, famine, "accident," birth and death, happens through God's will, and is a message from Him to man. It is therefore man's obligation to interpret

the event. In William Bradford’s account of the settling of Plymouth, there are numerous examples of this interpreting. On the journey to America, for instance, Bradford tells us about a sailor who, out of disdain for the Puritans, abused them, and subsequently fell ill and died. According to Bradford, there is a cause and effect connection; the death is retribution, a "spetiall worke of Gods providence."  

The Puritan was expected to be sensitive, not only to natural phenomena, but also to his own state of mind. The confession, either to one’s fellows or to one’s diary, was a widely accepted way of looking deeply within, trying to interpret thoughts, emotions, and acts. The practice of preparation intensified internal scrutiny and its consequent emphasis on the individual self. Preparation refers to the action the person can take to make himself ready for conversion. Although there was a conflict over the value of preparation, those in unyielding opposition to it, notably Anne Hutchinson and her followers, were formally rejected by the spiritual leaders of the early Puritans. Apparently, then, some form of preparation was practiced by most Puritans. According to Edmund Morgan conversion comprises ten stages, with preparation accounting for the first four. Those four are: listening to scriptures and sermons, recognizing sin, feeling contrition for one’s own sin, and

---

feeling one's own helplessness in the face of his sinfulness. The important point here is that the Puritan, given a role to play in his own conversion, concentrates on himself to an extraordinary degree. The whole purpose of his life, conversion, is pursued relentlessly, with all his faculties brought fully to the task.

Feeling was important to the Puritans. Preparation, as indicated above, called for an agonizing sense of contrition and humiliation. And the elect, who had gone through the final stages of conversion, were supposedly capable of enjoying a sense of God that the non-elect could know nothing of. Their language often reflected their spiritual passion, in spite of their official endorsement of "plain style" and their warnings against appeals to emotion and imagination through devices like metaphor.

Edward Taylor's poetry expresses a great deal of spiritual passion; his images are often sensual in an almost erotic way; his tone is almost always excited. Here, for example, are the last three stanzas of one of his Meditation poems:

Oh! make my heart thy Pipe; the Holy Ghost
The Breath that fills the same and Spiritually
Then play on me thy pipe that is almost
Worn out, with piping tunes of Vanity.
Winde musick is the best if thou delight
To play the same thyselfe, upon my pipe.

Hence make me, Lord, thy Golden Trumpet Choice
And trumpet thou thyselfe upon the same
Thy heart enravishing Hymns with Sweetest Voice.
When thou thy Trumpet soundst, thy tunes
will flame.
My heart shall then sing forth thy praises sweet
When sounded thus with thy Sepulcher reech.

Make too my Soul thy Cittern, and its wyers
Make my affections: and rub off their rust
With thy bright Grace. And screw my Strings up higher
And tune the same to tune thy praise most Just.
Ile close thy Supper then with Hymns, most sweet
Burr'ing thy Grave in thy Sepulcher's reech.

Jonathan Edwards gave those elements of the Puritan
sensibility we have been looking at their grandest form.
In his "Personal Narrative" Edwards details his private
spiritual experiences. The most dramatic is a vision he
has in 1737, when he is about thirty-four years old. He
writes: "The person of Christ appeared ineffably excellent
with an excellency great enough to swallow up all thought
and conception . . . which [vision] continued as near as I
can judge, about an hour."\(^5\) This is only one among several
visions. What characterizes them all is Edwards' use of
concrete imagery, a use intended to convey the reality of
the ineffable. Consider, for instance, that "swallow" is
not an arbitrary selection, but is peculiar to the diction
of Edwards. In the paragraph succeeding the quote above,
for instance, on the subject of the Holy Spirit, he says:

\(^4\) "Preparatory Meditation, Number 110, Second Series,"
The Poems of Edward Taylor, ed. Donald E. Stanford, 2nd ed.

\(^5\) Representative Selections, eds. Clarence H. Faust and
God, in the communications of his Holy Spirit, has appeared as an infinite fountain of divine glory and sweetness; being full, and sufficient to fill and satisfy the soul; pouring forth itself in sweet communications . . . sweetly and pleasantly . . . .

And I have sometimes had an affecting sense of the excelency of the word of God, as a word of life; as the light of life; a sweet, excellent life-giving word; accompanied with a thirsting after that word, that it might dwell richly in my heart.® (Italics mine.)

There is an appeal to the senses, specifically to what Edwards calls the "affecting sense," through which one feels and tastes and ingests, swallows the sweetness of spiritual experiences. It is this affecting sense that Edwards insists must be present in genuine conversion and in visions of God.

In "A Divine and Supernatural Light," Edwards explains the relationship between the affecting sense and the will:

There is a twofold understanding or knowledge of good that God has made the mind of man capable of. The first, that which is merely speculative and notional, as when a person only speculatively judges that any thing is, which, by the agreement of mankind, is called good or excellent . . . . And the other is, that which consists in the sense of the heart: as when there is a sense of the beauty, amiableness, or sweetness of a thing; so that the heart is sensible of pleasure and delight in the presence of the idea of it. In the former is exercised merely the speculative faculty, or the understanding, strictly so called, or as spoken of in distinction from the will or disposition of the soul. In the latter, the will, or inclination, or heart, is mainly concerned.

Edwards' logic is that the "affecting sense," the "sense

®Faust and Johnson, p. 69.

Ibid., pp. 106-107.
of the heart," is just that, a sense; it is like the sense of taste in that the heart can taste a spiritual idea. This sense of the spiritual is opposed to the "speculative" faculty, what would today be called abstract thinking. The thrust of the argument is that the spiritual man, the one with the "sense of heart," will respond with his whole being, his feelings and his will fused to the spiritual idea. In "Religious Affections," drawn from a series of sermons delivered during the Great Awakening, Edwards argues that there is a dimension of experience greater for the spiritual man than for the natural man. Using honey as a metaphor, Edwards explains that the spiritual man both sees and tastes the full richness of the product, whereas the natural man only sees the color.⁸

In The Nature of True Virtue Edwards explains that it is only the spiritual man who is capable of experiencing "primary beauty." There are two kinds of beauty. "Secondary beauty" is what most of us think of as beauty: the coherent, unified form, all of whose parts agree, as in a plant or harmonious piece of music.⁹ "Primary beauty," accessible to the spiritual man only, is "cordial agreement; that consists in concord and union of mind and heart:


which, of not attended (viewing things in general) with more discord than concord, is true virtue, and the original or primary beauty, which is the only true moral beauty."¹⁰ The affections are stirred by God through beauty; in being stirred, they participate through "cordial agreement" in the activity of primary beauty. Primary beauty is the "only true moral beauty" because it involves "the union of heart to being in general, or to God, the beings of beings. . . . Benevolence to being in general, or to being simply considered, is entirely a distinct thing from uniformity in the midst of variety, and is a superior kind of beauty."¹¹

Not only does Edwards insist that there is a sensible spiritual reality, he insists equally that we come to know this reality through language. Puritans generally agreed that reading the scriptures and listening to sermons was important because God would use these means to stir the soul. Edwards extended this view by his argument that language is a sensible experience, that it arouses the emotions and the intellect, and that this arousal need not be arbitrary; indeed, for the spiritual man it is not. In a sermon on grace, for instance, the spiritual man will sense the reality of grace with his emotions and his intellect as he listens to the sermon. It is this view

¹⁰ The Nature of True Virtue, p. 31.
¹¹ Ibid., p. 30.
that explains the preaching during the Great Awakening. Edwards did not see himself as an "enthusiast"; he was not wantonly stirring up hysterical emotions; he was arousing genuine spiritual responses, or "affections," as he called them. Edwards' own experiences attest to his belief in this power of language. Quoting again from his "Personal Narrative":

I had then, and at other times, the greatest delight in the holy scriptures, of any book whatsoever. Oftentimes in reading it, every word seemed to touch my heart. I felt a harmony between something in my heart, and those sweet and powerful words. I seemed often to see so much light exhibited by every sentence, and such a refreshing food communicated, that I could not get along in reading; often dwelling long on one sentence, to see the wonders contained in it; and yet almost every sentence seemed to be full of wonders.  

Perry Miller, in his "The Rhetoric of Sensation," sees Edwards as charting a course between Locke who rejects emotions as unreliable indexes of reality, and Berkeley who rejects abstractions, like "matter," on the same grounds. Miller sums up Edwards' "great discovery" as the "assertion that an idea in the mind is not only a form of perception but is also a determination of love and hate. To apprehend things only by their signs or by words is not to apprehend them at all; but to apprehend them by their ideas

---

12 Selections, p. 65.

is to comprehend them not only intellectually but passionately."  

To sum up: The Puritan emphasizes the individual self, subjective experience, the symbolic character of all events, and, especially through Edwards' work, the importance of feeling and the sensible nature of spiritual experiences and language. The Puritan believes that man, the particular, physical creature, could know through his consciousness, in ways analogous to his knowing the material world, the universal non-physical reality that is in ultimate relation to him. That the ultimate is non-physical, yet knowable to some degree, is the idealism basic to both the Puritans and Emerson.

Emerson's doctrine of "correspondence" is consonant with the Puritan belief that there is communication between the human and the non-human. For Emerson, the non-human is neither devil nor (Puritan) God, but is usually Nature or Spirit. In the section on "Language" in Nature Emerson says that "Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact." In the sections on "Idealism" and "Spirit" he discusses the individual and subjectivity, and though he is sympathetic to the claims of idealism that there is no matter, he is fearful of the solipsistic consequence. To
avoid, then, the unhappy consequence of being, as he puts it, "in the splendid labyrinth of my perceptions, to wander without end" (p. 63), and also to avoid the materialist alternative, he explains that "the Supreme Being, does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us" (p. 64). Thus man is both particular and universal. He is independent, creative, individual; and at the same time he is the world. The doctrine of correspondence provides for his knowing the relationship between the particular and the universal. That man participates in the creation, is of course not a Puritan view; but that man can interpret nature and thereby discover something about himself, is.

Feeling is an important part of knowledge to Emerson as well as to Edwards. Emerson, like Edwards, distinguishes between the ordinary and the extraordinary emotions, and the ordinary and the extraordinary man. The following passage from "Prospects" touches on these points:

Man is disunited with himself. He cannot be a naturalist until he satisfies all the demands of the spirit. Love is as much its demand as perception. Indeed, neither can be perfect without the other. In the uttermost meaning of the words, thought is devout, and devotion is thought. Deep calls unto deep. But in actual life, the marriage in not celebrated. There are innocent men who worship God after the tradition of their fathers, but their sense of duty has not yet extended to the use of all their faculties. And there are patient naturalists, but they freeze their subject under the wintry light of the understanding. Is not prayer also a study of truth,—a sally of the soul into the unfound infinite? No man ever prayed heartily without learning something. But when a faithful thinker, resolute to detach every object from personal relations and see it in the
light of thought, shall, at the same time, kindle science with the fire of the holiest affections, then will God go forth anew into the creation. (p.74)

Emerson's "faithful thinker," like Edwards' spiritual man, unifies his faculties of head and heart so that his experiences are coherently and harmonously intellectual and passionate. Such unified experiences accompany the powerfully persuasive sense that one is in relation to a vast reality beyond oneself, to what both Emerson and Edwards call God.

I would like now to turn to Emerson and consider the main elements of his idealism. I will take up, in the order listed, Emerson's view of the soul, of conversion, of the poet, and of suffering. This order roughly approximates the order of Emerson's attention: in his early essays he was primarily concerned with the soul and its conversion; in his later essays he was increasingly concerned with human sources of inspiration and with suffering as a source of conversion.

For Emerson the soul is the "me" as opposed to the "not me," or nature. Soul is full consciousness, though humans are not fully conscious. In fact Emerson avers that man is fallen, a "god in ruins" (p. 71). But Emerson then equally insists that man can achieve "redemption" (p. 73). This redemption is brought about through what Emerson elsewhere calls imagination and what he here calls "Reason":

"faithful thinker," like Edwards' spiritual man, unifies his faculties of head and heart so that his experiences are coherently and harmonously intellectual and passionate. Such unified experiences accompany the powerfully persuasive sense that one is in relation to a vast reality beyond oneself, to what both Emerson and Edwards call God.

I would like now to turn to Emerson and consider the main elements of his idealism. I will take up, in the order listed, Emerson's view of the soul, of conversion, of the poet, and of suffering. This order roughly approximates the order of Emerson's attention: in his early essays he was primarily concerned with the soul and its conversion; in his later essays he was increasingly concerned with human sources of inspiration and with suffering as a source of conversion.

For Emerson the soul is the "me" as opposed to the "not me," or nature. Soul is full consciousness, though humans are not fully conscious. In fact Emerson avers that man is fallen, a "god in ruins" (p. 71). But Emerson then equally insists that man can achieve "redemption" (p. 73). This redemption is brought about through what Emerson elsewhere calls imagination and what he here calls "Reason":
To the senses and the unrenewed understanding, belongs a sort of instinctive belief in the absolute existence of nature. . . . When the eve of Reason opens, to outline and surface are at once added grace and expression. These proceed from imagination and affection. . . . If the Reason be stimulated to more earnest vision, outlines and surfaces become transparent, and are no longer seen; causes and spirits are seen through them. The best moments of life are these delicious awakenings of the higher powers, and the reverential withdrawing of nature before its God. (pp. 49-50)

Somewhat like Edwards' visions, Emerson's penetrates the mask of matter and uncovers meanings, the spiritual behind the physical. Such a vision also reveals the nature of man, that he has a faculty, "Reason," which, if "stimulated," enables him to achieve extraordinary "moments." Emerson, throughout his work, attests to a number of such moments. The best known example is the passage, also in Nature, in which Emerson describes not only a vision, but also a metamorphosis, in that he becomes what he sees:

In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life,—no disgrace, no calamity (leaving me my eyes), which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground, --my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God. (p. 10)

"Outlines and surfaces become transparent," and here even the self becomes transparent, as if the ordinary boundaries between the self and the not-self, inner and outer, dissolved, leaving pure vision.

Emerson never again reaches the level of intensity
and complexity to the "transparent eyeball" experience, but he continues to record moments like it, implying that these moments, as rare as they may be, are the measure of what it means to live fully. In both examples following, Emerson again calls upon his favorite sense, that of sight. The first quote, from his middle age, looks back, to a past experience: "The day of days, the great day of the feast of life, is that in which the inward eye opens to the unity in things, to the omnipresence of law."16 The second quote, from his later years, makes much of physical excitement:

Am I not, one of these days, to write consecutively of the beatitude of intellect? It is too great for feeble souls, and they are overexcited. The wineglass shakes, and the wine is spilled. What then? The joy which will not let me sit in my chair, which brings me bolt upright to my feet, and sends me striding around my room, like a tiger in his cage, and I cannot have composure and concentration enough even to set down in English words the thought which thrills me—is not that joy a certificate of the elevation? What if I never write a book or a line? For a moment, the eyes of my eyes were opened, the affirmative experience remains, and consoles through all suffering.17

These moments occur, as Emerson says, not to the man of "unrenewed understanding," but to the man whose "eye of Reason opens." Just as Edwards divides the faculties into

16 "Fate," _Works_, VI, 25.

17 _Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson_, eds. Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes (Boston: Houghton, 1913), IX, 221.
the understanding and "the disposition of the soul, so
does Emerson divide the faculties, though more often into
three then two. In the "eye of Reason" passage, the
description moves from the senses, to the feelings, to the
symbolic vision; that is, before the "eye of Reason" opens,
one presumably sees only things, surfaces, colors; after
the "eye" opens, one becomes aware of beauty, "grace and
expression. ... which proceed from imagination and
affection"; and after further stimulation, one sees through
the thing to a fundamental level of reality, "causes and
spirits."

That these moments are genuine, that they reveal a
valid correspondence between nature and spirit, is indicated
by the way in which each faculty of the soul answers to an
actual condition of nature. Thus, in *Nature*, Emerson ex­
plains the "uses" of nature in terms of the soul's
faculties. The three basic uses ("discipline," the fourth
use, is really an education in the others) of nature are
"commodity," "beauty," and "language." Under commodity
Emerson lists "all those advantages which our senses owe to
nature" (p. 12). Commodity refers to material things,
climate, the seasons, the whole physical world and man's
control over it. Emerson elevates beauty to a higher level:
"A nobler want of man is served by nature, namely, the love
of Beauty" (p. 15). The love of beauty is subdivided
according to its operation through things, actions, and
intellect. About things, Emerson says man feels a delight in "the simple perception of natural forms" (p. 16). About actions: a noble act is beautiful, for "beauty is the mark God sets upon virtue" (p. 19). About intellect: "the intellect searches out the absolute order of things as they stand in the mind of God" (p. 22). The highest use of nature is language, for here is where the symbol and the imagination become prominent. Emerson says that "words are symbols of natural facts," that natural facts are symbols of spiritual facts, and that "Nature is the symbol of spirit" (p. 25). This is the level at which the soul sees the spiritual fact in the natural fact because the world is a symbol of the spirit, and then translates the vision into words, symbols. It does this because the Reason (imagination) in man is identical with the Spirit in nature (p. 27). Each answers to the other.

The love of beauty seems to be the most important faculty because it energizes the other faculties. It is the love of beauty that makes natural objects delightful to perceive, that stimulates the moral faculty, and that provides the intellect with the dimension it needs in order to develop its visionary powers. This last point is not made entirely clear in Nature. In one place Emerson says: "The intellectual and the active powers seem to succeed each other, and the exclusive activity of the one generates the exclusive activity of the other" (p. 22). The word
"exclusive" suggests that the faculties are separate and remain so, but in the passage from "Prospects" quoted on p. 22 he clearly indicates the necessity of unifying the faculties. There, in relation to the "faithful thinker" who "satisfies all the demands of the spirit," he says, "Love is as much its demand as perception. Indeed neither can be perfect without the other." Other passages also indicate the unifying importance of the love of beauty. In "Natural History of the Intellect" Emerson says that "affection (love) blends, intellect disjoins subject and object," and that this separation "paralyzes the will."¹⁸ He recommends "a blending of these two—the intellectual perception of truth and the moral sentiment of right—is wisdom."¹⁹ In "Pare he argues that "insight is not will, nor is affection will. Perception is cold, and goodness dies in wishes. . . . There must be a fusion of these two to generate the energy of the will."²⁰ Will here is obviously the characteristic of the integrated man, a point made by Edwards as well. In "Progress of Culture" Emerson develops this dramatic metaphor: "The affections are the wings by which the intellect launches on the void, and is borne across it. Great love is the inventor and expander of the frozen powers, the feathers frozen to our

¹⁸Works, XII, 44.
¹⁹Ibid., pp. 45-46.
²⁰Works, VI, 29.
Finally, in "The Divinity School Address," there is an extended discussion on the importance of the affections with life: "So much benevolence as a man hath, so much life hath he. For all things proceed out of this same spirit, which is differently named love, justice, temperance." The statement following this is even more explicit in its intimate relating of the affections and morality and universal vision: "Thought may work cold and intransitive in things, and find no end in unity; but the dawn of the sentiment of virtue on the heart, gives and is the assurance that Law is sovereign over all natures; and worlds, time, space, eternity, do seem to break out into joy."

The "faithful thinker" whose faculties are unified experiences the visionary moment; he may be characterized by such moments: he is the man of Imagination or Reason; his is the symbolic imagination. Others may be classified by their dominant faculty. Emerson, in fact, works out such a classification:

There are all degrees of proficiency in knowledge of the world. . . . One class live to the utility of the symbol, esteeming health and wealth a final good. Another class live above this mark to the beauty of the symbol, as the poet and artist and the naturalist and the man of science. A third class live above the beauty of the symbol to the

---

21 *Works*, VIII, 228.


beauty of the thing signified; these are wise men. The first class have common sense; the second, taste; and the third, spiritual perception. Once in a long time, a man traverses the whole scale, and sees and enjoys the symbol solidly.\textsuperscript{24}

I would like to suggest calling visionary moments "conversions," for several reasons. First, I want to use the word because of its relevance to Puritan conversion. To paraphrase and abbreviate Edmund Morgan's stages in Puritan conversion: The first stages call for sensible attention to evidence, to sermons, scriptures and signs; the next calls for an understanding, an interpretation and emotional appreciation of the evidence that sin exists in the world, and that oneself is helplessly sinful. These are the provoking stages during which one almost desperately seeks some way out. The last stages provide the way out as one's spiritual awareness deepens and he sees beyond his sin (if he is one of the elect, of course) a hope, and then becomes sensible of the mercy and grace of God.\textsuperscript{25} The role of sin as provoker of the sensibilities was important, but not exclusively so; some of the later Puritans gave a great deal of attention to the role of the happy emotions, and like Edwards, recounted experiences of ecstatic joy and visions of divine beauty.

\textsuperscript{24}\textit{"Prudence,"} \textit{Works}, II, 222-223.

\textsuperscript{25}\textit{Visible Saints}, pp. 68-69.
Second, I want to use the word because of its relevance to Emersonian conversion. The structure of Emerson's moments is not unlike the structure of Puritan conversion here outlined. Both begin in the world (commodity), and both move to the necessity of the individual, alone, with his full faculties, understanding and responding to that world. The last stage for both is a penetration of the apparent to reveal another, spiritual, world, which penetration is accompanied by extraordinary excitement and certainty about what one "sees." Emerson goes beyond the Puritans certainly, and beyond Edwards as well, on two points: in place of the sense of sin he posits the love of beauty as the stimulus to the extraordinary moment; and in place of the doctrine of the elect that restricts this moment to a small, favored group, he posits a doctrine of universality by asserting that it is imagination, which all men have, not grace, which few men receive, that provides the capacity for these moments of conversion.

Emerson also uses the word "conversion" itself (in much the same way that I use it here), as the following two examples indicate. In his journals he writes: "The whole secret of the teacher's force lies in the conviction that men are convertible. And they are. They want awakening. Get the soul out of bed, out of her deep habitual sleep, out into God's universe, to a perception of its beauty,
and... your prosy selfish sensualist awakes, a god."26
And, in "The Divinity School Address," in a statement that
would be looked upon as heretical by the school authorities,
he says: "To aim to convert a man by miracles is a pro-
fanation of the soul. A true conversion, a true Christ,
is now, as always, to be made by the reception of beautiful
sentiments."27

We can now characterize Emerson's idealism as a
belief, like that of the Puritans, in the symbolic nature
of the physical world, in an ultimate spiritual reality
behind matter. But unlike the Puritans, who see this reality
as an "other," Emerson claims it to be of the same stuff
as man's consciousness, which includes the imagination, the
affections, and the senses.

For the most part I have been analyzing the form of
conversion; I would now like to look at how conversion is
brought about. Conversion cannot come about for one who
is wedded to commodity and who is therefore a partial man.
In Nature Emerson blames the "secondary desires,—the desire
of riches, or pleasure, of power, and of praise" (p. 30),
for diverting man from his highest fulfillment; these
desires substitute the world of the senses for the world of
imagination. Emerson subsequently describes the "sensual

26Journals, III, 278.
27Works, I, 132.
man" (p. 52) as the man of "unrewed understanding," one who believes in "the absolute existence of nature," a belief that Emerson calls a "despotism of the senses which binds us to nature as if we were a part of it" (p. 49).

The essay in which Emerson argues at length on man as a spiritual cripple is "Self-Reliance." There he gives numerous examples of how conformity keeps man from living a unified life. All the examples have to do with man depending more on things than on himself (taking a coach instead of walking, using a clock instead of telling time by the sun), and his assuming the value of life to reside in the thing, in property. He argues that people "measure their esteem of each other by what each has, and not by what each is." Value is thereby effectively displaced from the person to an object. This is in fact, the thrust of Emerson's complaint against empiricism in science or in anything else, that it precludes a unified vision by ignoring man as a unified being, one with senses and affections and imagination.

To achieve conversion one must eliminate the split in himself and the consequent displacement of value. But one needs help. Of himself Emerson says "the sublime is excited in me by the great stoical doctrine Obey thyself

---

28 Works, II, 68-89.
29 Ibid., p. 87.
That which shows God in me, fortifies me." But this showing of God cannot be learned as a fact or imitated as a practice. Emerson says in *Nature*: "The best read naturalist who lends an entire and devout attention to truth, will see that there remains much to learn of his relation to the world, and that is not to be learned by any addition or subtraction or other comparison of known quantities, but is arrived at by untaught sallies of the spirit, by a continual self-recovery, and by entire humility" (p. 66). "Untaught sallies of the spirit" suggests that the experience is not a rational, communicable one. But Emerson does say that the soul can be "excited" into self-recovery." Elsewhere he pursues the same theme, but uses different words: "Truly speaking, it is not instruction, but provocation, that I can receive from another soul. What he announces I must find true in me, or reject."  

"Not instruction, but provocation": not building, but a calling forth; one must be provoked out of one's conformity to things; one must be provoked into "sallies of the spirit" and a unifying "self-recovery." This is all that one can do for another, but it can be a lifetime vocation. For the Puritans the office of the provoker was

traditionally filled by the minister; for Emerson, the office of the provoker is filled by the poet. Jonathan Bishop sees this as quite natural with Emerson, for it is the poet who translates experience into the provoking word. Bishop says: "Once the world is 'put under the mind for verb and noun,' once intellectual perception is realized to be in its structure a verbal activity, the poet becomes the representative man to 'articulate it.'"\(^{32}\)

Emerson mentions others functioning as provokers, the scholar, the preacher, the transcendentalist; but most often it seems to be the poet. The poet for Emerson, however, frequently appears as a point of view rather than as a versifier. In one place Emerson says: "The only way into nature is to enact our best insight. Instantly we are higher poets, and can speak deeper law."\(^{33}\) The poet must be a man of vision, "the true naturalist who domesticates himself in nature with a sense of strict consanguinity."\(^{34}\)

The poet must also "articulate" his vision in the language of imagination, the language that provokes the soul. The symbol is his favorite device. Emerson, throughout, Nature and "The Poet," praises the symbol (though sometimes

---


\(^{33}\)The Method of Nature," Works, I, 222.

\(^{34}\)Journals, V, 179.
It is metaphor, or metonymy, or figurative language in general; distinction among them are seldom made), because it unifies complexities, yet is inexhaustible while being concretely accessible. In Nature Emerson explains the symbolic imagination of the poet:

He unfixes the land and the sea, makes them revolve around the axis of his primary thought, and disposes them anew. Possessed himself by a heroic passion, he uses matter as symbols of it... To him, the refractory world is ductile and flexible; he invests dust and stone with humanity, and makes them the words of the Reason. The Imagination may be defined to be the use which the Reason makes of the material world. (pp. 51-52)

Emerson follows this passage with examples of how Shakespeare, "beyond all poets," uses nature in his metaphors. What Emerson is most struck by are the analogies between man and nature. What Emerson seems to be getting at, though he does not always affirm this, is that the symbol is itself creative and that it is inseparable from the vision that produces it. In other words, the poet is not a reporter who, after the event, must search for the language with which to record it. The symbol (or language) and the event occur simultaneously; indeed, are one. Thus Emerson's praise for Shakespeare is not for what the bard sees, but for what he does; or, as Emerson puts it: "thus the poet referring specifically to Shakespeare animates nature with his own thoughts" (p. 55).

Emerson retained a deep sense of the poet's power all
his life. In the late essay, "Poetry and Imagination," he says: "And poetry is the only verity... As power it is the perception of the symbolic character of things." In the same essay he says, significantly, for my purposes, that "there is no more welcome gift to men than a new symbol. That satiates, transports, converts them... Then comes a new genius, and brings another."

Emerson is himself a poet-provoker. A look at some of his symbols may help explain what Emerson means when he says a symbol "satiates, transports, converts." I take the "eyeball" image from Nature as a model of the image intended to convert:

Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God. (p. 10)

The experience begins with the physical, "Standing on the bare ground," and then moves upward to the head where "bare ground" gives way to the "blithe air" thus loosening the force of the literal, horizontal "ground." The vertical movement continues and expands, "uplifted into infinite space," and the metamorphosis of the self begins, "all mean egotism vanishes," as if that self were being identified with the "infinite space." Indeed this seems to be

35 Works, VIII, p. 27.
36 Ibid., pp. 13-14.
happening, for the next series of clauses suggest that the self is a universal vision. The second sentence describes the metamorphosis completed. The eyeball is the universe which both sees and is all things, but is not to be identified with any one of them; this is the stage of fundamental being, where creation takes place: "the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part of God."

The completeness of the experience in which one is taken out of his common self and identified with the godhead certainly qualifies as one which "satiates, transports, converts."

What is so provocative about this symbol of the eyeball is its very commonness. In fact the whole description is rooted in the common; that is, Emerson identifies himself with all men in that he performs an ordinary act, standing upright and lifting his head to the sky. But the sky suggests infinity, and there the excitement of the experience begins.

The provocative images in Emerson often wed the common and the uncommon in some surprising yet "natural" way. Like the eyeball passage these images usually describe an ascending motion; they are dynamic, spatial, expansive and absorptive. Emerson says that "space is felt as a great thing,"37 and, referring to the stimulus produced by a friend, he says, "When that which is so fair and noble

37 Journals, VI, 401.
passes, I seem enlarged; all my thoughts are spacious; the chambers of the brain and the lobes of the heart are bigger.  

A recurring image involving space is that of a house: "Every spirit builds itself a house, and beyond its house a world, and beyond its world a heaven" (p. 76). This last example from Nature, demonstrates an expansive movement through the stages of conversion, going from sensation (the house, something of the physical world) to imagination (heaven, something of the spiritual world). Emerson insists that everything spiritually alive must flow, hence the dynamic character of many of his provocative images: "As the world was plastic and fluid in the hands of God, so it is ever so much of his attributes as we bring to it. To ignorance and sin, it is flint. . . . In proportion as a man has any thing in him divine, the firmament flows before him."  

The absorptive images include the characteristics of the others and therefore offer an interesting complexity; in addition they are reminiscent of images that abound in the poetry of Edward Taylor and the prose accounts of spiritual experiences in Jonathan Edwards. These images frequently involve ingestion of some kind; here are several: "This contemporary insight (the conversion of everyday events into symbols) is transubstantiation, the conversion of daily

---

38 Journals, VI, p. 445.
bread into the holiest symbols; and every man would be a poet if his intellectual digestion were perfect."^40 "The Hebrew and Greek Scriptures contain immortal sentences, that have been 'bread of life to millions."^41 In Nature Emerson describes the lover of nature: "His intercourse with heaven and earth becomes a part of his daily food" (p.9). The climactic image of this group is Emerson's dream: "I dreamed that I floated at will in the great Ether, and I saw this world floating also not far off, but diminished to the size of an apple. Then an angel took it in his hand and brought it to me and said, 'This thou must eat.' And I ate the world."^42 Whatever one wants to make of these individual examples, he may; I cite them to show that Emerson offers them as provocative in the sense that the reader should find something familiar (the common) to start with, and that if he stays with it, something unfamiliar (stimulation of the imagination) may occur.

More pointedly, if most of these images provoke some or all of the characteristics of the conversion process, then the reader is being provoked, called out, to experience his own conversion. I find the absorptive image the most dramatically interesting because it is an image of a basic,

^40 "Poetry and Imagination," Works, VIII, 35.
^42 Journals, VI, 485.
universal, converting act; that is, eating converts, chemically, the not-me into the me. The act lends itself easily to figurative use. Jonathan Bishop says, in fact, that "the absorption of the scene by breathing or drinking it in" is the basic organic act in Emerson. 43

Besides recognizing the poet's agency and the perception of beauty as kinds of provocation to conversion, Emerson recognizes the place of suffering as another kind of provocation to conversion. Suffering may be defined here as the painful realization of one's physical limits and of deprivations brought about by circumstances over which one has no control. Emerson's discussion of "double consciousness" 44 focuses on this subject of limits and potential. "Double consciousness" is characterized by a disappointing realization that what we apprehend in moments of spiritual elevation does not last, that there is a swing in every experience from insight to ignorance, from certitude to insecurity, that a gulf suddenly opens making unattainable a world man sees in moments of illumination. This concept is not entirely negative; it is an admission by Emerson that the ordinary world has its claims and its powers. An idealism that emphasizes only what man can be finally distorts the nature of man and misleads us about what man is.

43 Emerson on the Soul, p. 91.
44 "Pate," Works, VI, 47.
Emerson rejected this kind of idealizing: "Deliver us," he says, "from that intensity of character which makes all its crows swan. . . . talent . . . genius; inoffensiveness, benevolence; willfulness, character; and even stupidity, simplicity." He admits to and insists on the limits of human perception. Of his own experience he confesses:

A certain wandering light comes to me which I perceive to be the cause of causes. It transcends all proving. It is itself the ground of being. . . . That is one fact then; that I have known that I existed directly from God. . . . Then, secondly, the contradictory fact is familiar, that I am a surprised spectator and learner of all my life. Cannot I conceive the Universe without a contradiction?

In the essay "Fate" Emerson makes much of the ambivalent forces in life, of man's limits, but he also insists that these forces and limits can be a refining experience. He admits that man is subject to large circumscriptions; circumstance, whether genetic or physical or familial, cannot be materially changed. But our attitudes, what we feel, think, and know, can be changed, and can make the difference between a confining circumstance that one suffers and a liberating one that one enjoys. Emerson puts it this way: "Fate then is a name for facts not yet passed under the fore of thought; for causes which are unpenetrated. But every jet of chaos which threatens to exterminate us is

45 *Journals*, III, 382.
46 *Journals*, IV, 248-249.
convertible by intellect into wholesome force. Elsewhere he indicates that some element of the unknown always remains unknown, and therefore beyond man's power to convert into a liberating force: "In every man," he says, "we require a bit of night, of chaos, of Abgrund, as the spring of a watch which turns best on a diamond; and: "There must be the Abyss, Nox, and Chaos, out of which all come, and they must never be far off." But even though the Abyss is not completely convertible itself, it is a necessary, active, creative force in its effect on man; for Emerson goes on to say: "Cut off the connection between any of our works and this dread origin, and the work is shallow and unsatisfying."

"Experience" is probably Emerson's finest statement on suffering, on man's limits, on deprivation, and on grief. The essay is dramatic, painful, and personal, like an internal monologue. It opens with questions about the self and the purpose and value of life. These questions are determined to be unanswerable. Then the autobiographic appears in Emerson's lamenting yet quiescent references to his dead son, Waldo; his pliant is a poignant "I grieve that

47 Works, VI, 31-32.
48 Journals, VII, 61.
49 Ibid., p. 131.
50 Ibid.
grief can teach me nothing." The entire first section of the essay is a discussion of the "Lords of Life," those forces present in the world, which he sums up as "Illusion, Temperament, Succession, Surface, Surprise, Reality, Subjectiveness" (p. 82). Emerson explains that Illusion and Surface indicate the inability of man to know ultimates, or even anything beyond his own senses. Man cannot detach himself from himself; therefore he cannot know where he has been, where he is going, or even where he is in relation to any reality beyond his own consciousness. In addition, he is subject to the world of time, Succession. Emerson then approaches the world from another angle; he sees two forces at the heart of existence, which are never in balance, power and form. Form is another term for the Lords of Life; power is the unexpected, the Surprise that erupts within man's Subjectiveness with the moment of Reality. Emerson says that "all good conversation, manners and action come from a spontaneity which forgets usages and makes the moment great"; and that "in the thought of genius there is always a surprise" (p. 68). He continues, celebrating power as the appearance of the Ideal, an inner vision:

Underneath the inharmonious particulars, is a musical perfection; the Ideal always journeying with us, the heaven without rent or seam. Do but observe the mode of illumination. When I converse with a profound mind, or if at any

---

51 Works, III, 49. Subsequent references are included in the text.
time being alone I have good thoughts, I do not at once arrive at satisfactions... but I am at first apprised of my vicinity to a new and excellent region of life. By persisting to read or to think, this region gives further sign of itself, as it were in flashes of light, in sudden discoveries to its profound beauty and repose, as if the clouds that covered it parted at intervals and showed the approaching traveller the inland mountains, with the tranquil eternal meadows spread at their base... But every insight from this realm of thought is felt as initial... And what a future it opens! I feel a new heart beating with the love of the new beauty. I am ready to die out of nature and be born again into this new yet unapproachable America. (pp. 71-72)

This is again the moment of conversion, but it is less triumphant than the eyeball experience, and more marked by a humility borne of suffering. There is, however, no doubt about what the vision is. Emerson goes on to assert that consciousness can know "sensations and states of mind" (p. 72), if nothing else. He identifies this vision as "First Cause," "ineffable cause" (p. 72), and "Being" (p. 73), and sees such visions as the source of new life:

Thus journeys the mighty Ideal before us;... Onward and onward! In liberated moments we know that a new picture of life and duty is already possible... The new statement will comprise the skepticisms as well as the faiths of society, and out of unbeliefs a creed shall be formed. For skepticisms are not gratuitous or lawless, but are limitations of the affirmative statement, and the new philosophy must take them in and make affirmations outside of them, just as much as it must include the oldest beliefs. (p.75)

What Emerson says here is thematically valid for the entire essay. Out of limitation comes liberation. If man is
subjectivity and can never know anything else, then he will find certainty within himself; and in the same spirit, skepticism becomes creed, unbelief becomes belief, suffering becomes joy. In such thought is also the dramatic resolution of the tension and suffering produced by Waldo's death; far from teaching him nothing, it teaches him everything.

Emersonian idealism, to take an overview, stresses the importance of the separate consciousness, the creative role of the symbolic imagination, and the life-giving intensity of the great moment, conversion. Later that idealism is tempered by Emerson with the acknowledgement that man's life is controlled to a great extent by circumstances. Conversion more often than not is accomplished through suffering. Man learns through suffering that though circumstances cannot be overcome, consciousness can be enlarged. Thus is suffering a provocation to spiritual growth. Such an idealism characterizes much of Puritan theology; and is significantly present both in James's sensibility, and in the sensibility of many of his major fictional characters many of whom start out seeking spiritual joy only to find it at last through suffering.
III. HENRY JAMES’S IDEALISM

In my first chapter I pointed to the common ground between Emerson and James; in the second chapter I examined Emersonian idealism; in this chapter I wish to examine idealism in James’s life and thought.

James responded early to his father’s idealism and expressed what seemed to be his own natural predilection for idealism. In his autobiography James indicates that he was more favorably impressed by his father’s attitudes than by his religion. In fact he admits being indifferent to his father’s beliefs: “I am not concerned with the intrinsic meaning of these things here (his father’s ideas), and could not be even had they touched me more directly, or more converted me from what I can best call, to my doubtless scant honour, a total otherness of contemplation, during the years when my privilege was greatest and my situation for inquiry and response ampest.”¹ He recognizes and appreciates instead, the virtue and freedom of their family life, a life that was

¹Notes of a Son and Brother (New York: Scribner’s, 1914), p. 165.
an "order of goodness and power greater than any this world by itself can show which we understand as the religious spirit," achieved without conforming to any institutional religion, worship, or creed.\(^2\)

Though Henry was not "converted to his father's ideas, he was stimulated by his father's attitudes and practices. The elder James insisted repeatedly on the necessity of paying attention to consciousness, and on the necessity of idealizing sensory experience, seeing everything as a mental event. The young Henry explains it this way: "It is quite for me as if the author of our being and the guardian of our youth had virtually said to us but one thing, directed our course by one word, though constantly repeated: Convert, convert, convert!" which meant, "everything that should happen to us, every contact, every impression and every experience we should know, were to form our soluble stuff (consciousness)."\(^3\)

The elder James actually held sessions during which he would lead the boys through an intense and close scrutiny of an event until that event was seen as part of a larger, ultimately good, order. The movement was from

\(^2\)Notes of a Son and Brother, p. 164

\(^3\)A Small Boy and Others (New York: Scribner's, 1913, p. 123.)
a particular discord to a general harmony. Henry comments on how his father could see any event, no matter how trivial or common, in this way:

Which means, to my memory, that we breathed somehow an air in which waste, for us at least, couldn't and didn't live, so certain were aberrations and discussions, adventure, excursions and alarms for whatever sort, to wind up in a "transformation scene" or, if the term be not profane, happy harlequinade; a figuration of each involved issue and item before the footlights of a familiar idealism, the most socialised and ironised the most amusedly generalised, that possibly could be.

The "transformation scene" is brought about through an exercise of consciousness. And though Henry responds with some amusement to his father's optimistic idealizing, calling it a "happy harlequinade," he was himself a confirmed practitioner of the transforming consciousness.

Henry saw himself as such a practitioner. He contrasts himself with his younger brother Wilky, and by implication with all others like him: "I really believe I was already aware—that one way of taking life was to go in for everything and everyone, which kept you abundantly occupied (as Wilky was so gregariously occupied), and the other way was to be as occupied, quite as occupied, just with the sense and the image of it all (as Henry was

---

4Notes of a Son and Brother, pp. 111-112.
so internally occupied), and on only a fifth of the actual immersion." The contrast is between the actor and the observer. James carefully implies that the observer is a special one whose imagination is more active than that of the doer; the observer does not need as much material as the actor to be "occupied," which suggests that the imagination supplies most of the "life" for the observer.

Three incidents attest to the conscious emergence of James's mature and special sense of his imaginative powers. One took place in the summer of 1854 when Henry was eleven years old. He had accompanied his father on a visit to Henry Senior's sister. Sometime during the evening the sister's daughter was ordered to bed. The child, living up to her reputation for being "spoiled," vigorously protested the order. In return, her mother chided her with "Come now, my dear; don't make a scene—I insist on your not making a scene!" James comments:

That was all the witchcraft the occasion used, but the note was none the less epoch-making. The expression, so vivid, so portentous, was one I had never heard—it had never been addressed to us at home; and who should say now what a world one mightn't at once read into it! It seemed freighted to sail so far; it told me so much about life.

5A Small Boy, p. 290.
Life at these intensities clearly became "scenes"; but the great thing, the immense illumination, was that we could make them or not as we chose . . . . The mark had been made for me and the door flung open; the passage, gathering up all the elements of the troubled time, had been itself a scene, quite enough of one, and I had become aware with it of a rich accession of possibilities.

"Epoch-making" and "portentous" leave no doubt about the importance the event had for James. The significance of the event is carried by the word "scene," the pronunciation of which somehow precipitated in his consciousness the event to which it refers. This was the moment in which the boy became aware of his mind: "life at these intensities clearly became 'scenes,'" present to consciousness. And this was the moment in which he became aware of his mind as a power over which he could exercise control: "we could make them 'scenes' or not as we chose." "Scene" is a conceptualizing, an idealizing, of an event, a forming of that event into a unified, significant, intelligible pattern; and more, but James does not explicitly explain how much more; he simply implies by the tone of words like "intensities" and "illumination," and by the concluding metaphor about the "door flung open," that "scene" is a rich word indeed. I should like to point out that it suggests a mental event parallel to

\footnote{A Small Boy, pp. 185-186.}
that which occurs to Emerson's idealist who "transfers every object in nature from an independent and anomalous position without there, into consciousness." The scene for James does at least as much to change the "anomalous," the neutral character of events, into personal, conscious meaning, "a rich accession of possibilities."

A second incident chronicling the emergence of James's imagination is an example of the "scenic" imagination at work. I occurred during a trip through Europe, when the boy was twelve. Henry, recuperating from an illness, was in a heightened observational mood. He writes:

I took in . . . by a long swig that testified to some power of elbow, a larger draught of the wine of perception than any I had ever before owed to a single throb of that faculty. The village street . . . opened out . . . into a high place on which perched an object also a fresh revelation and that I recognised with a deep joy— at once a castle and a ruin . . . Below . . . was a woman . . . engaged in some sort of field labour. . . . She had in the whole aspect an enormous value . . . the truth of one's embracing there, in all the presented character of the scene, an amount of character I had felt no scene present. . . . Supremely, in that ecstatic vision, was "Europe," sublime synthesis, expressed and guaranteed to me—as if by a mystic gage.

Here is a scene controlled by an absorptive image, an

8 A Small Boy, pp. 283-284.
image that figures significantly in Edwards and Emerson, as previously noted. Henry says "I took in," and then adds "swig" and "draught" as if what he sees becomes a part of him, is converted, as the absorptive image would have it, into his own being, and becomes an "ecstatic vision" of something far more than what he sees. This scene is the meeting place of thought and thing, where thought works the "sublime synthesis" with thing, turning the particular into the general, the thing into idea, "Europe." Certainly this moment is not unlike those we examined in Emerson in which a "provocative" image, like that of the eyeball, structures the moment into something dynamic, spatial, expansive, and absorptive. Here there is motion and emotion: the scene "opened out... into a high place," and there is a recognition accompanied by a "deep joy"; the whole is absorbed in "a long slow swig" by the visual faculty, which faculty is given an enormous play of importance by the number of words that refer to it, like "perception," "revelation," "recognised," "aspect," "scene," and "vision." James's scene is Emerson's symbol. Both are effected by the converting consciousness, sometimes also referred to here as the symbolizing or idealizing consciousness.

The third incident that marks the emergence of James's imagination is his response to the Louvre. James
calls his visits there the most "educative, formative, fertilising" experiences he was ever to know in his youth. He recalls times "during which the house of life and the palace of art became so mixed and interchangeable—the Louvre being, under a general description, the most peopled of all scenes not less than the most hushed of all temples—that an excursion to look at pictures would have but half expressed my afternoon." The Louvre as a "palace of art" is testimony to the creative imagination and an experience of it; it is a scene housing scenes, a symbol housing symbols.

James's special moments, like those we have been looking at, frequently contain religious images; a view becomes a "revelation," and the Louvre becomes a "temple." This kind of language both idealizes and intensifies. "Revelation" is more than an ordinary seeing with the eye; it is an extraordinary seeing with the soul a reality that is not expressed to the senses. James often reserves such language for discussions of art, or for the artistic consciousness at work, as we have seen. It abounds in his autobiography, from which I have been drawing, and from which I wish to draw one more example.

9 A Small Boy, p. 349.
10 Ibid., p. 351.
almost embarrassing in its richness. When James as a young man meets Charles Dickens his excitement is immense; the older James, looking back at himself in this moment says he was "ineffably agitated, so mystically moved, in the presence of any exhibited idol of the mind," and that Dickens is such an idol, "shining indeed, only shining with august particulars." Religious imagery idealizes and intensifies because it is an expression of the intense and idealized experience; such an experience is peculiar to what Leon Edel finds to be the "religion of consciousness" in James:

If Henry James can be said to have had a personal religion, it was a mysticism compounded of meditation and communion with spirits and forces, vaguely discerned yet acutely felt, in a dim intuitional "beyond." On the one hand he accepted the supremacy of reason and on the other inclined toward Pascalian intuition. . . . Within the orbit of "consciousness," Henry James had constructed, by middle life, his series of shrines—the shrine of art, tradition, morality, his own religion of beauty and the "religion of consciousness"—a worship almost pagan, were it not so highly sophisticated, of the "powers and forces and divinities to whom I've ever been loyal. . . " that included the guiding spirit of his writing table, whom he familiarly addressed as mon bon, the unseen but strongly experienced strength within him that was his creative power.

11Notes of a Son and Brother, p. 253.
12Ibid., p. 254.
this combined with the curious private prayers he wrote out in his notebooks--more invocation to the special Jamesian Muse than prayer--constituted the "religion" of the novelist.13

I would like now to turn to the notebooks as further evidence of James's idealism. Edel, above, mentions some of the expressions in the notebooks that characterize James's "religion of consciousness," his idealism. I have examples to add. I also wish to make the point based mainly on his increasing use of religious imagery, that, James's idealism becomes more pronounced during the mid-1890's and after, a point implied by Edel above in his statement that "Henry James has constructed, by middle life, his series of shrines." One of the passages strong­est in religious imagery is that on the death of his mother in 1882. He writes: "Her death has given me a passionate belief in certain transcendent things--the immanence of being as nobly created as hers--the immor­tality of such virtue as that--the reunion of spirits in better conditions than these... She is with us, she is of us--the eternal stillness is but a form of her love. One can hear her voice in it--one can feel, forever, the

inextinguishable vibration of her devotion."\(^{14}\) And speaking of the time he spends in Cambridge after his mother's death, he says, "I look back upon the whole three months with a kind of religious veneration."\(^{15}\) This appears to be what James meant by "transformation scene" earlier. He has here transformed or idealized the particular physical fact and particular emotional pain of his mother's death into a universal spiritual reality and creed of joy. Death, which is literally a negation, a separation, and an end, is idealized into a creed ("her heath has given me a passionate belief") of vast spiritual proportions involving "immanence of being" and "immortality." The climactic image identifies her with the cosmic other, ("the eternal stillness is but a form of her love") which communicates with man: "one can feel, forever, the inextinguishable vibration of her devotion."

It would be difficult and, for my purposes, unnecessary to pin down the change in James's notebook style to a specific date, but generally it seems to occur about the time he is writing for the theatre. This change


\(^{15}\) Ibid., p. 44.
reveals James's deepening idealism. In 1891 James admonishes himself:

To live in the world of creation—to get into it and stay in it—to frequent it and haunt it—to think intently and fruitfully—to woo combinations and inspirations into being by a depth and continuity of attention and meditation—this is the only thing—and I neglect it... from vagueness, from inattentiveness, and from a strange nervous fear of letting myself go. If I vanquish that nervousness, the world is mine. 16

It is as if James himself were afraid of being the artist-idealistic, yet in his fear he articulates the artist-idealistic's "world of creation," or his consciousness, rather, in a vital and dramatic way. In any event, in the next three years James vanquishes his "nervousness."

There are no more entries deploring his want of creative inspiration. The following entry, dated April 21, 1894, pulsates with confidence: "The thing I want will come—will come 'in its glory': the quiet, generous, patient mornings will bring it. They are everything; or only want to be, beg to be, so far as they are encouraged and permitted. Oh, soul of my soul—oh, sacred beneficence of doing!"

There is a change, then, in James's attitude toward

16. The Notebooks of Henry James, p. 112.
17. Ibid., p. 158.
himself and his work by 1894. The power of the Shelleyan "Oh, soul of my soul" is, evidence of how the very act of composition is an experience so charged that only the most sublime and intense language can do it justice. James is no longer fumbling because of "nervousness"; he is "in the world of creation"; he has won his "salvation." And just as the notebooks indicate James's increased idealism, so do the works he is writing, as we shall see in subsequent chapters.

In his autobiography we can see James's training and development in idealism; in the notebooks we can see that idealism deepen; in The American Scene we can see that idealism sharply disapproving of America's emergent materialism. In one passage James expresses disappointment at finding that a river "worthy of Ruysdael or Salvator Rosa, was known but as the Farmington River." He explains his disappointment: "This I could in no manner put up with--this taking by the greater of the comparatively common little names of the less. Farmington . . . is a delightful, a model village; but villages, fords, bridges are not the godparents of the element that makes them possible, they are much rather the godchildren." The note struck

---

18The American Scene, p. 32.
may be partially snobbish, but more important is James's clear vision of the reversal of values in which the genius of nature and man is made subservient to some common denominator of use, in this instance, farming. It is this reversal that James finds repeated often throughout his tour; and in his comments on this experience James reveals his own idealism, his own expectations of the human imagination, and fundamentally his sympathy with Emerson who deplores the "sensual man" whose life and faith are rooted in the power of things rather than in the power of the mind. Emerson would insist that man's world of things, his tools and his towns, his work and his reward, are not the final measure of man's life; but that he has to look beyond the commodity level, beyond what nature provides him physically, and see its spiritual value. For Emerson man must be stimulated by nature so that he sees through particular things to universal realities. But a river named after a town, which in turn is named after an occupation, undercuts the river as a natural symbol of some spiritual fact; it is instead a symbol of man at the level of commodity, of his own senses, of the physical world, ignorant of the spiritual.

The independent, self-conscious mind is basic to idealism, but James sees signs everywhere of practices anathema to independence and introspection. Everyone, no
matter how humble, suffers from the "great equalizing pressure, as James calls it, of American materialism." He tells of the immigrant who loses his uniqueness, his European identity, his "'manners' which were a grace . . . by which one had best known and, an opportunity, best liked him." The "great equalizing pressure" is at work on Americans at the opposite end of the economic scale from the poor immigrant. James sees in the Waldorf-Astoria a symbol of the American spirit, an "expression of the gregarious state breaking down every barrier but two—one of which, the barrier consisting of the high pecuniary tax, is the immediately obvious. The other, the rather more subtle, is the condition, for any member of the flock, that he or she—in other words especially she—be presumably 'respectable,' be that is not discoverably anything else."21

Reacting against the skyscrapers as symbols of America's "pecuniary purpose," James casts about, looking for something more sympathetic to his own nature. After scaling the heights of the city, he describes, in obvious relief, the flat, flowing, peaceful Hudson, and says, with a strong Whitmanian echo:

19 The American Scene, p. 126.
20 Ibid., p. 127.
21 Ibid., p. 103.
A decent respect for the Hudson would confine us to the use of the boat instead of the train—all the more that the American river-steamers have had, from the earliest time, for the true raffine their peculiar note of romance. A possible commerce, on the other hand, with one's time—which is always also the time of so many other busy people—has long since made mincemeat of the rights of contemplation; rights reduced, in the United States, to-day, and by quite the same argument, as those of the noble savage whom we have banished to this narrowing reservation.22

A "decent respect for the Hudson" is connected with the "rights of contemplation," a right that becomes a necessity of survival as implied by the analogy to the Indian. Besides Whitman, there is also a bit of Rousseau in the passage. The allusions and the images add up to a warning that like the Indian, the busy American has been "banished" to a "narrowing reservation," and that if he loses his "respect for the Hudson," for the tomantic value of individuals and feelings, he will be captured in the web of "pecuniary purpose." Later James speculates that the American needs "a relation, as intimate as possible, to something superior, something as central as possible."23 That "something" could be nature as exemplified by the Hudson; that "something" must be a call to man, for experiences that take him out of his physical drive

22 The American Scene, pp. 148-149.
23 Ibid., p. 290.
to conquer space and matter; it must be, James implies, something religious, something man can worship.

The section on Concord seems to be about that "something." This is the one section in *The American Scene* in which James delivers himself of encomium on page after page. If James's America has a core, "intimate," "superior," and central," this is it: an example of what has been and could be for the American. With pecuniary America kept in view, one can see what value Concord must have for James: "Among places of your size," he writes, "you're too obviously and easily first: it's a question of places, so many of them, of fifty times your size, and which yet don't begin to have a fraction of your weight, or your character, or your intensity of presence and sweetness of tone, or your moral charm." Of course James has in mind those great names associated with Concord during his childhood, Hawthorne, Thoreau, and Emerson probably being the most prominent for him. The tribute that James tenders to Emerson is, in the light of the rest of the book, part of its "intimate," "superior," and "central" vision, a vision in fact deeply sympathetic to Emerson. Nowhere else in this book on manners, values, the quality

---

24 *The American Scene*, p. 256.
of life, do we find such high praise:

I confess myself, for my part, much more satisfied than not by our happy equivalent, "in American money," for Goethe and Schiller. The money is a potful in the second case as in the first, and if Goethe, in the one, represents the gold and Schiller the silver. I find (and quite putting aside any bimetallic prejudice) the same good relation in the other between Emerson and Thoreau. I open Emerson for the same benefit for which I open Goethe, the sense of moving in large intellectual space, and that of the gush, here and there, out of the rock, of the crystalline cupful, in wisdom and poetry, in Wahrheit and Dichtung.25

James rather playfully brings in images of wealth, gold and silver, implying a contrast between their use here and their use in the vulgar world of business. More seriously, James places himself in sympathetic communion with Emerson and the past. Even his imagery, except for that of gold and silver, is Emersonian: dynamic, spatial, and absorptive. James muses further about Emerson, idealizing as he does so, and expressing through his imagery his sense of the Emersonian presence:

Emerson . . . couldn't have spent his career in a charming woody, watery place, for so long socially and typically and, above all, interestingly homogeneous, without an effect as of the communication to it of something ineffaceable. . . . It is admirably, to-day, as if we were still seeing these things in those images, which stir the air like birds, dim in the

25 The American Scene, p. 264.
eventide, coming home to nest. If one had reached a "time of life" one had thereby at least heard him lecture; and not a russet leaf fell for me, while I was there, but fell with an Emersonian drop.26

Here in Concord something "intimate," "superior," and "central" is to be found, the Emersonian "communication" alive in a leaf, neither "smothered" nor "caged" by the "perpetual Passionate pecuniary purpose" at work in the skyscrapers.

"Is there a Life After Death?" published in 1910, is probably the most idealist statement James ever made. Here James argues about the nature of consciousness in the kind of religious language we saw in his notebooks. Here is an excerpt:

It is not that I have found in growing older any one marked or momentous line in the life of the mind or in the play and the freedom of the imagination to be stepped over; but that a process takes place which I can only describe as the accumulation of the very treasure itself of consciousness. I won't say that "the world," as we commonly refer to it, grows more attaching, but will say that the universe increasingly does, and that this makes us present at enormous multiplication of our possible relations with it; relations still vague, no doubt, as undefined as they are uplifting, as they are inspiring, to think of; and on a scale beyond our actual use or application, yet filling us (through the "law" in question, the law that consciousness gives us immensities and imaginabilities wherever we direct it) with the unlimited vision of being. 27

26 The American Scene, p. 264-265.
27 The James Family, p. 610.
This passage mounts the steps of conversion as outlined in Emerson. James moves from a fairly ordinary reference to the "life of the mind" to an experience with special qualities suggested by the word "treasure" and by the replacement of "world" with "universe," which universe "grows more attaching." He climaxes the movement with an ultimate, an "unlimited vision of being." This whole experience compares very favorably with Emerson's in the eyeball passage with its climax: "the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me."

Both Emerson and James use religious terminology in describing moments of consciousness; both follow an enlarging, generalizing, idealizing pattern, going from the common to the extraordinary, from the physical to the mental, from the lower to the higher; and both emphasize vision and being. In testifying to this kind of experience, Emerson and James are as close as they can be without being simple duplicates of each other.

In another statement from the same essay James relates this visionary experience to the role of the artist:

The point is, none the less, that in proportion as we (of the class I speak of) enjoy the greater number of our most characteristic inward reactions, in proportion as we do curiously and lovingly, yearningly and irrepressibly, interrogate and liberate, try and test and explore, our general productive and, as we like conveniently to say, creative awareness of things...
in that proportion does our function strike us as establishing sublime relations.28

"Creative awareness" establishes "sublime relations" James's artist is Emerson's poet; both arrive at a vision of extraordinary reality in the pursuit of their work.

Of course Emerson, especially in the essays after Nature, emphasizes the need for expression, and the function of art. James is just as emphatic about the role of art; the summary statement is the one he makes in his notebook: "Without thee art for me the world would be, indeed, a howling desert."29 Writing was apparently the way for James into those experiences associated with religion and mysticism. This is one way of explaining James's use of religious terminology; the phrases would turn his mind in the creative direction, acting as invocations, as Edel suggests in his statement on James's religion quoted earlier. At any rate, James's desire for these experiences was not escapist; for, like Emerson, he felt the way into life is through consciousness and the exercise of the imagination. In a letter to H. G. Wells, James sums up this position: "It is art that makes life, makes interest, makes importance ... and I know of no substi-

28The James Family, p. 612.
29The Notebooks of Henry James, p. 68.
tute whatever for the force and beauty of its process."\(^{30}\)

Precisely what it is about art that "makes life" is suggested in James's "Preface" to *The Princess Casamassima*: "If you haven't, for fiction, the root of the matter in you, haven't the sense of life and the penetrating imagination, you are a fool in the very presence of the revealed and assured; but that if you are so armed you are not really helpless, not without your resource, even before mysteries abysmal."\(^{31}\) Here James asserts that the "sense of life and the penetrating imagination" prevent one from being bewildered, prevent the mind from succumbing to other forces, assure the freedom peculiar to the artistic imagination. This association of mind with freedom has its parallel with Emerson's "the poet conforms things to his thoughts;"\(^{32}\) thereby exercising the freedom James is talking about. For both Emerson and James, to be free is to create; and to create is to be an artist, an idealist who turns things to thought.

James's central characters are often like their creator, idealists with a strong sense of the power of


\(^{31}\) (New York: Scribner's, 1908), I, xxiii.

consciousness; they are, as he puts it in one place, "finely aware and richly responsible." He says further: "I confess I never see the leading interest of any human hazard but in a consciousness (on the part of the moved and moving creature) subject to a fine intensification and wide enlargement." To be "aware" and "responsible" is to be like Fleda Vetch in The Spoils of Poynton; she remains free by being able to appreciate the "spoils" without having to possess, or be possessed by, them. Similarly, Lambert Strether has enlarged his consciousness to the point of being unable to need anything else. He explains to Maria Gostrey at the end of The Ambassadors:

"That, you see, is my only logic. Not, out of the whole affair, to have got anything for myself." She thought. "But with your wonderful impressions you'll have got a great deal;" "A great deal" -- he agreed.

Willy Theale, in The Wings of the Dove, has a moment in which she reaches the peak of being "finely aware": "Once more things melted together--the beauty and the history and the facility and the splendid midsummer glow: it was a sort of magnificent maximum, the pink dawn of an apotheosis." All three characters are in these mo-

33 Preface" to The Princess Casamassima, I, viii.
34 Ibid., p. xii.
35 (New York: Scribner's, 1909), II, 326.
36 (New York: Scribner's, 1909), II, 220.
ments seers; their field of action is the imagination; their main organ of perception is sight; and, for the most part, they deal with the world as if it were a mental adventure. Though they are not artists, they too "make" life; they view it as a Jamesian scene; they approach it as does an Emersonian poet who "conforms things to his thoughts." They are "finely aware and richly responsible" because they remain free from the overwhelming power of things. This does not mean that they don't fail and don't suffer; obviously they do both; it does mean that they are "responsible" no matter what happens to them. The prime example is Isabel Archer, as James explains in the "Preface" to The Portrait of a Lady: "Without her sense of them the adventures her sense for them, as one may say, they are next to nothing at all; but isn't the beauty and the difficulty just in showing their mystic conversion by that sense, conversion into the stuff of drama or . . . 'story'?" It is Isabel's "sense," her converting consciousness, that creates the scene which James refers to here as "drama" and "story." Isabel is "responsible," for it is out of her "fine awareness" that she makes with Madame Merle something of a "sublime relation," which relation in turn leads Isabel to a great deal of suffering.

37(New York: Scribner's, 1908), I, xx.
It is revealing of his proximity to Isabel that James says it is not only her "sense" that works the "mystic conversion," but his as well that must accept the challenge of "the beauty and the difficulty just in showing" that conversion. Isabel's creating of her scene is James's creating of his scene, and both together create the scene that the reader also participates in the creation of. James hints at this complexity in his description of the house of art in the "Preface" to The Portrait of a Lady. There too he says that the event, the "subject" is "nothing without the posted presence of the watcher," who can also be, he implies, the "subject" of some other watcher. In Isabel's scene, Madame Merle is the "subject"; Isabel is the watcher, or artist; together they are the subject for James who is watching them in his capacity as artist; all three are the subject for the reader who must in some way accept the challenge of "the beauty and the difficulty just in showing" the converting consciousness at work.

James's novels are intended to challenge the reader out of his ordinary world and take him into the world of the idealist. Just as the sermon was the means to reach and move the spirit of the Puritan, and just as Emerson's lectures and essays were the means by which he strove to

38 (New York: Scribner's, 1908), I, xi.
effect the converting experience in his audience, so is
fiction for James the means to a fuller consciousness in
the reader. In "The Future of the Novel" he explains
that the demand for the novel expresses man's "eternal
desire for more experience."\textsuperscript{39} And in "The Art of Fiction"
he says that "the province of art is all life, all
feeling, all observation, all vision. As Mr. Besant so
justly intimates, it is all experience."\textsuperscript{40} Obviously
James is not thinking of fiction as mere entertainment or
adventure geared to the arousal of momentary and super­
ficial excitement. If art is to provide expérience, it
must be the kind of experience we have been discussing all
along, the experience of consciousness, the enlargement of
consciousness, and its reach to ineffable dimensions.
Fiction itself has to be such an experience; thus James
insists that the novel be not immediately accessible, that
the reader go through an "ante-chamber or two and the
crooked corridor before he is already in the Presence"\textsuperscript{41};
or, as he admonishes a fellow writer, fictional characters
must never be "too little mysterious."\textsuperscript{42}

To the extent that the Jamesian reader wrestles with

\textsuperscript{39}Selected Literary Criticism, p. 182.
\textsuperscript{40}Partial Portraits, p. 399.
\textsuperscript{41}The Letters of Henry James, I, 320.
\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., p. 289
the "mysterious," and travels the "crooked corridor" he is idealizing, creating a mental world. The technique that challenges the reader to be an active participant in creation is that of "foreshortening." In "Preface" to "Daisy Miller" James explains what foreshortening is:

Any real art of representation is, I make out, a controlled and guarded acceptance, in fact a perfect economic mastery, of that conflict: the general sense of the expansive, the explosive principle in one's material thoroughly noted, adroitly allowed to flush and colour and animate the disputed value, but with its other appetites and treacheries, its characteristic space-hunger and space-cunning, kept down. The fair flower of this artful compromise is to my sense the secret of "foreshortening."  

It is this direct, suggestive technique that provides so much of the tension in The Princess Casamassima, as James indicates in his "Preface" to the novel: "My scheme called for the suggested nearness (to all our apparently ordered life) of some sinister anarchic underworld, heaving, in its pain, its power and its hate." The important word here is "suggested." James did not see his office as one in which he was to document revolutionary activity; in this sense his novel is not meant to imitate life. He goes on: "The value I wished most to render and the effect I wished most to produce were pre-


44 The Princess, I, xxi.
cisely those of our not knowing, or society's not knowing, but only guessing and suspecting and trying to ignore, what 'goes on' irreconcileably, subversively, beneath the vast smug surface. 45 Foreshortening is the technique of omission, of the creation of mystery. It is this technique that William James often found so exasperating, but "successful." He tells Henry in a letter that his style creates in the reader "the illusion of a solid object, made ... wholly out of impalpable materials, air and the prismatic interferences of light." 46 This is also a way of saying that James is not interested, as artist-idealistic, in the object as object, but in the object as idea in the mind. Peter Garrett reads a writer like James with more sympathy than does William James. In his recent study, Scene and Symbol from George Eliot to James Joyce, which contains the chapter, "Henry James: The Creations of Consciousness," Garrett says that the fictional mode is not, "representational," or "strictly mimetic," but is "constitutive of meaning." 47 And I think that this is the way James, attested to by techniques like foreshortening, also sees the novel.

45 The Princess, I, xxi.
The ideal reader, then, for James, must have the qualities he insists that a good critic have: "To criticise is to appreciate, to appropriate, to take intellectual possession, to establish in fine a relation with the criticised thing and make it one's own." Just as he says in "Is There a Life After Death?" that the artist establishes "sublime relations," so here does he urge that the critic establish relations, suggesting that the critic is a participant in what the artist has done. That is almost exactly what James says in his essay "Criticism," in which he argues against simple reviewing and for the critic "to lend himself, to project himself and steep himself, to feel and feel till he can say, to have perception at the pitch of passion." All of which means that the critic recover the consciousness of the author at work. Edel attests to this role of the reader in James: "We readers are 'muddling out' experience, the character's, ours, James's. Ultimately this is what the novelist arrived at, and as his narrative ingenuity increased he asked his reader to read more and more between his lines; he invited a greater reciprocal

---


play between the creating and the re-creating, the absorbing and the re-formualting consciousness." The ideal reader must become, like character and author, something of a converting consciousness.

To sum up: James was an idealist like Emerson because he saw the world as effectively the mind; through his own experience he came to know artistic creation as the highest act man is capable of; he believed that there are those special ones, aware of their creative roles, who are freer and have fuller consciousnesses than others; these special ones are the poets, the artists, the free spirits. For James, the creative act converts the world brought to us through confused sense impressions into a coherent mental image which, in its turn, is a mental stimulus; such acts are accompanied by intense feelings suggestive of ultimate realities; the artist, in courting such acts, seems to get closer to those realities.

50."The Literary Convictions of Henry James," NE'S, 3 (Spring 1957), 9.
IV. THE SEEKERS:  RODERICK HUDSON, THE AMERICAN,
THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY

Idealism in both Emerson and James I call Emersonian because of Emerson's role in secularizing it from his Puritan-Unitarian background and making it available through his works to subsequent generations. James's peculiar contribution is the dramatization of the idealist character. The chapters that follow will be an analysis of Emersonian idealism in the fiction of Henry James. Nature is the key Emerson essay in this study, but I also turn to other essays such as "Experience" and "Fate," and to the Journals for additional support, for clarification, and even for divergent views. I will, for the most part, concentrate on character and imagery in James.

I have divided the novels according to what seem to be the major features of the central characters. In the first three novels I take up, Roderick Hudson, The American, and The Portrait of a Lady, the central characters, like Rowland Mallet, are on an "errand." They actively seek some great excitement, not of the flesh, but of the spirit.
an excitement of deep value and reality not to be found in ordinary life. The promise of that excitement comes with travel and the discovery of new and special friendships. Frustration and suffering, marked by death, usually follow, and only through an acceptance of frustration and suffering is there any "happy" resolution. I want to analyze the idealist character in these novels and document his growth in the ability to see, feel, idealize and transcend his experiences. I also want to show that sequentially, the novels are increasingly complex in treating this growth. Specifically, in Roderick Hudson and The American I want to concentrate on Rowland Mallet and Christopher Newman and show how Newman's subjective experiences are more carefully worked out than are Mallet's. In The Portrait of a Lady I want to show how important suffering is in the idealist experience of Isabel Archer.

In the subsequent chapters I concentrate on James's later novels. The central characters in these works are less active as seekers and, to risk the oversimplification, are more often seemingly passive seers. I have limited myself throughout to major novels featuring adult characters. By focusing first on the earlier and then on the later novels, though I do include The Princess Casamassima, I hope to show that James's idealist characters become more
affirmative and successful, and that the depiction of great 
moments of conversion, the use of symbolism, and the use 
of religiously descriptive terminology become increasingly 
pronounced. The differences between early editions and the 
New York edition are not, for my purposes, significant 
够 for special treatment. For the sake of convenience, 
then, all references unless otherwise stated are to the 

I read Roderick Hudson as Rowland's story. It is 
通过 Rowland's consciousness that the history of 
Roderick Hudson becomes a significant story. And Rowland's 
consciousness is richly variegated, at first even 
ambivalent. He seems to be a collection of New England 
Puritanism, Unitarianism, and even some transcendentalism. 
The Puritan in him is described thusly: "He had sprung 
from stiff Puritan stock and had been brought up to think 
much more intently of the duties of our earthly pilgrimage 
than of its privileges and pleasures. . . . He had at 
least been made to feel that there ran through all things a 
strain of right and wrong as different, after all, in their 
complexion, as the texture, to spiritual sense, of Sundays 
and week-days."¹ All of this training came from his dour.

¹(New York: Scribner's, 1907), p. 9. Subsequent 
references are included in the text.
hard-working father who, we are told, was a "chip of the primal Puritan block" (p. 9). His mother represented a quiet opposition to the Puritan father, and out of the "irredeemable error" of her marriage she had cultivated ... a little plot of independent feeling, and it was of this private precinct that before her death she had given her son the key" (p. 14). This mixture of influences is summed up in the following characterization of Rowland:

It often seemed to Mallet that he wholly lacked the prime requisite of an expert flaneur— the simple, senuous, confident relish of pleasure. ... His was neither an irresponsibly contemplative nature nor a sturdily practical one, and was forever looking in vain for the uses of the things that please and the charm of the things that sustain. He was an awkward mixture of moral and aesthetic curiosity, and yet he would have made an ineffective reformer and an indifferent artist. ... In the way of action he had to content himself with making a rule to render scrupulous justice to fine strokes of it in others. On the whole he had an incorruptible modesty. With his blooming complexion and his quiet grey eyes he felt the friction of existence more than was suspected; but he asked no allowance on grounds of temper, he assumed that fate had treated him inordinately well and that he had no excuse for taking an ill-natured view of life, and he engaged to believe that all women were fair, all men were brave and the world a delightful place of sojourn until the contrary should be distinctly proved. (pp. 15-16)

The Puritan in him is concerned about the "uses of things that please"; the Unitarian in him tries to strike an optimistic balance: "His was neither an irresponsibly
contemplative nature nor a sturdily practical one"; and the transcendental in him feels "the friction of existence." All these selves are not distinctly at odds with one another, however, because they are not extreme; they mingle in what seems to be a rather bland suspension.

Rowland doesn't really have a unified, independent self; that is, he is a conformist collection of various New England influences. But he does have enough self-awareness to be dissatisfied with the collection, and his story can be seen as an attempt to find himself in his own experience, in his own seeing, feeling, and knowing. His search, then, is for a self-reliant Emersonian self; what James focusses on are the enormous frustrations and unintentional errors and deep suffering the search engenders for Rowland and for others. Rowland expresses his dissatisfaction this way:

I'm tired of myself, my own thoughts, my own affairs, my own eternal company. True happiness, we are told, consists in getting out of one's self; but the point is not only to get out--you must stay out; and to stay out you must have some absorbing errand. . . . I want to care for something or for somebody. And I want to care, don't you see? with a certain intensity; even, if you can believe it, with a certain passion. . . . Do you know I sometimes think that I'm a man of genius half-finished? The genius has been left out, the faculty of expression is wanting; but the need for expression remains, and I spend my days groping for the latch of a closed door. (pp. 7-8)

To get "out of one's self" here means to repudiate the dull, ordinary level of sonsciousness and rise to another
where the self is capable of intensity, passion, and
the genius of expression, to move, in the Emersonian
schema, from the lower world of commodity to the higher
world of love and creativity, the ambition of the idea-
list.

In order to satisfy his need for genius, Rowland
decides to attach himself to one. His delight with
Roderick Hudson's small statue, "Thirst," leads him to
offer to sponsor the young sculptor on a trip to Europe
by paying for work yet to be done, by subscribing to,
in other words, an idea yet to be made real. Rowland's
errand begins with the acceptance of the offer, and
is then dramatically publicized when he must appear
before Roderick's mother, her friend and advisor
Mr. Striker and Mary Garland who is friend and relative
to the Hudson family. Mr. Striker, like Rowland's own
father, expresses the Puritan New England view that the
discipline of work is a good in itself. He scorns
Rowland's defense of art in general; and to Rowland's
particular explanation that observation is an active
occupation, that "everything he [the artist] looks
at teaches him something," Mr. Striker retorts: "That's
a tempting doctrine to any young men with a taste for
sitting by the hour with the page unturned, watching
flies buzz, or the frost melt on the window-pane" (p. 61).
But in spite of Striker's objections, Rowland wins out,
much perhaps as he would have liked to against his own father, had he the genius to defy him.

If Rowland has known only limitation, Roderick seems to recognize none. His announced ambition is to embody "divine forms": "Beauty," "Wisdom," "Power," and "Genius"; to embody the "Forces and Elements and Mysteries of Nature": "Morning," "Night," "Ocean," and "Mountains"; and to embody the spirit of his country: "I mean to make a magnificent image of my Native Land" (p. 118). In Europe Roderick starts out successfully with the impressive Adam and Eve statues. At a dinner party given by Rowland to celebrate Roderick's achievement, a scene, viewed through Rowland's consciousness, conveys his enjoyment of Roderick's success. Rowland sees Roderick, holding a lamp aloft, discussing his Eve with Singleton the water colorist and Gloriani the sculptor. We are told the "group" appealed to him by its romantic symbolism. Roderick, bearing the lamp and glowing in its radiant circle, seemed the beautiful image of a genius which combined sincerity with power"; Gloriani "represented art with a mixed motive, skill unleavened by faith," and Singleton was "aspiring candour afflicted with feebleness of Wing" (p. 123). This is the high point of Roderick's career and the happiest moment for Rowland who sees his genius as superior to that of his fellow
artists. Just after this scene, Gloriani expresses doubt to Rowland about Roderick's continuing to turn out such fine works, and Rowland returns with: "Oh, he'll keep it up—you see I'm here to make him" (p. 124).

Rowland's optimism proves to be unfounded and Gloriani proves to be right. Roderick falls, and very quickly, Gloriani expects him to fall because his vision is too ambitious, abstract and unrealistic: Gloriani insists that a passion like Roderick's "burns out, [its] inspiration runs to seed" (p. 124). Gloriani may be indirectly confessing his own experience instead of judiciously appraising Roderick's talent, but he is right, for whatever reason, in predicting that Roderick will not keep it up. During his holiday at Baden-Baden, immediately after the dinner given in his honor, Roderick turns to gaming, liquor, and love; and once back in Rome he pursues Christina Light in an escapade that takes him farther and farther from his earlier ideals. Christina Light is his new ideal: "'Immortal powers,' cried Roderick" when he first saw her, "'what a vision! In the name of transcendent perfection who is she?'" He then refers to her as a "revelation" (p. 95), and as "ideal beauty" (p. 96). It seems that as soon as Roderick finds what he thinks is ideal beauty incarnate he loses the impetus to search for that ideal in his own imaginative genius. Christina is thus no help for his art; his next work is disappointing
and he finally confesses to Rowland, "I haven't a blamed idea. I think of subjects, but they remain more idiotic names. They're mere words--they're not images" (p. 148).

In his disillusionment over Roderick's failing powers, Rowland has nothing to offer but advice about had work; it is as if the old Puritan view emerges at this moment of crisis and in all its unsympathetic condemnation sees Roderick's failure as a moral issue. Roderick tries to explain what his nature is like and why it is no simple matter of will to just work your genius:

The will, it seems to me, is an abyss of abysses and a riddle of riddles. Who can answer for his properly having one? . . . There are all kinds of uncanny underhand currents moving to and fro between one's will and the rest of one--one's imagination in particular. People talk as if the two things were essentially distinct; on different sides of one's organism, like the heart and liver. Mine, I know—that is my imagination and my conscience—are much nearer together. It all depends on circumstances. I believe there's a certain group of circumstances possible for every man, in which his power to choose is destined to snap like a dry twig. (p. 141).

Rowland retorts that "The power to choose is destiny" (p. 141); but Roderick counters with his confession that he is "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" (p. 142). Thus he opposes logic with experience, and in doing so aligns himself with the later Emerson of
"Experience" and "Fate." Just as Roderick argues that "There's a certain group of circumstances possible for every man, in which his power to choose is destined to snap like a dry twig," so does Emerson argue that the "Lords of Life," physical circumstances, limit the scope of man's exercise of will over the material world and his own temperament.

Rowland is not convinced, however, of the power of passion over will and continues to believe that a decision to return to hard work is within Roderick's power. Rowland's belief is motivated in part by his own love for Mary Garland. He is incensed that Roderick should be disloyal while he, Rowland, chivalrously keeps his affection for Mary a secret from all because it developed after Roderick and Mary's pledge to each other.

Rowland, who early learned that right and wrong are logically separate categories, continues almost to the end in applying his rational ethic to Roderick's behavior. But just before Roderick's death, Rowland begins to doubt himself. In a letter that he starts to his cousin Cecilia in which he attempts to come to terms with himself, he writes "I believe there's such a thing as being too reasonable. Yet when once the habit's formed what is one to do?" (p. 514-515). Roderick's death answers the question and is the climax for Rowland, for in his vigil he is no longer "too reasonable."
Roderick's death occurs in Switzerland where he, his mother and his fiancee Mary Garland, both lately arrived from the States, and Rowland, have gone to help Roderick recover his failing genius and falling spirits. Roderick's body is found by Rowland and Singleton at the foot of a cliff from which he either fell or leaped during a storm. While Singleton goes for help to transport the body, Rowland watches alone. What is then described amounts to a conversion scene in which Rowland achieves his earlier wish of "getting out" of himself, of feeling intensity and passion, of caring "for something for somebody": "He watched in the flesh for seven long hours, but the vigil of the spirit was a thing that would never cease. The most rational of men wandered and lost himself in the dark places of passion, lashed his 'conduct' with a scourge of steel, accusing it of cruelty and injustice; He would have lain down there in Roderick's place to unsay the words that had yesterday driven him forth on his ramble of despair" (p. 525).

Roderick's death occasions the birth of Rowland's new self. Rowland sees himself as one of the causes of Roderick's death: he pressed Roderick with his aesthetic expectations and finally his moral judgment, condemning him for what he called "remorseless" egotism (p. 508). He sees that Mary Garland's generous loyalty to Roderick, even giving him the last of her money without question,
makes his own condemnation of Roderick a "cruelty and injustice." But most of all he sees that what Roderick said about circumstances is true, that men are subject to forces beyond their control: "The great gaunt wicked cliff above them became almost company to him, as the chance-saved photograph of a murderer might become for a shipwrecked castaway alink with civilization: it had but done its part too, and what were they both, in their stupidity, he and it, but dumb agents of fate?" (p. 525) Rowland's errand is over; he now does "care" with "intensity" and "passion"; he is no longer wrapped up in his "own thoughts" and his "own affairs"; Roderick's story has become a part of Rowland's life; the "vigil of the spirit" (p. 525) continues and Mary Garland's cry on seeing Roderick's body "still lives in Rowland's ears" (p. 526). We are told, finally, that Rowland is the bearer and the teller of the tale: "He talks to her cousin Cecilia of Roderick, of whose history she never wearies."

By going back to Northampton and talking about Roderick to Cecilia and seeing Mary, albeit infrequently, Rowland continues to live with the pain of his past unsuccessful association with Roderick and the frustration of his continuing unannounced love for Mary Garland. Though there seems to be little that is "happy" about his life, he has learned to know deep passion and to bear
bitter frustration. Life has become for him a memory and a feeling, a subjective reality quite different from that objective expression of genius he sought at first. Roderick is, at the end, more of a seer than a seeker, and this is what marks his idealism.
In some ways *The American* seems less Emersonian than *Roderick Hudson*. Christopher Newman's past is hardly of the stuff of either Roderick's or Rowland's; he has been a businessman, not an artist, nor a critic, nor a connoisseur of the arts, nor one of its patrons. If anything he sees art much as does the brash, superficial Leavenworth in *Roderick Hudson*. Leavenworth's sense of art is limited to the spectacular, the easily impressive in size or subject. Just as Leavenworth orders an embodiment of "Intellectual Refinement" as one of a number of pretentiously decorative pieces, so does Newman casually order a dozen copies of the greatest masterpieces in the Louvre, all to be done by the untalented Noemie. What makes Newman Emersonian is that, unlike Leavenworth, he renounces his past commercial life and embarks on a quest for something as intangible as the object of Rowland Mallet's quest. Two great renunciations form two great conversion points in Newman's life and, by extension, in the novel; thus the novel's structure is informed by a deep Emersonian quality.
There is an Emersonian quality, too, in Christopher Newman, like Rowland Mallet, being the center of consciousness who gives events their significance. Newman becomes a creative consciousness, as does Rowland, to the extent that he can convert the need for physical experience and phycical possession into a profoundly valuable adventure of consciousness.

Newman, like Rowland, is an epitome of the rational man, the man of intellect, in Emerson's language, who operates efficiently and successfully with his mind, but who does not feel great passion nor express creative vision. His new acquaintance in Europe rebukes him for his rational control: "You take things too cooly. It quite exasperates me." But Newman insists that he does feel, and in his response explains that he is on a quest: "I feel something under my ribs here," he added in a moment, "that I can't explain— a sort of strong yearning, a desire to stretch out and haul in" (p. 45). "To stretch out and haul in" is the business man's image for what Rowland calls "getting out of one's self" and having an "absorbing errand." Newman is less articulate than Rowland in describing what he wants to "haul in," but his very vagueness about the object of his quest endows it with a mystery that seems

---

2The American (New York: Scribner's, 1907), p. 44. Subsequent references are included in the text.
of a piece with his telling if what started him on the quest.

Newman relates to Mr. Tristram, a former acquaintance, what it is that brings him to Europe. He talks first about his past, how as a youngster he had been poor and had "adventured almost to madness and escaped almost by miracles" (p. 26). Leading up to the incident that brought him to Europe, he explains that he was on his way to beat a competitor out of a half million dollars, someone who had previously bettered him in a financial deal that was "one of the clever meannesses the feeling of which works in a man like strong poison" (p. 30). He continues:

"I jumped into a hack and went about my business, and it was in this hack--this immortal historical hack--that the curious thing I speak of occurred. It was a hack like any other, only a trifle dirtier, with a greasy line along the top of the drab cushions, as if it had been used for a great many Irish funerals. It's possible I took a nap...at all events I woke up suddenly, from a sleep or from a kind of reverie, with the most extraordinary change of heart--a mortal disgust for the whole proposition. It came upon me like that!--and he snapped his fingers--"as abruptly as an old wound that begins to ache. I couldn't tell the meaning of it; I only realised I had turned against myself worse than against the man I wanted to smash. The idea of not coming by that half-million in that particular way, of letting it utterly slide and scuttle and never hearing of it again, became the one thing to save my life from a sudden danger. And all this took place quite independently of my will, and I sat watching it as if it were a play at the theatre. I could feel it going on inside me. You may depend upon it that there are things going on inside us that we understand mighty little about." (pp. 30-31)
This is the first half of the incident, focusing on what New man decides not to do; Newman then goes on to the second half, describing what he decides to do:

We pulled up in front of the place I was going to in Wall Street, but I sat still in the carriage, and at last the driver scrambled down off his seat to see whether his hack hadn't turned into a hearse. I couldn't have got out any more than if I had been a corpse. What was the matter with me? Momentary brain-collapse, you'll say. What I wanted to get out of was Wall Street. I told the man to drive to the Brooklyn ferry and cross over. When we were over I told him to drive me out into the country. As I had told him originally to drive for dear life down town, I suppose he thought I had lost my wits on the way. Perhaps I had, but in that case my sacrifice of them has become, in another way, my biggest stroke of business. I spent the morning looking at the first green leaves on Long Island. I had been so hot that it seemed as if I should never be cool enough again. . . . I seemed to feel a new man under my old skin; at all events I longed for a new world. (pp. 31-32)

The rebirth image is unmistakeably present. The hack looks "as if it had been used for a great many Irish funerals"; Newman falls into a "nap," or "sleep," or "reverie"—he even refers to himself as a "corpse"; he then acts out the archetypal journey following death by crossing a river to a different country where he engages in an act alien to the world he has left behind—"looking at the first green leaves"; and of course he finally tells us, punning on his name, that he is a "a new man." Additionally, the imagery suggests the quality of this rebirth. The hack is itself a commercial vehicle, tired, worn out, commonplace, vulgar,
and dirty. It goes down town to Wall Street carrying a man who wanted to wreak on another what that other had wreaked on him: "one of the clever meanesses the feeling of which works in a man like a strong poison." The intended act is tantamount to murder and itself signals the success of the other man's "poison." The rebirth is a rejection, then, of an existence marked by vindictive violence and immurement of the self; it is a transcendence of the past and a turning toward a new end, affirmative, creative, and expansive.

In Emersonian terms the turning is away from the secondary desires that have property and material security as their ends, and toward the primary desire that has an original relation to the universe as its end. This turning Emerson describes in a number of essays; especially relevant here are Nature and "Self-Reliance." In the former he discusses the primary and secondary desires, and in the latter he discusses the need to turn from conformity to non-conformity. In fact, in this latter essay Emerson cites an exemplum in which an awakening not dissimilar to Newman's takes place:

That popular fable of the sot who was picked up dead-drunk in the street, carried to the duke's house, washed and dressed and laid in the duke's bed, and, on his waking, treated with all obsequious ceremony like the duke, and assured that he had been insane, owes its popularity to the fact that it symbolizes so
well the state of man, who is in the world a sort of sot, but now and then wakes up, exercises his reason and finds himself a true prince.³

Newman, of course, does not awaken fully to his new identity; in this sense he is more like Rowland; he awakens enough to start on the quest.

The object of Rowland's quest is the poet, the sculptor-genius whose expression completes Rowland's being; the object of Newman's quest, at first inchoate, becomes coherent during a discussion he has with Mrs. Tristram. He tells her: "I want to set about it rather grandly. I not only want to make no mistakes, but I want to make a great hit. I want to take my pick. My wife must be a pure pearl" (p. 48). For Newman, then, the quest is for a wife, an extraordinary woman who would be worthy of one reborn, a rare and priceless person, "a pure pearl." Claire de Cintre appears as the embodiment of Newman's ideal, and true to the nature of the ideal, she is unattainable. Newman's response to this frustration forms the second great turning point in his life, the point at which he realizes the ideal in the very moment that he acknowledges its loss.

The crisis occurs when Claire's older brother and mother, to whom she has sworn obedience, withdraw their previously granted permission for the marriage to take

³Works, II, 62.
place. Newman is furious and, on the point of gaining information that would incriminate the older de Bellegarades in a family scandal, he threatens: "I want to bring them down--down, down, down! I want to turn the table on them--I want to mortify them as they mortified me. They took me up into a high place and made me stand there for all the world to see me, and then they stole behind me and pushed me into this bottomless pit where I lie howling and gnashing my teeth! I made a fool of myself before all their friends; but I shall make something worse of them" (p. 442). Again, as in the Wall Street episode, Newman feels justified in seeking vengeance; and again, as in that earlier episode, the imagery suggests life and death and the enormous attendant values at stake: note the use of "mortify" and the apocalyptic metaphor that follows.

Newman does not take immediate vengeance; he vacillates and returns to the United States where in a geographic expression of his indecision he crosses and re-crosses the continent several times, unable to settle, unable to take up his old life again. Finally, upon hearing that Claire has taken her last vows, he returns to Paris and walks to the Carmelite house where Claire now is. The scene depicting this walk also depicts the second great turning point in Newman's life:
He walked through the city, beside the Seine and over it, and took the direction of the Rue d'Enfer. The day had the softness of early spring, but the weather was grey and humid. He found himself in a part of Paris that he little knew—a region of convents and prisons, of streets bordered by long dead walls and traversed by few frequenters. At the intersection of two of these streets stood the house of the Carmelites—a dull, plain edifice with a blank, high-shouldered defence all around. From without he could see its upper windows, its steep roof and its chimneys. But these things revealed no symptoms of human life; the place looked dumb, deaf, inanimate. The pale, dead, discoloured wall stretched beneath it far down the empty side-street—a vista without a human figure. (p. 532).

This is the first half of his walk, a journey into the meaning of his experience, suggested by imagery that recalls his mission to Wall Street. The time is the same, early spring, and again there are walls, and again there is something within those walls that he has wanted. But this time it is not he who rejects; it is he who is rejected by the walls, condemned to his own solitude.

And now begins the second half of this walk:

He walked back through the narrow, winding streets to the edge of the Seine and there he saw, close above him, high and mild and grey, the twin towers of Notre Dame. He crossed one of the bridges and paused in the voided space that makes the great front clear; then he went in beneath the grossly-imaged portals. He wandered some distance up the nave and sat down in the splendid dimness. He sat a long time; he heard far-away bells chiming off into space, at long intervals, the big bronze syllables of the Word. He was very tired, but such a place was a kingdom of rest.
He said no prayers; he had no prayers to say. He had nothing to be thankful for and he had nothing to ask; nothing to ask because now he must take care of himself. But a great church offers a very various hospitality, and he kept his place because while he was there he was out of the world. The most unpleasant thing that had ever happened to him had reached its formal conclusion; he had learnt his lesson— not indeed that he the least understood it— and could put away the book. He leaned his head for a long time on the chair in front of him; when he took it up he felt he was himself again. Somewhere in his soul a tight constriction had loosened. He thought of the Bellegardes; he had almost forgotten them. . . . the bottom suddenly had fallen out of his revenge. . . . He was ashamed of having wanted to hurt them. (pp. 533-534)

As in the earlier Wall Street episode, Newman gives up the idea of vengeance. The imagery in this last half of the walk parallels that of the Brooklyn half of the earlier episode, and in some sense is a fulfillment of that earlier promise. Just as Newman moved from Wall Street across the river to nature on Long Island after he decided to give up his plan for vengeance, so here he moves from the walled convent to a church across the Seine after his realization that Claire is no longer within his reach. The church here is a "great Church," not the particular woman of his love, but the great woman of the centuries and of the spirit, "Our Lady," "Notre Dame," the spiritual complement of man, man's spiritualized love, the object of Newman's quest. Newman is now beyond the need for money, love, vengeance;
he is "out of the World" when "in his soul a tight constriction loosened."

The turning points in Newman's life constitute an Emersonian conversion in that they mark Newman's move from the level of commodity to that of the converting consciousness--from seeking to seeing. Newman first seeks vengeance through a financial victory over a business rival. He is dissuaded from his pursuit by a spontaneous awakening to a need for other satisfactions, which need culminates in his love for Claire de Cintré. The desire for vengeance emerges again when the hopes for fulfillment of that love are wrecked, but Newman once more renounces the need for vengeance. We are not told explicitly what releases Newman from his suffering, but the imagery of moving from the Rue d'Enfer to Notre Dame Cathedral where the "tight constriction" in his soul "loosened" suggests a parallel movement within him upward from the depths of pain to a point of liberation, a point at which Newman seems to understand something, to see something that frees him from his relationship to the Bellegardes, and by extension, from the need for a physically consummated love.

The American is more Emersonian than Roderick Hudson. An important distinction between Roderick Hudson and The American is in the greater emphasis on and treatment of a single person in the latter novel. Newman's suffering
and struggles are given close attention. One does not feel divided as he does in *Roderick Hudson* between the fortunes of the title character and those of Rowland Mallet. The theme of *The American* lends itself more easily to an Emersonian view because the main character's actions are seen more in terms of a personal vision than in terms of a professional ambition as with Rowland Mallet. The imagery of the great scenes is more successfully Emersonian in *The American* (e.g., the Wall Street episode and the walk from the Rue d'Enfer to Notre Dame) than in *Roderick Hudson*; that is, the imagery details the gradual movements of Newman's consciousness as he sinks to the depths and rises to the heights and is more suggestive of the idealist experience than is the more melodramatic imagery (e.g., the death of Roderick) in *Roderick Hudson*. 
The Portrait of a Lady

Isabel Archer in The Portrait of a Lady is an Emersonian idealist. In a comparison early in the novel of Isabel and her sisters, something like an Emersonian schema of the faculties is employed. The narrator tells us, presumably drawing upon the judgment of acquaintances of the sisters, that "Lilian was the practical one, Edith the beauth and Isabel the 'intellectual' superior." The narrator supports this judgment of Isabel when he says of her, apparently speaking here in his own voice: "her imagination was remarkably active. It had been her fortune to possess a finermind than most of the persons among whom her lot was cast" (I, 66). Additionally, the narrator tells us that that imagination formulated the following standards: "She had a theory that ... one should be one of the best, should be conscious of a fine organization ... should move in a realm of light, of natural wisdom, of happy impulse, of inspiration gracefully chronic" (I, 68). The classification of the sisters and the description of Isabel are Emersonian. Lilian,

^Works, I, 38. Subsequent references are included in the text.
as the "practical" one, represents the faculty of sense, of things; her values are drawn from the physical world of matter and the social order of friends. Edith represents the faculty of the imagination; at that level one sees everything symbolically, expresses symbolically, experiences reality in an idealized and intense way.

We are also told by the narrator that Isabel "carried within herself a great fund of life, and her deepest enjoyment was to feel the continuity between the movements of her own soul and the agitations of the world" (I, 45). This is a summary of the Emersonian doctrine of correspondence, to establish relations between self and not-self, here and there, above and below, within and without. And it is the description of the function of the idealist as expressed in "The Transcendentalist": "The idealist... does not deny the presence of this table, this chair, and the walls of this room, but he looks at other end, each being sequel or completion of a spiritual fact which nearly concerns him. This manner of looking at things transfers every object in nature from an independent and anomalous position without there, into the consciousness." 5 These statements share the view that consciousness participates in the creation of meaning, of connections, of ultimate unity, implying at the same time the ultimate validating intelligibility of all experience.

5 Works, I, 330-331.
Isabel, somewhat like Rowland, more like Newman, develops her idealist vision, not, however, as the essay Nature would have it, through her love of beauty, but through her willingness to suffer, as essays like "Experience" and "Fate" would have it. Isabel has what Emerson calls a "double consciousness," a nature that is rooted in the world of things, time, space, and pain along with a nature that is rooted in universals, laws that operate behind appearances. In "The Transcendentalist," he identifies the nature rooted in things as the faculty of soul, or imagination. He explains that the two often seem in opposition, that one has a sublime vision of life one moment and the next is weighted down by the prosaic. In "Fate" Emerson says that one must relate one to the other, somehow transform the particular into universal. This is an act of conversion, a creative act, because one brings about the transformation, the new vision, himself; it is not something that happens to him. In addition, such an act identifies him with the larger vision; he, too, is enlarged. In both "Experience" and "Fate" Emerson allows a great deal to the limits that come from biology, conditioning, the unreliability of the

---

6"Fate," Works, VI, 47.

7Works, I, 353.
senses, and the presence of space and time. These limits, in spite of man's grandest visions, cannot be ignored; they are the source of man's pain and suffering. How one transforms his circumstance, achieves spiritual freedom in the face of physical limitations, is suggested in Emerson's own reaction to the death of his son Waldo, in "Experience." He says: "An un navigable sea washes with silent waves between us and the things we aim at and converse with. Grief too will make us idealists."\(^8\) As significant an event as the death of someone deeply loved does not carry with it some neat summary explanation, no matter how much one may expect it of a world supposedly intelligible; thus Emerson utters the woeful "I grieve that grief can teach me nothing."\(^9\) One is an idealist then in the sense that he is thrown back upon himself, upon his own consciousness to work out his own grief. But in the throes of grief, in its tension, grows the need of the self to assert itself; as creative consciousness the self sees the fact or event as an abstraction, a generalization, a law. Thus the death of Waldo becomes a fact of death in general and Emerson, speculating on the event, is apprised of the Lords of Life as the laws of life common to all. Another way of putting this is to say that Emerson moves

\(^8\) *Works*, III, 48.
from the particular event to a vision of the universal law, and it is this kind of move that Isabel Archer makes in *The Portrait of a Lady*.

Isabel Archer's identity at the beginning of the novel is not as definite as either Rowland's or Newman's at the beginning of their careers. Rowland is a connoisseur with means when he starts his search for genius; Newman is a rich businessman when he starts his search for a "better" life. Isabel, however, is young, immature, at the beginning of things; she has neither fortune nor position nor important acquaintances. Though Caspar Goodwood is somewhere on the fringes of her world, and though she has a reputation with her sisters, Isabel is not characterized in any significant way by these facts.

She is characterized early by her mind, her play of imagination. Isabel's use of space and the objects in it is Emersonian; it is the way her imagination works to connect thing with thought. In *Nature* Emerson says that "the poet conforms things to his thoughts," and in "The Poet" he says that the poet "puts eyes and a tongue into every dumb and inanimate object." Isabel is just such a "poet."

An early scene in the novel serves as an example of Isabel's symbolizing, and also serves to characterize her; the scene is her room in Albany, where she meditates and reads:

---

10 *Works*, I, 52.

Whose office it had been and at what period it had flourished, she never learned; it was enough for her that it contained an echo and a pleasant musty smell and that it was a chamber of disgrace for old pieces of furniture whose infirmities were not always apparent (so that the disgrace seemed unmerited and rendered them victims of injustice) and with which, in the manner of children, she had established relations almost human, certainly dramatic. . . . The place owed much of its mysterious melancholy to the fact that it was properly entered from the second door of the house, the door that had been condemned, and that it was secured by bolts which a particularly slender little girl found it impossible to slide. She knew that this silent, motionless portal opened into the street; if the sidelights had not been filled with green paper she might have looked out upon the little brown stoop and the well-worn brick pavement. But she had no wish to look out, for this was a strange, unseen place on the other side—a place which became to the child's imagination, according to its different moods, a region of delight or of terror. (I, 30).

We see through Isabel's mind that the room for her is alive with the past. It is an office no longer used, though it once "flourished" as if with life; it has an echo and a musty smell, reminders of past existences, palpable, yet ghostly memories haunting the very air. Its proper entrance has been 'condemned,' is bolted, and stands "silent, motionless"; it is now a haven for discarded furniture and the meditative mind of a young girl. The room, then, is also alive in the present with the sensibilities of its occupant. Isabel has established "dramatic" relations with the furniture; she has a comfortable, safe familiarity with the room; inside it there is meaning and knowledge and thought and feeling and care; outside there is the unknown world, a "region of delight or of terror."
The "office" is Isabel's world, one she has helped bring to life through her own creative imagination. It contains her childhood and early maturing years, protected from the outer world of time by bolts and green paper. The intimacy of this inner world is interrupted by the appearance of her Aunt Lydia at the threshold of the room, signalling the end of this world and the beginning of another for Isabel.

After her entry into the world through the agency of her aunt, Isabel wants to experience that world and herself in it, independently and freely. This is her "errand," and it leads her to refuse her first offer of marriage, from Lord Warburton, tendered soon after her arrival at Gardencourt. It is not that Lord Warburton is not attractive to her as a person; it is that she sees him as part of a tradition that is moneyed, mannered, and managed to the extent that she would not have much freedom to establish her own place with her own genius. To her the aristocratic tradition appears to be an insulation from life. Isabel explains to Lord Warburton: "I can't escape unhappiness. . . . In marrying you I shall be trying to." She goes on to say that such a marriage would separate her from life, "from the usual chances and dangers, from what most people know and suffer" (I, 186-187).

In a conversation that follows this, Isabel explains with greater sublety to Ralph Touchett her motives
for rejecting Lord Warburton. She describes her position as a paradox that is central to both Emerson and James: she wants to be in the world, but not of it. She tells Ralph that she does not want to "drain the cup of experience. It's a poisoned drink! I only want to see for myself" (I, 213). Ralph interprets this to mean that Isabel wants to be a passive observer, safe, away from harm: "you want to see, but not to feel," he tells her; but she corrects him, saying: "I don't think that if one's a sentient being one can make the distinction" (I, 213). On the specific question of marriage to Lord Warburton, Ralph agrees with Isabel. He says her career with Warburton would be "prosaic. It would be definitely marked out in advance; it would be wanting in the unexpected. . . . I'm extremely fond of the unexpected" (I, 212). Whatever Isabel means by the "poisoned" cup of experience," she does not mean suffering; and although at times she is ambivalent about fate, saying to Lord Warburton that she can't escape it (I, 186), and then telling Caspar Goodwood that she wishes to choose it for herself (I, 229), she is not ambivalent about not wanting to shut herself off from a whole dimension of human experience. Isabel explains this to Lord Warburton: "I'm not bent on a life of misery . . . I've always been intensely determined to be happy, and I've often believed I should be. I've told people that; you can ask them. But it comes over
me every now and then that I can never be happy in any extraordinary way; not by turning away, by separating myself" (I, 197).

What Isabel is trying to avoid is the "prosaic," something "definitely marked out in advance" as Ralph puts it. She does not want experience "poisoned" by her loss of freedom and independence. This seems to be her reason for rejecting Caspar Goodwood as well as her reason for rejecting Lord Warburton. Caspar does not threaten Isabel's freedom with tradition; he threatens it with his very presence, so powerful a personal force does he seem to her: "He seemed to deprive her of the sense of freedom. There was a disagreeably strong push, a kind of hardness of presence, in his way of rising before her" (I, 162). She also finds him an unimaginative, literal person, suggested by the following, seen through Isabel's mind: "His jaw was too square and set and his figure too straight and stiff: these things suggested a want of easy consonance with the deeper rhythms of life. . . . They [his clothing] all seemed of the same piece; the figure, the stuff, was so drearily usual. . . . He showed his appetites and designs too simply and artlessly" (I, 165). The narrator moderates this portrait to some extent by attesting to Goodwood's intelligence in business and mechanics, and his energetic interest in his work: he even invented an improvement in the cotton-spinning
machine, an improvement which won him wide publicity (I, 163-164). But then the narrator adds strong support to Isabel's fear of Goodwood's personal power; he says: "There were intricate, bristling things he rejoiced in; he liked to organise, to contend, to administer; he could make people work his will, believe in him, march before him and justify him. This was the art, as they said, of managing men" (I, 164). Such a man's genius and freedom are exercised at the expense of the genius and freedom of others, a condition Isabel does not want to sanction.

In Emerson's schema, Isabel, as creative consciousness, would be reluctant to accept the limits she thinks would be imposed upon her by Goodwood or Warburton. Though Warburton is a man of cultured taste and has a fine sense of human relationships, not at all like Goodwood in his brashness, he must share with him a common fate, that of being rejected by Isabel. In rejecting them, Isabel is not unaware of their differences, but she is more concerned about their similarities: both men do the world's work; they deal in business and politics; their lives are directed by the value of things, masses of people, and organizations; they must excel at planning and directing. In spite of the freedom both men promise her, Isabel feels the reality of their professional positions and fears that she could not escape its force. She wants surprise, the unexpected, the
unplanned. Speaking to Henrietta Stackpole about turning down Caspar Goodwood, Isabel sums up the intensity of her desire in an almost hysterical metaphor: "A swift carriage, of a dark night, rattling with four horses over roads that one can't see--that's my idea of happiness" (I, 235).

Although Madame Merle hardly appears to be the type of person congruent with Isabel's "idea of happiness," she does appear as a surprise and even an "adventure" in Isabel's life. Madame Merle as "adventure" is suggested by James in his "Preface" where he describes Isabel coming upon Madame Merle playing the piano in the drawing room while old Mr. Touchett lies elsewhere in the house, dying (I, xx). This is the second scene in the novel in which an advent is coupled with a death. In the first it was Isabel's father who died and her aunt, Mrs. Touchett, who arrived and who took Isabel to a new life; in this scene it is Madame Merle who is the new arrival and she takes Isabel to another life. This is the second turning point in Isabel's story and the first in which Isabel finds a human being the object of deep attraction. She invests Madame Merle with superlative virtues; the following description of Madame Merle is through Isabel's eyes: "It was a face that told of an amplitude of nature and of quick and free motions and, though it had no regular
beauty, was in the highest degree engaging and attaching. Madame Merle was a tall, fair, smooth woman; everything in her person was round and replete, though without those accumulations which suggest heaviness. Her features were thick but in perfect proportion and harmony" (I, 249). There is little precise physical description here; the language, reflecting the imagination of Isabel's transforming what she sees into what she wants to see, tends to metaphor. Madame Merle seems to have those qualities that Isabel admires: Merle is "quick and free," or vital and independent; and her beauty comes not from some standard of features, but from her whole identity, her whole being, her "amplitude of nature," her "perfect proportion and harmony." Madame Merle apparently comes close to embodying the standards of Isabel's ideal self, that "one should be one of the best, should be conscious of a fine organization . . . should move in a realm of light, of natural wisdom, of happy impulse, of inspiration gracefully chronic" (I, 68).

Of course Madame Merle participates in Isabel's idealizing; one could even say that Merle's great goal in life is to create a favorable impression, to project an ideal type. There is irony in Isabel's generous vision being evoked by the narrow artistry of Madame Merle. Some of the adjectives easily admit unfavorable connotations. "Free motions" could be "wanton" or "irresponsible" motions; the "smooth woman" could be the "false woman." And there
is just too much of Madame Merle: she has an "amplitude of nature" that is in the "highest degree engaging"; "everything" is "round and replete"; she is "perfect proportion." By allowing the description to protest too much, the narrator is able to convey both the exaggeration of Isabel's vision and its error. Isabel apparently wants Merle to appear the way she does; Isabel wants to stir her own imagination to the utmost, to meet and be the friend of human perfection incarnate. Isabel is aware, however, of Madame Merle's grave defect, that her perfection is almost all surface, or at least seems so:

She was not natural; . . . her nature had been too much overlaid by custom and her angles too much rubbed away. She had become too flexible, too useful, was too ripe and too final. She was in a word too perfectly the social animal that man and woman are supposed to have been intended to be; and she had rid herself of every remnant of that tonic wildness which we may assume to have belonged even to the most amiable persons in the ages before country-house life was the fashion. Isabel found it difficult to think of her in any detachment or privacy, she existed only in her relations, direct or indirect, with her fellow mortals. (I, 273-274)

But Isabel fails to go all the way and see that in being "too useful" Madame Merle is using others. Instead, Isabel sees Merle's defect as somewhat similar to Lord Warburton's in that she leaves no room for the unexpected; but she is more attractive than Lord Warburton for reasons already mentioned, and for her potential service as a friend and guide to the world.
Ralph Touchett does not, for much of the novel, figure as dramatically in Isabel's social relations as do the characters we have been looking at. In relation to Isabel he is largely the incisively critical, keenly observant cousin. Decidedly unlike Goodwood, he is not overbearing; unlike Warburton, he is not what Isabel calls a "personage," one with public responsibilities; and unlike Madame Merle, he is not a "social animal" but a very private animal with a definite sense of self. In character he and Isabel are kindred spirits. Both are creative consciousnesses: they enjoy the exercise of the imagination; they delight in surprise and insist on independence. Ralph sympathizes with Isabel's reasons for not marrying Lord Warburton; he too finds a serious defect in Merle's "perfection," echoing the spirit of Isabel's thoughts on her friend and sometimes the phrases (I, 361).

But Ralph is not marriageable. Mainly because of his illness, and somewhat because of their close kinship, Ralph does not present himself to Isabel as a suitor. Gilbert Osmond, however, who has none of the drawbacks of Caspar Goodwood or Lord Warburton, seems to have some of the pleasing traits of Ralph: Osmond is neither overbearing (apparently) nor importunate nor rich nor public sick nor a close relation. Madame Merle describes Osmond as a purer, superlative type of Ralph Touchett. In talking about Ralph to Isabel she says that he gains his
identity from his illness, that he is an indolent recluse. She then goes on making much of what Osmond does not have, as if to imply that he makes up in his quality of consciousness what he lacks in his quantity of possessions:

The worst case, I think, is a friend of mine. . . . He's Gilbert Osmond—he lives in Italy; that's all one can say about him or make of him. He's exceedingly clever, a man made to be distinguished; but, as I tell you, you exhaust the description when you say he's Mr. Osmond who lives tout bêtement in Italy. No career, no name, no position, no fortune, no past, no future, no anything. . . . Fortunately he's indolent, so indolent that it amounts to a sort of position. . . . But I'm afraid that's Osmond's "interest" in Pansy and painting/no better than the snuff-boxes/makes some of Ralph's attention/; perhaps not even so good. (I, 281-282)

Of course Gilbert Osmond is not a "worst case," if "worst case" is meant as a virtuous superlative, representing a class to which Ralph belongs. Ralph belongs to that class, as does Isabel, in which a "fine organisation" implies an active, independent, creative consciousness; he is an idealist, which Osmond is not. But Osmond appears to Isabel to be a kindred spirit, a man who lives largely in themmind, a man of imagination and taste and independence. Soon after their first meetings Isabel thinks of him this way:

She had never met a person of so fine a grain. The peculiarity was physical, to begin with, and it extended to impalpabilities. His dense delicate hair, his overdrawn, retouched features, his clear complexion, ripe without being coarse, the very evenness of the growth of his beard, and that light, smooth slenderness of structure which made the movement of a
single one of his fingers produce the effect of an expressive gesture. (I, 376)

The "impalpabilities," the expressiveness of the tiniest movement fulfills the ideal Isabel constructs for herself. As previously noted, she wants to "be one of the best. . . . conscious of a fine organisation," and is attracted to those who seem to have, as Osmond, "a fine organisation."

But Osmond is not a kindred spirit; in fact his sense of self is directly contrary to Isabel's. Isabel's sense of self is indicated in a conversation she has with Madame Merle. Madame Merle says: "There's no such thing as an isolated man or woman; we're each of us made up of some cluster of appurtenances. What shall we call our 'self.' . . . I know a large part of myself is in the clothes I choose to wear. I've a great respect for things!" (I, 287). Isabel, the idealist, locates the self apart from things, apart from what Emerson calls the "not me" in *Nature*. She replies in the spirit of that essay: "Nothing that belongs to me is any measure of me; everything's on the contrary a limit, a barrier, and a perfectly arbitrary one. . . . My clothes may express the dressmaker, but they don't express me. To begin with it's not my own choice that I wear them; they're imposed upon me by society" (I, 288).

Although Osmond's egotism is great, it does not come from some inner, private self; it is all public, all
appearance. He admits to having no genius, no talent, only "indifference. . . . my studied, my wilful renunciation" (I, 381); the renunciation is of the fruits of genius. And, in a boastful declaration to Isabel, Osmond declares: "You say you don't know me, but when you do you'll discover what a worship I have for propriety. . . . I'm not conventional: I'm convention itself" (II, 21). Osmond, then, has no self like that described by Isabel to Madame Merle, and thus cannot be sympathetic to the claims of such a self. Ralph muses upon this lack in Osmond when, after the marriage, he thinks of Isabel as a "representative" of Osmond:

Under the guise of caring only for intrinsic values Osmond lived exclusively for the world. 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 lookout one mistook it for impulse. . . . His solitude, his ennui, his love for his daughter, his good manners, his bad manners, were so many features of a mental image constantly present to him as a model of impertinence and mystification. His ambition was not to please the world, but to please himself by exciting the world's curiosity and then declining to satisfy it. (II, 144-145)

Osmond, then, is the very force of limitation that Isabel has feared from the first. In her musings in Chapter Forty-Two she, as Ralph did earlier, sees Osmond's pose, his dependence on the world's attention, and his need to deprive her of all selfhood. This insight is part of her conversion. She as idealist faces
her ultimate challenge; a living human being who has legitimate claims, moral rights which she has freely given him as his wife, is bent, through the exercise of those rights, on destroying her separate self.

Chapter Forty-Two is the great Emersonian moment in the novel. It is a moment of insight, of vision in which Isabel's imagination actively projects in images the mighty struggles of her spirit, revealing thereby the full reach of her mental power. The chapter opens with an indication that it is Osmond's demands (that she help effect Warburton's marriage to Pansy) that set the stage for Isabel's mental drama. We are told that Osmond's "words had put the situation before her and she was absorbed in looking at it" (II, 186). She gives herself up to this "meditation" until four-o'clock in the morning. At first she traces her experience with Osmond through images of loss, separation, descent and restriction. Toward the end of her meditations she thinks of her relation to Ralph in images of expansion and ascent, the kind of imagery associated with Emersonian Conversion. We are told first that Isabel feels lost, that she "wandered among these ugly possibilities of the Pansy-Warburton marriage until she had completely lost her way; some of them, as she suddenly encountered them, seemed ugly enough. Then she broke out of the labyrinth, rubbing her eyes" (II, 188). Other images Isabel conjures up suggest a
greater horror, like burial alive. The following is a summary image of her whole drama as she sees it:

She had suddenly found the infinite vista of a multiplied life to be a dark, narrow valley with a dead wall at the end. Instead of leading to the high places of happiness, from which the world would seem to lie below one, so that one could look down with a sense of exaltation and advantage, and judge and choose and pity, it led rather downward and earthward, into realms of restriction and depression where the sound of other lives, easier and freer, was heard as from above, and where it served to deepen the feeling of failure. (II, 189)

The relationship of space and consciousness is in Emerson a fundamental concept. In the section on language in *Nature* he discusses it at some length, referring to it as a "radical correspondence between visible things and human thoughts." Man's creation of symbols is an indication of his ability to see this correspondence; in fact the two acts are interrelated. Emerson says that making images is "the blending of experience with the present action of the mind. It is proper creation. It is the working of the Original Cause through the instruments he has already made." In the section on beauty Emerson discusses the world as "*Kócpov*, beauty," and in describing the action of the eye, says: "By the mutual action of its

---


structure and of the laws of light, perspective is produced, which integrates every mass of objects, of what character soever, into a well colored and shaded globe, so that where the particular objects are mean and unaffected, the landscape which they compose is round and symmetrical. And in the essay "Circles," Emerson makes the circle an image of consciousness. In a sense Isabel is, like the Emersonian, performing an act of creative consciousness. And isn't this act the kind that James means when he tells himself: "To live in the world of creation—to get into it and star in it—to frequent it and haunt it—to think intently and fruitfully—to woo combinations and inspirations into being by a depth and continuity of attention and meditation—this is the only thing." Here too is the spatial-mental relationship, "to get into it . . . to think."

Isabel soon reaches a point at which her husband appears as an absolutely opposing force, one which is so different from her. Continuing the spatial imagery, Isabel sees the opposition between Osmond and herself thus: "a gulf had opened between them over which they lurked at each other with eyes that were on either side a declaration of the deception suffered. It was a strange opposition,

15Ibid., I, 15.
16Works, II, 304, et. passim.
of the like of which she had never dreamed—an opposition in which the vital principle of the one was a thing of contempt to the other" (II, 189).

She is at first enthralled by him, then almost enthralled in him. She thought his mind was "so large, so enlightened. . . . Hadn't he assured her that he had no superstitions, no dull limitation, no prejudices that had lost their freshness? Hadn't he all the appearance of a man living in the open air of the world, indifferent to small consideration, caring only for truth and knowledge" (II, 195). She finds, however, that he wants to reduce her to a non-entity, a "pretty appearance" without substance. He objects to her being "her character, the way she felt, the way she judged. . . . [Her] way of looking at life" (II, 195). The struggle between them is a struggle for survival of her own being. Isabel envisions his objection this way: He had complained that "her sentiments were worthy of a radical newspaper or a Unitarian preacher. The real offence as she ultimately perceived, was her having a mind of her own at all. Her mind was to be his—attached to his own like a small garden plot to a deer-park" (II, 200).

But Isabel is not to be buried nor to be captured or commended. In Chapter Forty-Two, her recognition is also her re-emergence. She sees her situation; she sees Osmond and through her power of thought, she develops an understood
how completely she must have done so in fact" (II, 191). She is not vindictive, nor does she respond with hate to what she knows to be Osmond’s hate for her. And she is able to appreciate, both in spite of Osmond’s restrictive ways and because of them, more deeply what Ralph means to her. She thinks that

Ralph was generous and her husband was not. There was something in Ralph’s talk, in his smile, in the very fact of his being in Rome, that made the blast of his circle round which she walked more spacious. He made her feel the good of the world; he made her feel what might have been. . . . Gilbert had never been so deep, so just. She had told him then that from her at least he should never know if he was right; and this was what she was taking care of now. It gave her plenty to do; there was passion, exaltation, religion in it. (II, 203-204).

So it is Ralph who takes her to the heights, to spiritual "passion, exaltation," not Osmond. Thus, through her very suffering there is triumph; she is not controlled by Osmond; the images themselves proclaim her emergence from the vaults of Osmond’s keeping to the spacious exaltation of her relationship with Ralph. Just as the room in Albany was a place for meditation, so is this room in Chapter Forty-Two; but with these differences: now the freedom and independence that were so abstract, so untried in her earlier personality, have become realized as acts, creative, conscious decisions not to hate Osmond in return, not to burden Ralph with the knowledge of her own sorrow. When Isabel walks out of the
room in Chapter Forty-Two, but with these differences: now the freedom and independence that were so abstract, so untried in her earlier personality, have become realized as acts, creative, conscious decisions not to hate Osmond in return, not to burden Ralph with the knowledge of her own sorrow. When Isabel walks out of the room in Chapter Forty-Two, she does so alone, about as alone as any human can be; her visions, her choices are truly hers; she is not led by her aunt as she was the first time; nor is she led by Madame Merle as she was after the second great turning point in her life.

Isabel's decision to go to England to visit the dying Ralph constitutes a "break" with Osmond. She anticipates Osmond's refusing permission for the trip, and in that anticipation she thinks that her going would constitute a break, one that would be "for ever," with "no condonement, no compromise, no easy forgetfulness, no formal readjustment" (II, 246-247). That the break is deep and irrevocable is further suggested by Isabel's making Pansy to go with her, an invitation directly contrary to Osmond's orders that Pansy stay in the convent. The break, however, does not necessarily mean that the marriage is ended; it does mean that Isabel will assert her independence and will no longer act in subservience to Osmond.

That Isabel is "reborn" through her meditations and final repudiation of Osmond as "master" is suggested by
a number of incidents toward the end of the novel. Isabel is able to effect the exile of Madame Merle to America (II, 389). During her last visit to Pansy in the convent, she sees the Roman Catholic Church as an oppressive force, an extension of Gilbert Osmond. When Madame Catherine tells Pansy, "We think of you always--you're a precious charge", the narrator explains: "Madame Catherine remarked in the tone of a woman with whom benevolence was a habit and whose conception of duty was the acceptance of every care. It fell with a leaden weight on Isabel's ears; it seemed to represent the surrender of a personality, the authority of the Church" (II, 382). And Isabel is no longer at the end of a "dead wall": "Deep in her soul--deeper than any appetite for renunciation--was the sense that life would be her business for a long time to come" (II, 392).

Upon her arrival in London to see Ralph, Isabel displays an independence and maturity that suggest confidence and deep insight. In a conversation with Mr. Bantling who is among those meeting her, Isabel responds to the news that it is sad at Gardencourt with "I don't believe you ever look awfully sad. You look awfully kind." The narrator characterizes Isabel as having said this "with a breadth that cost her no effort. It seemed to her she should never again feel a superficial embarrassment" (II, 395). Later, talking to Mrs. Touchett, Isabel suddenly sees the limits of her aunt's life; for the first time
she sees what her aunt has lacked; she pities "the poor woman's inexpressiveness, her want of regret, of disappointment. . . . Isabel could perceive, however, how it had come over her dimly that she had failed of something, that she saw herself in the future as an old woman without memories" (II, 406-407). Mrs. Touchett will not have memories because she has not allowed herself to take chances with potentially unpleasant situations. She avoided Isabel's father because of a quarrel; she was not intimate with her own husband; and her dearest friend, Madame Merle, was a woman whose greatest claim to renown was her ability to appear accommodating.

In addition to the incidents mentioned, there are two major scenes in which Isabel's new self is affirmed and tested. The first is the affirmation which occurs as part of her vigil with the dying Ralph. After having watched at his bedside silently for three days, Isabel is rewarded by Ralph's renewed strength. They talk and Ralph tells her: "You won't lose me--you'll keep me. Keep me in your heart; I shall be nearer to you than I've ever been" (II, 413-414). Toward the end of the scene Isabel tells him: "Oh Ralph, I'm very happy now," and the narrator adds that "she cried through her tears" this statement of "happiness" (II, 417). Isabel announced in the beginning of her story that she wanted to be happy and that she wanted to feel, not avoid what would bring unhappiness;
in this scene with Ralph she experiences the paradox of happiness in unhappiness, love in death. What she experiences here is another dimension of her Chapter Forty-Two insight. Through a confrontation with and an understanding of her situation with Osmond she exercises and proclaims her own independence; that is, she converts her limitations into a freedom. In this scene the pain of imminent separation is converted into the joy of unending intimacy. In both cases, however, the conversion is not a negation of limiting conditions; the conditions exist on the physical level: Osmond lives and Ralph dies. But Isabel is able to see the conditions in such a way that they do not control her: she can be Osmond's wife and still be independent; she can be happy loving Ralph, knowing at the same time that she will never be with him in the flesh again.

Thus love between these two human beings is spiritualized, as opposed to the "love" between Osmond and Isabel that becomes for Osmond a thing wholly of this world. The love and beauty that take one out of the physical world and into the world of mind where physical limits of time and separation do not apply, characterizes the relationship between Ralph and Isabel. The way into that mind is through suffering. Emerson in "Experience" argues basically for this subjective nature of experience, the location of the most intense reality within, and the fleeting nature of human love. His argument is in a sense the denial of
a satisfactory human love and an assertion that love must be transformed into some unearthly reality to be truly enjoyed. The man, like Osmond, who lacks the imagination to so transform love, can only oppose that which remains forever beyond his control.

The appearance of Ralph's ghost is a metaphoric way of emphasizing the point I've been making. Isabel sees Ralph's ghost the night of his death, a sign that she has earned through suffering, the "right" to see the ghost, a right, she was earlier told by Ralph, that is not granted to "a young, happy, innocent person" (I, 64). I take the ghost as a symbol of the spiritual intimacy between Ralph and Isabel, an intimacy that transcends the limits of time and space and is born of suffering. The ghost is the connection of physical and spiritual, or the world of sense and the world of consciousness; Ralph has moved from the first to the second, into Isabel's consciousness, because her suffering love creates him there anew. The innocent, of course, have no need for such transformation; the indifferent, like Osmond, do not know of it; and the efficiently anaesthetic, like Mrs. Touchett, don't want it.

The second major scene, in which Isabel's new self is tested, comes at the end of the book with the appearance of Caspar Goodwood. Too much has been made of the Freudian elements in this last scene between Isabel and Caspar. Of course Isabel is afraid of the love that Caspar presses
on her, and part of her fear seems to be sexual; but more inclusively important is Isabel’s physical realization that Caspar’s love demands submission. Such love is not idealizing, as is Ralph’s; it is wild, wanton, escapist. Caspar urges Isabel to leave her husband, to be happy, which he assures her is “easy,” and to see her suffering as licence to do whatever she wants (II, 434). The temptation is great, but the price is submission to Caspar and the repudiation of everything she has won through her suffering, her love for Ralph and her independence. Isabel is at one point moved to surrender:

The world, in truth, had never seemed so large; it seemed to open out, all round her, to take the form of a mighty sea, where she floated in fathomless waters. She had wanted help, and here was help; it had come in a rushing torrent. I know not whether she believed everything he said; but she believed just then that to let him take her in his arms would be the next best thing to her dying. This belief, for a moment, was a kind of rapture, in which she felt herself sink and sink. In the movement she seemed to beat with her feet, in order to catch herself, to feel something to rest on. (II, 435)

But she does “catch herself” and urges Caspar to leave, to which he responds, reversing roles for a moment, "Don't kill me!" (II, 436). Caspar recovers his aggressive posture almost immediately and kisses Isabel:

His kiss was like white lightning, a flash that spread, and spread again, and stayed; and it was extraordinarily as if, while she took it, she felt each thing in his hard manhood that had least pleased her, each aggressive fact of his face, his figure, his presence, justified
and she goes back freer to influence Pansy's future, perhaps even her husband's.

The difference between the idealist and the materialist is that the former emphasizes the symbolic nature of the world; the latter takes the fact or event as an absolute and treats it that way, either giving in to its force or fighting against it. Both Isabel and Ralph are idealists who transform their limitations, through suffering, so that they are not overwhelmed, and so that they reach to an intensity of self they would otherwise not know. Consider what Ralph, for instance, makes of his illness:

"With the prospect of losing them the simple use of his faculties became an exquisite pleasure; it seemed to him the joys of contemplation had never been sounded" (I, 53).

So instead of a business man following in the footsteps of his father, doing the world's work, and instead of an invalid railing against the iniquities of fate, we have the sensitive, sympathetic Ralph who knows the "joys of contemplation." But it is through Isabel's mind that we get a view of Ralph, and therefore of Isabel's understanding, that depicts in some detail the transformation of suffering:

Isabel had grown fond of his ugliness; his awkwardness had become dear to her. They had been sweetened by association; they struck her as the very terms on which it had been given him to be charming. He was so charming that her sense of his being ill had hitherto had a sort of comfort in it; the state of his health had not seemed a limitation, but a kind of intellectual advantage; it absolved
of its intense identity and made one with this act of possession. So had she heard of those wrecked and under water following a train of images before they sink. But when darkness returned she was free... In an extraordinarily short time—for the distance was considerable—she had moved through the darkness (for she saw nothing) and reached the door... Then she put her hand on the latch. She had not known where to turn; but she knew now. There was a very straight path. (II, 436)

Isabel's imagination renders Caspar's actions in dense, violent imagery; and his gestures of love are seen as menacing, murderous; Isabel is almost drowned by them. It is significant that the descent and burial in water imagery is not unlike the descent and burial in earth imagery that Isabel associates with her relationship with Osmond, "but is very unlike the space imagery associated with Ralph." Isabel fears Caspar, as she has feared Osmond, for his "intense identity" that makes her an object of its "possession." To sum up: Isabel's rejection of Caspar is a rejection of all the alternatives he represents, escape from Osmond, Physical passion, and a determined strength that could be comforting or overbearing.

In returning to Rome Isabel reaffirms her independence; she goes back after having defied Osmond's wish that she not go to London, and she goes back with the unwelcome news, for Osmond, that Lord Warburton is to be married shortly. Isabel returns, then, after having countered Osmond on the two most important differences between them;
him from all professional and official emotions and left him the luxury of being exclusively personal. The personality so resulting was delightful; he had remained proof against the staleness of disease; he had had to consent to be deplorably ill, yet had somehow escaped being formally sick. (II, 59-60)

The key line is "he had had to consent to be deplorably ill, yet somehow escaped being formally sick." This not only sums up Ralph; it also sums up Isabel's final position. She consents to her condition, but is not controlled by it.

Isabel chooses not to rail against her fate or to be overwhelmed by it. She develops a view of Osmond and herself that frees her of his domination. In "Fate" Emerson says: "Forever wells up the impulse of choosing and acting in the soul. So far as a man thinks, he is free." Basically Emerson argues for the ultimate identity of what he calls fate (limits) and power (free will), just as he argues in Nature for the ultimate identity of self and not-self. Man is the point at which these apparent opposites meet and are reconciled. Man is both matter and mind, nature and spirit; it is his creative act that transforms one into the other. Additionally, Emerson argues in "Experience": "Life wears to me a visionary face." But I have not found that much was

18 Works, VI, 23.
19 Works, III, 84.
gained by manipulator attempts to realize the world of thought. . . . Patience and patience, we shall win at the last. . . . In the solitude to which every man is always returning, he has a sanity and revelations which in his passage into new worlds he will carry with him."  

Isabel's "errand," her search for adventure and excitement, her desire to be of a "fine organisation," is transformed from "manipulator attempts" to a revelation that comes from a patient acceptance of one's experience, knowing at the same time that experience is the way in which nature communicates to man.

The ending of Portrait has excited a number of critical commentaries. Oscar Cargill says that Isabel has learned to respect "duty" and to realize that "sheer liberty has no meaning; he concludes that "as against the brief enjoyment of Caspar's snatched embraces, a life with, but apart from, Gilbert Osmond appeals more to her ascetic nature than the American kind of mockery of marriage."  

J. I. M. Stewart, in support of this view, sees Isabel "placing public decorum above private impulse."  

Such readings imply a moral didacticism in Isabel's act and

20 Ibid., p. 85.


thereby diminish the creative and individual elements of her character that emerge so forcefully at the end. Dorothea Krook gives more credit to Isabel's own resolve: "Marriage, for her is a complete commitment of one person to another, and as such not to be set aside even from the gravest causes." I think Matthiessen's view is more nearly correct than any mentioned thus far; he sees Isabel as the author of the meaning of duty: "Isabel lays the most scrupulous emphasis upon the sacredness of a promise." Isabel goes back to Osmond not out of a sense of duty learned or convention upheld, but out of what Matthiessen calls her "inner reliance": she acts in obedience to the subjective self, an Emersonian concept I have emphasized in this chapter, not in obedience to an objective form.

L. B. Holland takes this view of Isabel's subjective strength further than Matthiessen. He says:

The Portrait reveals in the institution of marriage the principal functions of a form: the capacity to sustain a fully developed relationship; but also the capacity to precede the full development of a process or experience while yet prefiguring it, and thus to shape the plans and aspirations for personal and social experience, to embody emerging possibilities as well as actual achievements; and the capacity to survive the process of experience.


itself, remaining a skeletal but nonetheless real image of possibilities no longer (or not yet again) actual.25

Holland then explains Isabel's act in relation to marriage as a form: "If her return to life and to her marriage makes the bond more demanding as a form of obligation, it also makes of the woman's role something more dignified than mere formalistic, deferential, and passive assent; it founds marriage in part on the vigorous determination which Isabel has displayed in choosing a husband before and which now takes her back to play an active role in the 'scene' she can anticipate."26 Both Holland and Matthiessen also agree that much of Isabel's strength is in her capacity to suffer. Matthiessen sums it up: "Isabel's link with humanity, if not through sin—unless her willful spirit counts as such—is through her acceptance of suffering."27 I have tried to show that, as Holland says about form, Isabel does not give "passive assent" to suffering; suffering becomes part of her conversion experience in which she finds her own "power" in the midst of her "fate"; or, to put it in the narrator's words: "Suffering, with Isabel, was an active condition; it was not a chill, a stupor, a despair; it was a passion of though, of speculation,

26Ibid., p. 53.
27The Major Phase, p. 184.
of response to every pressure" (II, 189).

The three novels I have been examining in this chapter all focus on the transformation of the seeker to a seer. They are different in that the treatment of the central character from novel to novel is increasingly intimate, and that the treatment of suffering is extended and more carefully worked out. Suffering for Rowland is occasioned by Roderick's failure and death. The novel does not probe Rowland's mind, but presents his emotional reaction to Roderick's death. Newman's suffering is made much more of, for we see him in his tortured travels crossing and recrossing the Atlantic Ocean and the American continent before going back to Europe to accept the loss of Claire and the treachery of the Bellegardes. Suffering pervades Isabel's life for almost half of the novel during which time she tries to come to terms with Madame Merle and Osmond. Isabel's suffering is fully and dramatically rendered through her own reflections. In each novel the seeker begins with great hopes, soon dashed by sharp disappointment. The reversal brings about the suffering. The unusual, the hyperbolic, so characteristic of these novels, heightens the reversal and the suffering. Roderick is unusual as a genius who distinguishes himself by an ambition that is impractical to say the least. Newman is unusual in his spontaneous, mystical experiences and is hyperbolic in his search for an ideal love. The unusual
In *The Portrait of a Lady* is the extreme ambition of Isabel that leads her to turn down what seems to be a British lord's too practical proposal, for a hopefully more ideal human relationship. The ordinary world of these characters is so intense that it is always suggestive of much deeper significance, of cosmic proportions. Thus when Isabel "sees," she sees a ghost; when she is assailed by an alternative in the form of Casper Goodwood, she is almost overwhelmed by imagery of universal magnitude.

These novels, then, are increasingly complex in their treatment of suffering, increasingly subjective, and increasingly hyperbolic, all of which reflect an emphasis on consciousness and tense mental states. Conversion in *The Portrait of a Lady* takes place gradually over an extended period, not in an isolated moment as with Rowland and Newman.

The later novels continue this trend, though not without some deviations, and place more and more emphasis on the seer than on the seeker, as exemplified by Fleda Vetch in *The Spoils of Poynton*. The novels I will examine in the rest of the dissertation evidence this increased emphasis on states of mind as the field of action, where the world takes place.
V. THE SEERS

In these final chapters I want to look at works that are especially marked by the Emersonian idealist as seer. There are many works that could be so examined. The ghostly tales and those involving doppelgangers could be read as attempts to explore in Emersonian fashion the limits of consciousness. I don't pretend in this study, however, to an exhaustive analysis of all of James or even most of James. My strategy has been to follow a chronological order and to determine Emersonian idealism in the early works and the modification and expansion of that idealism in the later works.

I include *The Princess Casamassima* in this chapter because it features the most intense, and hyperbolic internal struggle in James. Hyacinth Robinson is an Emersonian idealist whose later vision forces him to question his early revolutionary errand. *The Spoils of Poynton* does not develop the suffering peculiar to *The Portrait or a Lady*, nor does it allow as deep an intimacy with the mind of its main character as does *The Ambassadors*. Its main achievement for my purposes is its portrayal of a character of great and dynamic vision, Fleda Vetch.
The Ambassadors, also included in this chapter, extends the treatment of internal states so that the portrayal of Lambert Strether is the most consistently subjective of any by James. The theme of suffering is also given prominence, but it comes out of Strether's own life, his past, as much as it does from anything in his present.

Hyacinth Robinson is probably James's most hyperbolic figure; his passion for the extraordinary is immense, even reckless. For him religion is revolution, at least before his conversion. In a tavern where political malcontents gather, Hyacinth, in reply to a general charge that all present are too fearful to risk their lives for a principle, rises to a peak of fury, of hysteria, and is taken over by an unconscious energy: "The room surged round, heaving up and down. ... The next moment he found he had himself sprung up on a chair"; and then we are told: "when it was over he scarcely knew what happened." (I, 360). On the chair Hyacinth declares his readiness to sacrifice himself, and it is immediately after this that he goes to see Hoffendahl. Hyacinth gives his allegiance, absolute and unquestioning, to the violent revolutionary, Hoffendahl, whom he elevates and sanctifies in his imagination as the "heroic Hoffendahl," the "sublime Hoffendahl," (I, 355) the master who receives

1 The Princess Casamassima I, 359. Subsequent references are included in the text.
the initiate in the "holy of holies," the innermost sanctuary" (II, 48), where the oath of obedience, the "consecration" (II, 56) takes place. Hyacinth says of his oath: "It has made this difference, that I've now a far other sense from any I had before of the reality, the solidity, of what's being prepared. I was hanging about outside, on the steps of the temple, among the loafers and the gossips, but now I've been in the innermost sanctuary" (II, 48). He tells the Princess Casamassima that he has had a "vision" (II, 50). The narrator tells us "He had taken a vow of blind obedience, the vow as of the Jesuit fathers to the head of their order" (II, 54); and later the vow is likened to "the great religious rule—to live each hour as if it were to be one's last" (II, 57). Obviously there is more than just a political revolution going on here; Hyacinth's life has taken on an intensity of purpose, coherence, and value it didn't have before; it has become religious.

Opposed to the momentous turbulence of Hyacinth's spirit is the consistently unruffled rationalism of his friend Paul Muniment. When the Princess asks Paul "Is that what you go in for--keen emotion?" he answers, "God forbid! I hope to have as little of any sort as possible" (II, 291). It is Paul whose "reasonableness" is a "chill,"
and whose touch is "strangely cold"; and it is Paul who casually tells Hyacinth "You like a lot of things I don't. You like excitement and emotion and change, you like remarkable sensations—whereas I go in for a holy calm, for sweet repose" (II, 212). But there is something invidious, about Paul's "holy calm," for it is he who takes advantage of Hyacinth's "excitement." It is the "excitement" in the "Sun and Moon" tavern that leads directly to Hyacinth's meeting with Hoffendahl sponsored by Paul.

The difference between Paul and Hyacinth is dramatized in a little scene that occurs after Hyacinth has tried to explain to Paul the new complexity, and ambivalence, that he feels since his visit to Paris and Venice:

There was a strain of heroism in these words /Hyacinth's reaffirmation of his oath/—of heroism of which the sense was not conveyed to Muniment by a vibration in their interlocked arms. Hyacinth didn't make the reflexion that he was infernally literal; he dismissed the sentimental problem /Paul's being unmoved by the prospect of Hyacinth's death/ that had worried him; he condoned, excused, admired—he merged himself, resting happy for the time, in the consciousness that Paul was a grand person, that friendship was a purer feeling than love and that there was an immense deal of affection between them. He didn't even observe at that moment that it was preponderantly on his own side. (II, 219)

In miniature, this is a dramatization of the difference between Isabel's reckless idealism and Osmond's controlled rationalism; or, we shall see in The Wings of the Dove,
Densher's final, subtle love and Kate's constant material ambition. The difference often becomes an opposition as the cool rational mind tries to control the emotive spontaneous spirit. Hyacinth seeks passionately and religiously, to excess and error. He tends to overlook faults and see virtues where there are none. He continues to love the princess after her attentions are attracted, surreptitiously, by his closest friend. That friend, Paul Muniment, continues to be honored by Hyacinth, though Paul returns the honor with indifference, scorn, and betrayal.

The desire for permanent justice and rigid perfection produces the code of unquestioning loyalty and obedience demanded by the revolutionaries, and is, in this demand, anti-human. Such a demand encapsulates human experience, denies the symbolic imagination—the real field of man's action, identity, and freedom. Hyacinth's trip to Europe is part of the converting process and the disciplining of his imagination. As he sees more and more of culture, the museums, cathedrals, cities, he develops a new perspective, one quite at odds with his revolutionary extremism. The following excerpts trace that change:

The great legend of the French Revolution, a sunrise out of a sea of blood, was more real to him here than anywhere else; and, strangely, what was most present was not its turpitude and horror, but its magnificent energy, the spirit of creation that had been in it, not the spirit of destruction. (II, 141)
The monuments and treasures of art, the great palaces and properties, the conquests of learning and taste, the general fabric of civilisation as we know it, based if you will upon all the despotisms, the cruelties, the exclusions, the monopolies and the rapacities of the past, but thanks to which, all the same, the world is less of a "bloody sell" and life more of a lark. (II, 145)

I don't know what it comes from, but during the last three months there has crept over me a deep mistrust of that same grudging attitude—the intolerance of positions and fortunes that are higher and brighter than one's own; a fear, moreover, that I may in the past have been actuated by such motives, and a devout hope that if I'm to pass away while I'm yet young it may not be with that odious stain upon my soul. (II, 146)

It is this education in the senses that stimulates his imagination so that Hyacinth incorporates in his vision "a sunrise out of a sea of blood," the disparities of life, in this case, the disparities of the whole of Western culture. He sees that the disparities are not simply separate facts equally present; he sees there is a dynamism of opposites held together by the human energy in both "the monuments and treasures of art" and "the monopolies and the rapacities of the past."

Hyacinth's vision transforms his commitment from a simplistic revolutionary group to an ambivalent social order. He is effectively released from his original vow to commit murder. He swears to Mr. Vetch that he will "never do any of their work" (II, 391). But the princess continues to refer to him, ominously and correctly, both as a "strange mixture of contradictory impulses" (II, 244), and as "one
of the most civilised of little men" (II, 246). Though he is released from the intention of the original vow, he is not released from the intensity of his imagination. The imagination is where the significant action takes place, then. Hyacinth's consciousness is free, liberated, and his action is his vision. He kills himself as a dramatization of his vision, thereby repudiating his original commitment to revolutionary destruction, and, in this violent way, reaffirming his own ambivalence, and that of a society the revolutionaries see simplistically as an evil entity. Frederick C. Crews sums it up nicely in his explanation that Hyacinth's acceptance of "the destructive grasp" of his "previous imperfect ideals" leads to "awareness of life-as-a-whole . . . rather than an endorsement of one way of living against another."²

In *The Spoils of Poynton* important characters are developed almost as if James had his eye on Emerson's *Nature*, and the main character, Fleda Vetch, is James's most unalloyed portrait of the Emersonian idealist; she is indeed as unambiguous a seer as is to be found in all of James.

An exchange between Fleda and Mrs. Gereth places all four characters dramatically. The conversation occurs immediately after Mrs. Gereth has sent the spoils back to Poynton and both are anxiously wondering about Owen's silence. Speculating about the failure of her plan to get Owen away from Mona, Mrs. Gereth indicts what she calls Felda's "independence," a quality she has heretofore admired so much in the young woman, for the possible failure of her plan. Fleda characterizes Mrs. Gereth with the charge: "You simplify far too much. You always did and you always will. The tangle of life is much more intricate than you've ever, I think, felt it to be. You

---

3 *The Spoils of Poynton* (New York: Scribner's, 1908), p. 223. Subsequent references are included in the text.
slash into it . . . with a great pain of shears; you nip at it as if you were one of the Fates" (p. 224)! Clearly Fleda is the one with the inclusive vision that takes in subtleties and opposing considerations, exemplified by her great sensitivity to the need for Owen to be honorable to Mona, not to initiate a break in the engagement and thereby be an honorable man. Fleda is the Emersonian seer; she is from the beginning of her story like Isabel at the end of hers. And like all the Emersonian idealists we have been examining thus far, her greatest act is not positive or aggressive, but is a posture indicating an enormity of vision, one that is above possession, vengeance, selfishness, and even outrage. Mrs. Gereth operates on a much narrower scale and is, in spite of her genuine great taste for objects d'art, a selfish person who sees mainly in terms of her own interests. Mrs. Gereth is blind in her selfishness and helps bring about, with her precipitate attempts to get Owen and Fleda together, the very end she has tried to avoid, the marriage of Owen and Mona. Her sentivity to art, though, identifies her major faculty as that of feeling; she responds to beauty. She is therefore more complex than Mona, who, both women agree, is the strongest of all in her actively persistent and unwavering desire to win a contest. Mona, then, responds most strongly through the faculty of sense. Her consciousness is centered in the world of
visible things, not in that of invisible values. Finally, Owen is considered by Mrs. Gereth and Fleda to be weak. He seems to have no developed faculties of his own and is really the innocent, led by Mona's heavy hand and instructed by Fleda's subtle feelings for human relations.

James himself, commenting on his characters about ten years later, sees them in terms consonant with the Emersonian schema of man's faculties. Fleda, according to James, "almost demonically both sees and feels, while the others but feel without seeing." But Mona Brigstock, her competitor for the hand of Owen Gereth, is "all will, without the smallest leak of force into taste or tenderness or vision, into any sense of shades or relations or proportions" (xvii). In spite, then, of what he says earlier, here James implies that Mona is also unlike the others in that she has no feeling, is "without . . . taste or tenderness." The characters are also contrasted in relation to freedom: James says that Fleda is "tormented, and by no means always triumphant"; that she "is heroic, ironic, pathetic or whatever, and . . . 'successful,' only through having remained free" (xv). On the other hand the others are "fools" (xv) and Mrs. Gereth, specifically, is "the

4"Preface" to The Spoils of Poynton, p. xv. Subsequent references are included in the text.
very reverse of a free spirit" (xvi). The free spirit is
one who "understands." (xiii) and has "intelligence" and
"appreciation" (xiv); they are, as he says in the "Preface"
to The Princess Casamassima "finely aware and richly
responsible." The fools are "comparatively stupid; the
tangle, the drama, the tragedy and comedy of those who
appreciate consisting so much of their relations with those
who don't (xiv). According to James, and in terms of the
Emersonian schema of the faculties, Mona's consciousness
operates primarily through the senses. Mrs. Gereth's
consciousness operates primarily through the feelings;
Fleda's consciousness operates most importantly through the
faculty of seeing, the imagination. Near the end of the
novel there are two important examples of Fleda's creative
imagination spinning out Emersonian moments. In the first,
Fleda awaits word at her sister's from Owen, fearing but
not knowing that the marriage between Owen and Mona has
taken place and that the spoils have been returned:

Her trouble occupied some quarter of her soul
that had closed its doors for the day and shut
out even her own sense of it. . . . She sat
with her patience in a cold still chamber from
which she could look out in quite another
direction. This was to have achieved an equilibrium
to which she could not have given a name:
indifference, resignation, despair were the
terms of a forgotten tongue. . . . It was the beauty
she was most touched by that, in tons, she had
lost--the beauty that, charged upon big wagons,
had safely crept back to its home. But the loss
was a gain to memory and love. . . . She equally,

5"Preface" to The Princess Casamassima (New York:
Scribner's, 1907), I, viii.
she felt, was of the religion, and like any other of the passionately pious she could worship now even in the desert. . . . Her love had gathered them in. She wanted no catalogue to count them over; the array of them, miles away, was complete; each piece, in its turn, was perfect to her; she could have drawn up a catalogue from memory. Thus again she lived with them. . . . They were nobody’s at all--too proud, unlike base animals and humans, to be reducible to anything so narrow. It was Poynton that was theirs; they had simply recovered their own. The joy of that for them was the source of the strange peace that had descended like a charm. (pp. 234-235)

Fleda achieves an “equilibrium,” a “peace that had descended like a charm,” born, not of defeat—“indifference, resignation, despair”—but of victory: her “loss was a gain to memory and love.” She has converted the physical into the spiritual. Commodity is converted through the imagination into its symbolic reality under the stimulus of its beauty. Art—“They were nobody’s at all--too proud, unlike base animals and humans, to be reducible to anything so narrow”—is created by the imagination and in every moment of appreciation; and in this sense only is art owned or possessed, “unlike base animals and humans.” Fleda alone, then, succeeds in possessing the spoils, whereas everyone else loses them, figuratively because they cannot match Fleda’s imagination and literally because of the fire that destroys them—and Poynton at the end.

Fleda’s imagination is not selfish; she helps Mrs. Gereth, now settled at her place of “defeat”, to appreciate that what she has done with Ricks is in its own way
superior to what she had done with Poynton. Mrs. Gereth, at first resists Fled’s judgment, claiming only to have fished out the "maiden-aunt," the former tenant who bequeathed the house to her. Fleda is persistent and explains that now there is a "voice so gentle, so human, so feminine" in the house, a voice that Mrs. Gereth resurrected: "It's your extraordinary genius; you make things 'compose' in spite of yourself." Fleda continues, insisting that there is a spiritual atmosphere that was missing at Poynton: "It's a kind of fourth dimension. It's a presence, a perfume, a touch. It's a soul, a story, a life. There's ever so much more here than you and I" (p. 249). Mrs. Gereth, still not persuaded, retorts: "Oh if you count ghosts--!" and Fleda triumphantly answers: "Of course I count ghosts, confound you! It seems to me ghosts count double—for what they were and for what they are. Somehow there were no ghosts at Poynton. ... That was the only fault" (p. 250). And Mrs. Gereth at last begins to see, and agree with, Fleda's view.

The images of space and absorption characterize the achievement of Fleda's vision in the way by now evidently typical of the Emesonian idealist in James's fiction. What Newman earlier feels—a strong yearning, a desire to stretch out and haul in, Fleda accomplishes through her converting consciousness; "Her love had gathered them in." She images the accomplishment of Mrs.
Gereth at Ricks as a feat in which space contains time; that is, she ascribes to the very arrangement of the rooms, a force that has summoned up the spirit of its past, the ghost of the old maiden-aunt. Fleda responds through all her faculties to the ghost: She hears it as "voice so gentle"; she smells it as a "perfume"; she feels it as a "touch"; she sees it as a "soul"; she knows it as a "story." Fleda is the purest Emersonian character in all of James's fiction. Her world is almost completely one of appreciations, visions, ghosts, memories; she is even less in the world than Milly Theale; her adventures are almost wholly internal—gossamer drama of consciousness more real than any substantial things are for the others. It is this subjective purity that also gives her her presence, her effect on others. In a comment on this subjectivity of Fleda's Laurence Holland says:

Fleda is in possession of the past in the only way finally it can be known and redeemed; in memory and in art; in the things which are its records and in the life and imagination which can confront and cherish the past while accepting the uncertain future in the willingness to live and shape it. The past is embodied now most enduringly in the triumph which Mrs. Gereth makes of the maiden aunt's things at Ricks and which is revealed in Felda's recognition of it.  

Lambert Strether of *The Ambassadors* is in some way an Emersonian composite of the characters we have looked at. He has a capacity for suffering not inferior to Isabel Archer's; he has a capacity for concentrated intensity not unlike Hyacinth Robinson's; and he has a powerful capacity for seeing, somewhat like Velda Vetch's. The significant difference between the novels just names and *The Ambassadors* is that Lambert Strether is the only main character whose life seems finished, who looks back, and whose final position is that of self-recovery, a recovery of a self long lost through most of his life. It is also a very "secular" novel. The Princess Casamassima is heavy with religious imagery, the heaviest of any novel up to *The Wings of the Dove*. There is no such weight in *The Ambassadors*.

*The Ambassadors* is also different in structure from those novels taken up in Chapter Four of this study. Strether is not at first on a quest to satisfy a vague but insistent spiritual hunger of his own; he is ostensibly an emissary, an ambassador of Mrs. Newsome. Maria Gostrey soon changes the strictness of this relationship and pro-
mises to free Strether of his anxieties if he will only give himself up to her guidance. Strether does give himself up, but not so much to Maria as he does to his own past and the growing realization of the "road not taken" in his life that has made all the unhappy difference for him ever since his first trip to Europe many years ago. This deepening realization does transform his mission into a personal spiritual quest. James, as his own reader, comments in the preface that Stretcher has "missed too much," that he now faces the "terrible question": "Would there yet be time for reparation? The answer to which is that he now at all events sees; so that the business of my tale and the march of my action, not to say the precious moral of everything, is just my demonstration of this process of vision" (I, vi.).

The novel is a record of Strether's "process of vision," and as befits a main character in such a role, he is a man of imagination. Just as in The Portrait of a Lady and The Spoils of Poynton, there is in The Ambassadors a character classification reminiscent of the Emersonian schema. Both Maria Gostrey and Chad Newsome credit Strether with "treasures of imagination"; on the other hand Maria and Strether agree that Chad has no such treasures, that he is like his mother.

7I, 20. Subsequent references are included in the text.
The narrator tells us that Strether's life between the death of his wife and the death of his son ten years later, was a "grey middle desert" and that even after this period of "conscious detachment" "he had never taken any one anywhere." (I, 52). Thus we have Strether depicted as living a reserved, secluded, almost monastic life, in spite of his attachment to Mrs. Newsome. Maria Gostrey is the first woman he takes "anywhere" since the death of his wife. It is with Maria that his awakening to himself and others begins. His awakening is a painful, stretching torture on the rack of his vision as he sees himself in Chad and becomes the ambassador, not of Mrs. Newsome, but of himself, his younger self, as he imagines what he could have been. Europe reminds him of his first visit there on his honeymoon and of his early promises, all unfulfilled. The novel is almost unrelieved in its exposure of Strether's pain, the pain he feels in remembering his dead wife, their dead neglected son, and his own dead self.

Strether is trapped by time. He cannot change what has been, yet his deepening vision of the past continues. Strether is weighted down with the feeling of failure and ennui. We are told that he is very tired (I, 82) and suffering what the narrator calls an "ache" that comes from his early neglect of his son in the selfish indulgence in grief over the death of his wife. He considers himself a failure at business and human relations. "The fact that
he had failed, as he considered, in everything, in each
relation and in a half dozen trades..." (I, 83). And
his names on the Review was not so much an achievement of
identity as it is a mockery. "He was Lambert Strether be-
because he was on the cover, whereas it should have been,
for anything like glory, that he was on the cover because
he was Lambert Strether." (I, 84). But Strether is not
completely collapsed. He still wonders whether, like
John Marcher in "The Beast in the Jungle," he had been kept
by fate, "Kept for something, in that event, that he didn't
pretend, didn't possibly dare as yet to divine; something
that made him hover and wonder and laugh and sigh" (I, 86).
At the Gloriani party Strether reaches a height of seeing,
though it is both a height and a depth brought about by
his stranger's uneasiness in the bright sophisticated world
that Gloriani knows and which includes Chad. Strether thinks
to himself "if, at the worst he had been overturned at all,
he had been overturned into the upper air, the sublimer
element with which he had an affinity and in which he might
be trusted to float" (I, 216). We then move more deeply
into the scene by Strether's admitting he had nothing to
say to anyone because "it was too late" for him (I, 216).
Then Strether confesses to Little Bilham that he is too
old and that that is what he sees—"I see it now. I haven't
done so enough before—and now I'm too old; too old at
any rate for what I see. Oh I do see, at least; and more
than you'd believe or I can express" (I, 217). After
passionatingly exhorting Belham to live, even hedonistically,
he admits, "of course at present I'm a case of reaction
against the mistake; and the voice of reaction should, no
doubt, always be taken with an allowance" (I, 218).
Strether closes this session with confession that he would
like to be like Chad (I, 220). Strether doesn't realize
that Chad's attachment is not to Mme. de Vionnet's daughter,
but to Mme. de Vionnet herself, nor does he realize that
the attachment is not virtuous. He is romanticizing, then,
his admiration for Chad; he thinks Chad to be innocent as
well as polished in European sophistication. But most
important, Strether does not take into account that his
vision exceeds Chad's, as we are to see later. The scene
at Gloriani's depicts Strether moving from a keen recogni-
tion of what he is not, to an assertion of what he hopes
will be a vicarious achievement of what he missed in his
youth. Chad then becomes Strether's choice of surrogate
self, somewhat reminiscent of Rowland finding a surrogate.
in Roderick. Just as Rowland seeks his own fulfillment
through Roderick's genius, so does Strether seek his ful-
fillment through Chad's youth and charm.

After this, Strether has a number of "successes." He
persuades Chad to stay on in Paris; frightens Mrs. Newsome into sending the Pococks as additional ambassadors to find out what is holding up their plan to get Chad back to the States, and he manages to alienate the Pococks when they arrive. Unlike John Marcher, Strether finds in his confrontation with the loss of his past, a growing recovery of the self that had also been lost. Maria Gostrey congratulates him on his successes: "Boni! You are magnificent!" she says. To which he answers: "Well, that's what, just once in all my dull days, I think I shall like to have been!" (II, 45). Strether continues in this way to see more and yet not make the break. He vacillates between the independence of his own vision and the dependence on his vicarious enjoyment of Chad's life. The following passage conveys the strength and the pain of his vision:

He felt, strangely, as sad as if he had come for some wrong, and yet as excited as if he had come for some freedom. But the freedom was what was most in the place and hour; it was the freedom that most brought him round again to the youth of his own that he had long ago missed. He could have explained little enough to-day wither why he had misses it or why, after years and years, he should care that he had; the main truth of the actual appeal of everything was none the less that everything represented the substance of his loss, put it within reach, within touch, made it, to a degree it had never been, an affair of the senses. That was what it became for him at this singular time, the youth he had long ago missed—a queer concrete presence, full of mystery, yet full of reality which he could handle, taste, smell, the deep breathing of
which he could positively hear. It was in the outside air as well as within; it was in the long watch, from the balcony, in the summer night, of the wide late life of Paris, the unceasing soft quick rumble, below, of the lighted carriages" (II, 229-230).

As with Isabel Archer and Fleda Vetch, Strether's imagination operates in terms of spatial imagery, and that imagery here is like Fleda's "fourth dimension" imagery expressive of a spiritual reality (for Strether a memory, for Fleda the "ghost" of the maiden-aunt) that is known as if through the senses. It is this power of the imagination stirred by suffering, as with Isabel, that so specially marks Strether's consciousness— and is of course the mark of the Emersonian idealist for whom the incorporeal can be a sensibly tangible reality. Strether's "loss" becomes an "affair of the senses," something "he could handle." But though this moment seems to suggest that Strether has reached some powerful sense of himself independent of Chad, that he has attained a "freedom that most brought him round again to the youth of his own," he remains in a dependent vicarious relation, as indicated immediately after this balcony scene: "It was in truth essentially by bringing down his personal life to a function all subsidiary to the young man's own [Chad's] that he held together" (II, 231). All of which suggests the intensity of the internal conflict Strether is going through to achieve his self-recovery. James puts it this way in the "Project" for the novel: "He [Strether] can't, at such a time of day,
begin to live—for he feels, besides, with all the rush of the reaction against his past, that he hasn't lived; yet there stirs in him a dumb passion of desire, of rebellion, of God knows what, in respect to his still snatching a little super-sensual hour, a kind of vicarious joy, in that freedom of another which he has found himself." But "vicarious joy" is the "freedom of another" is self-contradictory: one can only enjoy freedom that one knows for oneself. And this is the point to which Strether moves. The climax of Strether's "process of vision" comes at the end of a walk, a walk not unlike Newman's and Herton Densher's when they come to their climactic realizations. Strether walks through the countryside and recalls vividly an old painting by Lambinet he once greatly admired but couldn't afford to buy. The suggestion is that Strether has achieved some accommodation with his past and sees himself both in the painting and in the "real" scene around him. He fuses that great adventurous moment, when he dared to think he could buy the painting, with the present. The spatial imagery is developed to an extraordinary extent here, for we have Strether stepping into his picture, extending the frame, and at the same time, walking through the scene up to a hill where he thinks happily and freely.

---

This is apparently Strether's high point, psychically and spatially. He is ready to take the plunge, make the descent to truth, to discover for himself that his dependence on Chad must be relinquished and that he must stand alone in accepting the painful reality of life, past and present. When he descends the hill he comes to the inn where he admires the French authenticity of what he sees:

The conditions had nowhere so asserted their difference from those of Woollett as they appeared to him to assert it in the little court of the Cheval Blanc while he arranged with his hostess for a comfortable climax. They were few and simple, scant and humble, but they were the thing, as he would have called it, even to a greater degree than Madame de Vionnet's old high salon where the ghost of the Empire walked. "The" thing was the thing that implied the greatest number of other things of the sort he had had to tackle; and it was queer of course, but so it was—the implication here was complete. Not a single one of his observations but somehow fell into a place in it; not a breath of the cooler evening that wasn't somehow a syllable of the text. The text was simply, when condensed, that in these places such things were, and that if it was in them one elected to move about one had to make one's account with what one lighted on. (II, 253-254).

But in that appreciation is a warning that Strether's ability to "make" his "account" with what he lights upon will soon be tested. He shortly realizes that the affair between Mme. de Vionnet and Chad is not innocent, and in that discovery and his subsequent decision to remain sympathetic to Mme. de Vionnet, Strether marks his real achievement, his self-recovery, his real conversion. He is now fully
independent of Woollett culture and consciousness and of Chad's charm. No decision could put him more at odds with Woollett than this which is fully contrary to his original mission as ambassador. He separates himself from Chad by no longer wanting to be like him, by even advising him not to be like himself, the self which would go back to Woollett and abandon Mme. de Vionnet. And he has developed his own sympathies for Mme. de Vionnet out of his own conscience, guided not by Woollett morals or Chad's opportunities, but by his own capacity for seeing and sympathizing with suffering, the suffering that Mme. de Vionnet has gone through and will yet have to face. The Emersonian point of the novel is summed up at the end in the exchange between Maria Gostrey and Strether, in which both acknowledge that what Strether has gained in this "process of vision" is, most importantly, the vision:

"That, you see, is my only logic. Not, out of the whole affair, to have got anything for myself."
She thought. "But with your wonderful impressions you'll have got a great deal."
"A great deal"--he agreed. "But nothing like you. It's you who would make me wrong!"
Honest and fine, she could n't greatly pretend she did n't see it. Still she could pretend just a little. "But why should you be so dreadfully right?"
"That's the way that--if I must go--you yourself would be the first to want me. And I can't do anything else."
So then she had to take it, though still with her defeated protest. "It is n't so much your being 'right'--it's your horrible sharp eye for what makes you so." (II, 325-326)
All three novels in this chapter, especially the last, The Ambassadors, emphasize the increased solitude and from the material world's point of view, the apparent defeat of the main character. Rowland Mallet has at least an audience for his tale and an audience however limited, with Mary Garland; Christopher Newman retains, at least, his position and his money; and Isabel Archer, at least at the end of the novel, still has her marriage. But Hyacinth Robinson kills himself; Fleda Vetch has no husband, no spoils, only the imagination of appreciation and Mrs. Gereth's hospitality; and Lambert Strether, in one way like Fleda in that he has only his impressions, and in another way unlike Fleda in that he becomes the complete solitary, has no confidante, no job, no future. The final position of these characters suggests a theme of increasing renunciation; in the end they renounce the world and what they can get from it; yet they are the strongest characters in their respective works. It is as Emerson claims for his poet, that withdrawal from the outside world is the necessary complement of conversion; that living an "ordinary" life is incompatible with living through one's own vision. The next chapter, on The Wings of the Dove continues this theme with the variation that the "process of vision" here involves a gradually unfolding love relationship that survives by being transformed into a spiritual one.
VI. THE SYMBOL: THE WINGS OF THE DOVE

The Wings of the Dove is the most idealist novel in James: its language is more religious and its symbolism more pronounced than that in the other novels. In this chapter I will trace the growth of Milly Theale to symbolic proportions and the converting effect of that growth on Merton Densher.

One could sum up much of Emerson on symbols by saying that a symbol is a thing, an object, an act or a word, that stimulates the mind to fresh thought. Emerson is often more complex than this, though, especially in his insistence that the symbol puts man in perceptual relationship with the world behind matter, the world of laws and universal beauty. He says this and more in "The Poet" which contains his most extended statements on symbolism and the symbol-maker, the poet. Other attributes of the symbol he discusses are its inexhaustibility and its organizing function: it sets "all things in their right series and progression."¹ The Emerson symbol puts man in

touch with realities that are beyond him physically and yet accessible to his imagination. Nature is as a whole and in its particulars symbolic of these spiritual realities, but man needs the poet (or the poetic imagination) to stimulate his symbolic faculty. The poet is the symbol-maker, a "liberating god." Of course, Emerson's poet is not just one limited to rhymes or language symbols; Emerson says: "We love the poet, the inventor, who in any form, whether in an ode or in an action or in looks and behavior, has yielded us a new thought. He unlocks our chains and admits us to a new scene." The symbol, to draw on what was said in Chapter II, "converts" man from seeing himself as physical object, creature, to seeing himself as subject, creator; and it is the poet who makes the symbol.

James's artist has no less a stature than Emerson's poet. He tells us that the artist must "liberate" his "creative awareness of things" in order to establish "sublime relations." And, as he wrote to H.G. Wells: "It is art that makes life, makes interest, makes importance . . . and I know of no substitute whatever for the force and

3 Ibid., p. 33.
beauty of its process.** Like Emerson's poet, James's artist creates both for himself and for others; thus James urges the critic to read creatively: "To criticise is to appreciate, to appropriate, to take intellectual possession, is to establish in fine a relation with the criticised thing and make it one's own. James's "scene" corresponds to Emerson's symbol, for it is in the scene that the artist is subject, or creator of a coherent experience, the one who "makes life, makes interest, makes importance."?

James describes The Wings of the Dove as a symbolic structure:

If, as I had fondly noted, the little world determined for her Milly was to "bristle"—I delighted in the term!—with meanings, so, by the same token, could I but make my medal hang free, its obverse and its reverse, its face and its back would become optional for the spectator. I somehow wanted them correspondingly embossed, wanted them inscribed and figured with an equal salience; yet it was none the less visibly my "key," as I ahve said, that though my regenerate New Yorker, and what might depend on her, should form my centre, my circumference was every whit as treatable. . . . One began, in the event, with the outer ring, approaching the centre thus by narrowing circumvallations.

---

5The Letters of Henry James, II, 490.
7A Small Bov and Others, pp. 185-186.
8"Preface" to The Wings of the Dove, I, xi. Subsequent references are included in the text.
One side of the medal is Milly's "case," and the other is "the state of others as affected by her" (I, xi). The novel is a world, circular, bristling with "meanings," whose apparent opposites (obverse and reverse) are correspondences; it is a world which is apprehended by the visual sense and which one must penetrate inorder to get to its centre, Milly Theale. The Emersonian echoes are very prominent here: the concept of correspondence is applied to a dramatic setting; the circular structure of the world is evident in the medal's shape and again suggested in "centre" and "circumvallations"; and the whole is an appeal to the eye, the most important of the senses to Emerson. Just as the novel is symbolic in its structure, so is the central character, Milly Theale, conceived as a dramatic symbol. By extension, then, Merton Densher's response to Milly should be part of the reader's response to Milly and to the novel as a whole. That James works for this end in general, not just in Wings, is implied in the following statement, "If Dickens fail to live long, it will be because his figures are particular without being general; because they are individuals without being types; because we do not feel their continuity with the rest of humanity."9 Establishing a common class,

generalizing, identifying a type, all these acts unify relationships in a way that the symbol does; to quote Emerson again, the symbol sets "all things in their right series and progression." That James wants Milly, specifically, to have a symbolic dimension is implied by placing her at the center of the medal, by titling her the "heir of all the ages" in the "Preface," and by having several characters respond to her as a symbol.

The first view of Milly establishes her symbolic dimensions through the eyes of her New England friend, Mrs. Susan Shepherd Stringham. The scene is also a turning point for Milly, for here she makes the decision to go "down" to England, to seek life among people instead of seeing "sights" like a tourist. We start by following an anxious Susan looking for Milly who has been absent for an unusual length of time. Susan's inquires lead her up a steep path on an Alpine slope, at the end of which she finds Milly, alone, in a still, meditative posture. This is the scene:

The whole place, with the descent of the path and as a sequel to a sharp turn that was masked by rocks and shrubs, appeared to fall precipitously and to become a "view" pure and simple, a view of great extent and beauty, but thrown forward and vertiginous. Milly, with the promise of it from just above, had gone straight down to it, not stopping till it was all before her; and here, on what struck her friend as the dizzy edge of it, she was seated at her ease. The path somehow took care of itself and its final business, but the girl's seat was a slab of rock at the end of a short promontory or excrescence
At first Susan fears that Milly is considering suicide; but as she continues to watch her she has what amounts to a prophetic illumination, which in time proves correct, that Milly is deciding to take "full in the face the whole assault of life" (I, 125). The intense significance of what Susan thinks is indicated by the religious terminology; she thinks of Milly's meditation as a "vision" that arouses "awe" in the observer (I, 125). The narrator underwrites the reliability of Susan's observations:

The image that thus remained with the elder lady kept the character of a revelation. During the breathless minutes of her watch she had seen her companion afresh; the latter's type, aspect, marks, history, her state, her beauty, her mystery, all unconsciously betrayed themselves to the Alpine air, and all had been gathered in again to feed Mrs. Stringham's flame. They are things that will more distinctly appear for us, and they are meanwhile briefly represented by the enthusiasm that was stronger on our friend's part than any doubt. (I, 125-126)

The narrator promises that what moves Mrs. Stringham to "enthusiasm," a sense of the god within, "will more distinctly appear for us," the readers, and will come presumably after we have made the journey from the circumference to the center, when we can appreciate how the "image" can become a "revelation."

But though the reader may not share Susan's enthusiasm at this point, the Alpine scene has a great deal to say to
him. Milly is at the meeting place of extremes; she touches and incorporates edges and ends, beginnings and plenitudes. She is at the point where life and death touch: on the "dizzy edge" she is at her "ease"; she is at the point where fullness and nothingness are juxtaposed; the promontory is "excrescence" jutting out into "gulfs of air"; she is at the point where the visible meet and in the solid rock and the empty air; even her seat is an ambiguity, "so placed by good fortune, if not the worst." Milly is at the borders of nature: the edge of the palpable and measurable, space and time, are marked off by the mountain; the edge of spirit is marked off by the "gulfs of air." This imagery and Susan's attitude make of Milly a symbol of narrative and cosmic proportions: Milly is the goddess about to descend to the world, to become the temporal incarnation of the ideal, and she contains within her all the elements of her drama to come; this is the "view of great extent and beauty," realized at a "vertiginous" height, at the "dizzy edge" of life.

Milly's decision to go to London is an acting out of her desire to take, as Susan put it, "full in the face the whole assault of life." In London she seeks people, friends, love, specifically, Merton Densher. Lord Mark takes a special interest in her (Densher is still in America), and on a visit to his estate she is invited to see a portrait
he thinks looks like her. Lord Mark leads her to the portrait: "Their progress meanwhile was not of the straightest; it was an advance without haste, through innumerable natural pauses and soft concussions" (I, 217); and it continues: "The Bronzino was, it appeared, deep within, and the long afternoon light lingered for them on patches of old colour and waylaid them, as they want, in nooks and opening vistas" (I, 219). Standing in front of the portrait, Milly, in response to the solicitude shown her by Lord Mark and the others, rises to a peak of emotion: "Once more things melted together—the beauty and the history and the facility and the splendid midsummer glow: it was a sort of magnificent maximum, the pink dawn of an apotheosis coming so curiously soon" (I, 220). But at this very peak of a happy, glowing experience, Milly, looking at the portrait, is locked into the fact that its subject is "dead, dead, dead" (I, 221). It is as if Milly does see herself in the portrait, and therefore must protest the difference; that while the Bronzino subject is dead, Milly is alive, so alive that she announces to Lord Mark: "I shall never be better than this." But Lord Mark ironically misunderstands, thinking Milly to be comparing herself with the portrait. Milly explains, but this time adds an ominous clause: "I mean that everything this afternoon has been too beautiful, and that perhaps everything will never be so right again" (I, 221).
The symbolic structure of the novel is evoked by the apparent circuitous path that Lord Mark and Milly take to get to the portrait. They move from the circumference as it were, to the center, "deep within." Instead of finding Milly at the center, however, there is an image resembling Milly. This scene corresponds, then, to the scene in the Alps: in that first scene the focus is on Milly's effect on Susan who sees Milly as if she were a goddess; in the second, the focus is on Milly herself, her own feeling of apotheosis that occurs simultaneously with her coming face to face with death. The two scenes set up the polar tensions of the novel. Although each contains elements of life and death, the first is more clearly a beginning, a high remise, a great hope; and the second is more clearly a completion, an end.

The day after the Bronzino portrait episode, Milly goes to see the renowned physician, Sir Luke Street. The relationship between doctor and patient is an unusual one. Milly thinks of Sir Luke as an additional friend, but very special, "the most appointed" (I, 230); so "appointed" that she sees him as a spiritual advisor: "I feel--I can't otherwise describe it--" she declares after her first visit to him, "as if I had been on my knees to the priest. I've confessed and I've been absolved" (I, 234). It is in this role that Sir Luke, during Milly's second visit, renders
his fatal verdict, a verdict transformed, however, from a medical diagnosis to a metaphysical challenge. The visit ends with Sir Luke's admonition an echo of Strether's to Little Bihan: "Is n't to 'live' exactly what I'm trying to persuade you to take the trouble to do?" (I, 247).

After she gets the verdict, Milly walks alone, at random, and muses to herself: "She had been treated—had n't she?—as if it were in her power to live. . . . The beauty of the bloom had gone from the small old sense of safety. . . . But the beauty of the idea of a great adventure, a big dim experiment or struggle in which she might more responsibly than ever before take a hand, had been offered her instead" (I, 248). Just as with Ralph and Isabel in The Portrait of a Lady, Milly faces a situation over which she can exercise little physical control, but she can affect her relation to that situation through the exercise of imagination and will. The point that Emerson makes, earlier applied to Ralph and Isabel, Hyacinth, Fleda, and Strether, certainly seems applicable to Milly: "Forever wills up the impulse of choosing and acting in the soul. So far as a man thinks, he is free." Sir Luke is urging a form of this view on Milly, and she, for her part, is taking it up with understanding and sympathy.

Milly's walk is another scene, an act in which Milly asserts herself "more responsibly than ever before." The

10 "Fate," Works, VI, 23.
symbolic nature of the walk is indicated in the following excerpt which locates Milly at Regent's Park, around which she has ridden with Kate, and which she now "penetrates" for the first time:

She went into it further now; this was the real thing; the real thing was to be quite away from the pompous roads, well within the centre and on the stretches of shabby grass. . . . Here were wanderers anxious and tired like herself; here doubtless were hundreds of others just in the same box. Their box, their great common anxiety, what was it, in this grim breathing-space, but the practical question of life? They could live if they would; that is, like herself, they had been told so. . . . All she thus shared with them made her wish to sit in their company; which she so far did that she looked for a bench that was empty. . . .

The last scrap of superiority had soon enough left her. . . . There was an accepted spell in the sense that nobody in the world knew where she was. It was the first time in her life that this had happened; somebody, everybody appeared to have known before, at every instant of it, where she was; so that she was now suddenly able to put it to herself that that had n't been a life. This present kind of thing therefore might be—which was where precisely her distinguished friend seemed to be wishing her to come out.

(I, 250-251)

On one level Milly has simply done something eccentric, eccentric for her; on another level she has participated in an image that suggests a reorientation of her entire being, a conversion. The circle she penetrates is that of common humanity, those who dramatize in their lives the working circumstance, of limitation, symbolized by the ultimate limitation, death, "their great common anxiety."

In identifying herself with humanity on such a broad and
humble scale, even though the anxiety remains and even though the identifying is totally subjective, Killy achieves a sense of the relationship of the particular to the universal, which achievement is a free act of the creative imagination, as Emerson discusses it in "Experience" and "Fate."

The symbolic structure of the novel is again evoked in this scene. Killy moves from the circumference to the center, but instead of an apotheosis as in the other scenes, instead of rarity and exclusiveness, Killy finds a "common anxiety."

Killy's quest for love, for Densher begins with the Alpind scene; it ends, in a very important sense, when she unexpectedly sees him with Kate Croy at the National Gallery. Killy has gone to the Gallery to be alone, to escape the overbearing solicitude of those around her. The narrator then tells us in full detail as if the incident were occurring in slow motion, how Killy, hearing what she takes to be a reference to a painting, looks for the work, but sees only Dutch paintings (the reference is to the "English style"), realizes as she stops at a pair of eyes that the reference must be to a person, the one she is looking at, whom she then recognizes as Merton Densher, standing in the "middle of the place" (292); then Milly becomes aware
of eyes looking at her, eyes that turn out to be those of Kate Croy who is standing some six feet from her. The spatial arrangement of the scene is suggestive of psychic relationships and of the symbolic structure of the novel. Hilly's turn of 180 degrees comes at the end of the novel's first volume when the attention does shift from Hilly to Densher and Kate, and the relationship of the latter two to Hilly. Densher and Kate are on one side of the medal James mentions in the "Preface," and Hilly is alone on her side. This separation and positioning is repeated in the Gallery scene. Their meeting in the Gallery, then, is less of a coming together than it is a separation, an indication that though Hilly has searched for Densher, she has not moved close to him.

Shortly after this meeting, Densher takes a walk alone and unknowingly follows Hilly's path of just a few days ago when she left Sir Luke Strett's office. Like Hilly, he walks at random, finds himself at Regent's Park where, as James teasingly tells us, "he might positively have occupied the same bench" (II, 12). This is an extension of the 180 degree turn, for when Hilly took this path she did so burdened with ultimate questions; but Densher now takes this path worried by not much more than the question of how he and Kate can arrange their clandestine meetings. He even conjectures that Hilly
might be of help to them.

In some ways it is difficult to see how Milly could have the impact she finally does no herton Densher. He is not at all ambitious, and his outer life is very unexciting, even dull and narrow. But he is, like all the main characters we have looked at so far, a subjective person, a person of great imagination. He is not as active as some of his predecessors; he tends to be passive, a much milder Emersonian than the others. The narrator tells us: "he had thought, no doubt, from the day he was born, much more than he had acted; except indeed that he remembered thoughts—a few of them—which at the moment of their coming to him had thrilled him almost like the adventures" (II, 294). He is attracted to Kate because she supplies what is missing in him, the active faculty, the ability to command people, to exercise will over things and events. At one point he puts it to himself broadly thus: "Having so often concluded on the fact of his weakness, as he called it, for life—his strength merely for thought—life, he logically opined, was what he must somehow arrange to annex and possess: (I, 48). But "to annex and possess" is too active; to "possess" life becomes possible only through the prescription "to obey Kate" which the narrator indicates in this statement: "He would do as she liked—his own liking might come off as it would" (I, 75). In the
Emersonian schema Kate operates at the level of the understanding; she has no quarrel with the world and its material values. Densher operates at the level of the imagination; he is vaguely restless and searching for something he knows to be missing in his life. Hilly also operates at the level of the imagination, but she is much more dynamic than Densher; she is in fact Emerson's poet who creatively transforms his life so that his very actions are symbolically stimulating to the imaginative observer.

In spite of what is implied about the difference in his earlier New York manner to Hilly, Densher is apparently convinced by Kate to fall in with the common solicitous manner in London that Hilly deplores. The following passage indicates Hilly's intense disappointment at not finding the original Densher:

However he had begun, he was now acting from a particular desire, determined either by new facts or new fancies, to be like every one else, simplifyingly "kind" to her. He had caught on already as to manner--fallen into line with every one else. . . . She could have dreamed of his not having the view, of his having something or other, if need be quite viewless, of his own; but he might have what he could with least trouble, and the view wouldn't be after all a positive bar to her seeing him. The defect of it in general--if she might so ungraciously criticise--was that by its sweet universality, it made relations rather prosaically a matter of course. It anticipated and superseded the--likewise sweet--operation of real affinities. (I, 300-301)
Milly is not protected by "the" view, as she dubs it; she is annoyed and even cheated by it. Certainly she would rather have the "operation of real affinities," love, than prosaic kindness. Sir Luke's admonition "to live," to which she responds with such sympathy, requires the "real affinities," not the prosaic kindesses.

But Milly fails to establish the "affinities" she wants with Herton, and, as if in response to this failure of love, she becomes less and less a narrative character, and more of a symbol; ironically, as this change takes place, Densher pays more attention to her, finally establishing, in his moment of honesty with her on her death bed, a "real affinity" that becomes also an "ideal affinity." These developments form the subject of the rest of this chapter.

Immediately after Milly settles in Venice, to which she goes in her quest for "life," she appears in this scene, heavy with funerary imagery:

We have positively the image, in the delicate dusk, of the figures [Milly and Kate] so associated and yet so opposed, so mutually watchful: that of the angular pale princess, ostrich-plumed, black-robed, hung about with amulets, reminders, relics, mainly seated, mainly still, and that of the upright restless slow-circling lady of her court who exchanges with her, across the black water streaked with the evening gleams, fitful questions and answers. (II, 139)

Milly is "still," "black-robed," near "black water." She is adorned with "reminders, relics"; she is mysterious
with her magic "amulets," and great with her title, "princess." There is a strong suggestion here of the subject of the Bronzino portrait whom Hilly pronounced "dead, dead, dead." The Bronzino was described as having "squareness"; Hilly is "angular" here. In the painting there are "recorded jewels," "wasted reds"; the subject is "a great personage" who is dead (I, 221) and "pale" (I, 225). Hilly wears "reminders, relics"; she has red hair; she is a "princess" who is also "pale." And again the medal symbolism is invoked. One side of the medal, Hilly's "case," corresponds to the other side, the effect she has on others; here we have Milly and Kate "so associated and yet so opposed, so mutually watchful," as if they were matched on the medal in such a way that the observer could see them in this relationship. The scene is a device, then, suggestive of Hilly's assuming her symbolic role, and of Kate Croy's growing inimical relation to Hilly.

That Hilly is aware of what is happening to her and that she has come to Venice for death rather than for life is indicated in her remarks to Lord Hark, made soon after the scene above:

"Oh the impossible romance—!" The romance for her, yet once more, would be to sit there forever, through all her time, as in a fortress; and the idea became an image of never going down, of remaining aloft in the divine dustless air, where she would hear but the plash of the water against
stone. The great floor on which they moved was at an altitude, and this prompted the rueful fancy. "Ah not to go down--never, never to go down!" she strangely sighed to her friend. (II, 147)

To remain "aloft in the divine dustless air" would be to return to the Alpine height, never to descend, to be denied both life and love, to be once again the solitary figure she was before the Regent's Park walk. But it is not for Milly simply to return to a previous position; she has descended to the world and she has encountered the great "common anxiety." What she finally becomes is developed through her impact on Kerton Densher.

Densher has agreed to but doesn't like the passive pretence of paying special attention to Milly, a role urged upon him not only by Kate, but also by Mrs. Stringham and her London friend, Mrs. Lowder. They all ostensibly want him to be kind to the dying girl. Densher objects to Kate about his role and even tries to persuade Kate to change her plans about putting off their marriage and continuing to deceive Mrs. Lowder about their relationship. He begs Kate: "Will you take me just as I am?" (II, 19), and again "Why not have done with it all and face the music as we are? ... God God, if you'd only take me!" (II, 19).

But Kate wants to go ahead with her plan which includes a plot to get Milly's money. She even agrees to a physical intimacy with Densher in order to give him the
opportunity to exercise his will as a balance against hers; but the agreement only serves to delay the danger that their plan leads them into. That danger is exhibited rather fully during Milly's dinner in Venice honoring Sir Luke Strett, for at this occasion Milly emerges triumphant as a presence that cannot be ignored. Densher's reaction to Milly's first appearance at the dinner is almost religious: "He felt her diffuse in wide warm waves the spell of a general, a beatific mildness.... They were only people.... But Milly, let loose among them in a wonderful white dress, brought them somehow onto a relation with something that made them more finely genial" (II, 213). Densher is beginning to respond in a way that he never has until this point; he feels Milly's power, her "beatific mildness," and the special "relation" she brings about. As Densher responds with "real affinity" to Milly, he is aware of her growing ascendancy over Kate, as the next passage reveals:

Kate was somehow—for Kate—wanting in lustre. As a striking young presence she was practically superseded; of the mildness that Milly diffused she had assimilated all her share; she might fairly have been dressed to-night in the little black frock, superficially indistinguishable, that Milly had laid aside. This represented, he [Densher] perceived, the opposite pole from such an effect as that of her wonderful entrance, under her aunt's eyes—he had never forgotten it—the day of their younger friend's failure at Lancaster Gate. (II, 216)

Kate's entrance at Lancaster Gate was a staged, dramatic
affair, managed by her aunt; it had none of the beatitude or geniality of Milly's entrance.

In sharp contrast to Densher, Kate, more than anything else, is aware of Milly as a possessor and potential dispenser of this world's goods. Kate once called Milly a "dove," warning her at the same time that she might have reason to "loathe" her in the future (I, 282-283). At the Venice gathering, Kate again calls her a dove, but she refers to nothing more spiritual than Milly's wealth, for it is the pearls that capture Kate's attention, the pearls as a symbol of all that Kate lacks in the world of material power. Densher, looking at Milly and then at Kate, sees in Kate's eyes the meaning Milly has for her, and muses to himself:

Milly's royal ornament [the pearls] had—under pressure now not wholly occult—taken on the character of a symbol of differences, differences of which the vision was actually in Kate's face... She unconsciously represented to Kate, and Kate took it in at every pore, that there was nobody with whom she had less in common than a remarkably handsome girl married to a man unable to make her on any such lines as that the least little present. (II, 219)

At the very moment that Densher is awakened to a spiritual sympathy with Milly, Kate is made aware of how materially inferior she is to Milly. Such a contrast in response serves to separate Densher and Kate, and the tension of these opposing psychic energies is increased by Densher's presenting the scene to the reader as an event in his
deepening understanding of Milly, Kate and himself.

In spite of Milly's great spiritual impact on Densher, he continues, at this point, to remain committed to Kate and her plan. During the same Venice dinner we have been looking at, Kate urges Densher to propose marriage to Milly. Such a proposal would be "kind" to the dying girl; it would bring the money that Kate deems necessary for her marriage to Densher; and it would not be unappealing to Densher, Kate thinks, for she shrewdly sees that he is taken with Milly. The following scene puts all this before us, while it also, in its use of space and visual perception, reinforces the idea of Milly as symbol:

"Naturally I can but try. Only, you see, one has to try a little hard to propose to a dying girl."

"She isn't for you as if she's dying." It had determined in Kate the flash of justesse he could perhaps most, on consideration, have admired, since her retort touched the truth. There before him was the fact of how Milly to-night impressed him, and his companion, with her eyes in her own and pursuing his impression to the depths of them, literally now perched on the fact in triumph. She turned her head to where their friend was again in range, and it made him turn his, so that they watched a minute in concert. Milly, from the other side, happened at the moment to notice them, and she sent across toward them in response all the candour of her smile, the lustre of her pearls, the value of her life, the essence of her wealth. It brought them together again with faces made fairly grave by the reality she put into their plan. (II, 229)
"The other side" suggests Milly's separation from the couple through her illness and impending death; it also suggests opposition because of the plot to deceive her; the phrase also evokes the symbol of the medal with Milly on one side communicating to Densher and Kate on the other side, thus transforming separation and opposition into association. In terms of the Emersonian schema, Kate continues to respond to things as things; she sees in Milly's effect on Densher an opportunity for material gain. Densher sees all that Kate does, and with his symbolic imagination, see beyond her to the more significant achievement of Milly's transforming the fact of impending death into a triumph of consciousness that communicates its fullness, its life, to the sensitive observer. One would guess, then, that for Kate Milly is more than anything else in her "smile," her "pearls," her "life," and her "wealth"; whereas for Densher Milly is more in the qualities of these things, as suggested in the underlined words: "the candour of her smile, the lustre of her pearls, the value of her life, the essence of her wealth."

Although Densher is still committed to Kate's plan, the intimacy of consciousness established between Milly and Densher proves stronger than the intimacy between Kate and Densher which is, significantly enough, expressed sexually soon after Milly's Venice dinner. Densher goes
on to break through, in his own consciousness, the "conspiracy of silence" that has governed the behavior of the whole group, except Lord Mark, in their treatment of Milly. He finally confronts what they have all tried to ignore, "the facts of physical suffering, of incurable pain, of the chance [For life] grimly narrowed" (II, 299). By no longer trying to ignore her suffering, by no longer trying to be "kind" to Milly, Densher can be himself, independently and honestly. It is as if he realizes now what Milly felt about him when they met at the Gallery, that his being "like every one else... made relations rather prosaically a matter of course. It anticipated and superseded the--likewise sweet--operation of real affinities" (I, 300-301). By being himself, Densher refuses to challenge Lord Mark's officious and self-serving revelation of Kate and Densher's engagement, even at the sad behest of Mrs. Stringham, whom Densher deeply admires, a behest made on the basis that it was Lord Mark's revelation that caused Milly to turn "her face to the wall" (II, 270).

Densher's act must be seen as a tribute to Milly's appearance at the Venice dinner. Unlike Kate's entrance at the Lancaster Gate dinner, which was staged and managed by Aunt Maud for ulterior reasons, Milly's appearance was
her own creation, an expression of her own soul. Densher's act is also a tribute to his own conversion. He has moved from the early stage of being a passive idealist; his affections were awakened by Milly; he saw Milly's spiritual wealth and Kate's spiritual poverty; he felt the reality of Milly's suffering; he acted out of his own vision, not that of others. There are indications that Milly knows and appreciates Densher's act. Although the last scene between the two is not recorded, there is no evidence of any bitterness; indeed, that Milly wills her money to Densher after all can be seen as a testimony of her faith in him, in his own spiritual maturity. Densher talks of Milly and his last meeting with her to Aunt Waud in such moving language that Aunt Waud and he develop a friendship, a deep relationship marked by sympathy for the suffering Milly and the premature cutting off of her great power and promise. That the last meeting between them is more than just cordial is finally indicated by Densher's musing on his own feelings during his talks with Aunt Waud: "something had happened to him too beautiful and too sacred to describe. He had been, to his recovered sense, forgiven, dedicated, blessed" (II, 343).

That Densher's conversion continues after his last scene with Milly is indicated by the religious terminology. The language in the last quote, above, is evidence of his
"religious" renewal, or as Emerson would have it, his self-recovery; "too sacred to describe" suggests a mystical experience, one that could be profaned by words; to be "forgiven, dedicated, blessed" suggests a relationship with the divine. This language has often been associated with Milly throughout the novel. From the beginning, through Mrs. Stringham's eyes, she is a "vision," perceived with "awe"; later she goes to Sir Luke who becomes for her a "priest" to whom she confesses and by whom she is "absolved"; and then, of course, she is a "beatific" presence at the Venice dinner. I want to suggest that this language, now associated with Densher's experience, indicates that Milly, the center of the other side of the medal, is now a living thought at the center of Densher's consciousness. In this sense Milly has been idealized, recreated out of the elements of memory and the ability to sustain the pressing reality of impalpable thoughts; it is this birth of Milly as thought in Densher's consciousness that constitutes his continuing conversion. What follows are passages offered in support of this reading of Densher and Milly.

The following passage describes Densher's reaction to the news, received on Christmas Eve, of Milly's death:

184
His spirit dealt with them, consequences of Milly's death, in the darkness, as the slow hours passed; his intelligence and his imagination, his soul and his sense, had never on the whole been so intensely engaged. . . . He stared at the buried day and wore out the time. . . . He acted, after his bath and this breakfast, in the sense of that marked element of the rare which he felt to be the sign of his crisis. And that is why, dressed with more state than usual and quite as if for church, he went out into the soft Christmas day. (II, 351-352)

This is, of course, Densher's vigil; like Rowland's vigil for the dead Rodérick, and Newman's for the symbolically dead Claire, and Isabel's vigil at the death-bed of Ralph Touchett, so is Densher's vigil at the death of Milly an absorption of her, a translation of her into all his levels of being, his "intelligence and his imagination, his soul and his sense." Newman's vigil ends at Notre Dame cathedral where he manages to spiritualize Claire, the particular, into the universal "Our Lady." Something very much like this is suggested at the end of Densher's walk, though here the church is nondescript, when he finds himself, without having consciously intended it, at a religious service: "He was, pushing in, on the edge of a splendid service—the flocking crowd told of it—which glittered and resounded, from distant depths, in the blaze of altar-lights and the swell of organ and choir. It did n't match his own day, but it was much less of a discord than some other things actual and possible. The Oratory in short, to make him right,
would do" (II, 361-362). Densher's being so "intensely engaged" with Milly's death, his vigil, the "burial" of the day, all this is climaxed quietly by his stopping at a church to be a peripheral observer of the Christian celebration of the most important birth in that Church's calendar. Although what he sees does not "match his own day," it is not antipathetic to it; and since his day (and the chapter is framed this way as well) opens with death, burial, and darkness, and closes with a living crowd attendant on its ritual honoring birth, a ritual "which glittered . . . in the blaze of altar-lights," there is a strong suggestion that Densher, too, will follow such a course, that out of the pathos of the past comes a spiritual birth.

The following passage, through its imagery, substantiates the idea that a spiritual birth takes place in Densher:

While the days melted, something rare went with them. This something was only a thought, but a thought precisely of such freshness and such delicacy as made the precious, of whatever sort, most subject to the hunger of time. The thought was all his own, and his intimate companion [Kate] was the last person he might have shared it with. . . . He took it out of its sacred corner and its soft wrappings; he undid them one by one, handling them, handling it, as a father, baffled and tender, might handle a maimed child. . . . Then he took to himself at such hours . . . that he should never, never know what had been in Milly's letter. . . . The part of it missed for ever was the turn she would have given her act. This turn had possibilities that, somehow, by wondering about them, his imagination had extraordinarily filled out and refined. It had made of them a revelation the
loss of which was like the sight of a priceless pearl cast before his eyes—his pledge given not to save it—into the fathomless sea, or rather even it was like the sacrifice of something sentient and throbbing, something that for the spiritual ear, might have been audible as a faint far wail. This was the sound he cherished when alone in the stillness of his rooms... till the inevitable sound of life, once more, comparatively coarse and harsh, should smother and deaden it. (II, 395-396)

What is left of Killy and Densher's relationship is not something old, worn, hollow, but something "fresh," "delicate," and "precious," kept in a "sacred corner"; the something is a "thought" made real, given life as a divine child. In other words, what the world cannot give the idealist, or deprives him of, he creates himself.

Thus, the loss of Killy's letter which the passage goes on to, is a deprivation which the imagination meets by creating a "revelation," exemplified in the imagery of the passage itself which moves from a lost pearl to something sacrificed that is alive and remains only as a "faint far wail" for the "spiritual ear." To sum this up, what happens is the real is made ideal in Densher's consciousness, and then the ideal is made real; or, in terms of the plot, Hilly becomes a "thought" after her death, in Densher's consciousness, which thought then takes on such force that only physical metaphors do it justice. Hilly as thought in Densher's mind becomes a
thing, a child that can be handled; Milly's thought is the missing letter becomes a thing, a pearl, and then "something sentient and throbbing" that can be heard, This same kind of imagiac transformation occurs in other novels, especially in The Spoils of Poynton when Fleda describes the maiden-aunt's presence at Rick's; and in The Ambassadors when Strether, musing on Chad's balcony, sees his past as a palpable present.

Densher's mind is vital and vivid in its symbolic vision, as these passages indicate. He has arrived at a stage that Emerson celebrates at the end of his essay, "The Poet":

And this is the reward; that the ideal shall be real to thee, and the impressions of the actual world shall fall like summer rain, copious, but not troublesome to thy invulnerable essence. Thou shalt have the whole land for thy park and manor, the sea for thy bath and navigation, without tax and without envy; the woods and the rivers thou shalt own, and thou shalt possess that wherein others are only tenants and boarders. Thou true land-lord! sea-lord! air-lord! Wherever snow falls or water flows or birds fly, wherever day and night meet in twilight, wherever the blue heaven is hung by clouds or sown with stars, wherever are forms with transparent boundaries, wherever are outlets into celestial space, wherever is danger, and awe, and love,—there is Beauty, plenteous as rain, shed for thee, and though thou shouldst walk the world over, thou shalt not be able to find a condition inopportune or ignoble.\footnote{Works, III, 42.}

The imagery is consonant with the Alpine scene in which Milly is introduced to the reader. Common to both Milly
and Densher is the appellation "lord," and the relating of the particular to the universal, the creation of a relation between the self and something beyond the self. That something beyond is "Beauty" for Emerson in the above quote, and the "thought" of Milly for Densher.

Although Densher does not share his subjective experience with Kate, she knows what has happened to him; to what extent she knows is not made clear, but she seems to know enough to say: "Your change came—as it might well—the day you last saw her; she died for you then that you might understand her. From that hour you did" (II, 403). Of course Kate is right, and though Densher continues to be the honorable man by offering to keep his vow made when she went to him in Venice, she, in her own honest realism, releases him from his vow with the final statement of the book, a statement that also indicates she doubts "life" will "smother and deaden" his relationship to Milly, and further indicates she believes him to be in love with her memory; she parts from him with the final "We shall never be again as we were!" (II, 405).

I should like to respond briefly here to some critics who find fault with the main characters in ways that touch on my arguments. Laurence B. Holland sees Densher's final position as wrong, a waste of what was intended as an act of generosity: "They [Densher and Kate] have made an anguished withdrawal into the sterile isolation of their lives apart while paying desperate tribute to the passion—
their own and Milly's—which they leave behind." But Holland does not see that the money is symbolic of Milly's freeing Densher of condemnation; she affirms her faith in him, but that affirmation, to be fundamentally true, must not encumber in any way. Holland says that the money becomes a responsibility and its refusal a "waste." But such a narrow moral view ignores the necessity of Densher's act being free, its value determined by how he sees it. For Densher to accept the money would be to revert to Kate's scheme and his old character of passivity and dependence. If Densher is out of character by his refusal of the money, as Sallie Sears argues, because his sudden access to piety is accomplished with too much ease, then the reading I have been developing, one that gives emphasis to his thoughtful, sensitive, Emersonian nature, should correct this view. Oscar Cargill sees Milly's bequest intself as suspect, a vengeful act; but to see Milly as less of a dove and as more of a scheming princess or serpent is difficult unless we accept a grave inconsistency in her character and a graver one between the intended

13 Ibid.
15 The Novels of Henry James, p. 361.
portrait of the notebooks and the preface, and the actual one of the novel.

Dorothea Krook's reading, though sympathetic, does not grant enough stature to Densher. She sees Densher as mentally confused but morally clear, and Kate as mentally clear but morally deficient.¹⁶ I think she is fully right about Kate who sees that her association with Densher is at an end but does not fully appreciate why. I think Ms. Krook is only partially right about Densher, that he has undergone a moral transformation; but she faults him for remaining "loyal" to Kate while trying to "repudiate her design." I think Densher's act of loyalty demonstrates the full range of his larger moral capacity, and is indicative of a virtue, not a fault, worthy of Milly's faith in him.

To take a long view in these concluding paragraphs, I should like to relate James to Emerson and to Edwards. The view that human experience can reach a point of such rarified intensity that only symbols suggesting the unseen, the mysterious, what is often meant by the mystical, can do that experience justice, is a view that reaches to high dramatic expression in the fiction of Henry James. It is, however, for our understanding of James, well to remind ourselves of the theological origin of this view in

¹⁶The Ordeal of Consciousness in Henry James, p. 228.
Jonathan Edwards. Milly's effect is, finally, the effect of what Edwards designates as "primary beauty," a beauty that thrills the soul not because of some superficial harmony of parts, but because of what Edwards calls "benevolence to being in general." Milly, in other words is more than a creature of her culture as Kate so fully is; Milly as symbol is more than a dramatic force; her triumph is not in winning and possessing Densher, but in loving him to the point of freeing him from that love to be what he chooses. This is a love that does not depend upon fulfillment in an individual; it is fulfilled in itself; it is a morally generous act because it is freely chosen, because it exists in consciousness not in expectations and regulations, and because it unifies the particular and the universal in a "benevolence to being in general."

This is the love that Emerson extols in his essays, a love that is not limited by persons and legalisms, but is constantly going beyond itself, rooted in man's subjectivity, but reaching out to all nature.

James himself in an essay explains what seems to be his version of "benevolence to being in general"; this passage seems especially appropriate:

I won't say that "the world," as we commonly refer to it, grows more attaching, but will

---

17 The Nature of True Virtue, p. 38
say that the universe increasingly does, and
that this makes us present at the enormous
multiplication of our possible relations with
it; relations still vague, no doubt, as undefined
as they are uplifting, as they are inspiring, to
think of, and on a scale beyond our actual use
or application, yet filling us (through the
"law" in question, the law that consciousness
gives us immensities and imaginabilities wherever
we direct it) with the unlimited vision of
being.18

The language itself idealizes, moves to generalizations
and abstractions, to something immeasurable, vast, and
intensely real, to a "being in general." It is this
experience of the indefinably real that Emerson took
from his sectarian past and ensured the survival of in
American consciousness by placing in a secular context.

18"Is There a Life After Death?" p. 610
INTRODUCTION TO THE EPILOGUE

For my purposes, the demonstration of Emersonian idealism in the works of Henry James, can be seen as reaching its climax with *The Wings of the Dove*. But *The Golden Bowl*, whose leading characters, Maggie and her father, achieve at times a symbolic state equivalent to that of Milly Theale, needs some attention here to indicate how it, the last complete James novel, relates to this study. *The Golden Bowl* may be seen as an attempt to go beyond anything done before, to fit the Emersonian idealist in the real world, to deep him functioning through his visionary capacity while keeping him within the forms of society, those of marriage and social position. Fictionally, I think the attempt becomes unbalanced, for only to the extent that the reader focusses on Maggie's difficulties with the Prince does the story achieve plausibility. Maggie's relationship with her father, however, is puzzling at the least, and Adam himself, seems like too fanciful a creation, so much so that one is tempted to see him as an ironic portrait instead of as a straight character. But seen from an Emersonian point of view, the fictionally puzzling relationship of father and daughter is clarified.
VII. EPILOGUE

The Golden Bowl is about the adventure of gain, the achievement of dreams in a high Emersonian fashion. "High" because although the novel is about specifically rendered characters for the most part, it is difficult not to feel that it has an epic dimension, a prophetic posture, especially suggested in the figure of Adam Verver. Emerson characteristically sees not men, but man, not the Concord personality, but the American personality. It is that broadness of vision that marks The Golden Bowl and makes it a fitting work to crown James's fictional career. The novel is also specifically and especially Emersonian in that the two figures, father and daughter, together make up an Emerson idealist character who operates actively and successfully through all three faculties of the soul: symbolic vision, love, and the senses.

Perhaps Adam's greatest moment is his decision, much like Christopher Newman's in The American, to do something completely other with his life than what he had been doing. Here is his memory of that moment:

His 'Peak in Darien' was the sudden hour that had transformed his life, the hour of perceiving with a mute inward gasp akin to the low moan of apprehensive passion that a world was left him to conquer. . . . It had been a turning of the page of the book of life. He was equal somehow with the great seers, the invokers and the
encouragers of beauty—and he didn't after all perhaps dangle so far below the great producers and creators. . . .

It was during his first visit to Europe after the death of his wife, when his daughter was ten years old, that the light, in his mind, had so broken.

Adam's "rebirth" takes place, just as it does for Rowland Mallet, Christopher Newman, and Isabel Archer, on the occasion of death. Just how seriously James intends this rebirth to be taken by the reader is suggested by some things James says in the preface. The following passage is especially relevant:

The "taste" of the poet is, at bottom, and so far as the poet in him prevails over everything else, his active sense of life: in accordance with which truth to keep one's hand on it is to hold the silver clue to the whole labyrinth of his consciousness. . . . The title we give him is the only title of general application and convenience for those who passionately cultivate the image of life and the art, on the whole so beneficial, of projecting it. The seer and the speaker under the descent of the god is the "poet" whatever his form.

(I, xvii-xviii)

Unlike Strether, Adam, in circumstances similar to Strether's, retains his "active sense of life," going so far as considering himself equal to "the great seers."

In the preface James specifically refers to himself as a seer-poet, though the passage is also generalized to include anyone who fits the description. Maggie's attitude toward him and the moments we have been citing are evidence that Adam is one of those "who passionately

1(New York: Scribner's, 1909), I, 141-142. Subsequent references are included in the text.
cultivate the image of life and the art, on the whole so beneficial, of projecting it." Adam sees, and his plan of "projecting" what he sees is American City.

Adam is not only James's poet, he is also Emerson's. In "The Poet," Emerson talks about the "Father" as the "Knower" and the lover of "truth," the "Son" as the "Sayer" and the lover of "beauty"—the poet. James's "seer" and "speaker" correspond respectively to Emerson's "Knower" and "Sayer." Also, the entire sentence, "The seer and the speaker under the descent of the god is the 'poet,'" parallels Emerson's paraphrase of Milton: "Milton says that the lyric poet may drink wine and live generously, but the epic poet, he who shall sing of the gods and their descent unto men, must drink water out of a wooden bowl." Adam is the epic rather than the lyric poet. His plans for American City and the museum there are national, historical, trans-cultural, recounting the great deeds of the imagination of man. (It is tempting to speculate on the imagery of the bowl, but I don't know that it is necessary or would lead to anything beyond what has already been said.)

2 Works, III, 6-7.

3 Ibid., p. 29.
Adam is both seer and doer. His visions of Maggie are extraordinary moments in his consciousness, moments that indirectly explain his life and what he expects to do at American City. In an early passage, Maggie as abstract force in her father's vision is made explicit:

She had always had odd moments of striking him, daughter of his very own though she was, as a figure thus simplified, 'generalized' in its grace, a figure with which his human connexion was fairly interrupted by some vague analogy of turn and attitude, something shyly mythological and nymph-like. . . . The play of vision was at all events so rooted in him that he could receive impressions of sense even while positively thinking. (I, 187-188)

In a later passage Adam envisions Maggie more explicitly as a dynamic symbol of love and beauty:

The mere fine pulse of passion in it, the suggestion as of a creature consciously floating and shining in a warm summer sea, some element of dazzling sapphire and silver, a creature cradled upon depths, buoyant among dangers, in which fear or folly or sinking otherwise than in play was impossible. . . . The beauty of her condition was keeping him at any rate, as he might feel, in sight of the sea, where, though his personal dips were over, the whole thing could shine at him and the air and the plash and the play become for him too a sensation. (II, 263)

Here Maggie is less herself than a force of nature, a form of cosmic energy, pristine, beauty, but real and present, the leap and play of being. Whatever the twentieth century critic might want to make of the sexual imagery in the passage--it is there--it is at least as important to take into account the cosmic quality of the
imagery. Adam, like Emerson's poet, is seeing beyond things and persons, into the symbol, into the universal heart of existence. Like Strether, and Densher, he idealizes the material; then he transforms the idea into a sensible experience. In a climactic moment he sees Maggie "as if perched up before him on her vertiginous point and in the very glare of his observation, she balanced for thirty seconds, she almost rocked; she might have been for the time, in all her conscious person, the very form of the equilibrium they were, in their different ways, equally trying to save" (II, 268). The image implies that Adam knows about the infidelity (though this is never made explicit in the novel), but more important, perhaps, the image implies that Adam sees Maggie--whatever is going on--as "the form of the equilibrium," as more than herself. If that equilibrium fails to hold, there will be unhappy consequences for all.

Maggie Verver, Adam's daughter, provides most of the passion and much of the action in the novel. She converts her love from something narrow and selfish to something larger than that attached to a person, from her father to her husband to something beyond but including them all, and in doing so purifies her marriage and the lives of others and gives her father the freedom he needs to work on his American City project. Maggie's love becomes something like Densher's; though it centers on objects,
it is abstract, spiritual, inclusive, transcending time and space. When Maggie says to Fanny Assingham that she can "bear" anything, she adds, "For love." Fanny tries to pin down that love to a person, first to Maggie's father, then to her husband; but to each of Fanny's questions Maggie repeats simply, "for love" (II, 216). Maggie's repetition conveys the general nature of her love, and its intensity. Her elevated sense of love reflects her elevated motives and serves to demonstrate the sharp contrast between her and the Prince, a passive, sensual pragmatist. His affair with Charlotte, Adam's wife and an earlier friend to both Maggie and the Prince, stirs Maggie to the confession of love just alluded to; but the affair, for the Prince, stirs not much more than is contained in the following description: "He hadn't struggled nor snatched; he was taking but what had been given him; the pearl dropped itself, with its exquisite quality and rarity, straight into his hand. Here precisely it was, incarnate; its size and its value grew as Mrs. Verver appeared" (I, 358).

That Maggie recognizes levels of love and that she claims the highest is more explicitly indicated in the following passage from a conversation with her father concerning why she is not jealous of the Prince:

*My idea is this, that when you only love
a little you're naturally not jealous—or are*
only jealous also a little, so that it doesn't matter. But when you love in a deeper and intenser way, then you're in the very same proportion jealous; your jealousy has intensity and, no doubt, ferocity. When however you love in the most abysmal and unutterable way of all—why then you're beyond everything, and nothing can pull you down. (II, 262)

In "The Method of Nature" Emerson explains love as a graded experience in much the same way that we find it expressed by Maggie: "What is Love, and why is it the chief good, but because it is an overpowering enthusiasm? . . . He who is in love is wise and is becoming wiser. . . . And what is Genius but finer love, a love impersonal, a love of the flower and perfection of things, and a desire to draw a new picture or copy of the same?" Both Emerson and Maggie conceive of the highest love in transcendental terms: Maggie's love becomes "unutterable" and places the lover "beyond everything"; Emerson's love becomes "impersonal, a love is a variation on the movement from thing to thought discussed several times in this study; it is also another way of describing the converting imagination. The connecting imagination moves from the immediate, the particular, to the cosmic, drawn on by the affective sense; thus one moves from sense to feeling to seeing, incorporating each level in the other, and achieves an intense microcosmic vision of reality.

\[Works, I, 217-218.\]
Maggie's love is beyond disorder, "ferocity": "nothing can pull you down" she says. At this level evil does not exist. When Maggie explains Fanny's view of evil, the reader can infer that Maggie speaks sympathetically. Fanny sees people not as villains, but as "fools" (II, 261)—a view that James himself expounds in his prefaces to The Princess Casamassima and The Spoils of Poynton. But Maggie achieves this view, experiences it; it is not the result of innocence untested. Consider the scene that occurs after the breaking of the bowl, after Maggie has incontestable proof of her husband's infidelity; Maggie walks alone at night outside the house looking in a lighted room in which she observes her husband, her father, Charlotte, and Fanny playing bridge:

She saw at all events why horror itself had almost failed her; the horror that, foreshadowed in advance, would by her thought have made everything that was unaccustomed in her cry out with pain; the horror of finding evil seated all at its ease where she had only dreamed of good; the horror of the thing hideously behind, behind so much trusted, so much pretended, nobleness, cleverness, tenderness. (II, 237)

In fulfillment of Fanny's prophecy, Maggie here takes what she sees as "evil" full in the face (I, 385), and then, just as Fanny does, discovers that all of them have "beautiful intentions," and that they are all "innocent" in their various ways (I, 392). As Fanny uses the word "evil," but finds it located in innocence, so does Maggie
confront what appears to be evil, but which in her understanding is transformed into something natural, even harmless, eventually beneficial. This is indicated when, immediately after musing about the wrong done to her, she refuses to react in "the ways usually open to innocence outraged and generosity betrayed, \[\text{that}\] would have been to give them \[\text{all of them, the "betrayers" and her father}\] up, and that giving them up was, marvelously, not to be thought of" (II, 237).

Maggie's refusal to react in a stereotyped manner affirms her own need and vision, her own love, and from this affirmation she acts creatively and forcefully. As Emerson puts it, hers is the "finer love, a love impersonal, a love of the flower and perfection of things, and a desire to draw a new picture or copy of the same."

Maggie's creative act, her "new picture," is the plan that follows from her decision not "to give them up." The plan works out so that Charlotte remains ignorant of Maggie's knowledge (and the Prince's, and Fanny's) and goes to American City with Adam, thinking mistakenly that Maggie has tried to ruin her marriage to Adam. Of this plan, while it is not much beyond the talking and thinking stage, and is still not wholly visible to Maggie or Fanny, Fanny says, with praise, "There's so much beneath it for you. ... That makes it hang together--it makes you hang together" (II, 217). So again, Fanny points to a significant fact,
that Maggie would fall apart, and their conversation implies that were that to happen, then all would fall apart, explode into fragments of fury—Adam's dream, Charlottesville's and the Prince's poor lives, Maggie's and the Principino love and faith, the Assingham's reputation—were it not for Maggie's plan.

Although Maggie's love is large and inclusive, it does have a particular inspiration—her father. In this sense the book is really about Maggie and her father. "That both inspire each other. We have seen that for Adam, Maggie is a symbol of natural forces and human stability." For Maggie, Adam Verver is the ideal man. She thinks of him as a work of art: "That [his character] placed him in her eyes as no precious work of art probably had ever been a museum, "polished and consecrated," and unfallen; and he communicates these qualities to her: "The sense that he wasn't a failure, and could never be, purged their predicament of every meanness—made it as if they had really emerged, in their transmuted union, to smile almost without pain. . . . She wasn't in that case a failure either—hadn't been, but the contrary; his strength was her strength, her pride was his and they were decent and competent together" (II, 274-275). They exchange a mutual confidence, that they believe in each other more than in anyone else (II, 275). This tribute to Adam takes place after the breaking of the bowl and immediately after his indication to Maggie
that he will go with Charlotte to American City. They have both thus cooperated in making Maggie's plan work. They are regenerated; they are not fallen (not a "failure"), though something has happened to them ("predicament"); they are once again at a high place ("purged" and "transmuted"). They are both new Adams, not as the first, doomed to sin and its inflexible consequences; they are new Adams regenerated through their own creative consciousnesses.

If Adam is the seer, Maggie is the beauty, the force of love that stimulates his vision. Together they risk the danger of destroying one another—through keeping out the world and turning in upon themselves in a sterile (spiritually) incestuous relationship. Separated, their forces play through others. Their triumph, their accomplishment is suggested in one of the last scenes of the novel:

Their eyes moved together from piece to piece, taking in the whole nobleness—quite as if for him to measure the wisdom of old ideas. The two noble persons seated in conversation and at tea fell thus into the splendid effect and the general harmony: Mrs. Verver and the Prince fairly "placed" themselves, however unwittingly, as high expressions of the kind of human furniture required aesthetically by such a scene. . . . There was much indeed in the tone say where his thought stopped? "Le compte y est. You've got some good things." (II, 360

Their moment of triumph is an end—vision, love, and beauty have prevented the destruction of a number of human relationships—but it is also at a beginning, as the continuation of the passage above shows:

Maggie met it afresh—"Ah don't they look well?" Their companions, at the sound of this,
That Charlotte and the Prince think of themselves as
"human furniture" and wax "effigies" in the eyes of Adam
and his daughter is a measure of the enormous gulf that
separates their sensibilities—and what comes of that is
another story.5

5There are a number of objections to The Golden Bowl,
centering mainly on the characters of Adam Verver and
Maggie. Adam is unconvincing and inconsistent, and Maggie
moves from impossible naivete to unconscionable cruelty—
according to the objections. The last scene quoted could
be cited as an example of psychic cruelty on the part
of both father and daughter: they reduce the Prince and
Charlotte to pieces of "human furniture," bereft of all
human dignity. I think there is enough ambiguity (compli-
cating and confusing) in the novel to allow such readings;
in fact, it is this ambiguity that led me to select Wings
for special treatment in chapter six of this study instead
of The Golden Bowl. I would insist, however, on the validity
of my own reading; that is, given the fact that there is
more than one valid reading.

Following is a brief survey of some of the adverse
criticism: Frederick C. Crews, The Tragedy of Manners;
Moral Drama in the Later Novels of Henry James (New Haven;
Yale University Press, 1957); Crews thinks there is irony
in Adam's portrait, pp. 94-95, and that his American City
project is "childish," p. 101. F. O. Matthiessen,
Henry James: The Major Phase (London: Oxford University
Press, 1944); Matthiessen finds neither Adam nor the
novel persuasive. Charles Thomas Samuels, The Ambiguity
of Henry James (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press,
1971); Samuels sees an ambivalence in the ambiguity;
see especially pp. 225-226. Sallie Sears, The Negative
Imagination: Form and Perspective in the Novels of Henry
James (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968); Sears
sees the "tiger in the lamb" of Maggie's characterization,
p. 192
Adam and Maggie are a long way from the Puritans, but they have their extraordinary moments; they are "elect"; they are the poet-priests discovering--making--a new world, and thus are not so far from the past, for they incorporate it in all that is new. They are epic and Emersonian, a hint of what America's spiritual history could be like.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

LIST OF WORKS CITED


---. "The Literary Conviction of Henry James," Modern Fiction Studies. 3 (Spring 1957), 3-10.


________. A Small Boy and Others. New York: Scribner's, 1913.


