Analogies of image and word: Studies in painting and the Anglo-American novel from the eighteenth century to postmodernism

Pamela Cantrell

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/rtds

Part of the Higher Education Commons

Repository Citation

https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/rtds/2984

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Scholarship@UNLV. It has been accepted for inclusion in UNLV Retrospective Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@unlv.edu.
INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.
ANALOGIES OF IMAGE AND WORD: STUDIES IN PAINTING
AND THE ANGLO-AMERICAN NOVEL FROM THE
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY TO POSTMODERNISM

by

Pamela Cantrell

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
English

Department of English
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
August 1995
The Dissertation of Pamela Cantrell for the degree of Ph.D in English is approved.

Chairperson, Darlene H. Unrue, Ph.D.

Examiner Committee Member, Joseph B. McCullough, Ph.D.

Examiner Committee Member, D. Timothy Erwin, Ph.D.

Graduate Faculty Representative, Robert Tracy, Ph.D.

Interim Dean of the Graduate College, Cheryl L. Bowles, Ed.D.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
August 1995
ABSTRACT

Analogies of Image and Word: Studies in Painting and the Anglo-American Novel from the Eighteenth Century to Postmodernism traces the historical progression of the relationship between painting and the novel through four representative analogies. The first chapter traces the critical history of the sister arts tradition, and examines the theoretical approaches most widely used in contemporary analogical studies. Chapter two takes up the modern concern with the sister arts as it blossomed in the eighteenth century with the pictorial iconoclasm of William Hogarth and the literary shift from the poetic tradition to the new generic form of the novel as represented by Tobias Smollett. The third chapter looks at the relationship between the visual image and the perception of woman in Victorian England and examines how one woman writer, Elizabeth Gaskell, seems to reinforce the patriarchal model for feminine behavior when in fact subverting the paradigm. Chapter four moves to the end of the nineteenth century as it studies the aesthetic of impressionism as practiced by Henry James and James McNeill Whistler in their move away from traditional realistic representation to a more
internal, perceptual mode of expression. Chapter five focuses on the surrealist movement of the early twentieth century, examining from a feminist perspective two women, Djuna Barnes and Dorothea Tanning, whose work subverts the overwhelmingly masculine surrealist aesthetic through a re-imaging of woman as subject, rather than object, of desire. The final chapter examines the eclectic instability of the postmodern era and the difficulties of defining a specific one-to-one analogy between individual visual and verbal artists. More generally, this study aims to accomplish three goals: first, to locate the writer and artist within a specific cultural discourse; second, to show a direct formal and ideological relationship between the works of both the writer and the artist or between the writer and the prevailing pictorial paradigm; and third, to illustrate how each reflects and contributes to the aesthetic of a particular movement or school of art.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .................................................... iii
LIST OF FIGURES ............................................. vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ......................................... vii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION ................................. 1
CHAPTER 2 WRITING THE PICTURE: HOGARTHIAN PICTORIALISM
IN THE NOVELS OF TOBIAS SMOLLETT ............... 19
CHAPTER 3 OH, TO BE A (HOUSEHOLD) NUN! (DE)CONSTRUCTIONS
OF VICTORIAN WOMANHOOD: ELIZABETH GASKELL AND
THE PAINTED LADIES .............................. 60
CHAPTER 4 STEPPING INTO THE PICTURE: IMPRESSIONIST
AESTHETIC IN THE WORK OF HENRY JAMES AND
JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER ......................... 111
CHAPTER 5 MOTHER AND THE BEAST: SURREALIST IMAGES
OF DESIRE IN DJUNA BARNES AND DOROTHEA
TANNING ....................................... 182
CHAPTER 6 WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? THE PROBLEMATICS
OF A POSTMODERN ANALOGY ................. 231
APPENDIX COPYRIGHT PERMISSION FORM .......... 258
Permission to Use Copyrighted Material .......... 259
BIBLIOGRAPHY .............................................. 260

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Artist/Title/Collection</th>
<th>Plate/Plate No.</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>William Hogarth. Marriage à la Mode,</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>William Hogarth. Marriage à la Mode,</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>William Hogarth. The Four Times of the Day,</td>
<td>1, &quot;Morning&quot;</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>William Hogarth. A Harlot’s Progress,</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>William Hogarth. A Harlot’s Progress,</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Charles Alston Collins. Convent Thoughts</td>
<td></td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>William Lindsay Windus. Too Late</td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Leopold Augustus Egg. Past and Present</td>
<td></td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Richard Redgrave. The Outcast</td>
<td></td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>James McNeill Whistler. Symphony in White No. 1: The White Girl</td>
<td></td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>James McNeill Whistler. Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket</td>
<td></td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Edward Burne-Jones. Phyllis and Demophoön</td>
<td></td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>James McNeill Whistler. Arrangement in Grey and Black: Portrait of the Painter’s Mother</td>
<td></td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>James McNeill Whistler. Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 2: Portrait of Thomas Carlyle</td>
<td></td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>James McNeill Whistler. Nocturne in Black and Gold: Entrance to Southampton Water</td>
<td></td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Claude Monet. Impression: Sunrise</td>
<td></td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>James McNeill Whistler. Arrangement in Black: Lady in a Yellow Buskin</td>
<td></td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>James McNeill Whistler. Arrangement in White and Black</td>
<td></td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Dorothea Tanning. Interior</td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Dorothea Tanning. Eine Kleine Nachtmusik</td>
<td></td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Dorothea Tanning. Palaestra</td>
<td></td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Dorothea Tanning. Maternity III</td>
<td></td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Dorothea Tanning. Maternity II</td>
<td></td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Dorothea Tanning. Maternity</td>
<td></td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Dorothea Tanning. The Blue Waltz</td>
<td></td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Dorothea Tanning. Tableau vivant</td>
<td></td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I appreciate more than words can say the patience of my family—Rick, Holly, Julie, and Brian—who have endured through tumultuous times, somehow, to the end. I extend my thanks as well to the members of my dissertation committee who supported my project from the beginning and who never failed to offer much-needed encouragement. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the inspiration of JB whose words and music helped me to reason with hurricane season.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The battle between the pen and the brush, the conflict between word and image, the struggle for superiority which in the Renaissance was termed paragone by Leonardo da Vinci—such has been the status of the relationship between the "sister arts" of poetry and painting since the eighteenth century. Although seeming to contradict the sisterly symbiosis of the ancient tradition of ut pictura poesis, the notion of the paragone more accurately describes the complications inherent in an analysis of the sister arts analogy. The idea that "painting is mute poetry and poetry is a speaking picture," a phrase attributed by Plutarch to Simonides of Ceos, long ago provided a means for the recognition of a chiasmic relationship between the verbal and the visual arts, supporting a tradition of ekphrastic poetry and literary, narrative painting which cited as its heritage a practice stemming from the ancient Greeks. The term ut pictura poesis, literally "as a painting, so a poem," can be traced to Horace, who first uttered the statement in relation to the critical examination of painting. As Jean Hagstrum has pointed out, however, the
phrase has come to mean more than Horace's original intention which was to imply, in Hagstrum's words, that some paintings, like some poems, "can bear repeated readings and close critical examination"; the later proscriptive interpretation, "Let a poem be like a painting" has little basis in the original (9). But the idea caught on and, attached to the dictates of mimesis advanced later in Horace's text, became the foundation for a long critical tradition of analysis of both the extent and limitations of affinity between the verbal and the visual arts. Horace's view of mimesis, imitation relating neither to the Platonic ideal nor to the Aristotelian transference of nature, alludes rather to the imitation of literary models as well as to the imitation of life and of the natural object (10). For Plutarch, imitation became a link between art and reality which was later extended to embrace the concept of literary enargia, the power of verbal imagery to create a vivid visual mental picture. Attempts by Roman writers of poetry and prose to create enargia came to define much of the literature of the time, a manifestation of the skill taught in the schools to create visual images through verbal description (28).

By the Renaissance, the pictorialist tradition had been clearly established. The recovery of ancient texts brought Horace to the modern world, and the multiple repetitions and translations of ut pictura poesis made it a key concept in
Renaissance criticism (Hagstrum 62). Yet it was because of the many translations of Horace’s original phrase (usually taken out of context) that its meaning began to shift. What had been an analogy of similitude between visual and verbal became an argument for singular superiority, opening the door for the paragone. Renaissance painters claimed that painting was superior in its mimetic function to poetry because it acts on the "most noble" sense of vision. They consequently altered the meaning of ut pictura poesis to imply that poetry should strive to be like painting while at the same time indicating their belief that words are pictorially insufficient. The notion that painting should be considered a higher art form than poetry was somewhat ironic, however, as painters continued to use poetry as inspiration for the subjects of their work, and many painters were in fact also poets. The writing of pictorial verse flourished as well, an indication that poets were undaunted by claims of insufficiency and that they continued to endeavor to paint a true verbal picture.

Painting and poetry in the seventeenth century became more entwined with the evolution of the emblem as a key element in both arts, one that served to draw the two closer together. Painting came to rely more upon literary texts than natural scenes as its objects of mimesis. Ronald Paulson has observed that the history of art is "to some extent an account of the different texts chosen by the
artist" who would develop "some aspect of the meaning that is significant to himself or his patron, or shows off his own particular (or personal) way of illustrating a text" (E&E 12). Sometimes the artist would rearrange the elements of a text into an allegory, the individual elements converging into an "easily understood topos," a "concept, illustratable by a variety of visual commonplaces-- traditional poses, gestures, relationships that have come to be associated with the concept" (13,14). W. J. T. Mitchell describes the use of such topoi as "a rhetoric of history painting complete with a language of facial expression and gesture, a language precise enough to let us verbalize what depicted figures are thinking, feeling, or saying" (Iconology 41), a practice which evolved into the more complex and more specifically defined emblematic tradition. The emblem, in Hagstrum's words, came to express "the union of body and soul, picture and word, sense and intellect," where each art "exchanges with the other its own proper quality" (SA 97); it was, in essence, the pictorial expression of a distilled quality or aspect of life united with an attached verbal representation. The iconography presented in a book of emblems such as Cesar Ripa's Iconologia became a reliable pictorial lexicon for both the creation and reading of visual texts.³ Emblems were frequently invoked within history paintings to encourage an analogy to the meaning of the original emblem and in poetry
to recall not only the emblem but the later paintings associated with it. Although, as Hagstrum points out, emblematic pictorialism may not have been a characteristic of the seventeenth-century English metaphysical poets (113), it remained key to English painting through the early eighteenth century.

The eighteenth century is where this study begins, and I present the aforesaid history as the groundwork for an examination of critical theory which since the eighteenth century has developed out of the historical tradition. Although this study focuses on analogies between painting and the novel, poetry, as the literary subject of *ut pictura poesis*, informs the discourse of all early, and many contemporary, critical approaches and must therefore be addressed in any discussion of sister arts theory. Moving from poetry to prose is not a giant leap, however, since any discussion of pictorial poetry can be adapted to similar situations in pictorial prose. A greater step occurs in the movement through time, from the eighteenth century to the late twentieth, as pictorial values evolve. Such evolution will be traced in detail in the following chapters. Before moving on, however, I would like to present an overview of the critical discourse that informs my discussion.

A discussion of the eighteenth century must begin with Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-81), a German philosopher whose treatise on poetry and painting continues to inform
critical discourse in sister arts studies today. Originally published in 1766, the Laocoon was Lessing’s attempt to solve the problems inherent in the discourse of ut pictura poesis since Simonides first uttered his chiasmic phrase. But Lessing’s treatise served the opposite purpose; rather than resolving the question of ut pictura poesis, Lessing intensified the question of difference. In chapter sixteen of the Laocoon, Lessing writes the words that were to lead to the critical acceptance of an irreconcilable difference between the arts:

if it is true that in its imitations painting uses completely different means or signs than does poetry, namely figures and colors in space rather than articulated sounds in time, and if these signs must indisputably bear a suitable relation to the thing signified, then signs existing in space can express only objects whose wholes or parts coexist, while signs that follow one another can express only objects whose wholes or parts are consecutive. (78)

By identifying "objects which exist in space" as "bodies" and "objects which follow one another" as "consecutive," or objects which exist in time, Lessing effectively limits the parameters of artistic expression in his proscription that "bodies . . . are the true subjects of painting" while "actions are the true subjects of poetry" (78). Because painting "can use only a single moment of an action" and poetry "in its progressive imitations can use only one single property of a body" Lessing argues that one art cannot contain the other--that poetry cannot be like painting, and, in fact, that it reverses Leonardo’s
propensity for the superiority of painting.

Despite the apparent finality of Lessing's argument, and after a brief hiatus of discussion in the years following the publication of *Laocoön*, the search for the key to the sister arts analogy has been in the twentieth century a dynamic one. Drawing from such fields of study as psychology and linguistics and from such schools of theory as marxism and feminism, the terms of debate have shifted from a question of validity to one of method. It is rarely questioned that a relationship exists between the arts of poetry and painting; the discourse centers rather on how they relate and at what points they intersect. No longer concerned with whether or not the analogy can be drawn, the focus of discussion is now on finding the proper tool to do the job—on finding a single theory broad enough to encompass the analogy in all its historical and formal manifestations. The problem arises, however, that just as there are variations in theoretical approaches, there are variations in terms of the analogy itself. Nothing remains static; with changing times come changes in cultural ideology and aesthetic theory as they are both reflected in and affected by the world in which they are embedded.

Beginning with Lessing, and moving forward through the twentieth century, the primary focus of the analogical intersection between the arts has been through a semiological lens. Although a formalist at heart, Lessing
nonetheless uses the terminology of sign theory when he refers to the "signs" of painting and poetry—namely "figures and colors in space" and "articulated sounds in time" respectively—which must "indisputably bear a suitable relation to the thing signified" (PT 78). The linguistic theories of Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Pierce, among others, later influenced the thinking of such seminal theorists as Ernst Gombrich and Nelson Goodman in their application of semiotics to the visual arts as a means of drawing a connection between literature and visual art. The semiotic approach has since been embraced as a mode of discourse by many contemporary art historians, including such theorists as Wendy Steiner, Norman Bryson, and W. J. T. Mitchell. This is not to say that everyone who discusses art in terms of the sign, signifier, and signified agree upon either their use or their interpretation, but the terminology provides for a common vocabulary. The approaches to the discourse are as numerous as its participants. Distinguished by the varying degrees by which they privilege such qualities as mimesis, hermeneutics, formalism, perceptualism, and historicism, contemporary critics continue to seek the single most valid means of drawing together literature and the visual arts.

Mitchell distills the terms of the debate into the following question: "Why do we have this compulsion to conceive of the relation between words and images in
political terms, as a struggle for territory, a contest of rival ideologies?” (Iconology 43). It all comes down, after all, to a concern with the reflection, "within the realm of representation, signification, and communication, [of] the relations we posit between symbols and the world, signs and their meanings" (43). The key here for Mitchell is the human interpretation, the "relations we posit," rather than the acceptance of the sign as a natural presence. Unlike the Perceptualist tradition (Wolfflin, Riegl, Panofsky, Gombrich) which, in Bryson’s words, "omits or brackets the social formation" by viewing the work of art in isolation as a record of individual perception, semiotics allows art to return to the social realm ("Semiotics and Visual Culture" 63). When painting becomes "an art of the sign" it becomes "an art of discourse," making it an active voice within the "social formation" (66). By assigning painting a semiotic role in social discourse, Bryson argues that it participates in the definition, not merely the reflection, of the culture. The picture we see is informed by the existing social and economic structure, not merely by the perception of an isolated artist. Mitchell takes Bryson’s argument a step further when he argues that we must "historicize" the contest between image and word, that we "treat it not as a matter for peaceful settlement under the terms of some all-embracing theory of signs, but as a struggle that carried the fundamental contradictions of our culture into the heart
of theoretical discourse itself." The point, for Mitchell, "is not to heal the split between words and images, but to see what interests and powers it serves" (Iconology 44).

Although Bryson and Mitchell inform my approach to the analogies of image and word that form the body of this dissertation, I find that a strict adherence to a single approach (in this case an historicized semiotics) is insufficient to fully explore my subject. The word "analogies" in my title was chosen purposely to indicate not only the individual analogy drawn between writer and artist in each chapter, but the many different types of analogies between word and image that operate within the specific pairing. While some chapters may focus primarily on cultural or social issues and others are more concerned with questions of aesthetics, every chapter is located within a specific historical and cultural context. In order to draw thorough analogies between my chosen writers and artists, however, I find that I need to go beyond, or perhaps I should more accurately say behind, historicism to formalism and a more traditional method of pictorialism.

In his seminal 1958 study The Sister Arts, Hagstrum defines five points of pictorialism. Summarizing Hagstrum very generally, to be pictorial a poem must be "capable of translation into a painting or some other visual art"; the pictorial is visual, but visual detail is not necessarily pictorial; it need not resemble any individual painting or
any school of painting; it must involve a static rather than
an active scene; and its meaning is limited to concept
rather than narrative expression (xxii). The literary
scenes discussed in the pages below for the most part follow
the tenets set out by Hagstrum. But, here again, there is
necessary variation. First, I apply the qualities of
pictorialism to prose, not poetry. Although many of the
passages I have chosen to discuss are in a certain way
poetic, they do function as part of a narrative; in most
cases, however, the passages are ekphrastic in the sense
that they can be removed from the narrative and set aside as
a visual adjunct to the narrative itself. Although
Steiner sees ekphrasis as "signifying motion through a
static moment" to achieve the effect of "an iconic embodying
of stillness" (Colors of Rhetoric 41), most ekphrastic
passages do not function merely as decorative paintings on
the wall. While frequently framed by visual cues within the
narrative—a woman standing in a doorway, for example, or an
outdoor scene viewed through a window—the ekphrasis
nevertheless forms a vital part of the larger narrative as
it steps aside from the narrative with the sense, in Murray
Krieger's words, of a "moment that is outside the temporal
sequence yet somehow contains it all" (219). On this point
James Heffernan agrees when, invoking Derrida, he remarks
that the ekphrastic passage "is quite capable of revealing
or prefiguring its [the narrative epic] most central themes"
(137). The literary use of ekphrasis in poetry or prose transcends the aesthetic to add to the narrative a secondary, iconographic context.

A discussion of ekphrasis leads naturally to the idea of spatial form, the point upon which Lessing made his determination that poetry and painting cannot be analogous. But spatial form plays a vital role in the ekphrastic image, and it can be argued that one of the aspects of pictorial prose arises from the author's use of spatial form. In his seminal 1945 essay "Spatial Form in Modern Literature" Joseph Frank argued, contrary to Lessing's long-standing assertions, that space and time can indeed cross media limitations. Frank applied Lessing's own terms such as "juxtaposition" and "simultaneity"—terms Lessing used only in conjunction with the visual arts—to verbal passages in prose. Using as examples works of modern literature he felt to be spatial—works that, in other words, do not depend for meaning on a chronological narrative—Frank set out to prove that a literary scene can indeed be set in space rather than time. Criticism against Frank was harsh, contending that reading is by nature a diachronic activity while viewing a painting is typically synchronic; and in his recent book written in his defense (The Idea of Spatial Form, 1991) Frank limits (and I believe weakens) his original argument when he claims that he was neither against Lessing nor was he interested in "the old ut pictura poesis problem" but
that he was looking at techniques of spatiality only within the text of certain works of modern literature (74). But many of Frank's original assertions about spatial form remain valid and can be applied to an examination of the **ut pictura poesis** analogy—especially in relation to ekphrasis. And the concept need not be limited to "modern" (twentieth-century) literature. As Mitchell writes:

> I propose, therefore, that far from being a unique phenomenon of some modern literature, and far from being restricted to the features which Frank identifies in those works (simultaneity and discontinuity), spatial form is a crucial aspect of the experience and interpretation of literature in all ages and cultures. ("Spatial Form" 274)

In his conception of spatial form Mitchell makes it clear that spatiality and temporality are neither antithetical nor self-limiting, but are instead interreferential, the terms of one frequently used to define the other.

In early European painting a temporal text was often depicted through a natural use of the spatial plane. The same subject would be repeated in several different areas of the canvas at different stages of life, for example, or at progressive points of an historical event. Space was used to construct a sense of temporal passage. With the advent of perspective in the Renaissance and the accompanying desire to present the painted image as "realistic" the use of repeated subjects fell into disdain. Steiner sees a paradox in the dismissal of narrativity from Renaissance art in the name of realism in that "narrative was inextricably
connected to realism" (23). Painting instead developed new norms for narrativity, primarily that of Lessing's "pregnant moment" as expressed by the marble sculpture of Laocoön. Able to express but one exact point in time the image must capture the moment wherein we can simultaneously read what has come before and anticipate what is to come later. Such is the principle behind the tradition of history painting as well as the later Victorian genre scene. While it can be argued, as Steiner does, that the movement away from narrativity in art began with the disappearance of the repeated subject, the reliance of painting on narrative continued well into the nineteenth century. The impressionist rejection of story signalled a major departure from narrative art at a time when both art and literature moved to a less narrative, more spatial representation--from a focus on plot (what has happened, what is happening, what will happen next) to a focus on character (who this person is, how her character is expressed, how she feels and responds) or, to use Hagstrum's term, content. In the major movements of art and literature in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries, content becomes more important than story, and narrative diachronicity becomes moot.

My emphatic shift from semiotics to spatial form in the preceding paragraphs is not as dramatic as it may first appear. The concept of spatial form is easily subsumed by a semiotic approach. Krieger finds that once we recognize art
as "self-conscious" rather than as a "natural sign," even in the "most apparently static of paintings, time intrudes upon space." Referring to Gombrich's earlier assertion in "Moment and Movement in Art" (1964) that the observer has a "narrative propensity" to "impose movement" on a work of art, Krieger concludes that "We are moving to a semiotic--and hence a verbal--model, in which time invades space in the arts Lessing treated as spatial no less than space invades time in the arts Lessing treated as temporal" (209). And Mitchell finds in ekphrasis an arena where verbal texts "encounter their own semiotic 'others,' those rival alien modes of representation called the visual, graphic, plastic, or 'spatial' arts" but where, in a "lesson of a general semiotics there is, semantically speaking . . . no essential difference between texts and images" (PT 156,161). There are differences in material, of course, and on "the level of sign types," but the dichotomous classification by exclusionary spatial and temporal modes is not a differentiating factor.

In the chapters that follow, I will trace the historical progression of the relationship between painting and the novel through various analogies of word and image. Three of the chapters concern a direct analogy between the paintings of a single artist and the work of one author, showing not only their relationship to each other but to a particular historical and aesthetic "moment"; a fourth looks
at the place of a woman writer in the context of a particular patriarchal artistic paradigm; a fifth examines the difficulty of drawing a direct one-to-one analogy in a contemporary setting—especially when that setting is the eclectic instability of postmodernism. Mitchell has cautioned that because any "theoretical reflection on visual culture will have to work out an account of its historicality, and that will necessarily involve some form of abstraction and generality about spectators and visual regimes," such a study would tend to lead unfortunately toward the development of an "overgeneralized master-narrative" (PT 22-3). I hope to have evaded such a tendency, however, by concentrating on several less typical period analogies. The various movements or schools of art and literature and the artists and writers I have chosen to represent them are not by any means exclusive for their particular period, nor are they necessarily the most representative. In each analogy I hope to accomplish at least three purposes: first, to locate the writer and the artist within a specific cultural discourse; second, to show a direct formal and ideological relationship between the works of both the writer and the artist (or, in the case of chapter three, between the writer and the prevailing artistic paradigm); and third, to illustrate how each reflects and contributes to the aesthetic of a particular movement or school of art.
Notes: Chapter One

1. The original reads, in context: "Ut pictura poesis; erit, quae, si propius stes, / Te capiat magis, et quaedam, si longius abstes." In Edward Allen McCormick's translation: "Poetry is like painting: one work seizes your fancy if you stand close to it, another if you stand at a distance" (Laocoon xii).


3. Iconologia, originally published with illustrations in 1603 (an earlier edition had appeared without illustrations in 1593) by Cesar Ripa, is, in Emile Mâle's words, "an illustrated dictionary of allegories where the author teaches you how to personify abstract ideas" (qtd. in Gordon 53). Until Mâle's 1927 revelation of his discovery of the book in the library of the Roman College (now the National Library of Italy), Iconologia, well-known in the eighteenth century, had been virtually forgotten by the twentieth.

Although not the only iconological dictionary published in the Renaissance, Ripa's Iconologia exemplifies the form in its emblematic representation of such allegorical abstractions as Truth, Beauty, Justice, etc. Each emblem appears as a single figure surrounded by or holding in the hand representative objects associated with a particular trait. The images serve as a way to "read" allegorical painting through their association with the figures in the painted image. As late as the eighteenth century artists relied on the spectators' familiarity with traditional iconology which they continued to use to infuse deeper meaning into their work. See D. J. Gordon, The Renaissance Imagination 51-56.

4. Bryson discusses the limitations of Perceptualism in terms of "the natural attitude" in chapter one of Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze (1-12). He argues, rather, here and in "Semiology and Visual Interpretation," for an approach that is both historical and materialist, yet at the same time he refutes the camp of the Historical Materialists (identified most closely with Marxism). Mitchell, on the other hand, comes close to embracing a clearly Marxist perspective. Both Bryson and Mitchell, however, agree that to be valid semiotics must be historically referential.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
5. Mitchell's concerns extend beyond the semiotic analogy. He deals as well with spatial form, discussed below.

6. For a thoroughgoing discussion of ekphrasis, see Murray Krieger Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign for whom ekphrasis becomes a near-equivalent to spatial form, and James A. W. Heffernan, Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery who defines the term in its simplest sense as "the verbal representation of visual representation" (3). Heffernan disagrees with Krieger's broadly formalist treatment of ekphrasis as "a way of freezing time and space" as well as with Steiner's definition as "the verbal equivalent of the 'pregnant moment' in art" (5). See also Steiner, Pictures of Romance (13-14) and Mitchell, Picture Theory (151-81).
CHAPTER 2

WRITING THE PICTURE:

HOGARTHIAN PICTORIALISM IN THE NOVELS OF TOBIAS SMOLLETT

In the eighteenth century, when painters began to relinquish the traditional elements of Renaissance art, emblem and allegory, in favor of the more familiar narrative style of modern history painting, the tradition of ut pictura poesis jumped its poetic boundary to add a new literary form to the paragone: the novel. Popular writers such as Henry Fielding, Laurence Sterne, and Tobias Smollett adopted the pictorial enargia of the painted image into their prose to evoke the eye of the reader virtually to see the character or narrative situation. Because painting had turned away from the strict depiction of emblematic biblical and classical narrative, writers of the modern novel could borrow images and scenes of contemporary life from the visual arts for their own fictional panoramas. Such modern artists as Thomas Rowlandson and William Hogarth were well-known for their portrayals of everyday life, and writers invoked the pencil of Hogarth in particular when language seemed insufficient to express a vivid facial expression or an unusual physical trait, or, frequently, a profoundly
visual (and usually humorous) predicament. As Ronald Paulson has acknowledged in *Emblem and Expression*, "Hogarth was the pure artist of the time, doing with visual language" what the novelists were trying to do "with the faulty vehicles of words" (49). With sight taken as the primary sense, the visual image maintained supremacy over the written word as a means of communication, and Hogarth was more than aware of the discrepancies between "the name and the thing named, . . . of the limited meanings of a word and the unlimited significance of the object designated" (49). For the writer to invoke the painter, therefore, was to indicate a continued dependence on the visual to explicate the verbal. On the other hand, literature had its own influence on the visual arts: its presentation of contemporary themes allowed the artist to abandon traditional subjects to pursue in his own medium the images and stories of modern life.

An analogy has often been suggested between the art of William Hogarth and the novels of Henry Fielding, an analogy founded primarily on Fielding's complimentary reference to Hogarth by name in the preface to *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and in Hogarth's response in his print *Characters and Caricaturas* (1743) where, as Martin C. Battestin notes, Hogarth actually repaid the compliment twice, both in the caption and within the print itself ("Pictures of Fielding" 8-13). In his 1948 study, Robert Etheridge Moore cited
several areas of similarity of character and incident between Hogarth and Fielding, and also noted the direct influence of Hogarth's imagery on Fielding's style. And in 1981, Peter Jan de Voogd argued strongly for a Hogarth-Fielding analogy based upon affinities in style and ideology, as well as in the many mutual references found within the works of both. Paulson has identified 1728 as the beginning of the relationship between Hogarth and Fielding, the year of Fielding's publication of The Masquerade, which Paulson believes to have been directly inspired by Hogarth's Masquerade Ticket. In his famous preface Fielding describes Hogarth as his counterpart in the visual arts and claims to adopt Hogarth's artistic practice by divorcing the burlesque from comedy in literature as part of an attempt to elevate the lowly form of the novel to the generic level of the epic, just as, according to Fielding, Hogarth had raised the depiction of character above that of caricature (xxiv-xxxv). Fielding's theory of character accords well with that of Hogarth, who was responding to charges that equated his work to what he considered a lower art form, that of Italian caricature. Fielding sought to raise the status of the novel just as Hogarth had taken the already established aristocratic form of history painting and tried to democratize it. Whereas the replacement of biblical and mythical scenes by realistic modern characters and events served to transform history painting into a
contemporary, middle-class genre, other representational changes could work on the contrary to raise the level of the comic novel from a mere burlesque into what Fielding calls "a comic epic poem in prose" after the lost comic epics of Homer (xxxi-xxxii). Both Fielding and Hogarth publicly fostered a symbiotic influence that would serve to further the analogy between the novel and modern history painting, yet their affinity relies more on teleological approximation than ideology. Fielding's emphasis on epic in fact distances him ideologically from Hogarth, who, rather than to cling to ancient models, meant to break from tradition in order to create a composite modern form.

Whether or not Fielding failed to recognize that he and Hogarth had actually set out to accomplish different goals, he consistently promoted the analogy between himself and Hogarth in calling upon the "inimitable pencil" of Hogarth when he wanted to illuminate a direct reference to a specific Hogarth print or when he thought that a particular facial expression was especially characteristic of Hogarth. No doubt Fielding in his novels aimed to represent the kind of visuality Hogarth accomplished in his prints, and he did succeed in creating scenes of realistic characters reacting to real-life situations. Here, however, the analogy begins to weaken. Paulson tells us that Fielding understood the "operation" of Hogarth's progresses and that he put it into practice in Joseph Andrews, "in which delusions are
constantly being exposed, though dreaded consequences are avoided" (Life 1:468). The claim is true as far as it goes since the general movement of the story, the subject matter, and the Bakhtinian use of contemporary reality to create comedy all correspond to the literary aspect of Hogarth's technique.

And yet, Fielding rarely accomplishes in his prose fiction a truly visual Hogarthian scene. Fielding writes a sustained narrative incorporating relatively well-developed but not individualized central characters who play an integral role in the action of the story. To support the assertion that Fielding has understood the "operation" of Hogarth's series in his prose, Paulson describes the movement of Fielding's narrative in this way:

Fielding's picaresque, with the mediation of Augustan ideas of unity and economy, gives the impression of being single-minded, a straight line in which intensity of gaze makes up for variety. Every detail or encounter contributes to the development of an argument concerning the relationship between greatness and goodness or form and feeling; the narrator's gravely ironic stance makes the reader aware at every step of an author standing between him and the material, preventing any irrelevant information from reaching him . . . . (Satire 177)

Yet it is precisely here that we find several essential points which differentiate Fielding's visual sense from that of Hogarth. While Hogarth's series move in a linear fashion with a focus on the main character[s], they also include activity and characters that serve as a secondary locus of satire. In Marriage à la Mode (1745), for example, plate
three (figure 1) not only illustrates the need of a treatment for syphilis but serves also as a satire on the practice of medicine by quack doctors. While it advances the linear action of the series as a whole, the scene is both active and interesting when it stands alone. From the licentious movement by the skeleton in the closet, to the machines in the left foreground (more for torture, it appears, than for healing!), to the assortment of strange objects that line the wall overhead (including a crocodile on the ceiling), our gaze is free to wander, stop, examine and interpret the unique environment Hogarth creates for his protagonist. An abundance of visual detail augments the action at the center of the print, where the central drama of the earl and the results of his sexual escapades is rendered. Unlike Fielding’s "Augustan ideals of unity and economy" where "intensity of gaze makes up for variety," Hogarth presents us with a profusion of activity extending the parameters of the linear progress.

Another point of difference lies in the sense of "author" as mediator between the reader, or beholder, and the material. Hogarth’s prints are relatively unmediated. Our eyes are free to take in every pictorial detail and arena of action within the print. This is not to say that Hogarth does not guide our gaze through the visual narrative, but rather that we are free to explore at our leisure all the nooks and nuances of the scene. It is as if
we were on the inside poking about, able to explore our surroundings before moving on. Yet where we are not integrally involved in the scene, we are not actually a part of the action as are such central characters of Fielding's as Tom Jones or Joseph Andrews. It is as though we were instead a minor character, able to observe and report the scene in all its detail from a closely involved point of view, where we are able to react rather than be acted upon.

When we look beyond the more obvious points of relationship between Hogarth and Fielding--Fielding's direct appropriation of character and incident and his understanding of the basic working of a Hogarth series--we find that the analogy ends unsatisfactorily at the formal level. Although Fielding owes much to Hogarth's influence, he rarely achieves the visual acuity of a Hogarth print. Tobias Smollett, on the other hand, often does, leading to a naturally more fruitful analogy. Paulson unintentionally has provided a key to the relationship between Smollett and Hogarth in his identification of Smollett's "weakness":

Smollett's [satire] is centrifugal, away from the hero and toward a general exploration. Moreover, the central "I" who is seeing, being acted upon, and reacting produces a heightened reality. . . . He appears to be in the very middle of the chaotic action, describing what it feels like, while Fielding's normative and controlling narrator is on the periphery. . . . With Smollett's lack of detachment . . . comes a much greater sense of immediacy, or sensuous contact, almost totally lacking in Fielding's novels . . . . ([Satire 178])

In a Smollett novel, the reader assumes the point of view of
the central character (or, in the case of Humphry Clinker, of the character who, as current letter-writer, is central at the time) without the author’s mediating presence. Here the character often assumes the role of the beholder of a visual work of art. Guided by the character rather than by the author, we are able to peruse the written scene as we would a painting, taking in all the peripheral objects and information because we are at the center looking out through the eyes of the character. Our gaze is guided but also diffuse. As in a print by Hogarth, the periphery becomes as important as the central action. J. Paul Hunter writes that "Smollett has more of the satirist’s interests in confessional and exhibitionism . . . but here too are clear instances of the novel’s tendency to try to get all of life by poking into the crevices and letting the nooks and crannies pop into view" (39). In a word, Smollett is, like Hogarth, ekphrastic; each scene is separate and complete within itself, yet contributes to the overall sense of the narrative. The satire can be more cutting and the characters better illustrated when the focus is more diffuse.

Smollett presents his protagonists’ progress through a succession of dramatic vignettes, each related to the other by a thematic moral thread. Each has its own drama, created through caricature, verbal expression, and the spatial quality of the action. The descriptive language is active
as well as precise; in Jerry Beasley’s words, Smollett’s description "throbs with energy and feeling" (153). Throughout his picaresque novels the protagonist travels from place to place, meeting interesting and unusual characters along the way. The ancillary characters rarely influence the linear action of the novel but serve instead as the occasion for Smollett to briefly suspend the narrative in order to present a panorama of character and incident, where we are momentarily allowed to view the periphery and to witness an expanded arena of action and satire. Smollett’s ekphrastic scenes are never static, and nowhere is the technique more skillfully used than in his final novel, The Expedition of Humphry Clinker (1771).

Humphry Clinker is an epistolary novel and borrows more from the tradition of the travel book than do the sustained narratives of Smollett’s earlier picaresque novels. Because the novel centers on the travels of the Bramble party, and especially on the people they meet and the places they visit, Smollett presents many scenes of local color and character. The novel is textured in such a way as to present what Beasley calls "composite pictures" of character, scene, and action (175). Aside from the five principal letter writers, most of the characters in Humphry Clinker appear as subjects in one or two letters, that is, as figures in isolated scenes, and then, having served their function, they disappear. The pictorial quality of the
novel arises from the ekphrases that occur when members of the Bramble party stop to observe the scenes around them. Although the Brambles do not always become involved in the action, neither do they become static, a paradox that Beasley has termed "dynamic stasis" (175). Through such a technique Smollett creates a novel that is artistic in its underlying design. A representative episode from Humphry Clinker illustrates the technique. In a scene described in Jery Melford's letter of September 12, the Bramble party stops at a Scottish inn while waiting for their carriage to be repaired. Looking out the window they witness a scene that might easily be drawn from Hogarth. An old man is at work paving a street when a well-dressed stranger arrives on horseback. The stranger stops, gives his horse to the innkeeper, and asks the old man about his family. The old man tells him about his sons, that the eldest and youngest have gone to sea and that the second is locked in the prison across the way for his father's debts. While they talk, a young man extends his head between two bars of the prison window and immediately recognizes the stranger as his elder brother. With that, the young men's mother runs out of a house adjacent to the prison and they embrace. From the spatial arrangement of the scene to the dramatic activity, Smollett captures recognizably Hogarthian qualities.

An examination of the opening sentence of the passage reveals Smollett's ability to use verbal indexes to create a
sense of atemporality and spatiality:

--As we stood at the window of an inn that fronted the public prison, a person arrived on horseback, genteelly, tho' plainly, dressed in a blue frock, with his own hair cut short, and a gold-laced hat upon his head. (254)

The opening clause, "as we stood," indicates simultaneity, and Smollett's use of the deictic mode gives the scene a sense of what Norman Bryson calls "relative temporality," which serves to draw in the reader as part of the "we." The following phrase, "at the window," places the "we" in space. The window itself serves a dual purpose: first, the reader becomes aware of the location of the Bramble party in the scene; second, the window becomes a frame for the action that is about to unfold outside. The "we" of the opening clause now becomes ambiguous, for the reader as part of the "we" witnesses the scene outside the frame of the window, while simultaneously watching the Bramble party as they physically stand at the window. In a very few words the scene is ordered in space: we see the Brambles, the window frame, and the arena outside. The opening sentence then begins to order exterior space, or what we might refer to as the space of the empty canvas. We learn that the inn faces a prison and that a person on horseback enters the scene. Visually, the prison would occupy a large space at the center of the canvas, serving as background to the arriving horseman. According to Paulson, the eye of a person "reading" a picture "moves from the lower left and into the
depth of the picture and toward the right" (Life 1:409). And as Jean Hagstrum has pointed out, "It is not necessary to paint out to the four corners of the 'canvas,'" to relate every detail of the scene, because a minor "hint of painterly structure . . . can evoke a train of controlled pictorial sensations" (140). In this case, although Smollett does not specify the direction of the horseman’s entry, we can reasonably place him on our canvas as arriving from the left, the first place our eye would rest. Smollett also presents a brief visual image of the horseman—he has a "blue frock," short hair and a "gold-laced hat." Smollett has chosen just enough detail about the horseman to enable us to visualize him and to determine his social status while maintaining an economy of words. A longer description would occupy literary space, as Mitchell describes it. By keeping the description terse Smollett from the moment of the opening clause maintains the pictorial impression of simultaneity.

Details of the scene continue to unfold as the passage progresses. Other characters arrive on the scene, and, since the novel is by nature a temporal medium, we view them as they appear, in succession. Even here, Smollett maintains simultaneity through frequent use of gerundives to indicate that one action is taking place concurrently with another: "Alighting and giving," "So saying," "desiring," "thrusting," "bolting" (254). Other verbal cues of temporal
unfolding, such as "at that instant" and "before" also compress the temporal sense of the narrative. It is not that the action unfolds in one moment, of course, but rather that its successive dimension is compressed into a mood of simultaneity. While it is a temporal scene that the Brambles witness, it presents itself pictorially as a scene captured by Hogarth.

To visualize the previous scene more fully, let us now return to the canvas we began to paint earlier, a scene framed by the sash of the window through which we see in the foreground a street with its horseman and in the background a prison. If we were to capture the action at the moment of dramatic climax, we would see the innkeeper at the lower left holding a horse, the alighted horseman holding the paving instrument and speaking to the old man, who points toward the prison; while another son's face, wearing a look of recognition, pokes out through the prison bars. From the right, emerging from a house adjacent to the prison, we would see the old woman beginning to run to embrace her eldest son. In the narrative, the frame functions to illuminate simultaneous action and surrounds the entire scene, presenting it in spatial rather than temporal terms.

Whereas Smollett compresses the narrative into a single moment, Hogarth uses framing in an opposed, though complementary manner, to create a sense of narrative time in a pictorial mode. The narrative quality of a Hogarth print
arises from the strategic placement of several temporal arenas of action within the same rectilinear frame. Whereas any number of Hogarth's prints would exemplify this process, Plate five of *Marriage à la Mode* (figure 2) serves as an example. Within the larger frame many smaller frames are placed (picture frames, mirrors, doorways, windows) which, as Paulson explains, serve to "delimit and compartmentalize the scene into pieces of more or less accessible information" (*E&E* 36). Such a division of information permits an abundance of narrative action within a single print, actions which would occur naturally as linear and temporal in a written narrative but which must occur atemporally and spatially in a graphic medium. By arranging events in space on separate areas of the canvas, several actions depicted simultaneously in the picture plane can be read as occurring at different points in time. Hogarth captures the action at the precise moment of dramatic crisis. Aided by the frame, Hogarth simultaneously depicts the action that occurs immediately before and/or after the critical moment. And as our gaze travels across the print, we are able to read the narrative sequence through a series of spatial and temporal cues.

Plates one through four of *Marriage à la Mode* depict the deterioration of the marriage between the young Earl of Squanderfield and his middle-class wife. Although not wealthy, the couple has assumed the trappings of
aristocracy. Both of them have taken lovers (their marriage, arranged by their fathers, was loveless), and the earl has become suspicious of his wife's activities after having heard that she attended a masquerade without him. In a fit of false pride and foolish valor, the earl has decided to interrupt his wife and her lover in their indiscretion.

Plate five serves as the dramatic climax of the series and involves a closet drama of its own. The scene can be read as a sequential narrative, beginning in the foreground with the central event and then moving along to the peripheral planes in the background and along the sides according to the conventions of the perspective box. Before we enter the scene a duel occurs between the earl and his wife's lover, the lawyer Silvertongue. The drama begins with the earl in the center foreground dying of a wound which has just been inflicted by Silvertongue. We see the earl as he falls to the floor while his kneeling wife begs forgiveness. His sword has not yet fallen, indicating that the mortal blow has just been given. Our gaze then moves to the second arena of action, Silvertongue's escape at the window to the left, an action which occurs immediately after the duel. The painting of the prostitute and the tapestry depicting the Judgment of Solomon next capture our attention, allowing for a temporal pause between Silvertongue's escape and the entrance of the authorities at the right, the third arena of action. The paintings also serve to confront us
emotionally; the gaze of the prostitute on the wall is directed immediately at the viewer, as if to ask the beholder to pass moral judgment upon the participants in the drama. By the time the authorities enter, all that remains of the central action is the aftermath, the scene of the dying earl with his penitent wife at his side. As we move through the action of the print, through three distinct arenas of action, our experience is one of temporal succession rather than of simultaneity. Each scene, in other words, presents a different stage in the narrative. Hogarth draws our attention to these temporal stages by placing a frame around each area of activity: Squanderfield's head is centered in the frame of a mirror on the wall behind him; Silvertongue's escape appears in the window frame; and the entering authorities are framed by the open door. Additionally, Hogarth uses the frame to call our attention to other areas that play secondary yet vital roles in the narrative: the toppled chair frames the ticket from the masquerade while the open curtain frames the mussed bed, taking us back in time to the circumstances that caused the current confrontation and to the sexual activity apparently interrupted by the entrance of the earl.

Because of the intimate relationship between painting and literature in the eighteenth century, it is only natural that Hogarth used the book as another model for the expression of a linear sequence. As Hogarth himself noted,
his prints are "designed in series and hav[e] something of
that kind of connection which the pages of a book have" (qtd
in Paulson E&E 44). Each page of the series serves as the
next chapter of the story, so to speak. Wendy Steiner would
argue, too, that the structure of the book serves as a model
for Hogarth's pictorial narrative:

[The book's] division into pages provides a
'natural' discreteness which other pictorial media
are forced to achieve metaphorically (the walls
separating narrative 'rooms') or arbitrarily (the
frames of triptych panels or the modern-day comic
strip). (152)

One might say that the model of the book has a two-fold
function for Hogarth: first, as literal pages in a narrative
series of prints, and second, within the prints themselves
to delineate different stages of narrative action. Hogarth
was, as Paulson points out, "in a sense producing a graphic
version of the page of a book, appealing to the growing
reading public" (E&E 44). Steiner, in citing Witemeyer,
notes that Hogarth's series A Rake's Progress, A Harlot's
Progress, and Marriage à la Mode were "reputedly the first
picture stories in their own right independent of a
previously written narrative" (17). And Sean Shesgreen
agrees that Hogarth "was the first major European artist to
use the technique of narration in a skillful manner . . .
[yet his] use of plot is not as novel as is his use of new
plots instead of traditional stories" (xv). Hogarth
continued to rely on the traditional form of history
painting while making an iconoclastic break from the past by
replacing historical narrative and conventional emblems with the stories and images of his contemporary world.

Character is at the heart of a Smollett novel just as in a Hogarth print. Hogarth creates character through physical appearance, facial expression, and action. His characters, like Smollett's, are rarely static, and the meaning of the print whether moral or satiric emerges from the action of the characters. For Hogarth, working in a visual field, physical image and facial expression must work together to develop a narrative without words; for Smollett, visual images can be evoked only through description (both of physical characteristics and action), dialogue (including occupational and class inflection), and an analogous reference to such visual masters of character as Hogarth. Smollett also invokes Hogarth, providing immediate visual reference for readers who, familiar with the artist, could bring to mind an immediate visual image. Smollett usually limits his allusion to the rare occasion when he needed to illustrate a particular facial expression, whereas Fielding frequently turns to Hogarth to bring to mind a complete character (Moore 127).

Another difference in their innovative appropriation rests in the fact that Fielding often mentions Hogarth in conjunction with his appropriation, while Smollett does not. Moore has argued that Smollett's neglect on this count indicates "a fundamental difference" between his characters.
and those of Fielding, and that Smollett differs from
Hogarth as well because Smollett's characters more resemble
caricatures than "the characters of human life" drawn, as
Moore sees them, by Fielding and Hogarth (167, 181). More
recently, however, George Kahrl, who also calls Smollett a
caricaturist, has employed the term to liken caricature to a
kind of Hogarthian pictorialism rather than to satiric
style. Unlike Fielding, who prides himself on the
expression of character, Smollett translates into language
the visual quality of caricature. Despite his arguments to
the contrary, Hogarth creates through the exaggeration of
recognizable physical traits a technique bordering on
caricature—that is, the depiction of unique characters who
each express a distinctive individuality. Smollett
translates this sort of quasi-caricature into language
through both physical description and dialogue, so that when
Smollett's characters speak (or write, in the case of
Humphry Clinker) they are as immediately recognizable as
Hogarth's Moll Hackabout or Tom Rakewell (Kahrl 183-85).

The character of Tabitha Bramble from Humphry Clinker
is a case in point. It seems likely that Smollett
appropriated the character from Hogarth's Morning, the first
plate of the series The Four Times of the Day (1738) (figure
3). Physically, the two figures bear a striking
resemblance. The initial physical description is provided
by Jery Melford in his letter of May 6:
. . . Mrs. Bramble is a maiden of forty-five. In her person she is tall, raw-boned, awkward, flat-chested, and stooping; her complexion is sallow and freckled . . . her forehed low; her nose long, sharp, and, towards the extremity, always red in cool weather; her lips skinny, her mouth extensive, her teeth straggling and loose, of various colours and confirmation; and her long neck shrivelled into a thousand wrinkles . . . .

The image is strikingly visual and remarkably reminiscent of Hogarth; and although Smollett could simply have appropriated her physical appearance for the character of Tabitha, the development of her character appears remarkably similar as well. Both Hogarth and Smollett were making a more serious statement not only about the character of this one particular woman but of her type. Hogarth's lady appears remarkably vain--the weather is cold but she ignores it, preferring rather to expose her bony chest and fingers to the weather than to cover herself and her thin but fashionable dress with a warmer garment. She is on her way to church, and her face expresses a superiority to those she passes on the street. She is ignorant of the suffering of those around her; she disregards the discomfort of the page who freezes as he walks behind her nor does she notice the outstretched hand of the beggar to her right. She does, however, notice the pair of lovers in front of her and is offended by their conduct, but it is more out of envy, it seems, than from a sense of moral self-righteousness. The lady believes she should be admired for her superiority, but in fact she is, because of her narrow view of life and lack
of human compassion, less honorable than the poor people who surround her. She suffers from a skewed sense of values, in other words, where wealth and appearance triumph over kindness and empathy.

Smollett paints the character of Tabitha Bramble in much the same way. Our introduction to Tabitha comes in her own words when we read her letter of April 2 to her housekeeper, Mrs. Gwyllim:

> When this cums to hand, be sure to pack up in the trunk male that stands in my closet, to be sent me in the Bristol waggon without loss of time, the following articles, viz. my rose collard neglejay, with green robins, my yellow damask, and my black velvet suit, with the short hoop; my bloo quilted petticot, my green manteel, my laced apron, my French commode, Macklin head and lappets, and the litel box with my jowls. (8)

Tabitha is a static character in an active world, a world which she never allows to act upon her or to enrich her experience. Her life revolves about itself; never does she express a thought outside her own self-interest. As John Sekora has pointed out, Tabitha "is concerned solely with her possessions. In none of her letters does she remark journey, place, or emotion. Nothing beyond self touches her . . . . She is oblivious" (258). Tabitha is easily distinguished from the other letter writers in the novel for her misspellings and malapropisms (often sexual in nature) as well as for her lack of interest in the world around her. Like the lady in Hogarth's Morning, Tabitha has no compassion for those less fortunate than she. In his
letter of April 20, Jery Melford relates an incident that had occurred between his uncle Matthew and a poor woman he had been charitably assisting. Matthew had just offered the woman a twenty pound note to help ease the suffering of her dying child when Tabitha burst into the room and snatched the note out of the woman's hand, crying, "Who gives twenty pounds to charity? . . . --Besides, charity begins at home-- Twenty pounds would buy me a complete suit of flowered silk, trimmings and all" (24). Tabitha expresses a similar sentiment in her own letter (of June 14) to her housekeeper after having been informed that her servants had been eating more than their share of provisions: "God forbid that I should lack christian charity; but charity begins at home, and sure nothing can be a more charitable work than to rid the family of such vermine" (153). Again, Tabitha shows herself as self-centered, petty, and vain, and although a pictorial caricature, she, along with Hogarth's lady, is more than a type; she is an individual, a character in her own right.

As characters, Tabitha Bramble and Hogarth's Lady amuse the reader with their silliness. But beyond the surface comedy of the caricature a deeper question must be raised. Ladies such as these were fortunate enough to live in a controlled environment where they were protected from their own folly as well as from unscrupulous men and women who would take advantage of their lack of awareness of the world
around them. Being neither beautiful nor wealthy, they would not readily attract the gigolo; being at least fairly well-to-do, they had families to support them in comfort. Many women, however, were not so fortunate. A woman left to survive on her own in a culture which held few options for a woman without family support had little chance to salvage her life in a socially acceptable manner. Prostitution, unfortunately, became the occupation of necessity.

In the first plate of Hogarth's *A Harlot's Progress* (1732) (figure 4), a beautiful young woman, Mary (later to be known as Moll) Hackabout, has just arrived from the country to find her way in the city. She is shown standing between a bawd, who touches her gently as if to comfort her on her arrival in what would have been rather frightening circumstances, and a clergyman, who sits on a horse with his back turned away from the young woman. It is the traditional posturing of the choice of Hercules rendered iconoclastically. The "choice" remains between Virtue and Vice, but here Vice appears more persuasive than Virtue, and the traditionally strong Hercules figure is supplanted by that of a naive young woman. The iconography loosely suggests that there is a choice to be made, but Hogarth's distortion assures us that for Moll there really are no options. Poor and alone, Moll follows Vice into prostitution.

As *A Harlot's Progress* advances, the character of Moll
visibly deteriorates. In the second plate, things appear at first glance to be going well for Moll—she is seated with a Jewish merchant, a man of apparent means, in a fashionable sitting room. But, as we see from the central image of the toppled table, life for Moll is in disarray. Upon closer examination, we notice that the position of the table repeats the position of the falling Ark of the Covenant in the painting above her lover’s head. Just as Hogarth subverted the iconography of the choice of Hercules in plate one, here he undermines the tradition of history painting by delegating it to a secondary position in the narrative, using it to explain the contemporary situation being enacted below. Paulson points out that Hogarth subverts the iconography within the painting itself by changing the Biblical text, "replacing the divine bolt of lightning with a human priest who stabs Uzzah in the back" (E&E 36). Just as Uzzah is stabbed in the painting, so is the cuckolded merchant whose back is being pierced, through a trick of perspective, by the sword of Moll’s escaping afternoon liaison.

Thus begun, Hogarth illustrates Moll’s deterioration through the "progress" in a similar fashion. By the third plate, the merchant has clearly discarded Moll, leaving her to a much poorer existence. The elegant sitting room has become a single-room apartment with a bed as its primary furnishing; the fine paintings have become cheap prints.
tacked to the wall. We see Moll here seated within the frame of her bed just moments before she is to fall even further; in the next temporal frame (that of the open door in the right background) the magistrates enter to remove her to prison. Plate four shows Moll in Brideswell prison with the other practitioners of her trade; and in plate five Moll lies dying in a tiny, run-down room in the company of her servant (an ugly woman who has lost her nose to disease), two quack doctors, a woman who has come to prepare the corpse—and Moll’s own young son. In the end Moll dies, at the age of twenty-three, a result of her innocent "choice."

Yet Hogarth shows that vice, like life, goes on as the undertaker makes advances toward one of Moll’s sister prostitutes attending the funeral.

Just as Hogarth shows the inevitable "progress" of the innocent corrupted not by choice but by necessity, Smollett illustrates a similar pattern in the story of Miss Williams in *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748). A beautiful young country girl, Miss Williams is duped by a country gentleman who falls for her beauty, declares his love for her, and expresses his honorable intentions, although he is already engaged to another woman. Pregnant and angry, she gathers what little money she can and leaves for the city. Although Miss Williams is, as Donald Bruce describes her, "intelligent, well-educated and spirited," she is "repeatedly tricked, her passionate and impetuous character..."
making her an easy victim, and is ultimately betrayed into prostitution by the only person she can turn to in her friendlessness and poverty" (88-89). After being fooled a second time, Miss Williams encounters a woman strikingly similar to the bawd met by Moll Hackabout upon her own arrival to London. Miss Williams describes their meeting:

(A)n old gentlwoman, under pretense of sympathizing, visited me, and, after having consoled me on my misfortunes, and professed a disinterested friendship, began to display the art of her occupation in encomiums on my beauty . . . insinuating withal, that it would be my own fault if I did not still make my fortune by the extraordinary qualifications with which nature had endowed me. (151)

Smollett's Miss Williams, like Hogarth's Moll, followed the natural course of events for someone of her occupation: eventual commitment to Brideswell prison. Miss Williams illustrates verbally the drama Hogarth presents in Plate four of A Harlot's Progress (figure 5):

Here I saw nothing but rage, anguish, and impiety; and heard nothing but groans, curses, and blasphemy. In the midst of this hellish crew, I was subjected to the tyranny of a barbarian, who imposed upon me the tasks that I could not possibly perform . . . I was often whipped into a swoon, and lashed out of it, during which miserable intervals I was robbed by my fellow prisoner of everything about me, even to my cap, shoes, and stockings . . . . (89)

After her release from prison, Miss Williams follows the same path as Moll--rumors of venereal disease chase away her regular customers, forcing her into the lowest form of prostitution, street walking. But when Miss Williams hits bottom, ill and destitute, Smollett rescues her from the
Figure 5. A Harlot's Progress, Plate 4. Third state. Sean Shesgreen, Engravings by Hogarth: 101 Prints (New York: Dover, 1979) 21.
usual narrative fate of the prostitute, who is commonly "turned out naked into the streets" and made dependent upon "the addresses of the lowest class." She turns to gin to "allay the rage of hunger and cold" which leads her into a "brutal insensibility" finally to rot and die "upon a dunghill" (162).

Miss Williams suffers all but the final fate, having the unusual fortune of being saved by the benevolence of Random who, speaking for Smollett, understands that she is not evil but has only taken the sole option available for a woman in her circumstances. Random admits that he, too, had hardships in his life, but when he compares his life to that of Miss Williams he finds that her situation is "a thousand times more wretched" (161). He realizes that for a man, "if one scheme of life should not succeed, [he] could have recourse fo another, and so to a third, veering to a thousand different shifts . . . without forfeiting [his] dignity of character" (161). Like the priest in Hogarth's first plate who turns his back on Moll's seduction by Vice, so England in the eighteenth century turned its back on the needs of women who did not have "recourse to another scheme of life."

The relation of Hogarth to Smollett encompasses more than their similarities in design and artistic vision. In many instances we can draw a direct ideological and political connection between specific Hogarth prints and
individual scenes in a Smollett novel. One such connection is evident in Hogarth's and Smollett's separate representations of events that occurred during the Oxfordshire Election of 1754. Both Hogarth's series, *Four Prints of an Election* (1754-58) and Smollett's chapters concerning an election in *The Life and Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves* (1762) are based on events of the Oxfordshire election. According to Sean Shesgreen, Hogarth's work "aims to present a generalized picture of a violent, chaotic election" (86). Although we cannot draw a direct pictorial analogy between Smollett's depiction of the election and that of Hogarth's series, they are thematically similar. We do know that Smollett was familiar with the series. James Basker notes that in the April 1759 edition of the *Critical Review* Smollett devoted an article in opposition to an "opportunistic poet who claimed to have Hogarth's authorization for his 'Poetical description of Mr. Hogarth's Election Prints'" (116). Hogarth and Smollett independently satirize the actual election that they each observed, yet, as Basker points out, "one sees detail after detail of correspondence" between them (205).

Smollett's depiction of the election appears in chapters nine and ten of *Sir Launcelot Greaves*. Awakened from his sleep by a loud clatter outside his window Launcelot looks out to see "a cavalcade of persons well-mounted, and distinguished by blue cockades" (71). The
color blue, representative of the Tory faction, becomes an important motif in Smollett's chapters as well as in Hogarth's series. Smollett's horsemen wave a blue banner which declares "Liberty and the Landed Interest," and the phrase reminds us of the banner proclaiming "Liberty and Property" that passes outside the window in the first print of Hogarth's series. In order to illustrate the representative color blue, Hogarth includes the words "True Blue" in two of his prints: in plate three they appear on a ribbon worn by a dying man, and in plate four we see them on a banner carried in the procession. In addition, the color orange plays an important role in both works to represent the opposing Whig faction. Although orange is not a motif in Hogarth's prints, the original paintings depict the Whig supporters wearing orange cockades. As in Hogarth's painting, Smollett also uses orange to represent the Whigs, placing the Whig candidate in a "procession of people on foot, adorned with bunches of orange ribbons." Although both Hogarth and Smollett chose to use orange for the Whig supporters, the actual color motif used in the election was green. Orange was known, however, as the symbol of Protestantism, from its defender, William of Orange. The slogan on Smollett's Whig banner, "Liberty and Conscience and the Protestant Succession" may thus easily be likened to the flag that leans against the wall in Hogarth's print of the Whig celebration (An Election Entertainment) which reads
"Liberty and Loyalty."

William Gaunt has noted that this is one of the many examples where "the novelist and the painter were... close in exuberance... where it might be said that the novel illustrated the picture" (78). Both express the themes of corruption and violence in party politics through active and dramatic comic scenes, sparing criticism of neither Whig nor Tory. In *An Election Entertainment* Hogarth depicts the Whig celebration as an orgy of drunkenness, violence, gluttony, and bribery, a representation of the mob no more genteel indoors than outdoors, when it conducts its riotous commotion. The print is a flurry of activity—drinking, shouting, seduction, music, plotting, and overindulgence. As the more sedate Tory procession passes by the open window, we are struck by a contrast in decorum made even more striking by two particular members of the Whig party, one of whom pours the contents of a chamber pot on the passing parade while the other prepares to attack it with a three-legged stool. In the second plate of the series, *Canvassing for Votes*, the Tories are shown in an outdoor scene that again appears more refined than the celebration of the Whigs. Violence and corruption, however, are no less evident. Bribery, prostitution, and gluttony are similarly featured in the foreground, while in the distance an angry mob storms the Whig headquarters where shots are fired. In these scenes of mob violence, Hogarth
captures Smollett's sentiment that the mob, "the base, unthinking rabble of this metropolis, without principle, sentiment or understanding," hurt rather than helped the political process (Fabel 110). Robin Fabel has pointed out that Smollett held little regard for party labels and came to feel "nothing but contempt for the men that bore them" (104). In *Sir Launcelot Greaves* Smollett criticizes both factions through Launcelot's heated speech to the crowd where he denounces the extremes of both parties while noting the presence of corruption in both.

Just as Smollett and Hogarth express similar political points of view, they also take the same side in the eighteenth-century aesthetic battle between "ancient" and "modern" sensibilities. In chapter forty-four of *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751) Smollett depicts a dinner given by the doctor "in the Manner of the Ancients" (217), a comic culinary representation of a very real confrontation between ancient and modern aesthetics. The character of the doctor (recognized for his penchant for speaking in Latin and quoting Homer) prepares a feast for several coxcombs and for his friend, the artist Pallet. Pallet, a character modeled on Hogarth himself, finds the feast abhorrent, and though Smollett treats the character of Pallet with satiric irreverence, it is clear that Pallet reflects Smollett's, as well as Hogarth's own, modernist ideology. The food served by the doctor consists of
authentic ancient Roman delicacies literally unpalatable to people accustomed to living in the modern world. Pallet calls the Romans "beastly fellows" and claims that he "would not give one slice of the roast beef of Old England for all the dainties of a Roman emperor's table" (222). Pallet, like Hogarth, had little use for either the ancient or the foreign, espousing rather the art and culture of modern England. Smollett, too, supported modern British art and artists through his position as art critic for the Critical Review. According to Basker, Smollett's purpose was to promote "the emergence of a distinctly British school of artists equal to any on the Continent" (10). And Smollett extended his support to Hogarth as well as to such artists as Gavin Hamilton, Sir Robert Strange, and Joseph Wilton. Despite the satiric depiction of Hogarth in Peregrine Pickle, Smollett admired Hogarth for his work in the genre of modern history painting. He extols Hogarth as standing alone, "unrivalled and inimitable" (Critical Review 480).

Unlike Fielding, Smollett saw the novel as an iconoclastic form, a new democratic model divorced from ancient values. Where Fielding adapted the form of the epic to his novels, Smollett found his model in the picaresque, travel books, and letter-writers. Like Hogarth, Smollett discarded the forms of high genre in favor of a modern, more democratic mode. In Hogarth's manner of modern history painting, Smollett found a model for his own work.
Hogarth's ecphrastic scenes of realistic, often frenetic action found their way into Smollett's novels in a way that Fielding, with his technique of a single, sustained action, never assimilated. Fielding understood Hogarth, to be sure, but underlying differences prevented him from translating Hogarth's pictorialism into the deep structure of his novels. Part of the difference is aesthetic, deriving from Fielding's reliance on classical forms. At the same time, Fielding's attempt to force critical acceptance of the novel as a literary form and to extend its scope beyond Richardson's anti-pictorial stance was necessary to move the genre forward. By the time Smollett published The Adventures of Roderick Random in 1748, Fielding had already lain the ground-work for the assimilation of modern forms, such as the picaresque, into the developing genre of the novel. Smollett's pictorialism grew out of his extensive combinative use of picaresque and epistolary forms with the travel book. In like manner, Hogarth imposed contemporary narrative and novelistic sequences on traditional history painting to create a more democratized form. Modern aesthetic sensibilities finally make the pictorial relationship between Hogarth and Smollett a closer one than the more frequently noted connection of the artist with Fielding.
Notes: Chapter Two

1. Moore draws analogies between Mr. Wilson in Joseph Andrews and Rakewell in A Rake's Progress; and between Mrs. Bridget Allworthy and Thwackum in Tom Jones to the lady in Morning from Four Times of the Day and the correctional officer in Brideswell prison in A Harlot's Progress. For a complete discussion of these analogies and others, see Robert Etheridge Moore, Hogarth's Literary Relationships 122-46.


3. The latest version of Paulson's biography of Hogarth (Hogarth. New Brunswick and London: Rutgers UP, 1991) only became available to me during the later stages of revision of this chapter. Upon examination of the new edition, I have found that several of the passages used in this chapter have been altered or deleted. Because the latest Hogarth differs is more a rewriting than a revision, I have chosen to retain the citations from the earlier biography. In the preface to Hogarth, volume 1, Paulson writes that in his "rethinking" of Hogarth he has come to a new understanding of the artist, drawing us, I believe, to more similar conclusions. I am indebted to Paulson for his extensive work on Hogarth and literary pictorialism that made much of this paper possible.

4. For Fielding's references to Hogarth, see Moore, Hogarth's Literary Relationships 122-32.

5. Bryson contrasts the deictic with the aoristic tenses: "The aoristic tenses (simple past, imperfect, pluperfect) are characteristically those of the historian," while the deictic tenses (the present and all of its compounds) "create and refer to their own perspective." According to Bryson:

The wider class of deixis therefore includes all those particles and forms of speech where the utterance incorporates into itself information about its own spatial position relative to its content (here, there, near, far off), and its own relative temporality (yesterday, today, tomorrow, sooner, later, long ago). (88)
6. According to Mitchell, the text itself is a spatial form. As we read, our eyes follow a linear "track" which is "literally a spatial form, and only metaphorically a temporal one" (544).


8. Unlike the negative connotation associated with the term "caricature" by Fielding and Hogarth, Kahrl sees it as positive. He explains:
   Caricature was primarily pictorial. When the subjects and the interpretations of these subjects were assimilated to another medium—to prose fiction—equivalencies in language had to be developed and perfected. Henry Fielding equated caricature with style, mistakenly with the burlesque style which he employed for narrative detachment and comment, not characterization. (183)

9. Moore refers to Fielding's appropriation of the same figure for the character of Bridget Allworthy. He cites a passage from Tom Jones, book IV:
   I would attempt to draw her picture, but that is done already by a more able master, Mr. Hogarth himself, to whom she sat many years ago, and hath been lately exhibited by that gentleman in his print of a winter's morning, of which she was no improper emblem, and may be seen walking (for walk she doth in the print) to Covent Garden church, with a starved footboy behind carrying her prayer book. (Moore 127)

10. For a more complete discussion of Hogarth and Pallet, see Ronald Paulson, "Smollett and Hogarth: The Identification of Pallet." See also Kahrl 194-96. On the other side, De Voogd argues against Paulson's identification, claiming rather that "there may well have been more than one jingoistic, over-dressed, garrulous, semi-literate painter striving to paint in Paris in the modern sublime style" and that if Pallet was indeed to be identified with Hogarth, his novelistic relationship to the character of Spondy (identified by de Voogd with Fielding) would have been closer (11-12).

11. The obvious reference is to Hogarth's print The Gate of Calais, or the Roast Beef of Old England (1748).

12. Art reviews were a regular feature in the Critical Review during the first six months of 1756, but no further reviews appeared after the June issue. Two reviews appeared
in 1757, in the February and May issues; only one appeared in 1758, in March (Basker 113).

13. Although the review was unsigned, Basker attributes its authorship to Smollett. See Basker 39-40, 220.

14. Maurice Johnson first showed that Fielding's Amelia was patterned upon the Aeneid in a book-by-book comparative analysis. See Johnson 139-64.
CHAPTER 3

OH, TO BE A (HOUSEHOLD) NUN!

(DE)CONSTRUCTIONS OF VICTORIAN WOMANHOOD:
ELIZABETH GASKELL AND THE PAINTED LADIES

Nowhere in the history of art and literature in England was the depiction of women more vital to the creation of her role in society than during the Victorian era. Images of women, especially in the visual arts, reinforced more than reflected the current socio-cultural construct of womanhood. Although studies of female sexuality were being made in the scientific community, the topic was virtually ignored in polite society. The exception was the case of the aberrant, the prostitute who was so degraded that she served as a stern warning against wanton feminine sexual desire. The placement of woman at the extremes of the cultural dichotomy, as either saint or sinner, was reinforced in the visual arts through paintings depicting both types—the ideal woman in her role as perfect wife and mother and the "creature" (dare we call her a woman?) who has fallen away from righteousness into a life of evil and deprivation. Such a figure appears as an outcast, sent away from her loving family and friends to life on the streets and
ultimately to an early death from venereal disease or suicide. Similar images appear in contemporary novels and stories as well, developed through conventional narrative patterns.

The female figure as object of the male gaze was nothing new in Victorian England; it was here, however, that feminine objectification became less a reflection of the reality than an ideal model to be emulated. Griselda Pollock argues that a woman's sexual identity is "produced through an interconnecting series of social practices and institutions of which families, education, art studies, galleries and magazines are part" (9). Such a production, Pollock continues,

must of necessity be considered in a double frame: (a) the specificity of its effects as a particular practice with its own materials, resources, conditions, constituencies, modes of training, competence, expertise, forms of consumption and related discourses, as well as its own codes and rhetorics; (b) the interdependence for its intelligibility and meaning with a range of other discourses and practices. (9)

All of these forces work in different ways to impose the acceptance of looking at sexual identity in such a way that "certain kinds of understanding are preferred and others rendered unthinkable" (9), a dichotomy leading to socially constructed moral readings of behavior. Such constructions, Linda Nochlin argues, appeared as "a complex of common-sense views about the world, and were therefore assumed to be self-evident," views "that were shared, if not
uncontestedly, to a greater or lesser extent by most people," male and female (13-14). Ideas about womanhood were less frequently related to her biological function than to her varied cultural roles identified with such traits as weakness and passivity, sexual availability, and domesticity. Bram Dyjkstra argues that feminine biology, in fact, became the enemy that the male had to conquer. In order to conform to the masculine ideal, woman was required to surrender her subjective desire to become the object of his:

When women became increasingly resistant to men’s efforts to teach them . . . how to behave within their appointed station in civilization, men’s cultural campaign to educate their mates, frustrated by women’s "inherently perverse" unwillingness to conform, escalated into what can truthfully be called a war on woman--for to say "women" would contradict a major premise of the period’s antifeminist thought. (vii)

The message, however, is inherently contradictory--the woman must be sexually inviting, but at the same time she must maintain her purity; she must not, at any cost, succumb to her own sexual desire.

Dyjkstra has identified several such constructs which delineate the inherent contradiction of male desire--for purity as well as sexual availability, for a woman who will fulfill his desire while suppressing her own. In such pictures of women, the painted image of the woman functions as a sign whose signified is not the biological female human being but the ideal Victorian masculine construct of
"woman." Identifying pictorial images according to their defining feminine motif, Dyjkstra locates different manifestations of "woman" as sign within the paradigm of masculine desire. From the "household nun" desired for her purity and devotion to her home and family, to the still pure but sexually inviting invalid, from the self-consciously inviting temptress to the emasculating vampire, Dyjkstra chronicles the various masculine constructs of woman. Most contemporary pictorial representations of woman placed her as object of the male gaze, that of the painter as well as that of the beholder. Women, however, viewed the images as well, images that imposed on the feminine beholder an aspect foreign to her own perception of self. Unable to identify herself in the figure on the canvas, women looked at the art work as a model for feminine appearance and behavior. Idealized, objectified, and silenced, the painted woman, the sign of the masculine ideal, came to define woman herself. As W. J. T. Mitchell writes, a woman is considered "pretty as a picture" when she remains "silent and available to the [masculine] gaze" (Picture Theory 163).

The images of woman most common to the mid-Victorian period (the 1850s and 1860s, contemporary to the work of Elizabeth Gaskell) were those that comprise Dyjkstra's first several categories. One of the earliest, that of the "shopkeeper's soul keeper," reflects a cultural stress on the necessity of absolute moral perfection in the ideal
Victorian woman. Although guidebooks for feminine behavior had been popular for several centuries, new versions began to appear that were devoted primarily to women of the middle class, stressing the importance of "respectability" in the home. It was the self-allocated duty of the middle class, in fact, to lead the moral fray which necessitated the rise of female "respectability." As Jane Flanders has pointed out, the middle class found that by asserting themselves as morally superior they could rise above not only the working class (considered to be "morally loose" by nature) but above the aristocracy (considered "licentious" with its "open cynicism about marriage and sexuality") as well (104). In order to exemplify such moral superiority, one must rise above human shortcomings to a level of perfection few human beings can attain. Because women had the "honor" of being the "sole keeper of man's virtue" it was natural that the responsibility of upholding the virtue of society should rest upon her shoulders (Dyjkstra 9). An excerpt from Sarah Ellis's 1839 treatise exemplifies the personal responsibility delegated to women:

Woman, with all her accumulation of minute disquietudes, her weakness, and her sensibility, is but a meagre item in the catalogue of humanity; but, roused by a sufficient motive to forget all these, or rather, continually forgetting them, because she has other and nobler thoughts to occupy her mind, woman is truly and majestically great.

Never yet, however, was woman great, because she had great requirements; nor can she ever be in herself—personally, and without instrumentality—as an object, not an agent. (qtd. in Dyjkstra 11)
By telling women that they were nothing, that their lives were meaningless outside their duty as guardians of the man's soul, Ellis worked as a mouthpiece for the patriarchal agenda, convincing women that by thinking of themselves in terms of self-effacement and sacrifice they were living up to a feminine as well as to a masculine ideal. The problem, however, was that the ideal was developed not by woman herself but by the male recipient of her devotion. When a woman, therefore, saw herself represented as an object of purity and virtue, she recognized herself as nothing less than more-perfectly reflected.

A painting such as Convent Thoughts (1851) (figure 6), by Charles Alston Collins, will serve to illustrate the masculine ideal of woman as "the essence of unearthly purity and sacrifice" (Dyjkstra 13). Collins focuses the gaze of the beholder upon the figure of a young novitiate dressed in a pale green habit and white wimple. She appears in deep contemplation of an open passion flower which she holds in her right hand, close to her face. In her left hand she carries an illustrated prayer book, held open by fingers placed casually between the leaves. The pages she has marked reveal two significant Christian images, those of the Annunciation and Crucifixion. The book falls partially closed on the image of the Annunciation (marked by a single finger), while the image of the Crucifixion (marked more forcefully with her remaining three fingers) opens directly
to the observer. She stands on a small island in the middle of a pond, among floating flowers and lily pads. The lower folds of her robe reflect in the water superimposed upon two of the fish swimming in the pond. Unlike the other fish, with their bright orange hues, those swimming within the novitiate's reflected robe are white. White Easter lilies, with their full, bell-like blossoms, bend toward her on her right as if seeking her attention; but her gaze falls rather on the small passion flower she holds in her hand. Behind her, an expanse of lawn leads to a high brick wall covered by a row of tall shrubs. Above the wall the sky shines brilliantly blue, but very little is visible. Perspective causes the top of the novitiate's head to rise slightly above the upper edge of the distant wall, into the freedom of the sky. Because the upper boundary of the canvas is rounded, the sky appears as a halo, a semicircle of light surrounding the head of the young woman. The painting is framed in gold, long-stemmed lilies in relief on either side culminating at the upper curve in two fully opened, bell-shaped blossoms.

To the contemporary beholder, *Convent Thoughts* reinforced woman's role as the bride of God who would be, like Mary in her purity, the only suitable vessel for His son. Her contemplative silence, her passive presence (rapt in contemplation, she appears unaware of being observed), and her innocent and fragile beauty invited, in Dyjkstra’s
words, "the mid-nineteenth century male's desire to find in his wife that paragon of self-sacrifice . . . that perfect jewel box for the safekeeping of the male soul, nestled in the walls of the family home" (13). Susan P. Casteras reinforces Dyjkstra's reading, seeing the young novitiate as "a contemporary figure in a hortus conclusus or enclosed garden of feminine virtue" (82). When read in such a manner, images such as Convent Thoughts served to alter the reality of woman from a sexual human being to an object of inhuman(e) perfection, a created image placed upon a pedestal of artificial virtue.

The rich natural and Christian symbolism in Convent Thoughts indicates a battle between the physical and the spiritual, between the pleasures of the flesh and their ultimate renunciation. Falling into the category Dyjkstra has labelled "Cult of the Household Nun," Convent Thoughts shows a woman literally placed into a self-effacing, self-sacrificing, sexuality-denying role--a literal depiction of the metaphoric role of the ideal Victorian wife. Having been forced to deny her sexuality, indeed convinced that she had none to begin with, places her within the Lacanian paradigm of woman as lack. Lacking sexual desire, lacking male power and aggression, she becomes an ideal, on one level, of masculine desire. But, as Collins' painting can be read to suggest, not all women who find themselves living a convent life, either actually or metaphorically, are
suited for the role. Many, such as Collins' young
novitiate, find such a life of denial an inescapable prison
of enforced self-sacrifice.

Looking at Convent Thoughts from a post-Freudian
perspective, however, a different reading of the painting
emerges. It becomes apparent that when the young woman so
pensively examines the passion flower in her hand she
ponders less the Passion of Christ which it symbolically
represents than her own subdued sexuality. Lilies,
traditional symbols of Christian virtue, assert their
presence but she ignores their call to virtue (virginity) in
favor of the lure of the smaller passion flower.
Ironically, the lilies beside her most nearly resemble, in
Freudian iconography, a female receptacle, and serve in this
sense as a reminder of the sexuality they simultaneously
encourage her to sacrifice. The robe of the novitiate,
being a pale, natural green, locates her within nature as it
reflects the green of the abundance of nature around her.
The fish, doubly symbolic, serve not only as an iconographic
symbol of Christ but as embryonic figures, symbols of her
own fertility. The whiteness of the fish reinforces a dual
reading, indicating both of their own immaturity (that they
have not yet attained the brilliant orange of the mature
fish) and the immature sexuality of the young woman, as well
as the purity of soul and body represented by the figure of
Christ.
Collins in this painting presents a dual image of isolation by placing his figure on an island within grounds which are in turn surrounded by a high wall. The small island pictorially represents the metaphoric isolation of a woman placed on a pedestal within the cultural construct of the household nun. The brick wall behind her represents a second level of isolation and functions within a (metaphoric) secular as well as a literal interpretation. Like the actual novitiate's literal isolation, the figurative image becomes forcibly isolated not only from her interior sexual self but from any outward expression of desire. Unlike the flowers and fish that naturally reproduce and flourish inside the garden wall, the young woman must remain passively asexual and passionless. It is not only her body that is contained by the wall, but her soul. Nature tries to hide the unnatural boundary built by man to contain it, but the wall remains an overwhelming presence to the young woman. The pages marked by her fingers in her prayer book iconographically represent her feelings about her confinement: motherhood, represented by the Annunciation, may play a role in her life, but even in the conception of her children, as in the Virgin's conception of Christ, she must maintain her spiritual purity, denying her own sexual pleasure; the book more fully opens onto an image of the Crucifixion, representing her complete (self-)sacrifice. The halo of the sky surrounding
her head represents her not as a child of nature, but as a child of the celestial heavens, a pure, passive vessel of Christian virtue.

Although the idea of the household nun (the visual representation of Coventry Patmore's [in]famous "angel in the house") worked to reinforce the vital significance of feminine virtue, the emphasis in painting moved from virginal purity (the courting of desire for transcendent perfection) to the depiction of passivity seen in a secondary role in the images of the household nun. The evolution was, visually, a subtle one; elevating the value of passivity over that of purity allowed the gaze of masculine sexual desire. Whereas the image of the household nun courted a more purely spiritual response (i.e. the desire for his own wife to exude such virtue), the image of the passive woman one step removed from untouchable virtue may unknowingly invite an unabashed desirous gaze. Removing traces of traditional Christian iconography from the images rooted woman more firmly in the physical world; she maintained her spiritual virtue, however, through her complete lack of awareness. Men could gaze on her image with sexual desire without guilt because she passively allowed it. The message to the female beholder was literally unchanged—purity, passivity, and silence remained her model behaviors; for men, however, the image of woman, while outwardly exhibiting ideal purity, could now
comfortably function as the object of physical desire. Thus images of sleeping women, invalids, and even the dead, depicted woman in pure, passive beauty, as an idealized object of desire.

The "cult of invalidism" or the "consumptive sublime" (to once again borrow Dyjkstra's terms) pictured women "properly trained" and "self-denying" who realized that "true sacrifice found its logical apotheosis in death," the "ultimate sacrifice of her being to the males she had been born to serve" (28,29). Just as visual images of sickly women found their way to the galleries, consumptive women became heroines of the novel. As a result (as life imitates art) women in society came to court a "consumptive look" which was considered to be "evidence of a saintly disposition" (29). So where the man would find an ideal object of desire in the passivity of the sick, dead, and dying, women found a new mirror, the source of a more perfect reflection of themselves as both guiltless objects of desire and as subjects of virtuous self-sacrifice. Invalidism became an external manifestation of self-sacrifice, showing to the world a visible transference of "the essence of her well-being ... the fragile lily of her virtue, to her chosen mate to help revivify his moral energies" (30). Death revealed itself to the woman as a virtue of her subjectivity, creating an image more beautiful than she had been in life, a beauty revealed as a result of
the willing and complete sacrifice of her self. As object of the male gaze, however, the dead woman invites desire through her ultimate, unchallenging passivity. Sickness and early death were, of course, as Christopher Wood points out, "a constant and very real threat" during the Victorian period, but many artists used it as an "excuse" to paint "charmingly pretty" (and ultimately, passive) young women (97). 4

Consumptive, dying, and dead women, while representing an ideal object of desire of the male gaze, did not, however necessarily represent the ideal in Victorian womanhood. Such passivity may have enabled acceptable masculine sexual desire, but the woman whose role in society was proper wife and mother belonged on the metaphoric pedestal with Collins' novitiate—the woman whose saintly perfection was so elevated that her only means of returning to her human state was to fall, metaphorically and pictorially, from that pedestal of unrealistic expectation. Images of Dyjkstra's "collapsing woman," or Beth Kalikoff's "falling woman" present examples of what a woman should not be—but what she can hardly help but become if she were to slip, ever so slightly, off her pedestal of unattainable virtue. In painting and narrative alike, no worse fate could befall any woman than that of the woman who, for whatever reason, fails to maintain her virtue—the woman who has taken a moral fall and must now suffer consequences which may include
banishment, poverty, depravity (prostitution), illness, and, ultimately, death. Although artistic treatments of the fate of the fallen woman elicited public sympathy through images of her victimization, the scenario reinforced the lesson of feminine chastity. She may have been, as Wood claims, "a potent symbol of innocent suffering" (135), but she continued to suffer the consequences.

William Lindsay Windus in his painting Too Late (1858) (figure 7) depicts a woman "collapsing" in both the literal and figurative sense, as she suffers from an actual physical illness which is representationally little more than the physical manifestation of her moral fall. In the painting, a consumptive invalid on an outing stands leaning on a cane when she meets her former lover and the father of her young child, returning "too late" to offer the woman an honest marriage. Although ill and weak, she is not painted attractively as an object of desire for the male voyeur, but serves rather as an example of undesirable womanhood. For the feminine beholder, she exemplifies the negative aspects of succumbing to desire: the child is living proof of her illicit pregnancy while her illness is indicative not only of the state of her soul, but of the element of contagion associated with the "sinful" woman. Her illness does not carry the passive beauty of a woman worn by self-sacrifice, but rather shows a woman poisoned by sin. It is "too late" to save the woman either physically or morally. Her
Figure 7. William Lindsay Windus, Too Late (1858). Tate Gallery, London; rpt. in Christopher Wood, Victorian Panorama (London: Faber and Faber, 1976) 98.
collapse began with her indiscretion, and it is only her cane that keeps this woman from literally collapsing to the ground.

Visual images such as that of Windus are highly literary, offering a narrative scene within the confines of the framed canvas. Not distantly removed from the techniques of history painting, and drawing (not unlike Hogarth) from contemporary context, the didactic mode of Victorian painting emphasizes the stories behind the images. Presenting the spectator with a "head-on view of a pregnant narrative moment" was a technique frequently used to illustrate a domestic, erotic, or otherwise emotionally charged situation (Rosenblum and Janson 372). Such artists as Holman Hunt, Octave Tassaert, and Leopold Augustus Egg depicted women at moments of moral or emotional crisis. Hunt’s *The Awakening Consciousness* (1853), for example, shows a young woman who, having experienced a moment of epiphany while sitting in her lover’s arms, rises dramatically with the revelation that "she has been trapped in a material world of moral evil" (259). In Tassaert’s *The Abandoned Woman* (1852) we see a pregnant woman, obviously contaminated by sin, as she leans fainting against a wall, repulsive to the woman and boy who refuse to come to her aid.

One of the better known pictorial moral tracts on the fallen woman is Leopold Augustus Egg’s triptych *Past and
Present (1858) (figure 8), which Peter Conrad has described as coming nearest to transforming "the Hogarthian moral progress into something like a three-volume novel" (qtd. in Wood 141). The first (central) panel depicts a scene in the family parlor in which the figure of the woman, a wife and mother, lies prone on the floor. In the background, her children build a house of cards, an iconographic representation of the instability of their own household. Her husband stands holding a crumpled letter in his hand, and looks down on her with approbation. The scenes in the second and third panels occur simultaneously several years after the initial action, after the death of the woman’s husband. In the second panel, the two girls, now grown, sit in a small, impoverished room, a result of the continuing stigma of their mother’s earlier adultery. Having been ostracized by their social circle, the girls live alone with little prospect of marriage. Lynda Nead notes that the phenomenon of isolation of the daughters of an adulterous woman, even if their own conception had been within the legal (and moral) boundaries of marriage and not a result of her infidelity, was supported by medical discourse which "defined infidelity in woman in terms of a congenital disease which could be inherited by female offspring" (74). Thus the fall of a Victorian woman was never hers alone. Just as the pure woman was considered the moral stronghold of the family (no house of cards here), the
Figure 8. Leopold Augustus Egg, *Past and Present* (1858), Tate Gallery, London; rpt. in Christopher Wood, *Victorian Panorama* (London: Faber and Faber, 1976) 140.
sinful woman caused its irreversible collapse. In the third panel of the *Past and Present* triptych we find the wretched woman herself as she, homeless by the waterfront, simultaneously observes the same moon her daughters view in the second panel. She hopelessly holds her illegitimate child under her shawl, a child conceived through a sexual encounter some time after her initial infidelity. She has obviously turned to prostitution for survival, indicated both by the child and by her position at the waterfront, where prostitutes not only earn their living but take their own lives by drowning—the most "usual end" for the fallen woman.

Art that was made to serve a moral purpose, however, exaggerated the real fate of the actual fallen woman. That such a woman was necessarily unable to fend for herself in an acceptable manner or that she was impossible to "save" reflects the construct rather than the reality. She may have been banished from family and friends into a life (at least temporarily) of prostitution, but as William Acton has acknowledged, many such women returned "sooner or later to a more or less regular course of life" (qtd. in Auerbach 31). Nina Auerbach argues that Victorian social reformers came to see such a woman as a "victim and survivor . . . limited to a wretched trade by the harsh realities of capitalist economics and sexual power," a woman who turned to prostitution "as a part-time job on the path to eventual
marriage and respectability" (32). Evangelical reform movements and philanthropic establishments such as the Urania Cottage for the rehabilitation of fallen women (established by Angela Burdett-Coutts in 1847), as Kalikoff tells us, "publicized the social problem and offered solutions" to rescue the fallen woman through programs designed to restore her to an honest life (357). But, as Laura Hapke notes, because such societies were usually run by women, controversy raged over the respectability of their operation. The belief in the contagion of the fallen woman—that she would infect the "respectable" woman with her sin—continued to flourish (17).

II

The various "types" of woman, from the angel on the pedestal to the creature in the street, fill the pages of contemporary fiction just as they do the canvases of contemporary painters. Such writers as Dickens, Trollope, Eliot, and Hardy feature in their fiction female characters from the household nun to the fallen woman; but it is in the work of Elizabeth Gaskell that we see each type presented as would be expected of a proper feminine Victorian writer—virtue naturally rewarded, sin naturally punished, the proper end to fit the behavior—only to be subverted by an honest insight beyond the construct into the true complexity of feminine behavior. In Gaskell's early novel Ruth (1853) and her short story "Lizzie Leigh" (1850) we find two
separate renderings of the fallen woman along with their supporters, "household nuns" with a twist. Aina Rubenius points out that Gaskell "was the first among the Victorians to make the fall and redemption of a seduced woman the main theme of a novel," noting that Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859) and Trollope's *The Vicar of Bullhampton* (1870) "appeared later than *Ruth* and show unmistakable signs of influence from that novel" (178), as did Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891). Dickens in the previous decade had created a stir with the character of little Em'ly in *David Copperfield* (1849-50), but her story played a relatively minor role in the scope of the novel. Both *Lizzie Leigh* and *Ruth* concern a woman who has been seduced and has had a child out of wedlock. In each, however, the focus is slightly different: *Lizzie Leigh* is concerned with the mother's anguish in her unrelentless effort to find and support her fallen daughter; *Ruth* deals with the trials and successes of the fallen woman herself. *"Lizzie Leigh" opens on a Christmas morning, upon the death of the family patriarch, Lizzie's father James Leigh. Gaskell dramatically reports his final moments:

> A few minutes before his death, he opened his already glazing eyes, and made a sign to his wife,
by the faint motion of his lips, that he had yet something to say. She stooped close down, and caught the broken whisper, "I forgive her, Anne! May God forgive me." (48)

The couple had been married for twenty-two years, and "for nineteen of those years they had been as calm and happy, as the most perfect uprightness on the one side and the most complete confidence and loving submission on the other could make it" (28). Mrs. Leigh had been the perfect household nun, the ideal wife and mother, morally upright and lovingly submissive. Although she continued to hold the family together after the tragedy of the eldest daughter’s fall three years before, her husband’s stubborn rejection of Lizzie caused Mrs. Leigh to become less submissive. Mr. Leigh was "an upright man . . . hard, stern, and inflexible," and as long as she believed in her husband’s values correct she could continue to submit lovingly to him. But when her daughter needed her support Mrs. Leigh came to resent his insistence on clinging to the cultural prejudice against a woman’s indiscretion. While her husband was alive Mrs. Leigh remained outwardly submissive, but on the inside, for three years the moan and the murmur had never been out of her heart; she had rebelled against her husband as against a tyrant, with a hidden, sullen rebellion, which tore up the old land-marks of wifely duty and affection, and poisoned the fountains whence gentlest love and reverence had once been for ever springing. (48)

Growing to resent her sacrificial and submissive role as household nun in her relationship with her husband, Mrs. Leigh maintained her self-sacrificial status without
resentment by altering her objective. Mrs. Leigh's move from the role of submissive wife to that of mother savior enacts no internal adjustment; she continues to live according to the construct of feminine self-sacrifice—that to live properly as a woman, she must live her life for others.

After the death of her husband, Mrs. Leigh moves her other children to Manchester, Lizzie's last known address. As a daughter of a middle class farming family, Lizzie had been sent to Manchester "in service" but had to leave after two years due to an unmentioned sexual indiscretion. Gaskell never reveals the exact circumstances of Lizzie's fall, telling us only that she was a "poor sinning child" (53). Typical of a Victorian fallen woman narrative, the young woman who had been reared properly by her family loses her virginity when living away from home; typical, too, is her father's response that "henceforth they would have no daughter; that she should be as one dead, and her name never more be named at market or meal time, in blessing or in prayer" (53).

A pictorial analogy to Gaskell's story is a painting by Richard Redgrave entitled The Outcast (1851) (figure 9). Redgrave not only captures the critical moment of the young woman's banishment but also indicates the despair felt by each member of the family as a result of the father's rash action. In the painting, a young woman holding an infant
stands at the threshold of her family home. Her father stands at the door, holding it open with one hand while vigorously pointing toward the outside with the other. The mother and other children dominate the left side of the image, with the mother sitting at a table wearing a look of resigned sorrow. She shows little emotion, which indicates that she must serve as the anchor for the rest of the family. One young daughter, on bended knee, pleads for mercy for her sister from behind the father, arms and hands extended but not quite touching him. Another daughter leans in anguish against a wall, her hands appearing both folded in supplication and clenched in anger. A son, head in his arms, sobbs at the table next to his mother, while a fifth child, younger than the rest, whispers questioningly at his mother’s ear as if not quite sure what is taking place. The father’s anger throws the entire family situation into disarray and misery; as in the household of "Lizzie Leigh," the man’s stubborn resistance to sympathize and forgive not only leads to the further, certain ruin of his daughter but irrevocably harms every member of the family. The question, then, must be raised— with whom lay the greater sin?

Like the young woman in Redgrave’s painting, not only Lizzie Leigh but her siblings are affected by her father’s response to her fall. When three years elapse after Lizzie’s banishment with no word from her, her brother Will assumes that she probably has died, and doubts strongly that
his mother will be successful in her search for his sister. But Lizzie is in fact alive, sustaining herself (naturally) as a prostitute. She had given birth to a little girl but did not keep the child, giving her away as an anonymous "bundle" to a woman she passed on the street--Susan, a young, single woman, living with a drunken father, who took the child in to rear as her "niece." Once in Manchester, Will becomes enamored of Susan, a saintly woman who in every way fills the role of a youthful household nun. Will finds Susan the ideal representation of womanhood from the male perspective, seeing in her a perfect example of feminine virtue:

Oh mother, she's so gentle and so good, she's downright holy. She's never known a touch of sin; and can I ask her to marry me, knowing what we do about Lizzie, and fearing worse! . . . If she ever knew about my sister, it would put a gulf between us, and she'd shudder up at the thought of crossing it. You don't know how good she is, mother! (59)

It is Will, not his mother, who "doesn't know how good she is." He sees her as "holy" because, in his eyes, she has never been contaminated by an association, familial or otherwise, with a woman who has fallen. What Will does not know, however, is that Susan's "niece" is in reality Lizzie's child. She has been "touched" more closely than he can imagine. Ironically, it is her personal sacrifice to the child of this fallen woman that elicits our admiration for Susan, who, having been closely associated with the "sin" of Lizzie Leigh, has done more than simply remain
uncontaminated, and personifies the ultimate self-sacrifice. She is a virgin mother, embodying idealized feminine dichotomy of maternity and chastity. Pure in body, she nonetheless exemplifies the qualities of caring and nurturing so admired in the young mother. She is, for the male, the ideal of the household nun—the woman a young man would choose to marry. For Gaskell, however, Susan's perfection comes rather from her sympathy for her fallen sister and her desire to do what she can to ease her burden—her holiness is her compassion and love.

Overall, the structure of "Lizzie Leigh" lies within the tradition of the Victorian fallen woman narrative. Although Lizzie herself does not die in the end, a sacrifice for her sin must still occur. Here again Gaskell reinforces her vision of feminine holiness as compassion and service rather than non-contamination. One evening after the epiphany that baby Nanny is indeed Mrs. Leigh's granddaughter, Susan leaves the bed she shares with the child in order to attend to her own intoxicated father. Sensing Susan's absence from the bed, the child feels lonely and gets up to search for her:

There was a light below, and there was Susy and safety! So she went onwards two steps towards the steep abrupt stairs; and then dazzled with sleepiness, she stood, she wavered, she fell! Down on her head on the stone floor she fell! (68)

The child dies from her fall, the sacrifice for the sin of her mother. When Lizzie learns of the accident she comes to
see her child and recognizes the significance of her death, as she cries, "Oh, the murder is on my soul!" (69). Only because the child dies is the mother allowed to live; Gaskell clarifies the point for the reader who may have missed it in context:

They took the little corpse (the little unconscious sacrifice, whose early calling-home had reclaimed her poor wandering mother), to the hills, which in her life-time she had never seen. (76)

Lizzie is therefore allowed to live and be redeemed; in fact, she becomes almost saintly in her redemption:

I only know that, if the cottage [where Lizzie and Mrs. Leigh live together] be hidden in a green hollow of the hills, every sound of sorrow in the whole upland is heard there—every call of suffering of sickness for help is listened to, by a sad, gentle-looking woman, who rarely smiles (and when she does, her smile is more sad than other people's tears), but who comes out of her seclusion whenever there's a shadow in any household. Many hearts bless Lizzie Leigh, but she—she prays always and ever for forgiveness—such forgiveness as may enable her to see her child once more. (76)

Because of her fall, Lizzie is literally isolated from the world in a "hidden" cottage, but Gaskell allows her to achieve a holiness similar to that of Susan's. Like Susan, Lizzie is admirable in her compassion; but unlike Susan, who marries Will and begins a respectable life at the old family farm, Lizzie has been tainted and must remain an outcast. Gaskell cannot completely exonerate her fallen woman, no matter how admirable her deeper character may be—no matter how well she lives the rest of her life. Convention demands
that the sinful woman suffer, and the outcome of Gaskell's narrative follows the convention. But while she outwardly reinforces the constructs of the household nun and the fallen woman, Gaskell presents her own moral perspective. Never denying the value of the "good" woman, Gaskell merely expands the definition to include a wider range of complexities. As Rubenius reminds us, Gaskell accepted "the current habit of dividing women mechanically into 'innocent' and 'fallen'"—a dichotomy she would later come to question—yet she still "asked tolerance of, even sympathy for the 'fallen woman'" (180).

Whereas in "Lizzie Leigh" Gaskell begins Lizzie's story after her fall, after the action of seduction and submission has been accomplished, her second novel, Ruth, deals with the young woman's seduction on a personal level, bringing the reader directly into the circumstances of her seduction and submission. Gaskell encourages our understanding of her protagonist as a complex human being by removing her from the conventional black and white dichotomy of fallen woman/angel. Unlike Lizzie Leigh who had the advantage of a family upbringing, Ruth Hilton was orphaned and sent to work as a seamstress in an orphan’s home. Ruth’s seduction begins at a party which she attended in the service of her employer, Mrs. Mason, her duty being to be on hand to repair any gown that may happen to rip during the dance. During the party a young man, Mr. Bellingham, accompanies his
fiancée into the sewing room where he notices the young seamstress whom he compensates for the rudeness of his fiancée with the gift of a flower. In the days following this incident, Bellingham meets Ruth by chance several times; he later begins assisting chance by purposefully meeting her at church and walking with her on Sundays. Ruth, too young and naive at sixteen to realize that she is being seduced, is utterly captivated by Bellingham’s attentions, an innocence which precisely attracts him to her; she, unlike other women he has known, has no knowledge of the power relations between men and women or between classes. For Bellingham, Ruth is the epitome of the innocent woman who has had no contact with sin:

There was, perhaps, something bewitching in the union of the grace and loveliness of womanhood with child. There was a spell in the shyness, which made her avoid and shun all admiring approaches to acquaintance. It would be an exquisite delight to attract and tame her wildness, just as he had often allured and tamed the timid fawns in his mother’s park. (33)

As natural and innocent as a fawn, Ruth "fascinated" Bellingham who was not anxious to enter into marriage with his fiancée nor with anyone else, preferring rather to "take care to please himself" (33). Bellingham admits that he has no honorable intentions toward Ruth, but hopes that "she might be induced to look on him as a friend, if not something nearer and dearer still" (33). His experience with his mother’s fawns has taught him to move slowly so as not to frighten the girl away.
Gaskell later paints Bellingham as a "child playing with a new toy" as he, now confident in Ruth's affections, decorates her in the manner of a Pre-Raphaelite portrait. Already an object of nature in his eyes, she now becomes an \textit{objet d'art}:

He went round, and she waited quietly for his return. When he came back he took off her bonnet, without speaking, and began to place his flowers in her hair. She was quite still while he arranged her coronet, looking up in his face with loving eyes, with a peaceful composure. . . . When he had decked her out, he said: "There, Ruth! Now you'll do. Come and look at yourself in the pond." (74)

In making Ruth "pretty as a picture" Bellingham has effectively silenced her voice of resistance. Having been idealized through her adornment with flowers, she has become an image, passively beautiful, the object of his gaze, to be possessed and controlled by his desire. Taken out of the realm of words, she becomes the visual "other" to Bellingham's speaking "self," representing what Mitchell describes as "a relation of . . . cultural domination in which the 'self' is understood to be an active, speaking, seeing subject, while the 'other' is projected as a passive, seen, and (usually) silent object" (PT 157). The longer Bellingham gazes at Ruth, the more pictorial her image becomes:

Her beauty was all that Mr Bellingham cared for, and it was supreme. It was all he recognized of her, and he was proud of it. She stood in her white dress against the trees which grew around; her face was flushed into a brilliancy of colour which resembled that of a rose in June; the great
heavy white flowers drooped on either side of her beautiful head, and if her brown hair was a little disordered, the disorder only seemed to add a grace. She pleased him more by looking so lovely than by all her tender endeavors to fall in with his varying humor. (75)

Gaskell paints a portrait of Ruth in terms of a painting by Rosetti, a languorous lady surrounded by flowers. Bellingham’s love for Ruth goes no further than his love for her as a decorative object, a work of art over which he alone has control. By presenting the relationship between Bellingham and Ruth in pictorial terms, as beholder and object of the gaze, Gaskell implies that Ruth’s fall occurs as a result of her naive desire to be physically admired. As an upper class male connoisseur, older than Ruth at age twenty-three, Bellingham naturally wields enormous power over the young woman. That he sees her as an objet d’art merely intensifies his control while removing him from any sense of moral responsibility. Yet it is because of Bellingham’s power over Ruth that it is clearly he, and not Ruth, who is ultimately responsible for her fall.

Bellingham and Ruth stay together at an inn, in the midst of a wooded area reminiscent of Milton’s prelapsarian Eden, a scene which changes dramatically for Ruth once her sexual indiscretion is revealed. We are never certain exactly when Ruth’s fall occurs; although Gaskell is explicit in her implication of a sexual relationship, she remains conspicuously mum on the circumstances of Ruth’s physical submission to Bellingham. We never see Ruth and
Bellingham together in their room(s?) at the inn; in the morning we simply find Ruth in the public parlor waiting for Bellingham to "come down." The certainty of Ruth's fall becomes evident when Ruth, having fallen ill herself while nursing her ailing lover, not only finds herself pregnant, but she learns that she has been blamed for having scandalized Bellingham and his family. No longer the beautiful object that had attracted Bellingham's desiring gaze, Ruth has become the object of the scornful gaze of society, as represented by Mrs. Bellingham who "looked at her with cold, contemptuous eyes, whose glances were like ice-bolts" (85-6). This is not Ruth's first exposure to the scornful social gaze; in an earlier scene a little boy sees Ruth and, pointing directly at her, he remarks, "'She's a bad naughty girl—mamma said so, she did'" (71).

Writing against the conventional narrative of the fallen woman, Gaskell allows Ruth to be redeemed from her fall when she is taken in by the Bentons, a kindly brother and sister who pity her when she is abandoned, ill and penniless, at the inn. Here Christian charity transcends social censure, but not without difficulty. Upon taking Ruth into his home, Mr. Benson contacts his sister Faith, a household nun upon whom he has relied since childhood for her "prompt judgment and excellent sense" (110). Faith, however, is not so certain as her brother about the prospect of Ruth's recovery; reflecting the prevailing attitude
toward the stereotypical fallen woman, as well as her usual fate, Faith remarks, "It would be better for her to die at once, I think" (112). But when her brother speaks her name, "Faith," she accepts his call to Christian charity. The interchange that occurs here between Mr. and Miss Benton, between brother and sister, male and female, reflects more broadly an ideal dynamic in Victorian gender relations:

"Faith!" That one word put them right. It was spoken in the tone which had authority over her; it was full of grieved surprise and mournful upbraiding. She was accustomed to exercise a sway over him, owing to her greater decision of character; and, probably, if everything were traced to its cause, to her vigour of constitution; but at times she was humbled before his pure, childlike nature, and felt where she was inferior. She was too good and true to conceal this feeling, or to resent its being forced upon her. After a time she said, "Thurston, dear, let us go to her." (112-13)

Whereas Ruth's relationship to Bellingham is defined by the image, Faith's relationship to her brother is defined by the word. Bellingham's pictorial appropriation of Ruth silenced her voice; as the object of his gaze, Ruth carries no reciprocal power. Faith, on the other hand, does not appear as a pictorial representation. Benton speaks her name as if invoking the word of God—calling upon her Christian faith with the utterance of her name, Benton uses the word to bring them together to one mind. Although his voice speaks with more power and authority than that of his sister, Benton acknowledges that she has "a sway over him." Her voice may be small and her power limited, but it is enough
to enable her to remain self-possessed. She does, after
all, have the last word in their discussion, and it is
ultimately she who decides that helping her brother with
Ruth is the right thing for her to do.

The Bensons nurse Ruth through her illness and
pregnancy, give her a new identity (as their relative, the
widowed Mrs. Denbigh), and procure her a position, several
towns away, as a governess. To people unaware of her past,
Ruth could be regarded as nothing less than a pure and
virtuous woman, but as a woman living alone, outside of a
traditional domestic role, she is more probably perceived,
guilty or not, as having "fallen." As Nochlin reminds us,
the "narrative codes of the time" indicated that "an
independent life" was "related to potential sexual
availability and, of course, understood to be the punishment
for sexual lapse" (26). Writing contrary to the prevailing
social and narrative code, Gaskell demonstrates in Ruth (as
previously in "Lizzie Leigh") that a woman seduced and
forced to live on her own is not necessarily a woman of poor
character, but that it is rather the stigma placed on
feminine sexuality by the culture that creates the
perception of an evil soul. During her years as governess,
Ruth is admired and praised by the family she works for,
performing her duties to perfection—and expressing the best
qualities of the household nun. But as soon as her employer
discovers her history she becomes a contemptible woman,
"depraved," "disgusting," and "corrupt for years," blamed in retrospect for the children having become "more and more insolent--more and more disobedient everyday" (337,338). Ruth’s former lover, Mr. Bellingham, meanwhile has become an important figure in the government and has taken a new name, Mr. Donne. He sees Ruth, learns of their son, and offers financial support and even marriage, but like the man in the Windus painting, he returns "too late." Ruth finds him to be a truly corrupt man and refuses any association with him. Although he is the one responsible for her situation, his life has been a success; he suffers no social disgrace whatsoever.

Although she openly attacks the moral double standard concerning male and female sexuality, Gaskell ultimately follows the conventional end of the fallen woman narrative: Ruth learns of Bellingham/Donne’s having fallen ill, and in her self-sacrificial goodness insists on nursing him herself. He recovers, but she falls ill and dies. Even with Gaskell’s decision to end the story of Ruth with her death, the novel created a critical stir upon its publication, to the point of being considered, as Gaskell reports, "'An unfit subject for fiction'" and a "prohibited book . . . in many households" (Easson ed. 202). Gaskell had even heard of instances "of the book being burnt" (203). Gaskell writes more or less in the tradition of the fallen woman, yet she endows Ruth with an innate goodness which
transcends her sexual error. Ruth is clearly a victim in Gaskell's view—a victim of male sexual desire and the society which supports a double standard for men and women; she confirms in a letter that it was "one of [her] objects to make her readers feel how much worse he [the seducer] was in every way than Ruth, although the world visited her conduct with so much heavier a penalty than his" (qtd. in Rubenius 190). Ruth is seduced and has a child, and as a result is marked as "ruined" by society, only to be given a second chance whereby she redeems herself through her virtuous self-sacrifice; her indiscretion is later rediscovered and while she again suffers social disgrace she is still recognized as good by those who know her. Ultimately she dies—not ravaged with disease, not penniless and alone, but with some honor and respect. Ruth, in other words, is too good to be a fallen woman, and her death is not a gruesome punishment for her contemptible life but the result of her self-sacrifice for the good of another. Not everyone, however, felt that Ruth should have met the fallen woman's untimely death. In a letter to Gaskell in response to her reading of the novel, Charlotte Brontë writes:

Why should she [Ruth] die? Why are we to shut the book weeping? My heart fails me already at the thought of the pang it will have to undergo. And yet you must follow the impulse of your own inspiration. If that commands the slaying of the victim no bystander has a right to put out his hand to stay the sacrificial knife, but I hold you a stern priestess in these matters. (Easson ed. 200)
Elizabeth Barrett Browning echoes Brontë’s sentiment:

I am grateful to you as a woman for having so treated such a subject. Was it quite impossible but that your Ruth should die? I had that thought of regret in closing the book. Oh, I must confess to it. Pardon me for the tears’ sake. (316)

Brontë sees Ruth as a "victim" and the knife as "sacrificial," but it was less the impulse of Gaskell’s inspiration than the necessity of a socially acceptable ending that forced the death of her heroine. To answer Browning, it was, indeed, "quite impossible but that ... Ruth should die."

In contrast, Hetty in George Eliot’s fallen woman novel of 1859, Adam Bede, is not, like Ruth, a victim; she suffers, but she carries much of the responsibility for her own actions. According to Elizabeth Hardwick, Hetty is not even a heroine: "Hetty simply hasn’t the right sort of nature, none of the heroine’s patience or endurance of the conditions of life, none of those crafty, observant hesitations we would wish from the life of realistic country people" (189). When she leaves on a solitary search for Arthur, the man who abandoned her, she is desperate and miserable, more like a trapped creature than a free spirit. It is true that Hetty has been betrayed, but it is difficult, in Hardwick’s words, to "keep from blaming her just a little for her own hell" (187). It is due to Hetty’s partial responsibility for her fall as well as to her physical unattractiveness that evokes Nina Auerbach’s
assertion that Eliot has in *Adam Bede* written a fallen woman novel "from within the Victorian myth rather than from without" (49). Eliot uses many of the fallen woman conventions in the novel—sexual indiscretion, the death of the illegitimate child (in this case, at the hands of Hetty herself), a life of despair, and the ultimate death of the woman. Eliot sets up a false salvation when she allows Hetty to be saved from the gallows at Arthur's last minute intervention which reduced her sentence from hanging to transportation; Hetty suffers an anticlimactic death several years later.

Moving from the novel of the fallen woman, Gaskell's last novel, *Wives and Daughters*, explores the Victorian perception of woman from a different perspective. In this novel, Gaskell touches only briefly upon the fallen woman paradigm, and when she does she explodes it completely. *Wives and Daughters* encompasses a world of women in a variety of roles—sisters, daughters, wives, spinsters, and dowagers. The novel opens as the two female protagonists, Molly and Cynthia, are at the age where daughterhood is ready to cede to wifehood. They are thrown together as sisters when Molly's father, the country doctor Mr. Gibson, marries Cynthia's mother, a widow who had worked as a governess and later ran a school for girls. Molly and Cynthia develop a deep, sisterly relationship despite their differences of character—Molly, the budding household nun,
and Cynthia, the fallen woman in training. Gaskell, however, continually reminds her readers that such constructs, rather than being located at opposite poles of a moral dichotomy, are actually quite fluid. In the latter half of the novel we learn that Cynthia at age sixteen had secretly accepted an engagement to be enacted on her twentieth birthday to Mr. Preston, a man generally disliked and mistrusted by the citizens of the town. Gaskell hints about a mysterious relationship between the two, but the reader learns no details until Molly accidentally stumbles upon the two of them together in what would appear to be a romantic tryst in the woods. The discovery holds a double shock for Molly who is appalled not only at finding Cynthia alone with a man with Mr. Preston's reputation, but also at Cynthia's violation of her formal engagement to Roger Hamley, the man Molly loves herself. Gaskell sets the scene in such a way that the reader will suspect Cynthia of an indiscretion that will lead to her fall, but Cynthia has actually done nothing to deserve our condemnation. The meeting was innocent; she had in effect been trapped into accepting the earlier engagement with Mr. Preston and was meeting him in order to extricate herself from the affair. Cynthia's attempt backfires, however, as Mr. Preston promises to blackmail her if she does comply with their original agreement. Molly rescues her sister from the situation, but in so doing causes the ruin of her own
reputation. The dichotomy of the household nun/fallen woman construct falls apart with the chiasmic exchange of roles between Cynthia and Molly. Cynthia, while not sexually promiscuous in the full sense of the term, is nevertheless involved with three different men, breaking engagements with two of them before finally marrying the third; Molly, on the other hand, remains quietly virtuous but becomes, in the eyes (or, more accurately, in the mouths and ears) of the townspeople, a fallen woman as a result of a purely selfless action. As the spinster Miss Phoebe tells her sister, "Molly Gibson has lost her character, sister. That’s it" (488). "That’s it"—the final judgment of the gossip. Molly had been judged by an image created by a collective of the town; having been seen handling "clandestine correspondence" and in "secret interviews," Molly has been verbally painted as the image of a fallen woman. Although she is not yet aware of her new reputation, her contagion is as real as that of the woman in the painting by Tassaert, as people move away from her in fear and repulsion. As the gossip Mrs. Goodenough (an ironic name in itself!) has to say,

You see, I don’t think the worse of a girl for meeting her sweetheart here and there and everywhere until she gets talked about; but then when she does—and Molly Gibson’s name is in everybody’s mouth—I think its only fair to Bessy, who has trusted me with Annabella—not to let her daughter be seen with a lass who has managed her matters so badly as to set folk talking about her. My maxim is this—and it’s a very good working one, you may depend on’t—women should mind what
they’re about and never be talked of; and if a woman is talked of the less her friends have to do with her until the talk has died away, the better. (487)

In this passage, Gaskell clearly indicates that the construct of the fallen woman is simply a construct. There is no real contagion, no actual moral difficulty. The problem lies rather in those who see and talk, in those who paint the picture and write the narrative. The woman who is the object of gossip is first the object of the gaze—what someone sees as an indiscretion is translated into a narrative which serves to re-create the social image of the newly-fallen woman. Molly met Mr. Preston three times, and although each meeting was innocent on her part (she had gone on Cynthia’s behalf), she had the misfortune to be seen. To Mrs. Goodenough, a woman’s indiscretion taints her only when it becomes socially visible, when it has been seen and spoken of. The "fallen woman" is a sign with no signified. She does not exist.

Molly’s fall illustrates the power of the word. The gossips who enact her fall are in essence themselves powerless. As women, they have no voice in the masculine realm of public sphere; their voices matter only in the feminine world of the drawing room. As Hilary Schor has attested, "Gossip is the history of the powerless," the avenue of a group traditionally without political power to enforce their own sense of moral superiority over those who, for one reason or another, maintain their silence. In
reference to Molly’s situation Schor continues:

Gossip here seems a form of social control, a small, constant voice of reproach, a way of ordering the behavior of others that increases the power of those who advise and monitor. In the powerless world of Hollingford women, those who can speak for society have the only authority. . . . Those who have seen the most, those who construct the most impressive narrative, speak for the other women (200).

Molly’s reputation does not spring from the improper behavior the gossips suspect, but rather from her virtue, her truth to her word, her ability to keep a confidence in the best interest of another. When confronted with the gossip by her father, Molly refuses to defend herself against the charges because to do so would go against her sense of personal integrity. She admits that what people saw was true—she did meet Mr. Preston twice, and did pass him an envelope—but she maintains her silence against the rumors, asking "How are they to be refuted, when you say that the truth which I have acknowledged is ground enough for what people are saying?" (496). Molly’s acknowledgement once again forces the reader to reevaluate the construct of the fallen women, to see it as an issue of power rather than morality. With the help of a friend in the aristocracy and with the aid of her father, Molly regains her reputation without breaking her silence. But here again power speaks— it takes voices with masculine authority to overrule the baseless feminine power of gossip.

Gaskell’s explosion of the fallen woman in *Wives and*
Daughters comprises but a small portion of the novel, however. Dyjkstra's invalid appears with relative frequency, with illness striking nearly every major female character. Mrs. Hamley, the "Hamley's of Hamley's" resident household nun, also fills the role of the ideal invalid. Because his wife has been "ill" for so many years, Squire Hamley expresses little worry when the doctor notifies him of his concern about Mrs. Hamley's health:

It's nonsense thinking her so ill as that--you know it's only the delicacy she's had for years; and if you can't do her any good in such a simple case--no pain, only weakness and nervousness--it is a simple case, eh? . . . --you'd better give her up altogether, and I'll take her to Bath or Brighton, or somewhere for a change, for in my opinion it's only moping and nervousness. (195)

The doctor's concern was well-warranted, for upon this visit Mrs. Hamley was really near death; yet as her husband observes, her illness now appears no different from what it has been for years. Mrs. Hamley is an attractive invalid, always gracious and gentle. We first see Mrs. Hamley when Molly is invited to Hamley Hall to serve as her companion. When Molly arrives, Mrs. Hamley "rose from her sofa to give Molly a gentle welcome; she kept the girl's hand in hers after she finished speaking, looking into her face, as if studying it, and unconscious of the faint blush she called up on the otherwise colorless cheeks" (72). Mrs. Hamley has all of the qualities of an ideal Victorian woman; genteel, beautiful, gracious, nurturing, she is the paragon of womanly perfection. As long as she in the Hamley household

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
everything runs smoothly: the house is lovingly kept (by servants, of course, but under her gentle authority), dinners are pleasant, the men are happy. Even at the worst of her illness "her children always knew where to find her, and to find her, was to find love and sympathy." Although "quiet and passive" she was nevertheless "the ruling spirit of the house," with a "pleasant influence" over her husband which always made him "at peace with himself" (244). At her death "the keystone of the family arch was gone, and the stones of which it was composed began to fall apart" (244). Mrs. Hamley presented the ultimate image of feminine perfection, the ideal confluence of passivity and strength, of invalid and household nun.

Few female characters in *Wives and Daughters* escape taking a turn in the role of the invalid. None, however, meet the standard set by Mrs. Hamley. Once again, Gaskell plays reality against the construct to expose the fragile quality of its foundation. Mrs. Cumnor, an elderly lady of the aristocracy, becomes a nicer person after developing a lingering illness, reinforcing the value of invalidism. On the other hand, Mrs. Gibson remains as petty and ridiculous as ever, using her illness to her advantage when it will aid in her self-centered and greedy pursuits. When virtuous Molly becomes ill from nursing a newly-widowed woman back to heath, an illness resulting from a selfless act of service, she, naturally, becomes more attractive. As in the
construct of the fallen woman, the cult of the invalid works in context—the woman of virtue becomes more attractive with her pale complexion and passive demeanor, while the woman of bad character becomes wasted and unattractive, her worst qualities increased by the ravages of illness.

When a woman is placed on canvas, her image becomes the unspeaking object of the gaze. If the gaze is that of a man, her silence invites him to impose his desire upon her image. By silencing her voice, he silences her desire; in silencing her desire, she becomes sinless. But the construct of the ideal woman is simply an imaginary image, not a reflection of what woman is but a reflection of what man would like her to be. If a woman were to view her own painted image, she would not recognize herself so much as she would see the object she must become to please the man. Since power resides in the patriarchy, the voice of masculine desire worked to shape woman into his ideal. Not all women, however, fit the ideal. On the other side of the dichotomous construct is the fallen woman—the woman considered "sinful" because she allowed her sexuality to show. Images of the fallen woman serve not as objects of desire, but as objects of regret; such images are presented as a proscription against feminine sexuality. In narrative works, such images were frequently reinforced as well. The work of Elizabeth Gaskell, however, undermines the constructs of womanhood by exploring their inherent
contradictions. Gaskell saw the inequity between the sexes, the moral double standard, women as voiceless victims of the masculine word. Gaskell illustrates that the image of the Victorian woman as either saint or sinner, virgin or seductress, wife or lover, but never both, has no solid, human substance. Although her feminine voice speaks quietly, Gaskell exposes the myth of the Victorian woman through its own conventions. By placing the real beside the ideal, the construct self-destructs.
1. Pollock refers to Elizabeth Cowie’s article "Woman as Sign" in her discussion of Elizabeth’s Siddall’s function as sign in Pre-Raphaelite painting. I adopt the idea here in a slightly altered form to explain that images of women in both narrative and visual art function do not represent the reality of the Victorian woman but rather work to construct and reinforce the masculine ideal.

2. I describe here images of the idealized woman. Didactic paintings and narratives of the fallen woman, discussed below, function in a different way. Rather than acting as an object of desire, the fallen women represents the abhorrent, pictured in such a way as to discourage the wanton sexuality believed to be associated with such women.

3. One example comes from Sarah Stickney Ellis, The Women of England: Their Social Duties and Domestic Habits, 1839. Ellis spoke to the middle class as champion for the construct of woman as "the holding agents for men’s souls." It is the duty of the woman to "replenish her mate" and "use her ‘moral power’ to counteract the destructive influence of the business world." She must not, however, go out in the world; her duty is "to be quiet and huddle at home" (qtd. in Dyjkstra 10-11).

4. In Victorian Panorama, Wood discusses what he calls "the Victorian cult of death." According to Wood, the English in the nineteenth century were "obsessed with the rituals of death, funerals and mourning," and both "thought and talked about death a great deal." Wood aptly notes the contrast in attitudes toward sex and death between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in his claim that "The twentieth century has brought a curious reversal of social habits--now death is taboo, but everyone talks about sex, whereas with the Victorians it was the other way around. Sex is the cliche of the twentieth-century novel; in the nineteenth century it was the deathbed scene." I believe we can apply Wood’s comment to the visual arts as well. See Wood, 163.

5. I am using the term "didactic mode" to indicate a style of painting defined by narrative images designed to serve as an example or to teach a lesson to its viewers. The women in didactic images appear more repellant than attractive. "Voyeuristic" painting, on the other hand, refers to images of idealized women, those which either passively or actively court the desire of the masculine voyeur.
6. The three panels of the triptych originally appeared together in a single frame, with the initial recognition scene (panel one) in the center position flanked on either side by the two images that occur chronologically later. Under the original configuration appeared the following epigram: "August the 4th. Have just heard that B---- has been dead more than a fortnight, so his poor children have now lost both parents. I hear she was seen on Friday last near the Strand, evidently without a place to lay her head. What a fall hers has been!" The title Past and Present was added at a later date. See Head, 72.

7. A contemporary art critic noted that the waterfront scene takes place under the arches of the Adelphi, "the lowest of all the profound deeps of human abandonment" in London. Wood notes that "the same critic praised Egg for choosing this location" (one that would have symbolic meaning for anyone familiar with the city), but suggested that "he should have included [in the painting] the rats which apparently infested the water's edge." See Wood, 141.

8. A London periodical, The Day's Doings, published a regular feature on divorce which listed the details of divorce proceedings. Many cases concerned the woman's adulterous relationship, leading to a full-page spread in the July 29, 1871 edition entitled, "An Old, Old Story, with its Usual End--As Told So Often in the Divorce Court." The "usual end" was the woman's suicide by drowning. See Nead 65-6.

9. The prostitute appeared in eighteenth-century novels as well, but, again, usually as a minor character. One outstanding exception would be Defoe's Moll Flanders whose fall and subsequent adventures are both humorously and morally recounted. Hogarth, too, treated the plight of the prostitute in A Harlot's Progress which details the fall of an innocent country girl. The eighteenth century was more concerned with female chastity as commodity than as an indication of a woman's immorality. The stigma attached to feminine sexual desire in the nineteenth century was not a major factor in the treatment of feminine virtue in the eighteenth century. The usual narrative end result (death) was the same, but in the eighteenth century its cause was more often unmarriageability due to loss of chastity (the woman's commodity) which led to economic difficulties and prostitution. In the nineteenth century, the woman's lost chastity again limited her marriageability, but now she was socially ostracized and condemned as a moral failure who had no hope of social reintegration. Contrast, for example, the character of Moll Flanders with Lizzie Leigh: both women survive their sin, but while Lizzie lives out her life in abject misery (her only salvation being tending to others),
Moll is able to repent her past life and find happiness in a new life in America.

10. Gaskell’s first novel, *Mary Barton*, tackles the fallen woman theme through a more traditional literary treatment of the prostitute as an outcast who, though remorseful, has no real desire to reenter respectable society. Unsentimental and historically factual, *Mary Barton* was more concerned with the social conditions that encourage prostitution than with individual circumstance.

11. As Rubenius points out, official reports and newspaper articles stressed the immorality among women working as dressmakers’ apprentices (182). By placing Ruth in the role of a seamstress, Gaskell shows that the behavior classified under the single rubric of immorality actually illustrates a wide range of behavior and circumstance that cannot be so neatly defined.

12. *Wives and Daughters* was left unfinished at Gaskell’s sudden death in 1865 and published posthumously in 1866. Most of the novel had been finished by the time of her death, and the end result can be conjectured by the direction of the narrative in the final extant chapters.
CHAPTER 4

STEPPING INTO THE PICTURE:

IMPRESSIONIST AESTHETIC IN THE WORK

OF HENRY JAMES AND JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

As music is the poetry of sound, so is painting the poetry of sight, and the subject-matter has nothing to do with harmony of sound or of color. --J. M. Whistler

Since the 1890s the term literary impressionism has been used to designate the work of writers who assimilated traits of the French Impressionist painters into their stories and novels. Although the literary narrative differs naturally in both matter and manner of expression from the painted canvas, these writers sought to translate into prose the Impressionist artist’s ideology of perception. Impressionism in the visual arts began in France in the 1860s as an informal movement in which several artists experimented with light, color, and space with the desire to capture on canvas the sense of immediacy of vision one experiences when observing an outdoor scene. Responding against the official Salon styles of history painting and the genre scene, and even the realistic landscape, the
impressionist sought what Wylie Sypher has called "a new sense of the motif" (171). The shift from the detailed realism of the Academy to impressionism is not, however, as great an ideological leap as it may superficially appear. Although technically less rigid and not at all didactic, impressionist painting ultimately remains an expression of external reality. Albert Aurier, writing in 1891, explains what he sees as a subtle move from earlier nineteenth-century realism to impressionism:

Impressionism is and must be only a kind of realism, a realism refined, spiritualized, and amateur, but always realism. This aim admitted, it is another imitation of matter, no longer perhaps in its accustomed form but as a form seen, a color seen, a translation of sensation with all its impromptu of immediate notation, with all the distortions of a quick subjective synthesis. (qtd. in Sypher 172)

Painting in one sense became more subjective, aiming to capture the sensation rather than to recreate an unchanging image of the scene. Yet, as Richard Shiff points out, the painter's "representation of nature—the effect—paradoxically assumed a universal validity. In this sense, impressionist art, during the period of its currency, was interpreted as both subjective and objective" (42), representing not only the artist's emotional response to the immediate impression but his expression of the external scene as it actually appears to the eye. By capturing on canvas the atmosphere of a particular instant—the light, color, and motion of one particular moment in time—the
artist could express the inherent mutability and, by extension, the objective reality of nature.

Drawn out of the studio and into plein air, the Impressionist would paint color and light where the Academic painter would concentrate on form, design, and, not infrequently, story. The intent was to capture a moment in time, to express in a spatial medium a temporal atmosphere of vibrant color and motion without conscious interpretation. Rather than reproduce the exact shape and position of each leaf on a tree, for example, the impressionist would instead paint the shimmering reflection of sunlight as it bounces off the entire leafy canopy as it quakes in the breeze. He discovered that the color of light is not constant, that it is as variable as the time of day and season of the year, able to produce a full spectrum of color. The resulting vision of the tree, then, becomes one of indistinct form and line, with unusually brilliant colors—reds, yellows, blues—set in immediate juxtaposition. Designed to be viewed at a distance, these paintings appear at close range little more than a jumble of smudges and color; one must step back for a recognizable scene to appear. To the impressionist, this is reality in its purest form. When we observe a landscape in nature we neither see nor respond to the detail of every leaf on the tree (we do not, as Samuel Johnson once wrote, "number the streaks of the tulip"); rather we take in the entire
atmosphere of the scene, noticing the changes in light as it reflects off the foliage onto our eyes, allowing us to subconsciously translate the continually changing image as the more concrete concept "tree."

A second type of impressionist vision adopted photography as its model in the sense of viewing a scene as it would be caught through the lens of a camera where the breadth and focus of the tableau are circumscribed by the physical limitations of lens and film. In a painting of this type, the confines of the rectilinear frame are indicative of the spatial limitations of the camera's field of vision. When viewing a photograph, we do not expect to see a full panorama; we expect, rather, to find the scene and objects within cropped off at the edges. Like a photograph which captures a scene literally in a flicker of time (the momentary instant of the opening of the shutter) the impressionist painting should convey a similar illusion of spontaneity. In a coastal scene, for example, where we would find passing sailboats on the water and sea gulls in the air, the camera would snap the image as the boats and birds spontaneously enter and leave its field of vision. At the same time, we would expect to find objects located at different distances within the photographic frame to be reproduced with noticeable variation in clarity of focus. As early as the 1850s John Ruskin, in volume one of *Modern Painters*, noted the inability of the eye to focus comparably.
at the same time on every object within a panoramic scene:

[I]t is impossible to see distinctly at the same moment, two objects, one of which is much farther off than the other . . . objects at unequal distances cannot be seen together, not from the intervention of air or mist, but from the impossibility of rays proceeding from both, converging on the same focus, so that the whole impression, either of one or the other, must necessarily be confused, indistinct, and inadequate. (183)

The lens of the camera works in much the same way as the lens of the eye, restricted by its inability to focus on more than one section of an image at any given time. Photography, as Katherine Lochman points out, placed such "optical theory," as it had been discussed by Ruskin and supported by studies made possible through the recently invented ophthalmoscope, in the eye of the general public (99). Such discoveries altered the artist's conceptual view of realistic artistic depiction to call into question the tradition of perspective perfected by the old masters.¹

Like the time-specific depiction of light and color, scenic fragmentation of images and differing clarity of focus indicate not only a more realistic depiction in Ruskin's terms, but additionally serve to signify a sense of movement through space and/or time, once again reinforcing the continual mutability of the natural world.² Literary impressionism emerges from just such an idea of mutability, what H. Peter Stowell has described as "the reciprocal relationship between perception and the world, both of which are momentarily framed in the flux of continual movement.
though time and space" (9-10). To write as an
impressionist, however, an author must transcend surface
pictorialism. A simple series of visual pictures does not
in itself create a pictorial sense; there must be an
ideological application that governs the verbal depiction of
the temporal and spatial arena. In studying the manner of
expression of time and space in works of literary
impressionism, Stowell has found that it is time that
"durationally links the fragments of a spatialized
perception, and consciousness spatializes the flow of time
into separate frozen instants" (15). For the impressionist
writer as well as visual artist, the image must create the
sense of a fleeting moment of time, and because conditions
of perception change rapidly, creating a sense of
spontaneity becomes a crucial technical point.

It was, as Richard Shiff observes, the "manner" in
which the impressionist painter conceived of and responded
to issues of perception that led to the technical practices
most commonly associated with impressionism—rapid brushwork
and the use of bright color on a spatial, rectilinear field
(17). For the painter, the accurate expression of
individual perception through artistic representation was a
fundamental concern that extended beyond the subjective.
The problem lay not only in the painterly expression of
individual perception, but the manner in which the
representation of such subjective truth at the same time
exemplifies the universal. For the writer, on the other hand, the expression in a temporally linear medium of the individual "impression" calls for the development of technical devices that verbally induce an image of perceptual spontaneity of the sort expressed by the visual artist.

In a slim volume published in 1973, Maria Elisabeth Kronegger presents a wide-ranging examination of impressionism as a literary technique, positing a liberal definition of its scope. Although the impressionist movement in the visual arts lasted a mere ten to fifteen years, Kronegger extends the parameters of literary impressionism from 1832, beginning with the appearance of Balzac's *Le Chef d'Oeuvre Inconnu*, to "a climate of impressionism" in existence today (31, 33). Kronegger lists such writers as Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence, John Dos Passos, Henry James, Stephen Crane, Gertrude Stein, and William Faulkner, among others, that she believes to reflect impressionist technique. While two of these writers, Crane and James, fall comfortably within the parameters of impressionism, the others clearly shatter the boundaries through a modernist aesthetic that can be more accurately associated with cubism. One writer not on the list, Joseph Conrad, she considers marginally as a "precursor of British and American impressionism," ranking him with such diverse writers as Poe, Swinburne, Whitman, and Wilde. Omitted as
well are two authors widely noted for their experiments with impressionism, Hamlin Garland and Ford Madox Ford.³

Although Kronegger delineates the parameters of literary impressionism perhaps too liberally, she clearly defines several key differences in sensibility between literary impressionism and its pictorial counterpart. The purpose of impressionism, both literary and painterly, is to attempt to capture the quality of sensual impressions on the individual consciousness. It is not, however, a completely subjective rendering; the perception of an impression is reproduced as it appears before being filtered through the intellect. Kronegger explains:

> With impressionist literature, language is no longer understood as thought and as concept, but as sensation and sound image. Impressionists state phenomena in the order of their perception, before they have been distorted into intelligibility. The grammatical shift places the emphasis on the sensory quality of the visual experience rather than on the thing itself. (37)

Here Kronegger captures the essence of impressionism in that perception both precedes and supersedes understanding; in other words, we paint (or write) what we see, not what we know. However, I must argue against Kronegger's use of "visual experience" in the literary context. Pure vision may be uniquely exalted in the pictorial sense, but it is insufficient as a literary paradigm. Whereas an artist is limited by the physical media of paint and canvas to a visual interpretation, the medium of narrative allows the expression of a variety of sensory and situational
perceptions. Nor should Kronegger's allusion to the "sound image" be slighted. Characters in an impressionist narrative respond to sound in much the same way as they respond to visual images--perceptually without immediate intellectual identification, leading to verbal presentation through metaphor or onomatopoeia.

Although the presentation of unfiltered sensory experience is an integral part of literary impressionism, the need for an intermediary consciousness cannot be ignored. In painting the artist needs no intermediary between his perceptions and their expression because, as James Nagel tells us,

there [is] no presumed creation of human consciousness only of the scene being perceived: the assumption is that what is depicted is rendered as the painter saw it, in plein air, in a vistazo . . . . But this assumption is not present in fiction because of the interjection of an intermediary center of intelligence which functions as narrator and which often records not what it sees but what is perceived by one of the characters . . . . It implies that views of reality are dependent upon the perceiving mind; the accuracy of the portrayal relies upon the quality of the observer and [his] limitations . . .  (36-7)

Such an intermediary intelligence serves to translate the sensory experience into language; it must work to express sensation in its purest form without intellectual intervention, at least not immediately. Conscious understanding, if it is to occur at all, may emerge only after the character has had the opportunity to more closely examine what had been initially perceived. Nagel, however,
believes that such "narrative intrusion" when used "to provide background, to point to themes, or to provide information beyond the knowledge of the characters" is a necessary technique of literary impressionism that works to better transfer the experience of sensory perception to the reader (42). Yet while authorial intervention does appear in the work of impressionist writers, rarely does it appear in their best work. Ford Madox Ford agrees, arguing against narrative intrusion with the sentiment that it tends to undermine a realistic depiction of life. Stephen Crane also denounced authorial presence with the assertion that it destroys continuity of action and serves only to reiterate what should have already become evident within the story itself. In a letter to John Northern Hilliard, Crane describes his critical perspective:

> I have been very careful not to let any theories or pet ideas creep into my work. Preaching is fatal to art in literature. I try to give my readers a slice out of life; and if there is any moral or lesson in it, I do not try to point it out. I let the reader find it out for himself.

(qtd. in Nagel 43)

In the best impressionist texts experience is transferred to the reader through the limited consciousness of the character, without need for other interpretation. Only as the character becomes cognizant of his own reality will the reader also become aware. The character himself should serve as the sole source of information.

> Literary impressionism, then, operates within a limited
range of perception. The narrative voice emerges most often from the mind of an individual character who serves as an intermediary consciousness between pure perception and its translation into language. The narrative itself is objective and non-judgmental with little or no external interpretation. It is episodic but chronological, reflecting the way in which an individual perceives the outside world. Such devices determine the deep structure of impressionist technique. Although narrative technique, naturally, was not a concern of the impressionist painters, literary impressionists adopted the visual artists' ideology of perception and made it their own. Their verbal medium forced the invention of specialized techniques to enable them to express perception through language in such a manner that captured the immediacy of the visual image. In order to recreate the spontaneity expressed by a painter by a rapid brush stroke, the literary impressionist developed a vocabulary of words in the present participle to place, in Kronegger's words, "the emphasis on the sensory quality of the visual experience rather than on the thing itself" (again, Kronegger limits herself in exclusively delineating the visual) (41). A second linguistic shift, from the determinate "is" to the more perceptual "seem," "appears," and "feels," furnishes the narrative with a sense of pre-conscious spontaneity—as in actual human experience, a character will perceive how something "appears" before the
consciousness imparts the understanding of what "is."

To underscore an analogy with the visual arts, a writer might insert a descriptive passage drawn in terms of the specific qualities associated with an impressionist painting. But where linguistic cues express the impressionist aesthetic by operating within the deep structure of the narrative, simple pictorial borrowing leads to a connection on the most superficial level. Stowell warns:

The major error in studies of impressionism is the inclination to reduce its dynamic vision of a changing world into mere pictorialism. Literary impressionism could not have existed as simply a series of "separate fleeting impressions." (14)

Of vital importance to the impressionist narrative is the theory of perception and its expression as conceived by the impressionist artist, the deep theoretical structure which must represent

the primacy of phenomenological perception, the atomization of a subjectively perceived reality, the acceptance of chance in a world so complex and unknowable as to render causality impotent, the necessity to come to terms with reality through the process of induction . . . . (15)

To work within literary impressionism a writer must be able to depict in narrative a perception of reality coincident with these terms. Anything less would constitute a Howellsian realism; anything more would move beyond impressionism into the more modernist sensibilities as expressed through such techniques as stream of consciousness and cubism. Such a limited aesthetic allows far fewer
writers to fall within the parameters of literary impressionism than Kronegger had proposed. And one who does is Henry James.

II

It is generally acknowledged that from the beginning of his career James incorporated techniques from the visual arts into his novels and tales. Having been tutored in painting as a child, James developed at an early age what John LaFarge discerned as the "painter's eye," a facility of observation and representation from the perspective of the visual arts. Looking at James's early experiences in art galleries, Viola Winner finds that he expressed a "sensitivity to atmosphere, play of light and intensity of color" as well as an astute ability to discern differences in tonal quality among painters (7). In his teens James felt representational truth to be a fundamental quality in painting,⁶ and his responses to visits to museums and galleries at home and abroad indicate a deeper interest in the idealized contemporary realism of the Düsseldorf and Hudson River schools than in the elaborate Christian and historical motifs found in works of the Renaissance masters. Upon viewing an exhibit at the National Gallery in 1847, for example, James found himself captivated by the images of such contemporary British painters of "subject" and genre pictures as Maclise, Leslie, Mulready, Landseer, and Wilkie (8).⁷ By the late 1850s James had developed a familiarity
with the highly romanticized images of the Pre-Raphaelite school which enticed him for a time with their meticulous attention to detail and their brilliant coloration.

James's fascination with the visual arts influenced his writing throughout his career. As his taste in art evolved through the years, so did his fictional style. Such early works as *Roderick Hudson* (1875) and *The American* (1877) reflect his admiration of images of contemporary realism as well as his attraction to idealized genre scenes. Two passages drawn from *The American* will serve to illustrate James's prevailing aesthetic. A descriptive passage such as this one of the chateau at Fleurières reveals a realistic portrayal of object and scene:

It [the chateau] presented to the wide paved area which preceded it, and which was edged with shabby farm-buildings, an immense facade of dark time-stained brick, flanked by two low wings, each of which terminated in a little Dutch-looking pavilion, capped with a fantastic roof. Two towers rose behind, and behind the towers was a mass of elms and beeches, now just faintly green.

But the great feature was a wide green river, which washed the foundations of the chateau. The building rose from an island in the circling stream, so that this formed a perfect moat, spanned by a two-arched bridge without a parapet. The dull brick walls, which here and there make a grand straight sweep, the ugly little cupolas of the wings, the deep-set windows, the long steep pinnacles of mossy slate, all mirrored themselves in the quiet water. (237)

James exquisitely details his picture of Fleurières. True to the design of a realist painting, the chateau and its immediate surroundings appear in such a way that presents every detail as vitally important, and every inch of the
tableau being as clearly drawn as every other regardless of angle or distance. We view the image as if pondering over it for a long period of time, detail by detail, from the shabby farm buildings to the double-arched bridge, from the dull brick walls to the deep-set windows. To enhance the pictorial sense of the scene, James mirrors the entire image in the quiet water of the river.

But if *The American* demonstrates markedly realistic overtones, it is nevertheless a romance at heart. Leon Edel agrees that the novel is realistic in its portrayal of people and places, but argues that "the story of what happened to them moved across the borderland of the actual into the imaginary" (198). Even James himself, when reviewing and revising *The American* over thirty years later for the New York edition, admitted in the preface that in its conception he "unfurled, with the best of conscience, the emblazoned flag of romance" and that he had been "plotting arch-romance without knowing it" (Art of the Novel 25). He goes on to admit that it is "consistently, consummately--and . . . charmingly--romantic; and all without intention, presumption, hesitation, contrition" (25). In *The American* James presents us with an elegant but dilapidated ancestral manor, a family with a mysterious evil secret, a duel for the possession of a woman--all traditional elements of romance. The narrative depiction of such romantic images differs in a pictorial sense from such
contrasting realist images as that of Fleurières. James reveals his youthful admiration for genre painting in passages such as this one, a romanticized pictorial narrative in the vein of the Pre-Raphaelite school:

Urbain de Bellegarde stared, then left his place and came and leaned upon his mother's chair, behind. Newman's sudden irruption had evidently discomposed both mother and son. Madame de Cintré stood silent, with her eyes resting upon Newman's. She had often looked at him with all her soul, as it seemed to him; but in this present gaze there was a sort of bottomless depth. She was in distress; it was the most touching thing he had ever seen. His heart rose into his throat, and he was on the point of turning to her companions with an angry challenge; but she checked him, pressing the hand that held her own.

"Something very grave has happened," she said. "I cannot marry you." (213)

Christopher Newman appears here at the center of romantic convention: in love with a beautiful young widow of title (but little money), Newman develops a masculine bond with her brother (who dies in a duel over a woman of questionable morals) and falls victim to the wiles of her eccentric, old world family. This passage functions as the climax of the story, encapsulating everything that has come before and what remains to happen in one emotionally-charged image—Lessing's "pregnant moment." Although the reader does not yet know the exact nature of the events to come, it is obvious that the situation, as it is pictorially represented to the contemporary reader in the familiar form of the genre scene, will lead to dramatically significant difficulties for Newman.
The relative positions of the characters and the direction and depth of the gaze in James's presentation evoke a scene by the British Pre-Raphaelite William Lindsay Windus that, although the story is quite different, is analogous in formal design and dramatic effect. In *Too Late* (1858) (figure 7) a man covers his face with his arms in a futile attempt to hide from the disbelieving gaze of an ailing woman and the wondering gaze of innate recognition of her child, of whom he is the father. A fourth figure, a female, stands beside the tuberculous woman supporting her both physically (with an embrace and a steadying arm) and emotionally (with a whisper in her ear and a kiss on her cheek). Her head is turned to the viewer, as she faces left with her eyes closed, effectively muting her gaze. In James's scene, comprised also of four figures, two characters, Madame de Cintré and Urbain de Bellegarde, focus their gaze purposefully on Newman. Madame de Cintré regards Newman with a look that comes from deep within her soul, a complex understanding of all the emotional circumstances leading up to her announcement and the regret she feels at being forced to make such a decision. Urbain de Bellegarde, on the other hand, watches the interaction between them with a gaze of pre-conceived recognition and anticipation; having strongly influenced the situation about to unfold, he is already aware of his sister's announcement and anxiously awaits seeing its effect. The direction of the gaze of the
mother is purposefully omitted, rendering her, like the supporting friend in the Windus painting, effectively mute. Her purpose is analogous as well; sitting silently in her chair, she acts as both physical and emotional support for her son. In contrast to the realistic "landscape" image of Fleurières which emerges through precise external physical detail, the romantic "genre scene" is anecdotal, developed through detailed interpretation of internal as well as external cues: the mother and her son were "discomposed"; Madame de Cintré looks at Newman with "a sort of bottomless depth" as if "she was in distress," Newman’s "heart rose into his throat" in anger. James clearly guides the reader through every response, leaving no room for readerly misinterpretation.

As early as 1878, with the publication of Daisy Miller, such romantic, genre images begin to disappear from James’s work. As he altered his narration from omniscience to a more limited consciousness, such scenes as the one discussed above were necessarily eliminated by the limitations imposed by reporting a story from the sole perspective of an individual character. Such a change in narrative perspective indicates the first step towards James’s eventual adoption of an impressionist technique. In Daisy Miller James tells the story through the perspective of the rather stuffy Winterbourne, whose inability to comprehend either the character of Daisy Miller or her actions leaves
the reader in a similar predicament; because Winterbourne cannot decisively pass judgment on Daisy's "innocence," neither can we, and we are left as is Winterbourne sadly awed by Giovanelli's confession at the end of the tale. In the following passage from *Daisy Miller*, a scene rich with realistic pictorial detail, Winterbourne's reaction to the scene unveiled before him reveals nothing more to the reader than an immediate impression of the situation as he sees it to exist between Daisy and Giovanelli. Such limitation of interpretation places this scene from "Daisy Miller" in striking contrast to the genre scene so prevalent in *The American*:

Winterbourne stood there; he had turned his eyes towards Daisy and her cavalier. They evidently saw no one; they were too deeply occupied with each other. When they reached the low garden-wall they stood a moment looking off at the great flat-topped pine-clusters of the Villa Borghese; then Giovanelli seated himself familiarly upon the broad ledge of the wall. The western sun in the opposite sky sent out a brilliant shaft through a couple of cloud bars, whereupon Daisy's companion took her parasol out of her hands and opened it. She came a little nearer, and he held the parasol over her; then, still holding it, he let it rest upon her shoulder, so that both of their heads were hidden from Winterbourne. This young man lingered a moment, then he began to walk. But he walked—not towards the couple with the parasol—towards the residence of his aunt, Mrs. Costello. (187)

James presents the scene as a painting that, to use Wendy Steiner's terms, is "composed" as well as "construed" by Winterbourne as observer, as it is "determined in effect by his . . . position and orientation" (43). Although the
picture viewed by Winterbourne is not static, its meaning relies more on spatial representation than temporal movement. The position the couple assumes on the ledge and the hiding of their faces by the parasol act as spatial cues for Winterbourne’s interpretation of the situation as "familiar." The pictorial image as Winterbourne sees it is presented to the reader unfiltered by external consciousness; the third-person narration is keenly focused on Winterbourne’s perception, and the final judgment is Winterbourne’s alone. Although the precise detail of the external setting as it is presented to the reader—the "low garden-wall," the "flat-topped pine-clusters," the shaft of sunlight—is pictorially realistic, Winterbourne’s response to the image is an impressionist one. There is no external analysis of the scene or of Winterbourne’s reaction, and even Winterbourne himself does not respond consciously to what he sees. No direct interaction of any kind occurs between either Daisy or Giovanelli and Winterbourne; neither words nor telling gazes are exchanged. Winterbourne’s judgment—his decision to accept the social values represented by Mrs. Costello over the youthful exuberance of Daisy Miller—is passed on nothing more than a visual impression. And here again Winterbourne’s actions are not interpreted for us; the narrator relates nothing more than the direction Winterbourne turns to walk.

Such obvious changes in style within the single year
between the publication of The American and Daisy Miller indicate a changing aesthetic of which even James may not yet have been consciously aware. James maintained a close connection between his prose and his growing knowledge and appreciation of the visual arts, an affinity that has been explored in depth by Viola Winner and Adeline Tintner, among others. A fruitful analogy may be drawn between James’s commentary on contemporary art and his own art of fiction. James’s critical insight into the visual arts can be traced through the reviews published in his role as anonymous art critic for such magazines as the Nation, the Galaxy, and the Atlantic Monthly from 1868 to 1882, and again, briefly, in 1897 (Sweeney 25). Although the reviews reveal much about James’s early and late aesthetic, the key period of experimentation and evolution of his own narrative style occurs during the years in between. Because of the changes so evident in James’s work of this period, we can understand that his views on art, including his eventual understanding and acceptance of impressionism (both in theory and product), evolved accordingly. Especially revealing is his response over the years to the work of American artist and fellow expatriate, James McNeill Whistler.

III

In 1861, Whistler began to paint a portrait of his mistress Jo Hiffernan; she would appear dressed in white, standing in front of a white background, her feet upon an
off-white bear skin rug. Whistler had in mind, no story, and no message. The theme of the painting was to be no more than its expression of whiteness. Whistler finished The White Girl (later retitled Symphony in White No. 1) (figure 10) the following spring and submitted it to the 1862 Royal Academy where it was summarily rejected. Still desiring to show the painting, he offered it to a gallery run by Matthew Morgan, where it was placed on public display. Morgan, however, mislabeled the painting The Woman in White, a title which, to a public accustomed to anecdotal painting, led to a literary association not imagined by Whistler. The art critic for Athenaeum considered the image a poor illustration of Wilkie Collins’s novel of the same name, and anticipated criticism that would follow Whistler throughout his career:

> It is one of the most incomplete paintings we have ever met with. A woman in a quaint morning dress of white, with her hair about her shoulders, stands alone in a background of nothing in particular. . . . The face is well done, but it is not that of Wilkie Collins' The Woman in White. (qtd. in Weintraub 76)

Such an implied literary association disturbed Whistler, who in a letter to the editor refuted any literary connection:

> I had no intention whatever of illustrating Mr. Wilkie Collins’ novel; it so happens, indeed, that I have never read it. My painting simply represents a girl dressed in white, standing in front of a white curtain. (76-7)

Whistler’s battle about the "meaning" of The White Girl was far from over, however. Looking for a more liberal
reception in France, he submitted the painting to the Salon of 1863, where it was once again rejected. It found a place of dubious distinction in the Salon des Refusés, where, Émile Zola reported, it was greeted by "people nudging each other, doubling up with laughter" (qtd. in Cabanne 28). So began Whistler's lifelong battle with a public accustomed to paintings with a moral story—or at the very least, a story of human interest.

Like James, Whistler began his career with an appreciation for realistic representation, having cut his baby teeth, so to speak, on a book of Hogarth engravings which influenced his earliest sketches. He himself later learned the art of engraving himself when he was hired as a map maker for the United States Coast Survey Office in 1854. The following year he went to London and then Paris, where he learned to paint in the manner of the Salon. But Whistler was a rebel by nature and soon left the ateliers for the rebellious fervor of Gustave Courbet. The influence of Courbet's realism is evident in such early seascapes as The Coast of Brittany, which appeared in its first exhibition at the Royal Academy of 1862 under the anecdotal title Alone with the Tide. As in the work of Courbet, this early painting exhibits a realistic three-dimensional sense of depth and volume. The rocks appear solid; the wave is translucent; the weight of the female figure leaves an impression in the sand. Yet elements of Whistler's later
work already appear. In Donald Holden's words, "The high horizon line and the placement of the dominant forms in the upper half of the canvas" are typical of the later Whistler (22). There is also a large area of open space in the right foreground, interrupted by only a dark, indistinct, shadow-like boulder—a spot of color that foreshadows Whistler's later technique.

It is useful to compare *The Coast of Brittany* with *The Beach at Selsey Bill*, painted just four years later in 1865. Both works depict a similar scene of a beach with a strip of sea and a cloudy sky above a high horizon. But the differences here overshadow the similarities. By the time he painted *The Beach at Selsey Bill* Whistler had moved beyond the three-dimensional realism of Courbet to a depiction of two-dimensional space, a technique essential to the later nocturnes. The lower two-thirds of the painting consist of an empty field of color interrupted only by three indistinct figures in the left foreground. Whereas the figure in *The Coast of Brittany* is identifiable as a woman wearing the regional costume of Bretagne, the figures in *The Beach at Selsey Bill* are hardly recognizable as people at all, but are rather marks of color imposed upon empty space. *The Beach at Selsey Bill* represents an early move to spatial design over realistic depiction. Like James, Whistler began to evolve toward a more impressionist technique; unlike James, Whistler openly recognized his changing aesthetic.
Whistler's conscious divergence from the realism of Courbet reinforced his inclination to avert anecdotal association in favor of pure description. In 1867 he abandoned thematically descriptive titles for his paintings in favor of musical terms indicative of composition (color, tone and design) rather than subject—"Symphony," "Harmony," "Arrangement," "Note." The musically nebulous term "Nocturne" for his nighttime scenes (originally called "Moonlights") evolved later at the suggestion of his patron, Frederick Leyland. Whistler loved the name and all that it implied; in a letter of thanks to Leyland he writes:

I say, I can't thank you enough for the name 'Nocturne' as the title for my Moonlights. You have no idea what an irritation it proves to the critics, and consequent pleasure to me; besides, it is really so charming, and does so poetically say all I want to say, and no more than I wish! (qtd. in Taylor 65)

Of all Whistler's work the nocturnes, his most abstract paintings, proved highly problematic for critics and public alike. Yet it is the nocturne that most clearly defines his aesthetic. As he explains in a letter to George Lucas in 1873,

They [the nocturnes] are not merely canvases having interest in themselves alone, but are intended to indicate slightly, "to whom it may concern," something of my theory in art. The science of colour and picture pattern as I have almost entirely penetrated and reduced to a system. (qtd. in Weintraub 136)

Darkness and mist, open space and undefined forms challenge the viewer's traditional notion of representation. Whistler
never laid claim to mimesis, writing in "The Red Rag," a pamphlet published in 1878, that the painter who imitates is in fact "a poor kind of creature" (Whistler 128). In the same tract, Whistler calls painting "the poetry of sight"—an image that he finds aesthetically superior to the print of the photographer because "it is for the artist to do something beyond this [exact representation]" (128).

Painting the sea or river cloaked in mist encourages an exploration of color and form in the absence of anecdotal distraction. In Whistler’s words,

> Art should be free of all clap-trap—should stand alone, and appeal to the artistic sense of eye or ear, without confounding this with emotions entirely foreign to it, as devotion, pity, love, patriotism, and the like. All these have no kind of concern with it; and that is why I insist on calling my works "arrangements" and "harmonies." (127-8)

Whistler may have explained, but his critics neither listened nor understood.

Like many other critics, James did not hesitate to admit his confusion about and dislike for Whistler’s work. In a review of an exhibition at the Grosvenor Gallery in the May 31, 1877, issue of the Nation, for example, James writes of Whistler that "one of his nocturnes is an impression of Mr. Henry Irving, and another his impression of Miss Ellen Terry," going on to say that such paintings "belong to the closet, not to the world" (qtd. in Murray 56). James paid so little attention to Whistler’s portraits that he did not notice that the title of a portrait could be a symphony, a
harmony, or an arrangement, but never a nocturne; even as late as 1882, when James's opinion of Whistler was more positive, he still claimed not to know whether a portrait he praised was "a harmony, a symphony, an arrangement, or a nocturne" ("London Pictures" 209). Whistler acknowledged such criticism against his musical titles in the opening lines of "The Red Rag" where he challenged,

Why should not I call my works "symphonies," "arrangements," "harmonies," and "nocturnes"? I know that many good people think my nomenclature funny and myself "eccentric." Yes, "eccentric" is the adjective they find for me. (Whistler 126)

In a review of the Grosvenor gallery contemporary to the publication of "The Red Rag," James claims, "The spectator's quarrel with them [Whistler's paintings] begins when he feels it to be expected of him to regard them as pictures" ("Grosvenor" 165). James, aesthetically rooted in representational truth, could not attach any value to a painting of "expression—just as a poem or a piece of music is" (165). Another review, "The Picture Season in London," for the August 1877 number of the Galaxy, finds James praising the "remarkable productions" of Edward Burne-Jones and calling the portraiture and other work of George Frederick Watts "the most interesting work at the Grosvenor" (142). James was particularly impressed by Watts's Love and Death, an allegory which he found to be "eminently pictorial," and he equally praised a portrait by the same artist for its "generous" design and its "proportionately
rich and sober" coloring (143). The seven paintings on
display by Burne-Jones, however, earned James's highest
acclaim:

It is the art of culture, of reflection, of
intellectual luxury, of aesthetic refinement, of people who look at the world and at life not
directly, as it were, and in all its accidental reality, but in the reflection and ornamental portrait of it furnished by art itself in other manifestations; furnished by literature, by poetry, by history, by erudition. (144).

To James, the work of Burne-Jones combined the best of narrative and realistic painting; although James admitted that some of his figures "seem flat and destitute of sides and backs," in general "while the brilliantly suggestive side of his work holds a perpetual revel of its own, the strictly plastic side never lapses" (145). James found himself impressed with the sheer beauty that Burne-Jones evokes through "his imagination, his fertility of invention, his exquisiteness of work, his remarkable gifts as a colorist" (147). In the same review, on the other hand, James proffers harsh criticism on the work of Whistler:

I will not speak of Mr. Whistler's 'Nocturnes in Black and Gold' and in 'Blue and Silver', of his 'Arrangements', 'Harmonies', and 'Impressions', because I frankly confess that they do not amuse me. . . . It may be a narrow point of view, but to be interesting it seems to me that a picture should have some relation to life as well as to painting. Mr. Whistler's experiments have no relation whatever to life; they have only a relation to painting. (143)

James did not see Whistler in the least as an important figure in "modern" art, dismissing him here in favor of the
mastery of color and design in the idealistic manipulation of reality common to the Pre-Raphaelites which, to James, seemed "the last word of consummate modern painting" (151). What James did not realize at the time is that it would be Whistler, rather than the Pre-Raphaelites, who would signal the course of modernity.

An early turning point in James's opinion on Whistler occurred during his coverage of Whistler's libel suit against John Ruskin in December 1878. Although at this point James himself remains critical of Whistler's art, he certainly understands Whistler's resentment and finds himself similarly concerned with the issue of aesthetic determination. In an article for the July 1877 edition of his journal *Fors Clavigera*, Ruskin reviewed the same exhibit at the Grosvenor gallery as James would for the *Nation* one month later. Like James, Ruskin also praised the work of Burne-Jones, declaring it "simply the only art-work at present produced in England which will be received by the future as 'classic' in its kind,—the best that has been, or could be" (qtd. in Merrill 46), while also disparaging the entries by Whistler. Of the eight paintings Whistler had submitted to the gallery only one, *Nocturne in Black and Gold* (figure 11), was for sale. It was against this painting that Ruskin leveled his most vehement criticism:

For Mr. Whistler's own sake, no less than for the protection of the purchaser, Sir Coutts Lindsay [the owner of the Grosvenor] ought not to have admitted works into the gallery in which the ill-
educated conceit of the artist so nearly approached the aspect of wilful imposture. I have seen, and heard, much of cockney impudence before now; but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face.¹²

Ruskin clearly judged Whistler's worth as an artist, and, as Linda Merrill observes, for Ruskin, "beside Burne-Jones, a paragon of artists, Whistler was an impudent fool" (47). Not only did Ruskin denounce Whistler's ability as an artist, but by raising the issue of price he moved "outside the jurisdiction of the art critic" only to land "squarely in the domain of the art economist" (49). It was the combination of Ruskin's aesthetic disregard and his judgment of economic worth that led to Whistler's charge of libel—Whistler's charge that Ruskin's commentary damaged his reputation by implying that he "lacked the qualifications necessary to produce a valid work of art" and that the remark "seemed calculated to degrade him in public estimation—to expose him to hatred, ridicule, and contempt," and, possibly, to reduce his ability to earn a living from his art (64).¹³ Whistler asked for damages in the amount of one thousand pounds.

The trial lasted for two days, and as James reported in the Nation, "it was a singular and most regrettable exhibition" ("On Whistler and Ruskin" 173). The case was heard before a jury of ordinary taxpayers who were to decide "whether Mr. Whistler's pictures belonged to a high order of art, and what degree of 'finish' was required to render a
picture satisfactory" (173). According to the Pennells, Whistler had called his action a case "between the brush and the pen" (166), begging the question of who is better qualified to form aesthetic judgment, the artist/creator or the critic/consumer. By taking on Ruskin, Whistler ultimately challenged the tradition of the Royal Academy as well—an institution whose aesthetic values echoed those of Ruskin. When Whistler’s canvases were brought to court as evidence, the jury was asked to judge them according to whether or not they were an "accurate representation" of what their titles claimed them to be and whether or not they showed "finish." As James reports, "Witnesses were summoned on either side to testify to the value of Mr. Whistler’s productions"—including Burne-Jones. Because of the praise Ruskin rendered to Burne-Jones in the same Fors Clavigera article, and because of a personal animosity against Whistler, Burne-Jones had initially offered Ruskin assistance in his defense. At the trial, Burne-Jones attacked both Whistler’s character and artistic ability, calling the Nocturne in Black and Gold (the painting which motivated Ruskin’s "pot of paint" remark), "one of a thousand failures that artists have made in their efforts at painting night" and declaring that it would be "impossible to call it a serious work of art" (qtd. in Merrill 173). Criticizing the nocturne (which Whistler admitted to have taken only two days to paint) for its lack of finish, the
attorney for Ruskin posed the key question of the trial, asking Whistler, "The labor of two days is that for which you ask two hundred guineas?" To which Whistler responded, "No. I ask it for the knowledge I have gained in the work of a lifetime," a statement that would later be echoed by James in Washington Square.\textsuperscript{15}

The following day a work by Titian was brought in as a comparison piece for "finish." Although an objection was raised, Burne-Jones was asked to judge the Titian, which he called "a most perfect specimen of a highly finished work of ancient art"; then, in a direct reference to Whistler's musical titles, he continued, "This is an arrangement in flesh and blood" (174). Through all of his acrimonious testimony, however, Burne-Jones did give Whistler credit for "excellencies of color and unrivaled power of representing atmosphere" (175)--two of the qualities Whistler felt important to his work. James found the testimony by Burne-Jones to be "the weightiest testimony, the most intelligently, and apparently the most reluctantly delivered" in a trial that was for James "decidedly painful" and that served little purpose other than to "vulgarize the public sense of the character of artistic production" ("On Whistler and Ruskin" 173).

Whistler won the lawsuit, but the damages awarded of one farthing solved nothing; as James reports, "Mr. Ruskin is formally condemned, but the plaintiff is not compensated"
James goes on to comment that Ruskin most likely "is not gratified at finding that the fullest weight of his disapproval is thought to be represented by the sum of one farthing" (174). Angry that the meager award of damages essentially ruled in favor of the critic, Whistler almost immediately (December 24, 1878) published another pamphlet in which, in James's words, "he delivers himself on the subject of art-criticism" ("Art-Criticism" 175). Whistler saw the battle to be not only a personal one between Ruskin and himself, but to be a "war . . . between the brush and the pen" (Gentle Art 25). Finding no justification for the existence of art critics, Whistler angrily writes, "No! let there be no critics! They are not a 'necessary evil,' but an evil quite unnecessary, though an evil certainly" (30). In light of his earlier critical evaluations of Whistler's work, James's response in the Nation to Whistler's tirade against critics shows a slight, yet significant, turn. In his article, Whistler claims that Ruskin, as a "litterateur," has no business guiding the course of the art world as a "populariser of pictures" (34). Surprisingly, even though he feels Whistler to be rash and rather harsh in calling Ruskin "the Peter Parley of painting," James in several respects agrees. For James, although Ruskin's "writing is art" his "art is unworthy of his writing" ("Art-Criticism" 176). Most telling of all, however, is James's passing comment that Whistler "by no
means writes as well as he paints" (175). Although his comment is made in light of the eccentricity of Whistler’s prose and is therefore not exactly praise, it indicates that the events and the ultimate result of the trial had an effect upon James’s understanding and appreciation of art. Finding Whistler’s "little diatribe against the critics" to be "suggestive" (175), James may have been anticipating later critical difficulties of his own. James writes:

> Few people will deny that the development of criticism in our day had become inordinate, disproportionate, and that much of what is written under that exalted name is very idle and superficial. Mr. Whistler’s complaint belongs to the general question, and I am afraid it will never obtain a serious hearing . . . . The whole artistic community is in the same boat . . . .

(177)

Although he reneges slightly at the end, calling criticism "in the long run" an "agreeable luxury" (even here, however, he claims that "agreeable" might be too strong a term), for the most part James’s commentary supports Whistler’s position as well as, for the first time, his art.

James did not comment on Whistler again in print until another review of the Grosvenor Gallery for the August 1882 number of the Atlantic Monthly, "London Pictures and London Plays." In contrast to his earlier reviews in which Whistler is allotted but a brief dishonorable mention, here James devotes over a page of hesitant praise to his work. Although James once again finds "much to enjoy" in the work of Edward Burne-Jones, his four pages of commentary are
hardly celebratory. James qualifies almost every statement he makes about Burne-Jones as if he feels that he should like the work more than he does. For example, James writes,

His expression is troubled, but at least there is an interesting mind in it . . . . [T]he painting of Burne-Jones is almost alone in having the gravity and deliberation of truly valuable speech. It needs, however, to be looked at good humouredly and liberally. (205)

James attributes the sickly look of Burne-Jones's women to their living "in a different world from ours—a fortunate world, in which young ladies may be slim and pale and 'seedy' without discredit," linking their appearance not to "a question of sickness and health" but to a question of "grace, delicacy, tenderness" (206). And concerning the odd coloring and facial configuration of the figures in a large painting of Phyllis and Demophoön (figure 12),

There is no very visible reason . . . why . . . the lovely Phyllis, forsaken by her lover, and turned by the kind gods into an almond-tree, should look as if she had secreted a button, or even a quid of tobacco beneath her upper lip; there is no reason why Demophoön, the guilty lover . . . should have hair of a singular greenish tinge. . . . In spite of all this, Phyllis's lip and Demophoön's hair are extremely pictorial, and I am willing to believe that they are indispensable parts of a beautiful scheme. (206)

Try as he would, James could no longer avidly praise Burne-Jones, whose technique had not changed over the past four years as much as James's own aesthetic—an evolution that James probably did not yet consciously realize. But just as James's praise of Burne-Jones appears subverted by his qualifying remarks, his attempt to proffer his usual
criticism of Whistler is transformed into praise. Here, too, James qualifies his statements, but it is rather to turn an initially negative comment into a positive one. Whereas with Burne-Jones James seems to be trying to convince himself that the work is more than it is, with Whistler he tries to convince himself that it is less.

The transition from Burne-Jones to Whistler in James's review transpires with a remark that reinforces our sense that James was not as pleased with the work of Burne-Jones as he pretended to be. He leaves Burne-Jones with the comment, "The only complaint I have to make of him [Burne-Jones] is that one cannot express one's appreciation of him without seeming to talk in air. For this reason I will pass on to Mr. Whistler, though on reflection I hardly know whether the case is bettered" (208). James may "hardly know," yet he has obviously considered the possibility. Although James opens his commentary by calling Whistler "peculiar," the supposed "buffoon of the Grosvenor, the laughing-stock of the critics," he finds that, although "exceedingly unequal," for Whistler "this is rather a good year" (208-9). Reluctant at first to comment on the pictures currently on display, James begins with unabashed praise of the portrait of Whistler's mother, calling it "so noble and admirable a picture, such a masterpiece of tone, of feeling, of the power to render life" (209). He contrasts the older painting with those on display with the
apparent intent of showing the weakness of the current works by comparison. Yet his critical commentary backfires. Although he calls Whistler's *Harmony in Black and Red* and *Harmony in Flesh Color and Pink* "sketches" that seem "in comparison very crude," the paintings nonetheless contain "the appearance of life, which is a good deal" (209)--a quality that the work of Burne-Jones obviously lacks. James describes the figure in Whistler's *Harmony in Black and Red* as "a vague black shadow" that "lifts its head and poises itself and says something." She is "charming; she looks like someone . . . and if she is a shadow she is the shadow of a graceful personage" (209). Although James maintains that Whistler's works are sketchy ("his manner of painting is to breathe upon the canvas"), he nonetheless prefers them to the "garish" colors of Holman Hunt and the "uninteresting" and "disappointing" canvases of Millais, Watts, and Alma-Tadema.

What impressed James most about Whistler's portraits was their ability to portray character. In a 1952 evaluation of James's reviews of Whistler's art at the Grosvenor, Donald Murray remarks that James avoided the "critical issues" of Whistler's painting as a result of his "limited insight into that artist's aims" (64). Murray is correct here only in part. It is true that James did not understand Whistler's theory of art as a pure medium, but he did innately sense Whistler's underlying concern with
character in portraiture, a concern of enough theoretical importance to warrant its inclusion in "The Red Rag." As the painter of landscape must transcend the limits of photographic representation to express the poetry of the landscape, the painter of portraits must "put on canvas something more than the face the model wears for that one day; to paint the man, in short, as well as his features" (128). Whistler's goal was to paint character without anecdote, a sense of "life" without story. In her study of Whistler in 1907, Elisabeth Cary explains that the artist does not need anecdote to express character:

> Character and personal history mould [the face] to a greater or less degree and the artist who distinguishes significant details of surface, and complex relations and correspondences in the organic whole perforce must reveal character. (76)

At the bottom of Whistler's portraiture was, in Denys Sutton's words, "a conviction that individuality exists in all of us" (71). Whistler's technique, Sutton continues, was

> to provide an instantaneous statement which took account of the inner spark of personality . . . to catch that one moment of time when all the elements, which held his attention, were fused simultaneously in front of his eyes so that he could perceive their intimate and revealing meanings. (71)

What James found most intriguing about Whistler's portrait of his mother was its mastery "of tone, of feeling, of the power to render life" ("London Pictures" 209).

In the portrait of the mother (Arrangement in Grey and
Black: Portrait of the Painter’s Mother, 1872) (figure 13), the full-length female figure appears seated, in profile. Because her face is not the focus of the painting, the sense of her character emerges through the relationship within the painting of body and face, color and tone, position and "arrangement." The figure itself appears frail: her small shoulders and slightly drooping head, her hands folded across the handkerchief, her serene facial expression, and her pale, almost translucent skin combine to present a touching insight into this older woman who appears reconciled to the renunciations of her past and resigned to her current position. The spatial arrangement and tonal scheme—the division of space, the placement of accents, the simple black dress juxtaposed to the patterned curtain—reinforce the traits expressed in the figure itself. It is fruitful to contrast here a formally analogous portrait of markedly different character, that of Thomas Carlyle, the Arrangement in Gray and Black No. 2 (1872-73) (figure 14). As the title suggests, both paintings are tonally similar, and even the arrangement itself is nearly identical. The portrait of Carlyle finds him in the same room and in the same chair as Whistler’s mother, but placed away from the delicate print and vertical line of the curtain in favor of a more horizontally linear field, allowing Carlyle to dominate the canvas. The mother, on the other hand does not dominate the picture; she sits off-center, framed by a
smaller square wall (limited, in effect, by the dark vertical rectangle of the curtain) which provides the lighter tonal ground that emphasizes the curve of her lap. Such fluid lines suggest of the figure serenity and repose, while the more angular lines of Carlyle indicate a certain rugged forcefulness. The differences between the two portraits are subtle, arising not merely from differences in tonal harmony or arrangement, but from the expression of two very unlike characters.

IV

By the time James reviewed the Grosvenor exhibit of 1882 he had published his first great character study, A Portrait of a Lady. James recalls in the preface to the New York edition that his idea began as "the conception of a certain young woman affronting her destiny . . . a slim shade of an intelligent but presumptuous girl" (Art 42). Developing character first rather than story enabled James to fully imagine an interesting character and then build a story around what she would do. In James's words, "Stick to the center of the subject in the young woman's consciousness, and you get as interesting and as beautiful a difficulty as you could wish" (51). Isabel Archer appears for the first time in the novel as an impression, seen through Ralph Touchett's eyes as a "tall girl in a black dress, who at first sight looked pretty" (Portrait I 17). At second glance Ralph notices that she "was unexpectedly
pretty" and that she seemed "to have a great deal of confidence, both in herself and others" (17). The character of Isabel, the "portrait" of the title, continues to develop throughout the novel as the impressions of others as they see her yield to her response to her own impressions of the world around her. The full portrait is not complete until we come to the end of the novel, and even then it is left unfinished. What emerges through our reading is a sense of character, of life, rather than of story. What matters to the reader is not so much what happens to Isabel as how she responds to her situation. The famous recognition scene in chapter fifty-two is a telling example of James's early impressionism. Isabel stops before the door of the drawing room, James writes, because "she had received an impression" (II 164). James purposely slows the temporal pace of the narrative because what Isabel sees "made an image, lasting only a moment, like a sudden flicker of light" (II 164). The scene is not presented as an impressionist painting; the description as related through Isabel's perspective is realistically detailed. Like the impression received by Winterbourne as he viewed Daisy and Giovanelli on the parapet, James's impressionism here is structural rather than superficial. Isabel sees an image "lasting only a second, like a sudden flicker of light" that is imprinted immediately on her consciousness, enabling her to understand as a gestalt a situation that she had previously
misunderstood. Seeing Madame Merle "standing on the rug, a little way from the fire" and Osmond "in a deep chair, leaning back and looking at her"--the fact that he sits while he stands--brings the entire circumstance of their relationship immediately to her understanding (II 164). Seeing, here, to Isabel, without conscious interpretation, becomes knowing. The immediate impression of the image requires, for her, no further interpretation.

Impressionism may inform a literary work in several different ways, in either the surface or internal structure; in other words, it may vary from superficial scenic description designed for the reader's visual perspective (creating a visual impression reminiscent of a canvas by Monet, for example) to the internal impression as it is received by a character and translated without interference to the reader. The transmission of the image from character to reader rather than from author to reader relocates the impressionist image from the surface to the deep structure of the work. It is the narrative focus within the consciousness of a character that enables the visual/verbal transmission of the impression. Such an image, in the deep structure of the novel, need not follow the most typical visual impressionist model of bright colors and reflected light. For the most part, when impressionism successfully informs the deep structure of the work, the images are rarely those of the French artists. Immediacy, however,
remains key, and the rapid brushwork typical of impressionism is implied in the immediacy of the response of the character/viewer who transmits the impression to the reader as it appears, without conscious interpretation. It is in just such immediacy that James excels. His impressionism is seldom bright, is seldom reminiscent of Monet particularly in a pictorial sense. In this respect, we turn again to Whistler.

A study of a Whistler nocturne, *Nocturne in Black and Gold: Entrance to Southampton Water* (figure 15) and one of Monet's early impressionist works, *Impression, Sunrise* (figure 16) will serve to illustrate the differences as well as the similarities between the two styles. Both were painted in 1872, and both depict a similar scene: a harbor in semi-darkness with a large expanse of water dotted with several boats. The horizon is high, and the line is foggy and indistinct. Monet's depiction of fog and his use of "liquid sweeps of color" in the water and sky had led John House to posit that Monet "may have responded to Whistler's early nocturnes" (79). Kenneth McConkey agrees that the direction of influence moved from Whistler to Monet rather than the reverse, noting that Monet's "having seen Whistler's *Nocturne in Blue and Green: Chelsea* (1870) might well have propelled him towards *Impression: Sunrise*, the seminal work of from the first Impressionist exhibition" (13). Although they share several formal qualities, the
Figure 15. James McNeill Whistler, Nocturne in Black and Gold: Entrance to Southampton Water (late 1870s to early 1880s), Chicago Art Institute; rpt. in Denys Sutton, James McNeill Whistler: Paintings, Etchings, Pastels and Watercolours (London: Phaidon, 1966) plate 83.
difference in style as it reflects each painter's pictorial
type transcends the similarities. The primary difference
between Monet's treatment and that of Whistler is the time
of day. Monet depicts the haze of an early morning sunrise;
Whistler shows the harbor in late twilight with a full moon
on the rise. In Monet, the sky glows, reflecting the
redness of the sun which has just ascended above the masts
extending above the horizon. The color red reflects off the
surface of the water as well, glowing in the rippling waves
created by the motion of the boats. There is a feeling of
life and motion in Impression, Sunrise. The smoke wafting
from the stacks in the background disperses in the breeze; a
figure in the boat in the foreground stands steering with a
stick; the water ripples; the clouds reflect the changing
light as the sun ascends in the sky. The painting maintains
a sense of depth and comfortable perspective—a three-
dimensional quality purposely lacking in Whistler's
nocturne. The Nocturne in Black and Gold has the flattened,
two-dimensional aspect common to his earlier nocturnes. The
scene is ensconced in a mist that minimalizes perspective.
There is no reflection of the rising moon on either sky or
water. The boats sit at rest upon the water, their sail-
less masts rising in lines that are not quite vertical. The
water in the right foreground is simply empty space, a field
of color showing only slight variations in tone. The water
does not ripple and the boats do not move. Occasional spots
of light reflect dimly on the flat surface of the water. Whistler paints a nighttime scene, one bathed in the unifying mist of darkness. Monet, in contrast, paints a scene full of motion and light as the harbor comes to life at the beginning of the day. Monet concentrates on the ephemeral qualities of light and motion; Whistler’s focus is on spatial form, color, and texture.

Because of James’s frequent reviews in the 1870s of Whistler’s art, it is possible that James was familiar with the Nocturne in Black and Gold: Entrance to Southampton Water. In The Bostonians (1886) there appears an image which verbally echoes Whistler’s painted scene. Early in the novel we find Basil Ransom as he stands in Olive Chancellor’s drawing room, looking out the window over the bay:

The afternoon sun slants redly, from an horizon indented at empty intervals with wooden spires, the masts of lonely boats, the chimneys of dirty "works," over a brackish expanse of anomalous character. . . . The view seemed to him very picturesque, though in the gathered dusk little was left of it save a cold yellow streak in the west, a gleam of brown water, and the reflection of lights. (11-12)

James may render his source of light as a slanting red sun rather than a rising red moon, but the resemblance to Whistler’s painting is remarkable. Ransom’s sun, resting low on the horizon, does not give off the bright light of Monet’s Impression: Sunrise but rather glows dimly through the fog, creating little more than a "cold yellow streak in
the west." In his narrative image James underscores the "picturesque" quality of a twilight view, the value of which had been hotly disputed during the Whistler-Ruskin trial. That James had come to an understanding by the mid-1880s of Whistler's aesthetic becomes obvious in an image such as this one.

Adeline R. Tintner, however, has noticed traces of Burne-Jones in the same novel, in the character of Basil Ransom itself. Noting that James had begun to "disavow Burne-Jones's kind of painting" by the time he wrote The Bostonians, Tintner finds it "paradoxical" that James would assimilate "definite signs of Burne-Jones's vision" into his work (143). Comparing the physical appearance and character traits of Ransom to the figure of Cophetua in Burne-Jones's King Cophetua and the Maid and comparing Verena Tarrant's physical appearance and character traits to the maid in the same painting as well as to a variety of figures in his "'trance' pictures," Tinter points out the decadence represented in Burne-Jones's work, not only in the chosen subject matter but in the manner of representation (144). As Tinter goes on to say, The Bostonians was to be "James's 'correction' of the Decadent novel" (144), in which case the use of Burne-Jones's images become more a source of irony than paradox. The juxtaposition of Pre-Raphaelite images with those of Whistlerian impressionism creates a tension within the narrative between two different art forms.
that persists to the end of the novel. James describes Ransom’s arrival at the hall where Verena is scheduled to speak, in the Pre-Raphaelite images Tintner refers to—the hall in its "Roman vastness" (Bostonians 353) is compared to the Coliseum, and Ransom (whose name, when rearranged anagrammatically is ‘Romans’) becomes more villainous page by page. When he finally sees Verena face to face, she appears as Whistler’s white girl of Symphony in White No. 1:

She was dressed in white, and her face was whiter than her garment; above it her hair seemed to shine like fire. (361)

Ransom ultimately convinces Verena to go away with him, yet "beneath her hood she was in tears" which "were not the last she was destined to shed" (370). The victory in the battle of aesthetics in The Bostonians in favor of the Pre-Raphaelite is an ironic one. The final lines of the novel convince us that the victory of the decadent is not a happy one, if it is truly a victory at all. James in effect leaves the ending open; the battle is not over, and with our understanding of Verena’s strengthening character, she is likely to emerge victorious after all.

Impressionism for James eventually did become the dominant aesthetic; by the 1890s his fiction had become increasingly impressionist in manner. His use of detailed external images abated as he focussed rather on the internal perceptions of his characters. By the time he published The Ambassadors in 1903 he had mastered the form of literary
impressionism. In *The Ambassadors*, as James notes in the preface, he strove to create a "splendid particular economy" which he achieved by centering the narrative upon one character and "keeping it all within my hero's compass" (*Art* 317). Although other characters would appear "each with his or her axe to grind, his or her situation to treat," they would be seen through the eyes of Lambert Strether alone:

> But Strether's sense of these things, and Strether's only, should avail me for showing them; I should know them through his more or less groping knowledge of them, since his very gropings would figure among his most interesting motions, and a full observance of the rich rigour I speak of would give me more of the effect I should be most "after" than all other possible observances together. (317-18)

Presenting the world through the eyes of Lambert Strether allows James to mingle impressions of the present with memories of the past in order to create a personal reality that necessarily would differ from that of any other character or of any individual reader. Seeing the world as Strether sees it allows for a simultaneous rendering of subjective and objective reality; as we move through Paris within Strether's mind at times we see things as he sees them, objectively, before conscious interpretation, while at the same time, his perceptions are narrated through the filter of his memory and experience which affects his "impressions" of the world around him.

James credits the germ of *The Ambassadors* to an incident which occurred in the garden of Whistler's house in
Paris. Jonathan Sturges, an artist and friend of both Whistler and James, told James in a conversation one evening of a brief encounter he had eighteen months before with William Dean Howells. In his notebook entry of October 31, 1895, James records the essence of Sturges's words:

Oh--somewhere--I forget, when I was with him--he laid his hand on my shoulder and said a propos of some remark of mine: "Oh, you are young, you are young--be glad of it and live. Live all you can: it's a mistake not to. It doesn't matter so much what you do--but live. This place makes it all come over me. I haven't done so--and now I'm old. It's too late. It has gone past me--I've lost it. You have time. You are young. Live! (226)

James admits that he does "amplify and improve a little" in his recreation of the incident, but it was enough to let him see "a little situation" that he could work out. Although Sturges admitted that he could not remember precisely where the conversation occurred, Leon Edel claims that it was indeed in Whistler's garden, which served James later as the model for Gloriani's garden, the site of the fictional exchange. Edel observes that James knew Whistler's garden well, having both visited Whistler there and having seen it from a neighboring house years before (535). Like Whistler, the fictional painter Gloriani was "at home" on Sunday afternoons, when many people, "fewer bores . . . than elsewhere," would gather to drink and visit (Ambassadors I 193). And like Whistler, too, Gloriani, according to Edel, had "matured" since his first appearance in Roderick Hudson, having now, as had Whistler, "acquired greatness" (535).
Chad Newsome invites Strether to join him for a gathering at Gloriani's one particular Sunday with the "expectation of something special" that afternoon (I 193). Strether describes "the place itself" as "a great impression—a small pavilion, clear-faced and sequestered, an effect of polished parquet, of fine white panel and spare sallow gilt" (195). Overwhelmed by the crowd of people in the open air of the garden, Strether's next impression is one of

a great convent, a convent of missions, famous for he scarce knew what, a nursery of young priests, of scattered shade, of straight alleys and chapel-bells, that spread its mass in one quarter; he had the sense of names in the air, of ghosts at the windows, of signs and tokens, a whole range of expression, all about him, too thick for prompt discrimination. (I 196)

Strether's words indicate a feeling of closeness, of being cloistered. It is all too much for him to consciously assimilate; his only response can be related as an impression. The purpose of his visit, to see for the first time Mme. de Vionnet and her daughter, leads Strether to more impressions which arrive in the form of two Whistlerian portraits. After his first "disconcerting" impression of the "air of youth" possessed by Mme. de Vionnet, Strether notices her appearance:

She was dressed in black, but in black that struck him as light and transparent; she was exceedingly fair, and, though she was as markedly slim, her face had a roundness, with eyes far apart and a little strange. Her smile was natural and dim; her hat not extravagant; he had only perhaps a sense of the clink, beneath her fine black
sleeves, of more gold bracelets and bangles than he had ever seen a lady wear. (I 210)

In Strether’s impression, James captures the style and palette of such portraits as *Arrangement in Black: Lady in a yellow Buskin*—Lady Archibald Campbell (1884) (figure 17), or *Arrangement in Black and Brown*, of which there are two, *Rosa Corder* (1876) and *The Fur Jacket* (1877), any of which is reminiscent as well of the *Arrangement in Black and Red* reviewed by James in 1882. In these portraits, fair-skinned women emerge ethereally from the shadows, dressed in dark, translucent gowns that appear to radiate from the nearly identical tones of the background. Not long after Strether had pieced together as well as he could a more complete image of Mme. de Vionnet through an overlay of "other impressions," he found himself faced with yet another:

He had just made out, in the now full picture, something and somebody else; another impression had been superimposed. A young girl in a white dress and a softly plumed white hat had suddenly come into view . . . . (I 220)

Mademoiselle de Vionnet resembles nothing so much as Whistler’s *Arrangement in White and Black* (figure 18), from her white dress to her plumed hat.18 Whistler’s lady stands almost ghostlike before a black ground appearing, like Mademoiselle de Vionnet, like an impression "superimposed."

Whistler’s shadowy portraits become even more abstract in his later years, increasingly cloaked in the mist that so defines his nocturnes. Lines fade as the figures emerge out of the shadows just long enough to invite us to come in for
a closer look. Subdued tones, especially blues and greens, give Whistler's paintings a sense of recession from the viewer. As Donald Holden points out, this evanescence demanded a new effort from the nineteenth-century observer:

If the picture recedes from us, we must allow ourselves to be drawn in, we must move into the blue and gray haze and allow ourselves to be enveloped by it . . . to experience a painting by stepping inside it. (50)

Further on in *The Ambassadors* Strether finds himself drawn into just such an experience, drawn into the picture, if you will. Deciding to spend an afternoon in the country, to go "to that French ruralism, with its cool special green" which he had experienced up to this time only through "the little oblong window of the picture frame," Strether hops a train to search for the landscape he had seen years before in a tiny painting by Lambinet (II 245). Finally debarking from the train, he walks a short distance before stepping into the memory of the Lambinet:

The oblong gilt frame disposed its enclosing lines; the poplars and willows, the reeds and river--a river of which he did n't know, and did n't want to know, the name--fell into a composition, full of felicity, within them; the sky was silver and turquoise and varnish, the village on the left was white and the church on the right was grey; in was all there, in short--it was what he wanted: it was Tremont Street, it was France, it was Lambinet. Moreover, he was freely walking about in it. (II 247)

Having been drawn into the picture, Strether continues to walk about in it throughout the day, having "not once overstepped the oblong gilt frame" (II 252). He experiences
the landscape in terms of pure color and form, like the village that affects him "as a thing of whiteness, blueness and crookedness, set in coppery green" and the church that appears "all steep roof and dim slate-colour without" (II 252). James paints the entire scene as a French impressionist landscape, here with the bright colors inspired by the French countryside. As Winner points out, by the time Strether enters the village "it is no longer a Lambinet which is being described but an impressionist canvas instead" (77).

Although James paints the landscape as Strether sees it in the early part of the day in the colors and light of French impressionism, toward evening its formal arrangement takes on the two-dimensional aspect and empty space characteristic of a Whistler painting that could be described in terms of a nocturne in green and pearl:

The valley on the further side was all copper-green level and glazed pearly sky, a sky hatched across with screens of trimmed trees, which looked flat, like espaliers; and though the rest of the village straggled away in the near quarter the view had an emptiness that made one of the boats suggestive. (II 255)

Like a Whistler nocturne, the canvas is divided into three parts--sky, treetops, and river--with an overarching feeling of emptiness. When a boat "containing a man who held the paddles and a lady, at the stern, with pink parasol" enters the picture, it is to Strether "exactly the right thing... as if these figures, or something like them, had been wanted
in the picture, had been wanted more or less all day, and
had now drifted into sight, with the slow current, on
purpose to fill up the measure" (II 256). Strether’s sense
that such figures are "wanted in the picture" echoes a
remark made by Whistler, once again in "The Red Rag," about
his *Nocturne in Gray and Gold: Chelsea Snow*:

> My picture of a "Harmony in Gray and Gold" is an
> illustration of my meaning--a snow scene with a
> single black figure and a lighted tavern. I care
> nothing for the past, present, or future of the
> black figure, placed there because the black was
> wanted at that spot. (126)

Although the figures Strether sees on the river become
ultimately important within the context of the novel, the
pictorial impression is the same. While viewing the
emptiness of the painted canvas, within the "oblong gilt
frame" of his original Lambinet, Strether views the empty
landscape first in terms of space and tone. It is only
later, after he recognizes the figures as Chad and Mme. de
Vionnet, that he consciously realizes the significance of
what becomes an impression within an impression--the amorous
relationship between his two friends.

Although James did not speak publicly about art during
the middle years, we can trace his changing aesthetic
through the evolution of his writerly technique as well as
his numerous comments made on art in the context of his
fictional works themselves. It is enlightening, then, to
look at James’s late art review for *Harpers Weekly* in 1897.
Whereas in 1882 we see the beginning of a chiasmic evolution
in James’s aesthetic appreciation for Burne-Jones and Whistler, here we find James unequivocally praising Whistler’s showing at the Grafton Gallery. Admittedly more impressed with the Hogarths and Zoffanys than with the "portion in which the portraits of the day prevail," James finds nevertheless that "this impression receives a grand lift" from the work of Whistler, especially in his "exquisite image" of Henry Irving (Arrangement in Black No. 3: Sir Henry Irving in the Character of Philip II of Spain in Tennyson’s "Queen Mary").21 Although lengthy, it is fruitful to cite James’s commentary in full.

To pause before such a work [Henry Irving] is in fact to be held to the spot by just the highest operation of the charm one has sought there—the charm of melancholy meditation. Meditation indeed forgets Garrick and Hogarth and all the handsome heads of the Kembles in wonder reintensified at the attitude of a stupid generation, liking so much that it does like, and with a faculty trained to courser motions, recognize in Mr. Whistler’s work one of the finest of all distillations of the artistic intelligence? To turn from his picture to the rest of the show—which, of course, I admit, is not a collection of masterpieces—is to drop from the world of distinction, of beauty and mystery and perpetuity, into—well, a very ordinary place. And yet the effect of Whistler at his best is exactly to give to the place he hangs in—of perhaps I should say the person he hangs for—something of the sense of illusion of a great museum. He isolates himself in a manner all his own; his presence is in itself a sort of implication of a choice corner. have we, in this, a faint foresight of the eventual turn of the wheel—of one of the nooks of honour, those innermost rooms of great collections, in which our posterity shall find him? Look at him, at any rate, on any occasion, but above all at his best, only long enough, and hallucination sets in. We are in the presence of one of the prizes marked with two stars in the guidebook; the polished
floor is beneath us and the rococo roof above; the
great names are ranged about, and the eye is aware
of the near window, in its deep recess, that looks
out on old gardens or on a celebrated place.
("The Grafton Galleries" 258-9)

After dismissing Whistler as a mere eccentricity less than
twenty years earlier, by 1897 James literally establishes
Whistler in a place of honor.

Although James and Whistler may have never had, as
Donald Murray remarks, a "meeting of the minds" (65), they
nonetheless shared an aesthetic affinity which can be said
to link them in both a pictorial and an ideological sense.
Rebelling openly against romantic anecdote and realistic
depiction, Whistler moved quickly toward the development of
an original aesthetic that came to be associated with the
movement of "art for art's sake." But Whistler was not
one for formal movements, and, while he did abhor anecdote
and favored formal pictorialism in art, he also valued
poetry in landscape and, above all, character in
portraiture. Although James often openly disagreed with the
pictorial as well as the ideological direction of Whistler's
art, his own aesthetic evolution followed, though more
slowly, similar lines. There is a paradox in James's art
reviews in relation to his own fiction in that James began
his early experimentation in impressionism years before he
came to accept it in the visual arts. He spent years
discrediting Whistler's work because it did not accord with
his early (and stubbornly lingering) appreciation for
representational and anecdotal art. In reviews as early as 1882, however, James began to waiver in his aesthetic judgment, indicating not so much a conscious shift as a subconscious one. Because there is no public record of his response to art from the mid-1880s to the late 1890s, James’s evolving aesthetic can be traced only as it informs his own art of fiction. It is in the later years, upon the composition of his most experimental (and least critically and publicly accepted) works *The Ambassadors*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and *The Golden Bowl*, that James had finally embraced a modernist aesthetic—an aesthetic rooted in the art of James McNeill Whistler.
Notes: Chapter Four

1. Ruskin indicates that a realistic depiction of a landscape must include areas of varying focus rather than focusing every object equally. Ruskin writes:

   The consequence of this [inability to see all objects in equal focus at the same time] is, practically, that in a real landscape, we can see the whole of what would be called the middle distance together, with facility and clearness; but while we do so we can see nothing in the foreground beyond a vague and indistinct arrangement of lines and colors; and that if, on the contrary, we look at any foreground object, so as to receive a distinct impression of it, the distance and middle distance become all disorder and mystery. (183)

   Translating his observation of the "real" landscape into painterly perspective, he continues that if "in a painting our foreground is anything, our distance must be nothing, and vice versa" or else "we violate one of the most essential principles of nature" (184).

2. Such experiments with space and time were still in the early stages during the impressionist period. The problem of temporality as applied to a spatial field later become a key element in the cubism of such painters as Braque and Picasso who juxtapose images, one on top of the other, to indicate the various positions of an object as it moves through time.

3. In "Impressionism," an essay written in response to the impressionist exhibit at the Chicago Exposition in 1893, Garland analyzes with insight and detail the technique of the impressionist painters, especially their use of bright color. Garland notes that "the yellow hair of a child," for example, contains "red, blue, and yellow," the same primary colors found in "the gray hair of the grandmother" (104). As far as subject, the impressionist painter "deals with the present" without allegory and paints "portraits and groups . . . as he sees them, not as others see them" (104). Garland saw a positive change in painting emerging through the impressionist vision, and attempted to transfer the technique to literature. Calling his version of impressionism "veritism" (a comfortable blend of impressionism and realism), Garland applied the technique to several of his shorter works. Garland, however, was unable to capture the essence of impressionism; although he infused many of his stories with brilliant color and presented several from the perspective of a series of visual impressions, Garland’s impressionism never penetrated below.
the surface. Garland, however, served as a major influence on the writing of Stephen Crane who ultimately became one of the better literary impressionists.

4. It is in this respect that the impressionist narrative differs from that of stream of consciousness. Where the impressionist writes a narrative that although episodic remains chronological to reflect the manner in which external images are perceptually received, the writer of stream of consciousness alters the chronology of the narrative to indicate the patterns of the mind as it makes internal connections based upon external cues.

5. James Kirschke summarizes the impressionist style in a list of six basic techniques:
   1. rendering the direct and fleeting impression,
   2. painting in the open air with emphasis upon seizing the effects of light and color,
   3. moving around a subject and painting it from different angles,
   4. using broken brushwork which requires viewing from a distance,
   5. juxtaposing colors to establish artistic effects,
   6. presenting scenes in a hazy atmosphere.

See Henry James and Impressionism, pp. 4-14.

6. In A Small Boy and Others James writes, "[T]he picture, the representative design, directly and strongly appealed to me ... My face was turned from the first to the ideas of representation—that of the gain of charm, interest, mystery, dignity, distinction, gain of importance in fine, on the part of the represented thing" (263).

7. In A Small Boy and Others James recalled finding Maclises's painting of a scene from Hamlet "'the finest composition in the world (though Ophelia did look a little as if cut in silhouette out of white paper and pasted on).’"
   In the same work, James noted being impressed as well with the romance of Leslie's Sancho Panza and His Duchess (315). See also Winner, p. 8.

8. I use here the Norton Critical Edition of The American, a text drawn from the London Macmillan edition of 1879. James's extensive revision of the novel for the New York edition of 1907 alters the realist/romantic aesthetic of the original text to reflect the affection for impressionism which developed over many years and which came to dominate the style of his later novels.
9. Although James unabashedly touts *The American* as romance early in the preface, several pages later he justifies the romantic elements in the novel through a comparison with Scott, Balzac, and Zola. James claims that these three writers mix, as he does in *The American*, elements of romance and realism, "washing us with the warm wave of the near and familiar and the tonic shock, as it may be, of the far and strange." Yet even here James blurs the distinction between realism and romance:

> I suggest not that the strange and the far are at all necessarily romantic: they happen to be simply the unknown, which is quite a different matter. The real represents to my perception the things we cannot possibly not know, sooner or later, in one way or another. . . . The romantic stands, on the other hand, for the things that, with all the facilities in the world . . . we never can directly know . . . . (Art 31)

James’s choice of authors to discuss in terms of realism and romance is an interesting one since we typically relate Scott to romance, Balzac to realism, and Zola to naturalism. Charles Child Walcutt, in his 1956 study *American Literary Naturalism, a Divided Stream*, relates naturalism, which many critics believe to have grown out of realism, to romanticism (particularly the American form of Transcendentalism) instead.


11. Whistler’s musical terms can be described as follows: "Harmony" indicates the relationship of one color tone to another; "Arrangement" focuses on the spatial arrangement of objects or people within the rectilinear frame; "Symphony" implies a large work, often featuring variations of one major tone; "Note" indicates a small work.

12. Ruskin’s remark has been isolated and reprinted many times. Originally appearing as a postscript to letter 79, "The Social Monster," in *Fors Clavigera* in July, 1877, the letter appears as well in the *Works of Ruskin*, 29:146 (Merrill 48, 332n). I cite from Whistler’s report of the trial in *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* (1), but the citation appears in full as well in James’s review of the trial, "On Whistler and Ruskin" in the *Nation*, December 19, 1878 (172).
13. The question of economics was raised at the trial when, under examination, Whistler was asked whether he had sold any Nocturnes since the publication of Ruskin's criticism a year and a half before. Whistler replied, "Not by any means at the same price as before" (qtd. in Merrill 143).

14. Merrill dates the animosity between the two men from "at least 1867" when Whistler and his brother-in-law, Seymore Haden, argued "over Haden's disrespectful handling of the death of a family friend in a brothel in Paris." The argument led to a physical fight wherein Whistler struck Alphonse Legros, a friend of Burne-Jones. Burne-Jones is reported to have said that he wanted to "take Whistler on" out of loyalty to Legros, and that the Ruskin trial would provide an opportunity to settle the score (107).

15. In chapter seven of Washington Square Dr. Sloper's sister, Mrs. Almond, challenges her brother for having so quickly made up his mind about the character of his daughter's suitor, saying "If you make up your mind so easily, it's a great advantage." The doctor replies, "I don't make up my mind easily. What I tell you is the result of thirty years of observation; and in order to be able to form that judgment in a single evening, I have had to spend a lifetime in study" (62).

16. Whistler's assertion differs from the paragone of da Vinci and the sister arts analogy, the battle for aesthetic supremacy between painting and literature, in that Whistler is concerned rather with the "pen" of the critic as it is used to determine the aesthetic as well as the commercial value of the visual art work.

17. Tintner traces James's increasing displeasure with the art of Burne-Jones beyond the published reviews discussed earlier in this chapter through several letters written to Charles Eliot Norton in 1886 and 1892. In the letter of 1886 James writes that Burne-Jones's pictures "seem to me to grow colder and colder--painted abstractions, less and less observed," and in 1892 that of his painting he has "ceased to feel it very much" (143).

18. This painting is alternatively known as Arrangement in Black and White: The Young American. Whistler was notoriously inconsistent in both his titles and numbers.

19. Émile Lambinet, 1815-1878, a minor French realist painter.

20. James repeats this line in a slightly different order two pages later when Strether again looks at the village as "whiteness, crookedness and blueness set in coppery green"
21. The painting was not a recent one. The painting was begun in 1876 and was probably reworked sometime later. See Sutton (color plate 76) and the Pennells (144-5).

22. Whistler's treatise on his theory of art, "The Ten O'Clock," was delivered as a speech, at ten in the evening, in London (February 20, 1885), at Cambridge (March 24, 1885) and at Oxford (April 30, 1885) and was later published as a pamphlet as well as in Whistler's own anthology of his writing, The Gentle Art of Making Enemies. Whistler's exhortations in the "Ten O'Clock" to remove the literary from art, to look to nature for tone and form, to divorce beauty from virtue, to remove art in its purest form from social as well as historical context, and his simple assertions that "art happens" and "art is" boldly express an ideology congruous with that of "l'art pour l'art."
CHAPTER 5

MOTHER AND THE BEAST: SURREALIST IMAGES OF DESIRE
IN DJUNA BARNES AND DOROTHEA TANNING

... let us not forget that in this epoch it is reality itself that is in question. A. Breton

Beginning in the 1920s, in the period between the two world wars, a group of writers and artists assembled in Paris to form a movement that would turn the worlds of literature and art inside out. Motivated by politics as well as by a unanimous vision that realism was inadequate to express the higher reality of the self, the surrealists, under the leadership of André Breton, set out to break all previously established precepts of art and culture. In his 1928 essay "Surrealism and Painting" Breton claimed that the problem with representational art was that its "very narrow conception of imitation... which has been given as its aim is at the bottom of the serious misunderstanding" that had developed about art over the previous several centuries (13). The mistake, continues Breton, lies in the artist's belief that the model for art "can only be taken from the exterior world, or that it can be taken at all" (13). Breton calls rather for the "necessity of thoroughly
revising all real values" which must "either refer to a 'purely interior model' or cease to exist" (13-14). The iconoclastic position of the surrealists called for a total transformation in both the perception and creation of works of art, and, as Breton clearly states, art that does not conform to this new vision of interiority cannot be considered art at all. Unlike the dadaists before them whose goals were to realize a complete annihilation of art, Breton and the surrealist camp did not aim for total destruction but rather demanded a new visionary focus, one that would, as J. H. Matthews points out, evidence "a purposefully iconoclastic spirit that views the existing order of physical reality as a serious impediment to man's fulfillment" (Imagery of Surrealism 117). The emphasis here is on purposefully, and as Matthews further notes, such an iconoclasm "is valid only when breaking down is a prelude to building anew, on a foundation other than that of habitual reality" (Languages of Surrealism 191). Herbert S. Gershman adds that despite their recognition that literature (and, by association, visual art) had "lost its ancient meaning," the surrealists "recognized early the pointless and ultimately dreary [dadaist] circularity of spoofing the ridiculous," striving instead "toward the creation of new myths out of whole, if imaginary cloth" (13). The surrealist ideal then, unlike that of dada, was not simply to challenge the existence of the arts by means of obvious parody, but to
challenge the traditional realism of the arts, as well as reality itself.

In his first "Manifesto of Surrealism" Breton condemns the "realistic attitude" that had dominated philosophy and the arts for centuries, "from Saint Thomas Aquinas to Anatole France," and which he considers to be "hostile to any intellectual or moral advancement" (Manifestoes of Surrealism 6). Breton continues:

I loathe it [realism], for it is made up of mediocrity, hate, and dull conceit. It is this attitude which today gives birth to these ridiculous books, these insulting plays. It constantly feeds on and derives strength from the newspapers and stultifies both science and art by assiduously flattering the lowest of tastes; clarity bordering on stupidity, a dog's life. (6)

The problem for Breton lies primarily in the tradition of the realistic novel, with its "purely informational style" and lengthy descriptive passages which leave nothing to the imagination and give no discretionary power to the reader but to "close the book" (7). Logic and reason, the controlling intellectual forces in western civilization, have led to the banishment of "everything that may rightly or wrongly be termed superstition or fancy" (10). Breton, however, felt that the "part of our mental world that we pretended not to be concerned with any longer" is actually the most important and has finally been "brought back to light" through the work of Freud (10). It is this part of our world, released from the constraints of logic and reason, that needs to be newly explored.
Several decades before Breton, in the years surrounding the turn of the century, Henry James and James McNeill Whistler had attempted to transcend the boundaries of conventional realism through impressionism, shifting the emphasis from external verisimilitude to individual perception. James's prose and Whistler's painting evolved from an earlier style of realist pictorialism in which every detail is precisely presented, to an impressionist style which presents detail selectively, as the mind perceives it. Yet here, too, the focus remains on external reality, however internalized our perception. In other words, the artist presents the outside world as people actually see it, not as a verisimilitudinous whole, but as it encodes itself on the human mind; from the surrealist's point of view, the move from exteriority to interiority encompasses little more than a relocation of common reality from one arena to another. The artist therefore creates an image that is naturally truer to reality because it expresses the way in which reality is actually perceived. But to get beyond the real to the surreal, where logic finally loses its hold over imagination, we must necessarily take another step, shifting our attention away from external reality altogether in favor of what goes on in the unhampered human mind. In dreams and nightmares, in unconscious desire, lies a different world, a higher reality, where images and objects drawn from external experience take on new meaning.
In "What is Surrealism?" Breton stresses an expanded meaning of surrealism, leading it to a more philosophical level than the limited dictionary-style definition of the first Manifesto. Breton acknowledges the ambiguity of the term, stressing that it does not designate any particular "transcendental attitude" but rather expresses "a desire to deepen the foundations of the real, to bring about an ever clearer and at the same time ever more passionate consciousness of the world perceived by the senses" (What Is Surrealism? 49). At first glance it does not appear that Breton’s goals of surrealism are very distant from the impressionist ideals of James and Whistler. When Breton expands upon his initial statement, however, the differences appear greater:

[F]or many years past . . . we have attempted to present interior reality and exterior reality as two elements in process of unification, of finally becoming one. This final unification is the supreme aim of surrealism: interior reality and exterior reality being, in the present form of society, in contradiction . . . we have assigned to ourselves the task of confronting these two realities with one another on every possible occasion, of refusing to allow the preeminence of the one over the other, yet not of acting on the one and on the other both at once, for that would be to suppose that they are less apart from one another than they are (and I believe that those who pretend they are acting on both simultaneously are either deceiving us or are a prey to a disquieting illusion); of acting on these two realities not both at once, then, but one after the other in a systematic manner, allowing us to observe their reciprocal attraction and interpenetration and to give this interplay of forces all the extension necessary for the trend of these two adjoining realities to become one and the same thing. (50)
Surrealism departs from Jamesian and Whistlerian impressionism precisely at Breton’s insistence on an internal reality that is equal to but in contradiction with the external. No longer does it suffice to examine and express the internal perception of communal reality; the artist must fuse the external and internal into one image, negating neither conflict nor recipocity.

Surrealist imagery, then, whether verbal or visual, is drawn from the familiar, from the ordinary, from the external. Following the pattern established by Lautréamont’s famous phrase "as beautiful as the fortuitous meeting of an umbrella and a sewing machine on an operating table," images in the hands of the surrealist find themselves situated in abrupt juxtaposition to one another. Beginning with a verbal image such as that of Lautréamont, surrealist poetry adopted a similar pattern of pulling together such unlikely pairs of ordinary images through a formula Matthews describes as "'the ---- of the ----,'" the preposition of (the French de) indicating the dual sense of "belonging to" and "made of" (Languages 106). For the visual artist, however, the difficulty becomes how to express just such an image within very different, non-grammatical limitations. As Matthews tells us, "There existed nothing comparable [in painting] to the commonplace preposition for combating tradition and opposing conventional modes of thought, perception, and
communication" (107). Artist Max Ernst found the solution in collage, a fusion of unrelated elements drawn from diverse sources to form a single new "irrational" image.\(^2\)

In Beyond Painting, Ernst, who was considered by many, including Breton, to have perfected the art of collage, explains:

One might define collage as an alchemy resulting from the unexpected meeting of two or more heterogeneous elements, those elements provoked either by a will which— from a love of clairvoyance— is directed toward systematical confusion and disorder of all the senses . . . or by hazard, or by a will favorable to hazard. (16)

Physical collage, then, led to what Ernst refers to as the "other conquest of collage: surrealist painting," which was for him nothing more than "collages entirely painted by hand" or alternately "painted or drawn poetry" (17,20).

What becomes important, however, is not merely the form of expression (which if followed pedestrianly leads to the inane and the trite) but the articulation of "something not only previously unstated but also previously unthought" (Matthews Languages 107). The element of discovery in surrealism was of primary importance to Breton, who expressed concern in his second Manifesto that some works labeling themselves surrealist were in fact little more than superficial imitations. He found that automatic writing, the central point in his earliest definition of surrealism, too frequently led to "authors who were generally content to let their pens run rampant over the paper without making the
least effort to observe what was going on inside themselves" or to others who, on the other hand, would "gather together, more or less arbitrarily, oneirical elements with a view to emphasizing their picturesque quality rather than usefully revealing their interplay" (Manifestoes 158). In the final result, it is not the form that matters in surrealism, but the artist's discovery and articulation of untapped thought and desire.

For the surrealist, the discovery of the untapped emerges from the type of "alchemy" Ernst found in collage, a détourment (to use a term coined by Marien) which is, as Matthews explains, "produced as the familiar is turned away (détourné) from the role that has rendered it familiar to us" (Languages 157). The key to such a discovery is what Ernst refers to as "hazard"—what Breton in his 1935 lecture "Surrealist Situation of the Object" terms "objective chance," or "that sort of chance that shows man, in a way that is still very mysterious, a necessity that escapes him, even though he experiences it as a vital necessity" (Manifestoes 268). The phenomenon of beneficent chance is itself a "vital necessity" to the surrealist; the attraction for the surrealist of the oft-repeated line by Lautréamont rests primarily in the notion that the meeting of the sewing machine and the umbrella in such an unlikely place as an operating table was a fortuitous one. Drawn together by chance in the mind of Lautréamont, such an "encounter upon a
non-suitable plane of two mutually distant realities," to borrow Ernst’s paraphrase in *Beyond Painting* (21), was also fortuitously brought to the attention of the surrealists to epitomize the articulation of the previously unrepresentable image.

Beginning with surrealist experiments in automatic writing and later moving to more sophisticated activities such as *Le cadavre exquis*, the tropes of chance and desire became inextricably linked. For Ernst, the techniques of collage and later frottage evolved as a matter of chance stemming from the happenstance of being confined to a hotel room and stumbling across available materials. Breton recognized the fortuitous aspect of chance one day in an outing with sculptor Giacometti who happened upon a mask which would serve perfectly as the face for one of his sculptures. Breton experienced the realization of desire through fortuitous chance on a more personal level through his circumstantial encounters in Paris in 1926 with Nadja, an experience he later recalled in what has come to be considered the first surrealist novel. Matthews notes the significance of desire as the "underlying element in the process of recreating reality" in *Nadja*:

Breton’s *Nadja* (1928) testifies eloquently to the fact that desire would lose its fascination in surrealism if it were limited to conscious aspiration. Here desire defined is desire confined. Hence any approach calculated to bring about anticipated results must fall short of the full attainment of desire. (*Imagery* 55).
Because desire can be realized only when left both unthought and unspoken, we can become consciously aware of it only after it has been actualized.

One of the primary objects of desire for the surrealist male was the femme-enfant. The child in a woman’s body, the femme-enfant was exalted by Breton because, as Gloria Feman Orenstein notes, "she incarnates a purity, a naïveté, and innocence which . . . puts her in closer contact with her unconscious. She is spontaneous, uncorrupted by logic or reason, and therefore closer to the dream and to intuitive knowledge" (37). Nadja in many ways represented for Breton the ideal of the femme-enfant. Physically and emotionally immature, Nadja, as Whitney Chadwick points out, becomes the catalyst for Breton’s own self-exploration, the answer, he hopes, to his question "Who am I?" (34). Never a character in her own right, Nadja functions merely as a complement to the needs of the author, completing him, as Benjamin Peret would say, "trait by trait" (qtd. in Chadwick 65). Like the "fallen" or "reclining" woman paradigm of the century before, the image of the femme-enfant was conceived out of masculine desire rather than feminine reality. Chadwick explains:

Fueling the male imagination by projecting it onto woman, Breton and Peret turn her into an abstract principle, a universal and an ideal. Passive and compliant, she waits for the world to be revealed to her. What they give us, finally, is not a role for woman independent of man, even as they acknowledge her power and her proximity to the sources of creativity, but a new image of the
couple in which woman completes man, is brought to life by him, and, in turn, inspires him. (65)

Sharing such qualities as passivity and compliance with her Victorian predecessor, the surrealist femme-enfant would allow herself to be shaped by masculine desire. But where the Victorian model was a fully adult woman whose fallen or reclining position merely invited the gaze of the male voyeur, the femme-enfant assumes the figure of a young girl or an androgyne who, although outwardly innocent, is actively yet mysteriously fascinating and sexual in her own right and who not only invites the desiring gaze of the male but also inspires his creativity.

Although women had been associated with the surrealist movement from the beginning, it was, as Raaberg notes, "not until the 1930s that women began to be given a more significant role" (2). Orenstein describes the difficulty of women to attain an autonomous position:

The women artists of the Surrealist movement had to succeed not only in outgrowing the stereotypes of the Femme-Enfant, but also in proving that the masculine system of values was not the necessary concomitant of autonomy. They had to maintain their independent identity and create their own artistic worlds without sacrificing their ability to penetrate the realm of the imagination or to capture the magical imagery of the dream. (37)

In their move from muse to creative participant, women became a vital, however marginalized, force in the second generation of surrealism. By altering the focus of the female image from that of desired object (masculine perception) to desiring subject (feminine perception), the
woman surrealist created a new kind of image apart from the Freudian link between the unconscious and objective reality. As Chadwick tells us, "The art of the women associated with Surrealism is an art of sensibility rather than hallucinatory disjunction," containing instead, "mysterious interiors, continuous rather than fragmented spaces, combining of precise drawing and deep chiaroscuro, and figures given over to somnolent reverie" (220).

II.

An artist of the second generation of surrealists, Dorothea Tanning became officially associated with the surrealist group of painters in the 1940s through her relationship (and subsequent marriage) to Max Ernst. Tanning’s interest in surrealism, however, did not begin with her meeting with Ernst in 1942. Having drawn, as she says, "otherworldly things right from the beginning" (qtd. in Gruen 181), Tanning found herself "rocked" by the 1936 exhibition at the New York Museum of Modern Art of "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism." Here Tanning found what she had been looking for, an art that expressed her own artistic sensibility. Tanning recalls in her memoir that she had previous "intimations" of surrealism through books, magazines, pamphlets, and earlier surrealist shows at the Julien Levy Gallery,

But here, here in the museum is the real explosion, rocking me on my run-over heels. Here
is the infinitely faceted world I must have been waiting for. Here is the limitless expanse of POSSIBILITY, a perspective having only incidentally to do with painting on surfaces. Here, gathered inside an innocent concrete building are signposts so imperious, so laden, so deductive and, yes, so perverse that . . . they would possess me entirely. (Tanning 74)

When Ernst was sent six years later by Peggy Guggenheim as a "willing emissary" to choose paintings for a showing of women artists to be entitled "Thirty-One Women," he was enamored of both Tanning's unfinished self-portrait and of Tanning herself, becoming not only the man she was to love for over thirty years, but the catalyst for her personal and professional involvement with the surrealist group in Paris.

An American writer several years older than Tanning, 

Djuna Barnes was well-acquainted with several of the surrealists of Breton's circle in Paris during the 1920s, although she was never officially affiliated with them in any way. Barnes, however, according to James Baird, had "intended to be an American surrealist" (164). Her association in Paris with the literary circle of Eliot, Stein, Joyce, and Pound would seem to lead to a natural affinity with expatriate modernism, but to look at her as an "American Joyce," for example, is, as Baird notes, "to assume likenesses which do not exist" (162). Unlike the prose of Joyce (or, for that matter, Stein), Barnes's work is not self-contained but is "designed to refer beyond itself" to the "phenomena of the human mind" (164). Going beyond the limits of her own imagination, Barnes uses her
dark, frequently nightmarish images not to illustrate artistic illusion but to express certain universals of interior reality. Not purposely obscure in syntax or diction, her language embodies rather the catachrestic imagery of surrealism. The pictorial quality of her prose extends beyond the surface of the surrealist image to explore fully, in Baird's words, the "full burden of the dark of the mind, the night, the subconscious" (163).

Nightwood is clearly Barnes's most surrealist work, an iconoclastic pictorial narrative in which characters are driven by their desires. Ulrich Weisstein noted Barnes's surrealism many years ago, pointing out that her work not only indulges in a formal, dream-like "amalgamation of separate elements," but that it is also surrealist in the manner of Ernst and Dali:

> By removing the life-giving medium of flesh and blood, Max Ernst reduces the human body to a cabinet of horrors; . . . by letting watches melt into the shape of saddles and by lifting the surface or the ocean's water like the top of thick cream, Salvador Dali makes the familiar appear strange and the common unusual. (3)

Similarly, he adds, in Nightwood "the skin of time is stripped from Robin Vote, [and] Felix Volkbein collects eye-sockets and torsoes in his 'museum'" (3), lending the novel the look and feel of a surrealist painting. In 1977, Louis Kannenstine made a similar observation, noting that various scenes in the novel resemble the "irrational or incongruous compositions" of such painters as Ernst, Magritte, or de
Chirico (99-100). But such comparisons to the formal qualities of surrealism barely touch the art of Djuna Barnes; in *Nightwood*, Barnes transcends the formal to explore the deeper issues underlying the surface of plastic representation. It is difficult as well to locate Barnes's work precisely among male painters who paint in accordance with the voyeuristic gaze. On the contrary, Barnes more nearly resembles the surrealist women in her focus on feminine desire. In *Nightwood*, the pictorial correlation with surrealism emerges through those elements most often found in the paintings of surrealist women, especially those of Dorothea Tanning.

Barnes and Tanning wrote and painted independently of each other, but in many respects they express affinities in their pictorial imagery as well as in their verbal and visual statements as twentieth-century women artists. Although Tanning has seen no positive purpose behind the label "woman artist," a point I must agree with to some extent, there are many differences in the presentation of woman between male and female artists which must be explored on a gender-related basis. From their expression of spatial continuity to their literal re-incorporation of the female form, the focus becomes woman as desiring subject. No longer serving the sole purpose as object of masculine desire, woman, whether in painting or prose, disrupts the power of the male gaze, often violently, to assert upon the
viewer or reader her subjectivity. As Donald Kuspit comments:

Woman is not a static, intact object to be fragmented by penetration, which is the way man ambiguously sees her, but a surface in creative flux. She is presented as a coenesthesiac entity, as it were, a perpetual process of bodily metamorphosis. (8)

By breaking the pictorial tradition of the male gaze, she regains power over herself, enabling her to express her desire, turning the table, so to speak, on masculine expectation. It is, as Gilles Plazy had noted, "desire fulfilling itself" (12).

In Birthday, her self-portrait painted in 1942, Tanning has created a space both continuous and mysterious through an extended perspective of doorways, each opening onto another, adjoining threshold. The female figure, Tanning herself, stands at the entrance to the first doorway which, as Plazy points out, "may lead nowhere" (33), but which may alternately indicate an endless potentiality, by "leaving," in Tanning's words, "the door open to the imagination" (qtd. in Gruen 182). The door is a frequent motif in Tanning's work, appearing prominently in such paintings as Maternity (1946) and Interior (1953), where it displaces the more traditional image of the mirror to represent the infinite realm of possibility that lies behind Alice's looking glass. In her early work, Tanning tells Alain Jouffroy, she painted our side of the mirror, but since then has passed to the other ("Dans les premières années, je peignais notre côté du
miroir—pour moi le miroir c'est une porte—mais je pense que depuis lors j'ai passé outré") (Oeuvre 47). In her move from the reality of the outside world to the reality of the mind, Tanning has, in the words of Plazy, the "capacity to transform this other side into image, to perturb reality" (12). Tanning, of course, does not limit herself to one motif. Her use of the window in Les Petites Annonces faites à Marie, for example, indicates a further possibility of metamorphosis. Here, birds flying outside the open window fall into the room, changing into fish as they cross the sill and fall on the floor next to an ambiguous vegetal figure. Susan Harris Smith interprets the metamorphosis from bird to fish as "the spirit literally becom[ing] flesh in a form that figures prominently in Christian symbolism" (58). Although the metamorphosis need not reflect a strictly Christian paradigm, the promise of transformation indicates an unlimited world of possibility for the vegetal figure at the apparent beginning of its own metamorphosis.

Metamorphosis between humans and vegetation appears as a frequent motif in Tanning's work. Presenting a change from vegetable to human in a positive light, Tanning never lets us forget that the possibility of regression, of vegetable reclamation is always present. Rencontre (1952) depicts a metamorphosis in progress as vaguely human figures with root-like appendages and onionskin heads lean across an open plain toward figures which have taken on definite human
form. Standing as superior beings to the left of the canvas, these anthropomorphic figures with their still-onion-like heads either look back to what they once were or visibly show off their new forms. The "encounter" indicates the necessity of those who have changed to face not only what they once were, but the possibility that they could return to their previous form. In Interior (1953) (figure 19) a young girl fights against just such a possibility as she pushes against a door in an attempt to keep out a potato-like figure pressing against the other side of the door while a diabolical cabbage looks on. The achievement of human attributes makes the difference between conscious self-fulfillment and emotional emptiness.

The character of Robin Vote in Nightwood represents metamorphosis on several levels. On a pictorial level, she breaks the boundaries of female passivity as represented by the Victorian painters becoming rather, as the novel progresses, an image of surrealism. Robin's pictorial metamorphosis takes her from a woman passively desired (Victorian paradigm) to a desiring woman (surrealist paradigm) while at the same time her image alters from a literal vegetable passivity to a visible animal sensuality. Barnes first presents Robin "amidst a confusion of potted plants, exotic palms and cut flowers" which we see as if framed by the open door to her room. Not only is Robin surrounded by plants but she seems to be literally one of
Figure 19. Dorothea Tanning, Interior (1953), collection of M. and Mme. Claude Hersaint, Paris; rpt. in Dorothea Tanning, Dorothea Tanning: Œuvre (Paris: Centre national d’art contemporain, 1974) 40.
them:

The perfume that her body exhaled was of the quality of that earth-flesh, fungi, which smells of captured dampness and yet is so dry, overcast with the odour of oil of amber . . . . Her flesh was the texture of plant life and beneath it one sensed a frame, broad, porous and sleep-worn, as if sleep were a decay fishing her beneath the visible surface. (34)

To rouse her from her unconscious state, the doctor flings a handful of water against her face—watering the plant, so to speak. Barnes later compares her to "a beast turning human," but for Robin the transformation is more vegetable to animal. The dual metamorphosis of Robin Vote reflects the inherent duality of the iconoclastic posture of the woman surrealist who reinforces not only the general surrealist breaking of Victorian images of passivity but entreats the more specific desire of the woman surrealists to divert the masculine gaze from woman as erotic object by reintegrating the female body to its full form. Moving away from the (dis)embodiment of what Mary Ann Caws refers to as "ladies shot and painted" (262), the woman surrealist paints herself in her entirety, a disruption of the paradoxical simultaneity of the sustained male gaze and the violent assault of the glance on the fractured sexual body. Caws suggests that "totalization of the model" or at least her "reintegration" would allow woman to refuse to enter into accord with the "synecdochal enterprises of representation" (272). By painting herself whole, the woman surrealist expresses her own desire, as a challenge to the male gaze
and glance which she may now choose to receive on her own terms.

Tanning presents female images that subvert the masculine voyeuristic gaze in favor of feminine identification. Frequently disturbing and always intriguing, Tanning’s women embody subjective feminine sexuality, breaking down, in the words of Renée Riese Hubert, "the barriers between childhood, adolescence, and adult life" to present "the female sexual dream as nascent conflagration" (79). Taking the surrealist paradigm of the femme-enfant for her own, Tanning subverts the image so that it can no longer serve merely as the object of the male gaze. In Eine Kleine Nachtmusik (1946) (figure 20) Tanning shows two young girls in the midst of metamorphosis, this time not from plant to human, but from innocence to experience. When we first look at the painting, our eyes are led not to the figures of the girls, but to an enormous yellow sunflower resting menacingly at the top of the stairs, and then to the open door at the far end of the corridor which serves to illuminate the scene. Tendrils of the sunflower stretch toward the two figures at the left of the canvas, literal femmes-enfants whose bodies are part woman, part child. The figure closest to the sunflower (and to the observer) is fully clothed, but the bottom of her skirt has begun to unravel. Although her breasts have not yet developed, she appears from the waist down to have the
hips, legs, and feet of a mature woman. Her hair stands straight up as if she is terrified by her choice: sexual awakening or vegetable frigidity. She stands facing right, looking both toward the sunflower and a corridor of doors as if ready, although not necessarily eager, to embark upon the realization of her metamorphosis. The body of the second figure mirrors the form of the other, but she faces left, her bodice open, the sunflower and corridor behind her. Her awakening apparently accomplished, she leans, eyes closed and relaxed, against the jamb of a closed door, petals of the flower in her hand. A painting such as this with its open yet mysterious space (we can only guess what experience lies behind the closed doors) presents the femme-enfant more as an embodiment of woman’s experience than of masculine desire, a metamorphosis accomplished more through the need of the female participant than by the desire of the voyeuristic male.

Other paintings by Tanning reinforce the image of the femme-enfant as self-actualized subject. In Jeux d’enfants (1942) two such figures rip strips of wallpaper off a section of a long narrow corridor; the partial image of a third figure lies prone in the foreground, her head and body off the canvas, apparently having fainted in reaction to what both she and we observe. As one figure pulls the paper, her hair fuses with the tail of a horse, while the other exposes the abdomen of an adult male. Frayed strips
of paper fly electrically above the heads of the two figures. The scene is one of sexually-charged discovery, where the figures desire to quickly reveal the mystery underneath the wallpaper. A rectangular doorway at the far end of the corridor opens onto an external scene but is distant in both space and interest from the activity in the foreground. The option to flee is open, but not taken. A thematically related image, *Palaestra* (1949) (figure 21) shows a gathering of *femmes-enfants* as they rise to the ceiling in various stages of ecstasy. From the foreground figure in a long-sleeved pink pajama or undergarment (which she is in the process of unbuttoning) to the floating nude at the end of the corridor, the figures rise on a whirlwind of self-discovery. A cocoon-like figure stands caged in the right foreground, gesturing toward the rising figures to its left. At the end of the hall stands a shadowy "little marquise," a *femme-enfant* in form like the others, but with a whip in her hand—a subtle evocation of the Marquis de Sade. As the figures rise in ecstasy from the enforced cocoon of innocence to the embodiment of their own desires, they alone are in control. Their desire is obviously and particularly feminine, and there is nothing about the sole nude that hovers at the top of the canvas to invite the desire of the male gaze—she floats with hands posed in innocent prayer, her body like that of a child.
III.

The figure of the femme-enfant plays a prominent role in *Nightwood* in the character of Robin Vote. From the very beginning of the novel, Robin appears as a visual image, a figure caught and frozen on a canvas, objectified for the masculine gaze, a catachresis of the femme-enfant of the male surrealist and the object of desire of a previous generation, the Victorian "fallen" woman. Our first view of Robin is reminiscent of the paradigmatic Victorian painting in which the woman is lying supine—as if asleep or dying—in a passive pose that without her knowledge invites the desiring gaze of the voyeur:

On a bed, surrounded by a confusion of potted plants, exotic palms, and cut flowers ... lay the young woman, heavy and dishevelled. Her legs, in white flannel trousers, were spread as in a dance, the thick lacquered pumps looking too lively for the arrested step. Her hands, long and beautiful, lay on either side of her face. (34)

Barnes compares the image of Robin to "a figure in a painting by the *douanier* Rousseau," whose almost surreal jungle scene she purposely evokes. At the same time, perhaps less intentionally but even more effectively, she evokes the Victorian paradigm of woman as image passively courting masculine desire—which is precisely the effect the unconscious Robin creates. As the doctor tends to Robin, Felix observes her from a hidden sanctuary behind the potted palms, becoming increasingly infatuated with her image. As the narrative continues, Barnes encourages our reading of
Robin in pictorial terms:

The woman who presents herself to the spectator as a "picture" forever arranged is, for the contemplative mind, the chiefest danger. Sometimes one meets a woman who is beast turning human. Such a person's every movement will reduce to an image of a forgotten experience; a mirage of an eternal wedding cast on the racial memory ... (37)

Robin represents the type of woman who is "the infected carrier of the past" (37), the woman who continues to convey, however subconsciously, the paradigm of woman objectified for the male gaze, whether Victorian or surrealist. In the early part of the novel, during her courtship and marriage to Felix, Barnes paints Robin as an amalgam of past and present, always in pictorial terms. Her eyebrows "gave her the look of cherubs in the Renaissance"; she was "gracious and yet fading, like a statue in a garden"; her clothes were "of a period he [Felix] could not place" that made her seem "newly ancient" (41, 42). For Felix, Robin is like a "figurehead in a museum" and he desires this "image" to make him complete. But it is in fact Robin who is incomplete, merely half of what she is to become, as if she were "the converging halves of a broken fate, setting face, in sleep, toward itself in time, as an image and its reflection in a lake seem parted only by the hesitation in the hour" (38). Because Felix sees Robin as an image that reflects his own desire, he cannot accept that her reality is not at all what he perceives. But when he sees her passively sleeping again after their marriage,
Felix realizes that, after all, "he was not sufficient to make her what he had hoped" (44). The woman he had desired, the dual image of Victorian passivity and the innocent sexuality of the femme-enfant, could never conform to the subjective reality of Robin Vote. Although always presented pictorially, Robin gradually turns the gaze of the reader, so to speak, from seeing her as object of desire to a desiring subject—a move from the masculine vision of the femme-enfant to the feminine.

The role of Robin as pictorial image sets the stage for a paragone where either image or word must ultimately triumph. Because of the tendency of others to insert their own ideas onto a work of art, Robin must continually struggle to achieve her own sense of identity. Felix, a collector, sees her as a welcome addition to his museum, a picture to complete his collection. But he admits later to Dr. O’Connor that he "never did have a clear idea of her at any time." He realizes that he never knew the reality of Robin but instead "had an image of her, but that is not the same thing. An image is a stop the mind makes between uncertainties" (111). Like Felix, Jenny Petherbridge wants to add Robin to her collection, but whereas Felix is a collector of objects for their value, Jenny collects things simply because they belong to someone else. Even her speech comes from someone else, as the "words that fell from her mouth seemed to have been lent to her" (66). In this sense,
she acquires for her "collection" not only Robin but Nora, the character who, along with Dr. Matthew O’Connor, is most closely associated with the word. Barnes presents Nora as "an early Christian" who "believed the word" (51), possibly of Christ and certainly of Dr. O’Connor. Jenny’s appropriation of Robin, then, is two-fold: from Nora, she "had stolen or appropriated the dignity of speech" which allowed her to take as well "the most passionate love she knew, Nora’s for Robin" (68); but Robin she had stolen entirely. Like Felix, Jenny desired Robin (as image) to make her whole. When Jenny and Robin are seen together at a cafe, they appear as interdependent parts of a sculpture that do not form a unified whole:

Thus they presented the two halves of a movement that had, as in sculpture, the beauty and the absurdity of a desire that is in flower but that can have no burgeoning, unable to execute a destiny; a movement that can divulge neither caution nor daring, for the fundamental condition for completion was in neither of them; they were like Greek runners, with lifted feet but without the relief of the final command that would bring the foot down—eternally angry, eternally separated, in a cataleptic frozen gesture of abandon. (69)

Jenny can only function as image in relation to Robin; when she is not alongside Robin her self-presentation as image cannot succeed. Robin, however, functions as image incarnate who, while she stands alone, can be easily appropriated by the desires of others.

Barnes describes Robin in terms of a sleepwalker, "the born somnambule, who lives in two worlds--meet of child and
"desperado" (35). For the onlooker, it is a passive condition: the sleepwalker as image, inviting unsolicited desire; for the sleepwalker, it becomes the subjective existence within one's own nightmares. In the childbirth scene, for example, Robin maintains her pictorial silence, but it is obvious from the image she presents that her experience runs contrary to her own desire. When Felix returns home the night Robin is to give birth, we observe the scene:

She awoke but did not move. He came and took her by the arm and lifted her toward him. She put her hand against his chest and pushed him, she looked frightened, she opened her mouth but no words came. He stepped back, he tried to speak, but they moved aside from each other saying nothing. (47)

When the birth pains finally come, Robin for the first time becomes vocal, cursing and screaming, "a thing that Felix was totally unprepared for" (48). Drunk, with her hair "swinging in her eyes," Robin yells at Felix to "'Go to hell!'" before she gives birth and is finally delivered "amid loud and frantic cries of affirmation and despair . . . in the double pains of birth and fury" (48). In a manner characteristic of many women surrealists, Barnes represents maternity as a negative experience, painting the scene in flashes of images that reinforce our view of Robin as a surreal representation. Although she remains pictorial image, Robin is no longer the femme-enfant of Felix's desire, no longer the object of the male gaze. Her desire,
on the contrary, has imposed itself upon the image.

Robin certainly was never meant to be a mother but was merely fulfilling the role Felix (and society) had imposed upon her. The image of woman Felix had seen in Robin, perfect in her passivity and therefore in her femininity, ceases to exist for him at the moment of childbirth. The masculine ideal of the objectified woman suddenly shifts to a different plane of reality, one of animal violence and emotional conflict, images embodied in the maternity paintings of Dorothea Tanning. In three paintings each entitled Maternity, Tanning creates images of women who do not fit the traditional masculine notion of motherhood as represented by the shattered expectations of Felix Volkbein.

Painted over the course of twenty years, Tanning’s images of maternity become more and more violent as they move in reverse chronology from a woman dealing emotionally with her role as mother (Maternity 1946) to two women in different stages of labor and delivery (Maternity II, 1953, and Maternity III, 1966). Each painting can be seen to represent an internal (as well as physical) nightmare analogous to the one experienced by Robin Vote, one that does not end with physical expulsion of the child. In Maternity III (figure 22), the latest and most visibly violent of Tanning’s maternity images, we see a woman from the foot of the bed, her legs spread below her ponderous belly as she pushes her infant into the world. The violence
Figure 23. Dorothea Tanning, Maternity II (1953), collection of the artist; rpt. in Alain Bosquet, La peinture de Dorothea Tanning (Montreuil, France: J.-J. Pauvert, 1966) 72.
Figure 24. Dorothea Tanning, *Maternity* (1946), collection of Mrs. Doris W. Starrels, Santa Monica, California; rpt. in Dorothea Tanning, *Dorothea Tanning: Oeuvre* (Paris: Centre national d'art contemporain, 1974) 23.
of the birth is obvious as her body writhes in obvious torment as it expels the squirming infant into the world. What appears on canvas as a surreal nightmare is the reality of childbirth from a woman's perspective—a position which certainly does not beg to be idealized. Maternity II (figure 23) depicts a woman pictorially reminiscent of Robin Vote, a woman on her hands and knees like a dog, with her hair, like Robin’s, "swinging in her eyes" (48) as she is surrounded by a litter of squirming infants. Her eyes vacant, she pushes the babies out, one after another, dog-like, showing no interest in them as they roll around her on the bed. In Tanning’s earliest painting on this theme, Maternity (figure 24), a woman stands holding a small child, and appears to be soon expecting another. Although the woman in her cap and flowing gown appears serene in her role as mother, Tanning paints a disconcerting scene that shatters the expectations of a Christian, patriarchal culture. Standing next to an open door through which she has just passed, the young mother finds herself in a landscape barren of all life except that which she has produced. Within an open threshold in the distance stands a mysterious figure in the shape of her reproductive organs, indicating that once entered into maternity it fills not only her present but seals her future as well. The sky, heavy with fertile clouds, hangs low on the horizon, increasing the sense of enclosure and entrapment. Even the
little dog at her feet wears the face of an infant. She has, to her despair, become a mother for eternity.

Like the women in Tanning’s Maternity images, Robin Vote is unable to resolve the conflict between the role of mother she is biologically and socially forced to assume and her own feelings toward motherhood. At first, she is stunned: "A week out of bed she was lost, as if she had done something irreparable, as if this act had caught her attention for the first time" (48). Robin’s confusion intensifies as she attempts to repair the past, but realizes she cannot:

One night, Felix having come in unheard, found her standing in the centre of the floor holding the child high in her hand as if she were about to dash it down, but she brought it down gently. (48)

Only later does she assert her own will against the prevailing moral attitude toward motherhood:

One night, coming home about three, he [Felix] found her in the darkness, standing, back against the window, against the pod of the curtain, her chin so thrust forward that the muscles in her neck stood out. As he came toward her she said in a fury, "I didn’t want him." ... Felix turned his body without moving his feet. "What shall we do?" She grinned, but it was not a smile. "I’ll get out," she said. (49)

Although she has physically walked out on her role as mother, Robin emotionally can never escape it. Later, while living with Nora, Robin will reenact the scene of violence toward the baby with its surrogate, a doll.11 Nora tells the story to Dr. O’Connor:
Sometimes, if she got tight by evening, I would find her standing in the middle of the room, in boy’s clothes, rocking from foot to foot holding the doll she had given us—‘our child’—high above her head, as if she would cast it down, a look of fury on her face. And one time, about three in the morning when I came in, she was angry . . . . She picked up the doll and hurled it to the floor and put her foot on it, crushing her heel into it; and then, as I came crying behind her, she kicked it, its china head all in dust, its skirt shivering and stiff, whirling over and over across the floor. (148-49)

Like the trapeze artist at the circus whose tights fit so closely that "the span of the tightly stitched crotch was so much her own flesh that she was as unsexed as a doll" (13), Robin the femme-enfant, the androgyne in boy’s clothes, makes herself, by her own desire, sexless. Having broken her image as object of male desire, in her confusion she begins to re-create herself as object of female sexual desire. But when she destroys the doll, she also destroys her emotional link to Nora. And when Jenny tries to add Robin to her collection of objects, Robin flees.

By the final chapter of Nightwood, the pictorial metamorphosis of Robin from desired object to desiring subject is accomplished. Robin’s somnolence completely envelopes her as she wanders through the countryside at the dictates of her own subconscious desire. She appears to move in slow motion as she externally enacts her internal dream-state:

Robin walked the open country in the same manner [with a slow, headlong step], pulling at the flowers, speaking in a low voice to the animals. Those that came near, she grasped, straining their
Robin continues in such a manner, making her way "into Nora's part of the country" where she begins sleeping in a "decaying chapel" nearby. Robin's behavior reflects, in Baird's words, "the insistence of the subconscious as it dictates [its] interlocking and fatal trap . . . . An animal lust rising from the jungle commands the encounter . . . . Then the subconscious and the conscience are at war" (176). As animal desire takes over, the socially disciplined morality of the conscience struggles in vain to reinvest itself with innocence. Although Robin's character has evolved during the course of Nightwood, Barnes in the closing scene reminds us that Robin is still the femme-enfant of the early chapters of the novel. The change we see in Robin lies less within the character herself than in our own pictorial perspective. When we see Robin in the chapel standing in the position of a small child, "one foot turned toward the toe of the other, her hands folded at their length, her head bent" (167), we are aware that she has come seeking fulfillment of her own subconscious desire. Robin does not speak—the novel has at this point, as Elizabeth Pochoda notes, "already jettisoned language"—and the silence reinforces the pictorial nature of the scene. Pochoda, however, assumes that the novel ends in "wordlessness and failure" with "nowhere for the prose to
go" (188). What Pochoda fails to recognize is the pictorial success of the closing scene where image (Robin) ultimately triumphs over word (Nora), a triumph indicated much earlier when Nora cried over the loss of Robin with "the effect of words spoken in vain" (61). Thus when Nora enters the chapel and sees Robin, she never speaks because words here would be futile. She focuses rather on the picture before her, a double image of Madonna and Robin as it is framed by the jamb of the door:

On a contrived altar, before a Madonna, two candles were burning. Their light fell across the floor and the dusty benches. Before the image lay flowers and toys. Standing before them in her boy’s trousers was Robin. Her pose, startled and broken, was caught at the point where her hand had reached almost to the shoulder, and at the moment Nora’s body struck the wood, Robin began going down. (169)

Robin’s metamorphosis is now complete. She is no longer the "beast turning human" (desire controlled) that she seemed to Felix upon their first meeting, but is rather the human turning bestial (desire released). The ironic juxtaposition of Robin with the image of the Madonna intensifies the effect of Robin’s increasing animal desire. Observing the scene along with Nora, we see Robin and the dog in a sensual dance, a tableau vivant of human bestiality and beastly humanity as the woman drops to the floor and the dog rears up on his hind legs. Barnes describes the dance:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
The dog began to cry then, running with her, head-on with her head, as if to circumvent her; soft and slow his feet went padding. He ran this way and that, low down in his throat crying, and she grinning and crying with him; crying in shorter and shorter spaces . . . (170)

The dance is orgasmic, building from frenzy to mutual engagement to satisfied tranquility. At rest in the final scene, Robin no longer embodies the passivity of the ideal Victorian image but rather illustrates the animal side of woman as a human being. Her image has transcended the illusion as well as the accepted reality of woman to enter a domain beyond that reality to reveal a new world of feminine desire.12

Such surreal images of feminine desire appear with equal power in the work of Dorothea Tanning. Her dog images are particularly disconcerting and are eerily analogous to the closing scene in Nightwood. Two sets of paintings, one from 1954 and the other from 1973, pictorially illuminate Barnes’s written images. In The Blue Waltz (1954) (figure 25) we see a young woman in a flowing dress and high-heels leading a dance with a llasa apso (modeled after Tanning’s dog Katchina). The dog appears more human than animal as he stands upright, well-balanced on his hind legs. The dog and the woman wear identical expressions on their faces, with eyes closed and lips turned down in a sensuous pout. The dance is very civilized, as a waltz should be, and the pleasure of the participants is obviously mutual. In the second painting from this period, Tableau vivant (figure
26), both woman and dog assume similar positions on the
canvas as in *The Blue Waltz*, but here the scene is more
sexually charged. The woman slumps, pale and unconscious,
in the bodily position of Christ as he is removed from the
cross in the Renaissance iconographic tradition of the
deposition. Like the correlation of Robin with the image
of the chapel Madonna, the association of the figure here
with the symbolic image of Christ creates an ironic
juxtaposition. As the dog stands like a disciple of Christ,
supporting the limp figure from drooping to the floor, his
gaze directly meets our eyes with a challenging glare,
daring us to accept our own animal desires despite our
deeply imbedded attitudes of Christian purity.

Tanning’s second collection of dog images, those from
1973, paint a picture of female desire even more graphic
than her earlier dance scenes. In one image, *Astronomies*,
the same llasa apso that appears in the earlier works poses
as voyeur to a couple of amorphous nude figures entwined in
an embrace. Its head covered by a blanket that looks like a
ladies’ scarf, giving it an almost human appearance, the dog
gazes over the bodies of the lovers to, once again, meet the
eye of the beholder. A second image, *Reality*, shows the dog
lying beneath a similarly amorphous female figure, also
nude, her body draped over its back. At the left edge of
the painting, the body of the woman merges with that of the
dog, as the end of her arm is blurred to match the dog’s
fur. Again, the dog looks directly at the observer, but this time its eyes are clouded, a gaze all the more disturbing because it is no longer readable. The third image, *Un tissu de songes,* is even more graphically explicit. Here, woman and dog recline on a bed, her amorphous figure merging with his, while he appears rather anthropomorphic, more human than dog with his paw cupping her knee and his head resting below her breast. The female figure has no face, an omission which places her in the role of Everywoman, as does her body which has a recognizable female form but no individual shape. The figure is nude, with genital hair centrally exposed, the lines of her body fluidly curved. The positions of the woman and her companion, as well as the image in the foreground of a comforting, steaming bowl, indicate satisfaction, contentment, and fulfillment of, to the observer, an extraordinary desire.

One of the objectives of surrealism as delineated by Breton is that the surreal image should release latent desire. For the surrealist, fulfillment of desire can occur only when that desire has remained not only unspoken but previously unknown. The images created by Barnes and Tanning shock us into thinking about our own humanity and the possibilities that lie within us if we were to be removed from the boundaries of social taboos. At the same time we find an implicit warning against a kind of passivity
that could lead us back to a frightening vegetable soullessness. Barnes's verbal imagery and Tanning's pictorial representations break the Victorian false iconology of female passivity and purity by forcing us to positively acknowledge the animal aspects of feminine sexuality. Similarly, their representations of maternity challenge the notion that the desire to be a mother drives the lives of all women. In Barnes's depiction of Robin's physical suffering and her later disinterest in her child, and in Tanning's haunting image of the young mother trapped by her maternity, the latent desire of some women—to reject motherhood--can be recognized. The tableaux created by Barnes and Tanning disrupt and transcend the boundaries of the past to undermine the traditional iconology associated with women.
Notes: Chapter Five

1. From the first "Manifesto of Surrealism":
SURREALISM, n. Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express—verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner—the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern.

ENCYCLOPEDIA. Philosophy. Surrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of dream, in the disinterested play of thought. It tends to ruin once and for all other psychic mechanisms and to substitute itself for them in solving all the principal problems of life. (Manifestos 26)

Breton's earliest definition of surrealism evolved considerably as he expanded his own understanding of what is was he wanted to express. In later writings, even, as Marcel Jean points out, as early as 1925 in a series entitled "Le Surrealisme et la Peinture" ("Surrealism and Painting"), Breton altered his original definition of surrealism (196).

2. Matthews links the use of the preposition in verbal surrealist imagery to the pictorial technique of collage through its literal translation: "The function of the preposition in imagery of this kind [surrealist] is altogether like that of glue in surrealist pictorial collage. It brings into unfamiliar proximity elements between which experience and reasonable supposition can establish no satisfactory connection." (Imagery 70-71).

3. The name le cadavre exquis (or Exquisite Corpse), derives from the first result of this exercise in group composition ("The exquisite corpse will drink the new wine"). Stemming from a statement by Lautréamont "Poetry should be made by all. Not by one," the game centers around writing or drawing as a group activity where each participant contributes a word to a poem or lines to a drawing without knowing what others had done before or will do to follow. Accomplished by folding a paper to conceal the contribution of the other participants, the completed cadavre exquis emerges with an incredible sense of continuity. Such continuity is claimed by the surrealist to be a result of the chance articulation of communal desire.

4. The exact difference in age between the two is difficult to determine. Tanning's date of birth has been located anywhere from 1910-1913, depending upon the source.
The most accurate date seems to be September 12, 1910. Barnes was born on July 12, 1892.

5. Tanning’s feelings about classifying groups of artists by gender are eloquently expressed in a statement written to Mary Ann Caws in regard to her requested exclusion in a volume of Dada and Surrealism to be devoted to surrealist women. Tanning writes:

If you lose a loved one does it matter if it is a brother or a sister? If you become a parent does it matter if it is to [be] a boy or a girl? If you fall in love does it matter (to that love) if it is for a man or a woman? And if you pray does it matter, God or Goddess?

During the spaces of time between great events, human beings have created their various cultures. They have learned to give breath to their life with art, to give (a kind of) hope to that life with science. Art, science. We are notoriously free to choose. If you consciously choose you may be said to win a battle against nothingness, a battle as momentous as anything in the mythologies of the world. But it is only the first battle. Like the phalanxes of an enemy, myriad assailants converge to bedevil your purpose and bewilder your vision. So, as someone, a human someone, who has chosen art, the making of it, the dedication to it, the breathing of it, this artist has pursued with a high heart that great aim; and has utterly failed to understand the pigeonholing (or dove-coterie) of gender, convinced that it has nothing to do with qualifications or goals.

December 3, 1989

6. I refer to Tanning’s paintings by their English titles where available. Because Tanning worked in both the United States and France, many of her pieces claim bilingual titles, and it is not always possible to ascertain which title, the French or the English, is the original. Where no English title or translation is available, I maintain the use of the French. One title, Eine Kleine Nachtmusik, remains in its original German.

7. Caws refers to the paradigm of the gaze and the glance as described by Norman Bryson in his 1983 study Vision and Painting: the Logic of the Gaze. Caws continues:

The Surrealist body represented, taken (in) by the gaze and glance of the spectator, presents no margin of interpretation. By the desire of Breton as critic, all distance is to be suppressed between seeing and the object seen, between the look of desire and the prey, between two objects imagined or seen together (Breton
8 The writings of the Marquis de Sade played a vital role in the surrealist imagination. Chadwick notes that although women have long been repulsed by Sade's "mythology of slavery and violence," Sade was, according to Angela Carter, "unusual in his period for claiming rights of free sexuality for women, for creating Juliette and other women as beings of power and dominance . . . [and] for scoffing at woman's bondage to motherhood and reproduction" (Women Artists 107). Tanning uses the figure of the little marquise here and elsewhere to signify the empowerment of women over their own sexuality. Robin's reading of the memoirs of de Sade, and her underscoring of the line containing the words "her captivity" ("Et lui rendi pendant sa captivité les milles services qu'un amour dévoué est seul capable de rendre") indicates her sense of entrapment by her current state of pregnancy.

9. Henri Rousseau (1844-1910), French artist who painted in a "modern primitive" style, featuring a flat picture plane, simple clearly-drawn figures, bright colors—and a certain dreamlike quality that foreshadows surrealism. The painting alluded to here is The Dream (1910). Rousseau comments on the unexpected placement of a couch with a recumbent young woman amidst the animals and foliage of a jungle in the painting in letters to André Dupont and André Salmon. In the first, to Dupont, Rousseau explains: "The woman sleeping on the couch dreams that she is transported into the forest, hearing the notes of the snake charmer's pipe. That is why the couch is in the picture." In the second he writes: "Don't be astonished to find a couch in a virgin forest. It is only there for the red. You see, the couch is actually in a bedroom; the rest is Yadwigha's dream" (Yadigwa is Rousseau's name for the young woman in the picture) (qtd. in Alley 78). Barnes's early identification of Robin with Yadigwa pictorially situates Robin in the role of the sleepwalker, one passing through life in a continual dream-state.

10. In her article "The Muse as Artist: Women in the Surrealist Movement," Chadwick discusses the attitude of several artists, noting that women surrealists tended to treat maternity, when they treated it at all, "less than positively" (123). Often disturbing, images of maternity deal with the its physical and emotional conflicts, citing Frieda Kahlo's Henry Ford Hospital (1932), Remedios Varo's Celestial Pablum (1958) and Tanning's Maternity (1942) as
examples.

11. A doll as surrogate object of desire appears in Tanning’s painting *The Guest Room*. An androgynous young woman, lies sleeping in bed, her arm encircling a broken doll. Two cowled figures, one a dwarf in cowboy boots, stand in the room amid broken eggshells on the floor, but neither figure looks toward the "couple" on the bed. The shells, symbols of female fertility, indicate a possible sexual initiation. But the object of desire is neither man nor woman, but a doll. The doll, however, is broken, possibly indicating the young woman’s own loss of virginity. In the foreground stands a young girl, nude, a *femme-enfant* with an immature body, but fully adult feet and hands; on the other side of the door, stands her own shadowy reflection. Has she left her innocence behind in her discovery of sexuality? Or is she angry that she is no longer the object of the other’s desire? *The Guest Room* opens the door for many questions but, as with most surrealist works, provides few answers.

12. Years later in an informal discussion with Hank O’Neal, Barnes denied any intimation of sexual contact in the closing scene between Robin and the dog, declaring that "there was nothing like that in her mind when she wrote the scene." She claims instead to have taken the idea from a real-life situation in which a friend was "drunk as a hoot and crawling around on all fours." See O’Neal pp. 36-7.
CHAPTER 6

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?: THE PROBLEMATICs

OF A POSTMODERN ANALOGY

Faulkner said he’d like to come back as a turkey-buzzard because the animal has no natural enemies and can feed on anything. I say that the novel is your great turkey-buzzard of art. — John Barth

In what condition do we find painting and the novel as we enter the final years of the twentieth century? Is painting really "dead" as Thomas McEvilley claims it had been declared in the mid-1960s (The Exile’s Return 1)? Has the flow of discourse in the novel been so disrupted, as Umberto Eco has feared, that it is in danger of writing itself into silence ("Postscript to The Name of the Rose" 73)? Has painting and the novel, to borrow an expression once used by John Barth, come to the point of "exhausted possibility" ("The Literature of Exhaustion" 64)? The progression of the modernist avant-garde from the early decades of the century through its half-way point probably warranted such fatalistic concerns; and for a decade or so the survival of both the verbal and visual arts was indeed questionable. Fortunately, however, this "death" of
painting, this silencing of the novel, turned out to be, in McEvilley’s words, "only a temporary exile" (88). Modernism may have brought itself to its own destruction, but it left new forms of visual and verbal expression to carry on.

Most cultural theorists would agree that by the 1990s we have now passed out of modernism into whatever it is that must come after. But if, as Brian Mc Hale points out, modern means "pertaining to the present" then postmodern could mean nothing less than "pertaining to the future," a reference to something that "does not exist" (4). It is, rather, a "literary-historical fiction" constructed by contemporary critics just as romanticism, for example, has been constructed retrospectively by literary historians. The very nature of postmodernism as a living construct, then, invites a heterogeneous definition; as Linda Hutcheon has observed, "postmodernism must be the most over- and under-defined" term in contemporary theoretical discourse (3). Because it signals neither a particular school of art nor a specific literary movement, because it is not, in Hugh Silverman’s words, "a new style of creating artworks, of synthesizing novel self-expressions" (74), the use of the term postmodernism has not been limited to a reference to the arts, but has come to define the broader state of twentieth-century fin-de-siècle culture, including such diverse areas as economics, politics, sociology, and feminism, as well as architecture and the many aspects of
the electronic media. Although the usage of the term is even more diverse than its many orthographic variants,¹ it is generally agreed that the post- in postmodernism indicates a condition of coming after the period commonly referred to as modernism and incorporates aspects of it into a new, often ironic, altered and multiply-coded form. Yet some critics, such as Jean-François Lyotard, would disagree with such an assumption, reading the post- instead as an overcoming of the past through a paradoxical precipitation of the modern, with a work of art or literature able to "become modern only if it is first postmodern" (79). For Lyotard, the moderns become modern by breaking with previous suppositions, so that the postmodern is nothing more than the continual rebirth of an even newer (or more modern) modernism. Other critics, such as Jürgen Habermas, Jean Baudrillard, and Frederic Jameson view postmodernism with less emphasis on the post- as a response to or a reaction against modernism than as a condition itself to be overcome; their criticism and occasional celebration of the conditions of the consumer culture and the information age present "critical reactions to the condition of postmodernity" (Jencks 17). Even such a brief critical overview illustrates the problem of fixing a clear definition to the various conceptual aspects of postmodernism, whose most clearly definable factor is its epistemological instability.

In an attempt to clarify the critical field, Charles
Jencks (with the acknowledged help of Margaret Rose) has posited a broad descriptive analysis of postmodern theory, conflating its many different, and frequently opposing, approaches into seven basic "stages." Aware of the postmodern "paranoia" of labels and hoping to avoid the inherent danger of creating a master narrative, Jencks carefully takes into account both the chronological overlapping of the various "stages" as well as their "different conceptual levels, or distinguishable aspects, of the condition and movement" of postmodernism (17).

Beginning with the "prehistory" of postmodernism (from the 1870s to the 1950s), to the three "stages" he finds running concurrently today, Jencks illustrates the heterogeneity of postmodern critical perspectives. Even within any given stage there is a tacit sense of disagreement on what, exactly, defines the postmodern. In general, however, most contemporary theorists would agree that the postmodern is pluralistic and eclectic, many would also say historically referential and frequently playful, while at the same time reflecting a certain malaise caused by cultural contradiction. Pluralism is the most pervasive factor, which is made manifest by the extent of definitive disagreement within any given field. When moving between disciplines—from art to architecture to the novel, for example—consensus becomes even rarer, making a study of a direct analogy between painting and the novel more difficult.
than in a retrospective examination of previous historical periods. Certainly part of the difficulty lies in our own immersion in postmodern culture, in our attempt to define it from within.

The date of the evolution from the modern to the postmodern is arguable; the word itself, as Jencks points out, was used by Arnold Toynbee in 1875 to indicate "the latest phase of a proletariat civilization" (17). In contemporary usage the term indicates a time beginning no earlier than the end of the second World War, and more likely occurring somewhere in the late 1950s to early 1960s as the physical manifestation of modernist ideology in art, architecture, and literature found itself so divorced from historical context that meaning ceased to exist. The "death" of painting and the "exhaustion" of literature were perceived as serious threats to their continuance. In painting, the ideology of abstraction was limited, even when viewed as a manifestation of the sublime rather than as an example of pure formalism. In the novel, the modernist concern with epistemology explored through the techniques of stream of consciousness and the interior monologue led to such high modernist works as Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, a nearly unreadable verbal abstraction analogous in its lack of contextual meaning to the visual monochrome.

The first rumblings of postmodern thought in the 1950s and 1960s looked at postmodernism in its relation to
modernism as a period or movement, to borrow the term from Jencks's second stage, "in decline"; it expressed a sense of the ultimate demise of art and literature if modernism were to continue unchecked. After the "death" of art was proclaimed in the sixties, John Barth in 1967 bewailed the state of both literature and art in his essay "The Literature of Exhaustion." Barth recognized the "used-upness" of certain forms of art and literature, yet saw the possibility of new forms, such as Pop Art and "intermedia" art as recent manifestations of "rebelling against Tradition" as tending to eliminate the "traditional audience" for art rather than bringing new life to art itself (64-5). Barth delineates the difference between "a technically old-fashioned artist, a technically up-to-date non-artist, and a technically up-to-date artist," describing the old-fashioned artist as one who follows the tradition of nineteenth-century realism in the manner of Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, or Balzac, the up-to-date non-artist as one who does the inane, such as the man "who fashions dead Winnie-the-Pooh in sometimes monumental scale out of oilcloth stuffed with sand and impales them on stakes or hangs them by the neck," and the up-to-date artist as "the few people whose artistic thinking is as au courant as any French New Novelist's, but who manage nonetheless to speak eloquently and memorably to our human hearts and conditions, as the greatest artists have always done," writers such as Beckett,
Borges, and Nabokov (66-7). Disdainful of both pre-modernist and exaggerated modernist forms, Barth sees possibility for literature and art in a merging of old and new, retaining the best of both.

Although he had claimed literature (and art) to be "exhausted" in its current state in the late sixties, Barth could find redemption through the redirection of the avant-garde away from noncontextualized meaninglessness to a recontextualizing of new forms of the text with a more traditional sense of human involvement. Others, however, saw postmodernism rather as just such a continuation of modernism to its ultimate, nihilistic conclusion. Here, too, Pop Art was viewed as the form that had moved beyond the abstraction of modernism in its readoption of figuration. The synthesis of images from popular culture—from the marketplace, from film and television—with formal references to high art seemed to represent a way to return meaning to art. But where the images were recognizable, meaning for the most part remained absent, or at least ambiguous. If anything, Pop Art exhibited little more-readable meaning than the monochromes of the metaphysical abstractionists. But the return of the figure to art, even in a fragmented condition, served to relocate art in an historical context as it came to increasingly reflect the period's discontent with the war in Vietnam as well as with problems on the domestic social front. In its return to
historical contextualization and in its formal use of fragmentation, the essence of Pop Art has, as Jencks points out, "remained both a fundamental fact and aesthetic of post-modernism ever since" (19)--including the postmodern novel.

In the 1970s, the "stage" referred to by Jencks as "plural politics, eclectic style," postmodern was "actually christened" as a movement with the publication of Ihab Hassan's 1971 essay "POSTmodernISM: a Paracritical Bibliography" (21). Hassan defined a literary movement which focused on what can be seen more as late-modernism than what we now view as the postmodern, with a critical emphasis on the avant-garde works of such writers as Gertrude Stein, William Burroughs, Jean Genet, and Samuel Beckett--the latter whom Barth had listed among his "technically up-to-date" artists--but including as well Barth, Barthelme, and Borges. Hassan saw modernism and postmodernism at co-existent movements by the early seventies, with postmodernism evolving slowly out of a "revision" of modernism ("POSTmodernISM 46,47). For Hassan, postmodernism signalled a movement of increased nihilism and abstraction as "the verbal omnipotence of Joyce yields to the impotence of Beckett" and art "pretends to abolish itself" or "to become indistinguishable from life" (53). In his catalogue comparison of "Modernist Rubrics" and "Postmodernist Notes" Hassan expresses the notion of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
postmodernism as the manifestation of the extremes of modernism—ultimate fragmentation, abstraction, irony, absurdity, dehumanization, and annihilation. Although Hassan may have officially christened postmodernism as a movement, as Jencks has posited, by pointing out that postmodernism has different characteristics from those commonly accepted as modernist, what he describes as postmodernism is actually no more than an increased modernity, or, as Jencks would say, an "ultra-avantgardism." As late as 1987 Hassan continued to describe postmodernism in terms of a more radical modernism, a "potential anarchy" of "depthlessness" and deconstruction ("Pluralism" 199,196) rooted in indeterminate fragmentation rather than the more historical eclecticism noted by Barth and Eco.  

In his 1979 essay "The Literature of Replenishment," a "companion and corrective" to his 1967 diatribe "The Literature of Exhaustion" (in which the term postmodern was never used), Barth posits a new definition which more accurately reflects the postmodern aesthetic.  

In a wonderfully embedded postmodern fashion, Barth quotes Gerald Graff who quotes T.S. Eliot on the modernism of James Joyce’s Ulysses. The purpose for his doubly-referential citation (to which I, in quoting Barth, will further extend) is to locate postmodernism in relation to its predecessor. Barth cites the qualities we have come to associate with a modernist novel: among others, the "self-conscious
overturning of the conventions of bourgeois realism," the
disruption of linearity, the lack of unity and coherence, of
cause and effect expected of plot development, the
expression of "inward consciousness" over "rational, public,
objective discourse," and, Barth’s own addition to the list,
"the insistence . . . on the special, usually alienated role
of the artist in his society" (199). Barth goes on to
repudiate critics such as Graff and Hassan who read
postmodernism as the carrying "to its logical and
questionable extremes the antirationalist, antirealist,
antibourgeois program of modernism"; nor does he see
postmodernism at the other extreme of repudiating either
modernism or its realistic precursors (200,201). Barth sees
postmodernist fiction rather as "the synthesis or
transcension of these antithesis, which may be summed up as
pre-modernist [traditional realist] and modernist modes of
writing" (203)—in other words, an eclectic narrative
double-coding. For Barth "the ideal postmodernist novel
will somehow rise above the quarrel between realism and
irrealism, formalism and ‘contentism,’ pure and committed
literature, coterie fiction and junk fiction" (203). Unlike
the modernist novel it will be able to be understood by the
general reader, yet will "not wear its heart on its sleeve"
in the manner of traditional realism. It would return the
novel to its historical eighteenth-century roots which lie
"famously and honorably in middle-class popular culture"
For Barth, it was not that the novel itself by 1967 had been exhausted, but rather the anti-contextual aesthetic of high-, or even late-, modernism.

Barth does not stand alone in his call for a return to historical perspective. In a postscript to his 1983 novel The Name of the Rose, Eco maintains that postmodernism is "a Kuntswollen, a way of operating" that works in opposition to the avant-garde whose purpose is to "settle scores with the past" by defacing it; taking it to its logical conclusion, the avant-garde "destroys the figure, cancels it, arrives at the abstract, the informal, the white canvas, the slashed canvas, the charred canvas" (73). Salvation comes through the postmodern recognition that "the past, since it cannot really be destroyed, because its destruction leads to silence, must be revisited" (73). The key to this return to the past, in order to keep from repeating it, is to turn to it "with irony, not innocently" (73). Hutcheon makes a similar observation that in "the postmodern rethinking of figurative painting in art and historical narrative in fiction and poetry . . . it is always a critical reworking, never a nostalgic 'return'" (4). Historical reference, intertextuality, and metafictional self-referentiality play key roles in Hutcheon's poetics, especially evident in her privileging of the form of the novel she calls "historiographic metafiction." Rather than using "the techniques of fictional representation to create imaginative
versions of . . . historical, real worlds," the postmodernist confronts "the paradoxes of fictive/historical representation, the particular/the general, and the present/the past" with a refusal to "recuperate or dissolve either side of the dichotomy" while being "more than willing to exploit both" (106). Brian McHale agrees, viewing the postmodernist novel as a "revision" of history due to its violation of the tenets of traditional historical fiction, its contradiction of historical record, its flaunting of anachronism, and its integration of history and the fantastic (90). McHale finds "tension" caused by the juxtaposition of "the officially-accepted version of what happened and the way things were, with another, often radically dissimilar version of the world" creates an "ontological flicker between the two worlds" (90). 6

The best analogical counterpart to the postmodern novelist's use of historical referentiality is found in architecture where, in the mid-1970s, it "crystallized" into a well-defined architectural movement (Jencks 24). In painting, a key movement in postmodernism has been the return to figure from abstraction in an ironically historical sense. In architecture, however, the return to the past consists rather of a reappropriation of historical forms for public buildings in an attempt to transcend the negative connotation of modernism through a return to a historically familiar architectural reference. The

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
connection between modernism and its manifestation in architecture was attacked in the late 1950s for its promotion of the false ideals of industrialization as expressed in the early work of the Bauhaus and the rapid spread of the International style. The postmodern movement in architecture became "a wider social protest against modernization, against the destruction of local culture by the combined forces of rationalization, bureaucracy, [and] large-scale development" (26). The Venice Bienniale of 1980, aptly entitled "The Presence of the Past," highlighted the return to historical meaning in architecture and "vindicated the post-modernists' notion that architecture is a public art which must be comprehensible and challenging" (27)—an echo of Barth's ideal for the postmodern novel which calls for generic referentiality that an educated public can understand "without a staff of tenured professors to explain it to us" ("Replenishment" 202-03). Bringing together eclectic formal and structural elements from past and present into what Robert Venturi would call "the difficult whole" (qtd. in Jencks 31) signalled a return to content through ironic historical reference—through a double-coded grammar of architectural form.

II

One of the more interesting phenomena of postmodernism is its ideological relationship to the aesthetic of the eighteenth-century. a trait Jencks relates to Neo-classicism
through the term Post-Modern Classicism (Post-Modernism 37). Although generally characterized by the mixing of classical motifs with present day elements, Post-Modern Classicism follows several separate lines, many contradictory, which nevertheless share a Wittgensteinian unity (337). In the sense of their turn away from historical narrative, the artists of Post-Modern Classicism are, in a sense, Hogarthian. In a sub-group Jencks refers to as "Narrative Classicists," such painters as Paul Georges and Michael Mazur mix realistic (mimetic) depiction with readable narrative. In Georges' My Kent State (1971-2), for example, a story of the killing of war protesters at Kent State is depicted through the gun-wielding paratroopers in battle pose captured immediately after the slaying. The figure of the artist himself appears in the painting as he attempts to restrain his artistic muse from fleeing. Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew stand to the right, Nixon with the blood of the victims on his hands. Such incorporation of contemporary figures into the scene signals their responsibility not only for the violence itself, but for the corruption that has lead to the violence as Hogarth in a similar manner illustrated the corruption of his own contemporary political figures through their recognizable appearance in his election series. Mazur's Incident at Walden Pond (1978) uses the narrative form of the triptych to show the events of a criminal chase. The result of the crime is evident in
the right panel, where a body lies on the ground. A man points to the central panel, where a man with a blank expression is shown running, fleeing another man who follows behind. The panel on the left depicts two other men joining the chase from the other side. Meanwhile a dog sits and observes the scene, taking no action, and joggers run by apparently oblivious to (or purposely ignoring) the incident. Although the three panels when placed together join to make one unified scene, the tripartate structure enforces a narrative reading. The events, here, are seen not as simultaneous but occurring through time, functioning in a similar way to Hogarth's framing technique used in such prints as the fifth plate of *Marriage à la Mode* and the third plate of *The Harlot's Progress*.

The similarities of postmodernism to neo-classicism are even more prevalent in architecture where in several aspects the postmodern is clearly reminiscent of the narrative quality of the follies of the eighteenth-century pleasure garden. Through an eclectic mixture of architectural styles as well as of traditional natural and contemporary artificial materials, the structures that comprise what has become known as entertainment architecture create, like the folly of the neoclassical garden, a sense of fantasy, an escape to another place and/or time. Eco's explanation of eclectic forms in postmodern architecture can apply with equal validity to neoclassicism:
Our rereading [of earlier forms] is based not only on what we have rediscovered of the codes and ideologies [on an earlier time], but also on codes and ideological perspectives peculiar to our times (codes of enrichment) which permit us to insert antiquarian objects in new contexts, to use them both form something of what they meant in the past and for the connotations that we attribute to them on the basis of our own present-day subcodes. ("Function and Sign" 31)

Such coding and subcoding create a symbiosis between the forms of the past and those of the present which lead to a further symbolic meaning. As the follies of the neoclassical garden created a narrative transportation to the glories of the past, postmodern entertainment architecture can recreate the narrative of the wild west or a turn-of-the-[20th] century Main Street (Disneyland) or even a working Roman forum (Caesars' Palace). A similar aesthetic is represented in more serious public architecture as well: Just as the neoclassical architect desired through his appropriation of ancient forms to evoke the most admired qualities of antiquity as well as the implication of the stability of empire, so the postmodern architect evokes the narrative of the past to create narrative meaning where it had, during the course of modernism, disappeared.

The postmodern novel has also experienced a return to narrative after the increasingly disjointed fragmentation of high modernism. Having discarded the order and coherence of plot and character expected in a realistic, mimetic novel, the modernists removed sequential chronology and, in some instances, intelligible language, leading to an
increased abstraction. The stories being told no longer resembled a narrative but a cubist painting—one by Braque or Picasso—where time and space has been conflated in such a way that multiple images appear simultaneously, layered one upon the other. Joseph Frank has referred to this phenomenon as "spatial form," where he sees the narrative (what there is of it) driven by spatial rather than temporal cues. The juxtaposition and overlapping of various narrative voices or plot-lines disallows a chronological reading. Each voice or story acts upon the others in such a way that meaning cannot be determined until all the voices have been heard and all the stories told. Only when the novel is finished can the reader determine its meaning—if then. The novel's accessibility to the general reader is limited by the difficulty of its enforced abstraction.

One such novel is Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury. Beginning with the nearly unintelligible rambling of the idiot Benjy, the novel gives the reader little narrative context. Benjy's narrative introduces us to his siblings, Caddie, Quentin, and Jason, but we have little means of identification of either character or event. When the story switches to Quentin's section, Faulkner disrupts the chronology, moving back in time eighteen years. Unlike Benjy, Quentin speaks intelligibly and relates certain details that enable us to make some sense out of Benjy's allusions. But Quentin is obviously not psychologically
stable, and although he is obsessed with time, his narrative does not follow a stable chronology. The reader remains uncertain as to the actual "plot" of the novel. In Jason's section, we move forward once again, to the day before Benjy's narration. With Jason, the narrative begins to make more sense as we are informed in what seems to be a more rational manner of the history of the Compson family. But even Jason cannot be trusted as a reliable source of information. The novel finally comes together in the final section, the third-person narrative voice as it would come from Dilsey's point of view. By the time the novel has ended, we get an overall sense of the whole—meaning comes only in retrospect. In this sense, Faulkner is relatively tame. In Finnegans Wake Joyce rarely removes the narrative from abstraction.

In a postmodern novel, on the other hand, some kind of narrative sense has returned. Although worlds may collide, the narrative itself will usually run in a more traditional chronological fashion as it relates a more traditional plot of cause and effect. The novel acknowledges its own contemporary historical context as well as its roots in eighteenth-century storytelling. The Tidewater Tales by John Barth will serve as an example, although postmodern novelists are as heterogeneous as postmodern theorists. As The Tidewater Tales opens (with what have been called "dippy verses" by one critic— an accusation Barth does not deny but
Katherine and Peter Sagamore have just returned to Chesapeake Bay after a long sailing vacation. The basic story is chronological (related in journal form with each day numbered and descriptively titled by the geographical progress of their journey): Katherine and Peter return home after their vacation; Katherine is pregnant with twins and is due in two weeks; Peter is a writer with writer's block, trying to give birth to a novel; they decide to sail the bay for the next two weeks where they deal with family members and have other assorted adventures. The structural linearity of the basic story functions as the frame to hang a variety of other stories, both Katherine's and Peter's as well as several alternative literary tales, while keeping us anchored to the primary, forward-moving narrative. The narrative voice, too, is neither what we would expect nor does it shock or confuse us; ambiguous, it alternates between Peter and Katherine while at the same time admits to being neither. It is as if there is a third party on the boat, privy to the thoughts of Peter and Katherine, yet not at all omniscient as it speaks in the first person. At one point, Peter and Katherine decide to go to bed and let the narrator of the story assume his/her/its own voice. The metafictional quality of the narrative is apparent as Peter somehow takes it down as they go, recording their conversations and adventures in the logbook of their boat (most appropriately named Story) as
they occur. The book is metaphorically born not as a twin, but by twin authors—it is the fruit both of Peter’s writing and Katherine’s pregnancy, its own birth as a novel occurring at the end with Katherine’s labor. During the course of the story fictional worlds collide with Peter and Katherine’s own fictional reality as they interact with such literary figures as Odysseus and Nausicaa (who have been cruising the Chesapeake for almost three thousand years since sailing through time in a Phaeacian 35), Don Quixote (whose author made up his return from the cave of Montesinos, where he actually sailed out on the river to the Atlantic shore and later to the Chesapeake where he now sails as Don Quicksote in Rocinante IV), as well as Huck Finn and Scheherazade. The Tidewater Tales illustrates Barth’s critical perspective on postmodernism as it offers the narrative coherence and cause-and-effect sequences of a pre-modern novel, the freedom of voice and offered by modernist fragmentation, and the postmodernist ontological dominant that takes over when worlds collide.7

The prominence of a more traditional, pre-modern narrative style in the postmodern novel has returned readable meaning to the postmodern novel, meaning that can be read within the text itself. No longer aiming for the elitism of abstraction, the literary novel has returned to its roots as a democratic genre. In this respect, it more closely resembles what has occurred in architecture over the
past fifteen years. Both have emphasized an ironic or parodic return to earlier, pre-modern forms in order to encourage public readability; both have emphasized the importance of social and historical contextualization; both have emphasized eclecticism. While neither the theories of the postmodern novel nor of postmodern architecture are either fixed or particularly homogeneous, the creative works, the novel or the building, are easily recognizable as falling under the general rubric of postmodern.

It is less easy to fix a definition of the postmodern in painting. Although what Jencks has called Post-Modern Classicism corresponds well to the trends of postmodern in literature and architecture, it plays only a small role in the definition of postmodern painting. In other areas of painting postmodernism has taken a different turn, looking toward the texts of contemporary theory rather than the narrative techniques of classical or neo-classical models. W.J.T. Mitchell has ironically applied a new twist to the ut pictura poesis analogy to describe the trend, which began with the late-modernist move to increased abstraction: ut pictura theoria (PT 222). In response to criticism that the relationship between art and theory is more one-sided than the symbiosis originally implied by ut pictura poesis, that theory appears as a critical afterword to the visual image without an opposite influence, Mitchell points out that theory frequently precedes the artistic work, having become
"a constitutive pre-text" for the work of artists in the twentieth century (222). Mitchell cites sculptor and painter Robert Morris who describes the evolution of modern art as "a progression of textualizing theories" from the manifestoes penned by the early abstractionists "based on their readings of nineteenth-century idealist philosophy" to the critical theories of abstract expressionism put forward by Clement Greenberg to minimalism and postmodernism where "the textual accompaniments to visual art are once again produced by the artists' themselves" as an adjunct to the painting, appearing either on a card on the wall or in a museum guide or catalogue raisonné (222). Thomas Wolfe had a decade earlier noted the same phenomenon, remarking the irony that "Modern Art has become completely literary: the paintings and other works exist only to illustrate the [theoretical] text" (7). What so startled Wolfe about his sudden realization of the literary turn in art is its apparent reversal of the complete rejection of the "literary nature of academic art" that signalled the Modernist movement (7).

The application of theoretical narrative to visual art is not limited to abstraction or minimalism, but may be attached to figurative painting as well as painting that utilizes borrowed historical referents. According to McEvilly, the postmodern painter may appropriate historical forms, but history is seen not as a means of periodic
contextualization but as a random "succession of moments without overall shape or direction" (A&D 162). Its forms are used as "quotations" removed from linear context that serve to tear "art history apart and throw its deck in the air, to clear the field of myths of inevitability" (162). Although a certain narrativity is evoked within the painting through historical quotation, it nevertheless remains fragmented and unrooted. McEvilley sees the emphasis of art (in the 80s) as being "on the fragment and the politics of the fragment," throwing "emphasis back upon the present as the only living moment, affirming the loss of meaningful purpose and continuity as liberation" (163). In this aspect of postmodern painting, the return to narrative signalled by architecture and the novel—and even the Post-Modern Classicist line of postmodernism—has been, in a sense, reversed. Predicting the future of postmodern art in 1991, McEvilley sees the rewriting of art history "in terms of content, as it has thus far been written primarily in terms of form" which will then allow for a "study of the relationship between form and content" and the effect upon both by social forces (165), critical perspectives already manifest in other areas of postmodernism.

An attempt to cover every aspect of postmodernism would take volumes, and volumes have already been written. The future of postmodernism is as uncertain and as wide open for possibility as its current heterogeneity. Not all critics
agree that we should be heading in the direction of narrative return and historical reference. One, Raymond Federman, sees the future of the novel in "critifiction"—the novel itself as critical discourse—and in the renunciation of the readable, realistic novel. Federman would take the "experiment" of modernism to its logical extreme of unreadability in its emphasis on the human mind rather than on human nature or identity (75). Other comments could be made concerning such movements as photo-(or super-)realism, the mixing of painting and film, the photographic essay, film as visual art, the music video—or the politically volatile "electronic disturbance" created through the "screenal reality" of the most up-to-date computer technology. All of these movements consider the importance of figure and of historical and social context; most call into question the boundaries of art and reality and the limitations of painting itself. All may be considered postmodern.

III.

In 1963 John Barth was asked to write an introductory essay for the Signet Classic edition of Smollett's Roderick Random. It was assumed that since Barth set his own historical novel The Sot-Weed Factor in the eighteenth century he would have a working familiarity with the eighteenth-century English novel—which he didn't; he had never, in fact, ever before read Smollett. After having
read the novel, Barth presents a lively, insightful view into the early novelistic tradition already developing in the eighteenth century. He comments upon the structure of the novel ("There is no structure") as well as on its implicit meanings (there are none of those, either). The lack of both is fine with Barth, who admires the book's sense of adventure and finds its "orneriness downright bracing" (38). Before the advent of postmodern theory, before he had ever known "the now-talismanic word postmodern," Barth found in Smollett an antidote to modernism:

There is evidence, in some really recent novels, of a renaissance of this same spirit: hints of the possibility of a post-naturalistic, post-existentialist, post-psychological, post-antinovel novel in which the astonishing, the extravagant ("out-wandering"), the heroical--in sum, the adventurous--will come again and welcome into its own. For those among us who have sustained our own idea of Roderick Random (never mind Smollett's idea of him) not for months but for years at a stretch, it can't happen too soon. (40)

As The Tidewater Tales concludes by a return to the beginning, framed by the lines of verse left incomplete in the opening lines of the novel and by the title page which graces its final leaf, as Lost in the Funhouse becomes a "frame tale" through the direction of a Möbius Strip that repeats ad infinitum "Once upon a time was a story that began"--so this study begs turning again to the eighteenth century and the historical origins of our (post?)modern cultural condition.
Notes: Chapter Six

1. I have adopted the lower-case, single-word compound postmodernism, the form most frequently used for literary criticism, in my discussion. Other variations contain some form of hyphenation and/or capitalization, as post-modernism, post-Modernism, Post Modernism, and Ihab Hassan's unique POSTmodernlSM.

2. The quotation marks around the word stages are Jencks's, used to indicate fluidity rather than an fixed structure.

3. In his essay "The Monochrome Icon" in The Exile's Return, McEvilley discounts Greenberg's formalist reading of abstraction in favor of a more metaphysical perspective, a criticism he extends in Art and Discontent to include such later formalist critics as Michael Fried, Rosalind Krauss, and Susan Sontag, citing the inherent contradiction of reading content into pure non-representational form. In The Exile's Return McEvilley examines freedom from form and context in monochrome abstraction from the perspective of Eastern mysticism which recalls a kind of Burkean sublimity. The "annihilation of form," in other words, does not signal an absence of meaning but a spiritual "mysticism of space," a certain "fullness of emptiness," that can easily be confused with "the formalist insistence on pure form and its desired emptiness of all external content" (46,62). For McEvilley, modernist abstraction is not void of meaning, but lacks historical context and social commentary. It is, in a sense, "the last gasp of the Romantic ideology of art" (51).

4. In "Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective" Hassan sets out eleven "definiens" of the term Postmodern that he views as descriptive rather than definitive. Like many critics, Hassan finds that postmodernism, in the end, is undefinable in the sense that, for him, it is "at best, an equivocal concept, a disjunctive category" which is "at worst . . . a mysterious, if ubiquitous, ingredient--like raspberry vinegar, which instantly turns any recipe into nouvelle cuisine" (199).

5. In his headnote to "The Literature of Replenishment" in The Friday Book Barth writes that his purpose for writing the essay "was to define to my satisfaction the term postmodernism, which in 1979 was everywhere in the air." Barth feels, ironically, that "almost no one agrees with [his] definition" which remains, for me, one of the most viable. He does, however, maintain that he "remain[s] satisfied with it" (193).
6. Some novels that express McHale's ontological flicker are Robert Coover's The Public Burning (1977), Thomas Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow (1973) and Vineland (1990), John Barth's LETTERS, The Tidewater Tales (1987) and The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor (1991)—to name but a few.

7. McHale uses the ontological dominant as a defining factor in postmodernist fiction. As opposed to the epistemological dominant of modernism which foregrounds such questions of interpretation, the ontological dominant foregrounds "post-cognitive" questions that occur when we are faced with experiences outside our accustomed reality—when we come into contact with worlds whose boundaries are different than our own. See McHale 6-11.

8. Federman quotes Gertrude Stein for his concluding remarks of the chapter: "Always it is true that the masterpiece [experimental novel again] has nothing to do with human nature or with identity, it has to do the human mind and the entity that is with a thing in itself and not in relation" (75). The bracketed comments are Federman's.

9. See the Creative Art Ensemble, The Electronic Disturbance.
Permission to Use Copyrighted Material

The Johns Hopkins University Press


hereby give permission for the author to use the above described material in total or in part for inclusion in a master’s thesis/doctoral dissertation at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

I also agree that the author may execute the standard contract with University Microfilms, Inc. for microform reproduction of the completed thesis/dissertation, including the materials to which I hold copyright.

Signature __________________________ Date 5/11/95

Erin M. Meitzler; Copyright and Permissions Coordinator
Name (typed) __________________________ Title __________________________

The Johns Hopkins University Press
Representing

Pamela Cantrell
Department of English
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
4505 Maryland Parkway-Box 5011
Las Vegas, NV 89154-5011

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


260


---. A Small Boy and Others. 1913. New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1941.


---. "Questions pour Dorothea Tanning entretien avec Alain Jouffroy, Mars 1974."


