Doamnei Profesor Ana Cartianu

GETA DUMITRIU

TANGLED SELVES

A Study of American Fiction in the 1890s

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FOREWORD

The 1890s stand somewhat apart in American literary and cultural history. In varying degrees this is true of any decade, as no such period has passed away without bringing some change in man's response to the world that in turn told on it and, in time, made it look different. However, a *fin de siècle* is bound to call attention to itself more peremptorily: the consciousness of closure is inherent in it if only because the calendar is an inescapable reminder that an "end" is well in view; and since a century–nineteenth century in this case–comes to an end to make it possible for a new one to begin, closure too cannot be kept apart from opening.

It is of course a commonplace to say that the relation between the two is at no time easy to discern. The questions that a hundred years ago, American culture considered to be essential for understanding its past and predicting its future seemed to be less so half a century or a century later. On the other hand, it has often happened that what appeared to be of minor interest to the generation(s) of 1890s gained in importance as the decades between "now" and "then" followed their more or less troubled course. Bound up with this is the status accorded to writers. That it has been reconsidered several times since 1890 can be no novelty, especially now when the historicity of the canon is an almost settled issue. Considered from this point of view, the writers whose fictions are discussed in the present study do not all belong to the same class. Henry James, William Dean Howells, Mark Twain, Stephen Crane, and Kate Chopin were "canonized" at different stages of its history, whereas Harold Frederic has remained an outsider.

Unlike Howells who was a canonical figure in his lifetime, Twain had to wait until the assumptions behind the so-called genteel canon were seriously revised. Needless to say his inclusion was concomitant with Howells's marginalization. As a matter of fact some attempts to subvert the Dean's position were made as early as the mid-1890s, though at the time his critics fought a different battle from what the champions of the "new" canon–new in the early years of the present century–were trying to promote: "American literature from a frankly social and political perspective."[i] Excluded from it, Henry James would not only attain canonical prominence with the emergence of modernism, but would be himself largely responsible for the lines along which the "new critics" built their (modernist) canon. The tenets of this last continued to be enforced in the post-war period, especially in the fifties and sixties. Discovered now, Kate Chopin was promptly accepted as a major fiction writer; still her inclusion was a matter of endorsing already existing literary principles and of consolidating approaches to American literature that were in vogue at the time–mainly "new critical"–rather than an effect of challenging the canon and forcing its supporters to re-evaluate it.

As for Stephen Crane, his status was at best ambiguous. At the end of the 1960s, however, when a fairly large number of names were (re)consecrated–apparently The Modern Languages Association took a vote on the issue(!)–Crane's was not among them; neither was Howells's, though both of them figured on the list of candidates. Even if Howells was refused readmission into the canon, the very fact that he was found worthy to "apply" for it was a serious improvement of the status he had had earlier in the century. More relevant to a change in contemporary attitude towards Howells is the comment made by Russell Reising in 1986. Taking stock of those who failed the MLA examination in the sixties, he deems it fit to call attention that "many of those excluded from serious consideration have played critical roles in the development of American writing. Garland, Howells, and Crane, for instance, helped revolutionize American literature at the turn of the century."[ii] It is a statement that places a representative of the so-called genteel tradition in an altogether new light. It is also an invitation to further revaluation, an invitation that might have been further stimulated by the Howells criticism published in the 1890s. This in turn

might have had an incentive in the Selected Edition of W.D.Howells which the University of Indiana has been issuing for more than two decades now. Three volumes of criticism came out in 1993 as part of the same project. Fresh from the press, they claimed my attention in a way that might account for the intention to consider them for their critical interest and the hope that in the process they might also constitute themselves in an introduction to those issues that had particular cultural and literary relevance at the time.

As *Criticism and Fiction* (1891) inaugurated the decade, as it were, it has a somewhat privileged position in the discussion inspired by Howells's criticism. In a sense "The Truth of W. D. Howells" is complimentary to the chapter devoted to the presentation of the six writers who at the turn of the century published fictions that have been selected for comments. In so far it includes some general information of literary history, this section is meant to suggest "a literary scene;" besides, it is an attempt to take account of connections existing between the writers, to see if and how their careers intersected at the period, and, more importantly, to call attention to their responses to each other's work. It has become obvious that they were all in relation, Kate Chopin included, even if in her case the information presented is quite scanty. Henry James and Howells, Howells and Mark Twain, Howells and Crane, James and Crane, Frederic and Crane: each of these pairings may be viewed as a literary relationship in its own right intersecting in varying degrees with the others and, in the process, making up a dynamic literary world where impetus, incentive, and criticism never keep things the same. To take measure of the creative energy triggered by them is beyond the scope of the present study. The task is too demanding and it appears to be more so, if note is taken that the field of forces gets complicated by a different kind of relationship: Mark Twain *vs.* Henry James, Crane *vs.* Mark Twain, Frederic *vs.* Henry James; which might also serve as a reminder that the individual writer is seldom, if ever, completely absorbed by one group or another.

What these writers said to each other and about each other in their letters and critical essays is an expression not only of their literary and cultural beliefs, but also of ideas, issues and queries always related to one

another in a process of mutual reinforcement and subversion that partly *made* American culture at the period. Even if the references to their dialogues are far from complete, they are not lacking in suggestiveness as to the richness and variety of American scene in the 1890s, as well as to some of the reasons why the decade is considered to represent a turning point in American culture and literature.

It goes without saying that the period has not remained unexplored. The book Larzer Ziff wrote on it in the sixties has been enjoying the prestige of a classic and few of the students of the turn of the century can ignore it. Indeed, *The American 1890s: Life and Times of a Lost Generation*[iii] highlights the forces at work in American society and, to no lesser extent, the salient features of the cultural and literary scene largely emerging from the works of a series of writers including, apart from those mentioned so far, Ambrose Bierce and Richard Harding Davis, F.Marion Crawford and John Jay Chapman, Sarah Orne Jewett and Mary Wilkins Freeman, Frank Norris, Henry Blake Fuller, Owen Wister, and Theodore Dreiser. (Though Dreiser wrote his first novel in 1900, he belonged to the same generation as Crane and Norris.)

Mention should be as well made of *The Critical Period in American Literature* by Grant C. Knight.[iv] Without having the amplitude and depth of Ziff's study, it too tends to view the 1890s as having an identity of their own. It is a decade that appears to take its distinguishing note from changes arousing uneasiness, which he traces in American life, including politics and literature; a feeling probably expressed at its most intense by Max Nordau, for whom the stage which evolution had reached at the end of the century was beginning to assume the look of "degeneration."

*

As far as the period as a whole is concerned, the present study is less ambitious. Its range is obviously narrower, it dealing with a limited number of novels. These are far from exhausting not only the fictions–a not exactly relevant enterprise, were it possible–but also the various trends in terms of which they could be grouped. Several "isms"such as naturalism, impressionism, romanticism, sentimentalism often supply headings under which individual works are considered to fall. Their fairly large number is

commonly read as proof that the battle for real*ism* fought in the seventies and eighties was now giving way to the pressure of new thematic and technical concerns (naturalism and impressionism) or of the attraction of older models presided over by sentimentalism and romanticism respectively.

The pattern emerging from such mapping might be very intricate without doing full justice to existing fictional types. The "western" for instance that came into being in the 1890s–the name of Owen Wister is associated with it–stands in some relation to the "romanticist novel," but it can hardly be assimilated to it. Generally viewed as incongruous with each other and often inviting the either/or question when an individual writer or work is under discussion, naturalism and impressionism coexist in an original formula–Malcolm Bradbury calls it "naturalistic impressionism" [v]–in the fiction of Stephen Crane, who is generally considered one of the four American naturalists, the other three being Frank Norris, Jack London, and Theodore Dreiser. Frontiers tend to become less firm, if note is taken that in the 1890s no other than the champion of realism, W. D. Howells, wrote such fictions as *An Imperative Duty* where reality tends to dissolve in the subjective perception or impression.

This is not to deny the cultural and literary relevance of "trend" as theoretical construct. Considered from this point of view both naturalism and impressionism point to changes that have their counterpart and/or stimuli in other fields of culture. The kind of determinism, primarily biological and social, can be easily recognized as one of the salient features of a period that is often qualified as post-Darwinian. Similarly impressionism can hardly be divorced from a mode of looking at the world that while tending to dispense with the notion of reality as "given," laid increasing emphasis on sensorial perception. As such it is noticeable not only in the arts, particularly in painting, but, as the contributions of William James stand proof, in psychology and philosophy as well.

Although trends are occasionally mentioned in connection with one work or another, or implied when discussing it, they do not form an object of special consideration. The novels discussed here have not been selected with the view to charting them as they manifested themselves in the 1890s. Their selection has been dictated by other considerations apart from the status of their authors; however, the most important of them is the nature

of the predicament in which the protagonists of these novels find themselves. This has much to do with the state of confusion following on shock or epiphany that their identity is seriously challenged, that they have been mistaken as to who they "really" are; or with their wish/inability to comprehend their relation to the world on which their sense of self depends.

"Muddle," "imbroglio," and "entanglement" are terms Henry James often employed to designate an intricate situation in which his characters find themselves, or the human condition, generally speaking–he called it "human predicament." It is questionable whether any of his protagonists has the capacity to extricate himself from whatever is a source of confusion and puzzlement. The remark holds true of Maggie Verver in *The Golden Bowl* too. A victory of this kind is not what monopolizes James's interest. What absorbs it and solicits his art to the utmost is to show the morally intelligent–the only characters that really count for him–arrive at an understanding of "where they are" in relation to others (and to themselves). Without aspiring to Jamesian lucidity, the selves presented here are aware in varying degrees of themselves as part of the more general imbroglio.

It is relevant in this connection that in the novels selected for discussion–an exception is Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*–the protagonist supplies a large part of the narrative perspective, if not the whole of it. Another way of putting it is to say that the point of view belongs more consistently to Maisie, Edna, Theron–although authorial intrusions are far more weighty in Frederic's novel–and only in part to Rhoda or Maggie. But even *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is not entirely devoid of interest in that Twain himself made an attempt to see the events through Tom's eyes. It is obvious that the shifts in narrative technique tend to increase the role of subjectivity, and, closely connected with it, of perception as far as the "rendering" of reality is concerned.

To discuss what in the present study are called "tangled selves" is also–as attempted here–to shed light on the nature of their entanglements, and in so doing to reach to more general constraints that had their role in defining American culture at the time. (Maisie alone lives outside the pale of American culture, but in view of her age and the kind of bewilderment

to which she is subject, the border between America and England which was not very firm even at the period is likely to lose in importance.) The various imbroglios are thus brought into focus not only as a set of questions that put their pressure on the protagonist for an answer and in this way compel him to a more or less lucid act of self-definition, but also because they are culturally relevant.

The two chapters, one dealing with some general issues of the decade, the other with some particular aspects of William James's views of the self and Thorstein Veblen's considerations on "dress as an expression of the pecuniary culture," are precisely meant to facilitate correlations between the fictional texts and texts that fall under some headings other than literature, highlighting in this way the interplay of beliefs, states of mind, responses to the "times" expressed in various forms and registers.

As has been mentioned, the selection presented is far from exhausting the cultural complexity of the decade, just as the "tangled selves" that have been brought into focus could have been easily supplemented. However, one can find comfort in the now famous words: "the whole of anything is never told; you can only take what groups together." [vi]

1

A WILLFUL DECADE

An American Anniversary. The 1890s or "the yellow decade" as they have often been called, are not only "the times of a lost generation" or of "the critical period in American literature;" as already mentioned, they are a decade shaped by a post-Darwinian world view. Determinism in its Darwinian or Spencerian variant found congenial ground in America where the imprint of Puritanism with its original emphasis on predestination was a mark of the place. "Darwinism itself," writes Warner Berthoff, "and the alarming principle of the 'survival of the fittest,' though widely interpreted as denying the authority of religion, coalesced neatly with the inherited look of New World Calvinism. Religious confidence may well have been shaken if not dissolved by Darwin's science, but the vision of created life conveyed in *The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) could also reinforce old certainties that only a few extraordinary souls were to be favoured in life with creaturely success, and that all others somehow deserved their fate."[1] A characteristic manifestation of the blind force at work was, in the opinion of many nineteenth-century thinkers, the financial crash that American life registered from time to time. As if in confirmation of their views, the year 1893 was confronted with the panic to which such a phenomenon usually gives rise.

There is, however, another side to the coin. The 1890s are also known to be a turning point in American history. It is now that America becomes a world power, the war with Spain fought in 1898 and concluded with the annexation of the Philippines fully endorsing her new status. The prestige and power America was enjoying in late 1890 appear to be the

result of a series of willed actions successfully performed. "The will to believe" (and to act) grounded in the major role individualism played in America was having now ample scope to manifest itself. The title of Wiliam James's essay of 1896 gives the decade a good part of its distinguishing note, as does the will behind his brother's work, the artistic will [ii], also highlighted by the stories of artists and writers Henry James wrote at the time.

It is significant, of course, that what an American anniversary celebrated in 1893–the year when the crash occurred and Stephen Crane wrote *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*– conveyed to the world was also the nation's will that could hardly have been surpassed. This was perhaps the most important message of the World's Columbian Exposition. Held at Chicago during the summer, it was meant to remind the Americans (and the world) that four centuries had passed since Columbus's discovery of America, and, more importantly, to give them all a chance to take measure of America's impressive achievements.

A splendid chance indeed, for "arts, industries, manufactures, and the products of the soil, mine, and sea" [iii] were all to be on display. Conceived on a grand scale, to some extent also because the glamour of the Parisian Exposition of 1889 had to be surpassed, the Chicago Exposition became famous even before it was opened. Figures bordering on the fabulous, as they seemed at the time, were mentioned in connection with it: forty-four nations and twenty eight colonies and provinces were to be present at the fair and six thousand workers were employed to "transform seven hundred acres of Jackson Park into a wonderland of promenades, canals, lagoons, plazas, parks, streets, and avenues as well as four hundred buildings." [iv] Renowned park builders, designers, sculptors and painters were engaged in the project, too, and the story goes that the sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens asked whether they realized that the occasion brought together "the greatest meeting of artists since the Fifteenth Century." [v]

The joint effort of the American artists who assisted Daniel Burnham in designing the Columbian Exposition resulted in what came to be known as the White City. Its main point of attraction was the Court of Honor with the Grand Basin at the centre and the white buildings in neoclassical style so disposed as to put in perspective statues representing female figures as

white and as neoclassical in conception and execution. They were meant to be impressive, and, no doubt, they were so, to this effect contributing their gigantic size and to no lesser extent the electric lights on view now on a scale that to onlookers, who were hardly accustomed with what electricity could do, was simply breath-taking. Prominent among the statues were the "Republic" by Daniel Chester French and "Columbia" by Frederick MacMonnies, the glorification of America in two different, but equally triumphal, stances: whereas the 100 feet high "Republic" stood firm on her pedestal, both her arms high up to make visible the emblems in her hands, "Columbia," sat on her throne towering over standing female figures that propelled the barge "guided by 'Time' and heralded by 'Fame'--none of the figures less than 12 feet in height." [vi]

Even from such a brief description, it is not difficult to see that the message which the White City intended to convey was the balance America presumably achieved between the artistic heritage of the old world and, on the other hand, her own great power. If before she had been given to many other pursuits, now America wanted to publicize not so much her hospitality to European values as the harmony existing between these and the fabulous wealth increasingly associated with her name. The old tribute to Europe continued to be paid, even if now it was restricted to the arts, whereas little heed, if at all, was publicly paid to artistic achievements that found their impulse in the matrix of a culture that in time was to supply a more reliable definition of what the New World was like. In this respect, the Exposition was not devoid of ironies. One of them lay in the fact that, while the response to largely imitative works was enthusiastic, genuine American contributions, such as the "Transportation Building" designed by Louis Sullivan, a name associated with the architecture of the present century, was barely noticed.

Although the White City was the major centre of interest especially at night when electric lights turned it into a Dream City--another name by which it was spoken about–the Columbian Exposition as a whole was not without impact on its visitors, both American and foreign. From the start it challenged them in somewhat special ways, and it may be of interest to note that the challenge seems to have been renewed in recent years. Unlike the earlier readers of the stunning exhibits and of their even more stunning

context, who had their own direct impressions to rely upon, present-day cultural historians depend on photographs and a variety of other texts, including of course those left by their predecessors. As omissions too are relevant, it is not surprising that an event barely noted because considered marginal in 1893 is treated as major in terms of American cultural history as it is understood nowadays. *Red Man's Greeting* is a telling example in this respect: printed on birch bark and given away to visitors, the pamphlet written by the Native American Simon Pokagon (author of a novel that would be published in 1899) reminded the Americans that the "land on which Chicago and the Fair stands, still belongs to (the Potawatamis), as it has never been paid for."[vii]

Perhaps the enthusiasm which the Columbian Exposition aroused in most onlookers was best expressed by Owen Wister when he wrote: "a bewilderment at the gloriousness of everything seized me...until my mind was dazzled to a standstill."[viii] In order to estimate the full force carried by this confession, it should be noted that it was a novelist who made it, and, moreover, he was to be shortly credited with the emergence of a type of protagonist in American fiction having a brilliant career before him: the cowboy. "Tall, clear-eyed, and handsome,"[ix] hating talk and loving deed, the new fictional personage was meant by his author as a nineteenth-century version of the Knight of the Round Table. Anticipating in a rather funny way the glorious days its ranchers were to have not only in fiction, but also in the art to come into being three years later, California signalled his presence at the Fair in the shape of a "Knight on horseback" made of prunes and advertised as "a unique departure in statuary."[x]

However, the Columbian Exposition put the West on the map in ways that warranted it a far longer life; they also signified a unique departure, this time, in understanding American history, and certainly the rise of the western as a popular form of fiction and, later, as a popular kind of movie, was not unrelated to the newly-opened perspective. Frederick Jackson Turner, we need to remember, read his paper on "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" at the convention of the American Historical Association in 1893. If we now add that the meeting was held as part of the activities under the aegis of the Columbian Exposition, we shall have better reason to regard the event as a landmark in American history.

Turner's argument that "the advance of the American settlement westward explain(s) American development" called for a shift of emphasis from Puritan New England, and, more generally, from the Atlantic coast to the West "with its new opportunities." The American character itself, a combination of "coarseness," "strength," "acuteness," " inquisitiveness," "masterful grasp of material things," "lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends" plus some other features, is traced to "the conditions of frontier life."[xi] If only because it supplied them and asserted itself as a shaping force, the West was to be preferred to any other region; but, as Turner argues, it also supplied a vast expanse of land, and to this America was encouraged to turn her steps and energy.

However, the pendulum will not take long to switch back to the East. In fact a good deal of twentieth-century American scholarship, including recent contributions, has argued for such a move, which is not to say that Turner's thesis has lost its hold upon American historians. In the early 1890s, however, challenging as it was, it found nonetheless a wide support. It is more difficult to say whether that came from Turner's fellow historians, but it is certain that it did indirectly from the place where the convention was held, though perhaps not in ways that fully endorsed all his arguments. What better proof that the centre(s) of weight had already been moving from East to West than Chicago, "the filthy Indian village on the shore of Lake Michigan (that) had grown within a generation to be the second largest city in America?"[xii] Whereas in the previous decade New York "grew from less than 2 million to more than 3.5 million," Chicago simply "tripled in size."[xiii] Besides, in the summer of 1893, the Dream City stood on its premises as a promise that in a not too distant future the entire neighbourhood will assume its look.

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"The new energies that America adored." The chapter title of a book also written by a historian was inspired, too, by the Chicago of 1893. Of an older generation, Henry Adams, grandson and great-grandson of two presidents of the United States, had good reason to spend two weeks in the former filthy Indian village. By that time he had devoted three years

to his new interest that was to obsess him throughout the 1890s; an interest that would have been more congenial to a physicist rather than to a historian. Adams, however, came to it only after taking some other avenues and discovered that he had reached nowhere, although his dozen volumes of American history were solid proof that he had hardly whiled his time away. Anyway, here is his *rationale,* expounded in a subsequent chapter, for looking in an altogether different direction: "Satisfied that the sequence of men led to nothing and that the sequence of their society could lead no further, while the mere sequence of time was artificial, and the sequence of thought was chaos, he turned at last to the sequence of force." [xiv]

This last sequence should be understood then as a new attempt on his part to discover a cause and effect relationship in human history, previous endeavors having resulted in little approximations of his original intention; for, "where he saw sequence, other men saw something quite different, and no one saw the same unit of measure" (382). The sequences to which he had devoted his major energies–the domains of history, intellectual history, philosophy–turned out to be "histories or stories" (382). A century later the term in vogue would be "fictions," but even "histories" or "stories" is not lacking in suggestiveness as to the subjective and imaginative nature of the intellectual enterprise. "Force," "power," and "energy" had been the focus of science, and Adams, not entirely an outsider, approached mathematically what appeared to be their symbols: the steamship, the railroads, and the dynamo; the last of the series that "had barely reached infancy" (342) impressed him as containing the promise that his old query would not be left unanswered.

It needs to point out that Adams's concern with his new sequence was highly stimulated by his apprehension at the time of the Columbian Exposition that both he and America were losing control of the direction of their movements. No doubt, the market crash of the same year was in a large measure responsible for it. The irony in the coincidence of the Chicago scenic display and the panic-stricken people was too striking to escape notice, and an English book title it inspired, *The Land of Contrasts* [xv], became a sort of label for the times. It could be read as well as proof that history repeats itself, for 1876, the year of the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia, was also the nadir of a severe economic depression. As for

the skeptical-minded Adams, he had no difficulty in holding his fears in check when finding his "self suspended, for several months, over the edge of bankruptcy" (337). They were rather an incentive for his determination to continue his education, this time by trying to face history squarely and learning from it whatever lesson it had to teach. To be sure, his new interest in force was whetted by his perception that "blindly some very powerful energy was at work, doing something that nobody wanted done" (338), and that in turn led him to Chicago and to his wondering there "whether the American people knew where they were driving" (343).

As shown a little further down, an answer, no less problematic for being emphatically declared so, would be given shape seven years later as Adams contemplated the Paris Exposition of 1900. In 1893, however, finding himself in the White City he was tempted to read the scene before his eyes as "a breach of continuity–a rupture in historical sequence" (340). What he meant by these remarks was rather the tendency apparent in the White City(scapes) to put themselves once more in the service of the aesthetic ideals of ancient Greece, and thus by-pass London and New York. But the Columbian Exposition also forced on him the sense of a different, more immediate, rupture. Apparently, it was in 1893 in Chicago that a major change of direction in American life became noticeable: the machine, valued now for being a great releaser of energy, was taking the lead, as it were, and, in so doing it had its own claims to make--efficiency was one--that were not necessarily in concord with the claims of reason in which American political power had grounded its authority with the help of, among others, Henry Adams's great-grandfather. (His grandfather too was a disciple of the Enlightenment values that had in large measure shaped the basic political texts of the United States, and the writer of *The Education of Henry Adams* continued to cling to them despite his attraction to different points of view.)

What became obvious to Adams in Chicago was that America to be shortly in possession of means of releasing energy on an unprecedented scale was evolving along lines so new that *a priori* principles might not prove to be invariably adequate. What he said about "breach" and "rupture" in a different context might easily apply here, or, more precisely, to the potentially widening divergence between Chicago and Washington, as

R.P.Blackmur remarks. The comments made by Adams's critic are so much to the point throughout that we might do well to quote at least a passage here:

> To Adams, this situation represented not only a shift in phase of society but a shift in the kind of force that had controlled society; it meant the difference between the assertion of the political principle and the submission to economic method–in short, the abdication of politics as value in favor of politics as an efficient machine. How complete the abdication might become, Adams left at this point nearly muted, remarking only that 'society might dispute in what social interest' the machine should be run, and that a necessary complement to the new machine was the combination of 'trades-unions and socialistic paternalism.' In the sequel, other images and other necessities would sharpen the sense of renewed conflict along old lines, but at the moment he was concerned to see, under the image of Chicago, 'the whole mechanical consolidation of force, which ruthlessly stamped out the life of the class into which Adams was born, but created monopolies capable of controlling the new energies that America adored.' The Babel of Chicago had absorbed the harmony of Washington. [xvi]

A more sustained attempt on Adams's part to consider history in terms of force(s) would be supplied by the Paris Exposition of 1900. There, "his historical neck broken by the sudden irruption of forces totally new" (382)–radium had been discovered meanwhile–he would linger in "the great hall of dynamos" (380) and try to reach some conclusion as to the Chicago infant, now a man in his prime. By focusing on the nineteenth century and the twelfth century, on the dynamo and the Virgin, or, in the words of R. P. Blackmur, "the force of symbol and the symbol of force," [xvii] and by balancing them against each other, Adams comes not only to respond to the differences between past and present (such as the unity of the Middle Ages as against the multiplicity of the Modern Age, an opposition that has been perpetuated as a commonplace) but also to see them as generated by their respective dominant symbols. If mention is made that, for him, force was also understood as "attraction over the human mind," the relation between the dynamo and the Virgin can no longer remain obscure. (One is tempted to remark that the very close association at the Columbian

Exposition between the dynamo and the marble female figures, evinced by their crowns of light at night, might have inspired Adams to take this line of thought.).

Having assimilated Venus and the power of sex embodied by the Goddess, the Virgin, an image of womanhood rather than of motherhood, in Adams's reading of Her, appeared to him as the great force behind the French Cathedrals, "the highest energy ever known to man, the creator of four-fifth of his noblest art, exercising vastly more attraction over the human mind than all the steam-engines and dynamos ever dreamed of; and yet," Adams is tempted to remark, "this energy was unknown to the American mind. An American Virgin would never dare command; an American Venus would never dare exist" (385). Their place seems to have been taken by the dynamo, the generator of a huge force. The energy it could release was overwhelming, as was its attraction over the mind, but when compared with the force of the Virgin, a significant change in its nature becomes evident. Instead of being creative of unity, it leads, in Adams's view, to a serious disturbance: the drifting apart of the sexes.

By making of the dynamo the symbol of its own culture, America was to give free scope to the energies it adored, but also to evolve in the process divergent roles for man and woman. The new force turned out to have such a strong hold on man, that he simply substituted it for woman. Needless to say the absence of Venus and the Virgin in America made all the easier for the machine to take full control of everything. Adams, however, is as explicit as possible in the chapter in his *Education* covering the year 1903: "The American woman at her best–like most other women–," writes he in "Vis Inertiae," "exerted great charm on the man, but not the charm of a primitive type. She appeared as a result of a long series of discards, and her chief interest lay in what she discarded. When closely watched, she seemed making a violent effort to follow the man, who had turned his mind and hand to mechanics. The typical American man had his hand on a lever and his eye on a curve in his road; his living depended on keeping up an average speed of forty miles an hour, tending always to become sixty, eighty, or a hundred, and he could not admit emotions or anxieties or subconscious distractions, more than he could admit whiskey or drugs.

without breaking his neck. He could not run his machine and a woman too: he must leave her, even though his wife, to find her own way, and all the world saw her trying to find her way by imitating him" (445).

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The Girl that America Adored. It is difficult to say whether the American woman as viewed by Adams was in any way related to the exemplary figure that the 1890s set up discreetly, but no less peremptorily, impelling the individuals to shape themselves accordingly. Its lineaments came from several projections cast–with varying degrees of awareness–by the community at large. The figure the American *fin de siècle* looked up to, apparently in ignorance that it was no one else's creation but its own, would shortly be known as "the American Girl." Highlighting its cultural significance has been a major concern of contemporary American cultural historians. A most notable contribution has been made by Martha Banta whose book *Imaging American Women: Idea and Ideals in Cultural History* brings under scrutiny literary, painted, and sculptured portraits set side by side with a variety of other documents such as photographs, posters, and illustrations from books and periodicals.

To be sure, it was not only in the 1890s that the image of the American Girl was perceived to be publicly appealing. Its emergence can be traced to an earlier date, as the fiction of Henry James and W. D. Howells written in the late seventies and eighties stand proof. "Heiress of the Ages," as Isabel or some other Jamesian character used to be called, is a value laden phrase, even if through too much use in criticism it has turned now into a cliché. A powerful image in American culture for about two decades, the American girl was to assume, however, full significance in the 1890s. According to Martha Banta, "she was at the height of her glory between 1895 and 1915."[xviii] What helped her further ascend to the peak was the Columbian Exposition of 1893. As the White City was pulled down in the Chicago Park, the American Girl was beginning to be seen as the image of America.

It is of course significant in this respect that the impression the foreign visitor was sure to take back home was inspired by the Girl. Her presence constantly foregrounded in one way or another seldom failed to strike him as most characteristic of America. At least the French Paul Bourget and the English James Fullerton Muirhead, both writing on America in the 1890s, thought it necessary to devote a good part of their comments to her representational power and significance. Apparently they agreed that what the girl most intensely conveyed to the observer of American life was self-confidence, a feeling that–as the country disclosed itself to his eyes–was inescapably perceived as the very note of the place. Understandably, Muirhead's impulse upon looking at her was to point out the contrast in which she stood to her English cousin; and he did so by comparing them (and their countries, of course) to two caryatids that could be seen at the Vatican: one, of an earlier stage, was expressive of self-assurance; the other betrayed an "air of insecurity."[xix] Though younger, America resembled the older caryatid, whereas England looked like the younger one. For his part, Bourget seems to have been drawn to the beauty of the American girl, or rather to the type of the charmer as distinct from the pal and the New England titaness. His remark that her face and figure "lend themselves to that sort of reproduction of which newspapers are so fond" account from a different angle–no less culturally significant–for the privileged presence of the American Girl in the 1890s.[xx]

Indeed, if the girl appears to be nothing short of ubiquity, the explanation also lies with those particular forms of culture–on increase at the tail end of the nineteenth century–that in varying degrees depended for their effect on image reproduction. Already with a tradition behind them, the magazine and the illustrated book hardly belonged with the novelties the decade had brought forth. (Still the proliferation of the former is considered to be specific to it.) It was, however, another form in the visual arts that the 1890s could safely claim as their own. This was the poster. In ascendancy for some time, it gained such a prominent place in American culture as to make the decade known as the "age of the poster." It could hardly escape notice that the glamour it lent to the 1890s owed a good deal to the American Girl, a favourite subject, because her features were found to agree extremely well with the techniques of representation that were being perfected at the time.

But what, more precisely, did the girl look like? One can still make an idea of her by gazing at the illustrations of Charles Dana Gibson (1867-1944), the artist who has been mostly credited with her rise and renown. It is not for nothing of course that she ended by taking his name. First appearing in the early 1890s–the years when Gibson started his career–she came to be simply known as the Gibson Girl, an appellation that has outlived the period of her glory and still survives in dictionaries of the English language (*The Random House*, for instance) Alongside slender figure and bare arms, it was her regularly shaped face–usually described as pretty–that made her easily recognizable. Hair-do threw it into even bolder relief, as her hair, an impressive mass of it, tightened up in big waves or curls laid bare the nape of the neck bringing her profile in full view.

Commenting on the girl's features, Martha Banta notices that their regularity tied in well with the more general interest in reviving neoclassicism. As for the phenomenon itself, which she analyses at length, a statement she makes is no doubt revealing enough: "By the late 1880s," she writes, "the American eye was being instructed in the particular aspects of neoclassicism that later informed modernist modes of seeing. In the next generation that eye might appreciate the experiments of the cubists in Paris and the verbal symmetries of Gertrude Stein." [xxi] But while she was largely expressive of a "taste for the Grecian look," the American Girl was–as the same cultural historian makes a point of arguing–even more identifiable by a feature that is considered to be pre-eminently American: a strong disposition to assert her will. The air of self-determination also radiated from portraits of American women that offered themselves to the contemplative admiration of foreign visitors in American museums and galleries. Neither was it lacking in the American man: the features of his face, no less regular, and especially his square jaw and even teeth, never failed to bespeak self-reliance and resolution, no matter whether they belonged to the cowboy in the West, "tall, clear-eyed, and handsome," or to the "Davis" type. The latter takes his name and features from the protagonist in Richard Harding Davis's novels, who apparently resembled his author and imitated his way of living, a "combination of high life and high adventure." [xxii] Both images have been perpetuated by the movies whose history–one should be aware of that–dates from the decade under

discussion. However, the impulse to show self-assertion distinguished the girl even more sharply, and this explains why it was she that came to be seen as more representative of her country, for America had become aware by the 1890s, or, if she hadn't, visitors were telling her just then, that what had been putting forth the mouldings of her features was an immense will.

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The Ambiguities of colour and law. No matter how much attracted by the Gibson Girl or the "Davis" male type they might have been, a large part of the Americans knew too well that neither of the exemplary figures was accesible to them, even as aspiration. Referred to it, Afro-Americans, Native Americans, and many categories of immigrants were compelled to think of themselves as anything but representative of America. It is of interest to mention in this connection that the blacks had access to the Columbian Exposition only on one day that came to be known as "the darkies' day." To understand why so severe restrictions were imposed on a section of the population that a few decades earlier had been granted citizenship, it is necessary perhaps to call attention to a phenomenon that having been well under way for a number of years was now reaching its peak: racism. For the African Americans it is no doubt a bitter irony--to say the least–that the rights they had been granted in the period from 1865 to 1875 were turning against them in ways that spoke out their new and perhaps more humiliating bondage.[xxiii] A backward glance will help to explain the unhappy denouement of a course of actions that appeared full of promise only a couple of decades earlier.

What made it possible for a "second slavery" to institute itself *de facto* was in the first place the subversion of black rights by southern legislatures, a process that began shortly after their freedom had been constitutionally guaranteed and was to continue to the end of the century. Passed one year in the wake of the 13th Constitutional Amendment, the acts known as black codes drastically restricted Negroes's freedom and changed their condition for worse; this was to deteriorate even more rapidly after the compromise of 1877 that stipulated the withdrawal of Federal troops from southern states. In the aftermath of the event, southern states

disregarding the Civil Rights Acts started to pass the so-called Jim Crow laws with the view to restoring segregation in almost every area of life including schools, churches, restaurants, and even public parks.

Legislature was, however, only one of the means; the other was the pressure, shortly to degenerate into sheer violence, the whites were putting on the blacks. Historians tell us that

> White resentment took a vicious turn with the appearance and rapid growth of the Ku Klux Klan. First organized in 1866, the white-hooded nightriders contented themselves for a time with playing pranks on freedmen to frighten them into 'good' behavior. But soon the Klan, with its Grand Dragon, 'Dens', and 'Cyclopses,' had spread over the South. Now an instrument of political terror, it attacked the Loyal Leagues, intimidated black voters, and destroyed the effectiveness of local black organizers. Nor did the Klan shun murder (...) When the organization was officially disbanded in 1869, it went underground. [xxiv]

The "White Leagues," paramilitary groups that proliferated especially in the early 1870s, acted to the same ends; with "many large property-holders and respected citizens in their ranks"–Kate Chopin's husband was one of them–they were also responsible for thwarting the plans for full integration. [xxv]

Louisiana gave perhaps the most conclusive proof as to the blacks' status *de facto* in the period under discussion. Some reference to the so-called "gens de couleur libre," also known at one time as "the Cane River's freemen of color," is very much to the point here. Before the Civil War, this category enjoyed certain rights (citizenship) and privileges they had inherited and the state of Louisiana acknowledged. (No other state, however, recognized them.) Like the French and Spanish whites whose descendants they partly were and in whose heritage they took pride, these freemen of color considered themselves superior to the blacks. Hence both their reluctance to mix with their "inferiors" and their tendency to identify with the whites. As the whites too were on their guard and denied them full access to their society, they had no other choice than keeping to themselves and forming their own caste, racially homogenous, but socially somewhat differentiated.

The largest number of freemen of color was to be found in New Orleans whose population had "the highest percentage of mixed-race ancestry of any American city or state."[xxvi] It is of interest to note that up to the Civil War a certain tolerance in sexual matters had been specific to the metropolis of the South. (The male code for instance made allowance for a liaison with a quadroon or octoroon woman.) Thus it was not unusual for a white who lived with his wife and children in a fashionable quarter to "formally" meet his mistress and his black children in some other part of the city. This relative racial harmony was seriously threatened in the 1860s, and two decades later there was no trace of it left in New Orleans, the relations between whites and blacks deteriorating meanwhile to such an extent that the former freemen actually found themselves less free than they used to be. This, partly, because the New Orleans whites came to look upon the "gens de couleur libre" as being even more dangerous than the blacks: often light skinned and having a good command of French, they could easily pass for whites.

Won over to the southern point of view as reunion with the South got precedence over many other issues, the North too was having a hand in depriving blacks of their constitutional rights. Segregation came (continued) to be a practice in some northern states–by virtue of custom, if not by law–, but the participation of the North took its distinguishing note rather from the subtler forms it assumed. These were inspired, as Eric Sundquist argues, from the duality on which the American notion of citizenship was based. Since the Negro, like any other American, was citizen of both state and nation, his rights were subject to a flexible interpretation; all the more so as, diverging from the Congress, the Supreme Court of the United States tended to limit federal law and separate national from state rights. The policy of the latter was by no means confined to cases having to do with race alone, but the dualisms it proliferated by indirectness and legal camouflage seriously affected the treatment of the blacks: in fact they were abandoned to receive justice at the hands of their former masters. It is relevant in this connection, as the cases invoked by Sundquist attest, that quite often state supreme courts–some notable examples are supplied by

Louisiana, Massachusetts, and Missouri–grounded their rulings against the blacks on precedents that in view of the Constitutional Amendments of the 1860s and 1870 were downright anachronistic.[xxvii]

However, it was in the 1890s that the anti-black feelings running high at the time both in the South and the North were given unequivocal official endorsement: in *Plessy v. Ferguson* the Supreme Court of the United States ruled in favour of segregation. Without being a premiere with respect to subversion of black rights, the Court's decision assumed the significance of an event of unhappy fame: it froze a process, weighing heavily in nineteenth-century American history, in a state that was to remain unaltered for more than half a century. The case had some other consequences too from which racist ideology reaped a more immediate benefit. A mere mention of the bare facts might help to better grasp at least one of the senses in which the decade can be characterized as critical. When Homer Adolph Plessy, a mulatto so light-skinned as to easily pass for white, boarded a Louisiana train in 1892 and took a seat in the "whites only" car, his act was obviously meant as a protest against the Jim Crow laws that Louisiana had adopted two years earlier. Enacted in other confederate states, the laws required, among other things, that the railroads operating within the state "shall provide equal but separate accommodations for the white, and colored, races." Plessy was of course arrested; and, despite his argument that the law by which his client had been arrested was unconstitutional, his lawyer, the novelist Albion W. Tourgée, was overruled by Louisiana's state court–first, by judge John H. Ferguson. In due time the case reached the Supreme Court, and four years later it too ruled against Plessy, on the principle "separate but equal," thus giving legal sanction to a distinction based on colour and, ultimately, to the policy of segregation.

One consequence of *Plessy v. Ferguson* was that a new duality came now to be added to dual citizenship: that of the context, white or black, depending on which the law came to be interpreted. As Eric Sundquist comments,

> What was clear by 1896, though, was that dual citizenship and negative enforcement of equal protection, even if they were not primarily masks for naked racial discrimination, made it increasingly easy to cover

pernicious intent with the cloak of law. *Plessy* was a landmark case not because it drastically altered the direction of legislation and judicial thought but because it concluded the process of transfiguring dual *constitutional* citizenship into dual *racial* citizenship which had unfolded since the end of Reconstruction. [xxviii]

So many dualisms in terms of which individual rights were to be referred led to confusion which often put the blacks to serious disadvantage. The case had other effects too some of which had a wide and long reach. Although the Court ruled on the colour principle, opposing blacks to whites, it was the meaning of both blackness and whiteness that, as a result, was now undergoing a disturbing change. Some measure of it was taken by Mark Twain when introducing Roxy in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*: "To all intents and purposes Roxy was as white as anybody, but the one-sixteenth of her which was black outvoted the other fifteen parts and made her a negro." [xxix] To a greater extent this applies to her fair baby, whose black blood is doubly diluted, the converse being true of its white blood, but in no way is it any less a Negro.

What came to be known as " 'one drop' definition of blackness" [xxx] was bound to reverse the meaning of whiteness in a very important sense: whiteness could turn any time into blackness, which explains why in the 1890s it was a problematic colour with a great potential for creating identity crisis and affecting self. No wonder, it is often associated with "tangled" selves as discussed in this book and illustrated not only by Twain's novel of 1894, but also by Howells's *An Imperative Duty* and, more generally, with a type of fiction--call it sentimental--centred on the sudden change in the meaning of whiteness triggering of a "reversal of fortune," to make use of a phrase more in place when discussing eighteenth and nineteenth century English novels. The "mulatto story," quite in vogue at the time and not without descendants in the present century, often expresses white pity and compassion for the protagonists so entangled, feelings that may well fall under the heading of a more general attitude known as racialism. Howells evinces it when he has Rhoda Aldgate mask her blackness in whiteness–a forced practice for some in the 1890s–and, for safety's sake–send her to Italy where to be dark-skinned was to be white.

2

"THE SELF" OF WILLIAM JAMES and a gloss on THORSTEIN VEBLEN'S "CLOTHES"

The imperative of tolerance. *Self* was a privileged topic in American culture at the turn of the century. Such syntagms as "social self," "empirical self," "the sense of personal identity," or "secondary personal selves" were most likely to be among the favourites in many discussions and debates, if not in drawing-room conversations. The incentive had been given by William James just as the previous decade was coming to an end. Animated throughout by the lively, conversational tone of which its author was a master, *The Principles of Psychology,* published in 1890, drew such a large number of readers that James soon began to talk of looking down on Mark Twain. Being perhaps aware that the mood to come to the book–a mood suited to a *Moby-Dick* or *War and Peace*, as subsequent commentators remarked–would be increasingly difficult to go into as the century rushed to its close, James proceeded to offer a compressed version. *Psychology* (*Briefer Course*) followed in 1892 consisting for the most part of faithful reproductions of the sections considered to be of utmost interest, to which new material was added. (The remaining text was abridged.)

The *Principles* that took James twelve years to write is his first book not only in order of appearance but also–as students of his work "tend to agree"–in that of merit. In the opinion of John J. McDermott, one of his editors, "perhaps more revealing is the fact that those commentators for whom James's philosophy is seriously inadequate, will nonetheless

acknowledge the genius of the *Principles*."[i] What further recommends the book as James's masterpiece is its great representativeness as to how various issues having relevance to human life might be more beneficially approached. It is not impossible, then, to view the contributions he later made to philosophy, ethics, and religion as the growth of one germ or another already contained in the voluminous treatise. This is also to revise his relation to certain thinkers who presumably influenced him, a debt he himself was too eager to acknowledge. On such grounds Richard Poirier for instance is reluctant to explain James's attempt to subvert "intellectualism" in *A Pluralistic Universe* by the impact Henri Bergson's writings were having on him at the time, for "his argument against "intellectualism" was already well advanced in his first book, *The Principles of Psychology* (...) before he and Bergson discovered their similarities and their friendship."[ii] If James had been open to a major influence, prior to the publication of this first book, that could only have come from Emerson. As a matter of fact, Poirier's "Emersonian Reflections" have for their focus the native connection represented by Emerson that a reading of, among others, William James promises to highlight considerably.

Although both volumes of James's treatise are concerned with *self*, it is especially in chapters IX and X, The Stream of Thought and The Consciousness of Self (The Stream of Consciousness and The Self in *Briefer Course)*, that James challenges his topic frontally. As usual, the questions he asks break the neck of the task he sets for himself at one moment or another, while seldom letting the reader's attention flag for long. He never fails to convey to the latter that what is at stake is really important; his answers may be less so–he warns the reader–as they are only tentative, their validity being quite often circumscribed to a very restricted sphere: himself.

In discussing the characteristics of the stream of thought–later to be replaced by the stream of consciousness–James insists that this is *personal*, in the sense of being owned by one mind only and completely cut off from others. "Each of these minds," says he, "keeps its own thoughts to itself. There is no giving or bartering between them. No thought even comes into direct *sight* of a thought in another personal consciousness than its own.

Absolute insulation, irreducible pluralism, is the law. It seems as if the elementary psychic fact were not *thought* or *this thought* or *that thought*, but *my thought*, every thought being *owned.*"[iii] In view of such statements it is no wonder that, for some of his commentators, "monadic" turned out to be a preferred, if not an indispensable, word when qualifying both Jamesian subjectivity and individualism.[iv] To believe as James does that "the breach from one mind to another is perhaps the greatest breach in nature" (237) is to see the condition in which self exists as one of perpetual isolation, even estrangement; for, if the mind is denied the capacity to see other "streams," it can be only blind in relation to *other*, an idea also illustrated in his 1899 essay "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings."

Despite the prospect that this view of self opens (or closes) for us, James hardly sounds the discouraging note. For one thing, we are encouraged to try to imagine how various the world is at one moment or another on account of, among other things, the perspectives from which it can be seen, the number of these being tantamount to the individuals looking at it, a belief surely shared by his brother Henry for whom angle(s) of vision is (are) something always to be scrupulously considered; for another, we are invited to ponder the conclusion James draws about how peremptory tolerance and respect for *other* should be in a world whose inhabitants are imprisoned in their own minds or selves. Referring to the result of his considerations and questions in the above mentioned essay, he notes:

> It absolutely forbids us to be forward in pronouncing on the meaninglessness of forms of existence other than our own; and it commands us to tolerate, respect, and indulge those whom we see harmlessly interested and happy in their own ways, however unintelligible these may be to us. Hands off: neither the whole of truth nor the whole of good is revealed to any single observer, although each observer gains a partial superiority of insight from the peculiar position in which he stands.[v]

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The selves of self. James's repeated conviction that each mind owns its stream of thoughts and self is opaque to (and for) others should not obscure the difficulties he was having when faced with the question about

the boundaries within which self could be confined. At the outset of the chapter on *self* he raises precisely this problem that continues to give food for thought to those taking an interest in the matter. Thus referring to "empirical self" or "what a man calls me," he asks: where is the boundary defining "me" to be placed? That it should be understood to be quite flexible is something he warns us from the start. But what does the line giving contour to self separate it from? The distinction James has in view is between "me" and "mine." For him "me" and "mine" cannot be kept apart so easily. On the contrary: "We feel and act about certain things that are ours very much as we feel and act about ourselves" (291). The border is unstable because what is felt to be part of "me" at one moment, at another can only be perceived as *mine*. He does not deny the possibility that the line of demarcation may be so set as to include mine: "*In its widest possible sense*, however, *a man's Self is the sum total of all that he* CAN *call his*, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank-account" (291).

Ignoring the dynamic relation in which it stands to *other* (wife, children, friends) James sees *self* as tending to grow by a mere act of absorption and invasion. It is not difficult, of course, to take issue with James's disposition to obliterate differences. Objections to such a view were heard even in the decade following the publication of *The Principles of Psychology*, and some, coming from literary quarters, were quite memorable; as for instance were those raised from the point of view of *wife* by a Kate Chopin character. (See Edna Pontellier's prelude to her awakening.) Open to castigation as James's views of self undoubtedly are, still it won't do to dispose of them all too readily. Some of the qualifications he makes deserve to be noted. These can be better considered against an outline of his more general analysis of *self*.

Without dismissing the notion of a Pure Ego, James centres his discussion on the empirical self. As to the former, he appears rather interested in taking issue with the spiritualist, the associationist, and the transcendentalist theories of the Ego. In their place, he is tempted to advance the idea of a "remembering and appropriating thought incessantly renewed" (362) that might not be unrelated to a bodily process, though how it is

related is a question he does not fully answer. (His former training in physiology accounts, of course, for the line he took in his approach to many moot points in the field of psychology.) At least, this seems to be a conclusion to which his analysis of the workings of the mind led him.[vi] On the basis of his study of "the stream of thought" or "the stream of consciousness," the phrases he coined to describe them, he evolves his notion of "a sense of identity." He grounds it in the perception of sameness and continuity of a present self and a past self, thus making it dependent on memory to a considerable extent. The perception belongs to the "I," that is, to the "remembering and appropriating thought incessantly renewed." Identity appears to be lacking in firm contours, for, says James, "the identity found by the *I* in the *me* is only a loosely construed thing, an identity 'on the whole' just like that which any outside observer might find in the same assemblage of facts"(372-73).Changes in the "assemblage" are bound to affect one's sense of identity.

James's empirical self too includes a constituent which he refers to as "spiritual." When considering "this central part of the self" (298), or "the self of selves" (301)–his other syntagms for the spiritual self–and acknowledging the difficulty of explaining it while questioning the solutions of various theories (as those mentioned above), he is tempted to believe in view of his analysis of consciousness that "*our entire feeling of spiritual activity, or what passes by that name, is really a feeling of bodily activities whose exact nature is by most men overlooked*" (301-302). However, it needs to specify further that this "innermost center of subjective life" that makes it possible for us "to think ourselves as thinkers," is the "place" of "psychic faculties or dispositions taken concretely," of "our ability to argue and discriminate," "our moral sensibility and conscience," "our indomitable will" (296).

Apart from the *spiritual self*, there are two more components that make up James's *me*: the *material self* and the *social self*. The terms in which the *material self* is defined have already been anticipated in the presentation of self in "in its widest possible sense." The body is "the innermost part" of it, "the clothes come next;" property too is to be regarded as included in it, and so is "our immediate family" (292). James's qualification of property in relation to *self* may not be without interest. If

to take issue with him on account of his treatment of *other*, is an impulse too strong to resist, on the other hand, his remark about how property is felt to be part of *self* is to be pondered over. "The parts of our wealth most intimately ours," says he, "are those which are saturated with our labor" (293). Property is felt differently depending on the amount of labor one has invested in it. The greater the amount, the more intimately it is "ours." James speaks here of what we own, but he could as well speak of what we *do* or *perform*, since in this particular context what we own is the result of some doing of which we are the agent, although in another sense, a sense contained in James's statement, we are, or rather become, what we have laboured.

Clothes too are tempting to gloss upon in this connection. Not that there is anything new in viewing them as part of *self*, or of one of its constituents, as James does. Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, to mention only this famous book, is informed with similar ideas the author may have taken from the Germans or found in the old saying mentioned by James too, according to which man is soul, body, and clothes. The gloss in this case is rather an attempt to set James's analysis of "the material self," more specifically of clothes as part of it, against the oft-quoted conversation between Madame Merle and Isabel Archer on precisely the same topic in Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*.

Disapproving of Isabel's indifference to such a thing as the house in which one lives, the Europeanized American insists that "there's no such thing as an isolated man or woman; we're each of us made up of some cluster of appurtenances." Her queries: "What shall we call our 'self'? Where does it begin? Where does it end?" are not only echoed in the difficulty William James was having when trying to draw the line between "me" and "mine," but will be heard over and over again in the present century especially in American fiction after World War II. As for Madame Merle, she tends to view things somewhat differently. Also seen as fluctuating–"it overflows into everything that belongs to us--and then it flows back again"–self appears to her, theoretically at least, less grabby; the "possessions," or what self extends its dominion over, according to William James, are seen by her to be as many expressions of it. It is not that clothes are part of *self*; it is rather that, as Madame Merle puts it,

"(...) a large part of myself is in the clothes I choose to wear." Her meaning can hardly be missed when she concludes: "One's self–for other people–is one's expression of one's self; and one's house, one's furniture, one's garments, the books one reads, the company one keeps–these things are all expressive."

Isabel's opinion stands in sharp contrast with the views of Serena Merle (and of William James). What is *mine* in no way expresses *me*, may be a good, though incomplete, paraphrase of it. The self by which she lays greatest store is absolutely autonomous and little continuous with anything else. Whatever is continuous with it is feared as a threat to its own being. "Nothing that belongs to me is any measure of me; everything's on the contrary a limit, a barrier, and a perfectly arbitrary one"–the resonance of these words is clearly Emersonian, and, no doubt, they supply some sound proof to those who are fond of arguing that Isabel's cast of mind is Emersonian. Her aversion to any boundaries that contain or rather confine self, leading in the last analysis to a rejection of its having an outline, a contour no matter how flexible, and, ultimately, of the possibility to define it in these terms, is an expression of an impulse so individualistic that it defies any bounds. Another remark she makes is worthy of note. Objecting to the expressive power attributed by Madame Merle to clothes, she says: "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." Isabel could have distinguished here between her self (Emersonian, real, inner) and her social self, and, unlike William James, relegated her clothes to the latter.[vii]

This would not be the only difference between William James's *social self* and Isabel's. What James wrote on *social self* in the *Principles* has appeared to his critics either admirable or censorious. Used as mottoes to recent books or quoted in various contexts, his admirable views on the matter have been in the limelight for some time now. Most appealing to a reader at the end of the twentieth century is the substitution of selves for self. "Properly speaking," says James, "*a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him* and carry an image of him in their minds (...) he has as many different social selves as there are distinct *groups* of persons about whose opinion he cares" (294). James appears

not to be oblivious of the relation of *self* to *other*; whereas in the first statement, social self is viewed from the *other*'s perspective with more than a suggestion that it is something that "exists" in the *other*, in the second the emphasis falls on the *self*'s awareness of socially defined *others*, and especially of how the relation to them works. The importance James attaches to this constituent of *self* should not pass unnoticed, even if, to a greater extent, it stands proof of his allegiance to nineteenth-century world view(s).

The three constituents are also disposed hierarchically with the bodily self at the bottom and the spiritual self at the top, the "extracorporeal material selves" (313) and the social selves occupying the middle ground. It is this ladder like arrangement of them, in addition to the autonomy granted the self as a whole, that is responsible for the censures passed on James's *self* in general and on his *social self* in particular. Although, as mentioned earlier, social self counts as a constituent, it is nonetheless understood to be a more or less luminous reflection in the *other*'s mind depending on how the individual is esteemed to relate himself to *the prevailing moral codes*. James's penchant to conceive of *social self* in moral terms is more than obvious when, speaking about potential selves, he isolates it as the most interesting "by reason of certain apparent paradoxes to which it leads in conduct, and by reason of its connection with our moral and religious life," and understands its progress as "the substitution of higher tribunals for lower" (316). It seems that the potential in question is its capacity to rise to the proximity of spiritual self, if not to actually merge with it.

A new direction in which self theory was beginning to evolve just about the time William James's career was drawing to its close would supply a perspective from which his description could be easily found deficient. Doing research in Chicago, the Australian born psychologist George H. Mead advanced the view that not only what James called *social self*, but *self* as a whole is social, James's "self of selves" being no exception either. "The self which consciously stands over against other selves," writes Mead, "becomes an object, an other to himself, through the very fact that he hears himself talk, and replies. The mechanism of introspection is therefore given in the social attitude which man necessarily assumes toward

himself, and the mechanism of thought, in so far thought uses symbols which are used in social intercourse, is but an inner conversation."[viii] Self is now seen to be a matter of relationship; or of a process involving language, gestures and actions, through which an individual sees himself as he is seen by others (in his own role) and also imagines himself to be *other* (playing the role of *other*). It is this continuous exchange of "roles" that validates self in Mead's opinion. Registering many other contributions– Erving Goffman's in the 1960s is too notable not to mention–, role theory has made quite an impact in the related fields of psychology, sociology, anthropology, and literature. Without having reason to deny, despite its limitations, the importance of the passage in the *Principles* on the plurality of social selves, it serves nonetheless to highlight what appears to be James's misplaced emphasis on the autonomy of self, and, in contrast to contemporary Emersonians who are arguing for a social relevance of Emerson's thinking, to show as groundless the much celebrated notion of self-reliance so dear to James too.

But James's *self* could be found objectionable for some other reasons that are impossible to eschew in a post-Freudian age. It might give the impression that it is little disposed to harbour conflicts, its superior constituents having the potential to grow and so, sooner or later--depending on how systematic the faculty of *will* is appealed to–, be invested with enough power to hold rebellious impulses in check. However, James does not conceive of *self* as really hospitable to harmony; on the contrary, he sees the "different selves" in perpetual "rivalry and conflict" (309). One of them is found to be more important than the others, that is, chosen as more worthy, which makes of the inner battle something not entirely independent of choice. The *material self*, the *social self*, and the *spiritual self* count differently for different men, argues James, some staking everything on the first, others, on the second; as for the third, it too can be (to some others, of course) "so supremely precious that rather than lose it, a man ought to be willing to give up friends and good fame, and property, and life itself" (315). Had James been eager to illustrate in the subsequent editions of his *Principles*, the statement given in the above quotation, he could have found a very relevant example near at hand at the close of the decade: Chopin's Edna Pontellier simply echoes his words when trying to make herself understood by Adèle Ratignolle.

Yet, neither "rivalry" nor "conflict" adumbrates the use of similar terms in Freud; and this because James's "constituents" can be all *known*, none of them being relegated to the level of the unconscious; which is not to say that he paid little heed to psychic states that fall outside the pale of *self* as outlined above. "Facts of subconscious personality," "buried feelings and thoughts" (227) preoccupy him a lot, but they are seen to belong to what he calls *secondary personal selves* that cannot be exactly identified with the Freudian unconscious. [ix]

Secondary selves, the English counterpart of *secondary personalities* as known in French psychology–James showed interest in the work of Pierre Janet–are understood to "form conscious unities, have continuous memories, speak, write, invent distinct names for themselves, or adopt names that are suggested." Nevertheless, they "are cut off at ordinary times from communication with the regular and normal self of the individual," "and are for the most part very stupid and contracted" (227). Buried deep down most of the time, they are likely to surface under conditions that, being specific to recipients of hypnosis, subjects of automatic writing, and mediums, are anything but "regular" and "normal" (227). Hence the interest James took in such cases, which however in no way blinded him to the fact that deception could be frequent.

Unlike Janet who is reported to have believed that the *secondary selves* looked upon as abnormal resulted from the splitting of "what ought to be a single complete self into two parts" (227), James was tempted to hold a somewhat different view on the matter: only "an inferior fraction of the subject's natural mind" (228) constituted itself as a secondary self; moreover, it is this minor component that appears to be acted upon by the more general ambience to which it has been exposed. It is in secondary selves that one should look for "the prejudices of the social environment" (228) and his examples, if accurate, are relevant in a larger sense. Thus he distinguishes between the messages conveyed by mediums in "a spiritualistic community" and in "an ignorant Catholic village," respectively: the former are "optimistic," the latter, presumably delivered by a demon, "frightening and obscene." Coming from a psychologist who, as shown above, insisted on the isolation of *self*, the idea might shock a bit, or, on the contrary, might encourage one to see it as evidence that James's *self* was not so isolated after all.

Dislocations of the "regular" and "normal" self are not confined, however, to the very special cases of hypnosis, automatic writing, and medium trance; in milder forms they occur in everyday life, and are often quite difficult to recognize as such. The part played by memory in changing the *me* is a case in point. It merits a mention as it sheds some light on how "fiction" constantly extends its dominion over "truth" making quite debatable the boundary separating them. It is not so much that "false memories affect the *me*," as that responsible for falsehood, in this particular instance, is no one but our*selves*. As James writes:

> The most frequent of false memory is the account we give to others of our experiences. Such accounts we almost always make both more simple and more interesting than the truth. We quote what we should have said or done, rather than what we really said or did; and in the first telling we may be fully aware of the distinction. But ere long the fiction expells the reality from memory and reigns in its stead alone (373-74).

Whereas James's description of consciousness as stream would find a fictional analogue several decades later, his discussion of self, or rather selves, and of the rivalries between their voices, might be recognized, even if indirectly, in the fiction of the 1890s. As a rule, the crises experienced by a number of protagonists, which may be triggered by several reasons that are culturally relevant, involve their social selves, but they often do this in ways that unveil their fictitious nature.

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Clothes as viewed by a sociologist. As mentioned earlier, unlike Isabel Archer, Serena Merle cannot think of her self otherwise than unrelated; that is, otherwise than being social (what is *ex-pressed* makes no meaning without a receiver of what is *pressed out*, which is to say that there is no expression outside relation). A large part of herself being in the clothes she is wearing, they are understood to be expressive in this sense, that is, in bringing her self out for other people to recognize for what it is.

It is tempting to remark that her views find an endorsement in a text that, published a little while before the 1890s reached its end, was to become a classic. Indeed, in "Dress as an Expression of Pecuniary Culture,"

chapter VII of *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), Thorstein Veblen argues that the major function of clothes is to convey certain social messages, those about the status of the wearer being among the most notable. More important than protecting the body, rendering it a "mechanical service,"[x] are the meanings meant for other people to read. If, in a sense, that was true of most societies, it was incomparably more so of modern ones, of which America at the time supplied the most telling example.

The terms used by Veblen in his argument need to be mentioned, all the more so as they have made quite a career in American culture. Thus the "leisure class" exemplified in the 1890s by the business class that came into being after the Civil War and had had an incentive in "invidious distinction" (17), or "invidious comparison" (18), terms not unrelated to competition, takes its identity from what he calls "conspicuous leisure" and "conspicuous consumption." Viewed in the context of American society, it is regressive as it looks for its models in the aristocratic past, fashioning itself on "barbarian" attitudes. (In *Culture and Anarchy*, Matthew Arnold too referred to the aristocrats as "Barbarians" and opposed them to the Philistines, on the one hand, and the Populace on the other.) The leisure class is set in contrast to industrial and industrious classes that by virtue of "the instinct for workmanship"[xi] are engaged in technological progress and in producing material goods, though, in another sense, the former is seen to have evolved from the latter. Of course, the process did not come to an end at the turn of the century. At the time, however, they represented two major tendencies in American society.

Although the leisure class is defined in terms of non-utility, "leisure" is not to be understood as connoting indolence. "What it connotes," writes Veblen, "is non-productive consumption of time. Time is consumed non-productively (1) from a sense of the unworthiness of productive work, and (2) as an evidence of pecuniary ability to afford a life of idleness" (28). A life of leisure is regulated by a code of its own that sets great store by a set of skills and accomplishments to be classed as "branches of learning" and such "social facts" as "manners and breeding, polite usage, decorum, and formal and ceremonial observances generally" (29). It goes without saying that none of these skills can be acquired otherwise than by investing time

and efforts; however, these last are not to be publicly exhibited; it is only the leisure that should be brought before the public eyes; it alone should be made "conspicuous" in the sense of being easily seen or noticed, readily observable.

Without ceasing to count in defining the leisure class of modern societies, leisure tends nevertheless to lose in importance in comparison with conspicuous consumption. (The career the latter has made stands proof of the relevance it has for this type of society, especially the American one.) Conspicuous consumption takes its meaning not only from the fact that one has the pecuniary capacity to indulge in a large amount of goods. As they are subject to constant innovation, they come to be preferred in their innovated form because of their higher efficiency. "But that does not remain the sole purpose of their consumption," points out Veblen. "The canon of reputability is at hand and seizes upon such innovations as are, according to its standard, fit to survive. Since the consumption of these more excellent goods is an evidence of wealth, it becomes honorific; and conversely, the failure to consume in due quantity and quality becomes a mark of inferiority and demerit" (74).

As the title of his book indicates, Veblen's concern is to evolve a theory of the leisure class; nonetheless, many of his observations and even concepts have a wider support. "Conspicuous consumption" supplies perhaps the best example. As Veblen notes, in modern civilized communities, the leisure class being the highest stratum of the social structure, "its standards of worth afford the norms of reputability for the whole community" (52). Their propagation downwards is largely helped by the tendency of the boundaries between social classes to become less rigid. "The result is," concludes Veblen, "that the members of each stratum accept as their ideal of decency the scheme of life in vogue in the next higher stratum, and bend their energies to live up to that ideal" (52). Mention should be made that whereas the demands of leisure decrease as one goes down the scale, those of consumption seldom cease to excise their exacting price. "No class of society, not even the most abjectly poor," observes Veblen, "foregoes all customary consumption. Very much of squalor and discomfort will be endured before the last trinket or the last pretence of pecuniary decency is put away" (53).

Generally, the social message conveyed by dress derives from its falling within the range of consumption. The message is however a privileged one in point of visibility: it leaps to the eye. Its greater significance in modern societies follows on the increasing role conspicuous consumption tends to have, although leisure too is given expression in dress. In fact, when meeting the highest demands made on it, dress is not only expensive, not only bespeaks pecuniary strength, but it also fully testifies to abstention from productive work. Veblen was in no difficulty to illustrate his point as he particularly had in view the fashion of his time, and indeed "the patent-leather shoe," "the stainless linen," "the lustrous cylindrical hat," and "the walking stick" bear out his observations about the man of leisure (105).

As for the woman of leisure, things are a bit more complicated. If her "apparel" is more conspicuously conspicuous with respect to both leisure and consumption, the explanation is to be found, opines Veblen, in the relation of subservience in which she stands to her husband. That she is simply and purely owned is something on which, we recall, William James agreed. (Apparently, Veblen's women readers responded favourably to the book considering that it did full justice to their condition.) Confirming her status of servant, Veblen is preoccupied with looking at it from a historical perspective. He argues that, without changing in substance, it had assumed new forms in accordance with the economic condition in one stage or another of historical development; from being directly engaged in productive work, some women, the women of the leisure class, have come to receive a status defined by Veblen in terms of vicarious leisure and vicarious consumption; vicarious, because

> the women being not their masters, obvious expenditure and leisure on their part would redound to the credit of their master rather than to their own credit; and therefore the more expensive and the more obviously unproductive the women of the household are, the more creditable and more effective for the purpose of the reputability of the household or its head will their life be. So much so that the women have been required not only to afford evidence of a life of leisure, but even to disable themselves for useful activity (111).

Given the status of women requiring of them to display leisure and expenditure for the purpose of calling attention to their masters, their dress is expected to meet these requirements more specifically, that is, to be

more markedly expressive of expenditure–Veblen's other term for it is "waste"–and of absolute disability to have anything to do with productive work. The discomfort caused by certain clothing–the high heel, the skirt, the bonnet, the corset–is not unrelated, argues Veblen, to this last message: by limiting the body's movements and standing in its way, they speak more clearly than words do that the wearer is out of touch with the sphere of productive work.

In view of what has been said so far, it can be almost taken for granted that Veblen was not indifferent to one more requirement: dress should be fashionable. Indeed, the phenomenon of changing styles, accelerating with each passing year, occupies him a good deal, and it is hardly surprising that in explaining it, he falls back on his key concepts: conspicuous consumption and conspicuous waste. In taking this line he has in mind the contrast between fashions in modern societies, speedily succeeding each other, and, on the other hand, the "stable costumes" characteristic of communities that are "relatively homogenous, stable, and immobile" (108); also the fact that the latter owe their status to leisure rather than to expenditure, unlike the former where the converse is true. Just as any other goods under the law of consumption are in process of continuous innovation, so dress is made fashionable over and over again; and just as they are preferred in their innovated form not because they are better, but because expenditure or waste is honorific in itself, so the dress in vogue gets precedence over all the others for a similar reason: it publicizes pecuniary strength. However, the explanation is, in his view, still in need of completion.

When reasoning along the lines mentioned above, Veblen is not unmindful of the aesthetic sense dress is expected to gratify. He believes, however, that pecuniary culture is less and less in a position to do justice to the artistic for the very reason that "the norm of conspicuous waste is incompatible with the requirement that dress should be beautiful or becoming"(108). His explanation is grounded in an observation of psychological nature: "wastefulness is offensive to native taste" (108); otherwise stated, the aesthetic sense objects to whatever gives the impression of a mere display that has no other justification other than its own futility. One conclusion would be that, as dress meets the increasing demands of

consumption, it tends to lose its artistic attributes: and, moreover, that it is in reaction to this process that change is resorted to, which, leading to more wastefulness, favours the process instead of opposing it. As Veblen puts it

> the more imperatively will the law of conspicuous waste assert itself in matters of dress, the more will the sense of beauty tend to fall in abeyance or be overborne by the canon of pecuniary reputability, the more rapidly will fashions shift and change, and the more grotesque and intolerable will be the varying styles that successively come into vogue (109-110).

The last part of his statement is, of course, open to debate. As to the explanation he gives to the ever more rapid change in fashion, the law of conspicuous waste accounts for it only in part. An impulse behind it has been the very technological progress bringing along a speed-up of reproduction, of imitation that makes for sameness. Together with the mass media and packaging, fashion is a domain where simulation is at its most visible. The phenomenon was intuited by Stephen Crane who in *Maggie* gives one of its earliest versions.

3

A LITERARY SCENE WITH SIX PERSONAGES

Generations, old and young. It is difficult to say whether by comparison the 1890s figures more frequently, for better or worse, in the biographies of American writers. Considered in terms of the calendar, literary chronologies evince more or less the same pattern: exits from the stage–literary or otherwise–are concomitant with debuts, either in literature or life. While of necessity confirming it, the decade under discussion does so in ways that call attention to a characteristic of its own; this time exits from and debuts in life are disposed symmetrically, being grouped, the former up to around 1896, the latter announcing themselves in the remaining years, as if in anticipation of the literary fame of the century to be shortly ushered in.

Indeed, the writers born in the second half of the 1890s would make a significant contribution to American literature, to American fiction in particular. At one period or another in the present century they would be considered to be worthy of emulation, not only in America, but elsewhere as well. Although hierarchies have lost their hold on us to a considerable extent–Americans have been all along suspicious of them–it seems almost impossible to speak of William Faulkner (b.1897), Ernest Hemingway (b.1898), F. Scott Fitzgerald (b.1896), and John Dos Passos (b.1896), if not as towering figures of American literature, at least as authors of fictional works that have had a large share in shaping the twentieth-century mind.

Continuity seems thus to have the support of chronology, for the decade that saw the birth of the generation that, though lost in a sense, won world-wide prestige for the American novel, opened under a different sign: Herman Melville died in 1891. It is true, at the time he seemed to have

closed his career as a fiction writer several decades earlier; and although he continued to publish poetry, to which he had turned after his experience of writing *The Confidence Man* (1857), he "cultivated obscurity as a defence and resisted all attempts to bring himself and his work before the public."[i] His life "a near blank"[ii] when looked at from the outside, and the fame he had known as author of *Typee* too remote to be remembered, it is small wonder that his death passed little noticed: his very name was misspelled in the obituary. It took another three decades or so to realize–Melville was discovered in the 1920s–that it was in the early years of 1890s that the last great figures of the American Renaissance, having outlived not only the literary period they so substantially helped to establish, but also the Age of Realism that followed it, made their final exits. Walt Whitman died in 1892, but, unlike Melville, insisted to the end that he should be connected to the world. An invalid after a paralytic stroke he had suffered in 1873, he turned Camden where he had made his abode into a place of pilgrimage: visitors from the States and abroad, especially England, where his vogue was high at the time, took the journey for the purpose of meeting the poet of *Leaves of Grass*; and, though busy with the ninth edition of his work, Whitman seldom disappointed them.

However, the established writers of the 1890s were not among Whitman's admirers. Neither were they among Poe's, even if some notable attempts were made in the decade to arouse American interest in the poet who in France and elsewhere in Europe, including Romania, had been long worshipped. *The Chap-Book* (May 1894-July 1898), an avant-garde semi-monthly, issued in the wake of *The Yellow Book* and published in Chicago, led quite a campaign for Poe, something not to overlook, of course, when considering Poe's reception in his own country, a reception generally qualified at best as indifferent.

The poetic achievement that, to their credit, the 1890s readily acknowledged was of an earlier date. A selection of Emily Dickinson's poems came out in 1891, and it not only received a laudatory and insightful review by the leading critic of the time, W. D. Howells, but also forcefully challenged Stephen Crane's poetic imagination; apparently, a number of poems to be included later in his volume of verse *The Black Riders and other lines* (1895) were written under the immediate impact of Dickinson.

That Howells's acknowledgment of "the rare and strange spirit she was" [iii] was ignored by subsequent critics of both Dickinson and Howells might be due to the label attached to Howells in the present century: there could be only incompatibility between the champion of the "genteel tradition" and "the rare and strange spirit" Emily Dickinson was.

As a matter of fact, an image of W. D. Howells as too staunch a supporter of the establishment and its moral conventions was beginning to take shape in mid-1890s.[iv] It was the *Chap-Book* that was largely responsible for it; in the name of art, the avant-garde periodical dealt repeated blows at the high prestige that the writer was enjoying at the time. With three full decades of literary and editorial activity behind him, Howells had become by 1890 an authority that had an important say in American literature. One can take some measure of his influence in the 1880s, if mention is made that when he moved from Boston to New York in 1889, the event was invested with a significance that went beyond biography: the new resident imparted to New York the renown of having succeeded Boston as the cultural center of America, a glory to be, however, shortly shared with Chicago. For more than a decade he had been looked upon not only as a major fiction writer and critic, but also as the leading voice of his generation, as if he were acting out his name in a sense that established him as the Dean of American letters.

As for Howells's generation, as things must have appeared at the time, it included writers like Mark Twain, two years his senior, and like Henry James, six years his junior, and, of course, many others who were born in the thirties and forties, that is, at the time when the writers of the American Renaissance were authoring their works or were about to. As the decade opened, Howells, James, and Twain, now in their fifties or late forties, had quite a substantial past behind them. A great part of their best fiction had already been written. *Huckleberry Finn*, a masterpiece of American literature, was six years old, although few people at the time including Twain were aware that it could aspire to such a status. Indeed the name of Mark Twain was famous all over the world, but since his reputation was that of a humorist, the canon of American literature was very slow to include him. It is highly relevant in this connection that prior to 1890, apart from Howells's reviews, only one critical piece was devoted

to Twain in *The Atlantic Monthly*, the periodical that had been instrumental in promoting the literary values of the age. This was a review of his book *Life on the Mississippi*, written by one of the critics of the *Atlantic*, G.P.Lathrop and published in 1883. ("Mark Twain as an Interpreter of the American character," an essay by Charles Miner Thompson, was to follow in 1897.[v])

If Twain gave twentieth-century students of *The Atlantic Monthly* the occasion to take stock of a serious omission–some explanation for it will be given further down–, James for his part inspired a different kind of comment: he "published virtually all his work in the Atlantic."[vi] This is likely to qualify his absence from the American scene in ways that considerably question its meaning. Although he had lived in Europe since 1876–first in France, then in England and spent long periods of time in Italy, visiting his native country only occasionally–, to speak of his absence from America is, in a very important sense, contradicted by his continuous presence there in a form that essentially defines him as a writer.

By casting a backward glance in 1890, he could feel secure as an author. What is now commonly regarded as two fairly distinct periods in his career were behind him: the early stories and novels to which *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881) rated by some, F.R.Leavis[vii] for instance, as the best part of his work, marked the end, and, on the other hand, the works of the 1880s–*The Princess Casamassima* and *The Bostonians*–conceived on a larger scale than the former, and giving far more prominence to the political and social dimension. However, as the 1890s opened, James felt impelled to put an end to his career as a novelist. To his brother William, who had just praised the newly published *Tragic Muse*, James wrote in May 1890 that "The Tragic Muse is to be my last long novel. For the rest of my life," he continued, "I hope to do lots of short things with irresponsible spaces between them."[viii] In fact, at the time, he was contemplating a shift from novel writing to drama.

His decision was not unrelated, it seems, to the cold reception given to *The Princess Casamassima* and especially to *The Bostonians* in the States. (A perceptive reader of James's fiction as usual, Howells was among the few readers who stood in disagreement with the more general attitude;

another was William James who was hardly an uncritical reader of his brother's novels.) Of course, James's life-long passion for the theatre, his familiarity with its world and protagonists counted heavily in his option, and once he had got engaged in playwriting, he must have felt the challenge coming from both Oscar Wilde and Ibsen, even if he was remarkably consistent in paying his tribute to Victorien Sardou, Emile Augier, and Dumas *fils*.

However, the literary fame of the 1890s rests only in part–a good part, it is true, but still a part–with the writers who were now ever more often in the mood to speak of "the thickening fog of life."[ix] As the decade began, a younger generation including Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Kate Chopin, and Hamlin Garland came on to the literary stage; others, like Harold Frederic, had already made their appearance at the end of the 1880s. Except for Hamlin Garland, none of those mentioned above was to know the mood that visited Howells, Twain, and James in the 1890s. Of them, only Frank Norris and Kate Chopin outlived the nineteenth century, and they did so by two and four years respectively.

By associating its literary career exclusively with that decade, the younger generation appears to belong to it in a more intimate way. Its achievements can hardly be ignored when the fiction of that short period is under discussion. At the same time, being compelled to make too abrupt an exit from literature and life, prominent writers such as Crane, Norris, and Frederic left behind them a feeling of loss that has been barely mitigated with the passage of time. Indeed, theirs was a lost generation–a meaning, among others, to which Larzer Ziff's subtitle to his book *The American 1890s* clearly points. For Stephen Crane and his peers no recovery was possible as it would be for the other, far better known lost generation that, as mentioned earlier, was born in the 1890s, and was to reach literary maturity a couple of decades later; with few exceptions, the writers belonging to it, were not strangers to the mood induced by "the thickening fog of life."

In a literary sense the lost generation of the 1890s was of course recovered. What becomes increasingly evident to anyone casting a backward glance to the last *fin de siècle* is that part of Hemingway's performance was simply to *re-cover* Stephen Crane. Once *dis-covered* as a journalist

whose knowledge of the events demanded close proximity to their immediate flavour, be their place near or far-off, Cuba or Greece, and as a writer whose personality bears the imprint of that dangerous exposure, Crane is likely to appear as an earlier version of the formidable author who at one time created almost a myth from his celebration of experience.

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To focus on a narrow span of time in the literary lives of a small number of writers, who were contemporary with each other and each contributed at least a significant work to this decade in American literary history, is to better see that none of them, not even Kate Chopin, created in complete isolation from his or her culture. What can be well discerned is that most of them were connected by bonds that, apart from helping them out of their entanglements at one moment or another, gave them a chance to carry on more than one dialogue with one another–an important aspect of their relationship with their culture–that were not without bearing on their writings; and these in turn offered further incentive for discussion, as their letters, reviews, and essays stand ample proof.

In a sense, this holds true of the writers of the American Renaissance, despite their reputed isolation, self-centredness, and reluctance to articulate their thoughts when in company. They too were eager to form literary attachments and, sooner or later, reaped benefit from them. In his house at Walden, Thoreau valued his chair for solitude a good deal--the other two, we recall, were for friendship and society respectively--, but for all its asperities, his relation to Emerson was not without merit at the human and creative level, though such a distinction is not so easy to make. Embraced by many of them when in company, silence advanced communication and rendered them "sociable." Melville, "so silent a man that he was complained of a great deal on this account" found that "Hawthorne's great but hospitable silence drew him out–that it was astonishing how *sociable* his silence was (...) sometimes they would walk along without talking on either side, but that even then they seemed to be very social."[x] Howells too had his share of Hawthornes's silence apparently still vivid in his memory long after

their meeting in 1860. "Hawthorne took me up on the hill behind Wayside," he recalls the event in a letter of 1890, "and we had a silence of half an hour together."[xi]

There is, however, a difference with respect to their sense of relatedness between Hawthorne, Melville, and Thoreau–Emerson's name might be mentioned alongside theirs–and the writers of our concern; and this does not wholly lie in the little aversion to articulating words the latter showed. Both Mark Twain and Henry James were known in the 1890s as great talkers. One even had behind him a career as platform speaker to which, as shown further down, he was to return in the early years of the decade; the other, having conquered a reticence due to stammering, was already famous in London drawing rooms for his impressive, if not baffling, verbal resourcefulness. Not only London society, but his American visitors had their share of James's talk. The fact that he was a conspicuous London presence–he dined out a good deal at the time–should not make us ignore that he was often in company of his country-men, even repeatedly playing host to them, especially after June 1898 when he moved to Lamb House in Rye. One of his first visitors at the new place was Sarah Orne Jewett who had published her masterpiece, *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, two years earlier.

If, in the 1890s, writers felt more closely connected with one another than did their predecessors in the pre-Civil War period, that can be more generally accounted for by the changes that had affected literary culture as a whole. One was anticipated when mention was made of Howells's editorial activity. The periodicals associated with him, such as the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper's Monthly–Scribner's Monthly* (later *The Century*) belonged to the same category–, were instrumental in establishing a set of literary values and in creating a space where they could be shared. Falling under the heading of "realism" in the post-Civil War decades and sometimes labelled as "genteel" in the early years of the present century, this type of literature takes part of its distinguishing note from the attempt to confer a higher status to the writer and to view the literary work as in itself valuable and as such worthy of interest and esteem. Seriousness and distinction were claimed to be among its most important attributes, in contrast to

popular fiction written by women that had supplied most of the best sellers at the mid-nineteenth-century, as well as to the so-called dime novels or Beadle novels–Beadle was the name of the publisher–presenting for the most part success stories.

Often criticized as too exclusive and evincing domineering tendencies in the sense of trying to impose its own canons on American culture as a whole, the literary culture promoted by the periodicals mentioned above had merits that need to be stressed. Among them are "the superior power of cultural definition it succeeded in achieving" and the campaign it led for "getting literature to be taken seriously by large masses of Americans of quite other cultural traditions than the gentry's." Note should be taken that in the later nineteenth century it "succeeded in creating, it may be, the closest thing to a coherent national culture that America has ever had."[xii] On the other hand, the high premium put on seriousness explains why the American canon was so slow to include Mark Twain, no matter how strongly Howells had supported him, and why the humorists in general were little present, if at all, in *The Atlantic Monthly*.[xiii]

As to the more immediate concerns of American literature at the time, Howells's *Criticism and Fiction*, to which one of the next chapters is devoted, is sure to supply a good occasion to get somewhat familiar with them. It was their sense of belonging to "a coherent national culture" that lends the writers supplying the focus of the present discussion a representative American quality, no matter how deep their interest in other literary traditions was, and how eager they were to form literary relationships outside their own culture. They did not need to live in America to write American books. It is not lacking in relevance to note that of the six novels discussed here only half were written in America; *Pudd'nhead Wilson* was written in Italy, whereas *What Maisie Knew* and *Theron Ware* in England. Not only James who never set foot in his native country throughout the 1890s, but also Twain and Frederic were living abroad at the period, paying only occasional visits to America. In 1897 Stephen Crane made England his abode too, and except for the period when he covered the war in Cuba, was to live there to the end of his life. The remaining two writers, W. D. Howells and Kate Chopin, might be more

significantly associated with the center, Boston followed by New York, and the margin, St. Louis, were it not that the American margin was even in later nineteenth century in need of serious qualification.

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(Mutual) Recognition. Distances, no matter how long, were more and more easily bridged as the 1890s gained in speed. One notable effect was that the literary and cultural space created by literary periodicals that functioned according to the laws of the mind rather than of geography was increasingly felt to be extensible in ways that rendered the national frontiers less limitary. Inhabiting it even when living in England, Italy or Germany, James, Frederic and Twain contributed to defining it as much as the writers living in America; and they did so by the fictions they wrote, as well as by the criticism and reviews published in America.

As mentioned above, with a few exceptions, the writers of the 1890s were bound by strong ties. It is true, they did not form a homogeneous group; neither did they emulate or support each other's work with the same zeal. In fact, the relation existing between Twain and James was far from friendly. More articulate as to his literary antipathy, Twain made public his decision concerning *The Bostonians*. "I would rather be damned to John Bunyan's heaven than read that," [xiv] he asserted, being under the impression that James's fiction, like Jane Austen's before it–she too was held in contempt by Twain–, was narrow in range and obsessively monochromatic. James for his part could have easily used Twain's fiction to illustrate the type of novel lacking in the artistic qualities that were his ambition to bring to the fore. Part of the disagreement between the two writers was due, needless to say, to their allegiance to different fictional traditions: one, older, reaching back to the Spanish picaresque and, as employed by Twain, often taking its substance from frontier culture; the other, of a later date, making of the character and inner life "the center of command" and insisting on control and discipline in matters of narration.

There was mutual dislike not only between James and Twain, but also between James and Frederic. Frederic's last fourteen years were spent in England as London editor of the New York *Times*. His novels, all written

in England of which *The Damnation of Theron Ware* is considered to be his masterpiece, won for him a certain reputation in the literary world of London; at any rate, he was better known in England than in America. Socially, however, he had to suffer the consequences of his apparently disordered domestic life: he was known to spend the week with his common-law wife and their children and visit his first wife and her children on the weekend. Most likely, James, for whom all London drawing rooms were open, irritated him on that account; besides, although at the time James was not a widely read author, he was nonetheless the *Master* who was revered by disciples among whom were Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford. That he was surrounded by such admirers who emulated his achievement increased, it seems, Frederic's irritation.

In comparison with aversion keeping writers apart, affection keeping them together proved to be far stronger. In this connection W. D. Howells's function as a ligament in the literary body of the 1890s can be hardly overrated. By dint of his editorial position in American culture and the high prestige he enjoyed in American letters he had enormous influence which he could readily use to encourage or discourage aspirants in the literary profession, as well as promote or obstruct literary interests. The fact that he was most often supportive, rather than inhibitory, reveals his intelligence and insight in literary matters and, no less, his sympathetic and generous nature. His friendship with Henry James and Mark Twain and the prop he gave Stephen Crane–to mention only the writers on whom the present book focuses–counted heavily in the career and achievement of each of them. Along the same lines, mention should be made that in 1897, a year before he died, Harold Frederic expressed his regret that Howells never told him how he had been struck by *The Damnation of Theron Ware*, declaring himself all the same to be "a Howells man to the end."[xv]

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In 1890, Howells's literary relation to Henry James had a history behind it that roughly coincided with their careers as writers. About a quarter of a century old now–they met in 1866–their friendship had not been spared disagreements that at one time tended to deepen into a parting

of the ways. As their dialogue triggered by the appearance of James's *Hawthorne* in 1879 clearly indicates, these had to do in the main with their attitude toward the American tradition, or rather with whether or not American culture met the demands of a novelist, and if it did, how successfully. By claiming that "the flower of art blooms only where the soil is deep, that it takes a great deal of history to produce a little literature, that it needs a complex social machinery to set a writer in motion," [xvi] James was sure to diverge from Howells's view on the matter, a divergence further highlighted by both Howells's review of the book and the letters they subsequently exchanged. James's catalogue of British assets that were absent from American culture made little impression on Howells, as he, in no way, conditioned "truth to life" on their presence.

Although less harmonious and warm than in the previous decades due especially to their discord as to whether or not America was congenial to the novelist, the James-Howells relationship after 1880 never ceased, however, to be of consequence to either of them. It is worthy of note in this connection that an essay on James that Howells wrote in 1882 reveals, apart from a high appreciation of James's art as a novelist, a grasp of the literary forces at work which would be endorsed by literary historians of the present century. In asserting that "the new school derives from Hawthorne and George Eliot" and is "influenced by French fiction in form," [xvii] Howells turned out to be one of the earliest critics to shed light on literary traditions behind James's work, for, there was no doubt about it: James was the most outstanding representative of "the new school." By laying bare James's relation to Hawthorne, Howells not only indirectly submitted James's estimation of Hawthorne to a more serious revision, but also called attention to a line of continuity in the American literary tradition that placed James in the wake of writers from whom he distanced himself in an attempt that can be read now as a good illustration of "the anxiety of influence."

Howells's admiration for James's fiction was genuine, and it continued to be made manifest both publicly and in private throughout the 1890s. A letter of 1894 acknowledges James's artistic power and the exemplary value his achievement had for the younger generation in words that do full justice to the writer's real status. "I wished to say to you,"

wrote Howells to James less than a month before the ruinous evening of the performance of *Guy Domville*, "that so far as literary standing is concerned there is no one who has your rank among us. That is, you, and not I, or another, are he on whom the aspiring eyes are bent of those that hope to do something themselves." [xvii]

Certainly, James knew he had no reason to disagree with Howells's rating. Much as he lauded Howells as editor and novelist--"my heart warmed itself over in the glow of your praise,"[xix] the latter would exclaim in 1898--he was too deeply committed to his art not to bring it to bear on the novel he was reading at one time or another. As he confessed several years later to H.G.Wells, he had made a habit to re-write--imaginatively, of course--the books of other novelists.

Taking stock of Howells's novelistic achievement in an essay written in 1886, four years, that is, after Howells's "Henry James, Jr.," he was tempted to view it as an expression of the writer's interest in "the common, the immediate, the familiar and vulgar elements of life." Needless to say, James's praise goes to *The Rise of Silas Lapham* published a year before. The large number of superlatives emphasizing Howell's merits hardly camouflage, however, the criticism he levels at his friend. Howells's novels exhibit "so small a perception of evil" [xx] that the impression they are likely to leave is that American life excells in innocence. The catalogue of good things prevailing in Howells's world, which James offers by way of illustration, is fairly long, it is true; but it is difficult to say, judging at least by *An Imperative Duty*, that evil could be barred off from Howells world, or for that matter from the world of any other American writer. Besides, one should not lose sight of the fact that Howells's critic was a writer who in the opinion of some of his readers possessed "a sense of evil religious in its intensity." [xxi]

The other regrets James expresses can be easily predicted, for they are usually occasioned by writers who make use of a different narrative formula, no matter whether their work could be described as "a wonderful mass of life"--Tolstoy's, for instance. Thus Howells seems to belong with those of his peers who "hold composition too cheap." His disregard for "execution" is especially visible in the tendency "to tell his story altogether in conversations," denying himself thereby the aesthetic benefit that results

from interspacing them with "narrative and pictorial matter;" or, in James's view, "the divinest thing in a valid novel is the compendious, descriptive, pictorial touch, *à la Daudet*." [xxii]

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Howells's high rating of Henry James did not prevent him from enjoying his Mark Twain, and, more importantly, from giving an estimate of his work that takes full measure of Twain's contribution to American fiction. Their relationship, affectionate from the start, continued to gain in warmth over the decades belying Twain's fame that constancy in literary affection was not his strong point. (Bret Harte was only one of a series of ex-friends.) Late in life, especially on Twain's return to America after his long European sojourn of the 1890s, they often kept each other company and had "high good times denouncing everything." [xxiii] Events such as the war against Spain subsequently invested with the significance of marking the rise of the United States as a world power were disapproved and so was the Boer war and war generally. "Clemens is, as I have always known him, a most right-minded man, and of course he has an intellect that I enjoy" –this is how Howells saw his friend in 1901.[xxiv]

As for Twain the writer, the terms in which about the same time Howells expressed his admiration –"what a fame and force he is!"–appear to sum up an appreciation along different lines from what he had in mind when eulogizing Henry James.[xxv] That he could respond as enthusiastically to differences so striking, is proof that he was anything but a narrowly biased prude.

Howells's pioneer criticism of Twain is worthy of note as it brings to the fore some of his crucial merits. Writing on him shortly after the nineties had run their course, Howells signalled an issue which since then has been accepted as a commonplace: Twain's achievement is a performance in language; a performance grounded in a language awareness that lays the emphasis on its referential power rather than on its memory. Twain writes English, notes Howells,

as if it were a primitive and not a derivative language, without Gothic or Latin, or Greek behind it, or German and French beside it. The result is the English in which the most vital works of English literature are cast, rather than the English of Milton, and Thackeray, and Mr. Henry James. I do not say that the English of the authors last named is less than vital, but only that is not the most vital. It is scholarly and conscious; it knows who its grandfather was; it has the refinement and subtlety of an old patriciate. You will not have with it the widest suggestion, the largest human feeling, or perhaps the loftiest reach of imagination, but you will have the keen joy that exquisite artistry in words can alone impart, and that you will not have in Mark Twain. What you will have in him is a style which is as personal, as biographical as the style of any one who has written and expresses a civilization whose courage of chances, the preferences, the duties, is not the measure of its essential modesty. It has a thing to say, and it says it in the word that may be the first or second, or third choice, but will not be the instrument of the most fastidious ear, the most delicate and exacting sense, though it will be the word that surely and strongly conveys the intention from the author's mind to the reader's. It is the Abraham Lincoln word, not the Charles Sumnerian: it is American, Western.[xxvi]

What is especially tempting in Twain's voice which Howells identifies with the West and ultimately with America is, as he aptly puts it, "its indifference to its difference from the rest of the world." It seems that hierarchies and ratings which Howells had long cherished were losing some of their relevance. The need for a more radical readjustment to the American scene was now communicated to him by both Twain and the West. It asked for a recognition of differences and, with them, of acceptance of what these were. It is in such terms that the West and whatever it contributed to American culture were perceived by Howells. The awareness he was expressing now deserves to be more seriously taken into consideration as it put both national and regional identity in an altogether new perspective. The context in which he refers to "the indifference of the West to its difference from the rest of the world" highlights it even more:

(...) it is not claiming too much for the Western influence upon American literature to say that the final liberation of the East from this anxiety is due to the West, and to its ignorant courage or its indifference to its difference from the rest of the world. It would not claim to be superior as the South did, but it would claim to be humanly equal, and what it was, show itself without holding itself responsible for not being something else.[xxvii]

In his response to Twain and, closely connected with him, to the shift in perspective brought about by the West, Howells, if not exactly solitary, found himself in small company. As mentioned above, except for the period of his editorship when Twain's books were more regularly reviewed, most often by the editor himself, the *Atlantic* gave him little notice, or when it did, it was to call attention that he had long been accepted by the people, but never by the critics.[xxviii]

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In a letter addressed to Crane in January 1896, Howells wrote: "I am glad you are getting your glory young. For once, the English who habitually know nothing of art, seem to know something."[xxix] The allusion was to the strong impact Crane's novel of 1895, *The Red Badge of Courage*, was having in England. Harold Frederic had been one of the reviewers, and he not only did justice to the book by predicting it a long and brilliant career, but also advertised its author's success in New York *Times* in headlines like: "Stephen Crane's triumph. London Curious about the Identity of America's New Writer."[xxx] It is obvious that the letter was started under their immediate stimulus, for it is of the same date as the newspaper.

By the time Crane published *The Red Badge of Courage* and triggered off a kind of dispute between the English and the Americans as to where–England or America–he was first discovered, he had already gained a reputation as fiction writer and journalist among New York men of letters. No other critic than Howells responded enthusiastically to his first fiction, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, when it first came out in 1893. As shown further down, the early reception of the book not only in America, but also in England was connected with his name. He was tempted to consider it Crane's masterpiece, as the same letter makes clear. "For me," he confesses to Crane, "I remain true to my first love, 'Maggie.' That is better than all the Black Riders and Red Badges."[xxxi] As he later regarded Crane's collection of poems the best book of the year 1895, he implicitly rated it higher than the novel that from the start impressed its readers with its nuanaced psychological analysis. Irrespective of the particular terms in which he appreciated one work or another–he reviewed most of them

including *Black Riders* and *The Red Badge of Courage*–Howells invariably looked upon Crane as a full-fledged novelist and artist. Coming from Howells shortly after he had read *Maggie* such words as "Mr. Crane can do things that Clemens can't" meant the acceptance of the young writer on a par with the most important writers then living in America.[xxxii]

It is difficult to know whether Howells's response to *Maggie* would have been as enthusiastic, if Crane's name had been one among others. On the other hand, there is no reason to suppose that it should not have been. As his correspondence shows, he seldom, if ever, sounded otherwise than encouraging when speaking to or about young writers. At the same time it is not improper to presume that his enthusiasm over *Maggie* might have had an extra stimulus in Crane's declared allegiance to his own views of fiction. Even prior to his reading of *Maggie* Howells knew that as far as American fiction was concerned, he and Crane were meeting on common ground. Hamlin Garland had played the part of a go-between. An adept of Howells's literary programme, Garland was engaged in a campaign for disseminating it, to which end he was making use, in good American tradition, of the lecture platform. When in 1891 he lectured in a small town on the East coast, Crane was frequently one of his listeners as he had to cover the event for a New York publication. The article he published after hearing the lecture on Howells made such a deep impression on Garland that he expressed his wish to meet its author. The start was thus made for a literary relationship that would promptly bring Crane to Howells's notice and after the appearance of *Maggie* considerably contribute to establishing his reputation. Its benefic effects, however, went beyond that. According to Edwin H. Cady, Howells's "contact through Garland with Crane became one of the fateful inspirations of Crane's life."[xxxiii]

There is no doubt that Howells's criticism of Crane, appreciative for the most part, did the young writer good service. Even if it was somewhat lacking in precision as to Crane's innovative quality, it still did justice to his merits. Especially "New York Low Life in Fiction," an expanded version of "An Appreciation of W. D. H" that was added to the London edition (1896), gives Crane full credit for "the treatment" of his material. If, thematically, *Maggie* belongs with other novels inspired by New York slums –Howells makes a survey of them–it is their undisputed

superior when judged by its power to affect the reader. In an attempt to explain what he means by that kind of power he is tempted to lay store by the inexorable nature of the force that determinism represents in Crane's novel. The empathy the novel calls for in his view has much to do with "a question of inevitable suffering, or of a soul struggling vainly with an inexorable fate."[xxxiv] Understandably, Crane's novel invited comparison with *Jude the Obscure* that had come out a year before Howells wrote his essay. No less than Hardy's novel, *Maggie* evinces the "quality of fatal necessity which dominates Greek tragedy."[xxxv] *Maggie*'s company is anything but low. (It is proof of something other than prudery which one reads in Howells's disagreement with the English reviewers whose hostility to *Jude* reduced Hardy the novelist to silence after 1895.)

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Not only Howells, but Garland too, as Edwin H. Cady notes, "seem to have nerved, even in part inspired, him to the achievement of the 1893-95 period which made him great."[xxxvi] Whereas Howells's role had been acknowledged from the start, probably because Crane often expressed his gratitude to him, Garland's took far longer to be estimated. It seems that the lectures he gave in 1891 were more seminal than it was believed at the time, and one who profited a good deal from them was Stephen Crane. It was not only the views and achievement of W. D. Howells that supplied the focus of Garland's commentary, but impressionism as well.

Crumbling Idols, the book Garland published in 1894, was based on his 1891 lectures, and its subtitle "Twelve Essays on Art Dealing Chiefly with Literature Painting and the Drama" is relevant in this respect. The trend in painting that engaged his attention was French impressionism, and he approached it via Eugene Véron in an attempt to establish literary correlatives–generally covered by his term "veritism"–of effects associated with impressionistic painting. They had to do basically with the change in the apprehension of reality and the shift from the object as such on to the viewer's perception of it. It should be recalled that James's argument in "The Art of Fiction" (1884) had taken a similar course. He too was tempted to speak of the sense of reality, rather than reality and, consequently,

to underline the importance of impressions. Significantly, he laid his emphasis on the quality of impressions--his favourite term was consciousness–something that Garland seldom considered.

It needs to be mentioned that if Garland came to be challenged from a literary perspective by the particular mode in which painters created sensory effects of reality, that was largely due to the interest America took in the French paintings bearing its imprint. Apart from occasional contacts with such works, Americans were given the chance. as early as 1886, to see an exhibition including paintings by Monet, Degas, Manet, Pissarro, and Renoir. An American impressionism was not slow to emerge. James Whistler and Mary Cassatt, who at the beginning of their career had been directly exposed to the new vogue, were its best known representatives. (Their art, however, evolved along other lines as well.) In addition, mention should be made of John Twatcham and Childe Hassam; "Ten American Painters," an exhibition they opened together with some of their colleagues, stands proof that in 1895 impressionism was at home in America in more senses than one.[xxxvii]

Certainly, impressionism implying new terms in which reality could be grasped and conceptualized, and, closely connected with them, new strategies in rendering man's relation to his world, represented a more general attitude. Painting was only one of the fields in which it manifested itself, it is true, in forms that could hardly fail to attract notice. Crane's early exposure to Garland's ideas was shortly followed by close contacts with painters–for a time in 1892-93 he lived in the Art Students' League–had a share, no doubt, in increasing his awareness of the new possibilities opened for fiction and of what words and a mode of employing them–economical, and precisely because of that, suggestive–could do.

Crane was not the only one who felt the challenge. Not without casting a glance now and then in the direction of painting–the drama was more closely observed–Henry James had set himself a similar task long before the younger writer started his career. Although suggestiveness was to him a matter of many words rather than of few, he was prompt to acknowledge Crane's art. It was mutual recognition that characterized the relation of James and Crane, just as it did that of Conrad and Crane. Whereas during the first year Crane spent in England he found himself

quite frequently in Harold Frederic's company–his domestic life too encouraged it, as he had, like Frederic, a common-law wife–in his last years he often had the opportunity to come in touch with both Conrad and James, all the more so as, after James had started to live in Lamb House in 1898, they became "neighbours." Crane's friendship with Conrad is a chapter in his life that none of his biographers can ignore. On the other hand the connections formed among such writers as Crane, James, Conrad--all of them expatriates–are likely, among other things, to highlight the cosmopolitan nature of modernism even when the phenomenon was in its incipient phase, as well as the role which self-exile played in its emergence.

That Conrad was one of the first to associate Crane was impressionism indicates that he was well aware that the young American writer was in the same camp, artistically speaking. Crane's admiration for James's work, on the other hand, is also proof that, though different as to what they chose to "treat"–the Bowery or London fashionable society–, they both held art in respect. What Ford Madox Ford (Hueffer) later related about James and Crane is evidence that the Master had a high regard for the younger writer:

> James suffered infinitely for that dying boy, says Hueffer. He referred to Crane as' truly gifted...so very lovable.' James 'was forever considering devices for Crane's comfort. He telegraphed Wanamaker's for a whole collection of New England delicacies from pumpkin pie to apple butter and sausage meat and clams and soft shell crabs and minced meat and...everything thinkable, so that the poor lad should know once more and finally those fierce joys. Then new perplexities devastated him. Perhaps the taste of those far off eats might cause Stevie to be homesick and hasten his end.' [xxxviii]

Besides its relevance to James's relation to Crane, Ford's account gives further proof that the Master's passionate dedication to his art hardly made him immune to human worries.

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If Frederic played a role in launching Crane and his *Red Badge of Courage* into the literary world of the 1890s, and acclaimed him as a great writer, Crane too made quite a contribution to establishing Frederic's

literary reputation, especially in America where the latter was little known. The essay he published in the *Chap-Book* in 1898 might serve, even today, as an introduction to Frederic and his work. There are two biographical episodes that Crane throws in bold relief and both are connected with Frederic's childhood and boyhood spent in New York State. (Frederic was born in Utica.) There is the story of little Harold getting his first notion of the alphabet from the letters on an empty soap-box and of his experience as a milkman: of "the gray shine of the dawn that makes the snow appear the hue of lead, and, moreover, (of) his boysh pain at the task of throwing the stiff harness over the sleepy horse, and then (of) the long and circuitous sledding among the customers of the milk route." [xxxix]

The other story is as relevant to his place and times as the beginnings of the self-made man in America illustrated by his earliest occupations. He was too young to be called to arms when the Civil War broke out, but old enough to respond to the pain the slaughter caused to those left at home. What the war meant to the people behind the line of fight, the sadness of partings, the tragedy frequently visiting their homes, women in mourning attending to their daily jobs and doing the extra duties imposed on them by the war, were all recorded in the boy's sensibility and memory.

Three decades later, Harold Frederic having behind him a career as journalist in Utica and Albany and as London correspondent of the *New York Times*, would draw on these recordings and write the stories to be published under the title *In the Sixties*. Crane rates them very highly, above anything else Frederic wrote with the exception of *In the Valley* (1890), a novel set in colonial times "the best historical novel that our country has borne." [xl] Considered from a different perspective, not only these works, but Frederic's other novels as well stand proof that, despite the critics' allegations, books were being written at the time that took their substance from the American scene and history. Indeed the fictional world of *Seth's Brother's Wife* (1887), *The Lawton Girl* (1890) and *The Damnation of Theron Ware* has a counterpart in Frederic's native region as it was being transformed by the Civil War and technological progress while its men's and women's lives changed more or less abruptly for better or worse.

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A Southern voice. Far from being poor as one might surmise given her distance from Boston and New York, Kate Chopin's literary relationships are themselves an index of the diversity of American culture and literature in late nineteenth century, as well as of their ties with European tradition. Mention should be made from the outset that she made no exception to the role in which Southern writers were cast at the time

Hardly indifferent--even before the Civil war--to the Institution of literature on the way to being established in America too, of which some Northern publications were especially supportive, Southern writers had found themselves since the 1870s in the apparently invidious position of having become an object of interest on their part. Of course, no justice can be done to the phenomenon in general terms; however, some light on it is likely to be shed when taking note of the urge voiced loudly in Northern quarters that writers had better put on the map those areas of the United States perceived to be culturally remote, exotic, or, as the critics had it at the time, to have local color. Meant to subvert borrowings, English ones in the first place, by presenting American regional characteristics as more highly desirable, the "Local Color" theory, was far from indifferent to Union claims. An influential journal like *Century,* considered to be "the most important" "in terms of Southern writings" defined its editorial policy as "a sane and earnest Americanism" that sought "to increase the sentiment of Union throughout our divers sisterhood of states."[xli]

If the South had anything in abundance, that was certainly "local color;" moreover, if, at one period, it had been felt to be hostile and a fugitive, now when it was reunited again to the family, it could be excused and even "understood." In fact, the wounds the war had incurred on it were far from healing and this lent it a pathetic look that the North, now that the victory was unambiguously on its side, found worthy of its full sympathy. It goes without saying that the Negro seen as a pathetic figure too--the invention of a Negro dialect largely contributed to this effect--added extra colour to the human landscape called the South, itself an invention, as far as fiction goes. Still, the invention was barely arbitrary: in the more general

image, including that of a Negro, a frame of mind was projected that, if it mattered so much as to ask for expression, the explanation lay with the dynamics of culture and history, more precisely with a change in the way of seeing and feeling a segment of the country that was in fact a cultural response to historical events not necessarily endorsing them; on the contrary, the invention in question implied a good deal of idealization: the South was now a fictional challenge because it was seen to have supplied the example of an organic society *par excellence* in which the Negro appeared to be harmoniously integrated. The issue was seldom approached frontally: more often than not it was relegated to the "Local Color" desideratum. It becomes evident then that when considered on its own this last turns out to have been ostensibly South-biased. Not only that the South was put on the map, but its position on it was already conspicuous. This is the point Albion Tourgée made in an essay he wrote in 1888 when he stated that if a foreigner were to judge by American fiction alone, he would "undoubtedly conclude that the South was the seat of intellectual empire in America, and the African the chief romantic element of our population." [xlii]

The above remarks help explain the fairly prompt access Kate Chopin had to Boston and New York publications of which *Century* was quite prominent, and–more importantly perhaps–the heading, "Local Color," under which her fiction was bound to fall; also her relation with the publisher that was not invariably smooth to the end. Rich in local colour, her first short story collection *Bayou Folk* (1894) made her famous overnight and so seemed to bear out the more general editorial policy promoted by Boston and New York. That at the time she herself gave full support to it, stands proof her rebuke of Hamlin Garland's disrespectful attitude towards the place where literary standards were being made: "There can no good come of abusing Boston and New York. On the contrary, as "literary centers" they have rendered incalculable service to the reading world by bringing to light whatever has been produced by force and originality in the West and South since the war." [xliii] Her second short story collection *A Night in Acadie* (1897), also successful, kept her relation to her editors apparently unimpaired. However, evidence of their pressure on her is not missing, just as a third section (that remained unpublished) is symptomatic not so much of a failed effort on her part to comply with their requirements, as of a parting of the ways.

It needs to be observed nonetheless that American literary centres were only one of the influences that helped shape her writings. As mentioned above, her Louisiana stories were acclaimed in terms of local colour–one of the standards in fashion by which fiction was judged and readers's expectations formed–, but note should be taken that in writing them she had other models in view. These came chiefly from Europe, from France in particular–a literary tradition in which, like any other educated Creole, she was perfectly at home. Moreover, the impact the direct contact with French culture had on her reading must have been enormous. It is relevant of course that in speaking about her relation to nineteenth century European writing, Chopin scholarship often uses the term *identification.*[xliv] She seems to have written–up to a point–from within that tradition, or rather as a response to issues that had engaged the imagination of European writers. In the opinion of some of her critics this explains her avoidance of the race question so prominent in the culture in which she lived. What challenged her most in the French novel was the attention paid to woman as erotic being and, closely connected with it, the insurmountable difficulty in harmonizing the roles she was expected to assume. Gustave Flaubert's Madame Bovary is likely to come first to one's mind, but Madame de Staël's Corinne, George Sand's Lelia–Chopin's only daughter was given the name of Sand's heroine–are not to be ignored either, for as Helen Taylor has argued, Edna Pontellier stands in relation to both of them; moreover, de Staël's novel is credited with supplying the more general pattern of *The Awakening* that owes so much to the contrast between North and South, Protestantism and Catholicism, asceticism and indulgence in sensuality.[xlv] As shown further down, Chopin's relation to Maupassant appears to have been decisive in more than one way.

However, to give her French connection its due, is not to ignore her links–some of which are very strong indeed–with nineteenth century American writers, and the emulation she did receive at the hands of her literary acquaintances. Just as her relation to the French writers has been found stimulating and liberating, often confronting her with troublesome questions her own experience had presented to her, so the high regard she expressed for many of her contemporaries, women writers in the first place like Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary E. Wilkins, or Ruth McEnery Stuart

–the last was a New Orleans fiction writer– have been carefully considered. However, none of them could vie with Whitman as to the resonance they had in Chopin's fiction.[xlvi]

Chopin's response to *Leaves of Grass* was so deep that not only much of her symbolism is characteristically Whitmanesque–sea, death, and night in close interaction with each other–but quite often, especially in *The Awakening*, the voice chanting the sea and the spell it casts on the humans has threnodic accents that recall the poet of "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking." There is more to read than a mere affinity between two writers in the modulation of one's fictional voice that brings in echoes from the other's poetry. Apart from bearing out the claim that the trope of voice is essential to American poetry, it indicates that, whereas American poets were relatively slow to respond to Whitman's poetry, writers of fiction were quite prompt to perceive its force; in other words, it was fiction rather than poetry that tended to assimilate both his symbolism and voice. With reference to Chopin, this may be expressed, too, as an aspiration of her fiction to come closer to poetry, an observation that may further encourage one to see her novel as an outpost of modernism. As to her relation to Whitman, one more point needs to be made: as noticed earlier she had good reason to be grateful to Maupassant for disregarding the taboo on sexuality, but as a reader of Whitman, she must have perceived a like incentive from the poet who, celebrating himself, no longer discriminated between soul and body.

Chopin's immersion in her culture expressed itself in other forms too, and they should be likewise considered, no matter how briefly. Whereas her stay in New Orleans was apparently poor in cultural contacts– it was the period that coincided with five of her six pregnancies–, her return to St.Louis marked the beginning of what might be called a cultural elan on her part. That was in tune with life in her native place, for St. Louis had long passed beyond that stage in its history when, like in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, was a mere frontier town. Culturally, its prestige came from its long association with the "Hegelians," the philosophers who, as promoters of hegelianism, were very active in the philosophical society of America and dominated the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. (Both of them had their headquarters in the city.) Far from being obscure in the

literary world, Kate Chopin lent it a good deal o glamour even before she had received nation-wide acclaim as the author of *Bayou Folk*. The "Corinne of St. Louis" as she came to be known in her native city used to entertain literary people and other intellectuals in her salon inspired by Madame de Staël's in a manner that won for her a literary renown that went far beyond St. Louis. Despite being less sustained, her participation in the so-called Wednesday Club is also worthy of note: it brought her in touch with Charlotte Champe Stearns, no other than T.S. Eliot's mother, herself a poet and the greatest force behind the club whose founders, St. Louis prominent women, had a reformist program in view. If Chopin was little at home in it, or as one of her critics puts it, found the women's campaigning zeal and intellectual earnestness distasteful," [xlvii] her reaction is to be accounted for, in the opinion of the same critic, by her education that "had installed in her a horror of women's participation in the social reform and public life." [xlviii] Nonetheless, "she must have been encouraged to value her own writings by the very existence and seriousness of such a group." [xlix]

4

THE TRUTH OF W. D. HOWELLS

The Critic criticised. The critical essays of W. D. Howells have not stimulated much commentary in the present century, and when they did, the verdict passed on them was not exactly flattering. An exception are of course the introductory studies to the three volumes of *Selected Literary Criticism* (the Indiana Edition) to which the 1959 edition of *Criticism and Fiction* should be added.

To a great extent, Howells's lower status as a critic may be traced to the place accorded him by texts that for one reason or another came to be looked upon as authoritative in the field. For a time this prestige (or power) was enjoyed by Rene Wellek's *History of Modern Literary Criticism.* Though apparently trying to be impartial as to Howells's merits and demerits–a harsh criticism is usually followed by a *but* that attempts to tilt the balance in the opposite direction–, Wellek does not leave the impression that there is much in Howells worthy of the reader's attention. For one thing, there is nothing new in what he said about realism, most of his statements being mere borrowings from the Italians and the Spaniards; for another, he was terribly faulty when relying on his own judgment: "Grossly exaggerated praise for women short-story writers alternates with severe censure of the greatest masters."[i] However, when Wellek discusses the concept of realism and specifically refers to "an American school of realism," he relies on Howells's views on the movement and those who "propagated it" "from 1886 onwards." One of the "chief proponents" was Howells.[ii]

As set forth in *Criticism and Fiction*, Howells's views of criticism do not seem too radically different from those held by Wellek himself. In an age when impressionism in literary criticism was at its height, Howells insisted that the critic should set to himself the task alone of "observing, recording, and comparing."[iii] The critic was cast in the role of a reporter: "his office is mainly to ascertain facts and traits of literature, not to invent or denounce them; to discover principles, not to establish them; to report, not to create" (208-209). In this light, as Howells repeatedly stresses, the critical text can be only secondary to the literary text. The latter exists in itself, as it were, whereas criticism finds its *raison d'etre* in the literary work and is largely dependent on it. Great literature had been written before criticism came into being, but "the critic exists because the author first existed." "Sometimes it has seemed to me," writes Howells, "that the crudest expression of any creative art is better than the finest comment upon it. I have sometimes suspected that more thinking, more feeling certainly goes to the creation of a poor novel than to the production of a brilliant criticism" (310).

The practice of literary criticism, remarks Howells, results in enhancing the gap between criticism and the literary work. The assumption from which he starts is that criticism is imitative in the sense that it "tacitly or explicitly compares it (the work) with models and tests it by them" (311). One may detect here an allusion to the Arnoldian touchstone and to how much weight it carries in a criticism otherwise concerned to see the object as it really is. For his part Howells is not completely carried away by the method; at times he is quite tempted to set forth a different critical standard that asks the critic "to inquire whether a work is true to life" and "to judge books not as dead things, but as living things--things which have an influence and a power irrespective of beauty and wisdom, and merely as expressions of actuality in thought and feeling" (309).

To judge books in terms of their relevance to life was a task that tied in well with his more general views. Yet, Howells seldom asked himself how a critic could judge a book as an expression of "actuality in thought and feeling" and at the same time be thoroughly impartial in his approach. He paid a tribute to many science-oriented literary beliefs prevailing in his age, and took for granted not only that one can be an impartial observer

like a scientist, but also that only in this way life and literary works could be treated in all fairness. His critical thought may evince other limitations too, but these scarcely substantiate Wellek's opinion that "Howells's standards are relaxed, uncertain and wavering, because basically, in spite of his enormous output, he did not care for criticism as analysis and judgment."[iv] To be sure, in his lifetime Howells revised some of the beliefs he had held as a young critic and author. Several substitutions on his list of favourite authors are a good index of them. Novelists such as Dickens and Thackeray who at one time had aroused his enthusiasm were later most severely chided for ignoring elementary demands of the novelist's craft. As Howells's views of "the new fiction" gained in clarity, and he outlined for himself a frame of reference, he used it rather consistently in reading other writers' books never forgetting of course to consider them "as expressions of actuality in thought and feeling."

In making these last considerations, he could not escape ideological constraints. Writing from the inside of established American culture and having assumed a share of its responsibilities, his voice, as shown in a previous chapter, could be heard in many dialogues that together made up American culture and literary history in the later nineteenth century. The literary historian has already shown concern for them, and he will no doubt *re-create* for us even in more depth and detail, the context from which each debate took its stimulus, and to which in turn contributed further depth and density.

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A controversial text. As the text of *Criticism and Fiction* has quite a history behind it, we may well start by alerting the reader to what in the first place generated it, and to the critical response aroused by Howells's revisions of the original essays. Howells's comments on the function of criticism, and his views of fiction, especially as it was illustrated by his contemporaries, received an impulse from his association with *Harper's Monthly* in the 1880s and the early 1890s. For more than six years--from January 1886 to March 1892--he wrote a monthly critical essay under the rubric known as "the Editor's Study." By the time he left *Harper's* in

1892, he had selected parts of the previously published essays and by presenting them in a new arrangement, he had given them a book shape under the title of *Criticism and Fiction*. Its twenty-eight sections emerged thus from a process dependent in some measure on the scissors and the paste pot. Their number is by far inferior to the "studies" that amount to seventy-five including those Howells wrote after the publication of *Criticism and Fiction* in May 1891. Twenty years later a new edition came out and this too had been subject to revision. As he outlived the nineteenth century, Howells's resentment against the British lost its edge, and this change in attitude is reflected in the last edition published in his lifetime.

The question that such genesis is likely to pose has already been suggested in the last remark. Revision as a rule is an index of the degrees, more or less significant, to which an author distances from himself in time, as well as of the impulse behind the steps he takes farther away from what he thought, believed, or felt at one moment or another. Howells's scholars could hardly have been slow to set *Criticism and Fiction* against the texts written over half a dozen years, each of them apparently four months before it was expected to come out. Despite their disagreements on many points in their appreciation of W. D. Howells, both Edwin H. Cady and Everett Carter hold the view that the book fails to do justice to the original texts. What makes it a poorer, truncated, and even distorted copy of these is, in their view, Howells's juxtaposition of paragraphs taken out of essays written at different periods of time. It was a method of composition which from the start put in jeopardy the unity of the book. On this score Cady is clear: "No future anthologist of his criticism should choose from that volume, but always directly from the *Studies*. The results would be far more sparkling–and more truly representative of the author,"[v] whereas Carter invalidates *Criticism and Fiction* by defending Howells against himself, as it were. The tag so long attached to Howells that links him to "the more smiling aspects which are more American" is shown to be a case of misreading assisted by the writer himself when transferring the phrase to a different context and repeating the transfer for a second time.[vi]

However, *Criticism and Fiction* was not left without any supporters: at the end of the fifties that saw the appearance of *Realist at War* and *Howells and the Age of Realism*, Clara Marburg Kirk and Rudolf Kirk edited the 1891 version. Their chief argument for rating it above the periodical essays was the legitimization given it by the authors: "No possible selections from these columns" ("The Editor's Study"), they write "could be so important to the reader today as Howells's own."[vii] As to the demand for unity, one of the demands of the period–in the fifties modernism was still very influential–they by no means disregarded it; only they preferred to speak of "wholeness of thought" rather than form. Meanwhile with the rise of postmodernism that decreed their collapse, wholeness and unity have lost a good deal of their prestige. Multiplicity and fragmentariness more frequently supply the terms in which literary texts are now approached. This renders the objection to *Criticism and Fiction* on grounds of unity entirely irrelevant. Besides, in the 1890s, the book had a life of its own. Coming out as the decade opened, it became a point of reference in many critical debates; and even if earlier texts continued to be available, and for some readers they were not entirely forgotten, the authority of the book could hardly have been disputed. At the turn of the century it was fully believed that a critical discourse takes its authority from the author alone. It was W. D. Howells, an established figure of American literature, who commanded attention rather than the critical text.

A far better solution to the intricate history of *Criticism and Fiction* has been offered by the Indiana Edition of 1993. A selection of forty-one essays–some reprinted by Howells in full, others only partially–is followed by the text of *Criticism and Fiction* in which these are included all too selectively or altogether left out. The reader is thus not deprived of the possibility to make his own impression of the original essays and estimate the differences in tone between them and Howells's selection.

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An Emersonian lesson taught in foreign languages. Howells's remarks on the reception of *Criticism and Fiction* that he made shortly after its publication shed light on the kind of impact the book was

having at the time. He wrote to his father that "I seem to have stirred up the Englishmen, now, by my little book on Criticism and Fiction–made up from the Study–and they are gnashing their teeth at it a great rate. I think I shall live through it, probably. The worst of it is the way the American sneaks accept them as authority; but even that is not mortally bad." [viii] Apparently *Criticism and Fiction* was understood to contain certain dissenting views from the authority British criticism exercised and even attempted to consolidate. Howells's stand was dictated by what he perceived to be the native impulse behind much of American literature that was being written at the time; and in taking it, he placed himself in a tradition that reaches back to Emerson.

Howells's Emersonian descent should in no way be obscured by the plethora of differences one is sure to find between the two writers. It was visible to Edwin H. Cady who, referring to Howells's castigation of the sentimental novel, makes the remark that "with certain most essential differences, it was the bold voice of Emerson heard again" and, no less, to Everett Carter who sees Howells as somehow another stance of the poet expected by Emerson. The latter's belief that "the meal in the firkin," "the milk in the pan," "tariffs, banks, commerce" are worthy of celebration is strongly borne out by Howells's use of the commonplace and whatever else American experience consisted of at the time. To this effect he integrates a number of passages from "The American Scholar" and "The Poet." On this matter Howells follows Emerson, as it were, programmatically.

There are, however, some other Emersonian ideas to which Howells gave his allegiance more or less explicitly. Prominent among them is the rejection of imitation, of the tendency to set up models for oneself. The penchant for retrospection in general is to be discouraged: it breeds self-distrust that ends in sophistication; or, for Howells, like for Emerson, to be self-reliant as an artist is a downright compulsion. That the artist not only can, but should protect himself against any anxiety of influence or awareness of belatedness is a recurrent emphasis in *Criticism and Fiction*. He should start afresh, forgetting about the masters or only retaining from them the reminder that their mastership was built on no masters at all. When Howells expressed this conviction, as he often did, he was bound to sound the Emersonian note. His statement that "they are taught to form themselves,

not upon life, but upon the masters who became masters only by forming themselves upon life" (300) can be easily traced at last as regards the attitude towards the masters to "The American Scholar," and so can his urge that "we have only to leave our studies, editorial and other, and go into the shops and fields to find the 'spacious times' " (338).

However, the question should be asked: what did Howells understand by making a fresh start? To answer it is to become aware of the direction he was taking in his views of literature, and how far from Emerson that was likely to lead him. To be sure, Howells insists too much on what appears to him to be the oppositon between "life-likeness" and "book-likeness," unequivocally opting for the former, not to find his concern worthy of consideration. The impression one may have is that for Emerson's Nature he substituted life narrowed down to man's experience of society and of himself as a social creature. It is a substitution that results in a different scale altogether. If Emerson could equally expand and shrink his vision, and was able to embrace the cosmos and the next moment to make it coincident with the smallest thing, Howells for his part was at ease only in the world of everyday experience. Not to mention, of course, that by focussing on a space where people's interaction counted most heavily, he did not appear to be primarily concerned with exploring the foundations of things. For him appearances seemed to be enough and their solidity challenging.

Still, when some of his assumptions are examined, his aesthetics may well turn out to be not unlike an offshoot of the Emersonian trunk. What in his eyes seems to be of utmost importance is truth; and all artists (the novelists included) should be judged by fidelity to it. Being a kind of touchstone for Howells, the meaning he attaches to truth needs qualification, all the more so as in *Criticism and Fiction* the term is over-solicited. A passage, such as the one that follows, highlights the issue to some extent:

> I confess that I do not care to judge any work of the imagination without first of all applying this test to it. We must ask ourselves before we ask anything else, Is it true?–true to the motives, the impulses, the principles that shape the life of actual men and women? This truth which necessarily includes the highest morality and the highest artistry–this truth given, the book cannot be wicked and cannot be weak; and without it all graces

> of style and feats of invention and cunning of construction are so many superfluities of naughtiness. It is well for the truth to have all these, and shine in them, but for falsehood they are merely meretricious, the bedizenment of the wanton; they atone for nothing, they count for nothing. But in fact they come naturally of truth, and grace it without solicitation; they are added unto it. In the whole range of fiction we know of no true picture of life–that is, of human nature–which is not also a masterpiece of literature, full of divine and natural beauty. It may have no touch or tint of this special civilization or of that; it had better have this color well ascertained; but the truth is deeper and finer than aspects, and if the book is true to what men and women know of one another's souls it will be true enough, and it will be great and beautiful (327).

Here there is seemingly no implication that truth has much to do with fidelity to details in all their overwhelming multitude; with a photographic copying of reality. It is neither local colour, nor national traits that essentially lend a novel its quality of truthfulness. This results from the author's power to grasp the forces that "shape the life of actual men and women." Without the qualification "actual," Howells's statement would have almost sounded the classical note, just as his focus on human nature, on its "impulses" and "motives," to which presumably the novelist is granted access, points in the direction of Aristotelian character.

But how does the novelist come to enjoy such a privilege? Living in a post-Kantian age, a generation after Emerson and Poe had each indebted himself to Kantian thought in one form or another, one way in which Howells could account for the novelist power was, of course, to bring intuition into play. However, the commonsensical stand which he had adopted made him seldom, if ever, use the term emphatically; rather he disguised it as "observation;" and, contrary to what he himself advised, when arguing a point, he often found support in someone else's opinion. Considering, like Emerson, that to be an artist is within every man's power--it is not Emerson who is invoked this time but Burke, the author of the assertion that "the true standard of the arts is in every man's power"–, Howells is very close to defining the capacity to see truth or the artistic power as intuition or insight into "the ideas of things." At least the extensive quotation from Armando Palacio Valdés in whose views he mainly shared, brings forth precisely this conviction: the artist has "the gift of discovering ideas in

things" (319). "The true meaning of things" (316), runs Howells's commentary inspired by Valdés, is perceived as beauty. Thus there is a sense in which the beautiful and the true are one. It is an equation that Howells endorsed from the outset when he quoted Keats' "Beauty is truth, Truth Beauty." The reader is thus little surprised to find Emily Dickinson's poem on the two "brethern," Truth and Beauty, quoted at length in his remarkably insightful review of her poetry published in the "Harper's Study" in 1891[ix]. Howells's gloss on Valdés also leaves small doubt that "beauty exists in the human spirit" (316). In view of the correspondence of Truth and Beauty, the question whether beauty is an effect of "the true meaning of things" when made out, or it, beauty, residing in the human spirit, makes possible such an effect becomes pointless: mind and "the true meaning of things" are governed by the same laws. The impression one may have in reading *Criticism and Fiction* is that Howells's realism is built on an idealistic assumption. It is implied in his definition of realism, which only apparently is general and vague: "Realism is nothing more and nothing less than the truthful treatment of the material" (319). If "truthful" is understood to have a significance that relegates truth to the human spirit, then Howells was not at all oblivious of the Emersonian heritage when promoting his realism, much as he preferred to look for confirmation elsewhere.

Apart from the Spanish novelists whom Howells often quotes, mention should be made of Tolstoy as exemplary in point of truthfulness. In a way the American writer was shifting his admiration from Turgenev, who had kept his enthusiasm alive throughout the seventies, to Tolstoy whom he, no less enthusiastically, was discovering in the latter half of the 1880s. His reading of *Anna Karenina* in 1885, of *War and Peace* a year later told a good deal on the interests he was developing at the time and was reflecting back on his personality; or rather was helping him to reach a better understanding of himself. Tolstoy's novels appealed to him through a quality that could be defined "infallible veracity." William James defined it in these words when in the summer of 1896 he was trying to explain the extraordinary impact *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* were making on him.[x] Howells would rather associate Tolstoy with truth, the touchstone of his criticism and fiction that accounted for his rating of novelists. It was

because Tolstoy was true in a way that suffered no comparison with any other writer, that Howells invariably placed him at the top. Zola and Ibsen were often mentioned in his company, especially in the 1890s, but neither was placed on exactly the same footing.

It should be likewise noted that Howells's realism does not bar the poetry out. As he believes that it resides in the commonplace too, it follows that it is within the novelist's reach to recognize and bring it out. Such a belief was widespread in the early years of *The Atlantic Monthly*. The novelist's concern with the actual was expected to lead to a revelation of the more spiritual reality. Despite the shift on to life and its issues which Howells himself championed, he never abandoned the idea that realism is apt to reach to the poetry of the commonplace. In 1891, writing on Hjalmar Boysen's *The Mammon of Unrighteousness*, he noted that "it is from the outset boldly realistic; and it is at the same time poetical, as realism alone can be, since realism alone has the courage to look life squarely in the face and try to report the expression of its divinely imagined lineaments."[xi] The poetic element was present in Björnson's novels too–Howells brought it to light when reviewing *In God's Way* the same year–as it was in almost every page of Turgenev as Howells's early reviews had never missed the chance to point out. It seems that what Howells so enthusiastically responded to was an effect resulting from the writer's skill to bring the commonplace into new light and startle the reader into a fresh perception of its existence. It must have been something very close to what the Russian formalist Victor Shklovsky later designated by the term defamiliarization, in other words, something that art always has the capacity to reveal in one form or another.

As to Howells's belief that "this truth (...) includes the highest morality," it too is consequent upon the meaning he ascribes to truth; which is to say that his moral imperative was grounded in his more general views, and to a lesser extent imposed by conformism to the prevailing dogma. It is true, he was mindful of certain requirements of his culture, especially those connected with gender and roles. While his fiction often subverted them, the submissive note his criticism sounded at times had the opposite effect.[xii] His censorship of sex for instance could express only approval of the role assigned to the young girl in America. The reading customs he invokes, which unlike those in England, did not discriminate between the young girl

and other members of the family as far as the use of the library was concerned, accorded her a better place within the family circle, but made no concessions in respect to her "innocence." Nor was Howells disposed to make any; he specifically appealed to writers of fiction not to lose sight of the freedom of the young female reader, and censor themselves accordingly.

On the other hand, his objections to passion are in need of qualification. To put the blame on prudishness would not be entirely fair. After all, not only "guilty love" is treated with reserve, but romantic love as well. In fact, his reserve referred rather to the novel that was built exclusively on "erotic shivers and fervors" (343). Howells's attitude towards passion should be judged in the context of his more general views and taking into account the store he laid by a sense of proportion when mapping human feelings and interests, as well as relationships. To consistently focus on any one of them, at the expense of the others, is to give a reductive image of life. Besides, passion itself was considerably impoverished by the use to which many novelists had put it. "Most of these critics who demand passion," he remarks, "would seem to have no conception of any passion but one. Yet there are several other passions; the passion of grief, the passion of avarice, the passion of pity, the passion of ambition, the passion of hate, the passion of envy, the passion of devotion, the passion of friendship; and all these have a greater part in the drama of life than the passion of guilty love" (344). The critics whom Howells had in view could have been many of his contemporaries, and no less Edgar Allan Poe. In Poe's essays, we may do well to recall, passion of love was entitled to many claims. It even claimed to be the province of an important type of fiction–the short story; not alone, it is true, as "ratiocination" had similar pretensions.

It needs to be observed at the same time that Poe's cult for passion was not without adepts at the turn of the century. It was precisely at this period that American criticism was becoming responsive to his writings; at least the short-lived *Chap-Book* did its best to win an American audience for him. Howells's views on fiction ran counter to Poe's on many points, and he could hardly bring himself to reconsider his predecessor of whom, as a writer, he had anyway a poor opinion. He made no secret of the low esteem in which he held Poe. While disagreeing with many appreciations

set forth by Barrett Wendell in his *Literary History of America*, he approved of the latter's opinion that "from beginning to end his (Poe's) temper had the inextricable combination of meretriciousness and insincerity." [xiii] Referring in the same review to Bret Harte's popularity in Europe, he avails himself of the occasion to observe that he (Harte) "enjoyed the sort of perverse primacy on the continent which confounds us in the case of Poe." [xiv]

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Fiction and its "evolution." Behind Howells's refutation of Poe was the rejection of an entire tradition that in the latter half of the nineteenth century came to dominate American fiction. Howells's concern with "the true meaning of things" also led him to accept as truthful a method of presentation that pledged itself not to violate probability and give the commonplace its due. "Fidelity to life" is a syntagm he often employed to express this basic requirement. His idealism found little excuse for what appeared to be transgressions of the ordinary course of events or distortions of the same for the sake of shocking the reader. "Horror" and "terror," the effects so dear to Poe, met only with utter disapproval; as did those fictions which like Poe's stories made use of the stock-in-trade devices of the Gothic. The trouble with Poe was that he stood too close to "such old fashioned horror-mongers as Mrs. Radcliffe." [xv]

Criticism and Fiction continued thus a battle which Howells had begun decades earlier. Once more he found Valdés's opinion on the matter appealing enough to quote it at length. The Spaniard's indictment of what he calls "effectivism," or "the itch of awakening at all costs in the reader vivid and vilolent emotions" (317) is endorsed by Howells without reserve. As the fiction devoted to "effectivism" has associations with the romance tradition and/or the tradition of the sentimental novel, the emphasis laid on "the truthful presentation of material" has often been understood as a downright disparagement of the earlier tradition. There is no doubt that writing at a period when a new mode of apprehending and rendering reality was well under way, and for whose progress he had done much, Howells was not only tempted to identify with it, but also to grant it merits by virtue of its newness.

One of his major assumptions in keeping with an age dominated by theories of evolution was that literary trends and the forms they foster are historically generated, and it is this process, evolutionary in essence, that constitutes the literary tradition. The rise of a new trend goes hand in hand with the decline of the previous one and this, of course, holds true of the forms they respectively sponsor.

> At the beginning of the century (...) romance was making the same fight against effete classicism which realism is making to-day against effete romanticism" writes Howells to continue as follows: "The Romantic of that day and the realist of this are in certain degree the same. Romanticism then sought, as realism seeks now, to widen the bounds of sympathy, to level every barrier against aesthetic freedom, to escape from the paralysis of tradition. (...) It exhausted itself in this impulse: and it remained for realism to assert that fidelity to experience and probability of motive are essential conditions of a great imaginative literature. (...) When realism becomes false to itself, when it heaps up facts merely, and maps life instead of picturing it, realism will perish too (302).

Howells's statement sheds light on, alongside the dynamics of literary history requiring of any nascent trend to oppose whatever stands in its way, the enlargement of human sympathy as a gain by which evolution in literature is to be estimated. "To widen the bounds of human sympathy" is an aspiration in which a Comtean echo is easily perceptible; as is Tolstoy's "Gospel of love." Tolstoy's impact on Howells, as well as his vogue at the time both in England and America were also a matter of the power of his thought to lure one into instant belief. To a certain extent his belief in "brotherly love" was a case of the boomerang effect, as the incentive of many of his ideas came from Emerson and Thoreau, as well as from George Eliot.[xvi]

It should be likewise noted that in Howells's view the reader is no exception to historical evolution. He too evolves by developing a capacity to respond to what the new literary forms have to offer him. Understandably, the most advanced is he who is thoroughly responsive to the "truth" he finds in realistic fiction. This belief was promptly refuted by H. E. Scudder who in reviewing *Criticism and Fiction* in *The Atlantic Monthly* of October

1891 found it "incredible that men's judgments as to truth in one form of literature should vary with the generations."[xvii]

However, Howells seldom conceived literary evolution as merely linear progression. What he knew of the tradition of British fiction and especially his reading of the nineteenth-century English novel discouraged him from holding such a view. For him the Victorian novel was an example of regress: instead of developing along the lines established by Jane Austen, it looked for its models in the novels of her predecessors, thus renewing an older tradition. That Howells laid much store by the novels of Jane Austen is a point that needs to be stressed. It shows how early he was in constructing a tradition that twentieth-century criticism has rated most highly. His response to Jane Austen's truthfulness and to Henry James's "distinction" anticipated evaluations not only of these writers, but also of the type of novel with which they came to be associated in a line of continuity that was to enjoy a critical vogue up to the end of the 1960s.

What distinguished that type of novel in Howells's eyes was first and foremost the importance it attached to character and character motivation. In a large measure his battle for realism was a sustained argument that the novel should take its major interest from character development. Neither character, nor his doings, should violate the notion that life was normative and unheroic. On the other hand, the American facts which he urged his contemporaries not to lose sight of made sense in fiction only if mediated by a character's perception of them. In this he definitely met on common ground with Henry James who to a far greater extent than he was instrumental in passing on to the present century this claim. (At least the Preface to *The Portrait of a Lady* was regarded as the standard text in this respect.) Reflecting on the future of the novel towards the close of his career Howells felt bound to remind his fellow writers that "Fiction can deal with the facts of finance and industry and invention only as the expressions of character."[xviii]

At the same time his concern with maintaining the character within certain limits of probability rendered him increasingly suspicious of plot and eventually impelled him to draw a clear-cut boundary between the two and even to set them in opposition to each other. If, in the early seventies, Howells could still make a statement to the effect that a Turgenev character

"is sufficient plot," later he was inclined to treat them somewhat apart, to express his delight with character and be thoroughly displeased whenever incident and situation tended to get the upper hand. One may wonder whether Henry James's oft-quoted reminder in "The Art of Fiction" that character and incident are not easy to divorce from each other was meant for Howells rather than for Walter Besant.

Howells's reaction to the romance and the sentimental novel cannot be kept thus apart from the high premium which he, like many twentieth-century critics, put on the novel that appeared to have a significant beginning in Jane Austen. At the same time it should be observed that he approached romance in different terms from those in which he discussed the sentimental novel. Certain discriminations need therefore to be made in his attitude towards these fictional types. According to Everett Carter, who was among the first of Howells's critics to call attention to the far better status which Howells accorded romance as against the fiction marked by sentimentalism, the writer's preference was explained by his conformism to established literary authority. As Hawthorne had drawn the distinction between the novel and the romance in terms which were not prejudicial to the latter, and, moreover, James Russell Lowell had, apparently, set forth a similar opinion, it could have been hard for Howells to disregard it even after three decades had elapsed.

As is known, Howells had good reasons to be respectful of both Lowell and Hawthorne. In fact Hawthorne's high reputation in America had been consolidated by *The Atlantic Monthly* all throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century including the period Howells served as editor. However, in discriminating between the romance and the sentimental novel, other feelings were at play too. While he saw in the popular fiction of the sentimentalists the exclusive tendency to worship romantic love and thereby gratify the readers' desire at the expense of converting life into mere wishful thinking, in the romance and especially in the American romances of the nineteenth century, he discerned a different kind of interest. We might do well to point out that this was to be found only in some of the writings known by that name. In other words, he further distinguished between romances that depend for their effect on the complication of story and plot, and on the other hand, romances centred on character. Needless to say, he

rejected the former almost as harshly as he did the sentimental novel: "the fatuity of the story merely as a story is something that must early impress the story teller who does not live in the stone age of fiction and criticism" (333). If Howells found Valdés stimulating and amply quoted from him, that was also due to the low opinion the latter had of the novelist dedicated to "the invention of a complicated plot, spiced with perils, surprises, and suspenses" (317).

If Howells admitted that there were romances that take their interest from character, then what kind of boundary did he set between these and the novel also known to make of character its centre of exploration? It must be said that Howells was aware of the issue, and on several occasions he referred to it. The review he wrote of James's *Hawthorne* contains some enlightening remarks on the topic. They make plain that for Howells the distinction was meaningful and he did not want it to be blurred. The charge he levels at James would have lost its object if the author of *Hawthorne* had not treated the two terms as convertible and judged Hawthorne's writings by standards applicable to romances rather than novels. By specifying what these are, Howells comes close to defining the fictional species in ways that once more anticipate influential contributions in the field of literary history and literary theory. (Richard Chase's *The American Novel and its Tradition* and Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* are only two of them.) What he thinks to be of particular relevance to the nature of romance is the concern with "types and mental conditions." James is reproached with precisely this oversight: "Mr. James excepts to the people in The Scarlet Letter, because they are rather types than persons, rather conditions of the mind than characters; as if it were not precisely the business of the romance to deal with types and mental conditions."[xix] It seems that this was a long-lasting belief with Howells; for as late as 1898, he speaks again of romance, and almost in the same terms. Referring to Edward Bellamy this time, he remarks that Bellamy "deals with types rather than with characters; for it is one of the prime conditions of the romancer that he shall do this. His people are less objectively than subjectively present; their import is greater in what happens to them than in what they are."[xx] It is obvious that Howells links romance to a certain kind of character whose appeal lies less in the possibility to grow along lines which can be particularized in some detail

than in the more constant features of the self that recommend it as a type or, rather, psychological archetype. As his references to Bellamy's *Looking Backward* indicate, he was also tempted to speak of utopias and romances in the same terms disregarding a boundary that twentieth-century theories of genres were keen on drawing. The subtitle of his Altrurian books stand further proof in this respect.

Howells also implied that one type of romance is akin to the poem. At least both appear to stand in the same relation to the novel: "the romance and the novel are as distinct as the poem and the novel" is a statement he makes in his review of James's *Hawthorne*.[xxi] As it is occasioned by *The Scarlet Letter* which to him seems to be quite unfairly treated because not sufficiently approached in terms of its romance qualities, his bringing the poem and romance together is proof of his discrimination. In view of the emphasis twentieth-century theorists of literary genres laid on the affinity between the romance and the poetic, Howells's insight is likely to gain in interest for the historian of criticism. I am not sure whether Howells uses anywhere the term poetic romances--to distinguish them from other types of romances–with which romance came to be identified in the twentieth century; but he definitely uses that of "poetic romancer" in a context that leaves no doubt as to his acceptance of diversity in matters of literary form. "Yet," he admits, "no doubt it is well that there should be a reversion to the earlier types of thinking and feeling, to earlier ways of looking at human nature, and I will not altogether refuse the pleasure offered me by the poetic romancer or the historical romancer because I find my pleasure chiefly in Tolstoi, and James, and Galdos and Valdés and Thomas Hardy and Tourgueneff, and Balzac at his best" (332).

It is also relevant that when speaking of particular books that are usually grouped under the heading of romance, Howells also sounds the praising note. "Prodigious"[xxii] is the term he employs with reference to *Wuthering Heights*. Wondering whether Emily Bronte knew how great her book was "with all its defects," he is confident that criticism must recognize its mastery and rejoyce in its courage."[xxiii] The response to the Brontes, "the girls who let themselves loose,"[xxiv] counts quite heavily if note is taken that Jane Austen aside, there were few English novelists whom he found worthy of praise.

For the most part the English novel was a constant target of criticism. It was his belief–and on this his agreement with James was complete–that "nearly all the English novels are very clumsy and formless."[xxv] Another objection to be raised against them was, of course, their emphatic disregard of the author's disturbing presence and intrusions in his own work. The need for the author to efface himself from his work–a cliché that dominated novel writing and criticism in the first half of the present century–had been argued in America long before Howells published *Criticism and Fiction*. Especially the periodical whose editor Howells had been in the late sixties and the seventies enlisted not only his contributions on the issue, but also of other critics of the *Atlantic*, particularly H. E. Scudder's. One result that became noticeable in the seventies was that attention had turned from George Eliot to Turgenev. As George Eliot's novels were increasingly found fault with because of authorial commentaries, many of them moralizing in nature, Turgenev's detachment was more and more praised and emulated. In Howells's opinion it conditioned the effects he valued most: "*simplicity, honesty, and naturalness*" which gave the full measure of his realism. By the same token Emily Bronte turned out to be a greater talent than Charlotte "who is never quite detached from her heroine, but is always trammeled in sympathy with Jane Eyre."[xxvi] The defects of *Wuthering Heights* alluded to earlier have to do with the framing device Emily Bronte employed, or in his own words with "the narratives within narratives" that was to make such a brilliant career in the American novel in the latter part of the twentieth century.

It should be pointed out all the same that even if Howells appeared to be consistent in his belief, and at the end of the eighties was writing that "to infuse, or to declare, more of my personality in a story, would be a mistake, to my thinking; it should rather be the novelist's business to keep out of the way,"[xxvii] he was seldom dogmatic in letting this standard dominate his appreciation of other novelists. Much as he disliked Trollope for his penchant "to be like the caricaturist Thackeray, and to stand about in his scene, talking it over with his hands in his pockets, interrupting the action, and spoiling the illusion in which alone the truth of art resides" (320)–a couple of years earlier Henry James had expressed a similar dislike for Trollope and for the same reasons–still, Howells in no way

shrank from professing admiration for the English writer's "simple honesty and instinctive truth;" he rated him second to Jane Austen, which shows that "spoiling the illusion" was not a very serious offence after all.

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"Superior freshness." Less prone to give detachment its due, and even worse, to heed Howells's admonestation that "the true plot comes out of the character," the English novel was not only an illustration of "reversions and counter-currents in the general tendency of the time" (332); it also made a poor contrast when set beside the American novel. In his criticism of Dickens, which he reiterated in 1897, Howells traces "the fall" to "the English custom of novel publication" which "was always against form, against balance." [xxviii] The question referring to the conditions of serial publication that presumably encouraged an author to start publishing a novel before completing it and so to work at random was a favourite topic of debate in the subsequent period.

In passing this verdict Howells, needless to say, once more fully agreed with James for whom "form" and "balance" were the foremost goals set before a novelist. However, when this aspiration came to be more widely accepted by criticism and for a time to receive legitimization, the texts that gave it authority were James's, while Howells was not only seldom recalled to have written that "form" and "balance" are not to be sinned against, but, more often than not, he was grouped with the sinners. Of course, his more persistent emphasis on truth, though hardly understood by him to violate the aesthetic effect of a novel, partly accounts for his obliteration by the modernists.

On the other hand, if Howells had reason to believe that American fiction was more rewarding as a whole, that had only to a lesser extent to do with aesthetic merits in terms of "balance" and "form;" these were rather contained in his notion of truth. "Simplicity, naturalness, honesty" are in his view, we recall, a better measure of them; or freshness, as he so perceptively suggests when rating the American novel higher than the British one on account of its "superior freshness." For Howells sees this to be closely linked to a fashion of writing fiction that is pre-eminently American. No wonder he was so responsive to those writers who put the West into

literature Mark Twain in the first place. It should be likewise noted that Bret Harte who had a share too in putting the West into literature aroused Howells's interest. Acknowledging Harte's "real power" he found little excuse for a *Literary History of American literature* (1900) that left him out. He chides its author for other omissions too: Henry James is the most conspicuous; but also relevant are those of G.W.Cable and "Miss Jewett and Miss Wilkins." [xxix]

Of all American writers at the turn of the century, Howells was perhaps the most articulate as to the tendencies in American fiction that made for "difference" on a scale commensurate with America itself. In his view, diversity was well on the way to become the hallmark of American fiction, its writers finding themselves not only in New England where they had traditionally belonged–that is up to the end of the Civil War–but in many other parts of the nation to be now identified with a continent. In 1912 he had good reason to believe that American writers "are of the West and the South, as well as of the North and the East, and more and more their work tastes of the soil that mothered them." [xxx] It is also noteworthy that because of the great stock Howells put in regional diversity such words as "parochial" or "provincial" developed positive connotations when employed by him. In contrast to James for whom to be provincial–Poe was so in his opinion–was from the outset a serious disadvantage, or to Matthew Arnold who found fault with nineteenth-century English literature because for him it was markedly parochial, Howells, starting from the assumption suggested by a historical reality that "next to the Italians and the Spaniards, the Americans are the most decentralized people in the world," can be only indifferent to this difference that Americans share with the Italians and the Spaniards. [xxxi]

However, there was another difference that American culture shared neither with the Italians, nor with the Spaniards. In supporting Paul Laurence Dunbar and Charles W. Chestnutt, Howells encouraged it too to manifest itself in American literature. In considering the race issue he did not take a stand at odds with his culture. When he was explicit on it, he unequivocally acknowledged the supremacy of the white man. Apparently his support of Booker T. Washington was dictated by the belief that the solution to the racial problem lay with both whites and blacks, that is, with

their reconciliation, without however putting in jeopardy the dominant position of the former. Perhaps nothing he wrote is more likely to arouse the resentment of the blacks, who see the solution in different terms, than his praise of Booker T. Washington for holding the key "in his strong grasp." Howells asks rhetorically: "if his notion of reconciling the Anglo-American to the Afro-American, by a civilization which shall not seem to threaten the Anglo-American supremacy is not the key, what is?" [xxxii]

When, however, the black or coloured individual talent is in question, he adopts a different point of view. Although still bound to make the difference between white and black, he never sounds the patronizing note on account of one's colour. He starts the introduction to Dunbar's *Lyrics of Lowly Life* (1896) by remarking that the poet "appealed to me for reasons apart from the author's race, origin, and condition." [xxxiii] The same approach is adopted in his review of Charles W. Chestnutt's stories. He grants interest to their topics inspired from the life of coloured people, but at the same time underscores that "it is much more simply and directly, as works of art, that they make their appeal, and we must allow the force of this quite independently of the other interest." [xxxiv]

By saying that colour is not to influence a literary judgment, and black writers like the white writers should be submitted to the same test, that of the artistic merit, Howells applied no preferential treatment to either ones or the others. His standards of artistic excellency may be open to question, but this does not in the least affect his general attitude, which was one of respect for the writer of merit whether he was white or black. To this one should add the perception he had, though not consistently, that the colour line is of surface only, and deep down all human beings are alike. Referring to Dunbar's poems, he confessed that he "accepted them as an evidence of the essential unity of the human race, which does not think or feel black in one and white in another, but humanly in all." [xxxv]

On the other hand, though Howells refrains from judging the black writers in terms of "racial interest" alone, he is not indifferent to it. Just as in Dunbar's lyrics he discovers to his full satisfaction "the essential unity of the human race," so too he reads the lyrics as giving a voice to race

differences, and finds them no less appealing. Some of the twentieth-century African American scholars considered the Negro dialect employed by Dunbar and praised by Howells to be an imperfect and even degrading approximation of their identity as expressed through language. This hardly impairs, however, the force of Howells's belief that "there is a precious difference of temperament between the races which would be a great pity ever to lose."[xxxvi] Elsa Nettels does justice to Howells when she writes that "he anticipates the writers of the Harlem Renaissance in conceiving the ultimate achievement of blacks to be the creation of an original art, to be judged and valued, like any expression of an independent, native culture, for itself and not dependent on any other."[xxxvii]

5

THE THREATENED SELF OF RHODA ALDGATE

The vogue of the shorter novel. *An Imperative Duty*, the shorter novel Howells published in 1891, might well serve as good evidence of a more general impulse shaping part of American fiction at the time. Howells himself commented on it in one of his essays for the "Editor's Study" to be shortly included in *Criticism in Fiction* (XXIII).

For him the tendency evinced by modern American fiction to narrow down its range was no cause for alarm, as it apparently was for some of his fellow critics. It bespoke strength rather than weakness. In refuting "the charge of narrowness" levelled at modern American fiction, Howells had at hand arguments generously supplied by what was being published on both sides of the Atlantic. Granted that one deemed it unwise to move his eyes away from Europe, there too–his finger kept pointing–one could find solid proof that a redimensioning of fiction was well underway. Towering exceptions aside–Zola in France and Tolstoy in Russia–the European schools were liable to similar attacks as those directed at American fiction. "Horizontal expansion" had ceased to be in favour with them; instead, a fairly limited cast was engaging the attention of all of them most powerfully. What "modern" fiction, American and European alike, were gaining in was "depth," and that more than paid for the loss incurred. "Narrowness" was a "virtue" rather than a "defect" and it by no means was exclusion of "breadth;" only the breadth in question was understood to be "vertical instead of lateral."

It is obvious that when Howells comes to account for a direction taken at the time by a good part of American and European fiction, the explanation he gives is grounded in a conception of the novel indebted to an older tradition that values the episode above the book, the part above the whole. For him the shorter novel centred on the exploration of man as "microcosm" was simply an effect of the disintegration or splitting of the novel defined as "horizontal expansion": "A big book," writes Howells, "is necessarily a group of episodes more or loosely connected by a thread of narrative, and there seems no reason why this thread must always be supplied. Each episode may be quite distinct, or it may be one of a connected group; the final effect will be from the truth of each episode, not from the size of the group."[i] That there seems no reason why this thread must always be supplied is a conclusion T. S. Eliot too would reach a couple of decades later. The proliferation of novelistic types at the close of the century is for him a mere effect of splitting: "the big novel" was no longer capable of hanging together and ended by being superseded by its parts."

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The quadroon's story. As a "modern novel," *An Imperative Duty* is bound to be "shorter" but endowed with "depth." Indeed, the cast of personages is characteristically small and they all have their share of a crisis that counts heavily in their lives; more importantly, approached in terms of aesthetic unity and coherence, discredited notions as they are nowadays, the novel strikes one as particularly apt to reverberate in each and every segment of its verbal texture the major issue at the heart of the conflict. As we shall see further down this effect has much to do with the narrative method, the use, that is, of a twofold perspective, with recurrent images of black and white and their interplay, as well as with the shifting semantics of the word "duty" foregrounded by the title. The high incidence of the word–there are instances when it occurs four times on a single page–subverts its received meanings.

As to the conflict at the heart of *An Imperative Duty*, it has to do with an issue that was central to American culture in the 1890s: the gulf separating the blacks from the whites. Howells's response to it is, of course,

worthy of note, no matter how open to strictures it might otherwise be. Or we may look at the matter from a reversed angle: that a major writer of the establishment was drawn to explore the colour line and its effects on individuals of mixed blood is proof of the increasing weight the issue was carrying at the time. This is not to say that its pressure throughout the nineteenth century had been otherwise than challenging.

Howells himself had been attracted to the story of the black woman and written a version of it in verse thirty years before *An Imperative Duty* came out. "The Pilot's Story" published in *The Atlantic Monthly* (September 1860) has not been entirely forgotten by the present century. Everett Carter brings it forth when he comments on the invasion of *The Atlantic Monthly* in the 1860s by sentimentalism and stereotype.[iii] The poem is of interest to him for the taste it evinces, and he links it to a mode later repudiated by its author. As Carter reads it "The Pilot's Story" could be easily assimilated to the kind of sentimental fiction that was finding its way into the *Atlantic*. Besides, the "heroine" of the poem, a quadroon, had a fictional part in Lou-Lou, an octoroon, the protagonist of the first *Atlantic* serial of the same name that preceded "The Pilot's Story" by a few years only.

There are grounds to believe, on the other hand, that the poem Howells regretted to have written and later spoke of as "a misfortune" reaches forward to *An Imperative Duty*. Reading the novel with an awareness of the poem is likely to enhance our response to the fictional text–the obverse is also true–, as well as to its virtual analogies with the very tradition that stood in the way of the realism championed by Howells. What in the first place makes poem and fiction tell on each other is the high degree to which the protagonist's self is affected by the colour line. In both, the author's sympathy unequivocally goes to the woman who falls victim to racial prejudice. In telling the story of the quadroon staked and lost to the gamblers by her white masters and lover, the pilot seems to be under the same spell as when in his youth he watched horrified how she fell of her own will on the wheel that "caught her, and hurled her, and crushed her, and in the foaming water plunged her, and hid her for ever."

As for the white men, they are both her moral inferiors. One, the gambler who wins her is a perfect villain: "dark and lustful and fierce and full of the merciless cunning," " a picturesque rascal" "with long black

hair and moustache;" the other, the father of her child, who sells her like a lifeless thing scarcely makes a pleasant contrast: he is "slender of body and soul, fit neither for loving nor hating," whereas his whiteness has connotations of sickness.

To be sure, selling one who is emotionally dependent on you, and keeping one in the dark about her mixed blood are very different things. Yet, both attitudes imply breach of trust, and, considered from this point of view, the wrong done to both of them is, roughly speaking, the same.

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Playing the ethnographer in Boston. Just as in "The Pilot's Story," Louise's shock at being told that she has a new master is brought into focus by the use of direct speech–her reproachful words intrude, as it were, upon the pilot's tale breaking it at this point–so Rhoda's reaction on learning that she is of Negro descent becomes focalized: at this moment the narrative perspective shifts from Olney to her. Her point of view dominates the mid-section, that is, about one third of the book. The plight in which she unexpectedly finds herself, the crisis it entails forcing her to question the very foundation of her self and to painfully face the possibility of building it anew, lend her part an emotional intensity which is missing when Olney is the "register." It is rather fortunate that Howells had second thoughts about the narrative technique he was to use in his shorter novel of 1891. As Martha Banta indicates, the reference to *Olney's Letters* contained in a notebook entry of 1883 suggests that Howells had initially contemplated using a first person narrative. The same title, *Olney's Letters*, is mentioned in his correspondence and in an entry of 1886, when he was taking the first steps to put his intention into effect.[iv]

As a doctor, Olney displays the characteristics of his profession: he is a detached observer of the human scene, although he is nonetheless tempted to read the human body with the eye of a sociologist and to take note of codes of behaviour and dressing fashions, which he identifies in terms of race and ethnicity. In a sense he plays the role of etnographer in his own country for which his five year absence has somehow qualified him. In the space best suited for such a task–the street and the common–he

carries on his exploration and is struck with, apart from the ethnical and race features constituting the identity of the Irish or the blacks, the loss of national characteristics of "poorer classes" that come into his view: in Liverpool they have an "almost American look" and in Boston, an English look.

Of the two major groups he "scientifically" observes, the Irish and the blacks, the latter make far more claims on his sympathy. It is not that the Irish *en masse* arouse his resentment. There is nothing about the Irish women for instance that renders them contemptible in his eyes. If anything, it is the bearing which their condition of immigrant has on them that engages his attention:

> the old women were strong, sturdy, old world peasants, but the young girls were thin and crooked, with pale, pasty complexions, an effect of physical delicacy from their hard work and hard conditions, which might later be physical refinement. They were conjecturally out of box factories and clothier's shops; they went about in threes or fours, with their lank arms round one another's waists, or lounged upon the dry grass...Their voices at once course and weak; their walk was uncertain, now awkward and now graceful, an undeveloped gait; he found their bearing apt to be aggressive, as if from a wish to ascertain the full limits of their social freedom, rather than from ill-nature, or that bad-heartedness which most rudeness comes from.[v]

Imagination and the commonsense are also among the national traits of this class of immigrants. The Irish had now little cause to be displeased. In the text published in *Harper's Monthly*, Olney was more antipathetic to the Irish, especially the Irish women, and at the same time more benevolent towards the Negroes. "The Irish howl" against him "waked" by the opening chapter that appeared in July made Howells drop the caustic remarks from the first version, although he justified himself privately by invoking the distance between author and the point of view character. "They can't see that it is not I who felt and said what Olney did," he wrote to his sister Aurelia.[vi] Simultaneously, as Martha Banta calls attention, in the book as compared with the serialized text, Howells revised Olney's attitude towards the Negroes, attenuating his very warm sympathy.[vii]

From Olney's vantage point, the Negro makes a far better servant because he knows how to dissimulate his real instincts.

> He would not have been ready to say, (muses Olney challenged by the pressure made by the Irish waiter,) that one of the Negro waiters, whom he wished they had at his hotel, would not have been just as greedy of money; but he would have clothed his greed in such a smiling courtesy and such a childish simple-heartedness that it would have been graceful and winning (5).

Made comfortable with appearances, Olney seldom goes beyond them and reaches to what lies there. To him "soft voices and gentle manners" make life agreeable. It would be too much to ask him to take the full measure of Negroes' penchant for dissimulation and share in the conclusion of later historians that such an art had been vital to them, for in it they had long discovered a strategy of survival. Olney's attraction to black racial traits and patterns of behaviour that most obviously point to the invisible though no less coercive power of the colour line foreshadow the conflict at the heart of the book and is responsible at the same time for the high frequency of the chromatic imagery already noted.

But the race problem is constantly kept in the foreground even before the secret of Rhoda's birth is revealed to Olney. As a matter of fact when the disclosure is finally made, it hardly takes the reader by surprise. Apart from such portrait details as "the inky blackness of her eyes and hair"(13), the talk in Mrs. Meredith's hotel room revolves round the traits that render the race sympathetic to both Olney and Rhoda, as well as round segregation and the border it had raised between whites and blacks.

There is no doubt on the other hand that much as he likes the Negro for his "childish simple heartedness," Olney still refrains from looking upon him as the white man's equal. His vulgar Darwinism forbids him such a recognition. To the extent to which virtues and vices have a clear-cut distribution between civilization and slavery, and, furthermore, selection is understood to lead to the "effacement of the inferior type" (27) and, in this light, the absorption of the Negro by the white race is taken for granted, one is encouraged to make allowances for racial segregation and abolish the distinction between assimilation and suppression. To be sure, it is to Olney's credit that he sincerely deplores the obliteration of black qualities

that goes with the loss of colour, but it is difficult to say whether this regret really subverts his theory of evolution and its consequences: the suppression of racial qualities in the first place. Even by marrying Rhoda he goes only half way in his response to "the race which vexes our social question with its servile past, and promises to keep it uncomfortable with its civic future" (6). Besides, his relation to Rhoda can be understood to be primarily sexual, *An Imperative Duty* turning out to be in this case a love story disguised as a novel about the race issue. Needless to say, Howells's critics have been tempted to read the novel along these lines.[viii]

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Rhoda's selves. Rhoda's frame of mind upon being told the truth about herself, what her identity *really* is, the psychological pressure to which she is subject, and her efforts to find a way out of her entanglement are of far greater interest than any of Olney's reflections or observations. A very important issue appears to be at stake here, lending Howells's novel a quality it shares with many twenty-century novels: how can you answer the question about who you are when the discovery has been forced on you that your old identity has no legitimization and was a mere illusion? Often asked by nineteenth-century American writers, Howells's predecessors included, the question has assumed increasing relevance in the present century.

What gives Rhoda's identity crisis its modern ring is her painful groping amidst all her anguish for a new beginning in terms of the new data about her existence. Following upon the shock she received from her aunt that she is an octoroon, are her impressive efforts to relate herself once more to the world and by so doing to lay new foundations for her selfhood. "To accept the loss of her former self" (59) and remake herself in a different image is hardly an ordinary endeavour, and examples are not missing especially in the nineteenth century when the shock described by Rhoda in the words: "it tears my whole life up and flings it out on the ground" (52) resulted in an act of self-destruction. Apparently she refrains from contemplating suicide. Her inner struggle is not any less painful at that.

Rhoda's wanderings, standing in contrast to Olney's relaxed and detached stroll, are suggestive of an entrapment in a labyrinth or descent into hell. There is something hallucinatory about the black faces surrounding her: "hideous," "with their flat wide-nostrilled noses, their out-rolled thick lips, their mobile, bulging eyes set near together, their retreating chins and foreheads, and their smooth, shining skins; they seemed burlesques of humanity, worse than apes, because they were more like" (58). Rhoda's nightmarish walk is also a journey back in historical times: it takes her through a crescendo of darkness to a symbolic meeting with her mother and the latter's female ancestors to the point where blackness seems to be complete. Significantly, horror comes not from it, despite the allusion to "skulls grinning from the eaves" (59), but from the wrong done to it for which history bears full responsibility. "The horror of the wrong by which she came to be" is to be found in the image of the "desert with a long coffle of captives passing by, and one black, naked woman, fallen out from weakness, kneeling with manacled hands, and her head pulled back, and the Arab slaver's knife at her throat" (59).

To come to terms with such roots and their growth in a forced environment is for Rhoda a deliberate act, a manifestation of her strong will and determination. Note should be taken as well that in her troubled state of mind she does not fail to take steps in a promising direction. What she senses to be vital to her is not to turn her back on the world–that would be suicidal because she is selfless or so she believes at the time–but to relate herself to the world once more and in so doing to foster a new identity. The old coloured woman whom she addresses in the street and identifies with both her mother and grandmother meets her most deeply felt need at the moment. It is to be regretted perhaps that Howells too quickly dissolves their relation in the doctrine of brotherly love preached to the black congregation in a Methodist church by a Negro divinity student. "To love your way out" (65) is meant no doubt to be a solution to Rhoda's individual plight as this was intrinsically bound up with the condition of the Negro at a period when racism was at its peak.

It hardly needs to point out that the Christian spirit of the "lecture" harmonizes well with Tolstoy's teaching under whose spell Howells, as noted earlier, had fallen a couple of years before. It is not unlikely however

that Rhoda's reaction to it, and especially to the audience's response to the lecturer's words, should have benefitted from the author's own impressions of black religious life. Less than a year before he had finished *An Imperative Duty,* he visited a black Methodist church in Boston and "felt softened and humbled among those lowly and kindly people." [ix] The effect on Rhoda is not different, notwithstanding how devastated she feels within. What lends her reaction particular force is the distortion involved in her perception of the faces round her. As if her walk in the nightmare had reached a terminal point and she had found herself almost engulfed in "frog-like ugliness." As perceived by Rhoda the black congregation assumes a surrealistic look. This has much to do with the intrusions of white in the "prevailing blackness": "the light here and there in the glint of a bald head (...) or the cast of a rolling eye" (64) just as the speaker's "goblin effect" is heightened by "the white point of his shirt collar, and the glare of his spectacles" (63).

As Elsa Nettels has pointed out, the divinity student's lecture anticipated Booker T. Washington's Atlanta Address that "advocated reconciliation of the races through white assistance to blacks and black submission to the realities of white dominance -a policy that Howells emphatically endorsed." [x] The black leader also cherished the idea that through education the Negro had an opportunity to find a better place for himself. Yet he was not to be granted the freedom to go beyond the line imposed by segregation. At the same time "the shadow" Howells's speaker seems to have become, is the sin darkening American history, the guilt each generation kept alive, like Rhoda's male ancestors, by paradoxically imparting their own whiteness to it.

It is difficult to say whether a black Rhoda would have fully come to life, whether, in other words, she could have really become the new self she takes steps to cope with when making the attempt to relate herself to her black folks. In fact she is denied the chance, once her crisis is brought to an end by Olney's proposal. His love makes it possible for her "to love her way out," but in a different sense from what the lecturer at the black church meant when he addressed his audience in the same words. There is no longer any need for her to bear the cost of acquiring a black identity, even if, to keep her old self which her marriage to Olney has brought her back, she has to play the part of dissimulation and even of suppression of part of

her identity. Seriously threatened by her aunt's confession, Rhoda's self eventually survives, though perhaps in a precarious state. She is rescued by Olney, in the hero's role, who takes her to Italy, where her black traits can pass unnoticed, although it is questionable whether she can dispose of her inner blackness so easily.

Starting as a fiction dependent for its effects on notation of race and ethnic beviour codes and centred on an identity crisis, Howells's shorter novel seems to evolve from a certain point on in the direction of romance. Like Cinderella, who abruptly changes her status in the Prince's eyes, and from the beautiful princess turns into the unassuming servant she is, and, notwithstanding all this, is still found worthy of the prince, Rhoda abandons her privileged position, at least temporarily, and takes a place outside civilized American society. However, Olney fits the role of the prince only imperfectly, his baldness–otherwise a very suggestive contrast to Rhoda's lustrous black hair–having very little princely distinction in it. This inadequacy somewhat dissipates the romantic glamour of the ending, just as his matter-of-fact tone collapses the role inspired by melodrama which Rhoda adopts when confronted with her lover.

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When, at the time of her identity crisis, Rhoda was contemplating the prospect of acting out the role of the return of the native and of bringing light to her humble people, she was supplying one more context for the word "duty" already over-solicited in the novel. For the most part its recurrence is associated with Mrs. Meredith, Rhoda's paternal aunt, in whose care she has been from a child. The duty which the respectable Boston lady has so long put off is to enlighten Rhoda as to her maternal ancestry. Not doing it has become an obsession to which her illness can most probably be traced. Rhoda's prospective marriage to the all too fair minister Bloomingdale brings about the crisis which, in a sense, the old woman had been long expecting. Her failure to rise up to the task to which her New England morality attaches foremost importance casts a pathetic aura round her case, though when looked at more closely, it may take on the hue of her face which at one time is described as "ghastly" (43). Her

death caused apparently by an overdose of sleeping medicine adds to his effect. In a different context, the allusion to "the dismal white-marble hearth" of the hotel room is suggestive of coldness. It can be hardly irrelevant that the traditional place of warmth and liveliness is converted into almost its opposite, while its whiteness is linked to Mrs. Meredith in more than one way.

As a matter of fact, if Mrs. Meredith's New England sense of duty has taken her sleep away for so long, and nearly turned her into an invalid, as so many women of very rigid morality will be in the fiction of the next period, the explanation lies more in her fear to be held responsible for miscegenation than in her guilt of not having been honest to Rhoda. As to the harm she has done her niece by letting her assume an identity which she knew that sooner or later the girl would be forced to give up, Mrs. Meredith shows little awareness. Her obsession with duty conceals in reality unconditioned conformism to her culture and its imperatives, and blinds her to the inhumanity of her long silence. It is worthy of note in this connection that the elderly lady used to think of herself in terms of roles borrowed from fiction. Much to her taste was the heroic gesture which the novels of "romantic coloring" generously supplied to her. So she had often "painted herself in the heroic discharge of her duty."

With each occurrence of the word "duty" in relation to Mrs. Meredith, a semantic devaluation becomes noticeable–repetition as a rule has this function–so that by the time Rhoda appropriates it and speaks of her duties, the word has already reversed its initial meaning. One instance of her use deserves to be brought up, all the more so as the historical allusion it contains gives its irony a resonance that reaches back to the American Revolution. "(...) We've going over to do our duty by Bunker Hill Monument" (38), she informs her aunt on coming in unexpectedly and interrupting the latter's confession to Olney. That an octoroon–at the time Rhoda has no idea that she is one–should pay her respects to he memory of the Founding Fathers who grounded their actions in the convictions that all men were born equal, is a gesture not lacking in irony, if we are aware that by virtue of the same declaration that proclaimed all men to stand

equal before God, a *status quo* was maintained that deprived quite a number of them of precisely this right. When nearly a century later this right was eventually acknowledged them, history was again at its tricks, and race hatred growing in intensity in Southern and Northern states alike to reach a peak during the very decade *An Imperative Duty* was published, was telling on their status in ways that little improved their condition.

However, not only Mrs. Meredith and Rhoda are connected to the title of the book; Olney too has his duties to perform, and to be sure, these are not to be slighted. The interest in his case also lies in the narrow margin separating his concern for an ethics of generosity and altruism–according to it a rival should not be unfairly treated–from a course of action he takes, which making allowances for small breaches of etiquette, actually furthers his own cause. Differences of style aside, Olney's visit to Mrs. Atherton recalls similar situations in Henry James's novels when messages are sent and received by some means other than the words uttered and against their commonly accepted meanings. Contrary to what he apparently pleads for, that Mr. Bloomingdale, Rhoda's declared suitor, should have his chance, Olney understands Mrs. Atherton's pressure of the hand that she will be in fact his ally. No wonder that when the conversation ends, he feels reassured.

There is however another duty which Olney fully assumes only to forget it in the end. It is specified early in the book as part of the motive for his return to America from his Italian journey. It is in this passage, by the way, that the word "duty" appears for the first time: "Besides, he recurred to that vague ideal of duty which all virtuous Americans have, and he felt that he ought, as American, to live in America" (9). This duty seems no longer to occupy Olney's thoughts once Rhoda has become his wife and the couple settled in Italy apparently for good. A remark needs to be made at this point. As the conflict at the heart of the book draws to its resolution, the narrative becomes less focalized, and the character's perspective–in part three we see again with Olney–is more obviously contained in the voice of the narrator. Often enough it makes its control felt by directing the reader's attention, even when pretending to make no imposition on it, to this or that explanation, to this or that meaning. An observation to the

effect that "to each must be left to question of how far the Puritan civilization has carried the cult of the personal conscience into mere idolatry" (89) may encourage readings of the novel that focus on Mrs. Meredith and her sense of "an imperative duty" leaving less explored the ironic reverberations of the phrase when associated with Olney and especially with Rhoda.

The voice that concludes the story of Olney's courtship of Rhoda and sets both of them on the course "with the every day duties of life plain before them" (99) is modulated by deep sympathy for the black people. Given Howells's option for concealing Rhoda's Negro blood, one may wonder whether the narrator's feelings--an expression of the author's racialism--are not to be viewed as an attempt on the writer's part to make up for his evasion of Rhoda's real case.

6

THE SUPPRESSED SELF OF MAGGIE JOHNSON

Two Endings. When Stephen Crane published *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (*A Story of New York*) in 1893 he was an obscure journalist. In his early twenties he could not have much behind him. The number of revisions to which the text had been submitted is proof of the high standards he set for himself as a writer. These had much to do with making "every damned word do the work of six."[i] The almost Dickensian suggestiveness of his imagery, otherwise so different in its lack of opulence, and the "modern" fashion in which he structures his narrative round experiencing selves bring Crane in company with the early modernists. As shown in a previous context, before the decade was over and a year before he died, both Conrad and James looked upon him as definitely one of them. Later Hemingway had good reason to make a similar acknowledgment.

But in 1891 when the young author was completing his first draft of *Maggie*, he had only himself to take encouragement from. Not even the memory of his father was stimulating; or if it was, that happened not because Crane was a good son. On the contrary, not only in reading fiction, but also in writing it, he disobeyed parental wish; for Reverend Dr. J. T. Crane, a strict New Jersey Methodist, had been suspicious of novel reading and advised: "If any harm results, stop at once." Far more safe was of course no exposure at all. Hence the "rigid iron rule for the guidance of all, young and old, learned and unlearned: Total abstinence from novel reading henceforth and forever."[ii]

Rejected by many legitimate publishers, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* was printed at Crane's expense in March 1893 by a firm that had little to

do with literature. Its name did not appear on the yellow cover; neither did Crane's. The slim volume hardly sold and–so the legend goes–the copies left were put to other uses such as kindling a fire. One of them, however, reached W. D. Howells. Hamlin Garland who had received a copy by mail was impressed with it and promptly sent it to Howells. The next day he learned that the author of *Maggie* was Stephen Crane, the young journalist whose article on one of his 1891 lectures had impressed him so much that he looked him up. Less prompt a reader because of his many engagements, Howells let some time pass before he started reading the book, but when he finished it, he was as deeply impressed. As mentioned earlier, Howells gave Crane not only encouragement, but used his immense authority to introduce him to the reading public. The literary market was no longer closed for Crane.

By the time the second edition of *Maggie* was published in 1896, this time both in America and England, Crane had become a well known writer and journalist. *Maggie* too had got public recognition a year before, when Howells commented on it in *Harper's Weekly*. Mention has already been made that the London edition of 1896 further benefitted from Howells's authority: "An Appreciation of W. D. Howells" was added to it. Shortly after the American edition had been published, an expanded version of Howells's appreciation came out in a New York periodical under a new title–"New York Low Life in Fiction"– also including comments on *George's Mother*, another fiction inspired by New York slums, Crane had written in the meantime.

But the second edition was not a faithful reproduction of the 1893 text. Maybe because the editors wanted them, Crane made a number of changes, deleting at least a passage and toning down certain expressions. The bearing which this revision had upon the text as a whole was quite a belated discovery. It was only in the 1960s that critics turned their attention to Crane's own edition and came to the conclusion that it should be given precedence over the 1896 edition. This editorial shift assumed, in Cady's words, the significance of "a revolution," "the honor and glory of making it" belonging to Maurice Bassan and Joseph Katz who in 1966 published a case-book edition and a facsimile edition respectively, both based on the earlier text.[iii] The University of Virginia Edition of the Works of Stephen

Crane (ed. Fredson Bowers) in ten volumes (1965-1975) followed their example, but not entirely: it left out a passage which, as shown further down, by bringing in suggestions of a different ending, is likely to modify sensibly our perception of Maggie. It seems that John Barth was not the first novelist who changed the ending of his *Floating Opera* for the second edition. Crane did the same, though in a more equivocal way.

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A Bowery fiction. Among the first things in Crane's novel to draw the readers' interest was its location. For most of them *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* was another Bowery novel. While often comparing it with previous fictions inspired by New York Low Life, they generally regarded it as a most serious warning about the moral degradation specific to that New York precinct. Once a farm that belonged to Peter Stuyvesant (bowery/*bouwerij* is Dutch for farm or country-seat), this part in Eastern Manhattan that developed along a Street nearly one mile in length, to which the old name came to be attached, had won for itself in the nineteenth century the repute of a famous slum. Its tenement-houses were full, as were the bars, though there was no small number of them: "In 1891 on the fourteen-block long street there were sixty bars on its east side and seventeen on its west side, an average of six per block." [iv]

But not only the saloon gave the district its fame; the flophouse deserved some of the credit too. One can make an idea about the inmates from Crane's own experiment in misery which he conducted in the winter of 1893/4. ("An Experiment in Misery" was published in the New York Press, April 22, 1894.) To carry it out properly, he had to put on a tramp's clothes. The figure which Crane cut when the experiment was over is to be found in the recollections of one of his friends. On returning to the studio where he was staying with some artists, he and his companion who had shared in his adventure were "both in rags, no overcoat, clothes all holes, toes out of their shoes, no umbrella (of course not), and soaked to the skin, water dripping in pools about them." [v] Tramp for a night, he had a good chance to get familiar with the flophouse--a cheap hotel where the bowery tramps and poor slept in rooms, each "accommodating" scores of them.

The adventure was more then demanding for "shortly after the beginning of the journey (the walk along the corridor) the young man felt his liver turn white, for from the dark and secret places of the building there suddenly came to his nostrils strange and unspeakable odors that assailed him like malignant diseases with wings. They seemed to be from human bodies closely packed in dens; the exhalations from a hundred pairs of reeking lips; the fumes from a thousand bygone debauches; the expression of a thousand present miseries."[vi]

The Bowery produced recognizable patterns of speech and behaviour. Thus the Bowery boy who was quite a prominent New York type had his own language, manners and, of course, "apparel" by which he could be easily distinguished. Here is what may pass for one of his portraits:

> The Bowery boy of the nineteenth century dyed his moustache jet-black, wore perfume, oiled his hair profusely, and affected rough airs he considered exquisite. His trousers were very tight and needed no suspenders, he wore a silk hat and a huge black silk scarf under the collar of his flannel shirt, and instead of shoes wore well-polished boots. (...) With a cigar tilted heavenward, the Bowery boy used to spread his elbows apart so that nobody could pass him, and then if someone jostled him he would immediately be insulted and fight with his fists. In a voice 'modeled after that of a fire-trumpet' (to quote Julian Ralph) he spoke a language of his own.[vii]

As for the Bowery girl, she did her best to acquire the Fifth Avenue look. "Bowery girls," Martha Banta informs us, "take the proper tone by aspiring to the aesthetic of the American girl which can be copied by way of cheap versions of expensive clothes and by imitating, gratis, Fifth Avenue poses and gestures."[viii] Keeping her eyes on the place where fashion was displayed, she had to work hard, of course, for even imitation, no matter whether grotesque or not, asked for a high price. From time to time, however, her efforts were more fully rewarded, and her style appeared not to be devoid of the genuine note. Her success was proof that like others before her who had started as low and managed to reach to the top, the poor girl in America, especially if she was still an immigrant, could have her share of the American Dream. At the beginning of 1896, the very year when Crane's novel was to make its way into the American and British market,

New York Journal offered for contemplation (and reflection) the pictures of two girls, each in its own frame, but similar in shape and joined under the same heading, which was in fact a question: "Which is the American princess?" The claim for the high rank, borne out by figures so much alike in elegance, brings together the two girls who otherwise are separated by a wide gulf; for one is Gertrude Vanderbilt, the daughter of a millionaire, and the other is Bertha Krieg, a Bowery girl who works in a dry-goods shop. The distance between them tends to decrease if they are set in a longer historical perspective, and note is taken that Cornelius Vanderbilt's start was similar to Bertha's: he too had been a poor immigrant before he became one of the richest men in America.[ix]

If American Princesses could be found in the Bowery, so could prostitutes. It was in fact the painted cohorts that gave the Bowery its reputation and not the likes of Bertha Krieg whom the *Journal* advertised. To reform them and abolish drunkenness was a concern at least as strongly advertised. Fighting against vice often took unexpected turns as those leading the campaign had also the police to reckon as enemy. The battle fought by Reverend Dr. Charles Henry Parkhurst is a case in point. In 1892, a year before *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* came out, he openly accused the New York Police and the District Attorney of being in league with the Bowery vice. When his allegations were rejected in Court, he was able, by adequately disguising himself, to collect further evidence straight from the "city's dens of vice." It should be noted that neither on reverend Dr. Parkhurst, nor on any other reformer did the first edition of Crane's novel make an impression; or, if it did, no one acknowledged it. The author who took care that the 1893 *Maggie* reach them remarked on their "iceberg" coldness in terms that surely encourage one to speak of the hellish look of the Bowery: "You'd think the book came straight from hell and they smelled the smoke. Not one of them gave me a word."[x] Perhaps the reformers found it hard to put up with the treatment which Maggie got at a clergyman's hands: when in her distress she is about to ask him for help, he simply turns his back on her, fearing for his respectability. The absence of any moralizing too might have estranged them, as few other novels of the period inspired from slum life left preaching aside. When the second edition more properly dressed for the market broke the silence, it did so for the most

part in order to call attention to the Bowery and its sordidness, as well as to the need for a change. To one reviewer, *Maggie* was "a powerful sermon on the need of missionary work among the heathen in the tenements of our big cities, and it cannot fail to open the eyes of many who have only taken a sentimental interest in the class that seems to be no nearer to them than the natives of the Congo." [xi] Absent from the book, the preaching was supplied by the reader by virtue of the expectations the slum novel had created by the 1890s.

But the frame of reference more generally used was that of realism with its emphasis on the truth-to-life desideratum. The appreciation, often contradictory, resulting from its application indicates that there were many ways in which realism and truth to life were understood, even if, in earnest or in jest, Howells's name was invoked. To some, Maggie was realistic because it offered "instantaneous literary photographs of slum life," [xii] to others it was less so because it grossly exaggerated what was unpleasant about New York slum life; to others still, it had little to do with realism, because "there is not a gleam of sunshine in the whole book." [xiii] The too heavy oppressiveness of the environment on the one hand, and Maggie's giving in to it so smoothly, on the other, made of Crane's novel but a poor illustration of what realism was understood to be.

Though comparisons with Zola were not missing in the nineties–later Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* will more consistently supply the French point of reference–it will take some time for Crane's novel to be relegated to the province of naturalism that was being mapped out in the 1890s according to subsequent divisions and labellings. There was evidence that he had read the French writers in translation, and, consequently, the relation in which he stood to them gained in interest. However, Crane's favourite was neither Zola, nor Flaubert, but Maupassant who apparently influenced his choice of the form of the short novel or novella, or, much more likely reinforced his attraction for it, as the fictional form had been at home in America for some time. (See Howells's plea for it in the previous chapter.) As already mentioned, impressionism will claim *Maggie* too. In fact, attempts along these lines were made as soon as the second edition came out. (It is true, they were stimulated by Crane's other works, especially *The Red Badge of Courage*, which had appeared in the meantime.) The

reviewer who appreciated the book to be more "impressionistic than real" was obviously in disagreement with Crane's version of realism demanding that the writer should be true to his impressions. But his remark that "the essential figure is the least delineated" bears out from another perspective the point made in this chapter. Maggie is, in the jargon implying a certain notion of character, "the least delineated,"[xiv] because there is not much in her to call for delineation. Innately disposed to human sympathy, she is nonetheless denied a self of her own. She exists by virtue of the impressions made by her environment and ends by being suppressed altogether: a self too precarious and dependent on others not to deny her the force to fight back the violence surrounding her and thus to make her survival possible.

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A universe consumed by "flames of unreasoning rage."

No discussion of Maggie can ignore the world of which she was a product. Besides, the Bowery in Crane's novel is a space too richly informed with significance not to claim prominence among fictional cityscapes that were shortly to proliferate as the attention of American writers was increasingly drawn to town life and the kind of success (or failure) it was having in store for the individual.

All in all a human environment *par excellence*, the Bowery in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* is mapped out according to the needs it presumably serves to meet. The tenement house where the Johnsons have their home, the places of entertainment to which Maggie is introduced, the factory where she works for a period, the saloon, and connecting them all, the street, are each contained within its boundaries. None of these spaces is completely cut off from the others, or from the fashionable New York. On a larger scale, the street is a link to both downtown and the river.

It can be further noted that in the Bowery the traditional boundary between domestic and common, private and public, can be maintained only at a high cost. This is an effect of the far greater claim that the commonly shared space makes on the individual. It is between work–an activity that brings individuals under the same roof–and the theatre or the saloon that the inhabitants of the Bowery divide their time. In a more important sense,

the loss of private ground is something to which Bowery life in general is conducive. The tenement house is no doubt most expressive in this respect. Each of the dozens of families dwelling in it has its own rooms and, apparently, its privacy is assured, but the proximity of the neighbours and the space they have in common use make a poor protection against intrusion. Making up a regular, though not always visible, audience to every domestic scene, the little community gratifies its instincts by voyeuristically indulging in the violence unleashed, their spectatorship further stimulating the performers; which does not in the least hinder it from acting as a formidable repressive force in the name of patterns of behavior held in respect by its inherited culture. It is the group man or rather the group woman that imparts its attributes to the building and makes it appear both multitude and one single human body:

> (...) from a careening building, a dozen gruesome doorways gave up loads of babies to the street and the gutter. A wind of early autumn raised yellow dust from the cobbles and swirled it against a hundred windows. Long streamers of garments fluttered from fire-escapes. In all unhandy places there were buckets, brooms, rags, and bottles. In the street infants played or fought with other infants or sat stupidly in the way of vehicles. Formidable women with uncombed hair and disordered dress, gossiped while leaning on railings, or screamed in frantic quarrels. Withered persons in curious postures of submission to something, sat smoking pipes in obscure corners. A thousand odours of cooking food came forth to the street. The building quivered and creaked from the weight of humanity stamping about in its bowells.[xv]

As the activities that help define the tenement house are all connected with Maggie's mother, her immense body may well appear as an image suggestive of the building itself.

That a place of one's own is hard to find, the Johnson children have been trained to accept from an early age. They know that privacy for them is the shelter they might take either under the table when very young or like their molested father in the corner of the room—the border of a space that is thus denied to them, but which nonetheless keeps them helplessly exposed to the violence perpetuated within the four walls. Fighting his mother while still a kid, Jimmie, an urchin is "tossed" to "a corner, where he limply lay

weeping" (100); some time later "in one corner of the room his father's limp body hung across the seat of a chair" (103). As for Maggie, it is compassion for her brother's condition that drives her to the corner: "She grasped the urchin's arm in her little trembling hands and they huddled in a corner" (103).

If the "corner" implies pressure that can hardly be resisted, the "door" is put to far more uses, which explains its exceedingly high incidence in the text. It is not only a connector between two self-contained spaces, the little segment where the boundary is abolished. The door brings the outside in and with it the promise of change, a possibility to transgress what is felt as too narrow a confinement. "The door opened and Pete appeared" (115): the import of this matter-of-fact statement is brought up a little further down in the text when Maggie's absorption with the doors is given particular emphasis. Three weeks after "the door opened and Pete appeared," Maggie abandoned in the "hilarious hall"[xvi] (122)-Pete having disappeared with "the woman of brilliance and audacity" apparently for a short walk--"was watching the doors" (125), "was paying no attention, being intent upon the doors" (125), "was still staring at the doors" (125). The intensity of her concentration "on the doors" bespeaks no doubt her attachment or rather her dependence on Pete, and at the same time anticipates a reversal in her relation to the object of her preoccupation. Back in the tenement house only to be driven out by her mother and Jimmie, it is she who attracts now the attention of "the doors": "As the girl passed down through the hall, she went before open doors framing more eyes strangely microscopic, and sending broad beams of inquisitive light into the darkness of her path;" "the crowd at the door fell back precipitately" (127). Facilitating access to various points in the space of the novel, the door also acts as barrier, as if the boundary, once reinstated, receives additional authority and becomes impossible to cross. So is the door Pete "slammed" "furiously" as an extra retort to Maggie's question: "But where kin I go?" (128).

Doors in the Bowery are often invested with unusual power over human beings, an instance of a metaphorical strategy greatly favoured by Crane, here working to express the strong grip which the environment has upon the individual. In Dickensian fashion, the "dozen gruesome doorways

gave up loads of babies to the street and the gutter." Extended to very young children, "loads of," normally used with inanimate objects, conveys the passivity and inertness to which human beings have been condemned from their earliest age. Reinforcing the analogy between buildings and bodies, the door appears to be "an open mouth" no less powerful to change the course of human lives: "the open mouth of a saloon called seductively to passengers to enter and annihilate sorrow or create rage" (117). James Nagel has noted the occurrence of the same image in *George's Mother* a novel also laid in the Bowery where Jimmie and Maggie brought to life once more recede, however, to the background. Taking stock of the more suggestive, though related, image in "An Experiment in Misery" of the doors of the saloon and their "ravenous lips," Nagel who is otherwise tempted to lay much store by Crane's impressionism at the expense of his naturalism is forced all the same to observe that what the image suggests is "that the environment kills and devours human beings." [xvii]

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Perhaps nothing distinguishes the Bowery better than violence and its manifestations. It is all encompassing despite appearances to the contrary, and affects humans and things at their very core. "Conflict as Condition" is the title of the chapter devoted to *Maggie* in David Halliburton's book *The Color of he Sky*, as well as the first of the headings under which the novel is analysed. His statement that "the series of fights in the first pairs of chapters demonstrates the sheer inertia of the violence unleashed (in Crane's view) *within* the Bowery *by* the Bowery" is fully borne out by the fights in the opening part of the book.[xviii] Apparently, with the exception of Tommie who is too young to be taken into account, all the other characters are agents of violence. After Jimmie's battle with the urchins of the Devil's Row, an impressive amount of energy is consumed by the mother in the thrash she gives Jimmie to be shortly followed by the scuffle with her husband. As for Maggie, for the most part the recipient of Jimmie's cuffs, she too causes physical discomfort to Tommie by dragging him against his will. Although violence as its most intense is to be found in the tenement house and especially in the domestic ambience of the Johnsons, it can hardly

be confined to those premises alone. It manifests itself on a far larger scale that can ultimately be identified with the entire space of the novel; and–the point needs special emphasis–though it is displayed by the humans, the objects have their share in it too. The universe in *Maggie* is one of permanent collision: human bodies clash with each other and get covered with bruises; on the other hand, things are dislocated or, when not heavy enough, broken into splinters; the "chaotic mass of debris," "shreds," and "clattering fragments" are the periodic effects of this ever-renewed process of disintegration. Definitely there is nothing striking in this aspect of the room as Maggie takes it in: "the usual upheaval of the tables and chairs had taken place. Crockery was strewn broadcast in fragments. The stove had been disturbed on its legs, and now leaned idiotically to one side. A pail had been upset and water spread in all directions" (114-15). It is worthy of note that elsewhere in the Bowery, things scarcely submit to different impulses. Order and "geometrical accuracy" (117) seem to reign in the saloon where Pete works as a bartender. However, the scene does not take long to tune itself to the more general laws governing Crane's universe: "the place had heretofore appeared free of things to throw, but suddenly glasses and bottles went singing through the air. They were thrown point-blank at bobbing heads. The pyramids of shimmering glasses, that had never been disturbed, changed to cascades as heavy bottles were flung into them. Mirrors splintered to nothing" (119).

Likewise, the bodies severely colliding with each other often change their look taking on a crimson hue as bruises and blotches multiply on the skin. Much has been written on Crane's use of "yellow," a colour which is by no means absent or insignificant in *Maggie*. However, if note is taken of the recurrence of blood imagery, red appears to be equally competitive. Most of the characters are mere bodies dripping blood: "Blood was dripping from a cut in his head" (97); "Blood was bubbling over his chin and down upon his ragged shirt" (98); "Blood stood upon his bruises on his knotty forearms where they had scraped against the floor on the walls in the scuffle" (114); "Blows left crimson blotches upon the pale skin" (119); "their blood-coloured fists whirled" (119). The series is far from exhausted.

As can be seen from the last example, the swiftness of the bodily movements also adds to the impression created by the objects in rapid

motion, that the characteristic condition of the Bowery is that of a vertigo. What may pass for repose in this universe is only a state of sheer exhaustion. As long as there is energy, there is violence leading to disintegration and chaos. That the postures in which the Johnsons most often find themselves are lying asleep on the floor or reeling indicate, of course, an animal-like insensitivity alternating with utter confusion and dizziness, the relevance of which is not to be limited to moral life, but drawn out to include the human condition as a whole. We may do well to point out that it is not only chromatically–as mentioned above–but aurally too, that violent disorder gains in intensity reaching a point that invites comparison with twentieth century heterotopias. In more senses than one, Crane's Bowery is a roaring universe. A variety of noises contributes to the overall effect: the collisions of humans and objects, the especially sonorous forms assumed by human utterance: "roaring" and "howling," "yelling," and "screaming," to which one should add the sound of the stage often accompanied by "the heavy rumble of booted feet thumping the floor" (111), "the turmoil and tumble" (104) of the street and the "whirl of noises and odours"(111) in the collar-and-cuff establishment where Maggie works for a while.

It goes without saying that a universe in which so many elements concur to render it so little habitable cannot offer too many choices for the individual. However, the impression it makes is, apart from inadequacy, that of a hellish quality that distorts the human and condemns him to the "flames of unreasoning rage" (114). David Halliburton is much to the point when he writes that "the very assertiveness of Crane's colors, their high pitch of emotional intensity, make his slum novel read at times like a nightmare or a hallucination."[xix] If to have a nightmare or a hallucination is to be a little in hell too, then there is some good reason to consider Crane's Bowery a late nineteenth century version of hell. In fact, Father speaks of his home as "reg'lar living hell" (102). His remark finds support in a set of suggestions that seem expressly meant for such a reinforcement. Prominent among them are the recurrent qualifiers "lurid" and "gruesome" associated as they are one with the doors of the tenement house and the other with Jimmie, with "the altercation" of husband and wife, with the Mother's face and Pete's glance, as well as the image of the "writhing" bodies: Jimmie's "body was writhing in the delivery of "oaths" (97) "the

mother writhed in an uneasy slumber" (103), "the girl cast a glance about the room filled with a chaotic mass of debris and at the writhing body of her mother's" (115), Jimmie "threw out his left hand and writhed his fingers about her middle arm" (114). It is worth pointing out along the same lines that the expression of the face emphatically brought into focus at the expense of portrait details reenacts the convulsions and contortions of the body. Apart from the "chronic sneer" that Pete and Jimmie have most obviously in common, a grin which is "wide dirty" when not "ghoul-like" (119) renders their faces almost interchangeable. That human faces tend to become grimaces and evince associations with hell is also the effect of the clownish number of the singer who "made his face into fantastic grimaces until he looked like a devil on a Japanese kite" (111). Often bringing it in the lime light, Bowery shows have no doubt their role in defining the space of the novel.

Before considering it, let us make sure that the implications of what has been said so far about Maggie's mother and her relation to the Bowery have been carried to their conclusion. The large woman, a lifeless body when not violently destructive, belongs to the place in a more intimate way than any other character. She emanates from it, let it be said, forcefully mastering it in return. The analogy already mentioned between her and the tenement house works to the same effect. Her "dishevelled" (106), "tangled" (103, 115), "tossing" (109) hair, and "the rolling glare" of "her eyes" (113) further qualify it for her dominant position in the infernal world, as does for that matter "the drunken heat" of her burning brain. The dance of the street urchins as they "hoot and yell and jeer" – "a wide dirty grin spread over each face" (113)–is suggestive of a devil's worship. There is of course truth in her calling Maggie "d'devil's own child" (116), which makes the imprecation sound all the more ironical.

Mention has already been made that the Bowery space takes some of its characteristic features from the shows supplying a variety of entertainment of which Pete and especially Maggie appear to be constant watchers. These places are easily assimilated to the more general atmosphere, their chromatic and sounds rendering them almost indistinguishable from either the tenement house or the collar-and-cuff factory. Still, they have their own suggestions to make, and we might do

well to heed them too. There is first the repeated allusion to imitation as regards both interior and repertoire: the impression of opulence is maintained through fake effects, and parody makes its way in the actors'play, as when a dancer delights the audience by imitating "those grotesque attitudes which were at the time popular among the dancers in the theatres uptown" (110).

According to David Halliburton theatricality as he calls the effect associated with the stage and, more generally, with entertainment is closely related to demonism–a strain to which, in the wake of Dickens, Balzac and Poe, some of Crane's contemporaries such as Frank Norris and Ambrose Bierce were drawn. In Halliburton's view, the theatricality in *Maggie* "leaning now toward melodrama, now toward the grotesque, expresses a tension between irreconcilable forces.[xx] In melodrama it takes the form of open opposition, in the grotesque it is controlled combustion." It is important to underline however that if the grotesque offered to the onlookers for the sake of amusement such as the rows of freaks in the dime museum, is somehow in tune with the grotesqueries exhibited by the characters themselves, lending Maggie's world as a whole the characteristic of appearing *fearful*, *quasicomic*, and *wondrous*--to stick to the terms in which Halliburton defines the grotesque[xxi]--melodrama on the other hand is put to a different use.

For one thing what is happening on the stage, while having resemblance to "real" life–the roles of the hero and the heroine have their counterparts in the audience–, evolves along lines which are the very obverse of the course taken by the characters. Maggie's story and her relationship to Pete is a complete reversal of melodrama. Apart from a different distribution of virtue and vice in their lives, as in the lives of the other spectators, generally speaking, their solution to the conflict, if one can speak of a conflict, reflects ironically on the play. Another point of interest is supplied by the response of the audience. It is most likely that the scene was meant to be a parody not only of melodrama, but also of its impact, which at the time counted quite heavily in American culture. Nevertheless, it is quite clear from the attitude of the Bowery consumers that the appeal of melodrama, though apparently a target of ridicule, sheds a good deal of light on both human nature and the environment. One may even detect a suggestion that there is a core in every human being where moral distinctions

can still be made and the forces of good prevail, or as William James would have us believe, there is a spiritual self in each of us, even if it is still in an embryonic stage. For otherwise how could "unmistakably bad man" evince "an apparently sincere admiration for virtue?" (113) It seems that the impulse towards identification with the hero and heroine on the stage has its abode in a psychological need, but the sociological factor is not to be disregarded either: "the loud gallery was overwhelmingly with the unfortunate and the oppressed (...). They sought out the painted misery and hugged it as akin" (113).

The Betrayal of Clothes. The question pressing for an answer in the ensuing pages is about Maggie and can be framed as follows: is it possible for her to foster a self of her own being confined as she is to the Bowery world?

The traditional view, more generally accepted, that holds the environment responsible for Maggie's joining "the painted cohorts" (129) and ultimately for her death has not remained unchallenged. James Nagel for one lays far lesser stress on the pressure of the economic factor and the power of heredity and this, because, as mentioned earlier, he is especially concerned with proving that Crane should be linked with impressionism rather than with naturalism. If Maggie continues to be a victim, it is her distorted vision of things and people that makes her so, rather than the slum in which she lives. Such a reading compels Nagel to take issue with Crane himself. The inscription the latter wrote on several copies of the book which he presented to, among others, Hamlin Garland, is quite emphatic on the shaping role of the environment: "it is inevitable," he warned his friends, "that you will be greatly shocked by this book but continue please with all possible courage to the end. For it tries to show that environment is a tremendous thing in the world and frequently shapes lives regardless. If one proves that theory one makes room in Heaven for all sorts of souls (notably an occasional street girl) who are not confidently expected to be there by many excellent people."[xxii] It goes without saying that the critic has no difficulty in disregarding Crane's brief comment on his own book. After all, a well-known lesson of the "intentional fallacy" discreetly echoed by Nagel is to keep the work distinct from whatever the author has to say about it.

Shifting the responsibility on to Maggie herself, that is, to her disposition to take the world for what it is not, Nagel is accordingly less inclined to lay the blame on "societal pressures." For him, Maggie's compassion and innocence show her to be different from the world around her. Had she been determined by heredity and environment–his argument runs–she should have resembled her mother. (Why not her father, who like Maggie herself is successfully pushed to a corner?) The contrast in which Maggie stands to Nell, "the woman of brilliance and audacity" with whom she shares her environment and lover, also pleads, in Nagel's opinion, in favour of a reading that does not make a point in specifically taking the environment to task. This is not exactly tenable either. To judge Maggie by Nell's standards is to acknowledge callousness as not only the right moral response to the world, but also as a way of survival, to endorse, in other words, the law of the fittest, the other pole round which gravitates the interest of the naturalist writer in America.

It appears obvious that as part of the world of the Bowery, as this emerges from Crane's novel, neither Maggie, nor any other character can be approached independently of it. Any estimate of Maggie's freedom should start therefore by taking into account the choices she has before her. Her identity or rather her chances to develop one, is largely a matter of the course(s) she can adopt and this in turn can hardly be divorced from her response to the world. Two are in my view the ways in which the characters in the Bowery can relate themselves to their world: defiance and apparent submission. It is tempting to imagine that if they had been granted the vision of their author, they might have asked the same question as Matthew Arnold:

> Is there no life, but these alone
> Madman or slave, must man be one? [xxiii]

As can be easily inferred, of the two attitudes, it is defiance to which the characters are more irresistibly drawn. The destructive impulse, so active in the Bowery, can be hardly distinguished from the sense developed in early childhood that despite its aggressiveness or rather because of it, one should look down upon the world and never doubt his superiority. This brand of nihilism leading to the hypertrophy of the ego, finds a more

permanent expression in the "chronic" or "choleric" sneer. Pete's distinctive mark in the beginning, it is reduplicated in due time by Jimmie. They both challenge the world in its own terms, that is, by challenging each other, and this act, which is another term for fighting, is not only the legitimization of their morals, but also their *raison d'etre*. Defiance alone endows them–in their own eyes–with a frightening stature: "There was nothing in space which could appal" (107) Pete; as for Jimmie, "he was afraid of nothing" (104).

Apart from the fighting disposition they have in common, the motives behind their behaviour are not always the same. Pete is in a larger measure dominated by his instinct for power. Hence his fascination with the spectacle of fighting, whether of monkeys or kids, and his admiration for the winner. His interest in such demonstrations–entertainment as a rule leaves him passive and indifferent–prefigures the penchant of Dreiser's characters to identify with the survivors of struggles in which the weak are literally devoured. On the other hand, an exceedingly strong sense of honour appears to motivate Jimmie. It is true, this is not to be associated with Jimmie alone. As John J. Conder makes a point of stressing, generally in Crane's world, "the biological instinct to survive (as in "The Open Boat") is coupled with "a psychological instinct for self-esteem." "This latter instinct," he explains, "is a natural corollary of the biological instinct for survival, the social dimension of the physical."[xxiv] In Maggie, this instinct for self esteem is at work on a large scale too. Maggie's mother is not lacking in it either. By assuming in her case the form of respectability that otherwise clashes so violently with her behaviour it becomes a major source of irony in the novel.

The demands of respectability have their say with respect to Jimmie too. He does not take long to dismiss the thought that his sister "would have been more firmly good had she better known how" (122) and to side with his mother in driving her away from home. The sense of self-esteem is, however, far stronger in him than in all the other characters including Pete, and often enough it is to be found behind his acts of defiance. Thus his inconclusive fight with Pete to avenge Maggie's ill reputation reiterates the opening scene when he, then an urchin, is fighting desperately for the honour of Rum Alley. But even when it is not particularly challenged, his

self-esteem is in need of gratification. As only defiance can give it full satisfaction, it is to be regarded as more than a gesture; it is rather an existential condition in one of its most constant manifestations.

It seems worth making the point that Thorstein Veblen's views on the force of respectability (what he calls "reputability") mentioned in an earlier connection can be easily brought to bear on the Bowery characters. Thus the code at work in late nineteenth century that invested self-esteem and self-respect with absolute value was as much of those at the bottom as it was of those at the top. Besides, as the former were prone to imitate the next higher stratum, they felt it their duty to convince that they were in earnest and their loyalty to the ethical norms had real meaning for them. They could do that by acting in the "right" way, or by keeping the topic of "right" and "wrong" alive in their talk; which is precisely what Maggie's mother does.

But Veblen's book of 1899 might be brought to bear on the fictional Bowery in other respects too. Dealing with the duel as a leisure-class institution, he comments that in modern societies, such as was American society at the tail end of the nineteenth century, two categories of people resorted to fighting as a means for settling disputes: certain leisure class members, such as naval and military officers, and lower class delinquents. With both of them self-esteem was the supreme value, and with both of them the recourse to blows was "the universal solvent of differences of opinion."[xxv] Just as the duel was grounded in a code of honour, so fighting was the only way in which the rowdy could assert their good repute.

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Unlike Pete and Jimmie, not to mention her mother, Maggie "opts" for submission, the only other course that is open to her. Not aggressive, she can be only obedient. It may be even tempting to jump to the conclusion that her untimely death was due to her constitutional inability to fight back the world that repeatedly pushed her to the corner. Her being different from the rest is well brought into view: "The girl, Maggie, blossomed in a mud-puddle. She grew to be a most rare and wonderful production of a tenement district, a pretty girl. None of the dirt of Rum Alley seemed to be in her veins" (105-106). The passage is a portrait–Maggie's–, as well as

an implicit critical comment (on the Bowery). In being so rare a sight, her good looks reflect back on slum life, especially on its adversity to prettiness. Her purity suggested by the absence of the Rum Alley dirt in her veins –though the absence in question is a matter of appearance rather than fact– is nonetheless in full harmony with her good instincts: abhorrence of violence and compassion for its victims.

But is Maggie a repository of good qualities alone to be crushed by an environment thoroughly inimical to them? Is she a mere innocent victim? There is no doubt that she is suppressed by her world either by an act of suicide which she is pushed to commit, or, as we shall see further down, by sheer murder. It is nonetheless worth pointing out that her horrible end is as much a result of her sharing in her culture and taking for granted some of its "values." Her response to the world and closely connected with it the kind of self she develops from the embryo in which human sympathy has a prominent place, can in no way be kept apart from what the Bowery is. What needs to be stressed in my view is that regardless of the pressure the Bowery is exerting on her through her poverty and the norms of respectability to which her family give such a public and noisy allegiance, her world is no less a shaping force by acting on her libido and giving it whatever substance it is capable of acquiring in ways that are not so easy to define.

Although she is not the only character who functions as "register," Maggie often supplies a point of view from which the Bowery is seen and– in a very simplistic fashion–evaluated. It is perhaps more to the point to speak of her response as desire rather than judgment however rudimentary the latter can be qualified. Maggie relates to the world by way of desire and this in turn tells on the self she becomes. It is of course relevant that what she desires are clothes. Deprived of them–in her earlier stance she is the "ragged girl"–it is of course natural that Maggie should project her desire on such things. At the same time clothes attract her attention as a symbol of status, her case presenting itself as a solid endorsement of Veblen's views in the chapter discussed above. If she is so deeply impressed by Pete, that is partly due to his "wardrobe," which to her appears to be "prodigious." She does not fail to respond to "the fascinating innovations in his apparel" (108), which he, by the way, barely falls short of displaying:

"He spent a few moments in flourishing his clothes, and then vanished without having glanced at the lambresquin" (108). For Maggie clothes have a magic power. Having become Pete's mistress, they give her the reassurance she needs: "She contemplated Pete's man-subduing eyes and noted that wealth and prosperity were indicated by his clothes" (120). The kind of awareness that Maggie develops also supplies her with a standard by which she estimates her relation to others. Mastering the means and art of dressing well, Nell imposes on her promptly, some time before she realizes how intimate the well-dressed woman is with Pete. It should be likewise noted that Maggie's aspirations and thinking--whatever amount she is capable of--cannot be divorced from the glamorous lights of the theatre. As the place where costumes are displayed--she is obviously preoccupied with them, often estimating them in terms of money--and where the melodrama types emerge so appealing as to have all their audience under their spell, the stage appears as the *locus par excellence* on which the young woman's desire is more and more boldly projected. When capable of distancing herself from the characters with whom, like the rest of the spectators, she could not help identifying herself, Maggie is stimulated to think; that is, she contemplates the possibility of acquiring "the culture and refinement she had seen imitated" (113).

A point not to be missed is that what further attracts Maggie to Pete is the extraordinary strength which she thinks he possesses. He appears to her not only wealthy and prosperous judging by his clothes, but also thoroughly able to control and dominate the Bowery with its own weapons. The apparent contempt in which he holds aggressiveness and violence is above all a sign of his superiority in these matters, in other words, an irrefutable evidence of his power; and to this, Maggie is not in the least indifferent: "Here was a formidable man who disdained the strength of a world full of fists. Here was one who had contempt for brass-clothed power; one whose knuckles could ring defiantly against the granite of law. He was a knight" (108). Undoubtedly, Maggie's image of Pete is highly idealized, a good example of how distorted her vision of the world can be. (Read with Veblen in mind, on the other hand, the above passage might strike one as meaningful in a different sense.)

However, a question can hardly be suppressed: why does Maggie idealize Pete in these terms? Why does she make so much of his strength and the attitude of defiance it presumably inspired? The answer, in my view, is most likely to have some bearing on the terms in which Maggie's own self can be defined at this point. In the golden ring she casts round Pete's face–to her, he "loomed like a golden sun" (112)– there is a good deal of self-projection. Not that Maggie wants power for herself. She is far from entertaining such a thought, just as she is wholly unaware that her image of Pete is in any way distorted. What she projects on him is a desire of which she is also wholly unaware: to invest him with the attributes of power. Instinctively, she knows that as long as she matters to him, she can share in them. Hence her increasing concern with his feeling for her, and her increasing dependence on him. Shortly after she had become his mistress, "the air of spaniel-like dependence had been magnified" (123). This explains why even at its best, her relation to Pete is not in the least stimulating as far as the prospect of developing a self of her own is concerned. Transferring her desire on to him, Maggie can get a self only if by one gesture or another he acknowledges his interest in her. Except for such an act of validation she is lifeless, reduced more and more visibly to the status of object. Crane's use of passive voice in connection with her is no doubt suggestive in this respect. When he writes that "from her eyes had been plucked all look of self-reliance" (120), the responsibility for this deprivation that is bound to deeply affect her sense of her own self is placed on some force other than Maggie.

Submission which Maggie has chosen "is a form of imprisonment" that will empty her of any desire to assert her selfhood. She becomes a mere body to be used, and then a corpse to be "plucked" form the river. The transition from one condition to the other is quite smooth, and it would almost pass unnoticed were it not for the chance it gives Maggie's mother to lament the death of her daughter. The amount of affection exhibited by the former and her consent, apparently under the pressure of her neighbours, to forgive Maggie renders the scene nothing short of the grotesque.

An idea is perhaps in need of further emphasis. Although in a sense the course Maggie takes is not apparently imposed on he--after all it is she who makes of Pete the butt of her projections and is thus responsible for

her distorted vision (Nagel's reading)–in another, there is no other course which she could possibly have taken. There is no other alternative for her, since in clear-cut opposition to her mother she is unable to defy the world by means of her fists. However, the lines along which she "evolves" ultimately make her as much dependent on her body as her mother is, though, obviously, the use to which she puts it is different. In this she comes to resemble all the others who in carrying out their acts of defiance have only their bodies to rely upon. At the same time we might do well not to overlook that her image of Pete, bound as it is with her own desire, is also a product of her environment. If Magie's image of the world is distorted, that can be in a large measure accounted for by her compulsory exposure to what her culture has to offer her. As shown above, her very desires are substantiated by the Bowery. It is therefore hard to take issue with R.W. Stallman's statement echoing Crane's own appreciation of his novel that "the true villain is the environment that shapes the lives of the characters;"[xxvi] but environment should by no means be reduced to the economic factor alone. In *Maggie* it exerts pressure on the individual conditioning his response to the world and ultimately his vision of it by a multitude of channels and a large network of influences which are not always easy to see for what they are. By making the individual responsive to his privation--clothes and physical strength in Maggie's case--they arouse desire which in turn binds him even more to the shaping power which it simultaneously increases.

There is one more thing that shows that Maggie's relation to her environment is anything but simple. If in the long run she is destroyed by her environment, that happens not before one of her desires is fulfilled: she gets the beautiful clothes she so much admired as a working girl. The last image we have of her is that of a well-dressed young woman who is not lacking in refinement either: "She hurried forward ... bending forward in her handsome cloak, daintily lifting her skirts, and picking for her well-shod feet the dryer spots upon the sidewalks" (129).

In view of her prosperity, her death is bound to raise several questions. They have challenged Crane's critics of late, especially since the Crane edition of 1893 was brought into focus as a more reliable version. One passage in it is likely to place Maggie's end in a new light. This was left

out in the 1893 edition and found its way back into the text as late as 1966 when Crane's own edition was simultaneously restored to legitimacy by the two editors of *Maggie* mentioned above. It was once more expunged apparently for aesthetic reasons from the edition issued by the University of Virginia, although this edition too used the text published by Crane in 1893 The passage in question is a description of the last man Maggie encounters on her way from the glittering avenues down the darker streets leading to the river. Her walk in search for a customer for the night takes her to three parts of the city in descending order of repute; in each of them he meets three men who for one reason or another reject her. They also suit their surroundings, a corresponding decline in their quality being noticeable. According to Halliburton, Crane's use of trios is not accidental. Intent on bringing to light their role, the critic, obviously a lover of correspondences, point out three functions. The pattern of Maggie's life based on repetitiveness is thrown into relief, and so is the worsening of her situations; they also "contribute an aura of mystery or mysterious horror." [xxvii]

The crescendo of "mysterious horror" finds its climax in the last man:

> When almost to the river the girl saw a great figure. On going forward she perceived it to be a huge fat man in torn and greasy garments. His gray hair straggled down over his forehead. His small, bleared eyes, sparkling from amidst great rolls of red fat, swept eagerly over the girl's upturned face. He laughed, his brown, disordered teeth gleaming under a grey, grizzled moustache from which beer-drops dripped. His whole body gently quivered and shook like that of a dead jelly fish. Chuckling and leering, he followed the girl of the crimson legions. [xxviii]

The passage does not supply a clear explanation of Maggie's end. On the contrary, while reinforcing the traditional reading that she committed suicide, it suggests some other ways in which she could have met her death. There is further reason for her suicide in the repulsiveness of the man that could have been beyond her power to endure. At any rate her desperate gesture shows her to be at odds with her world, to say the least. There remains the possibility that to the end she preserved a core in her being where tenderness and compassion continued to exist. In this case the fat

man simply pushed her to a resolution which anyway had been long forced on her by the life she was leading. The other alternative which Halliburton is tempted to accept seems to be as tenable: Maggie's death was an act of murder, and the fat man was responsible for it. It stands to reason that a murdered Maggie will alter our image of her. In that case she is no less a victim of her environment but her relation to it is somewhat different. Such an end indicates that the pressure on Maggie was so heavy as to force her into a readjustment at the expense of her own self. Long before her death she had been shaped into a painted and well-dressed vacuity. She is even worse than all the others; for reduced to exist by virtue of her body she has no name attached to it. The shaping or rather destructive power of the environment is thus thrown into bolder relief: it not only distorts the individual's sense of himself and in so doing condemns him to perpetual "unreasoning rage": far worse, it may turn him into a big emptiness. As Maggie's case stands proof, it is those who "choose" submission that are so suppressed.

CASTING ASIDE A FICTITIOUS SELF: THE AWAKENING OF EDNA PONTELLIER

New woman and mother of six. By birth and education Kate Chopin belonged to Creole culture. Her father was Irish, it is true, but his role in her upbringing was apparently insignificant in comparison with the influence of the women on the maternal side, especially of her great grandmother; besides he died when Kate had not reached yet the age of five. Surviving with some difficulty in St. Louis, her native place, a town that on becoming the "gateway to the West," drew in people from all over America, Creole culture continued to be at home in Louisiana.

It was on her marriage in 1870 to Oscar Chopin, the son of a wealthy plantation owner, that Kate O'Flaherty came to be fully exposed to it, first in New Orleans where she lived for nine years and then in Northwest Louisiana. (The move to the family plantation in this area was caused by Oscar Chopin's failure in business.) When her husband died, four years later, Kate Chopin, now the mother of six children, returned to St. Louis. Her writing career would be associated with her native place. As the story goes, one of her friends, Dr. Frederick Kolbenheyer, highly impressed with the literary qualities of the letters she had sent him from Louisiana, insisted that she should try her hand at story telling, and, satisfied with the result, pressed her to find a publisher; which she shortly did by sending her stories alternately to Boston and New York and thus establishing connections with influential editors.

It goes without saying that the different tradition to which she belonged should be well kept in view: her relation to contemporary writers

can be better grasped, and this in turn might highlight her options in matters of literary techniques and the overall effect they were meant to serve. Understandably, the education she had in St. Louis–she attended there the Sacred Heart Academy–was Europe oriented and later her exposure to New Orleans Creole culture, whose allegiance to the French tradition continued to be strong, mediated further contacts with French literature. Besides, she made her own impressions of France and Paris when immediately after her marriage she spent several months in Europe. Kate Chopin's biographers associate this period with her "emancipation;" from now on her look and hobbies would be those of "the New Woman": "she smoked cigarettes publicly, walked about alone, and drank beer; she learned to row and got herself a sunburn." [i] Strolling about the town alone would be a pastime she enjoyed all the more so as her frequent pregnancy was to keep her indoors for long periods of time. Some such pleasures are not unknown to Edna Pontellier, the protagonist of her novel *The Awakening*, which encourages one to think that for Kate Chopin they really meant a good deal. Even when the family lived in Northwest Louisiana, she had her way in matters of dress and deportment, an eccentricity that people who had known her had no difficulty in recalling.

Along the same lines, Chopin's relation to Maupassant appears to have been decisive in more than one way. It is tempting to venture the remark that Dr. Kolbenheyer's encouragement would have had little effect, if she had not discovered Maupassant's writings. Anyway, one can see more of a coincidence in the fact that she published her first story "Wiser than a God" (1889) a year after she had discovered the stories that were to impress her so deeply. Her response to them is most telling:

> Here was life, not fiction; for where were the plots, the old fashioned mechanism and stage trapping that in a vague, unthinking way I had fancied were essential to the art of story making. Here was a man who had escaped from tradition and authority, who had entered into himself and looked out upon life through his own being and with his own eyes; and who, in a direct and simple way, told us what he saw ... I even like to think that he appeals to me alone...Someway I like to cherish the delusion that he has spoken to no one else so directly, so intimately as he does to me. [ii]

Her fascination with Maupassant was twofold: she was impressed with his "direct and simple way" of telling his stories, or his achievement in point of narrative method, which Henry James and Stephen Crane admired and the latter emulated; also with his trust in his own perceptions, something that Henry James deemed fit to question, not because he distrusted personal impressions or experience, but because the terms in which Maupassant valued them seemed to him dubious. Looking up to the French writer's craft, Crane too laid little store by the former's interest in sexuality. For her part, Kate Chopin felt free–upon reading Maupassant–to confront the issue as boldly as he did, little aware at the time that coming to terms with female sexuality was too heavy a demand one could make on American culture. Chopin's relation to the French writer is bound to lay bare further facets when note is taken that she translated a number of his stories and Edna Pontellier has invited comparison with the protagonists of *Une Vie* and "Reveil." (It is not lacking in relevance either that when having to change the title of her novel – originally it was called *A Solitary Soul*– she eventually chose *The Awakening*, whose Maupassant ring is likely not to be missed.)

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"A world unto itself." Created from memory, Kate Chopin's fictional world has a historical counterpart in the Louisiana of the 1870s and the early 1880s of which she had direct knowledge. As recent culture-oriented criticism has argued, she had a deep understanding of this section of American culture, the local colour elements so highly valued by her contemporaries being as a rule functional in a larger sense. It has become evident that apart from creating picturesque effects, they are suggestive of differences so great in comparison with American culture as a whole as to encourage one to speak of a cultural identity in their terms alone. Perhaps the most distinctive feature of Louisiana was "the closed nature of its social structures,"[iii] a feature that is thrown into bold relief in Chopin's stories and novels too. Of course, the division in whites and blacks was part of the rough definition of this culture, as it was elsewhere in the South, but here, unlike in other Southern States, a caste system prevailed: either division

was made up of smaller, racially and socially well-defined groups, each having its place in the hierarchy. Thus whereas in the ladder-like social organization of the whites, it was tradition that had the say--the Creole plantation owners, descendants of French and Spanish aristocrats, were at the top and the rootless acadians at the bottom--in that of the blacks, on the other hand, the percentage of Negro blood automatically and irrevocably relegated the person to the category of Negro, sacatra, griffe, mulatto, quadroon, and octoroon.

In Kate Chopin's fiction set for the most part in Northwest Louisiana and New Orleans, characters are easily identifiable in terms of their social and racial roles. It is true, she was little concerned with the racial issue as such, and when she was, her attitude hardly differed from that of her caste--; an exception is "Desiree's Baby," a moving story in which fear of miscegenation, so terrible during Kate Chopin's residence in Louisiana, leads to an act of cruelty: the husband who comes to suspect his wife of being part Negro and indirectly condemns her and his baby to death, finds out in the end that he alone is responsible for the (self-)accusing looks of his child. A more recurrent figure is the Acadian who, when not taking the bold step to gratify his desires in the city only to experience bitter disillusionment afterwards, suffers from some existential boredom due to isolation or to a relationship that in a closed community is bound to deteriorate sooner or later, for one reason or another.

On the other hand, the refined Creole was likely to appeal to Kate Chopin most forcefully, and indeed the writing by which she is best known, *The Awakening*, is thoroughly informed with Creole culture from which New Orleans in late nineteenth century took its most distinguishing note. As one of Chopin's critics writes, "New Orleans culture in the late nineteenth century constituted a world unto itself--a set of traditions, mores, and customs unlike any other in America."[iv] Even if history had told on some of its codes--liaisons with black women were now to be avoided as disreputable--the Creoles of New Orleans continued to set a high premium on refinement in social occasions and artistic taste. Having registered but few significant changes, the female code still evinced some differences when compared with other cultures in America, particularly with that of the Protestant South. It should be admitted though that they barely affected

women's basic position, but culturally they had their share of relevance. Thus, the demands that women's upbringing and education were called to meet were of a more markedly artistic nature without neglecting in the least the norms of conduct on which the *modus vivendi* of the leisure class was based. (Little wonder then that Thorstein Veblen's book that came out the same year as Kate Chopin's book has been brought to bear on it[v].) But the code governing New Orleans Creole women differed in other respects too. They were not denied participation in a life that could be described as characteristically hedonistic. Their indulgence in the senses with respect to eating, drinking, and dressing could only invite contrast with Protestant women of similar social status who, like their husbands, made of asceticism the ethical law of their daily life. Married women enjoyed freedom in their relation with the opposite sex, provided they did not go beyond the limit that could endanger the marriage tie. Needless to say, neither their reading, nor their talk was subject to severe censorship, and to a Protestant at least, a quite extensive sphere of their social life had all the chances to show a dangerously misleading face.

Contempt too could be read in it, for conscious of their good manners and artistic superiority, the Creoles of New Orleans, male and female alike, were generally tempted to look down on the "Americans." Apparently, "to the refined Creole, these hunters and farmers" ("the backwoods 'Americans' who poured into this major port city with boatloads of timber, furs and tabacco") "seemed crude, dirty and socially backward, and although they came down the Mississippi from a variety of states, Kentuckians must have seemed particularly offensive, because the Creoles called all these outsiders "Kaintocks."[vi]

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"A valuable piece of personal property." A gulf separates Edna Pontellier from Crane's Maggie. Few female characters in American literature can be, socially and intellectually, more widely apart than the New Orleans middle class woman and the Bowery prostitute. A somewhat similar narrative technique associated with impressionism meant to bring into focus the character's response -- Maggie's in some sections of Crane's novel and Edna's throughout the *Awakening* - renders it an even easier

task to measure the intense emotional and spiritual life of Chopin's protagonist and her contentious questioning against the narrow sphere containing Maggie's thought and feeling and passive acquiescence. The contrast between the two can be hardly overrated. If the comparison is carried further on, it may evince, true, an ever sharper discrepancy in awareness: Edna is increasingly absorbed in her attempt at self-definition, whereas Maggie, having few notions about her relation to the world, never seems to ask herself who she is; at the same time, it may as well suggest that there is something disturbing about the female selfhood as presented and explored by *Maggie* and *The Awakening* respectively. This has to do with the emptiness covered by the clothes Maggie covets and manages to get in the end, which gives her whatever identity she possesses; and in a far greater measure with Edna's ever-renewed self-exploration that leads her to strip herself naked before her final plunge into the Gulf of Mexico.

In a sense both Edna and Maggie have the status of object, no matter how otherwise different are the relations in which they exist. When the narrator attributes to Leonce Pontellier the conviction that his wife was "the sole object of his existence,"[vii] the double meaning of the word "object" gives him away. Edna may be his sole *raison d'etre*, but the terms in which he understands it are perceived to be utterly reductive in respect to her. That he regards his wife as a "valuable piece of personal property" (201) is something that his way of looking at her has already made clear. Such disclosures ironically tell on earlier passages charging them with further revealing power as concerns Edna's place in her household. A good example is supplied by the remarks on Mr. Pontellier's devotion to his home that has gained for him the renown of the best husband. They make it plain that his attachment to her cannot be disentangled too easily from his sense of ownership: "He greatly valued his possessions, chiefly because they were his, and derived genuine pleasure from contemplating a painting, a statuette, a rare lace curtain–no matter what–after he had bought it and placed it among his household gods" (259-60). "No matter what" might easily find a substitute in Edna as the reader familiar with the whole text does not fail to grasp.

Edna's realization of the role that her husband wishes her to play marks the beginning of her awakening; appropriately it manifests itself as

disobedience to his commands; outbursts of revolt shortly follow, directed symbolically at her wedding ring, the seal of union with her husband, as well as at the vase, an object not lacking in female associations. Her husband's reaction to her repeated acts of rebellion is worthy of note too. He does not retaliate by putting pressure on her, but does his best to conceal the widening gap between Edna and the role to which she had been pledged. He not only resorts to a fiction, but acts it out, and in so doing has her play her role despite her taking a different course of action. "The fictitious self" (269) she is trying to cast aside continues to chase her well maneuvered by her husband's fiction. But Edna's refusal to comply with her "duties" has consequences that are bound to go beyond her household. Her gesture is subversive in a far larger sense: it puts into jeopardy not only her domestic life, but the gender role on which her culture is generally based.

Having a twofold allegiance–to her parental Presbyterian Kentuky and to her New Orleans husband's Catholic traditions–she has also the advantage of not being fully immersed in either of these cultures. Not that the differences between the two with respect to woman's role mattered in any significant way. Edna's father who "had been a Colonel in the Confederate army" (282) advises "authority, coercion" (287) in dealing with a wife, apparently unaware that his son-in-law holds the same view, his disagreement referring only to the method–smooth, not brutal–by which authority and coercion are to be carried into effect. Yet, New Orleans Creole culture has its own particularities of gender behaviour which Edna as a partial outsider can observe with a certain detachment. There is also the risk for her not to realize that some of these are matters of empty form only, of conventions publicly accepted on condition, of course, that they are not taken in earnest. Love and admiration professed for married women by their male companions, or a certain tolerance of linguistic freedom in sexual matters are among the games played with gusto by Creole society. In the main, however, Edna's different background places her to some serious advantage as it secures for her a vantage point from where to take in and appreciate the world that has adopted her.

The character that irreproachably plays the role of the middle class woman is no doubt Adèle Ratignolle. It is from her Creole friend that Edna's search for a self of her own takes her farther and farther away. As

has often been commented, in her domestic devotion, Adèle meets the highest demands of the mother woman, thoroughly conforming to the notion of Southern womanhood. She is the epitome of supreme selflessness having been wholly absorbed by the life of her children and husband. A scene of domestic harmony observed by Edna shows her keenly interested in what he (her husband) said "laying down her fork the better to listen, chiming in, taking the words out of his mouth" (268).

There is, however, another, deeper, sense in which her submissiveness is emblematic of her culture. By surrendering her body to its lawful owner–her husband–she has her sexuality protected, conforming thereby to a requirement that concerns the individual as much as the group; for the sexuality of the white man of a certain social standing was an issue of a far more general import. As a Chopin scholar makes a point of observing "the sexuality of upper-class white women–like its reverse, their chastity–constituted the visible and sacred prize of upper-class white men, who were honor-bound to defend it. But this very claim also reveals the defence of white female sexuality to have been a class and racial, rather than an individual, matter."[viii] It is as Mme Ratignolle, the wife of a drug store owner and mother of three children, that Adèle, this "sensuous Madonna" (212), invariably dressed in white, so exquisite in her role of upper class white woman, that she impresses Edna while forcing her to realize the inadequacy of the role itself.

The "ecstasy of pain" (334) involved in birthing that is part of woman's lot too–social and other roles have a lesser say when procreation is in question–is also brought into focus. Adèle's labours in giving birth to her fourth child–a reminder of Edna's own sufferings on similar occasions–are not spared "their agonizing moments" (334). Occurring towards the close of the novel, the end of Adèle's pregnancy that results in "a little new life" (334) also serves to foreground Edna's awakening. To her, birthing is "a stupor which had deadened sensation, and an awakening to find a little new life to which she had given being" (334). "Stupor" and "awakening" are precisely the stages Edna has traversed while experiencing a different kind of birthing, the birthing of her new self. Adèle's pregnancy coincides then with her gradual and conflictual awakening, just as her death to follow soon can be almost superimposed on the coming to life of Adèle's newly

born.

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"A newly awakened being." Awakening from stupor is for Edna only the beginning of her queries. She does not take long to find out that not only is her attempt to no longer be what she has been almost thwarted by a fiction keeping her in her former role, but–what is far more important–in order to exist at all, her newly born self makes claims which she is little prepared to meet.

A remark needs to be made at his point. As Chopin takes care to leave no one in the dark about it, Edna's rejection of what she comes to perceive as her "fictitious self" is her own decision and has nothing to do with the more general lines of action championed by women's liberation movement. Neither her connections, nor her reading suggests a possible influence from those quarters. There is no hint at the women's movement triggered by the Declaration of the Sentiments (1848) or similar initiatives, as there is no mention of prominent American feminists such as Margaret Fuller or Elizabeth Cady Stanton, or of their texts such as Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845) for instance, or E. Cady Stanton's *The Woman's Bible* (1895, 1898).[ix] The lines along which Edna struggles to rebuild herself are entirely her own. In this she is not unlike Chopin's male predecessors, Emerson in the first place, who set for themselves a similar task. The reference to Emerson to whom Edna turns at one point is therefore most appropriate, even if it might be read as expressing rejection rather than approval. ("Edna sat in the library after dinner and read Emerson until she grew sleepy;" 288) Her decision to devote more of her time to reading; "now that her time was completely her own to do with as she liked" (289) is a promise that she would resume her contact with the text. Besides, Emerson himself insisted that the growth of one's self is a matter to be settled by each individual in terms of his own choosing or making. No books, not even Emerson's, can supply them. To grow an independent self, Edna has to find a path of her own, and it is precisely this that brings her (and Chopin) in the company of self-questers and self-champions.

I am therefore more in agreement with those critics who on varying

grounds link Chopin to the tradition of the American Renaissance. Hers is a self exploration from a different gender perspective; which is to say that the issues challenging her are bound to be different. The options presented to her may entail difficulties which as mother she finds it hard to surpass. A mother is likely to discover that she is related to *the other*, her children, in ways that conflict with her aspiration for an autonomous self illustrated at its most free by nineteenth-century American literature. As Barbara C. Ewell has argued, while pressing Edna for answers that she finds hard to give, her quest critically reflects on the male self that made of its absolute freedom its strongest asset.[x] It needs to emphasize however that subverting the terms in which the male self was defined in the wake of Emerson is paradoxically no invalidation of the author of "Self-Reliance;" for Edna's indirect challenge of the male self is made possible only by her increasing allegiance to the Emersonian belief in the supremacy of the self.

Edna's rejection of her role as Mr. Pontellier's wife is no doubt prompted by her impulse to reach self-definition: she "was beginning to realize her position in the universe as a human being, and to recognize her relations as an individual to the world within and about her" (214). Edna starts to perceive, even if only dimly, that she is an individual with an inner life of her own following on sharing Robert's company and falling in love with him. Her reaction to her new feeling indicates that she is little tempted to project herself into the other and run the risk of obliterating her being by absorption into the loved one. Edna is no Madame Bovary. If Chopin wrote *The Awakening* with Flaubert in mind, she undoubtedly meant her novel to be a rejoinder to his novel rather than an endorsement of it from a French milieu across the Atlantic. Edna's love for Robert–a crucial stage in her awakening–sets her on an entirely different course, even if, like Flaubert's protagonist, she ends by committing suicide.

Several analogies have been revealed between Chopin's protagonist and heroines in fairy-tales who are awakened to life by a prince's kiss that dispels the magic holding them captives. Some version of Snow White or the Sleeping Beauty is acted out by Edna and Robert on their visit to Chênière Caminada when Edna sleeps for what seems to her a long period of time and Robert estimates to be one hundred years. However, *The Awakening* is far from being the old story in a late nineteenth century

American disguise. On the contrary. What concludes the tale–the heroine's marriage to her prince–is in Chopin's novel only the beginning of a process that considerably refocuses the princess's awakening. It is the change in the perception of life brought about by love that has an increasingly strong hold on Edna impelling her to self-examination. Her awakening from sleep on Chênière Caminada has the significance of an initiation, as her partaking of bread and wine clearly suggests. She is also well aware of the moment. On rejoining her family and resuming her usual life, she reflects that "she herself–her present self–was in some way different from the other self" (248).

Sensing that she is no longer the same does not make things any easier for Edna. Her "newly awakened being" (254) has revealed to her how vital self-definition has become in her case. Hence not only her resolve "never again to belong to another than herself" (297), but also her search for what–in her own terms–might give her self the validation it needs. From the outset, art seems to offer itself as an answer. Edna's relation to Mlle Reisz, the pianist, is obviously most meaningful in this respect. If Edna does not follow in her footsteps, this is to be accounted for by two things. Much as she admires Mlle Reisz as an accomplished artist and is determined to become one herself, she is nonetheless alienated from her –and the artistic career–by the high prices the artist has to pay in terms of his humanity. It is evident that the conception of art informing Chopin's novel is based on the opposition art/nature. Devotion to art runs counter to living in harmony not only with society but also with nature. The twofold disagreement is amply illustrated by Mlle Reisz: socially she is almost an outsider, whereas her relation to the elements (water, for instance) is one of well-known hostility. There is a similar suggestion in the dry geranium leaves that Edna picks in her friend's apartment.

On the other hand, the artificial violets Mlle Reisz is wearing pinned to the side of her hair–not at all in keeping with her times or rather in advance of them- are emblematic of a vision of art--claimed by symbolism and modernism--that sets a high premium on the artifact and on the symbols inspired from it and not from nature as the Romantic tradition would have it. The fresh bunch of violets Edna sends her is also an implicit refusal on her part to accept Mlle Reisz's exclusive absorption in her music. As can

be inferred from her friends' response to her paintings, Edna's artistic aspiration is closer to the realists for whom fidelity to life is of the utmost importance. In view of the above remarks, the significance of Mlle Reisz's ornament lies in the opposition it creates: the artificial as against the natural, rather than in what a violet usually stands for: protection against harm. Mention should be made in passing that the decade was fond of violets. (A novel Stephen Crane published in 1896 was entitled *The Third Violet.*) In fact the hegemonic position of yellow was somewhat subverted, the American 1890s emerging no longer monochromatic, but with patches of purple and violet on the hue in fashion.

There is something else involved in the artist's dedication to his art as is presented in *The Awakening*- the other reason for which Edna stops half way on the path taken by Mlle Reisz. Of this the pianist has full knowledge and she generously imparts it to Edna. A kind of the corollary of the opposition between the natural and the artificial noted above, it may be expressed as the extraordinary strength the artist must possess in order to make his dedication possible, otherwise so demanding in what he has to give up or contravene; in Mlle Reisz's words, it is "the courageous soul" (...) The brave soul. The soul that dares and defies" (277). It goes without saying that Edna does not possess it, no matter how daring, defying, and courageous she might be *vis-à-vis* codes and authoritative discourses. She comes to value her self too much to dedicate it even to art. If, like Icarus,[xi] she ends in the sea, this is not because her flight takes a too risky course, but because she may not be fully convinced that by playing Daedalus she can do justice to herself. In all respects a perfect contrast to Adèle Ratignolle, Mlle Reisz simply stands for another, far more demanding alternative, to which Edna is drawn, but not without realising that the price she has to pay may be too high for her.

Edna's relation to Alcée Arobin adds to her awakening in a sense that can be hardly overlooked or viewed too critically when her self definition is in question. His kiss, the first of "her life to which her nature had really responded" (301) reveals her sexuality to her both as desire and consciousness of this; also that desire and love may not be one: once awakened, the body has a life of its own that can easily disobey love. Hence the new way in which she relates to her body. What she now definitely

knows is beyond her power to do is to let herself be used as object for somebody else's desire. She claims possession of her body in terms that by every standard of women's emancipation at the turn of the century are nothing short of courage and defiance. Appropriation of body is bound to have some important bearing on the growth of self. The point has been made with a a good deal of emphasis by some of Chopin's critics, such as Barbara C. Ewell and Patricia Hopkins Lattin. Writing about Edna, Ewell asserts that "in recognizing that her body is not merely another's (sexual object) but hers and the subject of her own desire, such a woman also encounters a self."[xii] At a crucial moment Edna herself endorses this view. When finally Robert confesses his love and makes it clear that he has set all his hopes on Mr. Pontellier's consent to give up her claim on her, she confronts him with a resolution that significantly shifts the choice entirely on to her: "You have been a very, very foolish boy," she reproaches Robert. "Wasting your time dreaming of impossible things when you speak of Mr. Pontellier setting me free! I am no longer one of Mr. Pontellier's possessions to dispose of or not. I give myself where I choose. If he were to say, 'Here Robert, take her and be happy; she is yours' I should laugh at you both" (331).

It is also noteworthy that though the awakening of her body comes to mean a lot to Edna, it does not enslave her completely. Her experience of sex as something divorced from love leads her to see desire as conducive to a state which if not exactly anomie may all the same enhance her sense that life is monotonous and dull: "Today it is Arobin; to-morrow it will be someone else" (339). If, as she herself realizes, her social descent and her spiritual rise stand in close relation to each other, so the self-consciousness she develops following on her individual expansion may not be unrelated to her ennui. In other words, the more of an individual Edna becomes, the more aware she grows that loveless life can be mere boredom. Or even worse. At one moment she feels that "her whole existence was dulled, like a faded garment which seems to be no longer worth wearing" (255). It is true, the low spirits to which she is now subject are an immediate effect of Robert's departure; as if, by becoming absence, love that has awakened her is undoing the very meaning on which she felt her new self to be grounded. But even later, well after she has set out on her new course, to

be overcome with ennui is a familiar state with her. That it occurs during a social occasion when she has every reason to savour her triumph throws into even bolder relief the emptiness behind the well-observed forms and conveniences which her husband finds so meaningful. And something else besides. Shining in splendour of attire and beauty at her select dinner meant to be the last she gives in her old house, she feels oppressed by the same feeling. Edna knows too well that the grand absentee is responsible for it, he who would have been the thirteenth, if all the guests had shown up. The exquisite meal contrasts with her earlier partaking of bread and wine in frame of mind too. Though it momentarily holds her captive, Arobin's passion little ameliorates her condition. Somehow reminiscent of Emerson's "*hypocritic Days*," [xiii] the passing time holds out its promises, only to convince her of their lack of substance. The only moments she feels to be truly rewarding for her are those in which she is engrossed in some kind of work. If, as shown above, Edna comes to be absorbed in her painting and even contemplates an artist's career, this is in the first place because she has discovered the regenerative power of work. She may not take pleasure in what she can accomplish, but like Emerson or Thoreau, she draws "satisfaction from the work in itself" (289). There is some good evidence in this that her Protestant background and education left a deeper imprint on her that might be thought at first sight.

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In "the cradle endlessly rocking." A good deal of critical commentary occasioned by *The Awakening* has focused on its final episode: Edna's suicide. Quite often it has been approached in either/or terms. Does Edna's death signify triumph or defeat?–is a question that seems to press for as clear-cut an answer.

There is, of course, plenty of evidence to the effect that at the time Edna returns to the Grand Island, she is almost overwhelmed by a sense of emptiness, desire having reached a stage when its whet has ceased to be felt. It is true, Edna longs for her lover's presence, but the intimation she has that even he and "the thought of him would melt out of her existence, leaving her alone" (339) renders the image of her future anything but

desirable. Transitory, the satisfaction she has drawn from work as performance is behind her too. Her children alone are on her mind and momentarily bar out indifference from taking full possession of her being. Undoubtedly, her suicide has some connection with them. The defeat she herself admits is bound up with her realization that their power over her carries weight after all, and even threatens to restore her to the slave's condition she has striven to evade. The pressure they exert on her is emotional and moral, and eventually she gives in to it by sacrificing her life and thus acting out her earlier conviction that she would give her life for them, but she would never give herself. Edna's death lays bare then the conflict between the need for a full assertion of the self and, on the other hand, the demands made by *the other*, to whom a woman by virtue of giving birth to other human beings may feel related in a rather special way. This is important enough to be given further consideration; but not before more is said about the self that turns out to be Edna's most precious discovery.

By giving up her life in a supreme gesture to assert the independence of her self, Edna also lends the support of gesture to what earlier in the text was a mere figure of speech. When standing naked on the beach before taking the fateful step, she already disposed of "the faded garment which seems no longer worth wearing." Concomitantly, her nakedness is suggestive of an aspiration that has long been identified as essentially American: to give expression to one's self as not in least encumbered. While laying bare the body, and compellingly making it visible, that is, acknowledging it to be an integral part of self, nakedness stands for the more general tendency of the self to express itself in all its freedom. Walt Whitman became famous for celebrating it as Kate Chopin who was drawn to his poetry knew too well. Through Huckleberry Finn, Twain turned out to be as fascinated with nakedness: it served him to explore both freedom in is ideal state, and the impossibility of experiencing it for long. As for female characters in nineteenth century American literature, they were not indifferent to it either, and occasionally pondered as their creators wanted them to do on how the self can best express its true nature. A text famous for raising the issue is the dialogue between Madame Merle and Isabel Archer in Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* which has been commented in chapter 2. To the

questions asked by Madame Merle: "What shall we call our 'self'? Where does it begin? Where does it end?," the answer is given from a double perspective: the Europeanized Madame Merle insists on relation and expression as defining one's self, whereas Isabel, who in this respect is definitely in the ascendancy of Edna Pontellier, views self as an absolute and the clothes she is wearing as a kind of barrier. For Crane's Maggie, we recall, clothes are a goal to attain, they alone giving her an identity which she otherwise lacks, even if this is thoroughly "fictitious"and easily identifiable with a recognizable gender role. At the other pole, Chopin's protagonist takes steps that are unthinkable for Isabel who no matter how suspicious she is of social impositions never goes beyond the pale of conveniences. Edna's gesture signals her liberation from them in a sense that doing away with every barrier, consecrates allegiance to self as the supreme good. Her death simply reinforces the significance of this act, which is not to say that its use stops here.

Edna's definitive merging with the sea is suggestive of many meanings; some of them have an unmistakable Whitmanesque ring, bearing out Chopin's kinship with Whitman, to which Lewis Leary was one of the first critics to call attention. As he has pointed out, the seductive, threnodic refrain of the sea echoes not only "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," a poem which– I venture to remark–prefigures Chopin's novel in ascribing love an ontologically revelatory power, but also Section 22 of "Song of Myself."[xiv] Signifying complete liberation and–in terms of self–unequivocal triumph, her death may be understood as the moment when self and elements have attained full harmony. What needs to be emphasized is that her immersion in the water is not a purely symbolic act; it engages the response of her body to a degree that makes of self a matter of soul as well as bodily consciousness, of spirit as well as sensuousness. As a result, the old split between the two, the soul as something separate from the body appears to lose in importance.

However, there is more in Edna's swimming and death than a Whitman-inspired version of a self awakened through the body, to a sense of harmony with the elements to its final absorption in them. Edna's vanishing in the waters of the Gulf is likely to yield some other meanings as well, if attention is paid to the symbolism associated with her. The Chopin

scholars could have hardly failed to consider it. In fact with some of them it has been a most serious concern. Sara deSaussure Davis relies on it when she argues that Kate Chopin evolved towards an exploration of reality that employed images and symbols suggestive of "frontier states of consciousness" induced by drugs both as evasion from and perspective upon reality, or as "enabling agents of awakening with new insight and vision." [xv]

It is of interest to notice that by bringing Mircea Eliade to bear on them, Edna's symbolic associations and their interrelation can be as well highlighted. One cluster is especially relevant in this respect. It comprises the boat, the snail, the snake, the sea and the moon. Except for the snail they all have a high incidence, and this of course lends them prominence. As all of them stand in relation to Edna, their association with the female self is firmly established. Edna is watched as she "was advancing at snail's pace from the beach" (200). Her triumph over the waves when for the first time she gets over her dread of water and exults in her swimming occurs in the "white light of the moon" in a quiet sea that "swelled lazily in broad billows that melted into one another and did not break except upon the beach in little foamy crests that coiled back like slow, white serpents" (231). The other recurrences of the chthonic symbol reinforce the link between snake and woman, though along different lines. Robert's invitation to Edna to go to Grande Terre and "look at the little wriggling gold snakes" (241) is suggestive of awakened sexuality and regeneration, while Adèle's plaited hair, lying on the pillow "coiled like a golden serpent" (333) as she suffers in labours connects it with pregnancy.

As viewed by Eliade, these symbols are not only interconnected, but anyone of them may stand for another in a chain of mutual substitutions without implying, however, perfect identity, the moon and water symbolism supplying the more general headings under which they are grouped.[xvi] The significance of the two is, needless to say, only partially overlapping. The moon governed symbols such as the snail, the snake, the sea, and the pirogue, all convey the idea of regeneration, of *becoming* as an uninterrupted state, just as the moon, having died is reborn and creates itself anew. The moon's death and rebirth, its waning and waking, have their counterparts in the disappearance and appearance of the snail, its regression into and

emergence from its spirally coiled shell. As for the symbolism of the serpent, its impressive richness and multiplicity should not obscure a significance deriving from its character of "a moon animal." According to Eliade, "le serpent a des significations multiples et parmi les plus importantes il convient de considérer sa 'régénération'. Le serpent est un animal qui se 'transforme.' "[xvii] Along the same lines, the pirogue, or, more generally, the boat, shares in the moon symbolism, not only because it implies the sea that is well known to be in full concord with the heavenly body, but also because it is shaped like a crescent (waxing moon).

A glance at the isotopy established above renders its insistence on rebirth and regeneration quite obvious; it becomes visible just as at other levels–response to an other, the need for a different integration into the world and the subjectivity's conscious efforts to take the full measure of all this–the phases of Edna's growth can hardly be missed. If the idea of becoming is the main connection in the symbolism presided by the moon in which water symbolism is also included, a shift in significance occurs in the latter when in itself is regarded as a governing symbol: "les eaux," writes Mircea Eliade, symbolisent la totalité des virtualités; elles sont *fons et origo*, la matrice de toutes les possibilités d'existence."[xviii] The emphasis is on potentiality rather than on actuality, on what is virtual, rather than on what is real. Associated with water is then the idea of formlessness whence, however, what has form may emerge again. Hence the significance of immersion in water which is tempting to extend to Edna's vanishing for good in the sea. If, in a sense, this symbolizes an annihilation of what had existed as form, or "la régression dans le préformel,"[xix] in another it may be read as a symbol of the new emerging forms. Signifying reintegration into undifferentiated pre-existence or death, it is also the way to rebirth.

8

IN THE MAZE: THE BEWILDERED SELF OF MAISIE FARANGE

Henry James's "Exquisite Failure." For Henry James the 1880s came to a close with the publication of *The Tragic Muse*, the last of the novels where society at large–London society in this case–is as much foregrounded as the individual destiny. Richly informed with both the world of politics and the theatre, the novel turned out to be to William's liking. Writing to W. D. Howells, he indirectly praised it in a statement that has often been quoted since his letters were brought to public notice. "The year which shall have witnessed the apparition of your 'Hazard of New Fortunes', of Harry's 'Tragic Muse', and of *my* 'Psychology'," he half-humourously complimented Howells, his brother and himself, "will indeed be a memorable one in American literature!!"[i]

Little affected, it seems, by William's appreciation, Henry James's career and work were to veer, in the opening decade, in a new direction. However, the 1890s were not only experimental, but *"treacherous"* as well. Between experiment and betrayal there was a relation, as Leon Edel argues, although the terms in which he explains it would naturally leave room for revision.[ii]

Perhaps experiment should be granted a far wider range: its beginnings are not to be located in the mid-1890s when the writer having failed as a dramatist became aware of "compensations and solutions" that "seem to stand there with open arms for"[iii] him, but much earlier when he was irresistibly drawn to the stage; as such it includes the dramatic production of the early 1890s, also viewed as experimental by the writer.

(But is there any period in James's long career–one is tempted to ask–which he looked upon as other than innovating and experimental in some ways? Even the novels written in the previous decade, more "traditional" because based on a model–as supplied by the French realists–appeared to him to be experimental, if, for no other reason, at least because their genesis was bound up with the self-imposed practice of jotting down impressions of *real* places and people.) On the other hand, James's sense of failure, no doubt most painful at times, can scarcely be traced to the unhappy evening of *Guy Domville*. Leaving aside the somewhat powerful impact of "Daisy Miller" in the late 1870s, none of James's writings was known to have reached the reading public at large. By the time he made his decision to write for the stage, he must have been long accustomed to the idea that he was not, unlike Twain, a widely read author. The terms in which he would later distinguish between failure and success, more specifically his attempts to relegate the former to achievements presented as falling under such headings as "selection," "discrimination," "appreciation"–operations he pre-eminently valued and whose full measure his own work undoubtedly gave–might have had an incentive in his awareness that some considerable distance had long separated him from contemporary readership (including turn of the century readers).

There are sound reasons to believe that indeed the 1890s were a crucial decade for James. If he was most severely tried at the time, this was because the increasing sense of failure, which he could not help feeling, came in the wake of an extremely intense desire for success. The writer's craving to be publicly acknowledged for what he knew he was, reached a peak never equalled before or after in his career. His failure on which so much has been written cannot thus be kept apart from what he so intensely desired all the more so as "the very rustle of the laurel"[iv] seemed to be within hearing. The writings of the period are grounded in this conflicting experience.

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A glance at James's literary production in the 1890s is likely to evince the two impulses intensely at work: one triggered by desire for success, the other by failure in the sense in which the word is understood

by the artists in his shorter fiction. They account, too, for a noticeable shift in the writer's literary and critical interests. If earlier, James had devoted his entire creative energy to fiction and criticism concerned with that genre, now himself on the way to reaping dramatic success–or so he hoped–he felt seriously challenged by "the scenic art" both as text and performance. One result was that he channelled his critical interests in that direction. Indeed the dramatic chronicles he wrote now carried greatest weight–if not the only weight–in his criticism of the period. Texts where he responded to contemporary achievements in the field of the drama, as well as to the attractions of the London stage got precedence over the art of fiction and its practitioners. It is true, he had written notes on the theatres of Boston, New York, and Paris since the early 1870s, but these were occasional pieces scattered among his other productions.[v]

However, the 1890s were not lacking in James's discriminations on which, in his view, the art of the novelist so greatly depends, and, consequently, his status as artist. Only they are expressed indirectly, or, rather are part of an implicit poetics to be found in a series of fictions he wrote during the decade, all of them centred on the artist, his craft, and its reception by the reading public. What had been openly articulated in his essays and, in the next decade, would inspire his Prefaces, is now the very substance of his stories of writers and artists. With the difference perhaps that the case of the artist *par excellence* is stated in far more radical terms in the sense that the claims made by art and the writer's devotion to it are seen to be markedly exclusive. Hence the impression that the artist is bound to live in isolation. This seems to be the compulsory and–in human terms–exceedingly high price he has to pay for possessing the qualities rendering him what he supremely is.

The artist's relation to the world as it emerges from the stories of the 1890s is in need of some elaboration. It becomes obvious that his work, or rather the kind of novel (fiction) he couldn't help writing, was responsible, in a highly significant way, for the reception his culture gave him, just as in its very response it too found itself mirrored. Not that James's novelists entitled to be called artists are surrounded by indifference. They are usually lionized as Neil Paraday is, or James himself was in his own time. The act, however, has little to do with their work, being instead an effect of the

magic of their name, of their literary renown as established so by the initiated few; in other words their social value lies in lending interest to social occasions, this category of "readers" showing little disposition to distinguish between a manuscript and an umbrella. As to the reading public at large, this is simply nonexistent, which recommends the artist to be a case of "failure," often qualified by James as "exquisite" (245), which subverts the meaning of the word and changes it to its opposite.

Time and again James centres the story he (re)writes several times in the 1890s on the contrastive pair: the author who sells well and, on the other hand, the writer who, like Ray Limbert and himself, is wholly unable to achieve that kind of success, no matter how much he counts on it "the next time." Which brings us to a central issue in James' s work, which can be framed like a question asked by one of his novelists: "why try to be an artist?" (106), a question that can be read too as: what's the good of being one for oneself as well as for the world at large? The "mercenary muse" (133) is little expected to be involved in the answer; moreover, the point is, unusually with James, made quite explicit when in what appears to be an echo coming straight from Thoreau, it is said of the artist that "he must be able to be poor" (139). That James had never found himself in the situation to test his ability in this respect should not obscure the importance of this aspect of the artistic will. It is essential to point out in this connection that for James's novelists who are entitled to the status of artist, to be creative is an inner necessity so compelling as to make of its "consuming ache" (140) the only *raison d'etre*. No deviation from this imperative is possible, no matter how much willed, as Ray Limbert, no doubt, one of James's self-projections at the period, so aptly warns.

As to whether, apart from supplying the foundation of the artist's selfhood, art is of any good to the world, the stories of the 1890s are so rich in implications and allusions that one is likely to have the impression that the story of the Prefaces had already been written in them. Here too the commitment to the real through the novelist's "pleasures of observation and the resources engendered by the trick of analysing life" (197) is inextricably bound up with the famous challenges of foregrounding the points of interest that alone can render life intelligible in human terms, demiurgical intelligence being thus the ground on which art and moral

sense can meet. ("Moral intelligence" is a favourite Jamesian syntagm.) Far from opting for being a recluse, James's artist is rewarded in the long last with the only presence that really matters for him: the intelligent reader who is not denied the revelation of the "figure in the carpet," or the "thread on which the pearls are strung." (Less famous than the former, the latter image seems to have been no less cherished by James who uses it in the Prefaces in relation to his own work.[vi])

More recently, "The Figure in the Carpet" has been claimed as a basic text by reader's response theories, deconstruction, and other postructuralist trends; which should not discourage James's readers less disposed to ignore the writer's belief that it is the consciousness of the artist that informs his work, to aspire to the role of those readers in the stories to whom writers do not deny access to their proximity

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It appears obvious then that in the 1890s, unlike in other periods, James's criticism and a part of his stories stand in contrast to each other. One is informed with an art in which the performing self can hardly exist outside the relationship with some audience; inherent to it is success on the spot, something socially validated, precisely what a dramatic chronicle is supposed to tackle, if not--in varying degrees--to celebrate; the other, as hinted above, projects in fictional form Jamesian artistic creeds which the Prefaces written almost a decade later would make a point of elaborating.

Older beliefs in "the lesson of the master" with its emphasis on the artist's devotion to his art and the consequences such a consecration entails on him as a human being were reinforced no doubt by James's unambiguous failure in the theatre. To make an idea of James's frame of mind after his exposure to the jeers and hisses in the St. James's theatre where his *Guy Domville* had just been performed, to take, in other words, some measure of his dramatic collapse, one should keep well in view the almost half a decade during which James had written for the stage. (The night of January 5, 1895 was meant to be its crowning.) A year before, he had published *Theatricals* including four comedies modelled on the plays of Victorien

Sardou and Emile Augier. It was thus French drama that he was trying to emulate in his own dramatic productions. Sardou and Augier also supplied him with a frame of reference when in the late 1890s, having "crept round through long apparent bareness, through suffering and sadness intolerable" he had the revelation of a "key" that "fits the complicated chambers of both the dramatic and the narrative." The novels he wrote at the time (*The Spoils of Poynton, The Awkward Age*, and *What Maisie Knew*) were meant as experiments along dramatic lines, or as attempts to convert his "infinite little loss" into "an infinite little gain." [vii]

But what about James's dramatic chronicles of the 1890s which, as shown above, count most heavily in his criticism of the period? Are they more revealing than older texts of the same kind, and if so, in what way?

It is evident that James displayed the same interests as before: he continued to be drawn to the play of famous actors and actresses. Apart from his great French favourites like Benoit Constant Coquelin, Sarah Bernardt, Adelaide Ristori, some English names– Henry Irving is one– began to claim his attention more forcefully now. The writer had good reason to observe their acting very closely since–one is tempted to believe– it offered him models of stylized behaviour on which to build his characters. At the same time a dramatic performance was likely to offer itself as a sample of sensously perceived reality, something to which a writer concerned with creating "the illusion of life," a desideratum for which he pleaded in his most important critical essay of the 1880s, "The Art of Fiction," could hardly be indifferent. It needed a novelist to say that "an acted play is a novel intensified." [viii]

However, a new interest could be discerned now. Triggered off by London performances of Ibsen's plays, it sheds light on the early and more problematic stage of Ibsen's reception in England and, more specifically, on how James's reading of the plays–both as text and performance–affected him. To bring it up is also to note that "reading" in that context was not an individual act; leaving aside the circumstances under which it occurred– the reader as part of an audience–it presupposed dialogue and conversation, an exchange of opinion that in a larger measure than novel reading was known to give rise to.

Rather wary of the Norwegian playwright in the beginning, James was won over to him on seeing Elizabeth Robins play in *The Pillars of Society* (1889), *A Doll's House* (1891), *Hedda Gabler* (1891), *The Master Builder* (1893) *Rosmersholm* (1893) *Little Eyolf* (1896) and *John Gabriel Borkman* (1897). Her high opinion of Ibsen's drama, as well as William Archer's response to the part played in it by symbolism stimulated James to revise his former appreciation of Ibsen that insisted on his provincialism and accounted for the vitality of his drama in terms of the material he used rather than treatment. (The charges levelled at Tolstoy seemed to have held true of Ibsen too.) Still, *Hedda Gabler* had appealed to him. It was, as James read it, "the picture not of an action but of a condition" (...) "the portrait of a nature, the story of what Paul Bourget would call an *état d'âme*, and of a state of nerves as well as of soul, a state of temper, of health, of chagrin, of despair."[ix] James's reading is self-revealing: if the focus in Ibsen's play turns out to be the story of a self--an *état d'âme* that cannot be separated from a psychological make-up–this is largely so because the particular kind of story had already gained in importance for him.

James's later chronicles give further support to this point. Especially weighty is the observation occasioned by the *Master Builder* that Ibsen's drama as a whole is centred on "the supremely critical hour in the life of the individual, in the history of the soul."[x] What is brought to the fore is thus the tension within the ego at a certain moment that requires a whole play to resolve as much as to account for. Responsible for it is–*Hedda Gabler* is ample proof of this--one's temper, but also the clash with other egoes. The intensity of inner life when self and other are brought in relation could hardly be lost on James who remarked, speaking about *Little Eyolf* and *John Gabriel Borkman*, on how "in the very front of the scene lunges with extraordinary length of arm the Ego against the Ego, and rocks in a rigour of passion the soul against the soul–a spectacle, a movement, as definite as the relief of silhouettes in black paper or of a train of Eskimo dogs on the snow."[xi]

Apart from pointing, in matters of dramatic treatment, to some model other than Ibsen, the chronicles on the Norwegian playwright indicate that on being exposed to him James responded to what he recognized as his

own challenge. The supremely critical hour in the life of the individual, in the history of the soul, was to supply the focus of the novels he wrote in the early years of the present century. Now in the mid-1890s he most sharply experienced, if not the supremely critical hour in his life, at least an hour that was critical in more than one way.

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As told, probably most completely by Leon Edel, the story of the first night of *Guy Domville* has a restless protagonist. Unable to suppress his nervousness, James whom disillusionment did not spare in the end, could not but be well aware that all his reputation, including that of the novelist, was at stake. It is not difficult to understand his decision to while away the time by watching *An Ideal Husband*, Oscar Wilde's play whose opening at a nearby theatre coincided with the *Domville* event. The four week rehearsals in which he had become emotionally involved right from the start, told on his physical condition as did on his psyche the losses he had suffered since the beginning of the decade: Alice James, his sister had died in 1892, a year before Wolcott Balestier, a promising American writer and publisher (a recipient of James's deep affection) and, as the opening of his own play was in view, news reached him of the death of Robert Louis Stevenson. Though of different kind, the pain inflicted by the howling audience seemed at first to have no balm. James's apprehension of the fate of *Guy Domville* after hearing the applause that rounded off the Wilde night in no degree diminished the shock he received when he was brought on the stage and faced an explosive gallery.[xii]

On the following days James's spirits were too low to take any comfort from the reviews and notices scattered in various magazines and gazettes.[xiii] There is nonetheless evidence that he summoned up all the energy that was left in him not to wholly give in to the mood of dejection threatening to overwhelm him. Although it took him longer than a month to consider the benefits he could reap from his failure, he turned his thoughts to fiction as soon as he came out of the state of shock and regained his composture. References to the "the most horrible hours"[xiv] of his life in his letters and memoirs of his friends indicate that he was in

control of himself the very next day after the opening when he entertained Edmund Gosse and other friends at his place. But according to Leon Edel such appearances were misleading. James's wound was kept out of sight and no scar was in its place:

> He had pronounced the detestable incident closed, but he could not stop the pain as easily as he could lower the curtain on his play. The behaviour of the audience at the St. James's had struck at the very heart of his self-esteem, his pride of craft, his sovereignty as artist. He spoke of the theatre as an abyss–an abyss of 'vulgarity and British platitude'–and also as 'a black abyss.' The theatre doubtless had been one kind of hell, and he was now out of it. He lived on however in his other, his private hell–wounded, sore, depressed. In one of his letters of this time he invoked Dante. He had been, he said, plunged into 'the nethermost circle of the Inferno.' [xv]

If he found a way out of the Inferno, that was because his will had not completely deserted him and–more importantly perhaps–he was not without friendly support when he needed it most. The image of the Master writing in the solitude of his sanctuary that the modernist artist was said to emulate should be altered accordingly as to make visible the ligaments connecting him with his fellow artists and the world at large.

It is hardly irrelevant that it was from across the Atlantic that a friend came to James's succour. In giving his professional support to James, W. D. Howells gave one more proof of how valuable his help was to American writers both young and old. As already pointed out, he had a critical sense to rely upon when estimating their work and especially when he judged James's work, it did not play him false at all. In a letter dated December 13, 1894 to which reference was made in an earlier connection he expressed his admiration for James in superlative terms. ("So far as literary standing is concerned there is no one who has your rank among us," he wrote James. [xvi]) No doubt, Howells's high appreciation helped James to maintain his self-esteem at a time when it was severely tried. To understand how severely, one should take stock of, apart from his dramatic collapse, the low sales of his fictions that determined his publishers to turn their backs on him. Signs that he was no longer "wanted" had been clearly

in sight in the early 1890s, and they accounted as well for his dramatic efforts in the first half of the decade. In the same letter Howells assured him that "if now you were to write a novel of the same quality as your *Lesson of the Master* or *The Death of the Lion*, you would address a larger public than you ever have reached before." James's confession to Howells shortly after the dramatic evening that the latter put his finger sympathetically on the place and spoke of what he wanted him to speak of sounds more than the grateful note: it expresses rather the reassurance one must feel that one rises to one's expectations, that one *is* what one thinks he is. It is the reassurance that, in an important sense, validates the self. Coming as it does from *an other*, it also underscores how vital such a relationship is for the sense of one's selfhood.

It appears once more evident that despite disagreement on many issues–the condition of the American writer, his relation to tradition–Howells articulated now James's deepest desire, and in doing so he proved that their relationship was alive and fruitful. Even if William James was eager to sustain his younger brother in his critical hours, it is questionable whether his help could have had the same effect. Henry James knew too well that it was not his work that made the deepest impact on William; and if he had any doubts about it, it was not before long that he was assured that his brother's favourite writers belonged to a different camp. Just as the novelist was breaking new fictional ground, less than two years after the *Guy Domville* evening, William was imparting to him his enthusiasm for Tolstoy. "My great literary impression this summer has been Tolstoy," he wrote the novelist in 1896 and continued: "On the whole his atmosphere absorbs me into it as no one's else has ever done, and even his religious and melancholy stuff, his insanity, is probably more significant than the sanity of men who haven't been through that phase at all." [xvii]

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As mentioned above, a series of stories written in the 1890s can be read as an implicit poetics not without connection with James's status among his peers, his condition as author, and the response, or rather lack of response, of the reading public. Quite often the successful but artistically

sterile writer is contrasted to the artist *par excellence* condemned to suffer the consequences--in terms of money and worldly acclaim–of his lofty dedication.

James's fictional production of the period includes some other novels and stories beside the series focussing on the writers and artists. Each a piece in its own right, it turns out, at a closer look, to be linked to the others in ways that encouraged Leon Edel to see them as a sequence. *The Other House*, originally conceived as a play and turned into a novel in 1896, *What Maisie Knew* (1897), *In the Cage* (1898), *The Awkward Age* (1899), they all have in common girlhood as one of their major interests. When note is taken of their chronology, it becomes obvious that with each new novel or story, the girl gets older. As Edel was the first to remark, if these writings are viewed as a sequence, it becomes evident that the girl, four years old in *The Other House*, grows from the age of five to that of probably eight or nine in *What Maisie Knew*, to become a teenager *In the Cage* and *The Awkward Age*.

What to James's biographer amounts to an obsession with the writer in the latter half of the decade also finds in his view a psychoanalytical explanation: the little girls–each entrapped in a cage or labyrinth of the adult world–are projections of the author's hurt self: kept in broad daylight, safely out of sight, of other people and of the writer himself it was more free–in view of some Freudian theories–to manifest itself in the act of writing. The identities it eventually assumes originating in James's childhood of which his autobiographical writings give ample evidence, challenged the writer's creative powers and helped him grow as an artist, effecting all along an inner cure. Growth was thus a twofold process: psychical and artistic. Edel is even tempted to see some allegory of the self in the fiction of the late 1890s: "whether we call this a 'crisis of identity' or a 'middle-age crisis,' the sequence of his stories reveals the benign workings of the imagination moving–in this instance in chronological fashion–from direct confrontation of disaster through the death of the spirit to its re-emergence and growth within the familiar shapes of the past."[xviii]

Apart from the relevance it has to the psychical condition of its author, *What Maisie Knew* may be read as just one more instance of a self's state of confusion and the kind of questions it generates; or, if the

age of the protagonist is taken into account, the point of interest in the novel is more likely to be that of a nascent self and the process--the "imbroglio" is an essential part of it--by which it comes into being.

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A "domestic labyrinth." The ending of James's novel more than echoes the beginning, for its last sentence: "She (Mrs Wix) still had room for wonder at what Maisie knew"[xx] concludes with the three words that give the novel its title. By taking the reader back to the starting point, *What Maisie Knew* is not unlike recent novels such as *The Crying of Lot 49*, to mention only one of the postmodern fictional achievements whose circularity as to the issue at stake has elicited a great amount of commentary.

As the title foregrounds, what is at stake in *Maisie* is *knowledge*, and this poses the question of the protagonist's capacity to discover or find out for herself an answer to what presses her mind at one moment or another. Used in several tenses, "to know" appears to be a key word; it has as reference a mental activity, without however being restricted to it, that is no less challenging for belonging to a little girl.

The extraordinary "muddle" Maisie lives in may well stand for life in general, as it does for that matter in many other contexts in James. Alongside with "confusion" and "waste," it was a favourite word of the writer when speaking about the human condition at large. To be in the muddle as Maisie surely finds herself in when first waking up to the world around is also to be in the dark as to what it all means, or in a labyrinth in search of the centre where the monster/treasure is believed to lie, a discovery that conditions finding the way out.

Both Maisie's space, made up of confusing passages and crooked paths, and her mind, for the most part, confused and bewildered, are brought together in her name: that Maisie and mazy are homophones can hardly pass unnoticed. In discussing what she is or rather becomes, one is therefore not to ignore that in terms of muddlement the line of demarcation between *outside* and *inside* is hard to draw. Note should be taken as well that for James a state of confusion is not lacking in artistic appeal and in the Preface he takes some of its measure: "The great thing," he writes, "is

indeed that the muddled state too is one of the very sharpest of the realities, that it also has colour and form and character, has often in fact a broad and rich comicality, many of the signs and values of the appreciable."[xx]

Maisie's world is one of perpetual entanglement: her parents' divorce and the necessity under which she lives that she should spend half of the year with her mother and the other half with her father creates further complications for her as the experience she has of each parent and his/her space is constantly subverted by the language the other employs when referring to it. The child's impressions of her world(s) suffer the intrusion of words that are meant to lend them an entirely different hue. When she is told to tell her mother that the latter is a "nasty horrid pig" (31) and to inform her father that "he lies and he knows he lies" (33), she is of course little aware of the message she transmits–hence her faithful report–, but as time passes and she has her increasing share of linguistic knowledge, she is bound to outgrow her immunity to the meaning of words. Her developing notions of "mama" and "papa" under the guidance of her successive governesses contradict the names that her parents call each other with great gusto. The incongruity is a first source of confusion. What the little girl makes of it and of other confusing situations, how she relates to their agents, are questions that sensibly bear on her growing sense of self and its consequent manifestations.

Before attempting an answer, we might do well to bring up James's own comment on his rather special protagonist. Occurring in the Preface, a text first written for the New York Edition that followed the publication of the novel by more than a decade, it rather addresses the reader as the formulation of an intention. It is clear in the light of what James writes that Maisie was not to be so maltreated as to be incapacitated for feeling and thinking. On the contrary, "the small expanding consciousness" was to be "saved" by "the experience of certain advantages, by some enjoyed profit and some achieved confidence, rather than coarsened, blurred, sterilised, by ignorance and pain."[xxi] The advantages, profit and confidence, of which luckily Maisie has her share, are also a source of confusion: it is her stepparents that facilitate her experience of these.

However, she is far from being only a "receptacle" (31) where things both sweet and bitter are poured. It is true, in the beginning she is a "ready

vessel for bitterness, a deep little porcelain cup in which biting acids could be mixed" (25), but it is not long before she turns into a different kind of vessel: a medium through which connections are made, as that between her governess and her father, resulting with respect to the former in a change of status. She proved to be a more formidable agency of entanglement when at a later stage she had–as she herself remarked–"brought" her stepparents "together" (67). Though perhaps the most important as far as Maisie is concerned, these are not the only erotic relations to which the little girl was exposed. Equally short-lived, the re-marriages of her parents were promptly followed by a series of entanglements similar in their ephemerality.

If Maisie is slow as she sometimes appears to be, this is due to her not keeping pace with the speed at which her parents change their partners. In addition, there is the shift of her mother's husbands on to the former governess. The more particular alliances struck by parents, stepparents, lovers, and governesses are hardly left unaffected by the "restless change," and a question facing Maisie at regular intervals is to guess how "the distribution of parties" is going to tell on her, more specifically, whether "it would lead to a rushing to and fro and a changing of places" (89). "A receptacle" and a "vessel" at first, the little girl is also a spectator, a role suggested by one of the earliest images describing her world as "phantasmagoric" "as if the whole performance had been given for her– a mite of a half-scared infant in a great dim theatre" (27). But just as by being a vessel she develops other functions, among which that of connecting people is not the least important, so the almost frightened onlooker she is at the outset gradually leaves room for a different kind of experience and role: without ceasing to be a spectator she sees herself as part of the evershifting scene(s). She appears to progressively split her*self* into observer and observed, another way of saying that while the line between inner and outer tends to become blurred, Maisie develops a sense of a twofold being: as a private world and, on the other hand, as part of the more general entanglement. Her "small expanding consciousness" has much to do with both.

How Maisie appears in her own eyes, what she makes of the other's relation to herself–whether they are on her side or not, and what that side

is–are no doubt issues worthy of attention. That she is treated in such a way as to further ends that are not her own is something too obvious even for herself to miss. It is of interest in this connection to note that she is simply handled like an object owned at one time or another. To look upon human being as means and/or mere possessions is an impulse inherent in too many Jamesian characters prior to or in the wake of Maisie not to count heavily in James's work as a whole. What distinguishes Maisie's treatment from, say, Pansy's or Charlotte Stant's is that she may be literally classed with objects, as some of the verbs used in connection with her have a reference restricted to this class. Thus Beale Farange, her father, is said to complain that he "cannot afford a wife and daughter" (60), a use Maisie echoes when later on she speaks of herself as of something that can be stolen or "borrowed" (219).

More relevantly still, the way her body is handled, the "pats" and "pulls" to which it is submitted begin to function as a code through which messages are conveyed to her as to "the steps and signs of other people's business and even a little as (to) the wriggle or the overflow of their difficulties" (165). What Maisie knows comes–at least in part, but the part she knows in this way is no doubt important--from transmitters consisting of a range of bodily touch. A system of communication seems to be developing between Maisie and the others that is different from language and often subversive of it. Here lies further reason why language should not be fully trusted. Maisie's refuge into silence when a young child following on her mediating the exchanges between the parents may have something to do with it. That they read it as proof of her stupidity enhances the irony of the situation, while reflecting back on their limited perception and thought.

Maisie's option for silence and stupidity seems to indicate that the entanglements amidst which she was living impelled her towards concealment and duplicity. Just as the vessel to which she was compared in the beginning assumes other functions–that of connecting people is one, as shown above–, so the theatre image initially suggestive of her confusion--she was "a mite of a half-scared infant in a great dim theatre"–foreshadows ways in which Maisie would later on relate to the stage where the grown-ups were busy changing parts much in the manner of the plays perhaps not entirely off James's mind at the time he started to write *What Maisie Knew*.

By learning that to speak the words she has been taught to is something the others do not approve of, and so not exactly to her advantage, she is guided to evolve her own line of conduct with respect to them. Based on the association she makes between safety and stupidity--"she had never been safe unless she had also been stupid" (181) is what her memory keeps in a safe corner--, her behavior presupposes concealment depending to a great extent on the mask she has been driven to assume. In such instances, when she prefers to appear stupid to those around her, she turns out to be herself playing a part. No longer a half-scared infant in the great dim theatre, she now appears to have had her share of initiation in the ways of the stage. "Diplomacy" may be another word for what Maisie does when pretending to be different in order to, if not exactly rise up to and dominate a threatening or awkward situation, at least to find a way out of it. It is "an innocence so saturated with knowledge and so directed to diplomacy" (152) that the child evinced at the last meeting she had with her father when the latter "seemed, and quite touchingly, to ask her to help him to pretend--pretend he knew enough about her life and her education, her means of subsistence and her view of himself, to give the questions he couldn't put her a natural domestic tone" (151). That, for her part, "she would have pretended with ecstasy if he could only have given her the clue" (151), is proof of her resources in this respect.

It needs to be stressed at this point that what Maisie is willing to pretend at one moment or another can hardly be kept apart from how she is related to the people addressing her; in other words, the kind of role she takes on seems to be prompted to her by the circumstances in which she finds herself and only apparently is freely chosen. She is "directed to diplomacy." "Diplomacy" in her case is not something she was born with, but an acquisition she may put to use as the occasion arises. A diplomatic Maisie is only a provisional self.

We may do well to take note along the same lines that pretending and acting on the one hand and not pretending and not acting, on the other, may get confused. Thus, towards the end of the book Maisie has some reason to wonder whether in answering Mrs Wix she only appeared stupid. Here is the passage: "Maisie was aware that her answer (to Mrs Wix's question: "Haven't you really and truly *any* moral sense?") though it had

brought her down on her heels, was vague even to imbecility, and that this was the first time she had appeared to practice with Mrs Wix an intellectual ineptitude to meet her–the infirmity to which she had owed so much success with papa and mama" (221). "To practice an intellectual ineptitude" points to conscious effort and training as means by which a quality or its reverse can be displayed. Maisie is tempted to see the ignorance she manifested in her particular case–the question was far beyond her power to answer or it appeared so–as just another instance of assumed stupidity. The narrator makes a point of explaining that "the appearance did her injustice" (221); so the girl was far from pretending that she was ignorant. As a matter of fact, she was ignorant. However, from Maisie's point of view–in the quoted passage it is her awareness that supplies the lens through which things are seen–the confusion remains. Even though it is for only a little while that the boundary between being within a well-learned role and being out of it appears too blurred to be indicated with certainty.

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"A mute resistance to time." As Maisie's parents keep replacing their partners and stepparents form a liaison of which she can function as a most convenient cover, Maisie too suffers a change: she gets older. (By the time events reach a conclusion, she has passed from early on to late childhood.) A question that arises is whether, in a sense, her growth is only a matter of more consistently practising her art of concealment which requires of her a certain amount of pretending or acting. We might do well to recall that her "idea of an inner self" or, in other words, of concealment was meant as a "remedy" to meet "the feeling of danger" (32) she had begun to be subject to in the presence of her parents. Expressed as concealment, her idea of an inner self makes little room for growth, for Maisie is seldom alone. Most often she is shown to be related, and this substantiates her self in ways that make it dependent on the role(s) she is playing, that is, on what she is pretending to be, which in turn is suggested to her by a particular situation.

But even when alone Maisie is drawn to role-playing; this time her impulse is of a different nature, as are for that matter the parts she is

tempted to act. Freed from the adults' company, she resorts to playing as children characteristically do. As is known, this is a complex activity that involves various elements and forms including imitation of adult behaviour or roles. Children may thus play by playing roles they find in their immediate environment. As a rule, they act within a context they agree upon pretending to be the personages they are interested in for one reason or another. When playing with Lisette, her doll, Maisie acts out a situation where in comparison with real life there occurs a significant reversal: she chooses to play the mother's role while the doll is cast in Maisie's. The passage needs to be quoted at length:

> There were for instance days when, after prolonged absence, Lisette, watching her take off her things, tried hard to discover where she had been. Well, she discovered a little, but never discovered all. There was an occasion when, on her being particularly indiscreet, Maisie replied to her—and precisely about the motive of a disappearance—as she, Maisie, had once been replied to by Mrs Farange: 'Find out for yourself!' She mimicked her mother's sharpness, but she was rather ashamed afterwards, though as to whether of the sharpness or of the mimicry was not quite clear (p. 45).

It should be noted that what Maisie transfers to her doll is revealing as to how at this stage she perceives her mother's relation to her. The mystery in Ida's life is much on her mind, even if she cannot be aware of what it exactly is and how it affects her. There seems to be a connection between the doll's curiosity and the girl's "sense of being untutored and unclaimed" (61) that shortly will be articulated in such words as "Mamma doesn't care for me" (81).

As Maisie grows up other roles will be available to her. At least one is worthy of mention since its origin seems to be different. In the brief conversation she has with the Captain–one of her mother's lovers–in Kensington Gardens, Maisie suddenly places herself in a hitherto unpractised position: that of a young lady at a ball addressing her partner. There is a good deal of the dialogue generated by the image Maisie has invented and appropriated on the spur of the moment. Once she has created the young woman in her imagination, an imagination nourished by talks

she might have been exposed to, she is intent on imitating her. Maisie's reactions belong to the young woman, rather than to herself. So does her manner of laughing: "Maisie laughed, with a certain elegance, in return–the young lady at the ball certainly would," or of showing surprise: in making a retort, "she judged her young lady would say that with light surprise" (127). Both her laugh and "light surprise" might be read as ironical comments on her mother's disposition to proliferate her lovers and so as evidence of the girl's imitation in matters she was not expected to know.

The tendency Maisie shows to mimic real and imaginary people when playing, as well as when living, can be easily turned against her. As a matter of fact those readings that insist on her having been contaminated by the "atmospheres" that "it would be appalling to analyse" (168) are usually based on arguments having to do with such exhibitions on her part. Of course, not all her acts can be accounted for so readily. There is in the first place, her answer to Sir Claude's proposal: asked to give up Mrs Wix she agreed on condition he give up Mrs Beale, a sacrifice it was beyond his power to make. Some critics are tempted to see here a maneuver in keeping with the game played by other characters enabling Maisie to reach her goal: she wanted Sir Claude for herself. More than that, Maisie's reply to Sir Claude–an argument runs–was meant as an offer to become his mistress.

There is no doubt that Maisie's emotional attachment to her stepfather is very strong indeed. She greatly enjoys his presence and misses him when not at home. His showing up after periods of long absence is an event that brings her joy. It is true, Sir Claude's type of beauty–in vogue at the time–and aristocratic manners are not without effect on women. All the female characters in the novel fall under his spell including Mrs Wix whose pressure that he should break with Mrs Beale is obviously due to some incentive other than the moral sense she so loudly advertises. Maisie's relation to Sir Claude is different though. A point not to overlook is that he impressed her as truly caring for her, even if his concern that appeared to be real and not false did not hinder him from using her. The affection he aroused in her might simply reciprocate his interest in her: after all it was hardly parental love that she had been offered before.

Maisie's last walk in France in Sir Claude's company brings proof that to separate from him was not a prospect she could in the least cherish.

Indeed all her reactions on that particular occasion testify to how close she felt to her stepfather. He seemed to completely absorb her attention blinding her to sights that had previously enchanted her: "She saw nothing that she had seen hitherto--no touch in the foreign picture that had at first been always before her. The only touch was that of Sir Claude's hand, and to feel her own in it was her mute resistance to time" (267). In one sense Maisie's resistance to time refers to her desire to put off for as long as possible their return to the inn, that is, the moment when she is expected to give her answer. In another sense, it means not to grow up and remain a little girl who can always feel her father's hand clasping her own. Maisie's love for Sir Claude is filial not erotic, and to see it otherwise is to assimilate her to the female figure such as Mrs Beale and Mrs Wix--not to mention her mother–, whose line of action is decided by the game they intend to play rather than by a moral sense.

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"The circus" and "the glade." It is somewhat ironical that Mrs Wix differentiates between game and moral sense as a motive behind human acts. Appearances are misleading as to the real impulse at work. She makes the remark with reference to Maisie's stepmother who by joining Maisie and her governess in France gave first the impression that the reason for her coming was her duty to her stepdaughter, whereas in fact, as she was able to realize shortly, it was a clever move to make Sir Claude dependent on herself. But, as already mentioned, Mrs Wix herself is liable to mix up the two. It is difficult to say whether her insistence on a course of action on Sir Claude's part requiring his separation from Mrs Beale is not due to an unavowed desire: that she herself would enjoy his company.

Mrs Wix's question about Mrs Beale has an implication that should be, more fully, brought out. If a game may pass for moral sense, is not the latter endangered by the confusion? Is the distinction tenable in the sense that a moral sense does exist and a game can be distinguished from it? Or is it just another name for the same game people are used to playing? It is important to attempt an answer to these questions as they bear directly on the issue under discussion: Maisie's idea of an inner self, and, more generally, the terms in which self can be understood in the novel.

The point made earlier about Maisie's tendency manifest in several contexts to take on roles, or about her diplomacy, even if they were suggested to her or imposed on her by the situation, might lead to the conclusion that the self she was evolving was dependent on them. There are however reactions on Maisie's part that discourage one from accepting too readily such a view. If we look at the matter in terms of game and moral sense, it is plausible to wonder on their evidence whether the latter has no claims to make on her being. In other words, the question addressed by Mrs Wix: "Haven't you really and truly *any* moral sense?" (221) can be answered in the affirmative: yes, Maisie has a moral sense in contrast to her governess too much preoccupied with conventional, manifest forms to have a real and true moral feeling. In Maisie's case on the contrary, it is bound up with her idea of an inner self and so well concealed. Only now and then does it come up baffling those who are exposed to it, for it expresses itself in forms that are shocking for anyone trained to see in conventional morality its only form of manifestation. It is in fact the crucial issue in the other novels of Henry James.

Perhaps the best known instance of the girl's revealing herself in all the nakedness of her emotional impulses is supplied by her talk with the Captain in Kensington Gardens. There is increasing irony in the dialogue between Ida's lover at the time and the girl who gives too faithful an image of her mother's penchant for entanglements by unwittingly making references to one former lover after another. The irony is however seriously subverted by an altogether different note that gains in intensity as their conversation comes to a close: in her childish way Maisie is putting pressure on the Captain that he should make the confession she expects: " 'Say you love her, Mr. Captain, say it, say it!' she implored" (131). At the same time she confesses to experiencing the same feeling. It is love that renders Maisie's words morally meaningful, for next she asks the Captain not to be like the others.

A moral sense that owes so much to love is something entirely different from Mrs Wix's notion of it, or of any other character's. Sir Claude alone has a glimpse of it when a few moments before his final parting from Maisie, he pronounces "it" to be "the most beautiful thing I've ever met," "exquisite" (276) and "sacred" (277). According to Tony Tanner,

Maisie's "qualities belong to a pre-moral or trans-moral realm. In her ignorance she is all potential, all readiness, all humanity. What is innate is her spontaneous affection, her appetite for the new, her aptitude for life, her unprejudices uncondemning eye which is hospitable to the whole spectrum of sense impressions." [xxii]

To admit that there can be such a core in self is to resist reducing it to role-playing. Perhaps more to the point would be to say that just as there is a "an inner self," so there is an outer self always in the making and gaining consistency in exposure. As such, Maisie's self ties in well with the notion of self as developed by William James. In the view of Henry James's brother, the pluralization of self–the capacity of the individual to evolve further facets as the context, especially social context, required–did not preclude, but on the contrary presupposed a "self of selves." [xxiii]

Referring once more to Maisie's inner self and the way it came to the fore in her talk to the Captain, it is perhaps worth noting that the scene is laid in a garden. Once she has reached Kensington Gardens in Sir Claude's company, an exit out of the labyrinth in which she was wandering appears in sight. The difference the place makes is pointed out by Sir Claude: he contrasts it to the "pretty bad circus" (120) they have left behind. The walk promises to be an escape into nature as the landscape–the "great green glade," "the fresh turf," "the crooked course of a rural footpath" (120)–clearly suggests. The allusion to the Forest of Arden and Rosalind (120) no doubt reinforces the impression hinting at an opposition between nature and civilization, the latter somehow held responsible for man's entrappment into the labyrinth.

However, it would not do to emphasize the divergent course of civilization *vis-à-vis* nature. For one thing, Kensington Gardens is the name of a space where the two are meant to stand in harmony rather than to be in discord. By bringing together the virtues of both, the garden appears as the *locus par excellence* (of the mind as well) where higher attributes (including a moral sense as James understands it) are at home. As Tony Tanner remarks in his discussion of *The Portrait of a Lady*, James, when setting "house" and "garden" in opposition as he often does in that novel, associates the latter with, among other things, the "imagination of loving," exemplified at its best by Ralph Touchett. Isabel too is drawn to the garden, especially

to Gardencourt, a name that in Tanner's words "points to the fact that this is the locale in the book which most exudes a mood of mellow reciprocity between the civilised and the natural."[xxiii] In contrast to Ralph, however, who is from the outset "a true Jamesian artist figure," she needs to experience pain at the hands of others before developing a capacity to respond to it. ("Suitably, he is most often seen sitting in gardens."[xxiv])

But what about the effect of their exposure to Kensington Gardens on Maisie and Sir Claude? It is obvious that the child's response is different from the man's. The "green glade" and the "fresh turf" are likely to appeal to her "imagination of loving," a phrase that can be taken to be synonymous with her moral sense, in ways that bring it out giving it particular direction. The child feels stimulated to express herself more intimately. As for Sir Claude, his temptation to see the gardens as a place where to take refuge in Romantic fashion from the world turns against himself with a vengeance. The human presence has the effect of dispelling its charms and of revealing it as what it actually is: a part of the London world. His shock prefigures the more famous scene of Recognition in *The Ambassadors*. Strether's projection of a Lambinet on the landscape under his eyes is as mercilessly corrected as Sir Claude's projection of a literary text–Shakespeare's *As You Like It*–on Kensington Gardens. In both cases the mind is forced to give up its former perspective that was adopted or rather built from a reading experience.

9

WHITE AND/OR BLACK: THE RESTORED SELF OF TOM DRISCOLL

Mark Twain's resounding success. Except for a few periods of varying length in the first half of the decade–not exceeding, however, several months–when business took him over to America, Mark Twain spent the 1890s in some parts of the world other than the United States. Leaving aside the one year lecture tour round the world (July 1895 - July 1896), it was in Europe that he found his abode. With his family he settled successively in Italy, Germany, England, and Vienna; in the last two places he remained for two years or so respectively.

In 1891, with the greatest part of the work behind him, Twain was already a famous writer. Somewhat faster than America in acknowledging his manifold talent, both England and Germany had given him a warm reception on the occasion of former visits. Over the 1890s his reputation further consolidated, and, apart from France that kept its full praise for Edgar Allen Poe, Europe acclaimed him as America's greatest writer. His fame reached Asia too as he was to realize when lecturing in India: there, people "knew only three things about America: 'George Washington, Mark Twain, and the Chicago Fair.' "[i] At home he had now not only his readers and fans, but a high literary reputation as well, America having caught up meanwhile with European enthusiasm. He had always been a popular author and the sales of his books in the 1890s brought further proof of his readership. In September 1898 *Pall Mall Magazine* published an anecdote that must have flattered Twain a good deal. In the leading bookstore of Hartford a lady asked for Taine's *English Literature* and was told by the

shopkeeper that he had not written such a work. When she wondered, the bookman replied that he was absolutely sure for "I have read every line he has published from 'The Jumping Frog' upwards." [ii]

An important change in Twain's rating as a writer was noticeable throughout the 1890s. While he continued to be labelled a humorist in some quarters, in others the seriousness and innovative quality of his Mississippi writings were being brought to light with the result that the writer emerged a far more complex personality than his public image credited him in the previous period. In the wake of Andrew Lang in Britain, who wrote in February 1891 that he had "no hesitation in saying that Mark Twain is one among the greatest of contemporary makers of fiction," [iii] came Brander Matthews whose appraisal of Twain sounded the prophetic note in that he singled out *Huckleberry Finn* as the writer's masterpiece: "(...) I do not think," he predicted in 1897, "it will be a century or take three generations before we Americans generally discover how great a book Huckleberry Finn really is." [iv] As is known, Americans took less than a century to be won over to Matthews' judgment as far as Twain's novel of 1884 is concerned.

The growing interest in Twain's writings associated with the Mississippi, and, resulting from it, the tendency to speak of him as a writer of deep moral vision were stimulated, no doubt, by the hold those writings were having on their more perceptive readers. However, some polemical impulse must have been at work too. That is plainly visible in Brander Matthews' essay of 1897, as well as in the essay, highly appreciative of Twain, William Lyon Phelps wrote in 1907. Both Matthews and Phelps took issue with Charles E. Richardson for whom Twain's merits were confined to those of a humorist exclusively. In his "American Literature" (1886) Richardson had referred to the author of *Huckleberry Finn* only sparingly even by comparison with George Cable, disposing of him as a minor figure, certainly inferior to James Russell Lowell and Oliver Wendell Holmes. The revision to which Twain's work began to be submitted in the 1890s led to a new evaluation of his writings and consequently of his status as a writer, a process that was to be shortly reflected in his inclusion in the canon of American literature. *Huckleberry Finn, Tom Sawyer,* and *Pudd'nhead Wilson* were considered now to be his major achievements,

and also to take a good deal of their substance from their author's intimacy with the ante-bellum culture of the American Midwest, as well as with "the living speech that he knows so well as to use with the assurance of original proprietorship".[v] We may do well to point out that to Twain's more insightful critics–Matthews and Phelps are definitely among them – neither *Tom Sawyer* nor *Huckleberry Finn* is primarily a book for children, even if both of them are "devoured" by boys; *Huckleberry Finn* "is really not a child's book at all." Inviting comparison with *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver's Travels*, a tradition valued, we understand, for moral guidance (and satirical effects) they are considered among the books "that are read at different periods of one's life from very different points of view." (Phelps has in view *Tom Sawyer*, but the statement is implicitly applied to "the other masterpiece."[vi])

The recourse to European examples in order to take measure of an American writer's worth sheds light, to be sure, on the practice of American criticism at the period or rather on its standards: even when concerned with underlining the Americanness of the author under discussion, it could hardly resist looking across the Atlantic. Indeed, it was Twain's Americanness that engaged the attention of his critics in the 1890s and the early years of the twentieth century. Some other meanings of his work, of *Huckleberry Finn* in particular–its mythical significance in the first place–had to wait for T. S. Eliot and other critics of subsequent generation(s) to be brought to light.

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A gloomy decade. The great fame Twain was enjoying in Europe and America, especially his rise as a literary figure, gave him good reason to take pride in his achievement; but otherwise the 1890s were far from being generous to him. Even the decision he made in 1891 to settle for a time in Europe was chiefly motivated by financial difficulties; over the next couple of years these became so serious as to face him and his family with the spectre of poverty.

A rich man by all standards–his Hartford house stands proof of the grandiose scale of his living–Twain had not ceased to be lured into money-promising schemes. The large investments he made in James W. Paige

typesetting machine that despite its appearing "superb" and "perfect" lost in competition with Mergenthaler's Linotype, and, on the other hand, Charles Webster's inefficacy to run the publishing firm he had set up and financed--at least that was Twain's version of the story--brought him to the verge of financial ruin. In going into bankruptcy in 1894, apparently to his minimum disadvantages under the given conditions, he took the advice of Henry Rogers, one of the pillars of Standard Oil Company; it was also Rogers who helped disentangle him from the intricate involvement with the Paige machine. To keep unimpaired his prestige as a writer, Twain pledged himself to pay his debts. The lecture tour round the world on which he went in 1895 was meant to bring the money he needed or, at least, part of it.

Despite the success he had always enjoyed on the lecture platform, he was hardly in love with the job. He knew too well that what his audience wanted was amusement, and to supply it for twelve months at a stretch could have drained him of all his energy. When he followed the equator he was sixty years old. From the reviews occasioned by his tour, one can get a glimpse of the man and his performance on the stage. Seeming "to jest at his serious side, just as in his books," he could be nonetheless "moved by the remembrance of the iniquities perpetrated on liberty in the old slavery days amid which Huck Finn and Jim the slave lived;" his preference for "the quaintest americanisms, for instance, his use of "twarn't" instead of "it was not," or of "they done it" was not lost on his Australian audience. Neither was the way he spoke: "slowly, lazily, and wearily, as of a man dropping off to sleep," or "that characteristic nasal sound which penetrates to the back of the largest building." But while seldom failing to respond to all this, the listeners must have had their eyes fastened on "the picturesque figure" on the stage, further described to the readers of the London *Sketch*: "His long, shaggy, white hair surmounts a face full of intellectual fire. The eyes, arched with bushy brows, and which seem to be closed most of the time while he is speaking, flash out now and then from their deep sockets with a genial, kindly, pathetic look, and the face is deeply drawn with the furrows accumulated during an existence of sixty years."[vii]

Just as the tour ended, Twain's furrows deepened and others were accumulating. The death of Susy, his eldest daughter, plunged him into a depression from which full recovery could hardly be possible. He and his

family spent the remaining years of the decade in Europe–during the five years he did not set foot in America, not even once–hoping that away from "home," the grief over their loss would be more bearable. Finding a refuge in writing, he produced now an impressive mass of manuscript that after his death was to challenge the editors in a number of ways. Those of his works generally labelled "late Twain" postdate 1896, an important boundary in the Twain chronology being thus supplied by the mid-1890s. The essay "What is Man?," fictions such as "The Mysterious Stranger" are all permeated with despair at what human nature turns out to be: a series of wicked impulses, over which, man, the plaything of larger forces, can have no control whatever.

Twain's despair is however contained: it leads to resignation rather than rebellion. The contrast in which his body of writings stand to the writer's earlier work made Theodore Dreiser ask the question: "Were there two Twains from the beginning?" Although the question had been asked before Dreiser and would be repeated after him, becoming a kind of burden in the Twain criticism, its association with Dreiser seems more justified: and this not so much because Dreiser had in view a more relevant contrast and put a good of emphasis on "the powerful and original and amazingly pessimistic thinker that he (Twain) really was,"[viii] as because "Mark the Double Twain," the title of Dreiser's centennial essay, is far more broadly suggestive of the writer's personality. In a sense "Mark, the Double Twain" supplies the focus of the present chapter too: *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is too greatly dependent on doubleness not to invite a commentary on it.

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"Different selves" in "rivalry and conflict." The first who invites such an approach is Twain himself. It is difficult to say whether he adopted the pen-name of Twain because by the time he launched himself as a writer he had become aware of inner contrary impulses. (The story he told is of course different.) Once he came to be known– well-known seems a more appropriate word–as Mark Twain humorist, entertainer, journalist, and story-teller, he was tempted to look upon his name as fully expressive of his personality. Later his practice as a novelist must have even more

encouraged him to stress the relevance of a name for its bearer. "One doesn't name his characters haphazard," he enlightened one reporter who wanted to find out (!) whether "Tom Sawyer" was invested with any particular significance.[ix]

There were many reasons why the doubleness suggested by "Twain," a word so close to twins, should haunt him, as it were. Having grown into Mark Twain he had not in the least ceased to be Samuel Langhorne Clemens. "Clemens" which he sometimes liked to read as "claimants" continued to be the name by which he was addressed by acquaintances and friends, including literary friends. W.D. Howells for one seldom called him by his pen-name.

The sense of a split within his personality increased with fame and age. It was especially keen during the late 1890s. It was then that over a long period of time he contemplated the idea of bringing his twin identities in the open. As Justin Kaplan informs us in the biography of the writer, so aptly entitled *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain*, a few recurrent words in the notebooks Twain kept at the time are meant to be an incentive for a future work: "S. L. C. interviews M. T." His old interest in dreams that amounted to a sheer obsession now was also whetted by a belief having many adepts at the time that the more enigmatic aspects of human behavior had their explanation in a self of whose existence man was little aware: the dream self as it was called. Hence the new turn taken by his fiction centred on the conflict within the individual. In the stories he wrote in the late 1890s and the next decade, Twain was far more interested in presenting dream life in opposition to the state of wakefulness when the self was believed to be in full control. The same question appears to be asked over and over again: "Which was the dream?," a question which is bound to invite another one: "Which was reality?;" for, to Twain in old age, reality and dream are hard to keep apart and harder to define: dream dislocates reality, and reality takes on the attributes of dream.

Prior to *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, however, the uses to which the double had been put were rather different. Quite often Twain saw the conflict in terms that were more central to the nineteenth century. With another kind of emphasis he was to follow the pattern which E. A. Poe had set in "William Wilson": conscience is at odds with indulgence in sensuous

pleasure. Bound up with fear of damnation, the moral imperative is for Twain a source of guilt and remorse that may have crippling effects in respect to man's capacity to respond to life. Hence the impulse to turn against it and free the self from its crippling pressure. It is what happens in "*The Facts Concerning the Recent Carnival of Crime in Connecticut*," a fantasy he first read at his Hartford Monday Evening Club in 1876 where conscience is subverted and essentially destroyed.

But twinship enabled him to dramatize discordant sides of the self not necessarily connected with the uncomfortable demands of a superego. Several years before he presented his "Carnival of Crime," he had based one of the sketches on the figure of he Siamese twins. Written in 1868, at the end of the Civil War, "Personal Habits of the Siamese Twins" bind in Chang and Eng a series of opposites: some of these while relevant to the Civil War and the sympathies the two sides polarized- Chang fought for the Union and Eng for the Confederacy–might shed light on Twain's divided loyalty: born in the South he was contemplating marrying North (the Langdons were known to have been dedicated abolitionists); others refer to such addictions as smoking and alcohol, to which one of the brothers was given, while the other was a confirmed nonsmoker and teetotaler. Apparently, the writer himself was torn between the pleasure he took in smoking for a number of years now and the pressure Olivia Langdon, whom he was wooing in the late sixties, was putting on him to give it up.

No wonder then that being at the center of many of Twain's writings and occupying his attention to the end of his life–the story goes that a little while before his death, he was preoccupied with Jekyll and Hyde and other similar impersonations in literature–twinship often supplied the clue by which his work has been approached, even if some of the critics who took this route were biased towards one of the twins and too readily suppressed the other. A reading that made a long career in Twain's criticism presented the genteel tradition of the East–Olivia Langdon embodied it at its most persuasive--as the unequivocal winner in the contest it must have had with Twain's Midwestern background, upbringing and hostility of whatever stood in the way of personal freedom.[x] When the ordeal of Mark Twain presumably leading to the suppression of his more genuine self was not traced to the split caused by these contending forces, it was understood to

be related to the writer's double status in his culture. The Gilded Age repulsed him because of the sham values it so hypocritically advertised, but on the other hand he was flattered when tycoons like the Rogerses and the Rockfellers befriended him. For reasons too evident to mention, readings along these lines proliferated in the 1930s.[xi] Still the over-emphasis laid by the critics of the angry decade on Twain's moral discomforts with the corruption of the Gilded Age which hardly prevented him however from enjoying the company of its beneficiaries should not obscure a conflicting attitude from his part. Justin Kaplan underscores it time and again, each chapter of the writer's life supplying him with an occasion to make remarks as the following: "He was, at the very least, already a double creature. He wanted to belong, but he also wanted to laugh from the outside." "The representative of a broad spectrum of paradox, as a writer he stood outside American society of the Gilded Age, but as a businessman he embraced its business values."[xii] Martha Banta's way of putting it is characteristically suggestive: Mark Twain "contained the personalities of both loafer and climber."[xiii]

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(Un)twining the threads of the story. Perhaps to a greater extent than *An American Yankee in King Arthur's Court* that preceded it by a couple of years, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* foreshadows the cynical sombre vision informing the fictions and essays which Twain wrote after 1896. This of course lends further point and emphasis to Dreiser's question. Without claiming that there were two Twains from the very beginning, it is not difficult to assume on the evidence supplied by his writings that for many years before 1896 he had been evolving towards the vision he more unequivocally adopted after his daughter's death. That his evolution in the aforesaid direction speeded up, as it were, in the early years of the 1890s can be, of course, explained by his financial entanglements for which he was not alone responsible, if we are reminded of the crash of 1893 that kept even Henry Adams "suspended, for several months, over the edge of bankruptcy." But the rise of racism had a share too in accelerating the process. There is relevance in the fact that while far away from home

Twain was absorbed in writing a novel where the race issue figures prominently; and this apparently contrary to his will, if we pay heed to his confession that three of the characters (of these two are black) insisted on having their way. The increasing pressure put by them explains--according to the author at least--the more complicated genesis of *Pudd'nhead Wilson.*

Although in December 1892 Twain wrote that he had finished the novel entitled *Those Extraordinary Twins* and a month later repeated the announcement having meanwhile changed the title to *Pudd'nhead Wilson - a Tale*, it was only at the end of July 1893 that the final version emerged. The result of several rewritings, *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson* eventually parted company with *The Comedy of Those Extraordinary Twins*. The latter was included as a companion piece when *Pudd'nhead Wilson* came out in book form in November 1894 having been serialized in the *Century* magazine (December 1893 - June 1894). Twain confessed that he "pulled one of the stories out by the roots, and left the other one--a kind of literary Caesarean operation."[xiv]

During the visits Twain made in the United States in 1892 and 1893 the writing or rewriting of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* was not completely abandoned; in the hours, not many at a time, he could snatch from his extremely dense social and business engagements he made some progress with his work. However it was during his residence in Italy that he devoted most of his energy to the novel. The charm of Florence and of Villa Viviani in its vicinity was not lost on the author of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, less disposed than the author of *The Innocents Abroad* to poke fun at the European past, despite the playful tone he adopted in "Whisper to the reader," the preface to his novel, when speaking about the still-felt presence of Dante and Beatrice. The high antiquity of the Villa he inhabited for several months was a point of interest and attraction for him. To his relatives in America he wrote about "the fine beautiful family portraits" that "carry one well back into the past," imagining possible meetings between the respective ancestors and Dante or Boccacio or Columbus. But it is the Italian landscape near Florence that impressed him in a way that recalls Henry James's response to the same sight:

> The variety of lovely effects, the infinitude of change, is something not to be believed by anyone who has not seen it. No view that I am acquainted with in the world is at all comparable to this for delicacy, charm, exquisiteness, dainty coloring and bewildering rapidity of change. It keeps a person drunk with pleasure all the time. Sometimes Florence ceases to be substantial and becomes just a faint soft dream, with domes and towers of air, and one is persuaded that he might blow it away with a puff of his breath.[xv]

As the landscape under Twain's eyes would dissolve in dream, the imaginary world of Dawson's Landing finding a support in the writer's childhood memories was gaining in substance and consistency. It may not be irrelevant that what brought Rhoda Aldgate to Italy in the novel Howells had published a year before Twain started *Pudd'nhead Wilson* also supplied the point of interest in the novel Twain was now writing with the Italian landscape close at hand to admire and wonder at.

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A double pairing. There is no doubt that the two pairs, Tom and Chambers on the one hand, and Luigi and Angelo on the other, are suggestive of a relationship--a point also borne out by the genesis of the novel. That from the outset Twain had thought of developing his story along double lines, both of them connected to forms of twinship, be they real or apparent, is in itself an indication that the idea of duplicating the pair was not without importance for him. The "Caesarean operation" of a later date leading to the extraction of the Siamese twins hardly altered the original conception: the Italian twins no longer Siamese but separate replaced "those extraordinary twins" whose story would be published as an independent text having the same title together with *Pudd'nhead Wilson*.

There are grounds to believe that *Pudd'nhead Wilson* depend on the twins too, and this not only because their presence contribute to the vivacity of the narrative, or is required by the plot machinery. In some very important sense they reflect on the issue at the heart of the novel and provide the key for an understanding of Twain's attitude towards the relation of whites and blacks. As dramatized by the two pairs, it appears to point to two levels

corresponding to the real and the ideal respectively. In the master/slave relation brought face to face with the affection nourished by the twins for each other there creeps a suggestion of a different possibility, altogether denied in the world of Dawson's Landing, it is true, but which might have had a hold, no matter how frail and fleeting, over the 1890s reader. This is not to say that Twain went beyond racial prejudices. Tom's disreputable inclinations for laziness, robbery, and cowardice are almost automatically attributed to "the nigger in him." Roxy too believes so and no less Tom on whom the knowledge about his black blood has crippling effects.

But the automatism involved in the incriminating attributions is, on a closer look, double-edged. To associate the Negroes with what is base in human nature so promptly and so generally–apparently even those incriminated do not swerve from this belief– is to indicate that the prevailing opinion is especially powerful.

Besides there is more than an intimation in Tom's case that not only belief is a matter of conditioning, but identity as well. Just as "Chambers" when restored to his white identity turns out to be unfit for white society, so Tom may owe some of his moral trespasses to the kind of upbringing he has got at Roxy's hands. There is no doubt that his "mammy's" extra care that he should be treated as a master had a share in the conviction he had that the world existed in order to gratify his desires. From such certainty it was only one step to the feeling that if anything was at cross purposes with him, he was free to resort to no matter what means to have his way. More importantly still, Tom offers himself as an interesting illustration of the part which belief has in shaping the self. Although as Judge Driscoll's nephew he grew up without excelling in any virtue–on the contrary–, the awareness of the "nigger in him" forced upon him by his mother leads him to indulge in vice all the more freely, as he now believes that being what he is–a Negro–he cannot escape a Negro's nature. It may not be irrelevant in this connection that his more serious offences culminating in selling his mother down the river and murdering his uncle are committed when he has assumed his identity as Roxy's son.

But to revert to the point made earlier about the two pairs shedding light on each other. It seems obvious that both of them illustrate a relation of *self* to *other* so close as to make the former the equivalent of the half dog

that David Wilson wished to possess. Hearing a howling dog, the newcomer to Dawson's Landing shocked his listeners by saying that he wished he owned half of it: it was his intention, he further informed them, to kill it. The name of Pudd'nhead by which he came to be known originated in this piece of reasoning. On debating whether he was aware that if he killed his half, he would kill the whole dog, the citizens concluded that he must be a puddenhead. It is one of the fine ironies of the book that when finally the citizens have ceased to use his nickname, Wilson enacts it, as it were. By exposing Tom as a Negro and slave, Wilson also changes Chamber's life in a way that makes of him an outsider in both worlds, white and black. Along different lines, Roxy's maneuver is, in the words of Langston Hughes, "a grievous sin" because she paid little heed, if at all, to how the other was to be affected by the reversal of roles that was intended to protect her son from the worst possible lot.[xv]

As for the twins, "the brotherly bond," a used and abused nineteenth century syntagm, may still preserve some of its old meaning to do justice to a relationship in which *the other* is given affection, as well as support when his life is put in jeopardy. It seems that, apart from the role it plays in the melodramatic plot, the great risk Luigi takes to save Angelo's life may be read as precisely conveying this kind of involvement. That the twins while looking alike are also different in some other regards renders them all the more suggestive of the interplay of sameness and difference. The contrast in which they stand to each other in respect of liquor, for instance, generates some comic incidents, but its function can hardly be confined to these effects alone. If note is taken that colour is among the differences setting the twins apart from each other- "one is a little fairer than the other, but otherwise they were exact duplicates" (30)—, and, on the other hand, no such difference exists between Tom and Chambers, then the bond uniting Luigi and Angelo reflects even more directly on the unbridgeable gulf separating the black from the white. The harmony between brown and fair illustrated by the Italian twins foregrounds the discrepancy created by colour exemplified in Tom's relation to Chambers where paradoxically no difference in colour is to be noticed between master and slave. Concomitantly, it provides an alternative that implicitly sets the American pair in a critical light. Twain may have been racially biased in many respects,

but, on the other hand, he was hardly indifferent to the thought that nothing but history was responsible for the degradation of the blacks and the revengeful thought they nourished at times beneath their obedience and devotion to their white masters. Of this stands proof, among other things, the original conception of Tom as character and, as a direct expression of it, the deleted passages from the earlier version. In *Pudd'nhead Wilson* as we know it, Twain suppressed the unambiguous statement; by relying, in keeping with his more general penchant, on duplication and travesty reminiscent of the carnivalesque where surface and depth constantly change places, but also generative of stark contrast peculiar to melodrama, he projected a response to the racial issue so pressing at the time that twines black and white in ways highlighting more than one facet of their relation.

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Tom Driscoll is subject to a shock somewhat similar to that experienced by Rhoda Aldgate. When a young man of twenty three, a revelation is made to him to the effect that he is not what he passes for in the eyes of the world: he is not Tom Driscoll, the legitimate son of one of the most outstanding men in the then frontier town of Dawson's Landing, but Valet de Chambre, a Negro servant's son. The authority on which the information rests is beyond any doubt, for it is from his mother that the news comes to him.

Unike *An Imperative Duty* where Mrs. Meredith's confession to Olney about Rhoda's Negro descent is only obliquely anticipated, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* does not keep the reader in the dark as to the real identity of "Marse Tom." In fact what triggers off the story in Twain's novel is Roxy's switch of the babies informing an early chapter of the book. Mother and mammy at the same time, in charge, that is, of both her mistress's son and her own, she had no difficulty in exchanging the infants in their cradles once fear of the future of Valet de Chambre, her son, had inspired the step: the babies looked so much alike that not even Judge Driscoll could tell them one from the other when they had been stripped of their clothes. As clothes alone supplied the markers of their identity, dressing Valet de Chambre in a snowy gown and putting the coral necklace on his neck was enough to cast him in the role for which the other child was

conversely skilled. To emphasize the identical *look* of the babies as Twain does is also to wipe out the difference in colour: they both looked white. Indeed Valet de Chambre who dislocated the lawful heir at a very early age was thirty one parts white; however, as was the case with his mother too, the part of him that was Negro, no matter how small, "outvoted" the other parts and made a slave of him. "A fiction of law and custom" (9) turned out to be powerful enough to prevail over other things including paradoxically the colour itsef originally at the root of the discrimination. To a very great extent it was responsible for the shape and structure assumed by reality individually and socially in the slaveholding South of the ante-bellum years. It is most unlikely that there were people who did not take it for granted, and if there were any, these could hardly be found among the white inhabitants of Dawson's Landing, a town "half a day's journey, per steamboat, below St. Louis" (1). None of them went too far to intuit the fictional nature of either law or custom. Nothing of the sort happened in 1830 when the babies where born, or twenty-three years later when they were restored to their proper identities.

Tom alone contends against the omnipotent law and custom, but when he does so, he knows too well that he is no more one of the whites: he belongs now with "the niggers." Indeed his reaction upon being told the truth about his parentage is not only to commiserate with himself for the newly-revealed Negro blood in his veins, but also to ask a number of questions that go to the heart of the matter. Both these impulses set him in contrast to Rhoda Aldgate. Though equally shocked to the point of feeling her whole life torn up, Howells's protagonist, we remember, appeared determined to take a new course and accepting the loss of her former self to forster herself a new identity in terms of a relationship with her mother's race. No such possibility could have ever occurred to Tom. His world almost half a century earlier in time and located further down on the map was wide apart from Rhoda's, and the Negro in it was given no chance. It is to the Negro's plight in general that Tom now responds, the questions he asks having a relevance that goes beyond his own case: "Why were niggers and white made? What crime did the uncreated first nigger commit that the curse of birth was decreed for him? And why is this awful difference made between white and black?" (53).

It is not lacking in interest to notice that in an earlier version of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, Twain had Tom make bitter comments on slavery. The remarks to follow are based on Daniel Morley McKeithan's reading of the manuscript where the passages in question were marked out for deletion by the author, or, without being so, were omitted from the novel when it appeared serially and later in book form together with *Those Extraordinary Twins*.

If one is to judge by the deletions generously quoted by McKeithan, Tom in the manuscript seems to be quite articulate. Consequent upon the shock is his hatred of the whites and especially of his father, of whose identity he is, unlike in the book, wholly ignorant; also, an impulse he apparently experiences for the first time, that of thinking. The contempt he used to feel for the Negro is hardly mollified once the identity of an ex-white man has been forced on him; on the contrary, it becomes stronger, as he has himself too to despise. Whatever repels him in his new condition, the cowardice and self-contempt he feels, appear to him now as an effect of the debasing power of slavery itself. "Why was he a coward? It was the "nigger" in him. The nigger blood? Yes, the nigger blood degraded from the original courage to cowardice by decades and generations of insult and outrage inflicted in circumstances which forbade reprisals, and made mute and meek endurance the only refuge and defence."[xvii] It is little wonder then that the revenge gratifying his deepest needs at the moment derives from the position he holds among the highly distinguished and the chance it gives him to rub shoulders with those who would shrink from him in awe, were his "real" identity known to them. As he himself gives utterence to his feelings: "he loathed the 'nigger' in him, but got pleasure out of bringing this secret "filth" as he called it, into famliar and constant contact with the sacred whites."[xviii] It needs to mention likewise that what Tom Driscoll understands now is also the deplorable effects slavery has on the white masters too. Bringing the slave and the slave owner into a relation similar to that existing between victim and victimizer, the system englufs in its corrupting power not only the former, but the latter as well. To the question he asks: "Whence came that in him which was high, and whence that which was base?," the answer he gives is quite explicit in this respect: "That which was high came from either blood, and was the monopoly of neither color; but that which was base was the *white* blood in him debased

by the brutalizing effects of a long-drawn heredity of slave-owning, with the habit of abuse which the possession of irresponsible power always creates and perpetuates, by a law of human nature." [xix]

It is obvious from the examples above that at one stage in the genesis of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* Tom's appreciation of his own situation tended to supply the centre of interest. The Jamesian terms are no doubt incongruous with a Twain character; they are, however, hardly out of place in speaking about Tom Driscoll who was fated only to a manuscript existence. Had Twain followed the lead of his original insight, he would have produced "a powerful psychological study of a type that he had never dealt with before." [xx] More important from the point of view of the present discussion is the way the virtual Tom relates himself to both his white and black ancestors. Rhoda's impulse to see the blacks in terms of appealing qualities is alien to him. In his eyes the "nigger" is too debased a creature to arouse any sympathy. What he feels instead is hatred for the white man who–as shown earlier – by perpetuating the system of slavery degraded not only the Negro but himself as well. It is a view on slavery that the author-narrator utters in his own voice: "Slavery was to blame," he comments at one point, "not innate nature. It placed the slave below the brute, without the white man's realizing it." Brought by Roxy's disclosure into a more intimate relationship with her–her identity as his mother is no longer kept back from him–, Tom is by no means induced to see her in a more favourable light. His attitude is the reverse of Rhoda Aldgate who became determined, we recall, to train herself into accepting her mother's folk. Yet the "poor lowly and ignorant creature" is found worthy of his respect on the only ground that "she has never owned a slave." The remark reveals its full force when placed in its context, for the next sentence reads: "All the white respectability of this town is shabby and mean beside that one virtue ...." [xxi]

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The thoughts occupying Tom's mind and the more impersonal exposure of slavery as the root of all evil have, for the most part, disappeared from the published version. Hence the change in the character of Tom that tempts McKeithan to conclude: "Tom in the manuscript and Tom in the book are not exactly the same man." [xxii]

By suppressing Tom's inner monologue and with it his impulse to question and even to challenge the *status quo*, Twain once more makes his character dependent on comic and ironic devices. The emphasis falling on appearances and surfaces–the reverse is true all the same–Tom fits the world of Dawson's Landing where discordant voices and incongruities meet at every step, seldom giving the observer the chance to reach beyond them, while reversals in public esteem are not lacking in frequency either. In "the carnivalesque drama of twinship and masquerade" as Eric J. Sundquist calls *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, the white black boy is hardly out of place, as would have been probably less the case with a more enlightened Tom.[xxiii]

Yet, as it is, Tom's reaction is not devoid of interest. His thinking triggered by Roxy's disclosure takes a new, even more interesting line. It becomes self-oriented, and in this act of self-reflexiveness he experiences his self as a double, one white, the other black.[xxiv] What is especially interesting about it and lends point to his thoughts is that the black whom he used to despise and abuse is now part of his self too, or rather–as the fictions of law and custom have it–his whole self:

> For days he wandered in lonely places, thinking, thinking, thinking–trying to get his bearings. It was new work. If he met a friend, he found that the habit of a lifetime had in some mysterious way vanished–his arm hung lump, instead of involuntarily extending the hand for a shake. It was the "nigger" in him asserting its humility, and he blushed and was abashed. And the "nigger" in him involuntarily giving the road, on the sidewalk, to the white rowdy and loafer. When Rowena, the dearest thing his heart knew, the idol of his secret worship, invited him in, the "nigger" in him made an embarrassed excuse and was afraid to enter and sit with the dread white folks on equal terms. The "nigger" in him went shrinking and skulking here and there and yonder, and fancying it was suspicion and maybe detection in all faces, tones, and gestures. (...) He presently came to have a hunted sense and a hunted look, and then he fled away to the hilltops and the solitudes (54).

However, his "former self," to use Rhoda Aldgate's words in a similar plight, after feeling threatened and insecure for a while, recovers the lost ground, as it were. Once more he is "Master Tom" in full control of the situation, at least apparently. It seems that the restoration of his white self

was not so much the result of his turning against his double and suppressing it, as of an agreement between the two. It is significant in this connection that whenever he acts as a robber and thief, Tom invariably has recourse to disguises fabricating a series of temporary identies that go beyond his racial selves. Judging by appearances, it is neither Tom, nor Chambers who breaks the law, though in another sense "both" of them are. It is another way of saying that the question about which blood, white or black, bears responsibiliy for such acts, is pointless.

In a world where "surface" counts enormously–even if it is short-lived–clothes can assume great power, and indeed in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* they are an obvious means by which the *other* is manipulated. Misleading is a form of manipulation and this is precisely what Tom does when disguising himself for his raids as a girl or as an old woman. (Wilson's reaction in the beginning confirms Tom's expectations.) It needs to be observed all the same that though in a sense clothes are used to establish an identity, provisional in Tom's case or permanent as when Roxy switches the babies by dressing them in each other's gown, in another, their message is continuously subverted. Thus the stylish suit Tom is wearing at one time is thoroughly devalued when imitated by the old deformed negro bell-ringer. On the other hand, clothes are of little use to Chambers when he is restored to his "real" identity. Having been long excluded from white company and having grown up like a negro, the false Valet de Chambre is fated by speech and training to belong to no other space than the kitchen. Indeed he found himself

> in a most embarrassing situation. He could neither read nor write, and his speech was the basest dialect of the negro quarter. His gait, his attitudes, his gestures, his bearing, his laugh--all were vulgar and uncouth; his manners were the manners of a slave. Money and fine clothes could not mend these defects or cover them up; they only made them the more glaring and the more pathetic (143).

But even the switch of the babies dependent as it was on Roxy's dressing them in each other's gowns reflects back on clothes in ways that question their power. A point not to miss is that they are contemplated from the perspective of death. It is not that they are despised as too worldly. Roxy's toughts are absorbed in them as she wants to rise up to the occasion,

her own death, that is, which she strongly desires at the moment as something to be preferred to being sold down the river. No longer inspiring awe, death assumes a familiar look, not unlike in the Carnival. A tendency to tame down the terror of death was also peculiar to the frontier spirit and the literary forms it has generated. As the beginnings of his career testify, Twain had long been contaminated by it. Roxy brings further proof of that: she gets ready for death by putting on her new Sunday gown, "a conflagration of gaudy colors and fantastic figures," which she has not had yet the chance of wearing and by dressing her hair "like white folks" she tries "to make her death-toilet perfect." She applies the same treatment to her baby, and it is only when noticing that "Dat chile is dress' too indelicate fo' dis place," that she proceeds to strip him off his shirt and clothe him "in one of Thomas à Becket's snowy long baby gowns, with its bright blue bows and dainty flummery of ruffles" (14). Then the idea strikes her that after all death is not inescapable, and what she has to do is to put her baby's outfit on the child. However, it needs to be observed that if in a sense the clothes manipulated by Roxy are powerful enough to change one's identity, in another they are shown to be emptied of any significance. Despite Roxy's view of the matter, deriving, to be sure, from another fiction of custom, they can retain none of their power in the presence of death.

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Roxy's manipulation of babies and gowns did not save her son from the future she dreaded most: that he should be sold down the river. What has the last say in his punishment or rather in the change of his sentence from imprisonment for life to "pardoned" was of course his blackness now made visible. "Everybody granted that if "Tom" were white and free it would be unquestionably right to punish him–it would be no loss to anybody; but to shut up a valuable slave for life–that was quite another matter" (143). The creditors of Driscoll estate were especially articulate on the matter as they considered Tom to have been long their property of whose profits they were unjustly deprived.

But even the public exposure at Wilson's hands, now the mayor of the town, brings blackness to bear on the charges of robbery and murder on which Tom is accused. Unmasked as negro and slave, the murderer somehow assumes a collective identity. The group label that is now attached to him gets priority over the individual act, despite Wilson's cherished procedure that in fact depended on universal difference. (On the basis of the "natal autograph" (136) the amateur detective of Dawson's Landing argues that no two individual are completely alike, not even when they happen to be twins.) Wilson's irrefutable proof was based on the use of fingerprinting, a fictional premiere indeed, if mention is made that although interest in fingerprinting had been many centuries old, it was only in 1896 that it began to be programmatically studied as a means of criminal identification. Twain's knowledge of fingerprinting that he transferred on to Wilson came from *Finger Prints*, a book Francis Galton published in 1892, at the very time the writer was engrossed in writing his tale of the two babies. He hoped that the novelty of the material would lend interest to his novel. [xxv]

It needs to be stressed, however, that once it has resulted in unmasking Tom as Chambers, Wilson's method is itself subverted by the omnipotent fiction of law and custom.

10

THE RENEWED SELF OF THERON WARE

A 1896 best seller. Where to now? The decade–and, with it, the century–having run its course, this seems a reasonable question to ask. The fictions that have been brought into focus have all signalled that the issue at stake has much to do with their protagonists's sense, incipient or developed, that their identity is (could be) subject to certain mutations, willed or, as is more frequently the case, imposed. They all reach a point when they have to take stock of themselves as part of an imbroglio for which they have little or varying shares of responsibility. What distinguishes the response of Rhoda Aldgate, Tom Driscoll, Edna Pontellier, and Maggie Johnson, when confronted with the inescapable facts, is the high degree to which their relation to their own selves is affected. (Maisie's reaction is not lacking in relevance either, but it is more difficult to separate it from her relationships to the grown-ups.) The very foundations of selfhood are now questioned in ways that lead to self-suppression--suicide is one form, degradation is another–, or to changes of identity, be they well enveloped in mystery. Otherwise stated, self-collapse is writ large in the fiction of the closing decade.

Thereon, the question: now, where to? is quite justified. We can be sure of one answer given by the 1890s: " to the twentieth century." At the time few were likely to take issue with it, although in hindsight we might be less sure as to when the threshold of the new century was actually passed: 1900? 1912? 1914?–literary historians seem quite reluctant to reach a consensus. But the question that, no doubt, was on many minds as the decade waxed and waned must have received many other answers, some of them the result of sharp observation and deep thinking. One of them to be

found in a novel, *The Damnation of Theron Ware*, will be brought into focus in the pages to follow. As it too starts by asking the question raised at the beginning of this chapter, and, moreover, does it in its very title– don't we read Ware precisely like where?– it simply cannot be slighted so easily. It is true, there are some other reasons for selecting it, such as the strong sense of community life it conveys that lends the protagonist's associations with its various sections a larger significance in terms of the various forces–religious, moral, economic–at work in late nineteenth-century American society.

To a greater extent than any other fiction discussed here, or, for that matter, written in America at the time, Harold Frederic's novel has its center of interest divided between the individual self and the world of which the individual is a part. The entanglement in which the former finds himself is as much *self* revealing as it is relevant for the bonds making *his world* hang together.

The close interaction between protagonist and environment resulting in bringing to the fore a section of American rural life in its shapes and colours helps explain the success the novel enjoyed when it came out. (It was "one of the ten best-selling books of the year.") Probably because of the hostility shown to it in certain quarters and the untimely death of its author, *The Damnation of Theron Ware*, a best seller in 1896, had to wait for almost two decades before it was printed again. Several editions published in the 1960s stand proof of a renewed interest in it, as do a number of introductions and commentaries, including some more recent ones, which find a common note in a tone mingling praise and regret: praise, because Frederic's masterpiece is demonstrably fully entitled to it; regret, because the novel "is now virtually forgotten." The remark in quotations belongs to Joyce Carol Oates who, not very long ago, deplored the neglect which apparently continues to be its lot, contradicting Larzer Ziff's 1966 pronouncement that "the novel is again prominent and seemed assured of its deserved place as a minor American masterpiece."[ii] Certainly, Oates wishes the novel were widely read, as she makes no secret of her admiration. "What a wonderful novel is "The Damnation of Theron Ware"!" reads the first sentence of her essay published in a 1995 issue of *The New York Book Review*.[iii]

It is relevant in view of what has been said about Frederic's approach to self that if critics responded to it, that was due precisely to the humanized space in which the individual exists in his novel, a space that is so well particularized in terms of beliefs, patterns of behaviour, ideas, and social practice as to deserve the name of a *world*. Larzer Ziff's appreciation of Frederic should be retained:

> Possessed of an imaginative knowledge of his home county, in which character was inseparable from ethnic, religious, historical, political, and social conditions, he was able to follow Howells's lead in producing a fiction of the commonplace, yet to surpass the dean in rendering a sense of communal density. Not until Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County did American literature have a region so fully and intimately explored as Frederic's fictionalization of his native area–the land around the invented cities of Tyre, Tecumesh, and Thessaly. [iv]

That Harold Frederic invites comparison with Faulkner on account of the world to which he gave fictional life is in itself an acknowledgement of merit, just as it is to compare him with Thomas Hardy whose novels he had near at hand. But what about "his home county," the counterpart of the American South or English Wessex? Upstate New York was, like many other areas of the country, rich in ethnic colour and hardly spared religious rivalries. Taken over from the Dutch and increasingly populated by the English, it perpetuated certain resentments, especially against the earlier settlers. Frederic was drawn both to its more remote past–the settlement of the region in the seventeenth century–and to its late nineteenth-century present when politics that had baffled Rip Van Winkle a hundred years before was constantly giving people food to talk and reshuffling their positions in their small towns and villages. As "everywhere in Frederic man is a communal animal not to be understood except in terms of the community," [v] the changes affecting the life of the area as a whole–many of them had been triggered by the Civil War and the industrial expansion of the country–are in the picture, if not thrown into bold relief.

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Saving the soul vs. furnishing the mind. The obscure Octavius, the new appointment of Theron Ware, the young Methodist

minister, is, too, a meeting place of various cultures. If the Dutch element is less conspicuous in it, the Irish is more prominent instead, and this, from the start, defines the space in terms of a major religious difference: that between Protestantism and Catholicism, to which certain trends, recognizably as in vogue in late nineteenth-century, or in the "yellow" decade, such as social Darwinism or aestheticism, should be added. Very much "a communal animal" in a sense--though, as shown later, the version exemplified by him points to a significant alteration which the term communal undergoes now--, Theron Ware is subject to a change that, slow in the beginning and speeding up with each of the six months he spends in Octavius, brings him to the moment when he sees himself as a different self altogether. Apparently his evolution--or degeneration as the process is viewed by other characters in the novel--is a matter of thinking and intellectual debate not unrelated to his increasingly desired exposure to one more variety of religious experience.

His attraction to Catholic rituals and a way of living which to his mind bore the impress of Catholic faith is proportional to his disposition to call into question the role his own religion was having in encouraging a response to life he perceives now to be inadequate in several respects. As Methodism is counterpoised by Catholicism, Octavius becomes the *locus* of differences not only at the level of dogmas and religious practice, but also at the level of human relationships and consequently of the self. They can be summed up in the questions asked by Protestants and by Catholics respectively: "Is your soul saved?" and "Is your mind furnished?" [vi]

Although living in late nineteenth century (probably in the 1870s or in the 1880s) the members of Theron Ware's congregation take their primitive Methodism seriously" (177) and, unlike many others of their creed, they do so within their own church. A fact of the religious history of American Methodism informing the novel too needs to be mentioned at this point. About mid-nineteenth century a revival occurred within Methodist Episcopal Church that in many rural places led to the break with the Church of many believers who proclaimed themselves "Free Methodists."

> The seceders resented growth in material prosperity; they repudiated the introduction of written sermons and organ music; they deplored the

increasing laxity in meddlesome piety, the introduction of polite manners in the pulpit and class-room, and the development of even a rudimentary desire among the younger people of the church to be like others outside in dress and speech and deportment (111).

Methodism in Octavius had been spared the schism, but not without a price:

> The people whom an open split would have taken away remained to leaven and dominate the whole lump. This small advanced section, with its men of a type all the more aggressive from narrowness, and women who went about solemnly in plain gray garments, with tight-fitting, unadorned, mouse-colored sunbonnets, had not been able wholly to enforce its views upon the social life of the church members, but of its controlling influence upon their official and public actions there could be no doubt (111-12).

Including both conservative and radical members, the church in Octavius offers the new minister (and the reader) the chance to take stock of how heavily profit counts in the eyes of the most prosperous–it was not by accident that of the three trustees holding mortgages on the church property, two who were prominent practising Methodists claimed the highest rate of interest–and of the pressure put by the "small advanced section" that plainness should be the rule in all matters, and religious emotion or rather ecstasy should find its way back to their souls. The "discipline" to which they stick requires of Alice, Theron's wife, to take the flowers out of her bonnet, to no longer order milk on Sunday, and of him to drop the word *epitome* from his future sermons. As to emotional involvement, though probably genuine, it takes on, through its complete lack of restraint, some forms verging on the hallucinatory.

It is not, however, the "maudlin and unseemly scene" (158) that the minister finds the most unwelcome; the handling of emotion in cold blood with some purpose other than religious experience appears to him, in the beginning, to be downright repellent. Having become quite a profession, debt-raising has developed and perfected its own strategies that make use of the emotional potential of the congregation. What will be disclosed in time to the minister is that the money raised, enough of it to pay the church's debts, was the result of an artful scheme in which one of the trustees had

his part to play. The devoted Methodist fought in a duel of generosity, professionally staged, only to take his money back on the pretext that he acted under a false impression with respect to his business, leaving the other combatant to feel sorrow for being carried away by his inflamed heart, and, even more perhaps, for losing his money.

Although more and more irresistibly drawn to take note of what was wrong with his own people, Theron Ware is not unlike them in some important respects. "Innocent candor," "guileless mind," "good heart," "pious zeal" (19) are all his, as is, for that matter, ignorance, of which he gives such jolly proofs. There is in him, however, a certain Emersonian disposition that prompts him exclamations about nature's charm which does not disagree with an impulse to idealize progress–intellectual and social–and to see himself on the ascending line. His mind appears to him like an octopus, whose arms were "reaching out on all sides (...) exploring unsuspected mines of thought, bringing in rich treasures of deduction, assimilating, building, propounding as if by some force quite independent of him" (21). The irony of this early self-estimation is no doubt enhanced by the subsequent stages of his evolution.

A new direction of feeling and thinking has been opened up for Theron by his accidental initiation into the Catholic ritual of death. His response, aesthetic at first–the sound of Latin almost casts a spell on him–, promises to widen, as his recent experience submits his "truths" to re-vision. One of them concerns the practitioners of the Catholic faith, the Irish. Being firmly confined within a pale of common characteristics not any less rigid for being not quite flattering, their ethnic identity appeared to have been too well defined at the time. Some evidence to this effect comes, we recall, from Howells's novel discussed a few chapters back, and there is no doubt that many other texts stand proof of the same ethnical label, as well as of the role they themselves played in the period in disseminating and reinforcing the same opinion about this category of immigrants. Up to that moment the Irish had been "only a name" (49) to him, and Theron could not read it otherwise than his culture had taught him:

> His views on this general subject were merely those common to his communion and his environment. He took it for granted for example,

that in the large cities most of the poverty and all the drunkenness, crime, and political corruption were due to the perverse qualities of this foreign people,–qualities accentuated and emphasised in every evil direction by the baleful influence of a false and idolatrous religion (49).

It is one more irony that the "false and idolatrous religion" comes to interest the Methodist minister a good deal, his mind being brought to accommodate–despite his initial recoil–a series of reflections of the nature of comparative religion. The approach to sin is a case in point. As Catholics and Methodists hardly meet on common ground in this respect, their religious practice differs too, it being characterized, as far as the sinner is concerned, by tolerance and intolerance respectively. Whereas with the former, there is little discrimination, if at all, between the morally wretched and the irreproachable ones, the church being impartially hospitable to both, with the Methodists, on the contrary, a barrier is raised , as a rule, between the congregation distinguished by moral rectitude and eagerness to obey the commandments of the sermon, and whoever else feels that is unworthy to step in, or is considered to be so. As a more detached observer in the novel remarks, it is "the excellent character of the parishioners which imparts virtue" (76) to the Methodist church, whereas with the Catholics, the converse is true: it is their church that supply them with virtue whenever they feel they are in need of it.

Viewed in the twofold perspective, the believer's relation to the Church cannot fail to further highlight the contrast between the Protestant, who assumes that he is in charge of his soul and keeps it under severe scrutiny seldom being spared the painful consequences of his self-exploration, and the Catholic for whom the Rite of Confession is an easily accessible spiritual comfort. One might expect Theron Ware and Father Forbes to make up a contrasting pair; what they in effect do, but only in a sense deriving from the kind of religious practice over which either of them presides. To the preaching of the Methodist minister, an artful and eloquent speaker–his sermons gain in force as his religious faith loses ground–, the Catholic priest opposes a manifold activity such as is required by his parishioners. "What *is* wanted of him," Theron is informed, "is that he should be the paternal, ceremonial, authoritative head and centre of his folk, adviser, monitor, overseer, elder brother, friend, patron, seigneur, –

whatever you like,–everything except a bore" (75). On the other hand, if he no longer sees any point in preaching, the explanation lies with the linguistic difficulty posed by the service to the listeners, and in a larger measure perhaps, with his penchant for heterodox views.

This latter reason needs to be enlarged a bit. It is evident that it is his too well furnished mind that has led Father Forbes somewhat astray from the dogma. His impressive erudition, to which Theron's knowledge limited as it is to the basic texts can only compare unfavourably, has brought home to him historical evidence to the effect that legends and traditions belonging to people widely separated in space and time (such as the Chaldeans and the Celts of Britain or Ireland) meet on a common ground which in turn tends to recede into a still remoter past. To assimilate them to myth may have been an impulse accompanying anthropological research in fashion not only in Germany but also in England–James Frazer published the first volume of his *Golden Bough* in 1890–and it is probable that the captivating examples supplied by Father Forbes had their source in some contemporary material. (The interest Harold Frederic took in the Celts made him, no doubt, keep an eye on the novelties in the field.)

However, Father Forbes goes much farther than that, as he tends to assimilate religion too to myth. He makes no exception for Catholicism either; on the contrary, Catholic Rites are traced back to earlier rituals, such as those belonging to the Persians, and, before them, to the Turanians. Moreover, he views "this Christ-myth of ours" (73) as the latest of a series whose beginning reaches back to the "divine intermediary" (73) of the ancient Chaldeans. Believing in an original myth that has never ceased to take on new forms resulting in as many religions, Father Forbes cannot be an adept of significant change, much less of progress.

His argument that "there is nothing new" (72) invites reflection, all the more so, as it is borne out by an idea of deep cultural resonance, notwithstanding the mixture of the scientific and the religious jargons in which it is expressed: "Just as the material earth is made up of countless billions of dead men's bones, so the mental world is all alive with the ghosts of dead men's thoughts and beliefs; the wraiths of dead races' faiths and imaginings" (72). "Thoughts and beliefs," "faiths and imaginings" cover a good deal of what man has projected on the world by way of

explaining his relation to it. To give them their due is to have a conception of the human being that connects it at a very deep level with an ambience already filled or saturated with what has been thought, believed, put faith in, or imagined; in a word, with what we have come to call culture. The connection casts serious doubt on the Adamic stance, so passionately advocated at an earlier stage of American history, on the assumption that a fresh eye was possible, and the world could be seen in its pristine colours. It was in this sense too, that America was envisaged to be a "New World," a vision that for Father Forbes could be at best a revision, the people who settled the North American Continent, no matter how "new," still inhabiting a "mental world (...) alive with the ghosts of dead men's thoughts and beliefs; the wraiths of dead races' faiths and imaginings."

As for the future, Father Forbes's predictions are the first to force themselves upon our attention; and this, not because they have been borne out in any way by the twentieth-century religious history of the American people. On the contrary, few anticipations could have been so groundless and illusory as the view of an America dominated by the Irish Catholics. No wonder that it is unique in the American annals. Again, Father Forbes's arguments are cultural rather than religious, though certain elements in the Catholic dogma and, closely connected with it, the high authority of the Church cannot fail to count in his considerations. The aesthetic element continues to be invested with power, but it is now better integrated into a type of civilization that puts a premium on conformity and makes it possible for good manners to be observed. Religious doubts are simply discouraged by "the convenances." To read this more civilized future in the new drinking preference–beer over whisky–might seem a nice joke–Father Forbes is in real earnest though–, but drinking habits have their part to play in a culture, and there is no doubt that a change in them is not without consequences for a civilization as a whole. The observation may strike us as amusing, but this is not to say that the issue behind it cannot be serious, culturally speaking.

The perspective on Catholicism associated with Celia Madden should be brought in focus too: as already mentioned, it does much to explain Theron Ware's attraction to this religion, apart from being in itself of interest for its cultural relevance. John Henry Raleigh notes that "Historically, she

(Celia) represents a phenomenon that occurred in the late nineteenth century when, as a reaction against utilitarianism, rationalism, relativism, Catholicism *cum* art emerged with a vengeance."[vii] It is obvious that for her religion is not a matter of dogma; neither is it of faith in any sense; it is rather a matter of what it offers in the way of aesthetic gratification, in other words, of its hospitality to the arts. She takes no pains to confess that: "I am only a Catholic in the sense that its symbolism is pleasant to me" (260).

As if she were an adept of Matthew Arnold's mid-nineteenth century cultural programme calling for the encouragement of "sweetness and light" to balance the hold of morality ("the tradition of Hebraism"), very strong with the Protestants, Celia would have her own church too get out and out Hellenised. The cult of beauty of which she is a devout practitioner assumes for her forms of worship that are hardly confined to the church. The style of living as a whole is bound to thoroughly change by restoring to their proper place "art and poetry and the love of beauty, and the gentle, spiritual, soulful life" (260) that had been characteristic of the Greeks. Her own room, though not lacking in Catholic symbolism, reminds one in its nude statuary, columns, and capitals, of a Greek temple, a most adequate ambience for a priestess of beauty, a role she unequivocally assumes when, dressed in Greek robes, she plays Chopin. It has not passed unnoticed that Celia's devotion to beauty echoes Walter Pater's aesthetic hedonism just as her taste, the chromatic one in particular, discloses more immediate influences coming from England, such as the vogue, itself traceable to Pater, established by the *Yellow Book* the very decade Harold Frederic was writing his novel. If, "despite the fact that Celia is Irish and American, she bears the stamp of late nineteenth-century English culture,"[viii] the light she in turn sheds on how American culture stands in relation to the movements in fashion in England lends her relevancy of a kind that cannot be ignored.

It is obvious that the same influences are at the root of her feminism. One should note though that her views on the matter are so bold and determinate, and her way of living so consonant with them, as to recommend her a "new woman" much on her own terms. Three years later her language, or what might be more appropriately called, her feminist discourse, will

be echoed by Edna Pontellier; indeed, what she tells Theron is voiced by the Chopin character almost in the same words: "You don't understand, my friend, that I have a different view. I am myself, and I belong to myself, exactly as much as any man" (257). The analogy between Celia Madden and Edna Pontellier becomes even more evident when their views on marriage and love are taken into account. Neither of them sees a close, much less causal, relation between the two: Celia is determined not to marry, a resolution that in her eyes scarcely stands in the way to love; Edna for her part finds love outside the pale of marriage, a revelation that goes hand in hand with her resentment for a role her culture has imposed on her. Their iconoclasm in domestic matters may be safely related to the interest they both take in the arts, and so may be considered as an example of how art–avant-garde art in Celia's case–can subvert a prevailing code and usher in a new one. Both women are highly artistic, and without being dedicated artists not only give expression to their artistic inclinations, to music and to painting respectively, but invest these with serious importance for their lives, regarding them to be much more than a mere accomplishment reserved for their sex when of a certain social condition, as Veblen was tempted to argue.

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The Maddened Minister. What is striking in Theron's case is that his attraction to Catholicism can hardly be confined to aesthetic and intellectual emotion only: it is a sexual gratification as well, the two components, spiritual and instinctual, being bound up with each other, or rather, the latter manifesting itself through the former. As a matter of fact, Theron's growing attraction to Catholicism can hardly be kept apart from what shortly becomes his obsession with Celia Madden, a very fine example of how private and intimate life pushes its way into the everyday texture woven round inherited symbols, and shapes itself by assimilating them too.

There is, of course, a good deal of irony in the fact that while Theron believes that Catholicism appeals to him intellectually and aesthetically, what he actually feels is passion for Celia Madden. He may well tell himself in the beginning that his curiosity is purely

intellectual; this can scarcely conceal the erotic impulse that has such devastating power on him as to bring him to the verge of ruin. In the final stage of his relationship with "that Madden girl," his condition is that of one gone insane, of a *maddened* man.

That Celia's hold on the minister is primarily sexual, is synecdochically suggested from the very outset: "the bold, luxuriant quality of her beauty," reminiscent of Hester Prynne, is sexually aggressive, just as the "remarkably brilliant shade of (her) red hair" (42) signals some devouring capacity, not unlike that of a spider. The symbolism of hair reinforces the image of destructive femininity as, apart from its associations with water, it stands for binding ties of all sorts, and so brings together in one series of images "the spider," "the octopus," and "the fatal woman."[18] Since another signification of the spider, that of "the exemplary weaver"[19] can be associated with Celia, the spell she casts on Theron reaps benefit from both her art and sex appeal; or, rather, the latter is considerably enhanced by the seductive force of her music and "Yellow Book" interior. For the Methodist minister she seems to impersonate the power of sex at the root of many myths studied by anthropologists at the period and brought home to Anglo-American readers. It is to such a context that one should refer, I think, Celia's remark about the link between religion and sex, as well as her rejection of the Early Fathers on account of their mortification of the flesh.

At least three stages can be marked off in Theron's relationship with Celia, corresponding to as many phases of his evolution/involution towards his new self. There is first his prolonged attempt at dissimulation when he acts under the impulse of his desire, but scarcely appears to be aware of it; instead he refers to reasons having to do with the enlightenment of his mind in matters of Biblical scholarship with the view of putting into effect his projected book on Abraham, and, generally, with the more elevated state induced in him by his encounter with, on the one hand, Catholicism, and, on the other, with post-Darwinism. (The mouthpiece of the latter is, obviously, Dr. Ledsmar.) Whereas Celia seems to claim his attention only obliquely, the converse is true of his other pursuits: a good chance not only to bring out his ignorance, but also to have it forced upon himself. Theron Ware, the minister who has planned to write a book on Abraham, keeping

an eye on profit and in this making no exception from his other fellow Methodists, reveals himself to be a little American Casaubon: like his far better known English predecessor who was engaged in writing his *Key to all Mythologies* in ignorance of German scholarship, he has as little idea of what has been achieved in the field, and even less of the German contributions to it, which, as it turned out, were too significant not to take into consideration. Theron's reading, however, will take him away from Abraham, and this not only because he realises the inadequacy of his bibliographical training, but also because on meeting Celia his curiosity swerves towards the forbidden ground.

The state of elation that follows is worthy of note: he feels joy for having discovered "a world of culture and grace, of lofty thoughts and the inspiring communion of real knowledge, where creeds were not of importance (...)" (135). What he considers to be "the turning-point in his career" (134) appears to him to be determined by intellectual influences of the highest order, his reading of Renan being among them: "they had lifted him bodily out of the slough of ignorance, of contact with low minds and sordid, narrow things, and put him on solid ground" (134).

There is no doubt that such thoughts supply some of the bright colours under which the world presents itself to his eyes, but this should not obscure his other emotions that only a different kind of attachment could stir up. Most relevant in this respect is his treatment of his wife, the evidence of his drifting apart from her accumulating with every domestic meeting: from the first symptoms when he surprises her with his indifference to her narratives or when he has recourse to the classic headache as pretext for being spared her company to the moments when he can barely suppress the discomfort he feels in her presence. Despite her efforts that, far from restoring their older harmony, can only make the situation worse, their relationship progresses through all the characteristic stages of estrangement. In attempting to find some justification for his attitude towards his wife other than his infatuation with another woman, his thoughts reflect ironically on the domestic dialogues he is not always successful to evade; and on themselves too: for all their apparent concern with the role of women in general in securing the spiritual welfare of the men of genius, it is not difficult to see that the same blind passion is behind them.

However, fooling oneself cannot go on indefinitely, and even the minister has to admit to himself after a time that although he had told himself that his steps would take him to Father Forbes, in fact "he had come there in the hope of encountering Celia Madden" (p.189). In the new stage that begins in his relationship with the red-haired girl, he will make a fool of himself in the eyes of all the others including the girl. His obsession with her renders him now incapable of any of his former intellectual pretences, and no sharp insight is needed to realize what his case is. Dr. Ledsmar diagnoses it in a way that, while doing dubious justice to evolutionary post-Darwinian theories in vogue at the end of the last century, gives sex its due, the aura of sin, it is true, still glittering round it. The passage deserves to quote in full:

> At last he (Dr.Ledsmar) plunged his hand into the opaque fluid and drew forth a long, slim, yellow-green lizard, with a coiling, sinuous tail and a pointed, evil head. The reptile squirmed and doubled itself backward around his wrist, darting out and in with dizzy swiftness its tiny forked tongue. The doctor held the thing up to the light, and scrutinizing it through his spectacles, nodded his head in sedate approval. A grim smile curled in his beard. "Yes, you are the type," he murmured to it, with evident enjoyment in his conceit. "Your name isn't Johnny any more. It's the Rev. Theron Ware (230).

If the symbolism in it appears to be overdone, one should recall that masterpieces of American literature are open to the same reproach. Theron's identification with the yellow green lizard insists on his regression to the earliest inhabitants of the planet–a lizard being also the name under which a dinosaur is known–, and while somehow endorsing a common origin of man and the creatures below him, it also seriously calls in question the idea that the line claimed by the former as representing his history is really and unreservedly ascending. On the other hand, its "coiling, sinuous tail," as well as its other movements, are more likely to be suggestive of a snake, the image *par excellence* of the sexual libido, the "darting in and out" of the "tiny forked tongue" adding an extra emphasis to reading it this way. It is only with irony that one of Theron's former thoughts reverberates now: "they had lifted him bodily out of the slough of ignorance."

Once Theron has ceased to pretend as to the motives behind his interest in his new circle of friends, his bodily slough imprisons him even more firmly. Clumsy and shy as his advances to Celia are, they testify to his desire for her bodily presence, his efforts to get closer to her and touch her being his *raison d'etre* for the moment. Everything else pales out by comparison, as all his abortive attempts to declare his love are as many unmistakable denials not only of his Methodism, but of Christian faith as well. "I want to be a Greek myself, if you're one. I want to get as close to you–to your ideal, that is, as I can (...) I am going to put the things out of *my* life that are not worth while" (206). He is still having recourse to the older pretexts, but shortly he will leave them behind altogether and follow down his decline as, devastated by jealousy and desire, he chases the girl on an itinerary that is more of a labyrinth.

From self-delusion to erotic obsession no longer concealed, and from it to humiliation and self-abasement: these are the feelings colouring in succession the route covered by Theron Ware. To have reached the lowest point of this descending line is for the minister to be brought face to face with his disintegration–his indulgence in drinking is its most visible although most shallow aspect–and, moreover, to wish it were complete. He may be a figure of comedy in many respects--characters who make fools of themselves usually are–, but the pain he so acutely suffers on finally realizing where he is in relation to Celia and the others renders him pathetic in ways that seem to point to the human condition as a whole that bespeaks a deeply felt human need. It is a craving for love, as well as for sympathy, more generally for a form of response on the part of the *other*. What runs counter to it is indifference, something very hard to accept, as Theron's experience not only with Celia, but also with the little girl on the train proves.

The episode can hardly pass unnoticed. The car is a space not unlike the tenement house in Crane's novel, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. The travellers' bodies lying in various postures and the smells emanating from them have the effect of distorting and degrading the human, of lending it a lurid tinge: "the dim light disclosed recumbent forms, curled uncomfortably into corners, or sprawling at difficult angles which involved the least interference with one another. Here and there an upturned face gave a livid

patch of surface for the mingled play of the gray dawn and the yellow lamplight" (307). To be in the car is to head for a frightening destination, a place Theron Ware was shortly to reach when showing up in Celia's hotel room he is no longer left in the dark as to where exactly he is in relation to Celia and the others. To all of them he is no more than "a bore" (326).

Awakening from mystification breeds rage and thoughts of murder to be followed by a loneliness so complete as to widen the gulf between himself and Celia to the point at which the scale assumes cosmic dimensions. Facing him are now "planetary solitudes" that simply "crushed him." (The Pascalian overtones of the passage have not been ignored by Frederic's critics.) Abruptly dislocating love–even as illusion–indifference as response to human desire, now on the point of engulfing him, is something beyond his power to oppose. To take the full measure of its effects on Theron, it is essential not to overlook that Celia's brutal denial of any emotional involvement on her part has a prologue in the attitude of the child in the car. Impressed with the self-possession of the little girl, "her capacity for self-entertainment, the care she took not to arouse the others," he offered a coin to her hoping in this way at least to stir her curiosity. She took the coin calmly, but gave no sign that he interested her in the least: "her indifference produced an unpleasant sensation upon him somehow, and he rubbed the steaming window clear again, and stared out of it" (309).

Unpleasant sensation becomes pain so acutely felt as to render him incapable of maintaining a sense of direction, literally and figuratively. He collapses in the end not because he had too much rum, a different kind of drug to stupefy his faculties, which proves totally inefficient though. As diagnosed by Sister Soulsby, whose insight into human nature seldom fails, "he's grief crazy" (343).

However much as Theron wishes for his death, he will not end like Maggie Johnson and Edna Pontellier. He will find a way back to life, undergo, that is, a relatively long and painful process in the course of which concomitantly with the disintegration of his old self, a new self will gradually emerge to answer to a new prospect then opening to him. It needs to be stressed that if Theron Ware is about to make a fresh start, that

is possible because of a challenge coming from outside his old self. The effort required of him is to accept it and to take a new line of action by way of answering it; which is to say that the chance he takes to build himself anew lies in relating himself to a new situation, to new social relationships, and new tendencies and values. The new identity he is on the point of evincing is largely a matter of his acting as superintendent of "a land and real estate company" (347) in the West. To make it possible for it to emerge, a break with his old self is necessary: Theron Ware who is leaving for Seattle is not the same man that arrived in Octavius a year before.

It is difficult to say whether the values of which Theron's old self was the spokesman have been entirely suppressed. They may still have meaning for him, but the new object promising to engage his interest and energy is likely to get precedence over them. Besides, informing Theron's process of "renewal" is also the awareness that words in themselves are powerful and he who possesses eloquence is entitled to a privileged position. Apparently in keeping with a more general practice of his time and place, the former Methodist minister comes close to understanding power as skill in using words. By possessing it he can substitute speeches for sermons. Having left the ministry he is now free to become a politician. His last words before leaving for the West leaves no doubt about his intention: "What Soulsby said about politics out there interested me enormously. I shouldn't be surprised if I found myself doing something in that line. I can speak, you know, if I can't do anything else. Talk is what it tells, these days. Who knows? I may turn up in Washington a full blown senator before I'm forty. Stranger things have happened than that, out West!" (349). It is of interest to note that he is already playing in imagination the role he envisages. Just as he used to cast a spell over his parishioners, so now he imagines a similar response from some audience he addresses in his new capacity. Noticing "the attentive faces all rapt, eager, credulous to a degree," "their eyes" "admiringly bent upon a common object of excited interest" ("him"), "their ears strained to miss no cadence of his voice" and finally heaving "a mighty roar of applause in volume like an ocean tempest" (348), his desire for power seems to be fully gratified.

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The pragmatism of Sister Soulsby. If one is tempted to consider Theron's capacity to renew himself worthy of attention, this is also because a conception of self postulating mobility and flexibility with respect to some of its essential features, is advocated and illustrated by Sister Soulsby. Her affinities with Twain's characters suggest an approach to life that, broadly speaking, reaches back to Sancho Panza. Indeed Sister Soulsby shares with her remote ancestor a disposition to see things in their mundane context and judge people by referring them to a similar framework. Open to experience, she becomes initiated into the ways of the world and the mysteries of human nature. Such knowledge deepening insight to the point of seeing through people is with Sister Soulsby nothing short of power.

It is true, Sister Soulsby strikes the Methodists of Octavius as efficacious rather than powerful. She and her husband are successful beyond doubt in performing the job for which they were hired: that of raising money from the parishioners to pay the debts incurred by the Church. Debt-raising was a widespread practice at the time and those involved in it had to be well skilled for they were expected to induce generosity in close-fisted people. To this end, "machinery, management, organization" (181) had their part to play, as for instance in their approach to music–the means most adequate to arousing people's emotions. As Sister Soulsby explains to Theron, the great impact of their singing on the audience was due not only to their training, but to a fraud as well: "we take these tunes, written by a devil-may-care Pole who was living with George Sand openly at the time, and pass 'em off on the brethern for hymns" (181).

Apart from supplying further evidence of how much and in what a variety of forms, Chopin was played in America at the time, of how deeply responsive to him were both the Catholics–Celia, we recall, was drawn to his music too–, and the Protestants, Sister Soulsby's disclosure should retain our attention as proof that frauds are not all of a kind. She knows she has reasons to call her fraud "good" (181). Like Huckleberry Finn whose elder sister she is in a sense, Theron's mentor is reluctant to take a course of action that gives satisfaction to abstract moral principles at the

expense of fellow-feeling. What is really remarkable about her is her suspicion of any boundaries and frontiers separating people in morally identifiable categories. Even more remarkable is her belief that no one is denied a fresh start, and no label can be attached to anyone for good: implicitly, at no moment in its existence the self is to be regarded as having exhausted all its potential for change. Backing her "religion" that "the sheep and the goats are to be separated on Judgment Day, but not a minute sooner," her explanation to Theron deserves to be quoted in full.

> In other words (says she, speaking to Theron after the latter had touched bottom) as long as human life lasts, good, bad, and indifferent are all braided up together in every man's nature, and every woman's too. You weren't altogether good a year ago, any more than you're altogether bad now. You were some of both then; you're some of both now. If you've been making an extra sort of fool of yourself lately, why, now that you recognize it, the only thing to do is to slow steam, pull up, and back engine in the other direction. In that way you'll find things will even themselves. It's a see-saw with all of us, Theron Ware,–sometimes up; sometimes down. But nobody is rotten clear to the core (341).

Here the matter is considered in a religious and moral perspective. There is, however, more than an implication in Sister Soulsby's discontinued biography that a new start might be tantamount to breaking with the old self in some more important sense and taking on a new identity. That to Theron she evoked an actress though he had never been to the theatre, is not only an irony directed at the Puritan aversion to that Institution and at Theron's inexperience; it highlights her scenic resources, her huge capacity for assuming new roles.

The point to stress in this connection is that Sister Soulsby's flexibility taking on radical forms at times, can be accounted for in terms of practical ends. She knows that "a little butter spreads a long way, if it's only intelligently warmed" (144). Having this in mind and working to this effect she cannot be exactly rigorous as to how her means stand with respect to the moral categories of right and wrong. In her view, even "dirty work" (72) can be excused if it helps spread the butter. To object to it is also to

say that "potatoes are unfit and unclean to eat because manure is put into the ground they grow in" (172-73).

It goes without saying that this last point of Sister Soulsby's practical philosophy may be found objectionable. What is at stake here is not so much the opposition between right and wrong, an opposition difficult to maintain given the impurity of facts as against the purity of abstractions, but the difficulty to say how much "dirty work" one can take upon himself for the sake of some practical result one expects to achieve. The problem is serious indeed, and although it cannot be answered in general terms having always to be referred to the concrete situation, it is obvious that no matter how long the butter can spread in some particular case, other consequences which the dirty work might entail are not to be ignored either.

Though all make for efficiency, not all the frauds practised by Sister Soulsby are as innocent as her use of Chopin. The debt-raising owed a lot to Chopin's sixths, but it could not have been the success it was without her use of human frailty, a remark that returns us to the beginning of the comment of which she is subject. The question that should be asked is inspired in fact by her formidable insight into human nature and the power it gives her: is not her efficiency largely a matter of using people in the sense of profiting from their liabilities to yield to temptation? There is no doubt that vanity and pride had their say in the whole affair. They are feelings aroused at the right time by the machinery set in motion by Sister Soulsby whose management and organization are too good to fail. It can be argued nonetheless that if less noble features were brought into play, they ultimately turned against those who possessed them. They literally paid for being vain and proud.

What has been said about Sister Soulsby might qualify her approach to life as pragmatic. She fits the definition of the type in some important respects, for, according to a famous characterization, a pragmatist "turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad *a priori* reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins. He turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action and towards power."[xi]

NOTES

FOREWORD

[i] Russell Reising, *The Unusable Past, Theory and the Study of American Literature*. Methuen, 1986, p. 15.

[ii] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

[iii] Larzer Ziff, *The American 1890s: Life and Times of a Lost Generation*. Viking Compass Edition, 1968 (first published 1966)

[iv] Grant C Knight, *The Critical Period in American Literature*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1951.

[v] Malcolm Bradbury, *The Modern American Novel*, Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 11.

[vi] Henry James, *The Notebooks*, ed. F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock, Oxford University Press, 1962, p. 18.

CHAPTER 1

[i] Warner Berthoff, "Culture and Consciousness." In *Columbia Literary History of the United States*, ed.Emory Elliott *et al.*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1988, p. 486.

[ii] The great value which Henry James attaches to the artistic will is the focus of Stephen Donadio's book *Nietzsche, Henry James and the Artistic Will*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1978.

[iii] David Minter, *A Cultural History of the American Novel*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 23.

[iv] *Ibid.*

[v] *Ibid.*

[vi] Martha Banta, *Imaging American Women. Idea and Ideals in Cultural History*, Columbia University Press, 1987. See especially chapter 12 "Scaling up to War" (pp.449-552).

[vii] Simon Pokan's novel was entitled O-Gî-Mäu-Kwĕ Mit-I.Gwä-Kî (*Qween of the Woods*). He had made contributions to such magazines as *Arena, Forum, Harper's Magazine, Chautauquan, Review of Reviews*, and was known as "the red-skin bard" and the "Longfellow of his race." Werner Sollors, "Immigrants and Other Americans." In *Columbia Literary History of the United States*, ed. Emory Elliott *et. al.*, p. 576

[viii] Quoted from David Minter, *op. cit.*, p. 24

[ix] Larzer Ziff, *op. cit.*, p. 226

[x] David Minter, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

[xi] Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," *Readings in Intellectual History. The American Tradition*. ed. C. K. McFarland, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1970, pp. 247, 264.

[xii] Larzer Ziff. *op. cit.*, p. 3

[xiii] David Minter, *op. cit*, p. 13.

[xiv] Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams*. The Modern Library, New York, 1931, p. 382. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

[xv] The first chapter of Larzer Ziff's book is entitled "Land of Contrasts." It recalls the title of James F. Muirhead's book *The Land of Contrasts: A Briton's View of his American Kin*, published in 1898. Muirhead was also the author of the Baedeker (1893) that had been assigned to him for the purpose of supplying English-speaking visitors to the Columbian Exposition with a guide. Larzer Ziff, *op. cit.* pp. 4-10. Many of Muirhead's comments on America, especially those referring to "The American Girl," are discussed by Martha Banta in *Imaging American Women. Idea and Ideals in Cultural History*. See especially the section "Looking for 'the Best' Type," pp. 92-139.

[xvi] R. P. Blackmur, *Henry Adams*, Da Cappo, 1984, p. 106

[xvii] *Ibid.*, p. 131

[xviii] Martha Banta, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

[xix] Quoted from *Martha Banta*, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

[xx] Quoted from Martha Banta, *op. cit.*, p. 94. The charmer, the pal, and the New Engaland titaness are types discussed by Martha Banta.

[xxi] Martha Banta, *op. cit.* p. 24

[xxii] Larzer Ziff, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

[xxiii] Reference is made to the 13th Constitutional Amendment, ratified in 1865, that abolished slavery, to the 14th Constitutional Amendment, ratified in 1868, that by stating in the first part of section 1 that "all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside" granted citizenship to Negroes (including former Negro slaves) and to the 15th Constitutional Amendment, ratified in 1870, whose section 1 reads: "the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude--" *The Constitution of the United States of America*. Mention should be likewise made of the Civil Rights Acts, a series of laws enacted by the Congress to enforce the three Constitutional Amendments. Among their purposes was the curtailment of the legislation passed about the same time by southern states. Thus the first of these Acts (1866) was directed against the so-called black codes that while granting slaves freedom in keeping with the 13th Amendment severely controlled it, their new status of freedmen making practically little difference from that of their former condition. Similarly the last of the series, passed in 1875, guaranteed Negroes' equal access to public places opposing thereby the practice of segregation.

[xxiv] John M. Bloom with others, *The National Experience*, Part One, *A History of the United States to 1877*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1977. p. 372.

[xxv] Helen Taylor, *Gender, Race, and Region in the Writings of Grace King, Ruth McEnery Stuart, and Kate Chopin*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1989, p. 5

[xxvi] *Ibid.*, p. 4

[xxvii] Eric Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, "Mark Twain and Homer Plessy," The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993, pp. 225-271.

[xxviii] *Ibid.*, p. 241.

[xxix] Mark Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, Bantam Books, New York, 1959, p. 9.

[xxx] Eric Sundquist, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

CHAPTER 2

[i] John J. McDermott, Introduction, *The Writings of William James*, ed. John J. McDermott, The Modern Library, New York, 1968, p. xxvii

[ii] Richard Poirier, *The Renewal of Literature*, Yale University Press, 1988, p. 51.

[iii] William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, Macmillan and Co., LtD., 1901, vol. 1, p. 226. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

[iv] Ross Posnock, *The Trial of Curiosity, Henry James, William James and the Challenge of Modernity*, Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 35. Posnock insisits on William James's individualism and absorption in his own self, contrasting them to his brother's innate disposition for contemplation and "curiosity," attitudes which, in his view, are more hospitable to relationships.

[v] William James, "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings," *The Writings of William James*, ed. John J. McDermott, pp. 644-45.

[vi] As discussed in the *Principles* and the *Briefer Course* (here "stream of thought" is replaced by "stream of consciousness"), consciousness evinces a number of characteristics that have been summed up by McDermott as follows: "First, consciousness is personal and has changing and sensibly continuous states; second, consciousness has a fringe as well as a focus and thus is able to grasp a sliding stream of impressions at the periphery of attention; third, consciousness includes the apprehension of relations as well as of elements, of "transitive" as well as of "substantive" states; fourth, the activity of consciousness is selective, that is, consciousness welcomes, rejects and chooses from among the objects presented; fifth, in that human thought appears to deal with objects independent of itself, it is cognitive." McDermott, Introduction to *The Writings of William James*, pp XXIX-XXX

[vii] Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, Bantam Books, 1987 (first published 1881), p. 175.

[viii] George H. Mead, "The Social Self," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. X, January-December 1913, p. 377.

[ix] It seems necessary to qualify the unconscious as Freudian, as the term was far from being unknown in Western Europe in the nineteenth century. Apparently, Eduard von Hartmann's *Philosophy of the Unconscious* launched it most successfully in 1868, for in the 1870s, "there were at least a half-dozen books with the word 'unconscious' in their titles." What rendered it so shocking when used by Freud was the sexual content it received now. Francoise Meltzer, "Unconscious," *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. Frank Lentrichia and Thomas McLaughlin, The University of Chicago Press, 1990, p.148.

[x] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Dover Publications, INC., New York, 1994 (first published 1899), p. 103. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

[xi] *The Instinct for Workmanship* is the title Veblen gave to his book of 1914 where he holds that "industrial and scientific development" (looked upon as the consequence of the instinct for workmanship) "is the ultimate source of the increasing wealth and power in America. Later in his life, Veblen would view the trained technocrats who embody this impulse as best fitted to run society." Andrew Hook, *American Literature in Context* 1865-1900, Methuen, 1983, p. 186.

CHAPTER 3

[i] Robert Milder, "Herman Melville." In *Columbia Literary History of the United States*, ed. Emory Elliott *et.al.*, New York, 1988, p. 445

[ii] *Ibid.*

[iii] W. D. Howells, Letter to Mabel L. Todd, 2 December 1894, *Selected Letters of W. D. Howells*, vol. 4, ed. Thomas Wortham *et.al.*, Twayne, 1981, p. 83.

[iv] According to Everett Carter, "By 1895 Howells was falling from favor, and by 1928 he had completed the fall, and during the descent of his reputation no more damaging accusation has been made than that of his prudery." Everett Carter, *Howells and the Age of Realism*, Lippincott, 1954, p. 140.

[v] Helen McMahon, *Criticism of Fiction, A Study of the Trends in The Atlantic Monthly*, Bookman Associates: New York, 1952.

[vi] Richard H. Broadhead, "Literature and Culture" in *Columbia Literary History of the United States*, p. 473.

[vii] F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, Peregrine, 1962.

[viii] Henry James, Letter to William James, *The Letters of Henry James*, 2 vol., ed. Percy Lubbock, Macmillan, 1920, vol.1, pp. 164-65.

[ix] Henry James, "Henrik Ibsen," *The Scenic Art*, 32 essays on the English, French, and American Theatre, Actors and Playrights. From 1872 to 1901, ed. Allan Wade, A Drama Book, 1957, p. 243.

[x] Sophia Hawthorne, Letter to her sister Elizabeth Peabody, in Herman Melville, *The Confidence-Man*, A Norton Critical Edition, New York, 1971. p. 260.

[xi] W. D. Howells, Letter to Moncure D. Conway, March 5, 1890, *Selected Letters of W. D.Howells*, Vol. 3, ed. Robert C. Leintz *et al.*, Twayne, 1980, p. 276.

[xii] Richard H.Broadhead, *op. cit.*, p. 472.

[xiii] Helen McMahon, *op. cit.*

[xiv] Justin Kaplan, *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain*, a Biography, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1966, p. 135.

[xv] Larzer Ziff, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

[xvi] Henry James, *Hawthorne*, Macmillan, New York, 1967, p. 23.

[xvii] W. D. Howells, "Henry James, Jr.," *Selected Literary Criticism*, Indiana University Press, 1993, vol. 1, p. 322.

[xviii] W. D. Howells, Letter to Henry James, December 13, 1894, *Selected Letters of W. D. Howells*, vol. 4, ed. Thomas Wortham *et. al.*, Twayne, 1981, p. 84.

[xix] W. D. Howells, Letter to Henry James, July 31, 1898, *Selected Letters of W. D. Howells*, vol. 4, ed. Thomas Wortham *et. al.*, Twayne. 1981, p. 181.

[xx] Henry James, "William Dean Howells," *The Theory of the American Novel*, ed. George Perkins, Holt, Rinehart, and Wiston, 1970, p. 204.

[xxi] Graham Greene, "The Private Universe" in *Henry James, A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Leon Edel, A Spectrum Book, 1963, p. 11.

[xxii] Henry James, "William Dean Howells," *The Theory of the American Novel*, p. 206.

[xxiii] W. D. Howells, Letter to Aurelia H. Howells, February 24, 1901, *Selected Letters of W. D. Howells*, vol. 4, ed. Thomas Wortham *et. al.*, Twayne, 1981, p. 258.

[xxiv] *Ibid.*

[xxv] W. D. Howells, Letter to Thomas B. Aldrich, December 8, 1901, *Selected Letters of W. D. Howells*, vol.4, ed.Thomas Wortham *et.al.*, Twayne, 1981.

[xxvi] W. D. Howells, "An Inquiry" (1901), *Selected Literary Criticism*, Indiana University Press, 1993, vol. 3, pp. 39-40.

[xxvii] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

[xxviii] Helen McMahon, *op. cit.*

[xxix] W. D. Howells, Letter to Stephen Crane, 26 January 1896, *Selected Letters of W. D. Howells*, vol. 4, ed. Thomas Wortham *et.al*, Twayne, 1981, p.123.

[xxx] R. W. Stallman, *Stephen Crane*, a Biography, George Brazillier, New York, 1968, p.185.

[xxxi] W. D. Howells, Letter to Stephen Crane, 26 January 1896, *Selected Letters of W. D. Howells*, vol.4, ed. Thomas Wortham *et al.*, Twayne, 1981, p. 123.

[xxxii] R. W. Stallman, *op.cit*, p.72.

[xxxiii] Edwin Cady, *Stephen Crane*, Twayne, 1980, p. 42.

[xxxiv] W. D. Howells, "New York Low Life in Fiction," *Selected Literary Criticism*, vol. 2, p. 276

[xxxv] *Ibid.*

[xxxvi] Edwin Cady, *op. cit.*, p .43.

[xxxvii] James Nagel, *Stephen Crane and Literary Impressionism*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980. See especially the chapter "Backgrounds and Definitions:Conrad's 'Complete Impressionist,' " pp. 1-35.

[xxxviii] Quoted from R.W.Stallman, *op. cit.*, pp. 500-501.

[xxxix] Stephen Crane, "Harold Frederic," *The Theory of the American Novel*, ed. George Perkins, p. 231.

[xl] *Ibid.*, p. 233

[xli] Helen Taylor, *Gender, Race, and Region in the Writings of Grace King, Ruth McEnery Stuart, and Kate Chopin*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge and London, 1989, p. 19.

[xlii] *Ibid.*, p. 20

[xliii] *Ibid.*, p. 149

[xliv] *Ibid.*, p. 159.

[xlv] *Ibid.*

[xlvi] Lewis Leary was probably the first of Chopin's critics not only to respond to Whitmanesque echoes in Chopin's *The Awakening* but also to pinpoint and discuss them. Lewis Leary, Introduction to *The Awakening and Other Stories*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1970.

[xlvii] Helen Taylor, *op.cit.*, p. 146.

[xlviii] *Ibid.*, p. 147

[xlix] *Ibid.*, p. 145

CHAPTER 4

[i] Rene Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism*. 1750-1950, IV The Later Nineteenth Century, Yale University Press, 1977, (first published 1965), p. 212.

[ii] Rene Welleck, *Concepts of Criticism*, Yale University Press, 1963, p. 230.

[iii] W. D. Howells, *Criticism and Fiction*, *Selected Literary Criticism*, vol. 2, Indiana University Press,1993, p.311. Further references to *Criticism and Fiction* will be cited parenthetically in the text.

[iv] Rene Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism*, p. 212.

[v] Edwin H. Cady, *The Realist at War: The Mature Years of William Dean Howells*, Syracuse University Press, 1956, p. 14.

[vi] Everett Carter, *Howells and the Age of Realism*, Lippincott, 1954, pp. 185-90.

[vii] W. D. Howells, *Criticism and Fiction and Other Essays*, ed. Clara Marburg Kirk and Rudolf Kirk, Introduction to Criticism and Fiction, New York University Press, 1965 (first printing 1959). p. 6.

[viii] W. D. Howells to William C. Howells, August 9, 1891, *Selected Letters of W. D. Howells*, vol.3, ed. Robert C. Leintz *et. al.*, Twayne, 1980, p. 318.

[ix] W. D. Howells, "Emily Dickinson's Poems," *Selected Literary Criticism*, vol. 2, Indiana University Press, 1993, pp. 60-65.

[x] William James to Theodore Flournoy, 30 August, 1896, *The Letters of William James*, ed. by his son Henry James, vol. 2, The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1920, p. 48.

[xi] W. D. Howells, "William James and Hjalmar Boysen," *Selected Literary Criticism*, vol.2, Indiana University Press, 1993, p. 178.

[xii] See Alfred Habegger, *Gender, Fantasy and Realism in American Literature*, Columbia University Press, 1982.

[xiii] W. D. Howells, "Professor Wendell's Notions of American Literature," *Selected Literary Criticism*, Indiana University Press, 1993, vol. 3 , p. 56.

[xiv] *Ibid.*, p. 57

[xv] W. D. Howells, "Edgar Allan Poe," *Selected Literary Criticism*, Indiana University Press, 1993, vol. 3 p. 250.

[xvi] Gilbert Phelps, *The Russian Novel in English Fiction*, Huchinson, London, 1956.

[xvii] H. E. Scudder, "Mr Howells's Literary Creed," *The Atlantic Monthly*, October, 1891, p. 568.

[xviii] W. D. Howells, *Criticism and Fiction and Other Essays*, p. 346

[xix] W. D. Howells, "James's Hawthorne," (1880), *Selected Literary Criticism*, Indiana University Press, vol. 1, p. 293.

[xx] W. D. Howells, "Edward Bellamy," *Selected Literary Criticism*, Indiana University Press, vol. 3, p. 213

[xxi] W. D. Howells, "James's *Hawthorne*" (1880), *Selected Literary Criticism*, Indiana University Press, vol.1, p. 293.

[xxii] W. D. Howells, Letter to Aurelia H.Howells, 15 July 1900, *Selected Letters of W. D. Howells*, vol. 4, ed. Thomas Wortham *et.al.*, Twayne, 1981, p. 243.

[xxiii] W. D. Howells, "The Two Catharines of Emily Bronte," *Heroines in Fiction*, Harper and Brothers, 1901, p. 239.

[xxiv] W. D. Howells, Letter to Aurelia H.Howells, 15 July 1900, *Selected Letters of W. D. Howells*, vol. 4

[xxv] *Ibid.*,

[xxvi] W. D. Howells, "The Two Catharines of Emily Bronte," *Heroines in Fiction*, p. 231.

[xxvii] Letter to Hamlin Garland, 11 March 1888, *Selected Letters of W. D. Howells*, vol. 3, ed. Robert C Leintz *et al.*, Twayne, 1980, p. 221.

[xxviii] W. D. Howells, "My Favorite Novelist and his Best Book" (1897), *Selected Literary Criticism*, vol. 2, Indiana University Press, 1993, p. 282.

[xxix] W. D. Howells, "Professor Barrett Wendell's Notions of American Literature," *Selected Literary Criticism*, Indiana University Press, 1993, vol. 3, p. 58

[xxx] "Mr Howells's Speech" in *Criticism and Fiction and Other Essays*, p. 369

[xxxi] W. D. Howells, "The Future of the American Novel," *Criticism and Fiction and Other Essays*, p. 347

[xxxii] W. D. Howells, "An Exemplary Citizen," North American Review, 1901, CLXXIII, p.279.

[xxxiii] W. D. Howells, "Paul Laurence Dunbar," (Introduction to *Lyrics of Lowly Life*, 1896). *Selected Literary Criticism*. Indiana University Press, 1993, vol. 2, p. 279.

[xxxiv] W. D. Howells, "Mr Charles W. Chesnutt's Stories" (1900), *Selected Literary Criticism*, Indiana University Press, 1993, vol 3, p. 233

[xxxv] W. D. Howells, "Paul Laurence Dunbar," *Selected Literary Criticism*, Indiana University Press, 1993, vol.2, p. 280

[xxxvi] *Ibid.*

[xxxvii] Elsa Nettels, *Language, Race and Social Class in Howells's America*, The University Press of Kentucky, 1988, p. 85.

CHAPTER 5

[i] W. D. Howells, *Criticism and Fiction*, *Selected Literary Criticism*, vol. 2, Indiana University Press, 1993.

[ii] T. S. Eliot, "Wilkie Collins and Dickens," *Selected Literary Criticism*, Harcourt, Brace and Company. 1932, pp. 375-382.

[iii] Everett Carter, *Howells and the Age of Realism*, Lippincott, 1954, pp. 39-41.

[iv] Martha Banta, Introduction to *An Imperative Duty*, A Selected Edition of W. D. Howells, vol. 17, Indiana University Press, 1970

[v] W. D. Howells, *An Imperative Duty*, vol.17, Indiana University Press, 1970. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text. .

[vi] W. D. Howells, Letter to Aurelia H. Howells, 17 July 1891, *Selected Letters of W. D. Howells*, vol. 3. ed.. Robert C. Leintz *et. al.*, *Twayne*, 1980, p. 316.

[vii] Martha Banta, Introduction to *An Imperative Duty*, A Selected Edition of W. D. Howells, vol. 17, Indiana University Press, 1970.

[viii] Kenneth W. Warren, "Possessing the Common Ground: William Dean Howells' *An Imperative Duty*," American Literary Realism, vol. 20, No 3, 1988.

[ix] W. D. Howells, Letter to William C. Howells, Dec. 22, 1889, *Selected Letters of W. D. Howells*, ed. Robert C. Leintz *et al.*, vol. 3, p. 264.

[x] Elsa Nettels, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

CHAPTER 6

[i] R.W.Stallman, *op. cit.*, p. 331

[ii] *Ibid.*, p. 15

[iii] Edwin H. Cady, *Stephen Crane*, Twayne, p. 106.

[iv] R.W.Stallman, *op. cit.*, p. 572.

[v] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

[vi] *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, vol. 2, ed Nina Baym *et. al.*. W. W. Norton & Company, 1979, p. 716

[vii] W. R. Stallman, *op.cit.*, p. 68.

[viii] Martha Banta, *Imaging American Women. Idea and Ideals in Cultural History*, p. 109.

[ix] *Ibid.*, pp. 105-109.

[x] Quoted from R.W.Stallman, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

[xi] See "Maggie in Review," Appendix, in R. W. Stallman, *op. cit.*, p.539.

[xii] *Ibid.*, p. 542

[xiii] *Ibid.*, p. 543

[xiv] *Ibid.*, p. 544

[xv] Stephen Crane, *Maggie A Girl of the Streets, American Short Novels*, ed. R. P. Blackmur, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1960. p. 99. All further quotations are taken from this volume with page numbers given in the text in parenthesis.

[xvi] Repetition seems to be one of Crane's favourite devices. Often presented in terms of one or two features, his characters appear stylized in ways that call attention to their appearance, or rather to the impression they make upon "the other," substance in their case being reduced to mere surface. Thus references to Nell include the same qualifying phrase: "the woman of brilliance and audacity" (123, 124, 127. 132, 131) ; in the beginning Maggie is "the ragged girl" (99, 100) while Pete's "chronic sneer" is repeated three times on the same page (98).

[xvii] James Nagel, *Stephen Crane and Literary Impressionism*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980, p. 139

[xviii] David Halliburton, *The Color of the Sky*. A Study of Stephen Crane, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 39

[xix] *Ibid.*, p. 60

[xx] *Ibid.*, p. 48

[xxi] *Ibid.*

[xxii] Stephen Crane, Letter to Hamlin Garland, [March? 1893] *The Theory of American Novel*, ed. George Perkins, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, p. 234.

[xxiii] Matthew Arnold, *Poetical Works*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 244.

[xxiv] John J. Conder, *Naturalism in American Fiction, The Classic Phase*, The University Press of Kentucky, 1984, pp. 45-46.

[xxv] Thorstein Veblen, *op. cit.*, p. 153 It may be of interest to note that Veblen also takes into account the well-known fact that the fighting instinct is not confined to the two categories; the boys of every community are likely to give everyday proof that they possess it and that they are not deprived of a sense of honour either. On the other hand, as the duel can be traced back to what Veblen calls the predatory stage of barbarian culture, that preceded modern or pecuniary culture, he is tempted to believe that "the fighting impulse belongs to a more archaic temperament than that possessed by the average adult man of the industrious classes" (155). When he brings to bear

on this observation his conviction that the ages of the individual repeat the stages of culture, one conclusion presents itself to his attention: "the leisure-class and the delinquent-class character shows a persistence into adult life of traits that are normal to childhood and youth, and that are likewise normal or habitual to the earlier stages of culture" (155). The modern industrial community is the stage of culture that corresponds to the maturity of the individual, whereas the two categories discussed above exhibit "marks of an arrested spiritual development" (155). That Veblen's views of "the leisure class in its barbarian stage" are not always flattering can be accounted for by the fact that he spoke from a place and time that bore the imprint of the pecuniary culture; which does not mean, on the other hand, that he was apologetic of the later stage. In this Veblen met on common ground with Mark Twain; for the author of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* also makes a point of subverting, though by different means, the duel as a form in which the sense of honour expressed itself.

[xxvi] R.W. Stallman, *op. cit.*, p. 74

[xxvii] David Haliburton, *op. cit.*, p. 67

[xxviii] Quoted from Edwin H. Cady, *op. cit.*, p. 68

CHAPTER 7

[i] Emily Toth, "A New Biographical Approach," *Approaches to Teaching Chopin's* The Awakening, The Modern Languages of America, ed. Bernard Koloski, New York, 1988, p. 63.

[ii] Helen Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 159

[iii] Linda S. Boren, Introduction, *Kate Chopin Reconsidered: Beyond the Bayou*, ed. Linda S. Boren and Sara deSaussure Davis, Baton Rouge, Louisiana University Press, 1992, pp. 5-6.

[iv] Nancy Walker, "The Historical and Cultural Setting," *Approaches to Teaching Chopin's* The Awakening, ed. Bernard Koloski, The Modern Languages Association of America, 1988, p. 67.

[v] Dale Marie Bower and Andrew M. Lakritz, "The Awakening and the Woman Question," *Approaches to Teaching Chopin's* The Awakening, pp. 47-53.

[vi] Nancy Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

[vii] Kate Chopin, *The Awakening and Other Stories*, Holt, Rinehart and Wiston, Inc., 1970, p. 204. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

[viii] Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "*The Awakening* in the Context of the Experience, Culture, and Values of Southern Women," *Approaches to Teaching Chopin's* The Awakening, p. 38.

[ix] In her hermeneutic approach to the Bible, Elizabeth Cady Stanton rehabilitates Eve, as it were, by considering her "quest for good and evil a worthy one." Published during the four year period that preceded *The Awakening* it was too provoking to pass

unnoticed. Its impact turns to be long lasting, if note is taken that it supplies the assumptions on which a relatively recent study is based. Bonnie St. Andrews, *Forbidden Fruit. On the Relationship Between Women and Knowledge in Doris Lessing, Selma Lagerlöf, Kate Chopin, Margaret Atwood*, Whitson Publishing Company, Troy, New York, 1986. See Chapter 1, Feminist Perspective, p. 24.

[x] Barbara Ewell, "Kate Chopin and the Dream of Female Selfhood," *Kate Chopin Reconsidered: Beyond the Bayou*, pp. 157-165.

[xi] Lawrence Thornton, "Edna as Icarus," *Approaches to Teaching Chopin's* The Awakening.

[xii] Barbara C. Ewell, *op. cit.*, p. 162. Also see Patricia Hopkins Lattin, "Childbirth and Motherhood in The Awakening and in Athènaïse," *Approaches to Teaching Chopin's* The Awakening, pp. 40-47.

[xiii] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Days," The Norton Anthology of American Literature, vol. 1, ed. Nina Baym *et.al.*, 1979, p. 988.

[xiv] Lewis Leary, *op. cit*, pp. XIII-XIV.

[xv] Sara deSaussure Davis, "Chopin's Movement Toward Universal Myth," *Kate Chopin Reconsidered: Beyond the Bayou*, pp. 205-206.

[xvi] Mircea Eliade, *Traité d'histoire des religions*, Payot, 1975.

[xvii] *Ibid.*, p. 149

[xviii] *Ibid.*, p. 165.

[xix] *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 8

[i] William James, Letter to W. D. Howells, August 20, 1890, *The Letters of William James*, ed. by his son Henry James, The Atlantic Monthly Press, Boston, 1920, vol. 1, p. 299.

[ii] Leon Edel, *The Treacherous Years*, J. B. Lippincott, 1969. The fourth volume of Edel's Biography of James covers the years 1895 to 1901, but casts frequent glances back to the first half of the 1890s.

[iii] *The Notebooks of Henry James*, ed. F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock, Oxford University Press, 1962, p.188.

[iv] Henry James, *Stories of Writers & Artists*, ed. F. O. Matthiessen, A New Directions Book, Fourth printing, p. 113. The volume includes a number of stories written in the 1890s such as "Greville Fane" (1893), "The Real Thing" (1893), "The Middle Years" (1893), The Death of the Lion" (1894), "The Next Time" (1895), "The Figure in the Carpet (1896), "Broken Wings" (1900). References to these stories and "The Lesson of the Master" (1888) are made to this volume with page numbers given in the text in parantheses

[v] See *The Scenic Art*, ed. Allan Wade. A Drama book, New York, 1957.

[vi] Hugh Vereker is reported to have referred to the greatest point of interest of his work challenging his critics as "the very string that my pearls are strung" (293) and "the

string the pearls were strung on" (311). In the Preface to *The Princess Casamassima*, James makes use of the same image when pointing out the importance which the character's response has for him: "The whole thing comes to depend thus on the *quality* of bewilderment characteristic of one's creature, the quality involved in the given case or supplied by one's data. (...) There we have at once a case of feeling, of ever so many possible feelings, stretched across the scene like an attached thread on which the pearls of interest are strung." Similarly in the Preface to *What Maisie Knew*, James uses the same image with reference to the young woman of "In the Cage," Maisie, Morgan Moreen ("The Pupil") and Hyacinth Robinson (*The Princess Casamassima).* The part of the passage referring to Maise is worth quoting as it also expresses a critical appreciation of the novel written a dozen years earlier. James seems to be satisfied with it: "The range of wonderment attributed in our tale to to the young woman at Cocker's differs little in essence from the speculative thread on which the pearls of Maisie's experience, in this same volume--pearls of so strange an iridescence--are mostly strung." Henry James, *The Art of the Novel*, ed. Richard P. Blackmur, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937, pp. 66, 156.

[vii] *The Notebooks of Henry James*, ed. F.O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock, p. 188

[viii] "The Parisian Stage" (1872), *The Scenic Art*, p. 3.

[ix] "On the occasion of Hedda Gabler" (1891), *The Scenic Art*, p. 250.

[x] "On the occasion of the Master Builder" (1893), *The Scenic Art*, p. 258

[xi] "John Gabriel Borkman" (1897), *The Scenic Art*, p. 293

[xii] He had entered the theatre by the stage door when the show was over and had no idea that nasty remarks about the play were shouted at the actors during the performance. James must have felt his hurt even more acutely as "the intellectual and artistic elite" of London among whom there were many of his supportive friends- Edmund Gosse, John Singer Sargent, Mrs Humphry Ward were only a few of them- tried in vain to silence with their warm applause the howls and roars of rebellious spectators. However, other names were more likely to be retained by literary historians in connection with--for James--an ill-fated night. H. G. Wells, George Bernard Shaw, and Arnold Bennett, whose journalist careers had just begun, were, too, in the audience. Later Shaw and Wells would date their acquaintance with each other from the same event that cost the author of *Guy Dombville* so much. See Leon Edel, *The Treacherous Years*, pp. 61-96.

[xiii] Apparently a number of them including those of William Archer and especially G. B. Shaw, were laudatory of the text, while laying the blame on George Alexander who directed the show and played the title hero. There were also rumours to which some reporters gave their credence that the uproar in the gallery had been plotted by Alexander's enemies and had the famous actor as its target. Whatever comfort James took from them, they could hardly have alleviated his suffering.

[xiv] Quoted by Edel, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

[xv] Leon Edel, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

[xvi] W. D. Howells, Letter to Henry James, December 13, 1894. *Selected Letters of William Dean Howells*, vol. 4, ed. Thomas Wortham *et al.*, Twayne, 1981, p. 84.

[xvii] William James, Letter to Henry James, September 28, 1896. *The Letters of William James*, ed. by his son Henry James, The Atlantic Monthly Press, Boston, 1920, Vol. 2, pp. 51-52.

[xviii] Leon Edel, *op. cit.*, p. 266

[xix] Henry James, *What Maisie Knew*, The Bodley Head, VI, 1969, p. 283. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

[xx] Preface to *What Maisie Knew* in Henry James, *The Art of the Novel*, ed. R. P. Blackmur, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1937, p. 149.

[xxi] *Ibid.*, p.142.

[xxii] In contrast to F. R. Leavis who is "at least half won over by her (Mrs Wix') rhetoric," Tony Tanner argues that Maisie's both governesses, Mrs Beale and Mrs Wix, stand for "selfish appetite and spiritual appropriation" respectively. One embodies "the sort of social selfishness which wishes to posses and use," the other, "a type of self-righteous moralism which hungers to subdue and thwart." Tony Tanner, *The Reign of Wonder*, Perrenial Library, Harper and Row, 1965, pp. 291, 290.

[xxiii] Tony Tanner, "The Fearful Self: The Portrait of a Lady," *Henry James, Modern Judgements*, ed. Tony Tanner, Macmillan, 1968, p. 153

[xxiv] *Ibid.*, p. 156.

CHAPTER 9

[i] Justin Kaplan, *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain*, Simon and Shuster, New York, 1966, p. 334. It may be of interest to mention that at the end of the nineteenth century Mark Twain was a familiar name to Romanian readers. In the 1890s, his portrait appeared at least three times in Romanian magazines, each time accompanied by a biographical note. News of his bankruptcy was given in a note published in a Bucharest weekly, *Universul literar* (September 11, 1895, p. 3). Three years later the same magazine informed its readers that Twain and his family were staying in Vienna: one of his daughters was taking piano lessons with a famous professor, while the writer was collecting material for a book about the Austrian capital. The banquet given in his honour by "the literary societies" of the city was, apparently, a good occasion to come in touch with the writer and appreciate his "humour." (A good proof that Twain was capable of keeping his wound well hidden.) *Universul literar* (Bucureşti), January 19, 1898, p. 2. A short article about the American writer and the lectures he had given in Vienna a winter before was published in *Familia*. Here, Twain is praised both as a writer and lecturer. His writings, inspired especially by "his own life" have been "translated in all the languages of the world. Some of them can be read in Romanian too." *Familia* (Oradea-Mare, August 22, 1899, p. 407).

[ii] *Critical Essays on Mark Twain, 1867-1910*, ed. Louis J. Budd, G. K. Hall & Co., 1982, p. 138.

[iii] Andrew Lang, "The Art of Mark Twain," *Critical Essays on Mark Twain, 1867-1910* , p. 88 (reprinted from *Illustrated London News*, February 14, 1891)

[iv] Brander Matthews , "Mark Twain - His Work," *Critical Essays on Mark Twain, 1867-1910*, p.124 (reprinted from *Book Buyer* January, 1897).

[v] Hamilton W. Mabie, "Mark Twain the Humorist," *Critical Essays on Mark Twain, 1867-1910*, p. 204 (reprinted from *Outlook*, November 23, 1907)

[vi] William Lyon Phelps, "Mark Twain," *Critical Essays on Mark Twain*, 1867-1910, p. 195 (reprinted from *North American Review*, July 5, 1907)

[vii] R.C.B., "Mark Twain on the Platform," *Critical Essays on Mark Twain, 1867-1910*, p. 116 (reprinted from *Sketch* (London) November 27, 1895; reprinted at the time in *Critic*, April 25, 1896)

[viii] Theodore Dreiser, "Mark the Double Twain," *Mark Twain's Wound*, ed. Lewis Leary, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1962, p. 145.

[ix] Lute Pease, "The Famous Story-Teller Discusses Characters. Says that no Author Creates, but Merely Copies," *Critical Essays on Mark Twain, 1867-1910*, p. 108.

[x] A major argument of *The Ordeal of Mark Twain*, Van Wyck Brooks' seminal book first publishd in 1920 is that Twain developed as a split personality as a result of the pressure put by the genteel East on an ego prone to an inferiority complex because of his Midwestern birth and upbringing. One of the writer's favourite themes having to do with, when not Siamese twins, the secret bond between two beings cast in opposite roles, helped to illustrate the process. Being impelled to accentuate Twain's long attachment to the theme of dual personality, Brooks asks rhetorically: "Could he ever have been aware of the extent to which his writings revealed that conflict in himself? Why was he so obsessed with journalistic facts like the Siamese twins and the Tichborne case, with its theme of the lost heir and the usurper? Why is it that the idea of changelings in the cradle perpetually haunted his mind, as we can see from *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and *The Gilded Age* and the variation of it that constitutes *The Prince and the Pauper*? The prince who has submerged himslf in the role of the beggar-boy- Mark Twain has drawn himself there, just as he has drawn himself in the "William Wilson" theme of "The Facts Concerning the Rescent Carnival of Crime in Connecticut," where he ends by dramatically slaying the conscience that torments him. And as for that pair of incompatibles bound together in one flesh the Extraordinary Twins, the "good" boy who has followed the injunctions of his mother and the "bad" boy of whom society disapproves- how many of Mark Twain's stories and anecdotes turn upon that same theme, that same juxtaposition--does he not reveal there, in all its nakedness, the true history of his life?" Van Wyck Brooks, "The Ordeal of Mark Twain" in *Mark Twain's Wound*, pp. 58-59.

[xi] The critics after Brooks seldom shared his opinion that in the conflict to which Twain's self had been subject, the husband who used to look up to his Eastern well-mannered

wife prevailed over the Mississippi boy in him. Much as they disagreed on this and other issues with the exception of Bernard DeVoto and his more ardent followers they hardly questioned Brooks' insight that in Twain two impulses were at odds. Considering Brooks's approach to be vulnerable to the extent it views Twain as a case of self-suppression, Matthew Josephson for one admits nevertheless that "Mr Brooks's perception of the dualism of Mark Twain's character is keen and just" This does justice to Twain as an American writer in the first place, the American character generally finding his distinguishing mark in a large capacity to accommodate discordant tendencies; a point of view that applied to the American self by Richard Chase a couple of decades later was to make a powerful and long-standing impact on American culture and criticism. As for the terms in which Josephson viewed the writer's inner conflict, these were supplied by the conflicting relation in which Twain stood to his own culture: on the one hand he was exceedinly critical of it, on the other, he was attracted to its centres of power. .Matthew Josephson, "A Divided Nature," *Mark Twain's Wound*, pp. 83-84.

[xii] Justin Kaplan, *op. cit.*, pp. 18, 322

[xiii] Martha Banta, *Failure & Success in America, A Literary Debate*, Princeton University Press, 1978, p. 191

[xiv] Justin Kaplan, *op. cit.*, p. 314

[xv] From Twain's letters to Susy Crane. One is dated Oct. 22,'92. *The Selected Letters of Mark Twain* ed. Charles Neider, Harper and Row, 1982, pp. 218-19.

[xvi] Langston Hughes, Introduction to *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, Bantam Books New York, 1959. Further references to *Pudd'nhead Wilson* will be cited parenthetically in the text.

[xvii] Daniel Morley McKeithan, *The Morgan Manuscript of Mark Twain's* Pudd'nhead Wilson, Upsala, 1961, p. 36.

[xviii] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

[xix] *Ibid.*, p. 36

[xx] *Ibid.* p. 63

[xxi] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

[xxii] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

[xxiii] Eric J. Sundquist, *op. cit.*, p. 225

[xxiv] George E Marcus argues that Twain's novel is centred on an exploration of identity rather than race. "Race is merely an occasion, albeit a seminal one in American culture, for exploring the masked complexties of consciousness and self." What Twain achieves by his use of crossed selves is, in Marcus's view, a new sense of self that in so far it challenges boundedness and encourges the merging of both selves in each character simultaneously, anticipates the postmodern fragmented self. George E. Marcus, "What did he rekon would become of the other half if he killed his half? Doubled, Divided, and Crossed Selves in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*; or, Mark Twain as Cultural Critic in His Own Times and Ours." *Mark Twain's* Pudd'nhead Wilson, *Race Conflict and Culture*, ed. Susan Gillman, Duke University Press, 1990

[xxiv] Susan Gillman, " 'Sure Identifiers,' Race, Science and the Law in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*," *Mark Twain's* Pudd'nhead Wilson. *Race Conflict and Culture.*

CHAPTER 10

[i] Larzer Ziff, *op. cit.*, p. 212

[ii] *Ibid.*

[iii] Joyce Carol Oates, "Fall from Grace," *The New York Times Book Review*, December 17, 1995, p. 24

[iv] Larzer Ziff. *op. cit.*, p. 209.

[v] *Ibid.*, p. 210

[vi] Harold Frederic, *The Damnation of Theron Ware*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961, p. 135. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

[vii] John Henry Raleigh, Introduction, *The Damnation of Theron Ware*, New York, Holt, Rineheart and Winston, 1961, p. xiii.

[viii] *Ibid.*

[ix] Gilbert Durand, *Structurile antropologice ale imaginarului*, Univers, 1977, pp. 128-30.

[x] *Ibid.* p. 392.

[xi] William James, "What Pragmatism Means," *The Writings of William James*, ed. John J. McDermott, The Modern Library, New York, 1968, p. 379.

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