THE POLITICS OF THE AESTHETIC
IN HENRY JAMES

by

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in Henry James
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Abstract

Most of the criticism on Henry James characterizes him as apolitical or merely ignores the political implications of his fiction. Moreover, the category of the aesthetic, one of the central concerns and themes of James’s work, is generally regarded, in both his life and his fiction, as a refuge from politics and history. But contrary to prevailing critical opinion, the political traverses and implicates the aesthetic, not only in James’s most explicitly political novel, The Princess Casamassima, but also in such quintessentially "apolitical" and ostensibly socially quarantined novels like The Spoils of Poynton and The Golden Bowl. In the first novel, the aesthetic itself acts as a dubious vehicle for political solidarity and revolution. Meanwhile, read in the context of both political and psychoanalytic theories of "fetishism," The
Spoils of Poynton reveals a distinct homology and interpenetration between art and the commodity, as well as between what James calls "the sublime economy of art" and the more mundane market economy against which art attempts to define itself. Finally, in The Golden Bowl, Adam Verver's career and his daughter's efforts to preserve the "equilibrium" of their domestic and social relations suggest a similar homology and relationship between the aesthetic and ideology.
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Introduction

"The place to begin," begins Alfred Habegger's attempt to answer the question "Who Made James the Modern American Master, and Why?", the title of the concluding chapter of his book, Gender, Fantasy, and Realism in American Literature, "is George Santayana's original definition of the genteel tradition, which gives a brilliant formulation of the antithetical relationship between power and the alternative sphere" (289). What Habegger means by the "alternative sphere" is the sphere of art and culture, and the definition by Santayana to which he refers is this one:

The truth is that the one-half of the American mind, that not occupied intensely in practical affairs, has remained, I will not say high-and-dry, but slightly becalmed; it has floated gently in the backwater, while, alongside, in invention and industry and social organization the other half of the mind was leaping down a sort of Niagara Rapids. This division may be found symbolized in American architecture: a neat reproduction of the colonial mansion--with some modern comforts introduced surreptitiously--stands beside the sky-scraper. The American Will inhabits the sky-scraper; the American Intellect inhabits the colonial mansion. The one is the sphere of the American man; the other, at least predominantly, of the American woman. The one is all aggressive enterprise; the other is all genteel tradition. (39-40)

In the same essay, Santayana goes on to say that, while William and Henry James "were as tightly swaddled in the genteel tradition as any infant geniuses could be," both "burst those bands almost entirely," Henry "turning the genteel American tradition, as he turns everything else,
into a subject-matter for analysis" (54). Much of the criticism after Santayana likewise treats James as a critic of the genteel tradition. Robert Dawidoff in particular suggests that James's writing explores the link between these two spheres, that "James saw that the prevailing American genteel moralism was a degenerate morality, and he suspected it had to do with keeping the enterprise of American business culture going behind a veneer of professed ideals" (97). But Habegger, one of the more provocative and trenchant representatives of the so-called anti-Jacobite school, advances the suggestive argument that James's work in fact embodies a different sort of link: contrary to popular belief, Habegger says, the genteel tradition is a close relative or ancestor of modernism, and Henry James "is one of the few American writers who bridged [these] two entities" (291). "One should not be deceived by the ferocity of modernism's attack on the 'genteel,'" Habegger warns, for "both defined themselves against a mainstream seen as coarse, powerful, dominant, and yet clearly inferior to themselves. The genteel tradition and modernism were each an outsiders' elite" (291) and Henry James, a "sissy" whose "unachieved manhood" led him "to work out the most distinguished 'alternative sphere' in American literature" (301-2). The genteel tradition in James "remains exactly the same sort of thing it has always
been--a superior counterculture that defines itself against the ordinary, the practical, the material. It insists as it has always done on art as something separate, something vastly more distinguished" (302).¹

Of course such conceptions of art have long preceded both James and the genteel tradition, but Habegger's book has the virtue of attempting to provide a particular historical explanation and narrative of its embodiment in both James's art and canonization. Thus James's rise to prominence in America after the second world war is attributable to his work's "authorizing" the "escapist fantasies" of certain American intellectuals whose "rediscovery" of James is inspired by a "social and political alienation . . . not essentially different from" James's own "unachieved manhood" (301). The "balked former radicals" associated with the Partisan Review, to whom we owe James's current status in American letters (such as, most prominently, Lionel Trilling and Philip Rahv), proclaimed James "the great nineteenth-century American realist" because they found in his work a

¹ The gendered nature of this division is of course obvious and forms a subject in itself. Further commentary here would lead me somewhat astray from my own subject, though I will touch upon certain issues relating to gender in my chapter on The Spoils of Povnton. Suffice it to say here that disparagements of this aspect of James's writing say far more about gender roles and the social conceptions and expectations of "masculinity" and "femininity" than they do about James's artistic achievements or failures. Would anyone take James to task on the same grounds on which Habegger does had James been a woman? Probably not.
reflection and justification of their own "elitist" withdrawal from "mass society" and political activity (301). Fingering Lionel Trilling in particular, Habegger declares that "a depoliticized critic helped exalt a depoliticized writer, neither of whom was sufficiently aware of his real place in history" (300).

So runs what is only one of the more recent variants of a long-standing condemnatory tradition of criticism on James. Habegger is one in a long line of anti-Jacobite critics opposed to the effete gentility, elitism, cosmopolitanism, and political quietism of both James and the liberal humanist or modernist critics who have succeeded in canonizing him. This anti-Jacobite line may arguably be said to begin with William James’s pragmatist and nativist objections to the Europeanized, rarefied supersubtlety of his brother’s writing, though it only comes into prominence in the twenties and thirties in the works of such American progressives and nationalists as Van Wyck Brooks, Lewis Mumford, V.L. Parrington, and Charles Beard. Like Habegger, these writers insist on an historical understanding of James. Rejecting any notion of art’s autonomy--that James, that is, may "be read only with reference to himself" (290)--Habegger maintains that "Henry James cannot be understood apart from American masculinity, its violent rites of passage, the Civil War, the rough and tumble of primitive capitalism, and female
American culture in the 1860s and 1870s" (290).

Habegger's analysis, however, along with that of most populist or left-leaning anti-Jacobites, posits a rigidly "antithetical relation" [my emphasis] between "aggressive male power armed with capital and technology, and the alternative sphere" (290). Thus, in 1927, Charles Beard explains in his history of The Rise of American Civilization that Henry James wrote for a poignant middle class of seasoned families . . . distressed by the doings of the plutocrats and the vulgarisms of democracy . . . . The grandson of a millionaire, a whole generation removed from the odors of the shop, and granted by good fortune a luxurious leisure, James steered his way into a more rarefied atmosphere, normally as the sparks fly heavenward. (441)

In a similar vein, V.L. Parrington observed in his history of America that, amid his native country's "sprawling energy," Henry James was unable to barricade himself securely against the intrusion of the unpleasant. His organism was too sensitive, his discriminations too fine, to subject them to the vulgarities of the Gilded Age, and he fled from it all . . . . The explanation of the curious career of Henry James, seeking a habitation between worlds and finding a spiritual home nowhere, is that he was never a realist. Rather he was a self-deceived romantic, the last subtle expression of the genteel, who fell in love with culture and never realized how poor a thing he worshipped. . . . Did any other professed realist ever remain so persistently aloof from the homely realities of life? From the external world of action he withdrew to the inner world of questioning and probing; yet even in his subtle psychological inquiries he remained shut up within his own skull-pan. (239-41)

Subtract Beard's and Parrington's nationalism and we are not far removed from Terry Eagleton's criticism of
James some four decades later. In his short commentary on James in *Criticism and Ideology*, Eagleton, like Beard and Parrington, leans his reading of Henry James on the same biographical fact of the James family fortune, which was "large enough for complete independence of 'commerce,'" an independence that in effect "dislocated" James "from the significant history which surrounded him" (143).

Thus "dislocated" from "history" and "community," James produced a body of work that, according to Eagleton, represents a desperate, devoted attempt to salvage organic significance wholly in the sealed realm of consciousness—to vanquish, by the power of such "beautiful," multiple yet harmoniously unifying awareness, certain real conflicts and divisions. In the form of the struggle for material acquisition, those conflicts generate the wealth which makes such privileged consciousness possible in the first place. But the bearer of such contemplative consciousness is thereby absent from concrete history, displaced from what he totalises; to "know" (a crucial Jamesian term) is both supreme transcendence and impotent negativity. . . . Yet the sterile negativity of knowing is also convertible to a kind of virtue. Privileged spirits like Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady* and Milly Theale in

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2 Something of Habegger's explanation of James's rise to prominence at the hands of disillusioned and alienated intellectuals similarly finds a Marxist echo in Fredric Jameson's analysis of the ascendancy of "Jamesian point of view," which, although it comes into being as a protest and a defense against reification, ends up furnishing a powerful ideological instrument in the perpetuation of an increasingly subjectivized and psychologized world, a world whose social vision is one of a thoroughgoing relativity of monads in coexistence and whose ethos is irony and neo-Freudian projection theory and adaptation-to-reality therapy. This is the context in which the remarkable transformation of Henry James from a minor nineteenth-century man of letters into the greatest American novelist of the 1950s may best be appreciated. (*Political Unconscious* 221-22)
The Wings of the Dove, by their fine refusal to win anything for themselves, their heroic renunciation of self-interest, triumph spiritually over the possessive individualism of others. They triumph over those less abundantly provided with the material wealth which provides such transcendental gestures with their basis. That basis, as John Goode has pointed out, is in the late James the immense fortunes of the US corporations, which enable their beneficiaries "to have so much money that (they) no longer have to think about it". This, indeed, is the historical secret of the "negativity" of the Jamesian spirit: negativity is the abyss which opens up between consciousness itself and the suppressed, supportive economic base of which it is finely oblivious—an abyss inscribed within consciousness itself as a blank freedom from financial constraint. It is in the darkness of this abyss that the true historical determinants of James's fiction are most clearly illuminated. (141-42)

If I were, James-like, to isolate the "germ" of the present study, I would have to point to these remarks by Eagleton. This thesis began as an effort to expand upon Eagleton's assertions. As it proceeded, however, the initial conception began to capsize under the weight of accumulating qualifications and exceptions and turn into a dispute with Eagleton's argument. While my intention has been far from that of recasting or rehabilitating James as some kind of "political novelist" after the likes of, say, a George Orwell, or even a George Eliot, the following chapters attempt to throw some light into what Eagleton figures as an "abyss"—an abyss which, to begin with, is not quite as "dark" as Eagleton makes it out to be. One could, as a merely opening countermove, point to a number of remarks outside the fiction, as in,
for instance, the preface to *What Maisie Knew*, where James writes:

> No themes are so human as those that reflect for us, out of the confusion of life, the close connexion of bliss and bale, of the things that help with the things that hurt, so dangling before us for ever that bright hard medal, of so strange an alloy, one face of which is somebody's right and ease and the other somebody's pain and wrong. (viii)

It could of course be argued that, in the context of *What Maisie Knew*, the major implications of this passage are not political; at the same time, however, its political implications, one would have to grant, are unavoidable. These are made explicit in a letter to Grace Norton, in which James speaks about "that great total of labor and poverty on whose enormous base all the luxury and leisure of English country-houses are built up" (*Letters II* 209).

These passages are particularly fitting in this context, because they answer Eagleton's charge in his own classical Marxist terms of "base" and "superstructure." But I do not offer them here in order to suggest that James was some sort of crypto-Marxist, historical-dialectician, revolutionary, or even reformer. This, in any case, would be a biographical claim, and biography is not the objective of this study; it is an inquiry into—or, more precisely and mundanely, a close reading of—three of James's novels, *The Princess Casamassima*, *The Spoils of Poynton*, and *The Golden Bowl*, in relation to a central argument that, far from being "finely oblivious,"
James’s fiction indeed *thematizes* precisely those relations between economics, politics, and consciousness—and, particularly, the kind of “free,” "contemplative,” and "dissociated" consciousness that falls under the category of the aesthetic—of which James is supposed to be oblivious. There are infinite tracts of political territory untravelled by Henry James’s imagination, but the one region he returns to insistently is that of the politics and economics of art and culture. Gilbert Osmond is only the most famous and flagrant example in James’s oeuvre of a merging of what Santayana names "Will" (expressly in James a will-to-power, which of course always animates the political) and aesthetic sensibility. James may not use an explicitly political rhetoric, but even such evidently apolitical novels as *Roderick Hudson, The Portrait of a Lady, The Spoils of Poynton, The Wings of the Dove, The Ambassadors, and The Golden Bowl* deal centrally with the relationship between these "spheres"—with precisely, that is, the economic, political, and historical determinants, underpinnings, ramifications, and effects of the aesthetic.

This would of course be the place to define this central concept. As anyone who has taken even a cursory look at any kind of aesthetic theory would know, a concise but comprehensive definition or explanation of "the aesthetic" may be very nearly impossible. As Terry
Eagleton writes in his survey of aesthetic theory, "For a notion which is supposed to signify a kind of functionlessness, few ideas can have served so many disparate functions" (Aesthetic 3). Manifest quintessentially in the apprehension and enjoyment of art, the aesthetic is a kind of judgement and a species of cognition separate from and free of the constraints of the practical world and of instrumental, abstract reason. Thus, it is often defined negatively or antithetically—that is, as what it is not or what it opposes, particularly in the specific "social formation" of the capitalist economy, where it is often defined in contradistinction to consumption, as well as to mechanized, "reified" labour. Perhaps most importantly, it insistently appears as a kind of go-between, a mediating third term amid such antagonists as sense and reason, inclination and duty, individuality and collectivity, freedom and necessity. Such a terse sketch might appear unhelpfully abstract, but I hope a more complete, precise, and clear picture of the various tendered theories of the aesthetic and, more specifically, of how they bear upon--and, as importantly, how they themselves are borne upon by--James's fiction will emerge in the chapters to come. For, as in aesthetic theory in general, the aesthetic in James means many things, and I have attempted to illuminate the specific
qualities and implications of this category as they are suggested by each particular novel. Such illumination, however, can only occur by the light of other texts, and so the readings that follow juxtapose and confront the novels with an array of theoretical and philosophical works by such figures as Kant, Schiller, Marx, Freud, Adorno, Bourdieu, and Zizek--to cite only some of the more prominent names--chosen for their relevance to the themes and issues pursued, and the amount of exegetical energy generated by their being rubbed together with James's texts.

As I have already indicated, much of the criticism on James represents the aesthetic as a mode of consciousness and a way of relating to the world that amount to a withdrawal from "society"--from politics and history. Jonathan Freedman indeed suggests that it might be said without too much exaggeration that the entire course of James criticism from the time of Van Wyck Brooks and Vernon Parrington has consisted of a series of arguments over their vision of Henry James as a second Gilbert Osmond: an effete aesthete expatriate whose works are marred by his withdrawal from the soil of social reality (an exclusively American terrain) into the consoling never-never land of art (the country of the mauve as well as the blue); a figure of fastidious reserve and mandarin hauteur whose proclamation of his own status as Master masked and mystified his own severe will to power. (xiii)

Variously characterized as effeminate or emasculate timidity, infantilism, cowardly retreat, solipsism, or, conversely, redemption and transcendence, such a reading
of the aesthetic in James—as will become evident in the chapters ahead, where I address a wide array of the existing criticism on each novel—has been conducted by both Jacobites and anti-Jacobites at all points of the political compass. In fact, the anti-Jacobite assaults upon James's apoliticism from either the left or the right have been largely ineffectual before the monumental weight of James's canonization. At the same time, however, the same critics responsible for this canonization have mostly reinforced the charge and perception of apoliticism, sometimes explicitly but perhaps more often implicitly by subjecting both political and aesthetic issues in James to an ethical discourse. My own objective is to present the aesthetic as neither a vitiated, effete, detached, and solipsistic, nor a privileged and transcendent, mode of consciousness, but rather as a particular, if manifold, mode of apprehension and response that is no more free of economic, political, and historical determinants and effects than any other mental activity. But while it is a standard and perhaps necessary rhetorical move in literary criticism and most other humanistic discourse deliberately to brush the grain in a certain direction only in order to go against it, I must not, however, fail to indicate that the present study follows in the footsteps of a number of recent critics who have made
enormous contributions to socializing and politicizing not only James, but, more specifically, the aesthetic in James. Some of the most interesting of these are Freedman, Ross Posnock, John Carlos Rowe, Mark Seltzer, and Michael Sprinker. At the risk of suggesting a kind of critical incestuousness, I will quote Posnock, who quotes Rowe, in declaring that I too "share [the] intention to 'socialize, . . . destabilize and render uncanny' James by 'questioning the ways in which he has been mythologized as the master of a life-denying aestheticism'" (Posnock 302, n.31; Rowe 28).

One of the greatest but also the most interesting challenges of this effort has been to discern the political in the reputedly and seemingly apolitical, particularly in the two late novels The Spoils of Poynton and The Golden Bowl. The organization of my chapters has simply followed the chronology of the publication of the novels, but it is fitting that The Princess Casamassima come first, since, as everybody knows, it is James's most political novel and therefore allows fairly easy and straightforward access to some of the political issues and conflicts that are explored throughout this study, such as the conflict between the private and public spheres and between individual and collectivity, the relationship between politics and art or culture, the nature and construction of the subject, the nature and
function of ideology, and, of course, the role of the aesthetic in all of these matters. More specifically, the first chapter examines what Irving Howe describes as "the heart-struggle between beauty and necessity" (155), between, that is, aesthetic detachment and social or political duty and responsibility, and the function of what I characterize as a social mimesis within this struggle. While for Hyacinth Robinson, mimetic or imitative behaviour represents the very antithesis of the "consistency" and "authenticity" for which he yearns, for the Princess Casamassima, it represents the crucial means by which to achieve an understanding of, empathy for, and political solidarity with her social others--namely, the members of the working class. Given that the novel itself--not to mention most of James's corpus--classified, as it is, under the rubric of realism, is generally interpreted within a mimetic model, certain reflexive questions are raised about the novel's and its critics' own aesthetic and interpretive assumptions.

The second chapter examines The Spoils of Poynton under the lens of the concept of the fetish, a concept applied according to the canonical but disparate theories of fetishism of Marx and Freud, as well as Pierre Bourdieu's lesser-known theory of "political fetishism." The role in the latter of subjective will and intention bears upon the long-standing and ongoing critical debate
and dilemmas surrounding the role of James's own stated intentions in the interpretation of the novel. In its focus on the relationship or opposition between the art object and the commodity, this chapter also elaborates the central economic concerns of the thesis, further explored in the chapter on The Golden Bowl which, while extending the discussion of the relationship between art and commodity, concerns itself primarily with the relationship and, more specifically, the homology between the aesthetic and ideology.

Much of the terminology of this introduction is certain to raise red flags and hackles, for it draws upon concepts that have been rendered by recent theory and literary and cultural criticism either vague or invalid. Like "aesthetic," such words as "culture," "fetish," "commodity," "reification," and "ideology" each mean a great many different things. I have, throughout this study, attempted to be as clear and precise as possible in my usage of such terms, drawing upon those theoretical articulations that seem most relevant to the reading of each novel and the specific questions it raises. Rather than begin with a theoretical introduction, I have preferred to weave the theory into the reading itself, which partly explains the lengthiness of the chapters. A good portion of this theory comes, in one way or another, from Marxism. This is because, whatever one's own
political ideology or agenda, Marxism offers an extremely useful array of diagnostic, analytical, and heuristic tools for socially-oriented interpretations, and because in my view some of the most powerful, suggestive, engaging, provocative, and inspiring treatments in recent years of the social themes and dimensions of literature have come from Marxist criticism and theory, especially as represented by Raymond Williams, Terry Eagleton, and Fredric Jameson. If, however, in this thesis I partly read James through Marxism, I also read Marxism through James. Marxist literary criticism has provided the best map by which to locate the political even in the stubbornly apolitical, and while it has guided my own reading of James, the record that follows of this reading is also simultaneously, if secondarily, a tacit questioning of certain Marxist tenets.

The readings that follow also draw to a considerable degree upon the theoretical and critical legacies of two other figures, one named repeatedly throughout this thesis, the other invoked only in its margins but haunting the readings that follow, as he does much of contemporary criticism, like one of the ghosts of *The Spoils of Poynton*. The first is that of Lacan. While no less sceptical of Lacanian theory than I am of Marxism, the powerful synthesis of the psychoanalytic or psychological, the linguistic, and the socio-political
effected by Lacan and Lacanian theorists after him (a somewhat scattered constellation within which I would include such a figure as Jameson) has yielded an indispensable and exegetically fruitful vocabulary. One of the most persistent themes of this thesis is the nature of the subject and the subject’s relation to society, the ideas surrounding which have been profoundly influenced by Lacan’s categories of the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real, and, especially, by the Lacanian conception of the Other, all of which, again, are glossed and elaborated in the specific contexts of the novels.

The second figure is Paul de Man. In its willingness to speculate, periodize, subjectivize, and, especially, allegorize in pursuit of the social and political implications of James’s writing, this thesis could hardly be called de-Manian, veering far astray of the kind of "technically-correct" and "irrefutable" "rhetorical readings" that de Man practised and promoted (19). Nevertheless, I have tried to remain doggedly alert to the operations, complications, and exigencies of the rhetorical and tropological dimensions of James’s texts, which must, in what de Man would describe as a "genuine" reading, have final authority over other, political, historical, biographical, and theoretical concerns; for, as de Man says, if the literary critic’s central concern is not language, then he has chosen the wrong vocation.
Mimesis and Politics in
The Princess Casamassima

Widely regarded as James's most political novel, The Princess Casamassima is also widely dismissed on that basis, its author deemed uninformed on the themes and the types of characters about which he was writing, and its politics, therefore, as naive and superficial.³ Some critics salvage the novel only by demoting its political elements: J.A. Ward, for instance, argues that the novel's "theme is not political at all" (115), while S. Gorley Putt warns that "to read [The Princess Casamassima] as a political tract is to miss the whole meaning" (167). Irving Howe judges the novel "a bewildering mixture of excellence and badness" (141), praising James's portrayal of several of the novel's characters for displaying a "remarkable insight into political personality" (149); on the other hand, "brilliantly gifted at entering the behaviour of political people" as James may show himself to be, the novel, Howe protests, suffers from a "cultural insularity" (151) due to James's not having a "larger view of politics as a collective mode of action" (149-50). Nevertheless, James manages, Howe concludes at the

³ Some noteworthy exponents of this view are Yvor Winters, John Goode, Alwyn Berland, and John Lucas.
end of his essay, to "come upon a problem that lies at the very center of political life," namely, "the heart-struggle between beauty and necessity" (155).

Herbert Marcuse has discussed this "heart-struggle" in different but trenchant terms:

I remember the familiar statement made long ago about the futility and perhaps even about the crime of art: that the Parthenon wasn't worth the blood and tears of a single Greek slave. And equally futile is the contrary statement that only the Parthenon justified slave society. Now, which one of the two statements is correct? ("Art in the One-Dimensional Society" 54)

One might say that The Princess Casamassima asks a similar question; but while Marcuse decides that, given "the wholesale slaughter and brutality" of "Western Civilization," "the first statement is probably more correct than the second" (54), Hyacinth Robinson concludes, about halfway through the novel, that the world's "treasures" and "felicities" (2: 217), "the splendid accumulations of the happier few" (2: 145), justify or offset the "want and toil and suffering . . . of the immense majority of the human race" (2: 145)--to a point, indeed, that he feels "capable of fighting for" the "treasures" and "felicities" (2: 145). The problem is that he reaches this conclusion only after having committed himself to the cause of "the immense majority."

At one level, Hyacinth's conflict is one of divided loyalties between classes, specifically between, on the one hand, the poor labouring class, of which, for all
practical purposes and notwithstanding his alleged bloodties to a nobleman, Hyacinth is a member, and, on the other, the aristocracy, which he admires and envies even as he loathes the inequality upon which it rests. I say here "upon which it rests," but Hyacinth's divided loyalties manifest a certain confusion over the whole base/superstructure problem. In one instance, for example, during a stroll with Millicent through Hyde Park, he perceives the "throng of carriages, of riders, of brilliant pedestrians," all belonging to the class of "the upper ten thousand" (1: 170), as "a spectacle which rested on a hideous social inequality" (1: 171).

Similarly, in the letter he sends to the Princess from Venice, he refers to "The monuments and treasures of art, the great palaces and properties, the conquests of learning and taste, the general fabric of civilisation as we know it, based if you will upon all the despotisms, the cruelties, the exclusions, the monopolies and the rapacities of the past" (2: 145). But the conception of an economic dependence of the upper "ten thousand," or "civilization," upon a general exploitation is here qualified, offered, with the "if you will," almost as a mere concession to the Princess. Later in the novel, Hyacinth comes to espouse, if not an antithetical, then certainly a very different view. "He saw," we are told, "the immeasurable misery of the people, and yet he saw
all that had been, as it were, rescued and redeemed from it: the treasures, the felicities, the splendours, the successes of the world" (2: 217; my emphasis). In his letter to the Princess, he tries to balance the two views, at one point affirming both in a single sentence: having confessed that his European tour has provided ample evidence, and expanded his "sense" of the "want and toil and suffering . . . of the immense majority of the human race" (2: 145), he adds: "What has struck me is the great achievements of which man has been capable in spite of them--the splendid accumulations of the happier few, to which doubtless the miserable many have also in their degree contributed" (2: 145). The clause before the dash characterizes humanity's "want and toil and suffering" not as a foundation of but rather as a militating force against, its "great achievements," while the second part of the sentence leads a retreat from a full affirmation of this idea, conceding, in fact, its very opposite.

Yet, while, on the one hand, Hyacinth is often seen resisting the idea of a strict continuity between humanity's "successes" and its misery, his ultimate alienation from revolutionary politics is predicated precisely upon a belief in such continuity. He comes to believe that the "great achievements" of the world are in fact so directly dependent upon the "want and toil and suffering" of "the miserable many" that any attempt to
rectify the latter endangers the former. In his letter from Venice, Hyacinth tells the Princess that he is unable to understand exactly what those like her and Poupin, "in the general rectification . . . propose to do" with these "great achievements" (2: 145) "'Dear Princess,'" he writes, "'there are things I shall be too sorry to see you touch, even you with your hands divine.'" But even more he fears the great Hoffendahl:

"You know how extraordinary I think our Hoffendahl--to speak only of him; but if there's one thing that's more clear about him than another, it's that he wouldn't have the least feeling for this incomparable abominable old Venice. He would cut up the ceilings of the Veronese into strips, so that every one might have a little piece. I don't want every one to have a little piece of anything and I've a great horror of that kind of invidious jealousy which is at the bottom of the idea of a redistribution." (2: 146)

It is in such passages, insofar of course as they are seen as expressions of the author's own views, that one may find evidence of James's conservatism. Hyacinth's comments above reflect two of the cornerstones of nineteenth-century reactionary opposition to revolutionary or even reformist political programmes: the notion of envy or jealousy as the driving motive behind revolutionary upheaval, or what Fredric Jameson in The Political Unconscious calls the "ideologeme" of ressentiment, and the identification of social organization with "culture." Commenting, for instance, on

^4 See ch. 4, particularly 200-02.
Matthew Arnold's fear of working-class agitation and the outbreak of violence and anarchy, Raymond Williams writes:

The organizing, and at times demonstrating, working class was not, on any showing, seeking to destroy society as such. It was seeking by such methods as were available to it, to change the particular ordering of society which then prevailed. Often, indeed, it sought only the remedy of some particular grievance. For Arnold to confuse the particular, temporary ordering of interests, which was indeed being threatened, with human society as such, is the confusion which elsewhere he so clearly analysed: the confusion between "machinery" and "purpose."

(Culture and Society 124)

This confusion between "machinery" and "purpose," between the "particular, temporary ordering of interests" and "society as such," which Williams identifies as a "stock notion or habit" of Arnold's class, also contributes to Hyacinth's vacillations and his ultimate defense of the status quo. For to feel himself "capable of fighting for" "the splendid accumulations of the happier few" entails, for Hyacinth, fighting on behalf of "the happier few" themselves and, therefore, for the preservation of "the despotisms, the cruelties, the exclusions, the monopolies and the rapacities" of past and present. Nowhere does he--or the novel, for that matter--entertain the possibility that one can "fight" to preserve the great cultural achievements of the privileged few while, at the same time, seeking to alleviate the "want and toil and suffering . . . of the immense majority." "Culture" is
pitted against "democracy" and "equality," and Hyacinth must choose between them:

He must either suffer with the people as he had suffered before, or he must apologise to others, as he sometimes came so near doing to himself, for the rich; inasmuch as the day was certainly near when these two mighty forces would come to a death-grapple" (1: 171).

For Marcuse, the way out of this antithesis between "culture" and "democracy," or what he calls a "free society," involves "a reconciliation," as he describes it in Eros and Civilization, "between the pleasure principle and reality principle" (193). Art itself, for Marcuse, must transcend itself and "become a factor in the reconstruction of nature and society, in the reconstruction of the polis, a political factor. Not political art, not politics as art, but art as the architecture of a free society" ("Art in the One-Dimensional Society" 65-66). Under current social arrangements, however, art has a negative social function, since, according to Marcuse, it is "in its very structure false, deceptive and self-defeating . . . indeed an illusion" (63). Giving pleasure by presenting "as being that which is not," art "provides substitute gratification in a miserable reality" (63). The corrupting element in art is "form," or in Marcuse's more sinister capitalized rendition, Form:

The great artist may capture all the pain, horror, all the sorrow and despair of reality--all this becomes beautiful, even gratifying by grace of the
artistic form itself. And it is only in this transfiguration that art keeps alive the pain and the horror and the despair, keeps them alive as beautiful, satisfying for eternity. Thus a catharsis, a purification really occurs in art which pacifies the fury of rebellion and indictment and which turns the negative into the affirmative. . . . In one way or another, in the setting of the lines, in the rhythm, in the smuggling in of transcending elements of beauty the artistic Form asserts itself and negates the negation. (63-4)

Marcuse describes here what Hyacinth seems to experience on the continent, from where he writes to the Princess that, in spite of a heightened sense of the suffering of mankind, he has "lost sight of the sacred cause" of the revolution (2: 144). While in Paris, Hyacinth feels "The great legend of the French Revolution," become "more real to him" (2: 141); yet, at the same time,

strangely, what was most present was not its turpitude and horror, but its magnificent energy, the spirit of creation that had been in it, not the spirit of destruction. That shadow was effaced by the modern fairness of fountain and statue, the stately perspective and composition. . . . (2: 141)

As in Marcuse, the agent of Hyacinth's placation is Form--"the stately perspective and composition"--which has the power to "efface" the horror, though, paradoxically, it is attended by a supposedly heightened sense and knowledge of history. Hyacinth repeatedly assures the Princess that Europe has extended his "horizon": "Observe how much historical information I have already absorbed" (2: 142), he boasts in his letter. But one should also observe the peculiar--and, possibly,
for some readers, disconcerting--aspect history assumes for Hyacinth at this stage of his political evolution. Among his observations on Venice, for example, there is the following:

The Venetian girl-face is wonderfully sweet and the effect is charming when its pale sad oval (they all look underfed) is framed in the old faded shawl. They have also the most engaging hair, which never has done curling, and they slip along together, in couples or threes, interlinked by the arms and never meeting one's eye--so that its geniality doesn't matter--dressed in thin cheap cotton gowns whose limp folds make the same delightful line that everything else in Italy makes. (2: 142)

By reducing "historical information" to colour, form, and "line," Hyacinth drains it of political and historical meaning, the subordination of which is even reflected in the sentence structure, where such information or "content" is bracketed within parentheses. In this manner, even poverty comes to appear picturesque, even beautiful--like "everything else in Italy."

Of course, how a reader may react to such passages in the novel may depend largely on his own political inclinations. Yet one need hardly be a radical to feel at such moments, no matter how appreciative one might be of James's artistry or receptive to many of the other aspects of the novel, a certain alienation from Hyacinth and an uneasiness with the author's own underlying or implied politics. I would expect that John Lucas speaks for many readers when he says that, in The Princess Casamassima,
the defense of the past is strikingly uneasy in tone; that things are found to be less of a bloody sell and life more of a lark seems to be simply demeaning, and I do not for a moment believe that Hyacinth is here being distanced from his creator (202).

What is to a great measure demeaned is history itself, that is, history understood, as Nietzsche puts it, as a complex "nexus of cause and effect" (23). Hyacinth's attitude toward the past resembles what Nietzsche calls "monumental history," the object of which "is to depict effects at the expense of the causes" (23). According to Nietzsche there is at times "no possible distinction between a 'monumental' past and mythical romance" (23). So, for Hyacinth, the French revolution becomes a "legend," and his "monumental" apprehension of the past transforms history into a museum of aesthetic monuments to be cherished and celebrated for their "design," "style," "beauty," and "glory," as in James's own boyhood impressions of the Louvre, where the multifarious "forms" of "style"

arched over us in the wonder of their endless golden riot and relief, figured and flourished in perpetual revolution, breaking into great high-hung circles and symmetries of squandered picture, opening into deep outward embrasures that threw off the rest of monumental Paris somehow as a told story, a sort of wrought effect or bold ambiguity for a vista, and yet held it there, at every point, as a vast bright gage, even at moments a felt adventure, of experience. This comes to saying that in those beginnings I felt myself most happily cross that

5 As John Goode puts it, "History becomes a matter of curios" (275).
bridge over to Style constituted by the wondrous Galerie d'Apollon, drawn out for me as a long but assured initiation and seeming to form with its supreme coved ceiling and inordinately shining parquet a prodigious tube or tunnel through which I inhaled little by little, that is again and again, a general sense of glory. The glory meant ever so many things at once, not only beauty and art and supreme design, but history and fame and power, the world in fine raised to the richest and noblest expression. The world there was at the same time, by an odd extension or intensification, the local present fact, to my small imagination, of the Second Empire, which was (for my notified consciousness) new and queer and perhaps even wrong, but on the spot so amply radiant and elegant that it took to itself, took under its protection with a splendour of insolence, the state and ancienry of the whole scene, profiting thus, to one's dim historic vision, confusedly though it might be, by the unparalleled luxury and variety of its heritage. (345-47)

But when such a "monumental method of surveying the past" as we find in both The Princess Casamassima and James's autobiography "dominate[s] the others . . . the past itself," Nietzsche warns, "suffers wrong. Whole tracts of it are forgotten and despised; they flow away like a dark unbroken river, with only a few gaily colored islands of fact rising above it" (23). Having, however, taken due note of Hyacinth's, as well as, possibly, James's own, "monumental," or what might better be called aesthetic, predilections, what I want to focus on is, rather, how the novel in fact conducts a critique of aesthetic "methods" of both historical understanding and political praxis.
As he dines alone on his first night at Medley, Hyacinth, we are told, has his glass filled by one of the Princess's servants "with a liquor that reminded him of some lines of Keats in the 'Ode to a Nightingale'" (2:5).6 Nothing further is said about the poem, and though the specific lines Hyacinth has in mind are not indicated, we can surmise that they are among those in the ode's first three stanzas, in which drink figures as a central motif and a means of forgetting. The poet wishes "for a draught of vintage" and "a beaker full of the warm South," by drinking which he may "leave the world unseen" and--as he says in an apostrophe to the nightingale--''Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget /
What thou among the leaves hast never known, / The weariness, the fever, and the fret. . . ." The novel itself offers no further direct comment or elaboration upon Keats's ode--apart from two other indirect references to it. The first, preceding the actual naming of the poem by several chapters, occurs as Hyacinth gazes out the Muniments' window

at the dusky multitude of chimney-pots and the small black houses roofed with grimy tiles. The thick warm air of a London July floated beneath them, suffused with the everlasting uproar of the town, which

6 I have chosen to comment briefly on the novel's allusions to Keats's poem partly because, apart from Adeline Tintner's "Keats and James and The Princess Casamassima," they have received almost no critical attention.
appeared to have sunk into quietness but again became a mighty voice as soon as one listened for it; here and there, in poor windows, glimmered a turbid light, and high above, in a clearer smokeless zone, a sky still fair and luminous, a faint silver star looked down. The sky was the same that bent far away in the country over golden fields and purple hills and gardens where nightingales sang; but from this point of view everything that covered the earth was ugly and sordid and seemed to express or to represent the weariness of toil. (1: 243)

There is here not only the nightingale of Keats's poem, but also an echo, in "weariness," of the third line in stanza three. The figuring in the above passage of the relationship between freedom and necessity suggests an interesting structural tension: while the sky functions as an overarching, unifying constant or brace between the pastoral country and the sordid city, the "golden fields and purple hills and gardens" of the former, the haunt of the nightingale, lie, from where Hyacinth stands amid the latter, out of sight. All that Hyacinth can see is precisely that from which Keats's nightingale represents an escape and forgetting. The realms of freedom and necessity are thus connected, bound by the same sky, but invisible to each other.

Figured here as an opposition between city and country, the dichotomy of freedom and necessity recurs in a different guise in the third allusion to Keats's poem: as Hyacinth ruminates upon his decision to accept the Princess's invitation to stay at Medley beyond Monday, he considers that
The cup of an exquisite experience--a week in that enchanted palace, a week of such immunity from Lomax Place and old Crook as he had never dreamed of--was at his lips; it was purple with the wine of romance, of reality, of civilization, and he couldn't push it aside without drinking. (2: 41)

It is now not the country that offers flight from urban industrial toil and sordidness but "civilization." This word here obviously does not encompass, as it often does, a multifaceted but integrated social aggregate, as when, for example, we refer to "Egyptian civilization," but denotes rather a sphere of activity that constitutes, for Hyacinth, a deliverance from--but also, remembering Keats's poem, a forgetting of--the realm of necessity. Such a meaning reflects the dominant conception of "civilization" in the late nineteenth century as, according to Raymond Williams, a distinct, autonomous sphere, "a received state" rather than an ongoing "process," standing in opposition to "a new battery of forces," including "materialism, commercialism, democracy, socialism" (Marxism and Literature, 15). It is synonymous with the term "culture," which is commonly used in the nineteenth century to denote "a process of 'inner' or 'spiritual' as distinct from 'external' development" (Marxism and Literature 14), offering, as such, an alternative to or withdrawal from mere "external development," that is, from politics and history.

Such a withdrawal of course represents the very antithesis of Marcuse's conception of art as a "factor"
in the reconstruction of society and the polis, as "the only weak link that today connects the present with hope for the future" ("Art in the One-Dimensional Society" 54). Marcuse, following in Friedrich Schiller's footsteps, prescribes art not as a means for personal escape from historical and social necessity but as the very ground for social transformation and emancipation, an echo of Schiller's exhortation to "follow the path of aesthetics, since it is through Beauty that we arrive at Freedom" (27). Terry Eagleton has suggested that "The whole radical aesthetic tradition from Coleridge to Herbert Marcuse"--which includes, I might add, Williams and Eagleton himself--"lamenting the inorganic, mechanistic nature of industrial capitalism, draws sustenance from" Schiller's "prophetic denunciation" of fragmented, rationalized, and alienated capitalist society (Ideology of the Aesthetic 118), though one should also keep in mind Bernard Yack's warning that while Schiller may appear to some twentieth-century intellectuals to be the prophet of their social discontent and the "father of the concept of alienation" . . . there is nothing particularly new or significant in [his] critique of modern fragmentation. The criticisms of modern self-contradiction and fragmentation were commonplaces of German writing and rhetoric at the time, as was the praise of Greek wholeness. The claim that Schiller is the "father" of the modern concept of alienation implies that his arguments in some way beget later concepts and feelings of alienation. But, in the end, all that can be maintained is the trivial assertion that Schiller, like many modern intellectuals before and after him,
was disturbed by the fragmentation of the modern individual." (158)

The "originality and significance of Schiller’s critique of modern culture lies," according to Yack, in his being "the first to analyze the phenomenon of fragmentation and alienation in the light cast by the left Kantian perspective on human freedom and nature," a perspective from which "the fragmentary character of modern culture appears to be the obstacle to the realization of human freedom in the external world, rather than just a source of the limited accomplishment of modern individuals" (158-59).’ Schiller’s conception of modern society is encapsulated perhaps most succinctly and ardently in the following well-known passage from The Aesthetic Education of Man (1795), published, incidentally, almost three quarters of a century before Marx’s Das Kapital (1867):

As soon as enlarged experience and more precise speculation made necessary a sharper division of the sciences on the one hand, and on the other, the more intricate machinery of States made necessary a more rigorous dissociation of ranks and occupations, the essential bond of human nature was torn apart, and a ruinous conflict set its harmonious powers at variance. The intuitive and the speculative understanding took up hostile attitudes upon their respective fields, whose boundaries they now began to guard with jealousy and distrust, and by confining our activity to a single sphere we have handed ourselves over to a master who is not infrequently inclined to end up by suppressing the rest of our capacities. . . . That zoophyte character of the Greek States, where every individual enjoyed an independent life and, when need arose, could become a whole in himself, now

See also Vicky Rippere’s Schiller and Alienation.
gave place to an ingenious piece of machinery, in
which out of the botching together of a vast number
of lifeless parts a collective mechanical life
results. State and Church, law and customs, were now
torn asunder; enjoyment was separated from labour,
means from ends, effort from reward. Eternally
chained to only one single little fragment of the
whole, Man himself grew to be only a fragment; with
the monotonous noise of the wheel he drives
everlastingly in his ears, he never develops the
harmony of his being, and instead of imprinting
humanity upon his nature he becomes merely the
imprint of his occupation, of his science. But even
the meagre fragmentary association which still links
the individual members to the whole, does not depend
on forms which present themselves spontaneously (for
how could such an artificial and clandestine piece
of mechanism be entrusted to their freedom?), but is
assigned to them with scrupulous exactness by a
formula in which their free intelligence is
restricted. (39-40)

Here is a pre-Marxist diagnosis of "reification"—a
phenomenon of industrial capitalism whereby society is
fragmented, for the sake of efficiency and financial
profits, into specialized tasks and isolated individuals
alienated from each other, their labour, and society—a
diagnosis in which, as Eagleton has suggested, Marx's own
"critique of industrial capitalism is deeply rooted"
(Ideology of the Aesthetic 118).

It turns out that part of the problem for Hyacinth
with revolutionary political activism is that, whatever
its motives and promises for an emancipated future
society, it threatens the very same alienation and
subordination of the individual to a collective order and
utility that Schiller describes. We should remember that
what Howe, in his notion of "the heart-struggle between
beauty and necessity, " means by the latter term is specifically political necessity. He means a necessity that arises, in his words, from "the claims of the future," from "a vision of human fraternity in a world not yet made," from "the grim demands of the political vocation" (155). In short, surrounded by inequality, poverty, and misery, Hyacinth feels the necessity for social change and the pressures of a personal responsibility or duty to help bring about such change; but the political organization he joins in his attempt to fulfil this duty only manages to reproduce the structure of the social order it wishes to overthrow.

Much has been made of the shortcomings of James’s portrait of the "anarchists" and the lack of understanding of revolutionary politics that it reflects. John Lucas, for example, takes exception to Lionel Trilling’s assessment of the novel as "a brilliantly precise representation of social actuality" (The Liberal Imagination 74), describing it, rather, as "a superb bluff" (208). Lucas suggests that

It is because James wants to track down revolutionary motives to selfishness that he places anarchy at the centre of the revolutionary movements of the novel. For it is easy to see Anarchism as sudden, irrational and spiteful. Its effects are swift, spectacular or merely comic; and they can be effectively divorced from any considered ideology. Indeed, by choosing to identify the threat to the old order with such romantic or squalid irrationality James is refusing to take social revolution at all seriously. (216)
Several critics have argued, furthermore, that James's portrayal of anarchism and anarchists is inaccurate.\(^8\) Such criticism may, however, be somewhat off-target, for in fact James does not place anarchy at the centre of the novel's revolutionary movement. In the preface he writes that Hyacinth "has thrown himself into the more than 'shady' underworld of militant socialism" (1: xvii-xviii), and in the New York edition he removes all references to "nihilism" and "anarchism," which, in the earlier version of the novel, are, in any case, used only by Captain Sholto and Mr. Vetch. The latter's remark to Hyacinth that "'Any one can tell, to look at you, that you have become a nihilist'" (1977, 172) is changed in the New York edition to "'Any one can tell, to look at you, that you've taken some oath on bloody bones'" (1: 181), and his query about the Princess, "'Isn't she an anarchist--a nihilist?'" (1977, 363) is altered to "'Isn't she a conspiring socialist . . . ?'" (2: 99). Similarly, Captain Sholto's reference to the Princess's interest in "the lower orders, the rising democracy, the spread of nihilism, and all that" (1977, 188) becomes "the lower orders, the rising democracy, the spread of ideas and all that" (1: 203). Whatever James's ignorance about underground revolutionary activities, there can be

\(^{8}\) These include Lucas, Yvor Winters, George Woodcock, and John Goode.
little doubt, even apart from these minor revisions, that the movement Hyacinth joins is distinctly socialistic; it is the criticism and not the novel that has portrayed the revolutionaries as anarchists. Paul Muniment, for example, with his "dry statistical and scientific air" (2: 137), is quite clearly--whatever the qualities of caricature, one might complain, he possesses--a representative of scientific socialism. His fondness for prisons, moreover--"'We want to keep them standing,'" he says, "'and even to put up a few more; but the difference will be that we shall put the correct sort into them'" (1: 350)--would certainly disqualify him as an anarchist. The objection raised by, among many others, George Woodcock that James "did not in any way represent" the Anarchist movement "as it existed in the 1880's or at any other time" (223) is, therefore, a critical red herring.

In fact, given the history of the century following the publication of the novel, perhaps the most incisive political gesture of this notoriously politically naive novel is to have the political revolutionaries not display the "irrationality" that Lucas says is usually associated with Anarchism but rather reproduce the very rational and, more to the point, rationalized, bureaucratized, reified social organization denounced by Schiller and Marxists after him. On this count, one might
indeed, like George Woodcock himself, be tempted to call
the novel "prophetic." According to Woodcock,

It is, in fact, his peculiar consciousness of the
direction of history that gives James his relevance
today, for in a sense we have seen the fulfilment of
all he dreaded. Even his conspirators, unreal as
representatives of the revolutionaries of his own
time, take an almost prophetic reality when we
compare them with the disciples of Lenin, whose iron
ruthlessness they share, and who emerged more than
thirty years after this book was written, to
shoulder the more humane revolutionaries out of the
path of history. Historically inexact, The Princess
Casamassima is as prophetically true as that widely
different, but in some respects closely similar,
book, Dostoevski's The Possessed. (229)

Hyacinth expresses astonishment at the manner in which
Hoffendahl's revolutionary movement is "organized" (2:
49): it has a "headquarters" (2: 54), and its members
take "a vow of blind obedience, as the Jesuit fathers did
to the head of their order" (2: 54). The "mightiness" of
the Jesuits is, moreover, "what people who felt like
Hyacinth and the Princess should go in for," a
"mightiness" that derived not just from the blind loyalty
of its members but also, and at least as crucially, from
"great administrators" (2: 54). Hoffendahl's
revolutionary organization duplicates, as John Carlos
Rowe points out, not only the "hierarchy" (169) of an
administered social order, but also its rationalization
and reification; thus Hyacinth
didn't pretend to say what good his little job might
do or what portée it might have; he hadn't the data
for appreciating it and simply took upon himself to
believe that at headquarters they knew what they
were about. The thing was to be part of a very large
humanity, in [Hoffendahl's] scheme, was classified and subdivided with a truly German thoroughness and altogether of course from the point of view of the revolution, as it might forward or obstruct it. (2: 54-55)

In such a scheme, no less than in that described by Schiller, the subject is displaced, or subsumed and instrumentalized, by the operations and objectives, the "machinery," of a collective, social rationality; so it is that, as a member of this organization, Hyacinth finds himself on a "new footing of utility in the world" (2: 56) that requires the subordination of his personal will and desire to the dictates of the movement: "'I didn't promise to believe,'" he tells Poupin; "'I promised to obey'" (2: 371).

Hyacinth's persistent and much-commented-upon self-division can be located here, between what he characterizes as "belief" and "obedience." The nature of this self-division, as the varied criticism of the novel illustrates, depends largely on the terms by which its poles are denominated. Whatever terms one chooses—whether hereditary, socio-political, historical, psychological, linguistic—Hyacinth himself identifies the problem as one of "inconsistency." For Hyacinth, "consistency," along with "sincerity," "earnestness," and "genuineness," words which crop up insistently in the novel, designates a quality that he admires and envies in others and frets incessantly that he lacks himself. The
Poupins have it: they are "perpetually consistent with themselves and, what is more, with each other" (1: 106). The Poupins’ friends in Paris have it too, Hyacinth expects during his visit there, consequently feeling "a compunction . . . for having neglected to make the acquaintance of earnest people" (2: 125). And of course Paul Muniment has it--has what Hyacinth characterizes as "a sublime consistency" (2: 136). Finally, Lady Aurora has an irrefutable "genuineness," implied in terms that do not include the words consistency or sincerity but that go some way in suggesting what these words designate. Mr. Vetch says of Lady Aurora, "'There's a woman whose theories and conduct do square!'" (2: 100): sincerity, in other words, requires that one's actions and behaviour express or embody one's opinions, or what Hyacinth would call "beliefs," that conduct be a revelation of mind, that the outer man "square" with the inner. Such a yearning, I would like to suggest, should be seen in light of a long-standing European revolutionary idealist tradition of political thought on the relationship between the private and public realms--between individual and collectivity, citizen and state--a tradition overlapping with that radical aesthetic tradition identified by Eagleton and dating back, again, to Friedrich Schiller.
The kind of "squaring" that Mr. Vetch, and Hyacinth especially, admire resembles what Schiller calls "grace."

Schiller delineates "three sorts of relation of man with himself":

Either man enforces silence upon the exigencies of his sensuous nature, to govern himself conformably with the superior exigencies of his reasonable nature; or else, on the contrary, he subjects the reasonable portion of his being to the sensuous part, reducing himself thus to obey only the impulses which the necessity of nature imprints upon him, as well as upon the other phenomena; or lastly, harmony is established between the impulses of the one and the laws of the other, and man is in perfect accord with himself. ("On Grace and Dignity" 202)

"Grace" is the outward, visible manifestation of this last harmonious relation, whereby a person's actions, conduct, and even physical features are "an expression of the soul" (196). For Schiller, modern man is subject to and divided by the "impulsions" of two separate domains: those of "duty," as dictated by reason and moral law, and those of "inclination," as dictated by his sensuous nature. But, "as in practical morals," Schiller says, "it is not the conformity of the acts with the law, but only the conformity of the sentiments with duty, which is important" (205). In other words, it little matters that one's actions satisfy reason and the moral law if they run counter to one's inclinations; it is inclination, not conduct, that must be brought into line with duty, for "the destiny of man is not to accomplish isolated moral acts, but to be a moral being. That which is prescribed
to him does not consist of virtues, but of virtue, and virtue is not anything else than an inclination for duty" (206).

Schiller’s concept of "grace" is not, however, confined to a private, inner reconciliation between sensuous nature and reason but extends to the socio-political sphere. At one point, Schiller attempts to clarify the concept of "grace" by means of the following analogy:

Let us suppose a monarchical state administered in such a way that, although all goes on according to the will of one person, each citizen could persuade himself that he governs and obeys only his own inclination, we should call that government a liberal government. (200-201)

What here serves as a metaphor becomes in On The Aesthetic Education of Man the main object of analysis. In The Aesthetic Education, Schiller prescribes a dynamic between citizen and state in the social sphere that is similar to that represented by "grace" in the private. He posits that each subject carries in disposition and determination a pure ideal man within himself, with whose unalterable unity it is the great task of his existence, throughout all his vicissitudes, to harmonize. This pure human being, who may be recognized more or less distinctly in every person, is represented by the State, the objective and, so to say, canonical form in which the diversity of persons endeavours to unite itself. (31)

Hyacinth’s valorization of what he calls "consistency" reflects exactly this longing to overcome the cleavage between inclination and duty, belief and
obedience, between individual and collectivity, and citizen and state, and merge them into a single whole.  

In the novel, this cleavage is figured most insistently in the motif of theatricality. In Hyacinth's very first appearance in the novel as an adult, for example, there is (as we see him through Millicent Henning's eyes)

something jaunty and romantic, almost theatrical, in his whole little person. Miss Henning was not acquainted with any member of the dramatic profession, but she supposed vaguely that that was the way an actor would look in private life. (1: 79).

And in case there might be some question about the connotations of this trope, its very next recurrence just a few pages on spells them out:

He was on the point of replying that he didn't care for fancy costumes, he wished to go through life in his own character; but he checked himself with the reflexion that this was exactly what he was apparently destined not to do. His own character? He was to cover that up as carefully as possible; he was to go through life in a mask, in a borrowed mantle; he was to be every day and every hour an actor. (1: 86)

Hyacinth's theatricality is not a mark of craftiness or of a propensity for dissimulation, but reflects rather the disjunction between the private and social self. As Lionel Trilling suggests in Sincerity and Authenticity, the trope of theatricality is widespread in discussions of the social self, enlisted by a broad range of writers

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For a discussion of the conflict in The Princess Casamassima between the private and public spheres from an ethical perspective, see Martha Naussbaum, "Perception and Revolution: The Princess Casamassima and the Political Imagination."
and theorists dating back to Plato. In his discussion of Rameau's Nephew by Diderot, Trilling describes a "theory of society" that closely resembles Hyacinth's own attitudes:

The theory of society advanced by the Nephew rests on his recognition of the systematic separation of the individual from his actual self. The social being, he tells us, is a mere histrionic representation—every man takes one or another "position" as the choreography of society directs. (30-31)

But if the nephew embraces and even relishes the "pantomime" social existence demands, Hyacinth is profoundly distressed by it because it smacks of "inauthenticity"—of the sort of insubstantial being reflected in the Princess's characterization of Captain Sholto: "whatever feeling poor Sholto might have, four-fifths of it were purely theatrical. He was not in the least a natural quiet person, and only a hundred affectations and attitudes . . . " (2: 83).

But if the theatrical motif in The Princess Casamassima "lays bare," as Trilling says of Rameau's Nephew, "the principle of insincerity upon which society is based and demonstrates the loss of personal integrity and dignity that the impersonations of social existence entail" (Sincerity and Authenticity 31), it presupposes a condition of being opposed and superior to that of "impersonation" or the "histrionic," a condition based on what Theodor Adorno describes as a "conception of an
ultimate and absolute substantiality of the self" (Minima Moralia 152-53). Adorno writes:

Among the concepts to which, after the dissolution of its religious and the formalization of its autonomous norms, bourgeois morality has shrunk, that of genuineness ranks highest. If nothing else can be bindingly required of man, then at the least he should be wholly and entirely what he is. (Minima Moralia 152)

According to Adorno, the leading exponents of this "Enlightenment" "bourgeois morality," including such figures as Ibsen, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche, "have made the ideal of authenticity a centrepiece of metaphysics" (152), "authenticity" representing a mode of being and behaviour opposed and superior to "impersonation." For Trilling, "authenticity" "implies the downward movement through all the cultural superstructures to some place where all movement ends, and begins" (Sincerity and Authenticity 12). For Hyacinth, by contrast, "consistency" demands the expression and realization of the authentic self within the public sphere, that is to say, the merging of self with superstructure, exactly the ideal of social unity we find in Schiller, which involves the bringing into line of "inclination" and "duty" or the law, so as to eliminate the latter's compulsive, coercive externality and thus effect a wholeness of self and collectivity, citizen and state, the private and public spheres--indeed, to make it impossible even to distinguish two distinct spheres. As Bernard Yack puts
it, from such a perspective, "man’s freedom remains purely potential until it is realized in some objective form in the external world" (177).

Schiller argues, as is well known, that the quintessence of such unity--of the seemingly inconceivable reconciliation of inclination and duty, of individual freedom and moral and social law--is the aesthetic, which in Schiller is confusingly both a means and an end, a propaedeutic for the individual as well as a model and goal for society. As Eagleton explains:

The law subjects the individual will to the general, thus securing the general conditions of possibility of social life; it sets subject over against subject, curbing their inclinations, but cannot act as a dynamic source of social harmony and pleasurable intercourse. (Ideology of the Aesthetic 110)

Such a harmony is established by the aesthetic. Schiller writes:

The dynamic state can only make society possible, by curbing Nature through Nature; the ethical state can only make it (morally) necessary, by subjecting the individual to the general will; the aesthetic State alone can make it actual, since it carries out the will of the whole through the nature of the individual. Though need may drive Man into society, and Reason implant social principles in him, Beauty alone can confer on him a social character. (Aesthetic Education 137-38)

One might, then, ask, what would happen if the collective, social realm were assimilated to the aesthetic, if political life itself were aestheticized?--a question that The Princess Casamassima would seem to ask, for although the aesthetic provides for Hyacinth, as
we have seen, a retreat from history and social
necessity, it is at the same time called upon to mend the
rift between history and individual praxis. If in modern
capitalist society the aesthetic, or culture, is, as
Raymond Williams and other Marxists argue, opposed to
politics, then one way a synthesis might be attempted is
by aestheticizing politics itself--practising a "politics
as art" that Marcuse warns against. Such a politics is
revealed, for instance, in Hyacinth’s ruminations on
revolutionary praxis, which are fraught with aesthetic
rhetoric. A key function of revolution becomes, for
Hyacinth, to confer an aesthetic unity and teleology upon
politics and history, fairly accurately reflecting, one
might argue, past, and even present (though what might be
called "vulgar"), currents of Marxist ideology and
historiography, in which history, or rather History, has
the unity and teleology of a work of art and revolution
itself reconciles freedom and necessity, requiring, on
the one hand, the conscious, enlightened, and wilful or
voluntary participation of the proletariat, yet its
advent remaining, on the other, ineluctable and
autotelic, the proletariat thus becoming, as historical
agent--as indeed the historical agent--History’s
counterpart to the artistic "genius." Musing upon "the
flood of democracy . . . rising over the world" (2: 262),
Hyacinth considers that
In spite of the example Eustache Poupin gave him of the reconciliation of disparities, he was afraid the democracy wouldn’t care for perfect bindings or for the finer sorts of conversation. The Princess gave up these things in proportion as she advanced in the direction she had so audaciously chosen; and if the Princess could give them up it would take very transcendent natures to stick to them. At the same time there was joy and exultation in the thought of surrendering one’s self to the wash of the wave, of being carried higher on the sun-touched crests of billows than one could ever be by a dry lonely effort of one’s own. That vision could deepen to ecstasy; make it indifferent if one’s ultimate fate, in such a heaving sea, were not almost certainly to be submerged in bottomless depths or dashed to pieces on immovable rocks. (2: 263)  

Hyacinth’s aestheticization of political revolution entails an exchange of aesthetic goods, "perfect bindings" and "finer sorts of conversation" traded for the "wave" and "wild billows" of "democracy." Meanwhile, if, as in Italy, his aestheticism entails an effacement, a forgetting, of social or political necessity and history, his aestheticization of revolution, conversely, strives for self-effacement or self-amnesia--the need to forget oneself in the "surrender" to political necessity and merging with history. This political aestheticism is in a way the mirror-image of his other aestheticism, resolving the usual conflicts between subject and object, private and public, individual freedom and political necessity by means of self-effacement through immersion in the collective body, thus reversing the aesthetic

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10 In the first edition, Hyacinth’s "joy and exultation" is in "the thought of surrendering one’s self to the wave of revolt" (1977, 478).
impulse, as Adorno describes it, of grasping "the general truth or shape of things in self-immersion" ("Lyric Poetry and Society" 63; my emphasis). The surrender to revolution, moreover, promises a greater aesthetic, affective payoff than the lowly efforts of a solitary subject could ever hope to achieve.

While collectivity in the novel, particularly Hoffendahl's political organization, is delineated in a language of instrumentalization, such language is countervailed by an aesthetic rhetoric--specifically with metaphors drawn from the realm of music and theatre--that resists and attempts to overcome the reification of such organization. Reflecting the ambiguity and ambivalence of the term "instrumental" itself, in the first edition of the novel, Hyacinth characterizes Hoffendahl as a "Maestro" (1977, 332) who "had exactly the same mastery" of the multifarious elements of the organization he headed

> that a great musician--that the Princess herself--had of the keyboard of the piano; he treated all things, persons, institutions, ideas, as so many notes in his great symphonic revolt. The day would come when Hyacinth, far down in the treble, would feel himself touched by the little finger of the composer, would become audible (with a small, sharp crack) for a second. (1977, 334)

This figure, of course, repairs the fragmentation and alienation of administrated social organization, conferring upon the latter the harmony and unity of art or an object of aesthetic judgement and thereby
dissolving the barriers between individual and general will. This sort of voluntary subordination to the law produces, as is the hallmark of the aesthetic, feelings of plenitude and bliss rather than alienation and pain, as we see, for instance, in Hyacinth's elation the night he takes his fateful oath. For the New York edition, James changed "revolt" to "massacre" in the above passage and revised the final sentence to read, "The day would come when--far down in the treble--one would feel one's self touched by the little finger of the composer . . . " (2: 56; my emphasis), presumably in order to increase and emphasize Hyacinth's distance, as he recounts to the Princess his meeting with Hoffendahl, from precisely those feelings of revolutionary passion that inspired his oath; for, in the scene that leads to his meeting with Hoffendahl, moments before he mounts a chair at the "Sun and Moon" to stake publicly his life on the cause, Hyacinth finds himself, we are told, "in a state of inward exaltation" (1: 355):

... a breath of popular passion had warmed his cheek and his heart, and he seemed to see, immensely magnified, the monstrosity of the great ulcers and sores of London--the sick, eternal misery crying out the darkness in vain, confronted with granaries and treasure-houses and places of delight where shameless satiety kept guard. In such a mood as this he felt that there was no need to consider, to reason. . . . (1: 355-56)

As in Italy, Hyacinth's "inward exaltation" at the "Sun and Moon" is produced by the sight of sordidness and
misery, a sight of which the appeal is affective rather than rational. Here, however, in contrast to Italy, the impulse is to plunge into, rather than withdraw from, political action, for Hyacinth's exaltation attends an imaginary vision, amidst the sordidness, of proletarian unity and solidarity:

If he had a definite wish while he stood there it was that that exalted deluded company [in the "Sun and Moon"] should pour itself forth with Muniment at its head and surge through the sleeping world and gather the myriad miserable out of their slums and burrows, should roll into the selfish squares and lift a tremendous hungry voice and awaken the gorged indifferent to a terror that would bring them down. (1: 358)

But, as the next sentence indicates, "this grand treat gave no sign of coming off." In fact, Hyacinth's inner, exalted vision contrasts sharply with the external circumstances of the scene: around him there is only a "loud, contradictory, vain, unpractical babble" (355), and when he goes back into the "Sun and Moon," he sees that "the meeting was breaking up in disorder, or at all events in confusion, and that certainly no organised attempt at the rescue of any number of victims would take place that night" (1: 358). A few moments later, "the club-room had emptied itself, yet clearly not to be reconstituted outside in a revolutionary procession" (1: 360). It is what is above described as a "wish" for such solidarity, for such "reconstitution," especially in the face of disorder and disunity, that prompts Hyacinth's
oath: this oath functions as a wish-fulfilling gesture intended to externalize and realize his inner vision of collective solidarity. This wish can take on a religious fervour, as when Hyacinth longs "to stand face to face with the sublime Hoffendahl" (elsewhere described as "the very incarnation of a strong plan" (2: 47)) and "to hear his voice and touch his mutilated hand" (1: 355)--an image that, if it casts Hoffendahl as Jesus Christ, then, aptly, puts Hyacinth in the role of Thomas. Hyacinth also tells the Princess that his meeting with Hoffendahl

"... has made this difference, that I’ve now a far other sense from any I had before of the reality, the solidity, of what’s being prepared. I was hanging about outside, on the steps of the temple, among the loafers and the gossips, but now I’ve been in the innermost sanctuary. Yes, I’ve seen the holy of holies." (2: 48)

If, however, the aesthetic/religious rhetoric serves to heal or "transfigure" Hoffendahl’s political, collective body, then a related strand of tropes intertwined with the novel’s political rhetoric would only seem to undermine the very "reality" and "solidity," as well as the penetrating vision or "insider" knowledge, that Hyacinth extols and desires--namely, the tropes of theatricality. For example, Hyacinth explains that "‘When once the machinery is complete there will be a great rehearsal. That rehearsal is what they want me for’" (2: 49). "Rehearsal" here figures not only whatever terrorist action Hyacinth has promised to participate in as a pre-
enactment or prepresentation, as a kind of rough run-through, of the revolution to come, but also the theatricality, or illusoriness, of the terrorist activity itself; for, however "solid" or "immense" Hoffendahl's "underworld" is (2: 48-9), it does not have either the solidity or magnitude to carry out a revolution. As Hyacinth notes only moments before his vision of a revolutionary procession through the streets of London, their game must be now to frighten society, and frighten it effectually; to make it believe that the swindled classes were at last fairly in league--had really grasped the idea that, closely combined, they would be irresistible. They were not in league and they hadn't in their totality grasped any idea at all--Muniment was not slow to make that equally plain. All the same society was scareable, and every great scare was a gain for the people. (1: 356)

The "game" then is to fool "society" into believing that a vast seditious underworld exists and that revolution is imminent. John Carlos Rowe suggests that one of the reasons for James's indictment of the novel's "anarchist" movement is its employing "terrorism solely for the sake of preserving the illusion of its revolutionary solidarity," for "such fictive solidarity is merely another version of the lies sustained by the subtle arts of ideological mystification" (186).

Lionel Trilling has suggested that the rhetoric of theatricality is so tightly woven into our everyday language of social behaviour that it is virtually impossible to speak about such behaviour without recourse
to "histrionic" metaphors, which inevitably impart connotations of the fictive and illusory. Trilling writes:

We nowadays say "role" without taking thought of its original histrionic meaning: "in my professional role," "in my paternal, or maternal, role," even "in my masculine, or feminine, role." But the old histrionic meaning is present whether or not we let ourselves be aware of it, and it brings with it the idea that somewhere under all the roles there is Me, that poor old ultimate actuality, who, when all the roles have been played, would like to murmur "Off, off, you lendings!" and settle down with his own original actual self. (Sincerity and Authenticity 9-10)

Hence, the very language of social existence, pervaded as it is by theatrical metaphors and associations--as in such words as act, perform, represent, character, scene--would seem to stand between the private and social self, insistently linking the latter to mere role-playing. In the novel, even Poupin, who puts as much stock in sincerity as anyone--"'If I'm not serious, I'm nothing,'" he declares (1: 345)--and repudiates Hyacinth's commitment if it is not "genuine", telling him, "'We want you to be sincere--that's the great thing'" (2: 371), is tainted by such rhetoric, which reduces him to a kind of stock character of the political "stage":

He owed his position at the "Sun and Moon" to the brilliancy with which he represented the political exile, the magnanimous immaculate citizen wrenched out of bed at dead of night, torn from his hearthstone, his loved ones and his profession and hurried across the frontier with only the coat on his back. Poupin had performed in this character now for many years, but had never lost the bloom of the outraged proscrip, and the passionate pictures he
had often drawn of the bitterness of exile were moving even to those who knew with what success he had set up his household gods in Lisson Grove. (1: 344)

It would seem in such a passage as though it is the very nature of social existence to condemn one to play-acting and mimicry even when one is at one's most sincere. 11

Hyacinth's musings on revolution occasion a noteworthy conjunction between the rhetoric of theatricality and that of sincerity:

When the gathering at the "Sun and Moon" was at its best and its temper seemed really an earnest of what was the basis of all its calculations--that the people was only a sleeping lion, already breathing shorter and beginning to stretch its limbs and stiffen its claws--at these hours, some of them thrilling enough, Hyacinth waited for the voice that should allot him the particular part he was to play. His ambition was to play it with brilliancy. . . . (1: 342-43)

It is important to note that "earnest" here is used as a noun and should not be confused with the adjective that means "serious," "zealous," or "sincere," for the two, adjective and noun, are not cognate. The adjective derives from Old English eorneste, while the noun James uses above is, according to the OED, of obscure etymology, though presumed to derive ultimately from Latin arrha, and denotes "money, or a sum of money, paid as an instalment, especially for the purpose of securing

11 Even the revolution itself, it is worth noting, is in the 1886 edition envisioned by Hyacinth as "a grand spectacle" (1977, 293), which becomes in the New York edition, as quoted earlier, a "grand treat" (1: 358).
a bargain or contract." In its figurative sense, therefore, an earnest denotes a token, foretaste, guarantee, or pledge. But despite independent etymologies, there is a resemblance and an interpenetration of meaning, as there inevitably must be when two separate sets of meanings coincide in a single vocable. Thus, if earnest (i.e. eorneste) on the one hand denotes a synchronic "congruence between feeling and avowal," to borrow Trilling's definition of sincerity (Sincerity and Authenticity 7), an earnest (i.e. arrha) gives such congruence a diachronic or temporal structure, like Hyacinth's own pledge, which itself is intended as a sign or proof of his earnestness. If earnestness is the external manifestation or outward sign of a concurrent inner condition, an earnest functions as a current indication, sign, or guarantee of a future condition.

In her analysis of the promise in The Princess Casamassima, which she describes as "arguably the novel's pivotal event" (333, n.9), Deborah Esch proposes that what she calls Hyacinth's "metanoia" (323) (his "change of heart") "signals a demystification of any understanding of the promise as primarily an inward, spiritual commitment; it is more properly, as [J.L.] Austin and others have shown, a sheer utterance, an act of speech that operates strictly by convention" (324). In Austin's words, "when I say 'I promise,' . . . I have not
merely announced my intention, but, by using this formula (performing this ritual), I have bound myself to others" (Austin 99). In Austin's speech-act theory, such a "ritual" utterance falls, as is well known, under the class of "performatives." As such, Esch suggests, Hyacinth's oath or promise can be regarded as "the novel's crucial performance" (333, n.9) and, therefore, I would suggest, as one of the central figures of the disjunction between the private and social self, between political praxis and history. As Esch points out, "What James calls Hyacinth's 'deep dilemma,' his 'impossible stand,' is a function of the intervention of time into the configuration of promise and redemption in the narrative" (323). While Hyacinth's aestheticizing, teleological vision of revolution gives history an exhilarating (momentary) appearance of coherence and unity, history itself, or what James in the preface calls "destiny," unfolds instead an "inward revolution" that disrupts this unity (I: xvii; my emphasis). Hyacinth's oath has a twofold purpose: to connect individual and collectivity, offering Hyacinth a means by which to overcome his social alienation, precisely, as Austin puts it, by "binding" him to others, as well as to connect present and future.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{12} Esch describes the promise as "a linguistic structure that prescribes the future in the grammar of the present" (318).
But both of these functions, as it turns out, are frustrated. Taylor Stoehr has observed that *The Princess Casamassima* is in a tradition of novels that "are about little else but theories of realism." Stoehr writes that the "divided and suicidal heroes" of these novels are all victims of the difference between language and reality, and that the fatal division of thought and action in each of them is the result of one or another mistaken view of the nature of art, of the relations of life and literature, in short, some false notion of mimesis. (97)

Esch, however, argues that Hyacinth's self-division "is not a matter of 'the difference between' language and what is external to it, but of a 'fatal division' within language that cannot be accounted for by any notion of mimesis--namely, the aporia between the performative and the constative or cognitive functions" (335 n. 18). As Esch explains:

The performative function of language operative in Hyacinth's promise is heterogeneous to its cognitive, constative dimension. Since the former is indispensable to any thought of politics as the realm of the law, of contract, this warrants a provisional redefining of the text's ethico-political dimension in linguistic rather than strictly subjective terms; the novel's "politics" thus become readable as the referential mise-en-scène of a fact of language. That is to say, because of the pivotal position of the promise--Hyacinth's "social contract"--the text's politics resist a reading grounded solely in a mimetic model of language; the illocutionary function cannot be assimilated to the referential or representational. It is no longer simply a question of a self-divided subject (or of any "serious mistake" he may have committed), but of the irreducible self-alterity of language at its origin--or at least at a moment always prior to any particular speech act. (326)
The whole private/public problematic in the novel can therefore be seen as the socio-political extension of this linguistic heterogeneity between constative and performative and thus as a function of what Lacan names the Symbolic order, a psychoanalytic concept combining the linguistic and political. From a Lacanian perspective, performative speech may be seen as merely the most explicit instance of the operations of the Symbolic order, of which what we call politics are simply the particular power relations and local social configurations. Hence, in his attempt to merge with the other, Hyacinth only comes face to face with Lacan’s Other, that is, the socio-linguistic system or law that precedes and constitutes the subject, providing consciousness its voice, but only as that of the ventriloquist’s dummy, this Other lying both outside and inside the subject, remaining irredeemably alien even while determining him. Thus, the synthesis between self and collectivity, psychology and politics, and praxis and history that Hyacinth strives for in his submission and pledge to the "Maestro" results not in a harmonious "symphonic revolt," but rather in Hyacinth’s "playing," as James elaborates the musical metaphor in the preface, "a part that . . . is out of all tune with his passion" (1: xviii).
In *Minima Moralia* Theodor Adorno characterizes the relationship between subject and society as follows:

Not only is the self entwined in society; it owes society its existence in the most literal sense. All its content comes from society, or at any rate from its relation to the object. It grows richer the more freely it develops and reflects this relation, while it is limited, impoverished and reduced by the separation and hardening that it lays claim to as an origin. Attempts like Kierkegaard's, in which the individual seeks abundance by retreat within himself, did not by accident end up in the sacrifice of the individual and in the same abstraction that he denounced in the systems of idealism. Genuineness is nothing other than a defiant and obstinate insistence on the monadological form which social oppression imposes on man. Anything that does not wish to wither should rather take on itself the stigma of the inauthentic. For it lives on the mimetic heritage. The human is indissolubly linked with imitation: a human being only becomes human at all by imitating other human beings. (154)

Adorno's critique of "genuineness" entails a cheerful embracing of both other and Other that celebrates impersonation, imitation, and "inconsistency," and thus stands in opposition to Hyacinth's mournful and tragic Platonic, anti-mimetic puritanism.

Something resembling Adorno's attitude, however, can be seen in the Princess, to whom the "stigma" of imitation and inauthenticity seems to cling even more tenaciously and damningly than it does to Hyacinth. The Princess is, if anything, even more "histrionic" than Hyacinth, her characterization pervaded by a rhetoric of theatricality that extends back to her initial
incarnation in *Roderick Hudson*, where Madame Grandoni says of Christina Light that "'she likes drama, likes theatricals . . . histrionics, for their own sweet sake'" (272); "'I think she's an actress,'" says Madame Grandoni, "'but she believes in her part while she's playing it'" (146)—in contrast to Hyacinth, who "obeys" but does "believe." The same rhetoric surrounds the "Christina" of the later novel, now playing, under a different name, the role of a princess, also a role which she will in turn abandon in order to take up yet another. But a propensity and talent for acting, while giving her a powerful allure, are precisely what place the Princess's "sincerity" and "seriousness"—or "genuineness"—in doubt. Her final appearance in *Roderick Hudson* climaxes in her attempt to convince Rowland Mallet of her earnestness: "'I was sincere!'" she tells him repeatedly (363). Yet in both novels, the Princess cannot, try though she might, dispel—in the mind of the reader no less than in that of the other characters—the suspicion of insincerity. From the moment that Hyacinth first hears from Captain Sholto at the theatre about the Princess's political theories, he surmises that "Of course the lady in the box couldn't be sincere" (1: 200), while the lady in the box herself recognizes that she is the sort of woman "'to whom every sort of bad faith is sure to be imputed'" (1: 216). Indeed, feeling that
"'Nothing's more annoying than when one's sincerity is doubted'" (2: 246), she is ready to participate in the most dangerous revolutionary activity in order less, it seems, to improve the conditions of the poor than to demonstrate her earnestness: "'Try me, test me,'" she implores Muniment, who, from the moment he hears Hyacinth's description of the Princess--promptly inquiring, "'is she Genuine?'" (1: 230)--never doubts her insincerity; "'ask me to put my hand to something,'" the Princess says to Muniment, "'to prove that I'm as deeply in earnest as those who have already given proof. . . . I'm not trifling,'" (2: 228) she says, yet she gives the impression of being a "capricious trifler" (1: 200) till the very end. Whatever she may do in the name of the revolution, whatever vow or action or risk she may take, is condemned to bear the stigma of insincerity and imitation.

The Princess's imitative or mimetic behaviour may, however, be seen in the light of a broad (though by no means uniform) tradition of thought on the concept of mimesis at odds with that tradition which seems to undergird Hyacinth's, as well as the revolutionaries', exaltation of sincerity and genuineness. This anti-Platonic philosophical tradition is generally denoted as "Aristotelian" and confers a much higher cognitive status
upon the faculty and practice of mimesis. It holds that mimesis is not only, as Aristotle has it, an "instinct" of human nature, but also a crucial means of cognition and understanding. It seems to be indispensable for any cognitive contact between subject and object: if the mimetic "moment," Adorno argues in *Negative Dialectics*, "were extinguished altogether, it would be flatly incomprehensible that a subject can know an object; the unleashed rationality would be irrational" (45). As he remarks in his *Aesthetic Theory*, "Ratio devoid of mimesis negates itself" (455). Mimesis, according to the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, written with Max Horkheimer, "imitates the environment" (187), or involves, in Michael Cahn's translation, "a process of making oneself similar to the environment" (Cahn 31). Such a process entails an "identification with," as opposed to an "identification of," an object, a "non-

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13 See Mihai Spariosu's introduction in *Mimesis in Contemporary Theory*, vol. 1, for a brief summary of the history and problematics of the theory of mimesis, as well as the rest of the essays in the collection for discussions on specific issues of mimetic theory.

14 See Aristotle's *Poetics*, section IV.

15 The concept of mimesis in Adorno is as dense and difficult as most other ideas in his writing, especially in being, as Jameson suggests, a cryptically "foundational concept never defined nor argued but always alluded to, by name, as though it has preexisted all the texts" (*Late Marxism* 64). I am indebted to Jameson's and Michael Cahn's commentaries on this concept in, respectively, *Late Marxism* and "Subversive Mimesis: Theodor W. Adorno and the Modern Impasse of Critique," as well as to Ross Posnock's *The Trial of Curiosity* for bringing to my attention the relevance of Adorno's notion of mimesis in the work of Henry James in the first place.
repressive" behaviour that does not disfigure its object, as any "identification of" does. As Cahn explains:

On the one hand imitation might designate (the production of) a thinglike copy, but, on the other hand, it might also refer to the activity of a subject which models itself according to a given prototype. For Adorno, the first meaning of the term is a restricted and even a bad manifestation of imitation, and only the second is properly called mimesis. He requires that the subject assume an involved attitude in the process of imitation as an adaptive "identifying with" which is "guided by the logic (Logik) of the object." The early Greek meaning of mimēsis, "impersonating by dancing or acting" plays an important role in Adorno’s understanding of the concept. . . . (Cahn 34)

Shortening the distance, if not entirely overcoming the opposition, between subject and object, "the assimilation of the self to an other" (453) that mimesis entails—or, again, as Cahn translates, the "making oneself similar to an Other" (34; Cahn's emphasis)—both eschews a solid substance of the self, or self-identity, and resists dissolving or shrinking the object into the categories of rational "identity-thinking." Against such thought, Adorno, says Cahn,

directs his theory of the non-identical (das Nichtidentische), which aims, in the last analysis, at the possibility of an "identification with" the object. . . . Instead of radicalizing the nominalist conception of arbitrariness Adorno at first sight seems, on the contrary, to push to an extreme the idealist bias towards realism, but he avoids the realist tendency to idolize identifying conceptualization. Accordingly, he confers upon language and conceptualization a central role in the process of cognition which is supposed "to bring object and expression close to each other up to a point of non-difference" (Sache und Ausdruck bis zur Indifferenz einander zu nähern). This contiguity between object and expression, directed against the
separation from the object, is informed by his conception of mimesis. (38; Cahn's emphasis)

A central thesis of Ross Posnock's *The Trial of Curiosity* is that the writings of both William and Henry James reveal conceptions of mimesis and non-identity-thinking similar to those of Adorno. That mimesis is a central concern in *The Princess Casamassima*--although Posnock gives little attention to this particular work--is clear; less clear, however, is the epistemological and political status that the novel grants it.

The Princess's imitative behaviour has both a cognitive and a political function. On Hyacinth's first visit to her home on South Street, the Princess declares her mission to him and his role in it: "she wanted to know the people, and know them intimately--the toilers and strugglers and sufferers" (1: 290); but she adds: "'What could really be in worse taste than for me to carry into such an undertaking a pretension of greater delicacy and finer manners? If I must do that . . . it's simpler to leave them alone" (1: 290). Hence, in her effort to "know" the "strugglers and sufferers," she adopts, or imitates, their tastes and manners, transforming herself into, or, more precisely, taking on the appearance of, one of "the people". She makes an effort to dress and behave and furnish her home as they do, because "it was plainly her theory that the right way to acquaint one's self with the sensations of the
wretched was to suffer the anguish of exasperated taste" 
(2: 182). So it happens that, while, as Hyacinth 
obERVes, no one could "resemble" Millicent Henning less 
than the Princess, the latter "distinguished personage 
exhibited," nevertheless, "certain coincidences with the 
shop-girl" (2: 176). 

Millicent Bell has interpreted the novel's main 
characters as representatives of the dominant novelistic 
genres of the late nineteenth century. Thus, "Hyacinth 
personalizes James's own romanticism and his 
impressionist-aesthetic tendency as a novelist," while 
"Rosy, who has often been recognized as a Dickensian 
character in the mold of Jenny Wren, has a realist 
artist's ability to bring the true social world into her 
sequestered imagination" (169). "The naturalist attitude 
toward life," meanwhile, "the notetaking and classifying 
method of apprehending and representing it, is more fully 
represented in the novel by the Princess herself" (170). 
The Princess, Bell writes, "is, even more specifically, 
the naturalist novelist. It is in this role that she is 
to be observed when she explores the slums and tries to 
meet its inhabitants in her quest for 'copy'" (170). 
"When she assumes," Bell observes, 
a lowered social identity for herself and moves to 
Madeira Crescent, she does so with the descriptive 
thoroughness whose consistency of detail signifies a 
naturalist art. . . . There seems no question that 
James means us to see her as a literary researcher 
on the French model. . . . (172)
Suggestive as Bell's allegory is, however, there is in fact some "question" about the Princess's "naturalist art," for the Princess's procedure, for one thing, far exceeds and departs from the naturalist method. In his manifesto "On the Experimental Novel," Emile Zola, it will be recalled, based his project for a naturalist novel on Claude Bernard's Introduction à l'Étude de la Médecine Expérimentale. Zola wanted to apply "scientific investigation" and "experimental reasoning" (10)--the "scientific rigor" (6) of chemistry, physics, and medicine--to novel-writing. Thus, he emphasized "the impersonal character of the method" (25), which would be based on disinterested and objective observation of social phenomena. Hyacinth does, it is true, remark at one point that the Princess "pretended to be sounding in a scientific spirit--that of the social philosopher, the student and critic of manners--the depths of the British Philistia" (2: 177). But the Princess does more than observe. While both the social scientist and naturalist novelist, especially as Zola perceives them, maintain an impersonal detachment and distance from their object of knowledge, the Princess, in her attempt to understand the "British Philistia," "assumes," as Bell herself puts it,

16 Perhaps the most extensive, though not always convincing, discussion of the connections between The Princess Casamassima and naturalism can be found in Lyall H. Powers, Henry James and the Naturalist Movement.
"a lowered social identity for herself," imitating and emulating, as the scientist would not, her object of knowledge in a manner that reduces objective distance. Indeed, the Princess’s mimesis represents a kind of understanding that, according to Adorno, is antithetical to the "identifying" rationalism of the scientist and the naturalist novelist. According to Adorno, the ascendancy of rationalism under "enlightenment" culture confines mimesis to the realm of "art." As Cahn puts it:

The mimetic taboo, which effects the divorce of the two principles, mimesis and rationality, places the mimetic under "house-arrest" by confining it to art. Thereafter the manifestations of these two basic principles, which are best seen as modes of relating to the object, are deemed irreconcilable. Consequently the dialectic of mimesis and rationality breaks apart and surfaces as two distinct realms: instrumental or governing rationality on the one hand, and art on the other. (45)

The two realms also evince distinct epistemologies, the two "principles" achieving distinct forms of knowledge. As Adorno explains in Aesthetic Theory:

Discursive knowledge, Kant argued, had no business trying to chart the inner domain of things. This does not apply to art. Works of art represent a class of objects the truth of which can only be imagined as the truth of an inner domain. And imitation is the royal road that leads into this inner domain. (183)

The Princess’s mimetic behaviour, its own goal being the sort of charting of an "inner domain" that often goes by the name of empathy, can be seen as a journey down this road.
Stripped of their Marxist rhetoric, Adorno's claims for art are fairly familiar ones, evident in what might be called more traditional, mainstream, or "bourgeois" aesthetic theories. His defense of mimesis can be regarded as an extension of a well-established philosophical tradition. In an essay on Sartre entitled "Understanding the Committed Writer," Rhiannon Goldthorpe explains Sartre's use of the concept of *compréhension*:

This is a technical term that Sartre derived from a long-standing intellectual tradition, which reappears insistently from his earliest to his latest writing, but which is absent from the vocabulary of *Qu’est-ce que la littérature*? It refers to one of two apparently conflicting traditions in German thought of which Sartre was well aware: that of *Erklären* (explication) and that of *Verstehen* (comprehension). The former adopts methods of psychological or social analysis and explanation based on mechanistic or biological models; the latter seeks to understand social, psychological, and historical phenomena in terms of distinctly human intentions and meanings, grasped as synthetic wholes and apprehended either through empathy and intuition or by rational reconstruction. It draws a sharp distinction between methods appropriate to the natural sciences and those that should be applied in the human sciences. (148)

*Compréhension* thus relies on an aesthetic-mimetic mode of apprehension, on "a descriptive rather than explanatory psychology as a crucial basis for interpretation," that enables "us to grasp the other as subject rather than as object" (Goldthorpe, 150, 157). Entailing "an imaginative re-creation, through empathy, of the subject's situation and response," *compréhension*, Goldthorpe explains, is "a preconceptual faculty for grasping objects and relations..."
between objects as synthetic wholes. At this level the object and thought are one, and the implication is that the subject/object dichotomy is thereby resolved" (158).

Such a resolution, such a merging with the other, would of course have significant political implications: it might enable, in its achievement of a "synthetic whole," exactly the overcoming of the fragmentation and alienation of the collective realm for which Hyacinth longs. But while imitation is for Hyacinth the very antithesis and enemy of such wholeness, for the Princess it is the crucial means by which to achieve it. If, for Hyacinth, the mimetic only manifests the gulf between private and social existence, for the Princess, it offers deliverance from the private self and the confines of the monad by providing the self a bridge to the other. As she explains to Madame Grandoni:

"I try to occupy my life, my mind, to create interests, in the odious position in which I find myself; I endeavour to get out of myself, my small personal disappointments and troubles, by the aid of such poor faculties as I possess. There are things in the world more interesting after all, and I hope to succeed in giving my attention to them." (1: 303)

The Princess envies Lady Aurora, because, as she tells Paul Muniment,

"Better than any one I've ever met [Lady Aurora] has solved the problem--which if we are wise we all try to solve, don't we?--of getting out of herself. She has got out of herself more perfectly than any one I've ever known. She has merged herself in the passion of doing something for others." (2: 224)
The Princess’s political activism constitutes her own attempt to "get out of herself," an "effort that would make her forget her own affairs and comprehend the troubles and efforts of others" (1: 293). Against Paul Muniment’s insistence that people could never "really come out of their class," that "the stamp of one’s origin" is "ineffaceable and that the best thing one can do is to wear it and fight for it" (2: 278), social mimesis, for the Princess, provides the way to overcome the bounds of her class and see into the "inner domain" of her social others, "‘to understand,’" as Hyacinth describes her mission, "‘and enter into the misery of the people’" (2: 144), in order not only to "know," but to become one of--and one with--"the people."

The novel, however, keeps, from beginning to end, the success of her mission in doubt. Echoing Muniment’s scepticism, Hyacinth, for instance, observes that even in a Lady Aurora, with her "deep conscientiousness"--let alone in the capricious Princess--one saw the "mistakes and illusions" of the rich, who, though they "couldn’t consider poverty in the light of experience," could nevertheless convince themselves that "they had got hold of the sensations of the destitute when they hadn’t at all" (1: 316). And Madame Grandoni tells the Prince that if the Princess "becomes really poor it will be much more difficult for me to leave her. This is not poverty, and
not even a good imitation of it, as she would like it to be" (2: 315). There is a sense throughout the novel that, as Madame Grandoni's "even" suggests, an imitation—even a good one—is always in some way fundamentally different from, and inferior to, the original, and is therefore a dubious source of knowledge or compréhension. The nature of this crucial difference is revealed in those same passages describing the Princess's mimetic behaviour that I quoted above—though I did so elliptically. In her display, for example, of "certain coincidences with the shop-girl," the Princess stopped as Millicent had done to look into the windows of vulgar establishments and amused herself with picking out abominable objects she should like to possess; selecting them from a new point of view, that of a reduced fortune and the domestic arrangements of the "lower middle class," and deriving extreme diversion from the idea that she now belonged to that aggrieved body. She was in a state of light fresh sociable exhilaration which Hyacinth had hitherto not in the same degree seen in her, and before they reached Madeira Crescent it had become clear to him that her present phase was little more than a brilliant tour de force—which he could yet not imagine her keeping up long, for the simple reason that after the novelty and strangeness of the affair had passed away she wouldn't be able to endure the contact of so much that was common and ugly. For the moment, none the less, her discoveries in this line diverted her as all discoveries did, and she pretended to be sounding in a scientific spirit—that of the social philosopher, the student and critic of manners—the depths of the British Philistia. (2: 177)

What distinguishes imitation here and measures the distance between it and the original is the former's affective, or what may be called its aesthetic,
component: its ability to "divert" and "amuse" and "exhilarate," its appeal to "interest" and "fascination"; for, as the Princess confesses to Hyacinth, "she wanted to know the people, and know them intimately--the toilers and strugglers and sufferers--because," as the sentence continues, "she was convinced they were the most interesting portion of society" (1: 290; my emphasis). She "can't leave them alone," she says, because they "fascinate" her (1: 290). At the same time, however, the aesthetic masquerades as scientific knowledge, pretending to "sound" its object "in a scientific spirit." But, although the Princess may adopt a mimetic behaviour as a means of bringing subject and object closer together, the incongruity between, on the one hand, the elation and feelings of pleasure roused by her subjective perceptions, and, on the other, the "aggrieved body" and actual "common and ugly" condition of the source of her "light, fresh, sociable exhilaration," only underscores the extreme distance between subject and object. The explanation of the mystery that in Hyacinth's mind "is more than may be explained" of "Why the idea of these scenes of misery should have lighted up her face" (1: 298) lies precisely in this distance.

The Princess's "diversion" and delight in her "discoveries" manifest what Aristotle regarded as one of the fundamental features of imitation: its
pleasurability. So it is that, according to Aristotle, "Objects which in themselves we view with pain, we delight to contemplate when reproduced with minute fidelity: such as the forms of the most ignoble animals and of dead bodies" (Poetics, section IV). While for Aristotle, such pleasure is caused by the "learning or inferring" that attends the contemplation of a "likeness," for Kant, aesthetic pleasure is a component of cognition itself, "resulting from our being able to grasp nature and the unity in its division into genera and species that alone makes possible the empirical concepts by means of which we cognize nature in terms of particular laws" (27). But such aesthetic pleasure is also, for Kant, a consequence of freedom—a delight in the play of that freedom—and here lies the radical difference between the Princess's imitation and the object of her imitation. The fallacy of the utopian tradition deriving from Friedrich Schiller's political adaptation of Kant's theory of the aesthetic consists in a confusion of a precondition with an effect: that is, because freedom is a component of aesthetic pleasure, the aesthetic itself becomes the means to freedom. According to Schiller, "Beauty" has "precedence of Freedom," so that if political liberation is to be achieved, "we must" as Schiller says in what has probably become his most famous axiom, "follow the path of aesthetics, since it is
through Beauty that we arrive at Freedom” (27). But as The Princess Casamassima reminds us, the aesthetic itself is dependent on freedom, for it is precisely the Princess’s freedom—her freedom to choose her proletarian role, unlike Hyacinth and Muniment and the patrons of the "Sun and Moon," whose social class is ruled by necessity—to which her mimesis testifies. The aesthetic component of her social role as a member of "the people" marks the distance between herself and that "class," between subject and object; it marks a lack of "contact," a "contact" that indeed the Princess, according to Hyacinth—and it is difficult to imagine a reader disagreeing with him—"would not be able to endure." It is through the aesthetic that the Princess attempts to "get out of herself" and out of her class, to merge with the other; yet it is finally the aesthetic itself that renders both her compréhension and solidarity dubious or, in Marcuse’s and Hyacinth’s terms, illusory: she can never, as Muniment informs her, "live poor" because—not in spite, but in light, of her imitations and impersonations—she doesn’t "‘begin to know the meaning of it’" (2: 414). Having struck out on "the royal road" into an "inner domain," the Princess finds herself, at the end of that road, stranded in an external world of appearances and forms.
One question that arises is how does such a reading bear upon Millicent Bell's allegory of realism, and, more specifically, upon the epistemological status of realism, a genre of which, as John Rignall puts it, "the aim and achievement" is "the representation of the inner life," (12) the fostering, in other words, of empathic understanding? Indeed, even if we go no further than Bell, interpreting the main characters as allegorical representatives of novelistic modes, what we find in *The Princess Casamassima* is far from a partisan endorsement of realism. I have already touched upon what Bell calls Hyacinth's "impressionist-aestheticist tendency as a novelist" (169) and what she calls the Princess's "naturalism." But then there is Rosy Muniment, who, as Bell puts it, "has a realist artist's ability to bring the true social world into her sequestered imagination" (169). Bell's approving characterization of Rosy casts the latter as the exemplary Jamesian realist: "Her imaginative vision makes the most of slight hints and puts her into full possession of remote realities, as though she were that literary sensibility upon which nothing is lost to the end of producing a veritable account of reality" (170). But would it be far-fetched to suggest that Rosy might be seen as a travesty of the realist, or perhaps of the reader of realist novels, who, precisely in his earnest reading for knowledge--knowledge
of the poor, or the past, or foreign cultures, or what have you--may be, at bottom, just another "presumptuous trifler" to whom the likes of "Hyacinth" and other exotica are "served up," ultimately, as mere "entertainment" (1: 200)? Bell points out that "Rosy resembles James's invalid sister, Alice" (169); but isn't Rosy, in her insularity and lack of first-hand experience and knowledge, a caricature of Henry James himself--not only the James of the criticism that presents the novelist as a naive aesthete, frightened and sheltered from the melée of politics and history, but also the James of the preface to the novel, who confesses himself lacking a first-hand knowledge that is, however, compensated for by the "penetrating imagination" without which one is "a fool in the very presence of the revealed and assured" (1: xxiii)? Despite the preface's self-congratulatory rhetoric extolling such imagination, there seems something faintly absurd and grotesque about Rosy's "penetrating" imaginings, as well as about her ability to derive "entertainment" from "any one in the world, from the prime minister to the common hangman, who might give that young lady a sensation" (1: 253-54). There is, indeed, throughout the novel, a marked irony in the treatment of this character, as in the Princess's calling her "a perfect little femme du monde" (2: 199). In the end, even Hyacinth, the central consciousness and
conscience of the novel, declares flatly, "'I don't like the sister'" (2: 402)--and it is not clear whether or not the reader is supposed to find his own thoughts echoed in the Princess's reply, "'Ah neither do I!'" (2: 402).

But the more important question here is, what are the broader implications for realism of the novel's treatment of mimesis, which, of course, grounds any realistic practice? Indeed, the mimetic model, as Deborah Esch points out, is "presupposed in most attempts to come to terms with the politics" of The Princess Casamassima itself (335). Mark Seltzer, for example, suggests that it is in the "rigorous continuity established in James's novels between seeing, knowing, and exercising power that the politics of the Jamesian text appears" (57). Because of this "nexus" or "conjunction of seeing and power" (39, 49), The Princess Casamassima and the realistic novel in general become complicit in what Seltzer, echoing Foucault, identifies as the "panoptic technologies" emergent in the nineteenth century, which include not only the police, prisons, and other institutions of the law, but such discursive practices as investigative and sensationalistic journalism, sociology, and of course the naturalist and realist novel. It is in the context of such "everyday panopticism" (49) that Seltzer interprets what he calls the novel's "pervasive theatricality" (40), which, he says, "refers less to any 'dramatic analogy'
than to the reciprocal watchfulness that invests every relation in the novel. What the theatre scenes in the novel enact is an indifferent interchange of audience and play as objects of observation" (40). Merely "to be seen," Seltzer says, is "to be objectified, fixed, and imprisoned in the gaze of the other" (41): it "is already to be inscribed within a coercive power relation, to be placed under surveillance and under arrest" (42).

But it is just such a conjunction or continuity between seeing, knowing, and power, or the law, that The Princess Casamassima challenges, suggesting instead a radical disjunction and discontinuity. John Rignall observes in his Realist Fiction and the Strolling Spectator that "The metonymical practice of the realist seems to be based on the assumption that seeing is equivalent to knowing . . . and the figure of the spectator or observer bears witness to this epistemological premise" (2). But, in Seltzer’s reading of The Princess Casamassima, this equivalence between seeing and knowing is Seltzer’s premise, not the novel’s. The novel is, I would argue, a perfect example of just one of those "realist" texts that, as Rignall puts it, "themselves challenge the equation of seeing and knowing on which they appear to be predicated" (3); James’s novel conducts a critique of the mimetic model that informs Seltzer’s reading. What Fredric Jameson describes as "the
ideal of theatrical representation," which "organizes Jamesian point of view" (Political Unconscious 231), rests upon a distance between actor and role that is not easily or securely traversed by mere "seeing." What both Jameson and Seltzer ignore is that this distance or divide and the artificiality, fiction, and illusion that springs out of it, constitute theatrical representation and bear directly upon the interpretive strategies enlisted by the "spectator."

This, it should go without saying, is not to claim that such discontinuities in mimetic and aesthetic practices strip such practices of political consequences and ramifications. But in The Princess Casamassima, such ramifications appear opaque, tangled, and often contradictory. Ruminating, for instance, upon the Princess's revolutionary make-believe, Hyacinth asks himself whether she were seriously entangled, were being really exploited by plausible outlaws, predatory adventurers who counted on her getting frightened at a given moment and offering hush-money to be allowed to slip out---out of a complicity which they themselves of course would never have taken seriously; or were merely coquettling with paper schemes, giving herself cheap sensations, discussing preliminaries that could have no second stage. It would have been easy for him to smile at her impression that she was "in it," and to conclude that even the cleverest women fail to know when they are futile, had not the vibration remained which had been imparted to his nerves two years before and of which he had spoken to his hostess at Medley---the sense, vividly kindled and never quenched, that the forces secretly arrayed against the present social order were pervasive and universal, in the air one
breathed, in the ground one trod, in the hand of an acquaintance that one might touch or the eye of a stranger that might rest a moment on one's own. They were above, below, within, without, in every contact and combination of life; and it was no disproof of them to say it was too odd they should lurk in a particular improbable form. To lurk in improbable forms was precisely their strength, and they would doubtless have still queerer features to show than this of the Princess's being a genuine participant even when she most flattered herself she was. (2: 275-76)

The Princess's political role-playing thus rests on a contradiction: it is "genuine" and "ingenuine" at the same time. It is at once mere "coquetting" for the sake of "cheap sensations" and "complicity"; and though it is a complicity that even the "predatory adventurers" who most exploit and benefit from it deny, and merely an illusion (or delusion) that allows the Princess to "flatter" herself as "a genuine participant," it is complicity, and she, "a genuine participant" nonetheless. An analogous paradox may, moreover, be seen in the fate of The Princess Casamassima itself: for here is a work almost universally criticized for representing, or "imitating," inaccurately and unconvincingly, people and activities and worlds of which it is, even according to the writer's own qualified admission, plainly ignorant, yet to which political events succeeding its publication have, retrospectively and regardless of his knowledge or lack of it, given the "proper semblance" (1: xxii) which the writer confesses in his preface he was striving for, a retrospective vindication that often goes by the name
prophecy. So it is that *The Princess Casamassima* can be regarded even by one of its most severe detractors as, at the same time, "historically inexact" but "prophetically true."
Fetishism in The Spoils of Poynton

The Spoils of Poynton is not one of Henry James's most celebrated or widely-read novels, but the critical commentary it has elicited has been as heated and contentious as that surrounding any of his other works. According to David Lodge, in his introduction to the Penguin edition, The Spoils of Poynton "has followed a very similar course to that of The Turn of the Screw, for similar reasons" (6). Chief among these reasons is of course what James fans describe as ambiguity and detractors as mere confusion. For Lodge, the interpretive conflicts, dilemmas, and impasses the novel raises can be explained by the fact "that the impossibility of arriving at a single, simple version of the 'truth' about any human action or experience is, in the broadest sense, what the fiction is about" (6). Edmond L. Volpe, on the other hand, suggests that in the seventeenth chapter, "the novel falls apart," and the "last six chapters are confused and inconclusive," manifesting a "loss of artistic authority" (602). Similarly, A.W. Bellringer observes that "If there is a line in good literature between complexity and self-contradiction, the possibility is that James's treatment of his material here has overstepped that line" (The Spoils of Poynton" 185).
For all these critics, the problematic ambiguities, be they faults or virtues, lie within the novel itself. But while the novel is, to be sure, rife with ambiguities and contradictions, the most nettlesome interpretive conflicts arise from its relation to its principal paratexts--namely, James’s notebooks and his preface to the New York edition of the novel. The record James left in his notebooks of the genesis and development of *The Spoils of Poynton* is more extensive than that of any of his other works. But, as Lodge points out, such a resource can be "a double-edged tool for interpreting the story" (4), for the notebook entries and preface seem inconsistent with the novel itself and therefore raise more questions than they answer. For one thing, the subject that served as the novel’s "germ" or inspiration--namely, "the situation of the mother deposed, by the ugly English custom," from her home (*Notebooks* 79)--does not occupy a prominent position in the final product. Here, the mother is a crass egoist whose character and behaviour tend to militate against any sympathy for her "situation." Moreover, very little is said directly about "the ugly English custom" of which she is the victim, and indeed the novel’s sympathies seem to be more with the beneficiary of this custom, the son, Owen Gereth, who seems to be victimized by his mother as well as his wife-to-be. Second, and perhaps more
troublesomely, the character of Fleda Vetch strikes many readers as someone vastly different from the "poetic" and "heroic" figure the notebooks and preface describe.

But were these discrepancies the only ones, there would be no problem at all, for one could very easily argue that as James worked on the novel, he departed further and further from his original intentions, so that the differences between the novel and the notebooks present us not with contradictions but simply the trajectory of a work's progress. It wouldn't be the first time that a writer's "final intentions" differed radically from his original ones. Indeed, James himself, in the preface to the novel, points out that an artist's "effort" is

ever the sum, for the most part, of so many lapses and compromises, simplifications and surrenders. Which is the work in which he hasn't surrendered, under dire difficulty, the best thing he meant to have kept? In which indeed, before the dreadful done, doesn't he ask himself what has become of the thing all for the sweet sake of which it was to proceed to that extremity? (xi)

Such an explanation of changed intentions, however, is invalidated--and the confusion compounded--by the preface. For while the preface was written after the novel, it nevertheless seems to echo and support some of

\[17\] For discussion and speculation on the composition and evolution of *The Spoils of Poynton*, see Nina Baym, "Fleda Vetch and the plot of *The Spoils of Poynton*," Emily K. Izsak, "The Composition of *The Spoils of Poynton*," and S.P. Rosenbaum, "Henry James and Creativity: "The Logic of the Particular Case.'"
James's more bemusing remarks, specifically regarding Fleda, in the notebooks. The Fleda of the preface bears no closer resemblance to the character in the novel--at least as she is perceived by those Lodge calls the "anti-Fleda party" (6) -- than does the Fleda adumbrated in the notebooks. In fact, the preface and notebooks, written over a dozen years apart, accord far better with each other than either one does with the novel. The critical debate resulting from the discrepancies between the novel and James's own commentary on it is, as Lodge observes, "a classic instance of a general theoretical question about the bearing of authorial intention on interpretation" (6). It is particularly interesting, therefore, to observe how the novel itself explores--intentionally or not--the same questions about interpretation and intentionality that the critical commentary on it has generated.

*The Spoils of Poynton* concerns a conflict over possession of some furniture: it is, James says in the preface, "a story of cabinets and chairs and tables" (xiii). These objects have been amassed and arranged in large measure by Mrs. Adela Gereth, to whose sole custody they have devolved since the death of her husband. Her custody, however, is temporary: in conformity with the late Mr. Gereth's legal will and the aforementioned "ugly English custom" of primogeniture, all these objects and
the house that they furnish and adorn are to pass to the Gereths’ son, Owen, upon his marriage. What generates the conflict that sets the novel in motion, however, is not so much the injustice of this ugly custom, but rather that Owen decides to marry a woman with philistine sensibilities who, in Mrs. Gereth’s opinion, can have no appreciation for the objects of which she is to come into possession. The novel might seem less concerned with the villany of patriarchal primogeniture than of bad taste.

Early in the novel, Fleda notes how little vulgar avidity had to do with [Mrs. Gereth’s] rigour. It was not the crude love of possession; it was the need to be faithful to a trust and loyal to an idea. The idea was surely noble; it was that of the beauty Mrs. Gereth had so patiently and consummately wrought. (46)

Though there may be no reason to doubt Mrs. Gereth’s “loyalty” to a “noble” ideal of beauty, we should not be misled by the remark that she had no “crude love of possession.” The key word here is crude: a “crude love of possession” is what motivates the Brigstocks; Mrs. Gereth is driven by a desire for possession that is perhaps less “crude” because it is less mercenary, but that is no less fierce than that of the Brigstocks. While Poynton may distinguish itself by adhering to principles and values that rise above the crass materialism of Waterbath, the Brigstocks’ residence, its transcendence is constantly and forever threatened by such materialism. The word materialism is often—and here, appropriately—ambiguous.
On the one hand it denotes something resembling greed, a hunger for material wealth; on the other, a philosophical position opposed to "idealism" with which we associate such figures as Thomas Hobbes and Karl Marx. Walter Isle has written that "Mrs. Gereth's devotion, her religion, is purely materialistic" (86). Mrs. Gereth is indeed materialistic, but not in the sense that Walter Isle probably intends; while she recoils from the crass materialism (i.e. avarice) of the Brigstocks, she is a philosophical and, more to the point, political materialist, because she recognizes perhaps better than anyone in the novel--certainly better than Fleda--that, as Isle himself puts it, "the meaning of art is interwoven with the terms of its possession" (114). She knows, that is, that it is upon these terms alone that the "beauty" of Poynton depends. Should Poynton fall into such hands as the Brigstocks', its "beauty" will come undone. There is for Mrs. Gereth no strict separation between ideas or ideals and the material world of appearances. Fleda herself notices that Mrs. Gereth has a "strange, almost maniacal disposition to thrust in everywhere the question of 'things,' to read all behaviour in the light of some fancied relation to them" (24).

Given the prominence of this theme in the novel, it is surprising that the vast majority of critics of The
Spoils of Poynton has managed to avoid invoking Marx and the concept of commodity fetishism. Raymond Williams has said:

I was extraordinarily impressed re-reading The Spoils of Poynton, not merely by its treatment of money, but of money as conspicuous display. Although it is presented as a spectacle, there is absolutely no deception possible for the spectator. It's an incredibly powerful demonstration of a certain kind of fetishism. One might even say that after the first chapter of Capital, people should be sent to read The Spoils of Poynton. (Politics and Letters 258).

Only David Lodge and Paul B. Armstrong, it seems, have taken Raymond Williams's cue, remarking, respectively, that, in The Spoils of Poynton, "The cult of antiques might be described as a special case of what Marxist theory calls 'commodity fetishism' and 'reification'" (Lodge 15), and that,

Like Marx in his analysis of social structures at roughly the same period, James describes a situation in which the products of human activity—the things through which we express and objectify ourselves—control us more than we control them because they mediate in the service not of community but of power. (Armstrong 191)

When one, however, raises the issue of fetishism, one ought to keep in mind Jean Baudrillard's warning that the term is "dangerous" because "it turns against those who use it, and surreptitiously exposes their own magical thinking" (88, 90). Long before Baudrillard, Marcel Mauss urged for the rejection of the term, and W.G. Aston, in the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, points to a strong temptation "to consign the word to the
terminological scrap-heap as so blurred and disfigured by indiscriminate use that it is unserviceable and misleading" (895). Yet the term has not only survived; as Emily Apter points out, "within contemporary discourse a kind of fetishism of fetishism is in the air" (Feminizing the Fetish 3). Baudrillard, however, reminds us that

since the 18th century [the term fetishism] has conducted the whole repertoire of occidental Christian and humanist ideology, as orchestrated by colonists, ethnologists and missionaries... The metaphor of fetishism, wherever it appears, involves a fetishization of the conscious subject or of a human essence. . . . (88-89)

This "metaphor," says Baudrillard, "presupposes the existence, somewhere, of a non-alienated consciousness of an object in some 'true,' objective state" (89). At the same time, though, these pitfalls don't, you will notice, prevent Baudrillard himself from using the term, charging, as he does, theorists of fetishism of themselves "fetishizing" a human essence. Nor should the potential pitfalls prevent us from recognizing its pertinence to a novel like The Spoils of Poynton. What Baudrillard's warning should do is cause us to use the term fetishism with critical caution and, at the very least, be clear about what we mean by it.

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18 See also William Pietz, "Fetishism and Materialism," in Apter and Pietz, Fetishism as Cultural Discourse.
The word is generally traced back etymologically to the Latin root factitius, meaning "fabricated" or "artificial." While féétiche was introduced as a theoretical concept by Charles de Brosses in 1760 in his study of African religions, the Portuguese form of the word, feitico, was being used by Portuguese navigators and merchants at least as early as the fifteenth century to denote the native idols they encountered in West Africa. As an adjective, it means "made by art" or "skilfully contrived," while as a noun it refers to objects that are not only "made" or "fabricated" but also "bewitched," "enchanted," or "magical." After de Brosses, the word remained the domain of religious anthropology and philosophy for close to a century, until Marx introduced it to the language of economics (though it is worth noting that for the voyaging merchants of the fifteenth century, feitico designated not only the idols of West Africa, but also the trinkets these merchants used for barter or swore upon to honour commercial transactions with the Africans). Extending Ludwig Feuerbach's theory of religion, which holds that God and all idols of religious worship are aspects of man's mind,

19 On the etymology and history of fetishism, see Emily Apter, Feminizing the Fetish, chapters 1 and 2; Robert A. Nye, "The Medical Origins of Sexual Fetishism," and William Pietz, "Fetishism and Materialism: The Limits of Theory in Marx" in Apter and Pietz; and the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, v.5, pp.894-98.
of man's own nature projected upon the external world and worshipped as objective forces and beings, Marx wrote, in what is probably the most famous passage in all of *Capital*:

A commodity is ... a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour. This is the reason why the products of labour become commodities, social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses. In the same way the light from an object is perceived by us not as the subjective excitation of our optic nerve, but as the objective form of something outside the eye itself. But, in the act of seeing, there is at all events, an actual passage of light from one thing to another, from the external object to the eye. There is a physical relation between physical things. But it is different with commodities. There, the existence of the things qua commodities, and the value-relation between the products of labour which stamps them as commodities, have absolutely no connexion with their physical properties and with the material relations arising therefrom. There it is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. This I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities. (77)

The Marxian fetish, then, is any product of man's labour that detaches itself from and conceals its material and social provenance, masquerading as an autonomous entity
independent of the social totality that produces it. Moreover, insofar as it has any perceptible relation to its producers, this relation appears as the inverse of what it actually is, so that men's "own social action takes the form of the action of objects, which rule the producers instead of being ruled by them" (Capital 79).

Hence, Mrs. Gereth's valorization of Poynton and her own high standards of taste are fetishistic in the Marxian sense insofar as both Poynton and her taste are isolated from the socio-economic conditions that have made them possible. For example--and here of course the fetishism is that of James himself--nothing is said about the means that provide the Gereths with the vast amounts of leisure time required, first, to gain their knowledge about antiques, and second, to be able to wander about the globe shopping for them. In addition, both the Brigstocks and Gereths are evidently rich, but no details are given about the origins of either family's wealth. If, for example, the Gereths came from old money while Mr. Brigstock were a prosperous businessman presiding over the operations of an enterprise demanding most of his attention and energies, then this would go a long way toward explaining the differences in taste and style between Poynton and Waterbath. As it is, both the Brigstocks' and Gereths' "principle of taste" must remain "obscure" (6). In this instance, one would have to agree
with Terry Eagleton's charge that both James and his characters remain "finely oblivious" of the material, economic base of consciousness. As with Hyacinth in *The Princess Casamassima*, James has once again to resort to "nature" to account for the sophisticated and aristocratic tastes of a character from the lower classes: "The museums had done something for [Fleda]," we are told; "but nature had done more" (23). And the "marks" that only the "clever" and "those really informed" (13) know, Fleda knows "by direct inspiration" (138). Here is of all "principles of taste" the most "uncanny and obscure." To the extent that the novel invites us to judge a character on the basis of her tastes considered apart from their social and economic determinants, we may justly accuse it of fetishism in the Marxian sense. Similarly, to the extent that Mrs. Gereth herself makes such judgements in this fashion--and it certainly is to a very high extent--we may apply the term to her.

But, in crucial ways, Mrs. Gereth transgresses the limits of Marx's concept of commodity fetishism. For one thing, it is precisely commodity fetishism that she herself abhors in Waterbath and from which she wishes to save Poynton. If for Marx commodities detach themselves from their social origin and pretend to inhabit an autonomous realm of exchange-value, a "fantastic form of
relation between things" that conceals their relation to men, then Mrs. Gereth's things always--and, according to her, always must--declare their relation to her. They are "the record" of her life (22):

Everything was in the air--each history of each find, each circumstance of each capture. . . . the old golds and brasses, old ivories and bronzes, the fresh old tapestries and deep old damasks threw out a radiance in which the poor woman saw in solution all her old loves and patiences, all her old tricks and triumphs. (58)

If Marx's fetishist is alienated from his own creations, viewing the products of his own labour as independent entities with no connection to himself, then the "beauty" Mrs. Gereth admires and wishes to preserve is not inherent in the things themselves, but is rather "the beauty Mrs. Gereth had so patiently and consummately wrought" (46; emphasis added)--in other words, the beauty of her own labour. As the fruit of her labour, Poynton is, moreover, an expression and extension of her very self; it contains "an element of creation, of personality" (21-22). The Brigstocks, in Mrs. Gereth's estimation, lack the capacity to recognize this element. When, for example, Fleda suggests that Mona "'had set her heart upon . . . the house exactly as she had seen it,'" Mrs. Gereth protests: "'She never saw it at all, she never looked at it!'" (255). Mrs. Gereth fears that, remaining blind to Poynton's particularity or "personality" and certain "inevitably" to "mix up" its
contents with Waterbath's "abominations" (19), the Brigstocks threaten to convert Poynton's personal and unique aesthetic value into a general exchange-value. In effect, Mrs. Gereth manifests the anxieties of the archetypal post-Romantic artist.

The market's role in the rise of modernism in the late nineteenth century is by now, at least in Marxist literary history, virtually cliché. The shift from the patronage- to the market-system, the beginnings of which can be traced back to the age of Dryden, was by the late nineteenth century virtually complete, bringing the ever-expanding commercialization and rationalization that ordered the general economy to bear as fully upon the production and consumption of art. It is worth noting that James calls the "fierce appetite" for antiques "that most modern of our current passions" (ix). This passion is "modern" inasmuch as it is a reaction against modernity. As mass-production and mass-marketing techniques penetrated more and more sectors of manufacturing throughout the nineteenth century, the hand-crafted products "of the more labouring ages" (ix) rose in prestige and value, taking on the aura and cachet of "art." Social critics like John Ruskin, whose writings
are rife with diatribes against mass-produced goods and attendant celebrations of older, hand-crafted artifacts, played no minor role in promoting such attitudes. Merchandisers meanwhile absorbed and exploited these attitudes, creating, in the process, an army of mass-market Ruskins, writers who legislated tastes and fashions for the middle-classes in so-called ladies' magazines and such hugely popular and influential guidebooks as **Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management** (1861), by Isabella Beeton, **Hints on Household Taste in Furniture, Upholstery and other Details** (1868), by Charles Lock Eastlake, and, in America, **The Complete Home** (1879), by Julia McNair Wright.\textsuperscript{20} Hence, one of the chief emblems of the Brigstocks' philistinism is the "lady's magazine" that Mrs. Brigstock naively offers to Mrs. Gereth and which the latter, of course, sneers at. This cultural moment of an escalating commercialization and domestication of aestheticism that Mrs. Brigstock's lady's magazine symbolizes is also inscribed in the novel's original title (when it was conceived as a short story), "The House Beautiful," a common expression during this period and the title of, among other things, a chapter in Pater's **Marius the Epicurean**, a lecture by

\textsuperscript{20} Jonathan Freedman provides an excellent history and analysis of this genre of writing in **Professions of Taste**; see, in particular, chs. 1 and 2. For a more concise survey, see Asa Briggs, **Victorian Things**, ch. 6.
While both Waterbath and Poynton are solidly bourgeois homes, the conflict that erupts between them is a subtle kind of class competition the stakes of which are not just wealth, but cultural legitimacy. Pierre Bourdieu has described how the fiercest competition in matters of taste occurs between classes contiguous on the social hierarchy. Thus a lower or "dominated" class will constantly--and vainly--strive to imitate the class directly above it, while the higher or "dominant" class will scorn the vulgar pretensions of the class below and find ways to distance and distinguish itself from that class. Since we are not given any details about their income and finances, it is difficult to place the Gereths and Brigstocks on any economic hierarchy. Poynton, however, emits the musty scent of old money, of a quasi-aristocratic, fading leisure class, while Waterbath has

21 For more on the trope of the "House Beautiful" during this period, see Freedman, Professions of Taste pp. 105-110.

22 Bourdieu writes:
Explicit aesthetic choices are in fact often constituted in opposition to the choices of the groups closest in social space, with whom the competition is most direct and most immediate, and more precisely, no doubt, in relation to those choices most clearly marked by the intention (perceived as pretension) of marking distinction vis-à-vis lower groups. (Distinction 60)
the sheen of the *nouveaux riches*. If we go along with Edmund Wilson's suggestion that, although James may neglect the industrial background, "its effects are a part of his picture" (119), we can read Poynton and Waterbath as such "effects." Thus, Waterbath is filled with the kind of so-called "household art" (19)--the mass-produced bric-a-brac and "the cheap gimcracks" that Mrs. Gereth complains "'the world is full of . . . in this awful age’" (31)--that was vigorously targeted at a middle-class eager to emulate as it rose in economic power the aestheticism of the aristocracy. For the likes of Mrs. Gereth, however, such objects carry--like their owners, whose wealth bears the stigma of "trade"--the stench of the marketplace: Waterbath's contents are described as "nondescript conveniences," "souvenirs from some centennial or other Exhibition" (7), and the "sweepings of bazaars" (19). Although, in a few instances, the class associations of taste are made explicit, as when we are told, for example, in the novel's opening chapter that Mrs. Gereth was "the only person in the house incapable of wearing in her preparation the horrible stamp of the same exceptional smartness that would be conspicuous in a grocer's wife" (4), or that Waterbath is full of "gimcracks that might have been the keepsakes for maid-servants" (7), Mrs. Gereth does not wish to assert Poynton's superiority in
terms of economic class. Although she cannot escape the class-associations and -determinations of taste, she is actuated by the conviction that Poynton possesses a value that transcends economics and class altogether, that stands outside the realm of exchange-value that the "gimcracks" of Waterbath inhabit. This superiority, however, is nevertheless threatened by the Brigstocks who, Mrs. Gereth fears, would wish to "replace" the irreplaceable, nonexchangeable furnishings of Poynton "by pieces answerable to some vulgar notion of the 'handy'" (19). Should Poynton be subsumed by Waterbath, the former's noble objets d'art would themselves be reduced to mere commodities.

Mrs. Gereth's "noble ideal of beauty" has, of course, a long tradition in the West. But, as Raymond Williams has argued, this view of art as a "transcendent" or "superior reality" began to receive a "significant additional emphasis" during the Romantic period (Culture and Society 32, 44). For the English romantics, "great art" embodies a reality that escapes or rises above the vagaries and contingencies of history.\(^\text{23}\) Blake, for example, declares that the imagination, expressing itself in art, is "a Representation of what Eternally Exists, Really and Unchangeably" (Culture and Society 38). Similarly, in his first preface to the Lyrical Ballads,

\(^{23}\) See Culture and Society, Part I, ch. 2.
Wordsworth, invoking Aristotle, contends that "Poetry is the most philosophical of writing: . . . its object is truth, not individual and local, but general and operative" (15). For Wordsworth, the poet is "an upholder and preserver" who "binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time" (18). More importantly for us, a similar view of art can be found in James's own preface to The Spoils of Poynton, where he writes:

Life being all inclusion and confusion, and art being all discrimination and selection, the latter, in search of the hard latent value with which alone it is concerned, sniffs round the mass as instinctively and unerringly as a dog suspicious of some buried bone. The difference here, however, is that, while the dog desires his bone but to destroy it, the artist finds in his tiny nugget, washed free of awkward accretions and hammered into a sacred hardness, the very stuff for a clear affirmation, the happiest chance for the indestructible. (v-vi)

It is perhaps ironic that James goes on to describe art's "discriminations" and "affirmations" in financial terms--as "the sublime economy of art"--for the nineteenth century's "emphasis" upon art's ability to reveal a "superior reality" or discover and preserve what James calls "hard latent value" is largely a reaction to commerce and finance. By the time James was writing his preface, there existed a long and dominant tradition of defining art not only positively, as an expression of universal and eternal truths, but also negatively, that
is, in opposition to the values of the market: as
Williams puts it, during the Romantic period, "'culture'
became the normal antithesis to the market" (35). But the
market was not only the opposite of "culture" (at this
stage, a concept virtually indistinguishable from "art");
the market and commerce were perceived as inimical to
culture.

But while the superior truth or reality of art
received a new emphasis during the Romantic period, in
the years that followed, the nature of this truth and
reality underwent a significant change of its own. The
stirrings of such a change are evident in the Romantic
period, but it does not crystallize until the Victorian
age. Throughout most of the Christian era, the function
of art (or what we now call art) was to embody or imitate
the divine order and unity of the cosmos. As art began to
be wedded to geometry, science, and mathematics by such
empiricist-artists as Leonardo da Vinci and Albert Dürer
in the fifteenth century and to focus increasingly on
secular subjects throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth
centuries, the order it purported to represent or imitate
became to be generally designated as that of "nature."
"We regard," Dürer said, "a form and figure out of nature
with more pleasure than any other, though the thing
itself is not necessarily altogether better or worse"
(qtd in Gardner 611). This idea of art as an imitation or
representation of nature survives well into the nineteenth century, animating, for example, Wordsworth’s polemics in the preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*. Though Wordsworth, along with his fellow Romantics, introduces to poetry a heightened subjectivism and a greater emphasis on the poet’s "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (5), he insists that the poet must consider "man and nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting properties of nature" (17). Wordsworth chooses "Humble and rustic life" as the subject for his *Lyrical Ballads" because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature" (4).

While this view of art survives the Romantics, it begins to co-exist and even be eclipsed by a different and partly conflicting view. One of the earliest declarations of the new aesthetic ideology, which will come to prominence at the end of the century and continue to rein to this day, can be found in J.S. Mill’s essay "What is Poetry?", published in 1833. Mill uses the word "poetry" in its original Greek sense of *poiesis*: for Mill, "poetry" is not confined to verse but is a quality of great prose, music, sculpture, painting, and architecture (5). Mill writes: "To the mind, poetry is
either nothing, or it is the better part of all art whatever, and of real life too" (5). He continues:

Poetry, when it is really such, is truth; and fiction also, if it is good for anything, is truth: but they are different truths. The truth of poetry is to paint the human soul truly: the truth of fiction is to give a true picture of life. The two kinds of knowledge are different, and come by different ways, come mostly to different persons. Great poets are often proverbially ignorant of life. What they know has come by observation of themselves; they have found there one highly delicate, and sensitive, and refined specimen of human nature, on which the laws of human emotion are written in large characters, such as can be read off without much study: and other knowledge of mankind, such as comes to men of the world by outward experience, is not indispensable to them as poets. . . . (8-9)

By the time Mill is writing, the artist, or "poet," has moved indoors. The object of representation is no longer external nature, but inner and individual experience and emotion. The truth of the "human soul" is conveyed through the truthful expression of the poet's own self: "Poetry is feeling confessing itself to itself, in moments of solitude, and bodying itself forth in symbols which are the nearest possible representations of the feeling in the exact shape in which it exists in the poet's mind" (12). More than mere expression, poetry is the outward embodiment--feeling "bodying itself forth"--of the poet's inner being.

What we find in Mill is essentially the subjectivist "aestheticism" we generally associate with such fin de siècle figures as Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde. For
Wilde, of course, art and style--virtual synonyms--become the very substance of personality. In "The Soul of Man under Socialism," Wilde remarks that "It is a question whether we have ever seen the full expression of a personality, except on the imaginative plane of art. In action, we never have" (26). It is important to note, moreover, that such expression of personality is conceived as existing in opposition to, and isolation from, social and, more precisely, market dynamics. Wilde writes:

A work of art is the unique result of a unique temperament. Its beauty comes from the fact that the author is what he is. It has nothing to do with the fact that other people want what they want. Indeed, the moment that an artist takes notice of what other people want, and tries to supply the demand, he ceases to be an artist, and becomes a dull or an amusing craftsman, an honest or a dishonest tradesman. He has no further claim to be considered as an artist. Art is the most intense mode of Individualism that the world has known. I am inclined to say that it is the only real mode of Individualism that the world has known. (34)

For Mill, too, art is an isolated, solitary, even solipsistic, activity--"feeling confessing itself to itself":

A poet may write poetry with the intention of publishing it; he may write it even for the express purpose of being paid for it; that it should be poetry, being written under any such influence, is far less probable; not, however, impossible; but no otherwise possible than if he can succeed in excluding from his work every vestige of such lookings-forth into the outward and every-day world and can express his feelings exactly as he has felt them in solitude, or as he feels that he should feel them, though they were to remain for ever unuttered. But when he turns round and addresses himself to
another person; when the act of utterance is not itself the end, but a means to an end,—viz., by the feelings he himself expresses to work upon the feelings, or upon the belief, or the will of another,—when the expression of his emotions, or of his thoughts, tinged by his emotions, is tinged also by that purpose, by that desire of making an impression upon another mind, then it ceases to be poetry, and becomes eloquence. (13)

Ironically, however, as this individualist, subjectivist, anti-market aestheticism gained ascendancy during the nineteenth century, it played beautifully into the hands of businessmen and advertisers. Jonathan Freedman has argued that such nineteenth-century high-minded exponents of aestheticism as Ruskin, Morris, Pater, and Wilde "articulated and shaped a new social ethos, one that privileged the experience of beauty as a valuable experience in and of itself and served, wittingly or unwittingly, to celebrate the act of consumption" (107). Marketing strategies of the period, in both England and the U.S., encouraged the consumer to purchase household goods, as Freedman puts it, "the way a connoisseur purchases a fine oil" (110). Such commodities were acquired not merely for personal enjoyment but also for the social display of personal taste, serving as markers not just of wealth (what Veblen names "conspicuous consumption"), but also of "culture" (what Bourdieu calls "distinction"). In Freedman's words, culture "is no longer viewed as a process or an activity, an endeavour or a discipline; rather it is something
whose rules can be learned or, failing that, something that can be bought" (109). The consumerist ethic or ideology was thus promoted through a rhetoric of personal expression appropriated from highbrow, putatively anti-market aestheticism. For example, John Wanamaker, founder of one of America’s earliest department stores, commented:

> It is not only the person whose soul sings through his lips, or who puts his thought on canvas with a brush, who is an artist. The vehicle of expression does not matter. It is the spirit that counts. The woman who arranges a room charmingly, who dresses to express her personality, or serves dinner with grace; the man who binds a book in good taste, or turns out a chair that is a pleasure, or lays out a garden to give delight—all are artists in their way. So too is the store that lives up to its highest ideals. (qtd in Saisselin 44)

There is a fairly obvious affinity here between Wanamaker and such figures as Mill, Pater, and Wilde. By the time Wanamaker enters the scene, the idea that art is an expression of the individual "soul" and "personality" is a truism; he merely wants to extend the domain of art to include common commodity goods.

Paradoxically—and here lies one aspect of her fetishism—Mrs. Gereth both buys (literally) into Wanamaker’s program and repudiates it. After all, she hasn’t made the objects in Poynton; she has only purchased them. She is an exemplary artist-consumer of the sort Wanamaker describes, but she represses and disguises this fact by excluding and rescuing—-that is,
by fetishizing—a certain class of objects from the base realm of consumer goods and the market: "'Things' were of course the sum of the world; only, for Mrs. Gereth, the sum of the world was rare French furniture and oriental china" (24). Anything outside this "sum," then, is detritus or, in the language of the preface, "waste."

Such discriminations are of course familiar to all of us. They are in large measure and almost inescapably how we continue to distinguish our "art." In the Toronto Globe and Mail of November 5, 1993, for example, Rick Salutin devotes his column to the thesis "that there's something inimical between art and capitalism, especially today." "Much art," Salutin argues,

... is about expressing the power of unique moments, lives or objects. Art bodies forth, as Heidegger or someone said, the irreducible quality of what simply is. You could say, in pseudo-economic terms, that it's about inherent value as opposed to exchange value. This doesn't mean artists don't have to live in the real world or recognize economic need. Art has accommodated many -isms, including Catholicism. But it's only capitalism which directly attacks the irreducible quality of works of art, by trying to level them to a common denominator (money) so they can exchange in the marketplace. It's inevitable and healthy, I'd say, that artists resist--not to deny the market exists, but to contest its domineering nature. (C2)

Salutin's ideals and apprehensions are typical of the post-Romantic artist as well as the highbrow art consumer. For Mrs. Gereth, in whom the two merge, the "inherent" value of Poynton lies in its "bodying forth" her self and personality. So powerfully assimilated to
her sense of selfhood are Poynton's things that when she moves into Ricks, she thinks of her loss of them as an "amputation": "Her leg had come off--she had now begun to stump along with the lovely wooden substitute" (69). "'They're living things to me,'" she says; "'they know me, they return the touch of my hand'" (31). Here again we find ourselves in Marx's "mist-enveloped" region of the fetish, where things "appear as independent beings endowed with life." Paul B. Armstrong suggests that "Although inanimate, the things 'live' because they carry traces of [Mrs. Gereth's] life. It is herself she touches in touching them and herself who returns her touch" (194). Far from being, like Marx's fetishist, unconscious of the things' relation to herself, she is all too conscious of that relation. Poynton is her "religion" and her "life" (30). Indeed, Mrs. Gereth's idolatry of Poynton, though fetishistic in Marx's sense insofar as it involves an inversion in the relation between human beings and things, might better be characterized as narcissism than commodity fetishism.

It is worth noting that Mrs. Gereth's personal and psychological investment in beautiful objects evinces an
aesthetic ideology that is commonly ascribed to James himself. Philip Sicker, for example, writes:

With nothing inside or outside of the mind to give shape or fixity, individual identity becomes nothing more than the ever-changing sum of consciousness. From moment to moment, the individual melts into the phosphorescent foam of his own impressions, melts out of one self and into another. In his own isolation, James came to believe that the only order or stability that could possibly exist within the perceiving self or the world of its impressions was that which the imagination created. (76)

Stephen Donadio likewise suggests that James shares with Friedrich Nietzsche the belief in art as the sole means of ordering and justifying the chaos of our experience in the world, and of endowing that experience with value. For both Nietzsche and James, the activity of art--or perhaps more precisely, the exercise of taste--becomes a means for the continual reassertion of personality and the mastery of experience. It is seen as a way of preserving the integrity of individual identity, and is consequently valued as the ultimate (and indeed the only) form of power over what would otherwise be simply a meaningless and menacing existence, a chaos threatening the obliteration of individual personality at every moment. (16)

But while there is compelling evidence in much of James's writing--particularly in his literary criticism--that he indeed held the sort of conviction in art that Sicker and Donadio describe, it is necessary to observe how such a novel as The Spoils of Poynton in fact challenges this conviction, as well as how James's rhetoric in the preface to this novel, for example, can be seen, in the light of the novel, to undercut the argument he seems to wish to make; for James's idea of "the hard latent value"
in art is conveyed in the preface, as I mentioned earlier, through metaphors of finance:

> It at the same time amuses [the artist] again and again to note how, beyond the first step of the actual case, the case that constitutes for him his germ, his vital particle, his grain of gold, life persistently blunders and deviates, loses herself in the sand. The reason is of course that life has no direct sense whatever for the subject and is capable, luckily for us, of nothing but splendid waste. Hence the opportunity for the sublime economy of art, which rescues, which saves and hoards and "banks," investing and reinvesting these fruits of toil in wondrous useful "works" and thus making up for us, desperate spendthrifts that we all naturally are, the most princely of incomes. (vi)

Art retrieves the "hard," durable value "latent" in life but, in doing so, transforms it into an abstract and fluctuating economic value, the way, for example, the "hard" materiality of gold is converted into coin. Moreover, in the novel itself, it is precisely the financial dimensions of art that, by turning art into "investment" and "income," threaten its "hard latent value." To make matters worse, art in the novel is entangled inextricably not only with the regular commerce of the market, but also within an economy of narcissistic desire and power that itself seems to preclude any access to some "hard latent value."

In order to discuss such an economy, however, it is necessary to move beyond Marx. The theory of fetishism does not of course end (or begin, for that matter) with Marx. In fact, the popular understanding and use of the term has probably been influenced less by Marxism than by
psychoanalysis. While Alfred Binet introduced the term fetishism into psychiatry in 1887, in an article entitled "Fetishism in Love"—though cases of what might now be called "fetishistic perversions" had been documented and analyzed in previous clinical studies by a number of people—it is Sigmund Freud's novel theory of fetishism that has had the profoundest impact on our understanding of the term.24 For Freud, the fetish is not merely a sexually-charged part-object that substitutes for a woman with whom it is in some way associated, but is rather a substitute "for the absent female phallus" (Freud 354). Freud writes:

the fetish is a substitute for the woman's (the mother's) penis that the little boy once believed in and--for reasons familiar to us--does not want to give up.

What happened, therefore, was that the boy refused to take cognizance of the fact of his having perceived that a woman does not possess a penis. No, that could not be true: for if a woman had been castrated, then his own possession of a penis was in danger; and against that there rose in rebellion the portion of his narcissism which Nature has, as a precaution, attached to that particular organ. (352)

Such a narcissistically-motivated fetishism might then provide a better framework for a discussion of Mrs. Gereth's idolatry than Marx's theory of commodity fetishism.

Before pursuing this idea, however, it is necessary to address certain misgivings it is sure to arouse. Because the Freudian fetish stems from "an aversion . . . to the real female genitals" and acts as a defence against "the horror of castration" (353), it is viewed for the most part—and to this day—as an exclusively male perversion; therefore, any ascription of it to a woman, including a fictional one like Mrs. Gereth, will strike some as suspect. While even a cursory summary of the current debate over Freud’s theory of the castration complex is far beyond the scope of this study, it is impossible, since I wish to enlist Freud’s concept of fetishism, not to touch upon some of the problems with this complex. The fundamental flaw of Freud’s theory of fetishism, as I am not the first to point out, is that, like so much else in Freud, it is based on a thoroughly androcentric perspective of human sexuality. Freud’s idea of fetishism is itself based on a fetishization, or overvaluation, of the penis. Innumerable researchers and commentators have shown that Freud’s descriptions of castration-anxiety in boys and penis-envy in girls are
theoretically dubious and empirically unsubstantiated. As Ellie Ragland-Sullivan has remarked:

If the Oedipal drama were really caused by an interpretation of differences in sex organs, Symbolic privilege might as easily be conferred on the woman for her large, pregnant belly or her full breasts--both conceived in opposition to male "lack." (288)

Ragland-Sullivan, however, provides, through her reading of Jacques Lacan, a means by which to redress the sexist bias of Freud's theory of castration-anxiety and thereby salvage and expand his theory of the fetish. For, according to her, Lacan uses the term Castration figuratively to denote the loss not of an organ, but of "being," the feeling of "disintegration" (270). During Lacan's famous mirror-stage, occurring approximately between the ages of six to eighteen months, the infant enjoys an "Imaginary" symbiosis with the mother, who is both a proleptic image of the "unity" that the infant

lacks because of its motor incoordination and a component of that unity. The infant’s anticipated unity is proven illusory and its Imaginary fusion with its mother ruptured by the intervention of what Lacan calls the Phallus. But just as Castration does not refer to the literal dismemberment of the penis, the Phallus refers not to the penis, but to language, law, and the social, or "Symbolic," order, all of which manifest and codify the gap between being and its representations, and which, in a patriarchal social organization, are associated with the father. Castration here denotes the child’s passage from the Imaginary to the Symbolic order:

This Castration leaves the infant feeling incomplete, broken, an hommelette. No incest wish is being punished here by fear of organ loss; instead, the fear is of loss of being or of disintegration. So potent is this drama that it inaugurates human anxiety. The phallic signifier imposes culture or order on nature, therefore, creating a permanent awareness of Otherness in the subject. Lacan’s revision of Freud’s Castration complex inscribes the individual in an unconscious structure of exchange: exchange of mother fusion for father "selfhood" or otherness. The devastating loss of symbiosis is repressed and displaced, but symbolically felt by its effects. (270)

Lacan’s revision of Freud’s notion of castration, moreover, describes not just a fear but an actual (albeit figurative) "castration" that, having nothing whatsoever to do with sexual organs or the envy of them, is experienced inevitably by both males and females.

Lacan’s mirror-stage, incidentally, closely parallels the aesthetic psychology attributed to James by
Philip Sicker: a tumultuous, "ever-changing" inner consciousness needing to identify with external forms of "fixity", "order," and "stability." Ragland-Sullivan writes:

The "want-in-being" of alienation is a "subversion" of the subject, which makes him or her aim not at renunciation or repression, but at the realization of Desire, the re-finding of the presocial self. . . . The goal sought is a repetition, the replacement of the pleasure (jouissance) in the illusion of wholeness which was characteristic of the prephallic period. (271)

"Out of this inadequacy," Ragland-Sullivan suggests, "arises every kind of compensatory attachment to objects, people, ideologies, and so on" (292). Hence, Mrs. Gereth's relationship to Poynton can be seen, borrowing Ragland-Sullivan's metaphor, as "a shadow pantomime of the primordial [i.e. mirror-stage] drama of Desire between mother and infant" (271). Similarly, her "amputation" is an image of the corps morcelé, Lacan's expression for the bodily fragmentation an infant feels as a result of its chaotic desires and motor incoordination, echoes and memories of which return to the adult in dreams of dismemberment.

If the subject's first experience of a "loss of being" and "disintegration," his primordial post-mirror-stage castration, occurs with his entry into the Symbolic order, the "loss of being" Mrs. Gereth faces at her current "stage" is the ultimate one of death; thus, her fervid determination to preserve the integrity of Poynton
can be interpreted, at one level, as a defense against this greatest "horror of castration." Her impending and inevitable Real extinction increases the stakes of her Symbolic preservation. The means of her Symbolic salvation is of course Fleda. As Mrs. Gereth's "replacement," Fleda will watch over Poynton and "keep the place right" (32). To "keep the place right" involves ensuring that Poynton continue to "express the conceptions to which it owed its origin" (24), even in the absence of the begetter of those conceptions. At issue is the role and value of the "mother":

[Mrs. Gereth] hated the effacement to which English usage reduced the widowed mother; she had discoursed of it passionately to Fleda; contrasted it with the beautiful homage paid by other countries to women in that position, women no better than herself, whom she had seen acclaimed and enthroned, whom she had known and envied; made in short as little as possible a secret of the injury, the bitterness she found in it. The great wrong Owen had done her was not his "taking up" with Mona--that was disgusting, but it was a detail, an accidental form; it was his failure from the first to understand what it was to have a mother at all, to appreciate the beauty and sanctity of the character. She was just his mother as his nose was just his nose, and he had never had the least imagination or tenderness or gallantry about her. One's mother, gracious goodness, if one were the kind of fine young man one ought to be, the only kind Mrs. Gereth cared for, was a subject for poetry, for idolatry. (49)

As the "mother" of Poynton, Mrs. Gereth is not just one subject among many, a mere part of a greater whole; she is, rather, the root and origin of that whole. What is at stake for Mrs. Gereth is the sanctity and supremacy of the matrix. As Poynton's creator or originator, she
should also be its ruler, worthy of enthronement and idolatry, and should, therefore, "have till the end of her days the supreme word about everything" (50). Indeed, Fleda's role is to ensure that Mrs. Gereth will have the supreme word even after the end of the latter's days: Mrs. Gereth tells Fleda, "with you here--yes, with you, I believe I might rest at last in my grave!" (32). Fleda can "replace" Mrs. Gereth because "there was nobody else who understood" (14), "who ever felt what [Mrs. Gereth] had achieved" (21). Fleda recognizes (or so Mrs. Gereth believes) the matrix to which Poynton "owed its origin" and therefore the context within which it yields its meaning.

But, as Laurence Bedwell Holland observes, Poynton has other, prior origins:

the rare objects in the Jacobean house (itself preserved for over two centuries) are old, and once were lodged in the hands of the Chinese, Florentines, Frenchmen, Spaniards, and Maltese who originally made or possessed them. More recently they have been bought and transported, by an "imperious" Mrs. Gereth, to the seat of empire, the hodge-podge of modern England. . . . Implicit in the "things" is the artful past, the labor and craftsmanship and history, which modern imperial England has appropriated and whose possession is now at issue. (92)

If Mrs. Gereth can complain that

No account whatever had been taken of her relation to her treasures, of the passion with which she had waited for them, worked for them, picked them over, made them worthy of each other and the house, watched them, loved them, lived with them (43),
so can several generations of anonymous owners before her. For, in Mrs. Gereth's hands, the "artful past" "implicit" in the things is suppressed. If Waterbath is "full of souvenirs of places even more ugly than itself and of things it would have been a pious duty to forget" (7), then Poynton is full of "souvenirs" of places successfully forgotten. Poynton, "all charged" with Mrs. Gereth's "memories" (58), may be a "record" of her life, but it is "written in . . . the tongues of other countries" (22). It is "all France and Italy with their ages composed to rest" (22). The rhetoric here evokes death and loss, the phrase "composed to rest" sounding somewhat like "laid to rest," while "the tongues of other countries" suggests the sounds of alien, unintelligible languages. Mrs. Gereth's "record" is written, like a palimpsest, atop and at the expense of previous records. But these earlier records are not entirely erased: the alien tongues still make a noise, declare their presence; thus, in her bedroom at Ricks, Fleda finds "the sweetest Louis Seize, all assorted and combined--old, chastened, figured, faded France" (78). Both "figured" and "faded," France is both there and not there, simultaneously present and absent.

Similarly, the fetish according to Freud does not thoroughly annihilate the traumatic perception. As a substitute not "for any chance penis, but for a
particular and quite special penis" (352), namely that of
the mother, the fetish is a wish-fulfilling substitute
for an imaginary object that does not and never did exist
in reality. Like Feuerbach's religious fetish, it is an
imaginative projection that screens out--or, to use
Freud's term, "disavows"--unpleasant aspects of reality.
It is borne of the traumatic perception that reality does
not accord with desire and serves to surmount this gap by
remaking reality in a way that placates desire, which
amounts, as Feuerbach suggests with respect to religious
fetishism, to remaking reality in one's own image. Why,
after all, should the boy expect his mother to have a
penis except because he has one himself? The traumatic
perception, however, is never "entirely wiped out"; "on
the contrary," Freud says,

we see that the perception has persisted, and that a
very energetic action has been undertaken to
maintain the disavowal. It is not true that, after
the child has made his observation of the woman, he
has preserved unaltered his belief that women have a
phallus. He has retained that belief, but he has
also given it up. In the conflict between the weight
of the unwelcome perception and the force of his
counter-wish, a compromise has been reached, as is
only possible under the dominance of the unconscious
laws of thought--the primary processes. Yes, in his
mind the woman has got a penis, in spite of
everything; but this penis is no longer the same as
it was before. Something else has taken its place,
has been appointed its substitute, as it were, and
now inherits the interest which was formerly
directed to its predecessor. But this interest
suffers an extraordinary increase as well, because
the horror of castration has set up a memorial to
itself in the creation of this substitute. (353)
In short, as Freud says a few paragraphs later, the "wish" and the "reality" exist "side by side" (356).

The novel itself evokes this "memorial" aspect of the fetish—that is, the trace or the survival of "reality," or what one might prefer, in this instance, to call history—through the figure of ghosts. Ghosts are present in one form or another throughout the novel—at Ricks, in chapter five, for example, the maiden-aunt is perceived by Fleda as a "dim presence" (54)—but they are not acknowledged until very near the conclusion. This acknowledgment, moreover, may be seen as one of the narrative's "lessons" or "epiphanies," as it were. Fleda tells Mrs. Gereth that there is something in the maiden-aunt's house "that will never be in the inventory."

"'Does it happen to be in your power to give it a name?'" Mrs. Gereth asks. Fleda replies:

"I can give it a dozen. It's a kind of fourth dimension. It's a presence, a perfume, a touch. It's a soul, a story, a life. There's ever so much more here than you and I. We're in fact just three!"

"Oh if you count the ghosts--!"

"Of course I count the ghosts, confound you! It seems to me ghosts count double—for what they were and for what they are." (249-50)

Tzvetan Todorov, who has provided one of the more interesting and illuminating discussions on the role of ghosts in James's work, suggests that they represent an "absent cause" or elusive "essence."  

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26 See chs. 10 and 11 in The Poetics of Prose.
describes James's ghosts as "visitations which live as absences," manifesting "a stopping point where either/or assertions of plenum and void meet and flicker one to the other" (3). In the above passage, they represent all of the history and prior "origins" that Mrs. Gereth forgets in her efforts to impose her own "conceptions."

But just as reality and wish do not, in the case of the fetish, usually coexist in harmony, not all ghosts in the novel coexist with the living without conflict. While Mrs. Gereth may mostly succeed in ignoring most of Poynton's ghosts without much consequence, one persists in bedeviling and interfering with her conceptions. Far more exigent than her "forgetting" of France and Italy is Mrs. Gereth's "disavowal" of her husband's claims upon what she regards as her creation. She says to Owen:

"The best things here, as you know, are the things your father and I collected, things all that we worked for and waited for and suffered for. Yes," cried Mrs. Gereth with a fine freedom of fancy, "there are things in the house that we almost starved for! They were our religion, they were our life, they were us!" (30-31).

Poynton then, by this account, is the "record" of two lives, the embodiment of two personalities. But in the very next breath, Mrs. Gereth declares, "'And now they're only me" (31).\(^27\) Mrs. Gereth thus attempts to

\(^{27}\) Granted, she does go on to say to Fleda, "except that they're also you, thank God, a little, you dear!" (31). But this remark should be viewed within the context of Fleda's role as Mrs. Gereth's "representative"; the intention of Mrs. Gereth's appointment of Fleda as her
"exterminate" her husband at Poynton the way she does the maiden-aunt at Ricks.\footnote{28}

The "ghost" of Mr. Gereth, however, is far more powerful and intransigent than that of the maiden-aunt. When Fleda says that "there were no ghosts at Poynton," we can only understand her to mean that they were not recognized or acknowledged. Moreover, her claim that, as a result, Poynton was "too splendidly happy" is exceedingly ironic, because, if indeed it were "happy," there would be no novel. If we agree with Todorov that the "core" of James's narratives usually consists of an "absent and superpowerful force which sets the whole present machinery of the narrative in motion" (184, 145), then The Spoils of Poynton is propelled by the deceased Mr. Gereth, whose "ghost" ensures that Poynton is anything but happy. Given his central and "superpowerful force," it is remarkable how little attention Mr. Gereth has received from critics of the novel. Most have focused on the machinations of the "domineering scheming women" (Holland 94), particularly of Mrs. Gereth, while virtually no one has sufficiently emphasized how Mr.

\footnote{28 It is Fleda who observes at Ricks that "The maiden-aunt had been exterminated--no trace of her to tell her tale" (79).}
Gereth haunts the entire novel--how the struggle for control and possession of Poynton among the various parties in the novel is staged within the boundaries laid down by the absent father, in this case quite literally by the Name-of-the-Father, the signature of his will under the British law of primogeniture.29

But almost as unwarranted as the emphasis on the domineering women is an emphasis on what John Carlos Rowe calls "feminine powerlessness" under patriarchy: "For all its charm" Rowe remarks, "for all its power to put Fleda and Mrs. Gereth in relation to each other as friends, rather than 'mother-in-law' and 'daughter-in-law,' the companionship at Ricks is still expressive of their marginalized existences" (102). In Rowe's estimation, "Owen has fulfilled his proper destiny as the heir to Poynton. Like the Uncle in Turn of the Screw, he has learned how to play the role of master, how to manipulate the post" (104). Such an interpretation, however, apart from simply giving Owen too much credit, ignores the immense influence of Mona and Mrs. Brigstock upon his decisions and actions, not to mention the enormous power over him of "mummy." Far from fulfilling any "destiny" or "the role of master," Owen finds himself assailed and

29 While not mentioning The Spoils of Poynton, Kelly Cannon discusses the subject of absent fathers as a recurring theme in James in chapter 5 of Henry James and Masculinity.
manipulated by several masterful women—including Fleda. These women are, without a doubt, marginalized by society and the law (it is in fact just this theme that, according to James’s first notebook entry on the novel, acted as the story’s inspiration); but they are nevertheless far from helpless or "powerless." Indeed, one of the consequences of my deployment of the concept(s) of fetishism here is that it redeems to some measure Mrs. Gereth, toward whom critics have, almost unanimously, been antipathetic. When we view the novel through the lens of the Freudian fetish (augmented by Ragland-Sullivan’s reworking of the concept of castration), Mrs. Gereth emerges as an almost heroic figure who elicits, as James in fact seems initially to have intended, the reader’s sympathy and pity rather than the scorn that is customarily heaped upon her. While the fetish, according to Freud, is an instrument of the male’s disavowal of the mother’s castration, Mrs. Gereth’s fetishism of her possessions is a disavowal of her own castration. Although, as I have mentioned, Mrs. Gereth wishes Poynton to serve as a compensation for her death, a piece of herself that will survive her own extinction, her husband’s will makes plain that Poynton in fact does not and never did belong to her in the first place. Her fetishism then is not only a compensation for her prospective extinction in death, but also, and far
more urgently, a disavowal of her dispossession in life, for her husband’s will denies Mrs. Gereth ownership and control of her own possessions and what she regards as the very constituents of her identity. Ragland-Sullivan names this sort of institutionalized female dispossession "secondary Castration": "At the real structural level of primary Castration," Ragland-Sullivan says, "both males and females experience loss of the symbiotic attachment to the mother as a kind of Castration" (297). Women, however, undergo a secondary castration at the Symbolic level, where they confront an array of theological, scientific, and political myths and laws of women’s "natural" inferiority and subservience. The practice of primogeniture that denies Mrs. Gereth ownership of Poynton is just such a law. "Females," Ragland-Sullivan observes, "... are doubly castrated: first, by identification with the mother’s gender and, second, by deferring to the myths that link that gender with loss" (302). Consequently, according to Ragland-Sullivan,

A systematic refusal of secondary Castration is required to change woman’s history. Ideally, the mothers of the future would reject the substantive interpretations conjured out of the Oedipal drama, which distort woman’s reality and potential, and pass on messages that do less to handicap their children along gender lines. The mother’s Desire would change to contemplate phallic possibilities for herself as well. (302)

Mrs. Gereth’s fetishism certainly cannot be described as "systematic." It is more symptom than
system. Moreover, it is politically feeble, if not irrelevant, for it fails to rectify, or even address, the radical socio-economic conditions underpinning female "secondary Castration" and falls far short of the "will for revolution" that John Carlos Rowe suggests "ought to inflame the hearts of Fleda and Mrs. Gereth" (104). It addresses female dispossession strictly at the individual and personal level. It does, however, have the virtue of constituting, at this limited level, a "refusal" of secondary Castration and allowing Mrs. Gereth to contemplate "phallic possibilities" for herself, though precisely these "phallic" tendencies are probably what have most roused the critics' antipathy for her. While Ragland-Sullivan suggests that if a woman refuses "the patriarchal stereotypes of the Symbolic order," she risks incurring "the accusation of being 'phallic'" (295), most critics have used such words as "domineering," "manipulative," "vulgar," "barbaric," "unscrupulous," and the like to describe Mrs. Gereth. This is not to say that these charges are unfounded: it is probably fair to call Mrs. Gereth all of these things. As I myself have argued here, she is aggressively narcissistic, ready to trample upon the claims of others in order to assert her

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10 The very long list of critics to have laid some combination of these charges upon Mrs. Gereth includes Paul B. Armstrong, Millicent Bell, John C. Broderick, Paula Marantz Cohen, James W. Gargano, Kenneth Graham, Laurence B. Holland, Walter Isle, and Fred G. See.
own. But she does so because there are no other practical ways for her to assert her claims. As Ragland-Sullivan writes:

> Desire drives people to seek recognition at the other’s expense and, if necessary, to annihilate the other to validate their own belief system. Given the absolutist nature of Desire, it is not surprising that its paths must be restricted by internal and external laws, limits, and the language of a given social order. (272-73)

The social order in which Mrs. Gereth finds herself, however, has different and, as far as she is concerned, inequitable limits and restrictions for men and women, for fathers and mothers. Her only means of circumventing these laws, written in the name of the father, is to take, in the name of the mother, the "aggressive," "vulgar," and "unscrupulous"—in a word, "phallic"—actions that the novel describes, all in order to inscribe the mother’s name—the name of Adela Gereth—upon Poynton.

The Symbolic order thus involves a perennial struggle and conflict between the social order, the law, and language on the one hand, and the individual Imaginary on the other, particularly in the case of marginalized and disenfranchised people such as Mrs. Gereth, who find their desires more often thwarted than fulfilled by the Symbolic order. Mrs. Gereth recognizes that value and meaning do not somehow passively and objectively inhere in "art" but are rather a consequence
of power and strategic action, or, in Walter Isle's words, "the terms of its possession." Far from transcending the flux, chaos, contingency, and conflict of the market, or history, or "everyday life," art is embroiled in and shaped by these forces.

If the critics have been virtually unanimous in their disapproval of Mrs. Gereth, they have been sharply divided in their assessment of Fleda Vetch. As David Lodge points out:

Most of the critics who have commented on The Spoils of Poynton fall into two groups. Either they take Fleda to be the heroine of the story in the traditional sense--heroic in her readiness to sacrifice her own happiness rather than compromise her principles, sensitive and perceptive in her dealings with the other characters, to whom she is morally superior; or they have taken her to be neurotic and self-deceiving, pathologically fearful of sex, and contributing more harm than balm to the domestic row between the Gereths. (5)

In the face of the ambiguities and contradictions within the novel and the disparate and seemingly irreconcilable interpretations that it generates, Lodge, as I indicated earlier, concludes that The Spoils of Poynton merely recapitulates the central Jamesian theme of "the impossibility of arriving at a single, simple version of the 'truth' about any human action or experience." Lodge, however, interprets the novel in a certain isolation, not
addressing the more nagging contradictions between the fiction and James's own commentary on it.

The Spoils of Poynton is, in characteristically Jamesian fashion, ambiguous in itself, but much, if not most, of the critical controversy has been fuelled by the novel's paratextual documents, particularly the notebooks and the novel's preface. In the earliest notebook entry, dated Christmas eve, 1893, the main interest for James seems to lie in "the situation of the mother deposed, by the ugly English custom" (79). James seems to sympathize with the mother's "rebellion" and proposes taking her "anguish" as the story's "subject" (79-80). By October 15, 1895, however, almost two years after registering his initial conception of the story, the mother has been usurped: "the whole idea of my thing is that Fleda becomes rather fine, DOES something, distinguishes herself (to the reader), and that this is really almost all that has made the little anecdote worth telling at all" (133). The main interest now lies not in the mother's anguish but in Fleda's "fineness." Indeed, the novel's own "fineness," James reckons, "is the fineness of Fleda" (133). Therefore, she must be "heroic" and "achieve beauty and poetry" (134). The preface is, if anything, even more rhapsodic, particularly now about Fleda's "understanding" and "appreciation":

From beginning to end, in The Spoils of Poynton, appreciation, even to that of the very whole, lives
in Fleda; which is precisely why, as a consequence rather grandly imposed, every one else shows for comparatively stupid. . . . Fleda almost demoniacally both sees and feels, while the others but feel without seeing. (xiv-xv)

Fleda is, in James’s estimation, a "free spirit" surrounded and "tormented" by "fools" (xv).

Most of the critics of the novel have tended to take their interpretive cues—though they may not always explicitly acknowledge it—from these paratexts, particularly the preface, and their readings of Fleda have consequently echoed them.31 There exists, nevertheless, a sizeable contingent of critics that takes issue with what one might call the orthodox view of Fleda. Robert C. McLean, for example, calls Fleda an "inscrutable heroine" (13), while William Bysshe Stein characterizes her as a neurotic, hysterical, and sexually repressed character whose "reforms, protests, and rebellions" are "perversions of the heroic ideal" (188). Allan Bellringer, meanwhile, suggests that "Fleda’s perfectionism works so much against her own interest that it is hard not to be impatient with James for not distancing himself from her," and that "there is a hovering sense of misjudgment about Fleda’s moral heroism which leaves one uncomfortable" (Henry James 92). And

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Patrick F. Quinn, in what seems to be one of the most cited and enduring essays in the criticism of *The Spoils of Poynton*, writes:

In Fleda Vetch, the principal character, we have a study in the psychology of ethical absolutism. However admirable her values may be in the abstract, they bear only a dim relation to actual life; practically, they serve as her defense against life, and their extravagant sublimity is a measure of the paucity of her own self-knowledge. She thus becomes an agent of destruction, and the last scene of the story, the burning of Poynton, is a conclusive symbol of the havoc that her deluded and intransigent idealism has brought about. (563)

The main problem with all these readings is that they fly in the face of James's stated intentions and his own interpretation of the novel. As Lodge points out, while "What one might call the pro-Fleda party relies heavily on James's own remarks in the Preface and Notebooks," the opposing "anti-Fleda party are likely to be anti-intentionalists, arguing that whatever James thought he was going to write beforehand, or thought he had written afterwards ... is irrelevant to the interpretation of what he did write" (6). Those critics who insist that Fleda is a figure surrounded by fools, and that Fleda alone sees clearly and understands fully and acts morally do so of course out of a desire to have the novel "express the conceptions to which it owe[s] its origin." Those in the opposing camp are, in a certain way, like the Brigstocks, blind to originary conceptions and thus willing to sever the novel from the imagination
or "personality" that produced it. But as Quinn suggests, if we are to make Fleda conform to James's characterization of her in the notebooks and preface, "we must close our eyes to half the scenes in the book" (576). In other words, if the anti-intentionalists are blind to originary conception, the intentionalists can be accused of being blind to the words in the novel itself. But what I wish to point out is not so much how the novel depicts a different Fleda from the one described in the notebooks and preface as how it puts into doubt the very foundations upon which intentionalist arguments are built, namely the valorization of original or originary conception, authentic or inherent meaning and value, and aesthetic unity and continuity between the art and the artist.

If for Mrs. Gereth Poynton is the means by which she achieves, through her identification with it, what Ragland-Sullivan might describe as a jouissance of wholeness (271), then for Fleda Poynton possesses a self-contained unity and integrity that owes no debt and has no reference to anything or anyone outside itself: "everything at Poynton was in the style of Poynton" (27). Poynton is, in itself, "a happy whole" (78). Mrs. Gereth believes that "her whole life" had been "an effort toward completeness and perfection" (50), while both she and Fleda believe that the former has achieved such
"completeness" and "perfection" in Poynton; but if for Mrs. Gereth Poynton embodies her "personality," then for Fleda Poynton is a complete and perfect work of art because it transcends its social and human origins:

each piece, in its turn, was perfect to her; she could have drawn up a catalogue from memory. Thus again she lived with them, and she thought of them without a question of any personal right. That they might have been, that they might still be hers, that they were perhaps already another's, were ideas that had too little to say to her. They were nobody's at all--too proud, unlike base animals and humans, to be reducible to anything so narrow. It was Poynton that was theirs; they had simply recovered their own. (235)

For Fleda, then, unlike for Mrs. Gereth, art transcends its social context or, to quote Walter Isle once more, "the terms of its possession." As Isle puts it, Fleda holds the spoils in her imagination and visualizes them as immortal, outside of human concerns, existing only in her mind which no desire for possession can violate. . . . Art is thus something separate from the crudities of life, and the ambiguities about the spoils--art or thing--are removed only when Fleda has a vision of them beyond their physical embodiments. (114-15)

Indeed, any trace of "physicality" or materiality--of mortality, of loss or absence--in the things turns them to ugliness. At Ricks, for example, the transplanted things are described in a language that evokes death and desecration: "what . . . the full picture most showed [Fleda] was the far-away empty sockets, a scandal of nakedness between high bleak walls" (72), the "empty sockets" here suggesting a death's-head, the "nakedness between high bleak walls," a corpse in a tomb. In
addition, rather than instruments of preservation, the things become monuments to extermination, as of the maiden-aunt, for example, of whom "no trace" is left "to tell her tale. Moreover, in their new arrangement, the objects evoke their own "origin" only as something absent or "far-away," or even mutilated:

Fleda tried to think of some of the things at Poynton still unappropriated, but her memory was a blank about them, and in the effort to focus the old combinations she saw again nothing but gaps and scars, a vacancy that gathered at moments into something worse. (79)

Confronted by this new element in their constitution, Fleda, despite her initial infatuation, recoils from the objects: "She couldn't care for such things when they came to her in such ways; there was a wrong about them all that turned them to ugliness" (78).

Fleda experiences at Ricks her own visions of a corps morcelé. Moreover, the eerie rhetoric used to describe these visions reveals Fleda as a fetishist in her own right:

In the watches of the night she saw Poynton dishonoured; she had cherished it as a happy whole, she reasoned, and the parts of it now around her seemed to suffer like chopped limbs. To lie there in the stillness was partly to listen for some soft low plaint from them. (78)

When Mrs. Gereth fears that she has lost Poynton, she suffers from the "amputation." What is curious in the above passage is that the suffering is expected to be felt by the chopped limbs themselves. As in some scene
out of Edgar Allan Poe, the limbs come alive. In the figure of Mrs. Gereth’s amputation, the things function as components of the totality or whole of Mrs. Gereth’s selfhood, of which she, as subject, forms a kind of centre. In Mrs. Gereth’s case, the loss of the things leads certainly to a diminishment and suffering of the subject, but in Fleda’s vision, subjectivity is obliterated and the fragments of a greater whole appear, through a fetishistic inversion, as dispersed subjects in themselves.

In keeping with this inversion of subjectivity, a consequence of her aesthetic idealism, Fleda acts as a kind of subordinate and servant of the things themselves, viewing her own involvement in their fate as that of a perfectly disinterested intermediary. She takes on the role of "sole messenger and mediator" between Mrs. Gereth and her son, vowing to keep her own desires "gagged and blinded" (119). Finding herself in a place done up in "battle array," in which personal relationships "had come indeed to a question of ‘sides’" (72), Fleda becomes determined to remain neutral. The question of "sides" comes up repeatedly in the novel, and Fleda’s ostensible neutrality has the effect of convincing each party that it has Fleda’s support: Owen, we are told, "liked Fleda’s seeming to be on his side" (41-42), while Mrs. Gereth is convinced that "she was of course always on Mrs. Gereth’s
side" (52). Fleda thus comes to act as both sides' "representative". She herself feels "strangely divided" (47), but she nonetheless convinces herself that she can be not only neutral but also objective.

With a conception of art radically different from that of Mrs. Gereth, Fleda vows to keep Poynton "right" by taking only such actions as will advance not one side or another but strictly what is just for Poynton itself, thus manifesting a conviction very similar to what Pierre Bourdieu calls "political fetishism," that is, a fetishism in which a "delegate" conceals his own selfhood and personal interest behind "impersonal duty" to some group, cause, or some "Other," of which he is perceived, and more importantly, perceives himself, to be a representative (Language and Symbolic Power 210).

Borrowing heavily from Nietzsche, Bourdieu characterizes this sort of "representation" as a set of "priestly strategies":

the priest, says Nietzsche, is the one who "calls his own will God". (The same could be said of the politician when he calls his own will "people", "opinion" or "nation".) To quote Nietzsche again: "The 'law', the 'will of God', the 'sacred book', 'inspiration'--all merely words for the conditions under which the priest comes to power, by which he maintains his power--these concepts are to be found at the basis of all priestly organizations, all priestly or priestly-philosophical power-structures." What Nietzsche means is that delegates base universal values on themselves, appropriate values, "requisition morality", and thus monopolize the notions of God, Truth, Wisdom, People, Message, Freedom, etc. They make them synonyms. What of? Of themselves. "I am the Truth." They turn themselves
into the sacred, they consecrate themselves and thereby draw a boundary between themselves and ordinary people. They thus become, as Nietzsche says, "the measure of all things".

It is in what I would call the oracle effect, thanks to which the spokesperson gives voice to the group in whose name he speaks, thereby speaking with all the authority of that elusive, absent phenomenon, that the function of priestly humility can best be seen: it is in abolishing himself completely in favour of God or the People that the priest turns himself into God or the People. It is when I become Nothing--and because I am capable of becoming Nothing, of abolishing myself, of forgetting myself, of sacrificing myself, of dedicating myself--that I become Everything. I am nothing but the delegate of God or the People, but that in whose name I speak is everything, and on this account I am everything. The oracle effect is a veritable splitting of personality: the individual personality, the ego, abolishes itself in favour of a transcendent moral person. . . . (210-11)

We can see the sort of self-abnegation Bourdieu describes here in Fleda. She gives herself to Poynton--Poynton conceived as an autonomous and transcendent incarnation of Beauty (a word we can add to the above list of God, Truth, Wisdom, etc). She acts with a sense of "impersonal duty" to Poynton, mobilized by an "ideology of disinterest," which, according to Bourdieu, "is the professional ideology of clerics of every kind" (215).

What is fetishized in Bourdieu’s model is not a thing but a person--the political delegate or representative. Thus, Fleda’s "objective" regard of Poynton as an autonomous and self-contained whole involves a fetishization not just of Poynton but also of herself, casting her as a detached and disinterested "representative" of Poynton’s artifacts, who, free of personal prejudices, desires, and
motives, "speaks", as it were, for these artifacts, enabling them to realize through her their authentic being and to transmit their true meaning. This is also of course the attitude or ideology of the intentionalist critic (the literary "cleric") who insists that he has transcended or put aside his own particular interests and prejudices in order to reveal and give voice to the intrinsic, which is to say intended, meaning of the text.

What is concealed in such self-fetishization is the interpreter's own subjectivity. Hence, in The Spoils of Poynton, while Mrs. Gereth confiscates and appropriates antiques, occluding their history in a recombination and reconstitution calculated to register only her own identity, personality, and personal history, Fleda, in Bourdieu's language, abolishes herself--makes herself nothing--in order to preserve the sanctity of Poynton and Owen's honour, his "pledges so deep and sacred" (106). She is, in the process, willing to sacrifice her own desire to these higher causes: "There was something in her that would make it a shame to her for ever to have owed her happiness to an interference" (106). Even though she is in love with Owen, she tells his mother: "'I'm thinking . . . of the simple question of his keeping faith on an important clause of his contract: it doesn't matter whether with a stupid person or with a monster of cleverness. I'm thinking of his honour and his good
name’" (116). Likewise, she says to Owen, "'the great thing is to keep faith. Where's a man if he doesn't? If he doesn't he may be so cruel. . . . I couldn't have a hand in that, you know: that's my position--that's mine'" (197). Certainly one of Fleda's most infuriating qualities is the imperious way she has of deciding for others what is the best and most ethical course of action for them to take. But as Bourdieu notes:

> those who have made themselves nothing in order to become everything can invert the terms of the relation and reproach those who are merely themselves, who speak only for themselves, with being nothing either de facto or de jure (because they are incapable of dedication, etc.). The right of reprimanding other people and making them feel guilty is one of the advantages enjoyed by the militant. (211)

Having elected herself the sole guardian of all "noble ideals," of "honour" and "truth," of "pledges so deep and sacred," Fleda can reproach Owen for not "keeping faith," even when he confesses that he has come to hate Mona. For Fleda, his desires are irrelevant; what matters is his pledge. She demands perfect identity between words and deeds, representation and desire. Fleda's fetishism, denying as it does--or concealing--personal will and desire, stems from a need for absolutes, for unity, fixity, and stasis, for an escape from time.

Ironically, however, Fleda's own role of non-interference entails prevarication, dissimulation, and hypocrisy. This is because "merely to have abstained even
wouldn't sufficiently assure her she had been straight" (106). So in order to be "straight," Fleda habitually lies to everyone and repeatedly makes pledges she doesn't keep. Her ideal of non-interference or neutrality proves to be itself a lie, an impossibility. Mona is perhaps the first character in the novel to recognize that Fleda is meddlesome and "dishonest" (164), and Fleda herself acknowledges that her dealings with others are "false and horrid" (60); and near the end of the novel, even Mrs. Gereth accuses her of being "hideously misleading" (223). Fleda's non-interference proves to be itself a kind of action and a form of participation that serves in fact to defend and preserve the reigning social-symbolic order. By accepting the Father's will as ex cathedra and his claims as de jure and by renouncing her own desire, she, unlike Mrs. Gereth, willingly submits to secondary Castration. While it is true that Mrs. Gereth never approaches the revolutionary radicalism that her situation and left-wing critics such as John Carlos Rowe might require, Fleda is the very picture of the political conformist and reactionary.

One can of course argue that such a reading fails to take the novel on its own terms and contradicts James's stated intentions in the preface, where, for example, whatever other ambiguities it may contain, James flatly asserts that between Mrs. Gereth and Fleda Vetch, the
latter is the superior character in feeling and intelligence.\textsuperscript{32} I readily concede this charge and do not wish to argue, as Lodge, for example, has, that the preface and notebooks are more "equivocal" than critics have appreciated, but wish to emphasize how the novel on one side and the preface and notebooks on the other contradict each other and fail to form a unity. Moreover, I wish to argue not only that the novel says something different from what James may ostensibly have conceived but also that one of the things it says is that it cannot be bound by original conceptions--that the novel itself, in other words, endorses an anti-intentionalist reading. James's stated intentions surely cannot simply be ignored, but they can only dimly, and somewhat ineffectually, haunt the novel like one of its ghosts.

Indeed, as Fleda herself suggests near the end of the novel, such ghosts are a constitutive element of a work of art. Such ghosts, she says, "'convey the impression in which half the beauty resides--the

\textsuperscript{32} Apart from the often quoted remark that Fleda is a "free spirit" surrounded by "fools" (xiv-xv), James says in the preface that Mrs. Gereth is the very reverse of a free spirit . . . is at the best a 'false' character, floundering as she does in the dusk of disproportionate passion . . . . Mrs. Gereth was, obviously, with her pride and her pluck, of an admirable fine paste; but she was not intelligent, was only clever, and therefore would have been no use to us at all as centre of our subject--compared with Fleda, who was only intelligent, not distinctively able. (xvi)
impression somehow of something dreamed and missed, something reduced, relinquished, resigned: the poetry, as it were, of something sensibly gone'" (249). The preface's notion of a "hard latent value" is here displaced by the figure of loss and absence, of a void. Initially, of course, Fleda recoils from this vision, because it violates her conception of art as a perfect or "happy" whole. By the end of the novel, however, such "happiness" is something Poynton needs to be "cured" of (250), and the intimation of loss and death, of the "sensibly gone," bestows beauty rather than evoke horror. The recognition of ghosts is a recognition of the rights of succession--that is of the right not simply to inherit, but to succeed, override, and usurp predecessors and progenitors. It is precisely the reinterpretation and reconstitution of Ricks that render the maiden aunt a "ghost." Ghosts, Fleda says, "'count double--for what they were and for what they are'" (250). Time thus lies at the heart of value. The past remains and persists, but is altered. In place of a solid core of "latent value," a space opens up between what the past was and what it is that successions of collectors or readers, or what have you, themselves fill with value.

Accordingly, toward the end of the novel, Fleda renounces her stance of a mere disinterested, passive guardian of Poynton's "latent value" and takes a more
aggressive and active--or "phallic"--role in Poynton's fate. While, through most of the novel, she struggles, or, rather, pretends, not to "have a hand" in Owen's affairs and the fate of Poynton, by the time she decides, in chapter 19, to act upon her own desires, she insists that "'To succeed it must be all me!'" (227). She swings from feigned detachment to an open and unbridled personal involvement that is attended by a different approach to interpretation, as manifested in her response to Owen's letter inviting her to come to Poynton and select for herself an item among its contents:

She would go down to Poynton as a pilgrim might go to a shrine, and as to this she must look out for her chance. She lived with her letter, before any chance came, a month, and even after a month it had mysteries for her that she couldn't meet. What did it mean, what did it represent, to what did it correspond in his imagination or his soul? What was behind it, what was before it, what was, in the deepest depth, within it? She said to herself that with these questions she was under no obligation to deal. There was an answer to them that, for practical purposes, would do as well as another: he had found in his marriage a happiness so much greater than, in the distress of his dilemma, he had been able to take heart to believe, that he now felt he owed her a token of gratitude for having kept him in the straight path. That explanation, I say, she could throw off; but no explanation in the least mattered: what determined her was the simple strength of her impulse to respond. (259-60)

The questions Fleda raises are the fundamental questions of the intentionalist reader or critic, of the kind of phenomenologist reader for whom the text or artifact is a container that carries its meaning within itself and, to
be properly understood, must be "explained" in terms of some correspondence between it and its creator's "imagination" or "soul." Fleda raises these questions only finally to dismiss them, thus renouncing an intentionalist approach. Resigned to the knowledge that she can never retrieve the meanings contained within "the deepest depth" of Owen's gift, that she can never ascertain the "correspondence" between it and his mind and motives, Fleda "said to herself that of what it would symbolize she was content to know nothing more than just what her having it would tell her" (261). Moreover, more important than any final answer or truth is "the simple strength of her impulse to respond." The act of interpretation no longer consists in the idealist, objective, passive reflection practiced by the political fetishist but becomes a genuine act—an active subjective response entailing personal involvement. The question Fleda now asks herself is: "Would she act upon his offer?" (emphasis added); the answer to which is "She would act with secret rapture" (260).

We might say, especially in the context of the varied "response" it has elicited, that The Spoils of Poynton itself conveys "the impression somehow of something dreamed and missed." James may, in Fleda Vetch and Mrs. Gereth, have intended to show respectively a "free spirit" marked by "high lucidity" (xv) and its
opposite. But as I have tried to show here, the novel does not merely allow for the possibility of an interpretation that departs from the author's intentions but affirms the very necessity of such interpretation by collapsing the very opposition between a disengaged, objective "intelligence" or "high lucidity" and a merely politic "cleverness" upon which James's valorization of Fleda above Mrs. Gereth as well as the notion of a fixed, authoritative, or "correct" interpretation is based. It is a lesson of the novel itself that the reader's interpretation cannot be contained, constrained, delimited, and determined by the author's intentions as expressed in any number of documents anymore than can the fate of Poynton be guaranteed by Mr. Gereth's legal will or Mrs. Gereth's sheer force of will. Even in the face of such express intentions and the author's own "explanations" of the novel, readers finally have no choice but to be content to know only what their reading it will tell them.
Aesthetic Ideology in *The Golden Bowl*

During the last year and half of his life, Henry James's letters become darkened by the shadow of the Great War. "We eat and drink, and talk and walk and think, we sleep and wake and live and breathe only the War" he writes to Lilla Sargeant Perry on September 22, 1914 (*Letters* 718). This consuming preoccupation fills the letters of this period with complaints and laments of fatigue and infirmity and feelings of helplessness, dread, and, perhaps most pervasively and poignantly, disillusionment. "Black and hideous to me," he writes to Rhoda Broughton at the start of the war, is the tragedy that gathers, and I'm sick beyond cure to have lived on to see it. You and I, the ornaments of our generation, should have been spared this wreck of our belief that through the long years we had seen civilization grow and the worst become impossible. The tide that bore us along was then all the while moving to this as its grand Niagara--yet what a blessing we didn't know it. It seems to me to undo everything, everything that was ours, in the most horrible retroactive way--but I avert my face from the monstrous scene. (713)

Alongside the historical tragedy of the war itself, the letters evoke the private drama and pathos of James's disillusionment with "civilization"--or, rather, what in another letter is now denoted as "so-called civilization" (*Letters* 758).

Such, however, is the dominant theme of not only the letters of the war period, but also, as Leon Edel points
out, the novels of "the major phase," long predating the war. James, Edel argues, "had dealt exclusively with the myth of civilization" (5: 563), but toward the end of the nineteenth century,

James was beginning to say that civilization and society, form and manner which ennable man and make rich his life, would founder without illusions, or artistic lies, the old "suspension of disbelief." In a word, society must have faith in its illusions and yet paradoxically remember they are illusions. It must have its mythology, like the Greeks; and live by its myths. This would be the philosophy of his last and greatest works. (4: 259-60)

Borrowing the central metaphor from The Golden Bowl, Edel suggests that, by the time James was writing his last three novels, "he saw the crack in civilization" (5: 218) yet continued to maintain that "civilization alone assured equilibrium and a rule of law" (5: 219). Edel's reading is widely echoed and elaborated throughout the criticism of The Golden Bowl, and, in large measure, my own reading proceeds along parallel lines. The main difference is that I wish to pursue the political ramifications of this theme, which, although implicit in readings such as Edel's, are nonetheless, for the most part, ignored; for the framework of "civilization" that Edel reads in James's late fiction--what Edel calls the "illusions," the "artistic lies" and "myths" by which "civilization" holds together--is the equivalent, I wish to argue, of what is usually designated by the term ideology.
At first glance, such an inquiry into The Golden Bowl may very well appear misdirected. If James's work in general suffers from an inadequate acquaintance with the arenas of commerce, politics, history, and society's dingier backstreets, The Golden Bowl has been accused of being divorced from a social context altogether and hermetically sealed in the airless bubble of James's imagination. His friend Edith Wharton suggested, to James's chagrin, that the four principal characters of The Golden Bowl were suspended "in the void," stripped "of all the human fringes we necessarily trail after us through life" (Backward Glance 191). "His latest novels," she writes in A Backward Glance,

for all their profound moral beauty, seemed to me more and more lacking in atmosphere, more and more severed from that thick nourishing human air in which we all live and move. The characters in "The Wings of the Dove" and "The Golden Bowl" seem isolated in a Crookes tube for our inspection.

This apparent absence of a clearly-marked, closely-observed, recognizable social space is one the chief contributing factors to the "expressionism" Donna Przybylowicz identifies in James's late fiction.33

33 See in particular chapter 7, "From Realism to Expressionism," in Desire and Repression. V.L. Parrington made a similar observation almost forty years earlier: "It is this absorption in the stream of psychical experience that justifies one in calling Henry James a forerunner of modern expressionism" (241).
Yet, although it wastes little time in dissolving to the extreme close-ups and dim interiors of which it mostly consists, *The Golden Bowl* opens with a magnificent establishing shot, almost panoramic in its evocation of London life and historical scope. With an invocation of "*Imperium,*" in which London figures as the modern equivalent of ancient Rome, the opening paragraph refers to such famous landmarks as the Thames, London Bridge, and Hyde Park Corner, citing the latter two as the vantage points from which to "recover" best the imperial dimension of the city, only to go on to tell us that "It was not indeed to either of those places that" the Prince, his "predilection" for such "recovery" "after all sufficiently vague," now betook himself, but rather to Bond Street, "where his imagination, working at comparatively short range, caused him now and then to stop before a window in which objects massive and lumpish . . . were as tumbled together as if, in the insolence of the Empire, they had been the loot of far-off victories" (3)--raising the question of whose imagination, then, if the Prince’s is "working at comparatively short range," perceives the objects in the window as "the loot of far-off victories?"

A similar question is raised by one of the most often-cited scenes in the novel, in which Maggie and her
father take a visual stock of their lives, gazing at the "picture" it presents at Portland Place:

She had passed her arm into his, and the other objects in the room, the other pictures, the sofas, the chairs, the tables, the cabinets, the "important" pieces, supreme in their way, stood out, round them, consciously, for recognition and applause. Their eyes moved together from piece to piece, taking in the whole nobleness—quite as if for him to measure the wisdom of old ideas. The two noble persons seated in conversation and at tea fell thus into the splendid effect and the general harmony: Mrs. Verver and the Prince fairly "placed" themselves, however unwittingly, as high expressions of the kind of human furniture required aesthetically by such a scene. The fusion of their presence with the decorative elements, their contribution to the triumph of selection, was complete and admirable; though to a lingering view, a view more penetrating than the occasion really demanded, they also might have figured as concrete attestations of a rare power of purchase. There was much indeed in the tone in which Adam Verver spoke again, and who shall say where his thought stopped? *Le compte y est. You've got some good things.* (2: 360).

This is a kind of rhyming scene to that of the Prince gazing at the imperial loot in the window. Now, however, it is the Prince himself who forms a part of the "tumbled-together" antiques, which, once again, are the objects of a gaze or "imagination" "working at comparatively short-range." Also again, the field beyond the "penetration" of this gaze is pointed to by an obtrusive narrator, though, as in the previous scene, it is not at all clear how far this gaze "sees." After all, we are not told that Adam Verver is incapable of a farther view; only that such a view would be "more penetrating than the occasion demanded."
However constricted the novel's own social and historical horizon, such scenes as these reveal a multiplicity, if not indeed a limitlessness, of horizons. The lineations of farther reaches and other "points of view" remain visible through and beyond the ostensibly prevailing one: in the case of the opening scene, the historical imagination or gaze that seems to reach over the head of the Prince, and in the later, the possibility of a more penetrating "view." The questions raised by these scenes do not entail merely another inquiry into the familiar Jamesian topos of "point of view." What is at issue is not so much a question of "point of view" as the mode or category of apprehension, vision, and cognition implied in the "point of view" that seems to prevail in the end. It is worth recalling that while the opening chapter of the novel concludes with the Prince's promising himself to give "a twitch" to the "shroud" that signifies the Ververs' mystery and inscrutability, the novel ends with the Prince declaring to Maggie, "I see nothing but you" (2: 369). The question is, what sort of vision is this?

Yet another story of "furniture," The Golden Bowl revolves around the same oppositions and conflicts
between the aesthetic and the commercial we saw in *The Spoils of Poynton*. Michael Sprinker remarks that the passage describing the Ververs' final survey of Portland Place reveals an "intersection of economic with aesthetic concerns" that "has been amply prepared from the first. . . ." "If the matter of *The Golden Bowl* attests to anything, it is to James’s complex understanding of the different semantic possibilities contained in the phrase, 'the sublime economy of art’" (58). While Sprinker is careful to emphasize that "the values of economy and art" cannot "be readily or thoroughly reconciled," and that "it is far from clear that the aesthetic understanding which Maggie has purportedly acquired by the end of the novel encompasses the more vulgarly materialistic possibilities implied in the final disposition of the characters" (58), he also points out that "The line in Adam's career and his speech separating the authentic aesthetic object from the commodity is characteristically thin" (59). While it is not my intention to suggest such a reconciliation, I wish to explore in closer detail than does Sprinker (whose focus after all is the novel’s preface) or most other critics, the various infiltrations and trespasses across this

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34 Apart from Sprinker, other critics who have given special attention, with widely varying degrees of cogency, to the novel’s economic aspects include Jean-Cristophe Agnew, Jan Dietrichson, Laurence Holland, Mimi Kairschner, Peggy McCormack, Donald Mull, and Carolyn Porter.
line. Although it is unclear, as Sprinker suggests, what Maggie's "aesthetic understanding" successfully "encompasses" at the end of the novel, such so-called "aesthetic understanding" or "aesthetic consciousness" (57) in fact constitutes an ideological effort to "encompass" and "contain" not just the economic, but also--though one may argue it amounts to the same thing--the socio-historical and political.

The thinness, not to say permeability, of the "line" between the aesthetic and the commercial (just what, perhaps, the more "lingering view" would "penetrate") is evident not only within the Ververs' vision but also between Adam's and the Prince's respective "short-range" gazes. While in the final chapter the Prince himself is the object of an aestheticizing/commodifying gaze, a similar objectification is implicit in his own gaze in the opening of the novel. The shop-window can be seen to act as a kind of mirror, for the Prince stands in a metonymically concomitant and metaphorically consubstantial relation to the "loot" behind it (1: 3). Carolyn Porter characterizes Amerigo at this moment as an example of Walter Benjamin's flaneur, "still on the threshold, of the city as of the bourgeois class" (Porter 138; Benjamin, "Paris" 156). The Prince has wandered into Bond Street shortly after "his fate had practically been sealed" by his signing of legal documents preliminary to
his marriage into the Verver family (1: 4-5). Adam's "power of purchase" is already on display, for the Prince has, as Sprinker puts it, already "been 'bought'" (58), "tumbled together" with Adam's loot and treasure, the "victories" and acquisitions of an ascendant "insolent" American mercantile imperialism. Amerigo's meditation on his status within the Verver empire, which makes up the bulk of the remaining chapter, culminates in his comparing himself to a coin:

He had stood still, at many a moment of the previous month, with the thought, freshly determined or renewed, of the general expectation--to define it roughly--of which he was the subject. What was singular was that it seemed not so much an expectation of anything in particular as a large bland blank assumption of merits almost beyond notation, of essential quality and value. It was as if he had been some old embossed coin, of a purity of gold no longer used, stamped with glorious arms, mediaeval, wonderful, of which the "worth" in mere modern change, sovereigns and half-crowns, would be great enough, but as to which, since there were finer ways of using it, such taking to pieces was superfluous. That was the image for the security in which it was open to him to rest; he was to constitute a possession, yet was to escape being reduced to his component parts. What would this mean but that practically he was never to be tried or tested? What would it mean but that if they didn't "change" him they really wouldn't know--he wouldn't know himself--how many pounds, shillings and pence he had to give? (1: 23)

In the coin converge the incompatible values of art and the market, but only as its opposite "sides." In contrast to Mrs. Gereth in *The Spoils of Poynton*, the Prince locates his personal "intrinsic" or "true" value, the sum of "his component parts," on the side of exchange-value.
It is the aesthetic here that blocks genuine value: for to be estimated and esteemed for one's aesthetic value is to be locked out of the market, superannuated, kept out of circulation and consigned to a realm of inactivity, of "being" rather than "doing," of what the Prince calls "futility" (1: 17).

In certain respects, the Prince manifests, despite his very different social background and status, a self-division similar to that of Hyacinth in The Princess Casamassima. Although he learns and practices the social forms of English life, he retains the determined need, while apparently all participant, of returning upon himself, of backing noiselessly in, far in again, and rejoining there, as it were, that part of his mind that was not engaged at the front . . . in shooting, in riding, in golfing, in walking, over the fine diagonals of meadow-paths or round the pocketed corners of billiard-tables. . . . (1: 327-8)

Among the English, "something of him . . . was left out," and only when he was alone or "with his own people" or "with Mrs Verver and nobody else" did he feel himself "as a congruous whole" (1: 328): "'English society,' as he would have said, cut him accordingly in two" (1: 328). At the same time, however, he seems to be hardly more reconciled to "his own people." As he explains to the future Princess:

"There are two parts of me. . . . One is made up of the history, the doings, the marriages, the crimes, the follies, the boundless bêtises of other people—especially of their infamous waste of money that might have come to me. Those things are written--
literally in rows of volumes, in libraries; are as public as they’re abominable. Everybody can get at them, and you’ve both of you wonderfully looked them in the face. But there’s another part, very much smaller doubtless, which, such as it is, represents my single self, the unknown, unimportant--unimportant save to you--personal quantity. About this you’ve found out nothing." (1: 9)

Like Hyacinth, the Prince bemoans the gulf between his public, dynastic, "historical" identity and his private self. But while, with his pledge, Hyacinth attempts to overcome this schism through a submission to his social collectivity and its historic destiny, the Prince’s marriage vows seem calculated to effect a complete escape from collectivity and history--from what he calls his "race," which, as he thinks, he is "full of." Rather than, like Hyacinth, assimilate the private self to the public, the Prince feels his "single self" must be extricated, rescued, and preserved from the actions, deeds, and "boundless bêtises of other people." Yet, after his marriage, his very singularity or uniqueness is a source of frustration. He finds that within English society he resembles "a man possessed of a shining star, a decoration, an order of some sort, something so ornamental as to make his identity not complete, ideally, without it, yet who, finding no other such object generally worn, should be perpetually and the least bit ruefully unpinning it from his breast to transfer it to his pocket" (1: 328). As with the metaphor of the coin, the Prince’s "futility" is again characterized in
aesthetic terms, and his frustration stems from a failure of fungibility, of the absence of a "relative equivalent" upon which identity can be established on the basis of comparison and exchange.

The word "futility" is a part of a larger constellation of key words around which the Prince’s ruminations revolve—relatively homely and familiar enough words in themselves but applied in the opening chapter in a manner that complicates and obfuscates their interrelations and implications. One such word is "science": the Prince, we are told, "was allying himself to science" and hoping that his future "might be scientific" (1: 17). "Science" is somewhat idiosyncratically and nebulously defined as "the absence of prejudice backed by the presence of money" (1: 17). Associated with "machinery," "science" is opposed to "superstition," yet another fuzzy term occurring repeatedly throughout the novel, which, however one interprets it, is described as "too much the consequence, or at least the exhalation, of archives" (1: 17); "superstition," in other words, is a product or concomitant of history. Amid this opposition between, on one side, "superstition," "prejudice," and "archives," and, on the other, "science," "machinery," and "money," the Ververs are clearly representatives of the latter category of terms and as such provide the promise of an
escape from "superstition" and history: "What was this so important step he had just taken but the desire for some new history that should, so far as possible, contradict, and even if need be flatly dishonour, the old?" (1: 16). But such a "new history," a concept that verges on the oxymoronic, amounts to a break with history altogether—that is, history conceived as the effect of a multiplicity of social agents and an infinite plexus of social forces within which the activities of an individual are inextricably entwined: "If what had come to him wouldn't do," the Prince thinks, "he must make something different" (1: 16); that is, he must become the subject rather than the object of history. In order to do so, however, requires merging with a whole new collectivity—but a particular type of collectivity: that exemplified by the market. As we see in both the metaphor of the coin and that of the shining star, it is the Prince's uniqueness, his lack of exchange value, that condemns him to "futility," a mere object of history, a morceau de musée. If he is to make his own history, the Prince "perfectly recognised--always in his humility--that the material for the making had to be Mr Verver's millions. There was nothing else for him on earth to make it with" (1: 16-17).

The Prince's vision of a "scientific" future would thus seem to resemble that supreme capitalist promise of
an end to history and ideology. If, as it is not I think far-fetched to do, we read "prejudice" and "superstition" as synonyms for, if not "ideology," then certainly mystification or illusion, then "science" denotes exactly the technocratic, "post-ideological," "post-historical" capitalism only fully articulated some decades later by such people as Daniel Bell and Francis Fukuyama.\textsuperscript{35} In the novel, the quintessential expression or symbol of such a technocratic socioeconomic order--of, that is, the Prince's "scientific future"--is "machinery." "Machinery" is "the antidote to superstition" (1: 17), and "It was in fact, content as he was with his engagement and charming as he thought his affianced bride, his view of that furniture that mainly constituted our young man's 'romance'" (1: 15-16). As the "furniture" of the commercial landscape of Bond Street, "machinery" is drawn into the figuration of the Prince's impending salvation from "futility," which is a memory in fact simply to screen out--much as, just in front of him while he walked, the iron shutter of a shop, closing early to the stale summer day, rattled down at the turn of some crank. There was machinery again, just as the plate glass, all about him, was money, was power, the power of the rich peoples. (1: 17-18).

\textsuperscript{35} See Bell's \textit{The End of Ideology} and Fukuyama's \textit{The End of History and the Last Man}. For a general overview of the arguments and history of the "end-of-ideology" thesis, see Job L. Dittberner, \textit{The End of Ideology and American Social Thought 1930-1960}.
Iron shutter, plate glass window: one screens, the other displays. Indeed, as Philip Fisher has shown in an illuminating discussion of the significance of the urban landscape in Theodore Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie* and late nineteenth-century America, plate glass is a crucial structural elements of both the physical and psychic architecture of turn-of-the-century capitalism and itself screens and prohibits even as it displays, the shop window thus becoming an instrument and symbol of a reified social order, commodification, and a consumerist libidinal economy. Glass, in various forms, is an insistent motif in *The Golden Bowl*, signifying—among other things, of course—the simultaneous operations of exhibition and withdrawal or confinement, as does, for example, the figurative glass near the end of the novel, behind which "lurked the whole history of the relation [Maggie] had so fairly flattened her nose against it to penetrate" (2: 329). The glass admits whatever view at all Maggie has of the history of Charlotte’s and the Prince’s relation but also forbids access to the "whole history." In the opening chapter, the plate glass embodies the market’s simultaneous operations of displaying and withholding. The plate glass reveals the treasures in Bond Street to the gaze of passersby but simultaneously drains them of a "historic" identity, rendering them mere imperial "loot." Poised on the
threshold of the bourgeois class, the Prince’s gaze through the window on Bond Street resembles a mirror-stage proleptic identification, but, unlike Mrs. Gereth in *The Spoils of Poynton*, his Imaginary identity and *jouissance* lie in the screening-out or erasure of the "record" of his life. Much has been said of the Prince’s status as a mere commodity or possession. What has not sufficiently been emphasized is the Prince’s *quest* for such a status, for perhaps nothing escapes its "origins" better than the commodity: deriving its value and identity within a constantly fluctuating system of exchange, the commodity—a vehicle for "speculation," its "being" conditioned by a continually prospective price or exchange—inhabits not so much an eternal present as a perennial futurity. The Prince’s dream is the ideal of the pure market economy: a social order that is liberated from ideology, politics, and history by being beholden exclusively to what *Nostromo*, Joseph Conrad’s contemporaneous grand parable of transcendent capitalism, calls "material interests." Such is the paradise of science and machinery—what the Prince regards as "the developments of the coming age"—to which he gives his "absolute acceptance" (1: 17), but from which he continues to find himself shut out even after his marriage to Maggie Verver.
"Futility" consists in so being shut out. "Futility" is the outside, or the other side, of "the power of the rich peoples," of science and machinery. Presumably, this side would comprise all those who constitute the cogs, rotors, and belts of the machine--the Hyacinth Robinsons and Paul Muniments. But Amerigo is not of these.

Enlisting Marx's theories of value, Carolyn Porter characterizes Amerigo as an unusual or "particular" type of commodity: "from Amerigo's standpoint," Porter writes, "Adam Verver exchanges his daughter and his millions for a morceau de musée to add to his collection" (141). Hence, "What was a non-use-value for [Amerigo] is apparently a use-value for the Ververs; otherwise, he presumes, they would not have bought him" (142). But "since only the act of exchange can prove whether a commodity has a use-value, and since the Ververs do not intend, apparently, to sell what they have purchased, the Prince cannot see what value he has for them" (142). Porter concludes that the Prince does not realize that "in fact, his use-value has been subsumed by an exchange-value which can never be measured so long as he is simply hoarded, suspended above the circulation of commodities" (142). "What makes Amerigo's purchase by the Ververs strange," Porter writes, "is that it takes him out of the circulation of commodities, placing him in the position of a possession which is 'to escape being reduced to his
component parts' by being sold again in the marketplace" (140). Such non-use-value as Porter describes is of course the *sine qua non* of the art object, which is axiomatically defined, as I have indicated in the previous chapters, in opposition to the commodity. If anything is, as Porter suggests, "strange," it is that both the Prince's "use-value" and "exchange-value" reside in this very "non-use-value." In the *morceau de musée*, aesthetic- and exchange-value coincide, for it is simultaneously "an object of beauty" and "an object of price" (1: 12).

While Adam's gaze in his final survey of Portland Place manifests a synchronic merging of commodity and art object, his career charts an emphatically temporal trajectory between what may be taken as the exemplary spatial coordinates of the commercial and the aesthetic—namely, the market and the museum. In the antagonism between art and the commodity, the museum of course traditionally represents a kind of antithesis to the market. Yet, despite Adam's efforts to distance the connoisseur from the entrepreneur and repudiate or suppress any hints of the latter in the activities of the former, so that "as one of the great collectors of the world . . . he had little to do with shops and was mostly, as a purchaser, approached privately and from afar" (1: 100), the rhetoric surrounding his
connoisseurship insistently emphasizes the indissoluble links between museum and market: thus, not only had "the years of darkness . . . been needed to render possible the years of light," but "acquisition of one sort" serves as "a perfect preliminary to acquisition of another" (1: 144). Likewise, his "wishing he were able to transport" "the little old church" at Fawns, "as it stood, for its simple sweetness, in a glass case, to one of his exhibitory halls" (1: 152) cannot but recall the same "insolence" of Empire that has tumbled together the objects behind the glass on Bond Street. Hence, while Adam, as the Prince fears, is no doubt less interested in the coin's value as specie, his "directed regard" of the Prince, later in the novel, is nonetheless "much of the same order as any glance directed, for due attention, from the same quarter, to the figure of a cheque received in the course of business and about to be enclosed to a banker" (1: 325)--even if a cheque that, as Porter suggests, Adam has no intention of cashing. Adam is able to calculate and hold both sets of values at once, but such a relationship, or economy, between the commercial and the aesthetic is not, as Porter would have it, merely a matter of "hoarding" or of "use-value" "subsumed by an exchange value which can never be measured."

Capitalizing, as it were, on both sides of the coin at
once, it involves, not a subsumption or a synthesis, but the coordination of opposed and heterogeneous values.

Such an economy, moreover, makes "use-value" of "non-use-value" and finds utility in "futility." In order, however, to understand such "use-value," it is necessary to pass from the economy to the "administration," or, to use two of the more ubiquitous words of the novel, the "management" and "arrangement," of that economy: that is to say, it is necessary to pass from economics to politics. The tangled relationship between Adam's two forms of "acquisition" is elaborated and complicated in a long and difficult passage during the novel's extended lapse in the Prince's section into Adam Verver's "point of view." The rhetoric throughout this passage is so vertiginously convoluted that it is necessary to quote the passage in full:

Nothing perhaps might affect us as queerer, had we time to look into it, than this application of the same measure of value to such different pieces of property as old Persian carpets, say, and new human acquisitions; all the more indeed that the amiable man was not without an inkling on his own side that he was, as a taster of life, economically constructed. He put into his one little glass everything he raised to his lips, and it was as if he had always carried in his pocket, like a tool of his trade, this receptacle, a little glass cut with a fineness of which the art had long since been lost, and kept in an old morocco case stamped in uneffaceable gilt with the arms of a deposed dynasty. As it had served him to satisfy himself, so to speak, both about Amerigo and about the Bernardino Luini he had happened to come to knowledge of at the time he was consenting to the announcement of his daughter's betrothal, so it served him at present to satisfy himself about
Charlotte Stant and an extraordinary set of oriental tiles of which he had lately got wind, to which a provoking legend was attached, and as to which he had made out contentedly that further news was to be obtained from a certain Mr. Gutermann-Seuss of Brighton. It was all at bottom in him, the aesthetic principle, planted where it could burn with a cold still flame; where it fed almost wholly on the material directly involved, on the idea (followed by appropriation) of plastic beauty, of the thing visibly perfect in its kind; where, in short, despite the general tendency of the "devouring element" to spread, the rest of his spiritual furniture, modest scattered and tended with unconscious care, escaped the consumption that in so many cases proceeds from the undue keeping-up of profane altar-fires. Adam Verver had in other words learnt the lesson of the senses, to the end of his own little book, without having for a day raised the smallest scandal in his economy at large; being in this particular not unlike those fortunate bachelors or other gentlemen of pleasure who so manage their entertainment of compromising company that even the austerest housekeeper, occupied and competent below-stairs, never feels obliged to give warning. (1: 196-7)

The central subject or tenor of this entire passage would seem to be Adam's so-called "aesthetic principle," which seems to operate by the same reifying principles of commodity exchange. As we have seen, reification, in both Marxist and non-Marxist thought, is the cardinal sin of the market economy. Here, however, art and "taste" would seem to result in a similar reification. The remark that Adam was "as a taster of life, economically constructed" is ambiguous: on the one hand, it may mean that Adam was frugally or resourcefully constructed, so that his calculus of taste consists of one simple little glass into which everything is poured; on the other, that his taste has the structure of an economy, a system of
exchange, the glass thus functioning as an instrument of "universal equivalence," the underlying principle of a monetary economy. As such, the glass would appear to function exactly as money, the general equivalent, the agent mediating the exchange and conversion of the entire universe of objects or goods and the very embodiment of universal equivalence.

Precisely what the figure of the glass represents, however, remains unclear. If the glass is read as a figure of the "aesthetic principle," then a kind of reflexivity, involution, and tautology results: for "cut," as it is, "with a fineness of which the art had long since been lost, and kept in a morocco case stamped in uneffaceable gilt with the arms of a deposed dynasty," the glass itself is an aesthetic object, resembling not only Adam's "finds" and museum pieces, but also recalling the Prince's metaphoric coin, with its "purity of gold no longer used" and "stamped with glorious arms." The figural and semantic operations of the two metaphors, however, are not the same. The coin is fairly straightforward: it represents the dichotomous, heterogeneous values of the Prince as simultaneously aesthetic and commercial object. In the case of the glass, a more convoluted figuration is at work, for while the two heterogeneous values in the coin are inherent in a single object--the coin itself--the figure of the glass
in fact comprises two substances, the glass and its content, the latter of which is ultimately "measured" by being "raised to [Adam's] lips"--by being, that is, "tasted." It is the operation or ritual of "taste," or of "consumption"--the glass raised to the lips--that is aestheticized; or it might be better put that "consumption," or what is called "appropriation," is assimilated to, and becomes indistinguishable from, "taste."

The glass, moreover, is a "tool" of Adam's "trade," thus combining two "measures" or categories of value that are traditionally conceived and defined in opposition to each other: the aesthetic and the utilitarian. The utilitarian is of course the side of the coin the Prince favours, the side of "power," "machinery," "doing." The other side, the side of mere "being," represents "futility" and constitutes lying outside the dominant relations of power, outside "the commercial, the financial association founded, far down, on a community of interest" (1: 293). But Adam's "aesthetic principle" resolves what the Prince regards as a dichotomy, opposition, and conflict into a coordinated duality, so that the aesthetic and utilitarian enfold each other: for, within the Ververs' domestic and social economy, it is precisely the Prince's and Charlotte's aesthetic value, their "futility," that determines their utility.
The utility of the aesthetic is in fact implicit in the rhetoric of the coin, as the coin’s aesthetic value consists in "finer ways of using it." It is also implicit in Adam’s conception of the Prince as a Palladian church--architecture in general exemplifying, as the platitude goes, the perfect marriage of form and function, and the Palladian openness and roundedness in particular perfectly meeting the specifications of the Ververs’ social and domestic space.

It becomes most explicit, however, in the language surrounding Charlotte. Adam himself protests to Maggie after she suggests to him that they take in Charlotte in order simultaneously to make themselves "grander" (1: 180) and save Charlotte from "acquaintances" who only "make use of her" (1: 181): "‘If we get her to improve us don’t we too then make use of her?’" (1: 181). But while Maggie may insist on maintaining a distinction between aesthetic and utilitarian value--replying that "‘even at the worst’" she will "‘admire [Charlotte] still more than [she] used her,’" (1: 181)--Charlotte’s eventual "function" within the Verver family thoroughly collapses the two, for "what perhaps most came out in the light" after her father’s marriage to Charlotte

was that it had been for all the world as if Charlotte herself had been "had in," as the servants always said of extra help, because they had thus suffered it to be pointed out to them that if their family coach lumbered and stuck the fault was in its lacking its complement of wheels. Having but three,
as they might say, it had wanted another, and what had Charlotte done from the first but begin to act, on the spot, and ever so smoothly and beautifully, as a fourth? Nothing had been immediately more manifest than the greater grace of the movement of the vehicle—as to which, for the completeness of her image, Maggie was now supremely to feel how every strain had been lightened for herself . . .

(2: 23)

Charlotte has been "had in" for what is specifically identified a couple of paragraphs later as her "social utility" (2: 26)—a utility determined by the aesthetic criteria of smoothness, beauty, and grace. Since "the act of representation at large and the daily business of intercourse, fell in with Charlotte's tested facility and, not much less visibly, with her accommodating, her generous view of her domestic use" (1: 316-17), she is put, "by general acclamation in charge of the 'social relations' of the family" (1: 316): "They had brought her in—on the crudest expression of it—to do the 'worldly' for them, and she had done it with such genius that they had themselves in consequence renounced it even more than they had originally intended" (1: 318). The Ververs manage to put into practice Philippe-August Villiers's dictum of letting the servants do one's living for oneself. "Social relations" become a mere branch, department, or division of the domestic economy.

The generality of these "social relations" and "acts of representation" is, as I have indicated in the previous chapters, one of the designations— one might
call it the broader or "lower" designation--of the term "culture": the public modes, manners, and rites by which "the daily business of intercourse" is conducted. If "culture," understood as the aggregate of social manners and behaviour and the norms that regulate them, is generally conceived of as a manifestation or an expression of the deeper, inner, underlying "essence" of social relations, then, as, quite literally, the "business" it is presented as in The Golden Bowl, "culture" is less a matter of "social relations" than what we nowadays call "public relations." It is a kind of keeping up of appearances--what Stephen Spender calls an "aesthetics of behaviour" (89)--the purpose of which is political, not an expression, but a management and legitimation, of inner, underlying social and economic forces. Something of this is suggested at the end of the long passage on Adam's "aesthetic principle." In a figural elaboration that only compounds the reflexive and tautological impediments of this passage, the figure of the glass is followed by metaphors that are ostensibly complementary, but that, under close scrutiny, betray a certain dissonance. The first figures the "aesthetic principle" as a potentially "devouring element," a "profane altar-fire," which under Adam's careful attendance burns safely and almost Pater-like as a "cold still flame" that does not pose any danger to the rest of
Adam's "spiritual furniture." While the nature of this "furniture" remains unclear, the dwelling is explicitly a "spiritual" one: hence, the aesthetic represents a kind of sinful, sacrilegious indulgence that if not controlled and confined can lead to a general iniquity and depravity. Fortunately, Adam Verver does manage so to confine it; but such confinement is delineated by a metaphor, immediately following, that inverts and spills out the spiritual content of the previous one by expelling Adam's internal, moral "furniture" to an "economy at large." We are no longer in a private, inner, "spiritual" realm, but in a social realm of "public relations" and "management," by means of which the "economy at large" is protected from "scandal." In this metaphor, then, the profane altar fire would seem to have devoured everything: for as a matter of tact, decorum, social form, manners, good taste, such a "management," or what is elsewhere in the novel called a "saving" of "appearances" (1: 382), represents nothing less than the application of the aesthetic to social relations themselves, where, as a means of avoiding "scandal" and preserving the larger "economy," the aesthetic takes on a distinctly political function. While in the first metaphor, the "aesthetic principle" resembles a "devouring element" in need of containment, in the
second, the aesthetic itself constitutes the "strategy of containment"; the aesthetic functions as ideology.36

The metaphor of the "fortunate bachelor" is consonant with that of the little cut glass: in each case, the keeping up of an agreeable appearance serves to obscure a potentially "scandalous" economy. Adam’s general application of the "aesthetic principle" throughout the novel can indeed be read in the light of these metaphors, his prospective museum in American City functioning on the one hand as merely another form of "acquisition"--the "receptacle of treasure sifted to positive sanctity" (1: 145) evincing the same reifying effects as does that other little glass "receptacle"--while, on the other hand, redeeming and legitimizing the economy upon which it stands. Whatever his much-commented-upon flaws in verisimilitude, Adam’s career mirrors, if in foreshortened form, the "fortunes" of the American "robber-barons" of his generation, the Carnegies, Goulds, and Vanderbilts, and indeed of the James family itself, insofar as "art" or "culture" are not only products of money, but function, moreover, as a kind of money laundering, by which earlier obscure and dubious financial practices are glossed over, redeemed, legitimized, or disavowed. Although, as many critics have

36 It is of course ideology that Fredric Jameson in The Political Unconscious defines as a "strategy of containment."
complained, Adam is seemingly and implausibly less tarnished than his historical counterparts, he regards his later "years of light" as the sole justification of his previous "years of darkness." This relationship between "darkness" and "light" is a somewhat contradictory one: while on the one hand, "the years of darkness had been needed to render possible the years of light" (1: 144), on the other, the fact of his fortune, would have been a barren fact enough if the first sharp tender shoot had never struggled into day. There on one side was the ugliness his middle time had been spared; there on the other, from all portents, was the beauty with which his age might still be crowned. He was happier doubtless than he deserved; but that, when one was happy at all, it was easy to be. He had wrought by devious ways, but he had reached the place, and what would ever have been straighter in any man's life than his way henceforth of occupying it? It hadn't merely, his plan, all the sanctions of civilisation; it was positively civilisation condensed, concrete, consummate, set down by his hands as a house on a rock—a house from whose open doors and windows, open to grateful, to thirsty millions, the higher, the highest knowledge would shine out to bless the land. (1: 144-45)

If the precise nature of Adam's "devious ways" remains nebulous, that is precisely the point: if one goes along with Benjamin's famous dictum that "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism" ("Philosophy of History" 256), as much of James's fiction, including The Golden Bowl, would seem to do, the residue and excess that Adam's "condensed" civilization discards is precisely the barbarism—or, should this seem too strong a word here, the
"scandalous"--which makes civilization possible in the first place.

The metaphor of light is, moreover, entangled in yet another knotty and frustrating figural pattern. While for Adam light designates a kind of "higher knowledge"--his own as well as that which will "shine out to bless the land" of his birth--for the Prince, light is, conversely, a figure of the Ververs' "obscurity" and "impenetrability," which are characterized as "a thickness of white air that was like a dazzling curtain of light, concealing as darkness conceals, yet of the colour of milk or snow" (1: 22). While for Adam the figures of light and darkness distinguish between his current enlightenment and superior knowledge and his previous condition of "comparative blindness" (1: 144), from the Prince's perspective, light itself represents blindness. Indeed, light is, if anything, an even more treacherous agent of concealment than darkness. The Prince, we are told, "had never known curtains but as purple even to blackness--but as producing where they hung a darkness intended and ominous" (1: 22-3). Such curtains, in other words, at least reveal the intention to conceal and their darkness betrays a potential menace; this other "white curtain" (1: 22), on the other hand, conceals its own intentions, conceals that it conceals, conceals while seeming to illuminate.
Though perhaps not apparent at first glance, this figure of "white air" bears some important resemblances to one of the most famous of the novel's metaphors: the pagoda. Initially a pagoda, then a "Mahometan mosque" (2: 4), it is an edifice of the Orient, long the epitome in Western symbology of the other. Yet, "impenetrable and inscrutable" (2: 4) though it may be, this edifice occupies "the very centre of the garden of [Maggie's] life" (2: 3):

She had walked round and round it--that was what she felt; she had carried on her existence in the space left her for circulation, a space that sometimes seemed ample and sometimes narrow; looking up all the while at the fair structure that spread itself so amply and rose so high, but never quite making out as yet where she might have entered had she wished. She hadn't wished till now--such was the odd case; and what was doubtless equally odd besides was that though her raised eyes seemed to distinguish places that must serve from within, and especially far aloft, as apertures and outlooks, no door appeared to give access from her convenient garden level. (2: 3-4)

In the metaphor of the pagoda, the alien crowds the interior of Maggie's own domain, blurring the distinctions between interior and exterior as Maggie finds herself both inside and outside. "The pagoda in her blooming garden," moreover, "figured the arrangement--how otherwise was it to be named?--by which, so strikingly, she had been able to marry without breaking, as she liked to put it, with her past" (2: 5). How long this structure has stood in Maggie's garden is not specified; what marks this moment at the opening of the second volume is what
seems to be the first careful notice Maggie has given this structure, the first stirring of a "wish" to enter it. This wish at the start of the second volume recalls the Prince's own wish at the beginning of the novel to peek behind "the shroud" (which is a part of the same figural pattern as the "white air"). Both the Prince's white air and the Princess's pagoda symbolize a state of mystification and befuddlement. As we have seen, the whole chain of metaphors extending from the "white air"--the curtains, light, mist, veils, and shrouds--delineates the mystery and "impenetrability" of the Ververs and of Americans in general, "The state of mind of his new friends, including Mrs Assingham herself" (1: 22), and, more specifically, as the images of snow and milk suggest, the seeming innocence of that state of mind. At the same time, however, it figures the mystery of what the Prince "would have called the quantity of confidence reposed in him," the Ververs' "estimate" of himself, by dint of which "He was taken seriously" (1: 23): "Lost there in the white mist was the seriousness in them that made them so take him" (1: 23-4). Hence, the "shrouded object" the Prince promises himself to uncover at the end of the first chapter is the "measure" of his own value; inside the mist, behind the shroud, lies a reflection of himself. In both the white air and, even more vividly and suggestively, in the pagoda, we can thus see the
lineaments not so much of the other as of the big Other, that is, the Otherness of the social-symbolic order, which is exterior to but simultaneously and divisively haunts or constitutes the subject, which stands on both sides of the curtain or shroud, inside and outside the pagoda, contained and reflected in, even while barred by, the structures and "arrangements" of the social-symbolic order.

Frederick Crews suggests that while Adam's money is "the primum mobile of everything," the "essence" of Adam's "seemingly unlimited" power lies in his "formlessness, colorlessness, and inaccessibility" (107). I wish to suggest, rather, that this primum mobile in fact engenders a virtual surfeit of "form" and "colour," a preponderance of what Maggie calls "miracles of arrangement." One indeed could argue that the central lesson of The Golden Bowl--the lesson that also constitutes Maggie's fall from innocence--lies in Fanny Assingham's observation that "forms . . . are two thirds of conduct" (1: 390), for Maggie's "innocence" at the start of the novel consists in her seeming unawareness of such a conjunction or dialectic of form and conduct. She is, for instance, taken aback to hear the Prince remark
upon her father's "form," replying, "'Father's form?' She hadn't seen it. 'It strikes me he hasn't got any'" (1: 7):

"But your father has his own. I've made that out. So don't doubt it. It's where it has brought him out--that's the point."

"It's his goodness that has brought him out," our young woman had, at this, objected.

"Ah darling, goodness, I think, never brought any one out. Goodness, when it's real, precisely, rather keeps people in." He had been interested in his discrimination, which amused him. "No, it's his way. It belongs to him."

But she had wondered still. "It's the American way. That's all." (1: 7)

The American "way," according to Maggie, is based on a repudiation of "ways," a disregard for forms, or rather a marked distinction between "form" and "goodness," a straightforward, unproblematic distinction between manners and morals that constitutes the "innocence" that the Prince finds so baffling in Americans. The management of the Verver family's social relations is of course exclusively the Prince's and Charlotte's responsibility, largely because it is a part of Maggie's innocence to regard such relations purely as a perfunctory matter of surface and decor. Social form is merely a veneer:

They had taken too much for granted that their life together required, as people in London said, a special "form"--which was very well so long as the form was kept only for the outside world and was made no more of among themselves than the pretty mould of an iced pudding, or something of that sort, into which, to help yourself, you didn't hesitate to break with the spoon" (2: 27-8).
Social form is structured upon a division between public and private, exterior and interior, appearance and essence; such "special form" as social life requires is purely a matter of surface, remaining ultimately superfluous and permitting, most importantly, easy access to the substance lying behind it. Maggie's innocence thus amounts to a conviction in that classically American ideal of the autonomous subject, while her fall from innocence lies in the collapse of that autonomy, the effacement of that dividing line between social and private, outside and inside, form and conduct.

While the pagoda figures Maggie's alienation and exclusion from her own "arrangements," its elevated, inaccessible "apertures and outlooks" suggest her own objectification under an imaginary gaze of which she is the object and from which she herself is debarred. Maggie "arranges" herself a new life but eventually finds herself "arranged" within it: "The word for it," Maggie muses, "... was that [the Prince and Charlotte] were treating her, that they were proceeding with her--and for that matter with her father--by a plan that was the exact counterpart of her own" (2: 41). "It all came back," Maggie thinks, to "a process" and "a policy" of "their own" (2: 44). At the party at the beginning of Book Third of the Prince's section, Charlotte tells Fanny that Maggie "likes to arrange":

"To-night for instance has been practically an arrangement. She likes [her father] best alone. And it's the way," said our young woman, "in which he best likes her. It's what I mean therefore by being 'placed.' And the great thing is, as they say, to 'know' one's place. Doesn't it all strike you," she wound up, "as rather placing the Prince too?" (1: 259).

To which Fanny replies, "'So placed that you have to arrange?'" (1: 259). Throughout the novel, all of the characters are both the subject and object of "arrangements." As crucial in Maggie's confession to Fanny that the former lives "in the midst of miracles of arrangement, half of which I admit are my own" (2: 110) as her taking responsibility for such arrangements is her measure of the limits of that responsibility.

Nevertheless, the onus of "arrangements" in the second half is taken up by Maggie. While Maggie enters the novel with a "romantic" American "innocence" based on a conviction in the autonomy of the subject and "goodness" from mere "forms," virtually her entire activity during the course of the second part of the novel amounts to "arranging" social forms and appearances, a "throwing over" all of her social "intercourse a kind of silver tissue of decorum" (2: 38). She thus takes on a role similar to that for which the Prince and Charlotte were "brought in," except that while the latter's duties extend to "representation at large" and the arrangements of such "special forms" as were required for the "outside world," Maggie's own efforts
are applied to the arrangement of her "inside world," which she previously believed required no such "special form," efforts that entail what Fanny describes as "a concern for . . . surface at any cost" (1: 381) and a "saving of appearances." If one of the salient features of the pagoda is its decorative attributes--"a structure plated with hard bright porcelain, coloured and figured and adorned at the overhanging eaves with silver bells that tinkled ever so charmingly when stirred by chance airs" (2: 3)--then Maggie's anagnorisis in the second part of the novel compels her not to a stripping away of the porcelain and silver bells, to a storming of the pagoda, a razing of its walls to expose the interior, but rather to an active participation in the application and "arrangements" of its external decor. As Fanny describes her, "'she's like an old woman who has taken to "painting" and who has to lay it on thicker, to carry it off with a greater audacity, with a greater impudence even, the older she grows'" (1: 396).

Maggie's arranging of social forms has received a great deal of attention in the criticism of the novel and further elaboration of this theme here may very well seem redundant. The brunt of the existing criticism, however, is structured upon the same "innocent" opposition between "form" and "goodness" espoused by Maggie early in the novel--that is, between the aesthetic and the moral.
While, in fact, the second half of the novel narrates a kind of social conquest or imperialism of the aesthetic, whereby a naive or "innocent" opposition of "conduct" and "goodness" to "form" collapses under the dominance of the latter, much of the criticism of the novel assiduously preserves this opposition and redeems Maggie's "aestheticism" by subordinating it to the "good," that is, to the moral. Dorothea Krook's reading of the novel is representative: she suggests that "one of the important truths that the fable of The Golden Bowl is to disclose [is] that there is a difference between the moral and the aesthetic, and that by the aesthetic alone no man is saved" (246). According to Krook, the novel teaches that "The aesthetic must be superseded by the moral," though, at the same time, "the moral must, somehow, incorporate the aesthetic" (268). The general critical judgement of the Ververs hinges upon this principle, the crucial question being whether the aesthetic is adequately assimilated to the moral: those who think it is judge the Ververs, or at least Maggie, as "good" or "redemptive"; those who don't, regard them as decadent, rapacious, acquisitive, and "evil."

Even when praising the novel, most critics fault it for its socio-economic shortcomings, and thus, in a

\[37\] The canonical representatives of this position are F.O. Matthiessen and Yvor Winters, whose respective well-known essays on The Golden Bowl mix praise with often
kind of emulation of James, ignore political questions to focus on ostensibly ethical ones. Yet the political traverses and informs, however implicitly or "unconsciously," even such seemingly "apolitical" readings.\(^{38}\) Frederick Crews, for instance, declares early in his reading that "The subject of the novel, in my opinion, is power." Yet the central "question" about power that Crews chooses to pursue is "What are its moral implications?" (85). In Crews' reading, the novel's "contrived double marriage" functions as a "social microcosm,"

the field in which each is encouraged to ease his conscience falsely. Instead of exposing moral errors, society assimilates them and thrives on them. Everything is converted, hypocritically, into "service for others," while the real truth is hushed and sanctified in accepted social forms. Society as the five characters conceive it is basically a means of circumventing reality. This is especially traceable to the Ververs, for it is they who prescribe the extreme delusions of innocence that Charlotte and Amerigo find themselves expected to preserve. Amerigo, who for all his ambition is the character least at home in an atmosphere of mystery, compares the Ververs' moral climate to a milky fog, a white curtain, and later to a golden mist. At first he sees only the promise of goodness behind this barrier, but he gradually realizes that for the Ververs it is a substitute for regarding the world as it is—a screen for the safe development of "a vicarious good conscience." (98-99)

\(^{38}\) The principal critics to address political issues in the novel include Leo Bersani, "The Subject of Power" and "The Jarnesian Lie"; Mimi Kairschner; Gabriel Pearson; Carolyn Porter; Mark Seltzer, chapter 2 of *Henry James and the Art of Power*; and Michael Sprinker.
Despite Crews's ethical objectives and moral rhetoric, his "field" of false "conscience"--with its Marxian echoes, I would think, readily apparent--and what he calls a "moral climate" bear a striking resemblance to common conceptions of ideology.

Echoing Crews, Krook observes that "the central situation in the Second Book of The Golden Bowl is . . . a colossal symbol, as audacious as it is brilliant, for expressing (in the Prince's phrase) the fathomless depths of equivocation that a sophisticated society is by its nature committed to" (276-77). While Krook's thesis is that the novel "is predominantly a fable about the redemptive power of human love" (281), depicting "the triumph of good over evil," whereby the aesthetic, a "destructive element" "embodied" by the Prince and Charlotte (267), is "suppressed" (273), she also argues that the "prevailing absence of candour," or "prevailing presence of obliqueness, evasiveness, and 'ambiguity' of so-called 'sophisticated society,' is both a matter of "necessity--as, somehow, a means of corporate self-preservation"--as well as of "beauty" (278). In other words, so-called "sophisticated society" evinces an identity or conjunction between the ideological ("corporate self-preservation") and the aesthetic ("beauty"). According to Krook, the Prince "is James's quintessential Aesthetic Man": 
The Prince's aestheticism is pre-eminently a view of life, dangerously complete and coherent, whose basic, unexamined assumption is that the aesthetic criterion, "the touchstone of taste" (as the Prince himself is to call it at a crucial point in the story), is the ultimate criterion in the conduct of life. The aesthetic, on this view, is the measure of the good; the good is a function of the beautiful. . . .(241)

But by the same token, it would seem that Maggie becomes in the second part of the novel James's "quintessential Aesthetic Woman," for far from being "annihilated" (273), as Krook maintains, the aesthetic is the very principle of both the visual and social harmony at Portland Place, the very measure of both Adam's and Maggie's final account of their "good things." Perhaps not quite as "colossal" a "symbol" of "society" as Krook suggests, The Golden Bowl might rather be characterized as a kind of miniature porcelain figurine of ideology, revealing the ideological as the aesthetic applied to the field of social relations.

The term "ideology" has been widely and justifiably assailed and dismissed in recent social and political theory for its "naive" and idealist or "metaphysical" assumptions. Yet, at the same time, we cannot seem to dislodge the term from our political discourse for the same reason that is usually cited as necessitating our doing so: ideology is always with us and no one is exempt from it. John B. Thompson identifies two different basic conceptions of the term: what he calls the "neutral
conception" designates "systems of thought" or "belief" and "symbolic practices" that "pertain to social action or political projects," irrespective of whether such "systems" and "programmes" are "directed towards the preservation or transformation of the social order" (4); by contrast, the "critical conception" essentially links ideology "to the process of sustaining asymmetrical relations of power--that is, to the process of maintaining domination" (4). This latter should not, however, be mistaken as merely a theory of "mystification" or "false consciousness." While the notion of mystification or illusion cannot be eschewed, it is also necessary, as Thompson maintains, to "resist the view that ideology is pure illusion, an inverted or distorted image of what is 'real':"

We must resist this view because, once we recognize that ideology operates through language and that language is a medium of social action, we must also acknowledge that ideology is partially constitutive of what, in our societies, "is real." Ideology is not a pale image of the social world but is part of that world, a creative and constitutive element of our social lives. . . . For in using language we are constantly involved in extending the meaning of words, in producing new meanings through metaphor, word-play and interpretation; and we are thereby also involved, knowingly or not, in altering, undermining or reinforcing our relations with others and with the world. To study ideology is to study, in part, the ways in which these creative, imaginary activities serve to sustain social relations which are asymmetrical with regard to the organization of power. (5-6)

It is worth observing that Thompson's rhetoric of creativity, metaphor, word-play, and imagination suggests
certain links between ideology and the aesthetic, for these same links represent the political themes or "content" of *The Golden Bowl*. Until now I have discussed the social dimension of the aesthetic mostly in terms of "surface" and "decor." But the aesthetic in the novel cannot be characterized solely as a decorative and deceptive surface that dresses up and disguises some underlying "essence" or "reality." Certainly the aesthetic can be said to be "ideological," or to have ideological uses, even as mere decor; but the aesthetic also betrays a certain *homology* with ideology. Both of these ideological aspects can be found in the novel's central symbol--the golden bowl. The gilt of the bowl, which conceals the crack in the bowl's core, may be seen to correspond to Adam's "aesthetic principle," his collecting mania and associated cultural practices that legitimize or occlude the "economy at large" and "the power of purchase" that makes such practices possible in the first place. There is, however, another ideological component to the aesthetic, and that is what Sprinker describes as its "power of formal integration" (57), which, as Sprinker explains,

is symbolized in [Maggie's] assembling the pieces of the shattered bowl and holding them together in her hands. On the conventional view, this gesture becomes an emblem of the altered relations among the characters in the novel after Maggie's discovery of the Prince's and Charlotte's duplicity, relations which now require the force of Maggie's moral or aesthetic (it matters little which label one
prefers) will to sustain them. Mastery of the situation derives from Maggie's superior knowledge and understanding, her skill--to invoke another classic figure for the aesthetic which is also a topos in the novel--at playing the game of social and psychological relations. This has always been the promise which aesthetic formalization holds out: its claim to ground reliable and universal epistemological judgments that confer ethical and political authority on the aesthetic condition. (57)

Sprinker thus not only collapses the polarity of moral and aesthetic that has structured most of the criticism of the novel but also assimilates these to a political function.

Frederick Crews writes that, having her eyes opened to the "corruption" of the world, "Instead of turning her face to the wall [Maggie] confronts the problem of social deception directly and masters it" (111):

By suppressing her wrath and maintaining the social appearance of harmony she can avoid any disastrous confessions or reprisals, and hence, salvage the broken pieces of her marriage. If no outward signs of discord are emitted, no one will dare show his hand by acknowledging the existence of that discord. Decorum thus enforces a precious silence, a benevolent hypocrisy.

This new policy of Maggie's is the most important shift in the novel's action, for it establishes the social ideal of harmony as a worthy object for the full American intensity of soul. (104)

For Crews, Maggie's "mastery" of "social deception" reflects a heightened "moral awareness" (111); but the social "harmony," or, as Krook calls it, the "corporate self-preservation," that Crews identifies with the "good" seems much more an ideological than a moral matter. Such ideology, however, does not consist merely of illusion
and mystification; in Crews's words, it consists rather in a "decorum" that "enforces a precious silence, a benevolent hypocrisy" (104). Indeed, throughout the entire novel everybody knows that everybody else is lying but everybody pretends not to know. Fanny describes to her husband what she calls an "understanding" between herself and Maggie that entails Maggie's keeping "up her lie so long as I keep up mine," Maggie's lie consisting in "the pretence that she believes" Fanny's lie (2: 130-31). Indeed, social relations in the novel resemble what Slavoj Zizek—elaborating upon Peter Sloterdijk's concept of "cynical reason" and "enlightened false consciousness"—calls "ideological fantasy": in contrast to the victim of "false consciousness" or "misrecognition,"

The cynical subject is quite aware of the distance between the ideological mask and the social reality, but he none the less still insists upon the mask. . . . Cynical reason is no longer naïve, but is a paradox of an enlightened false consciousness: one knows the falsehood very well, one is well aware of a particular interest behind an ideological universality, but still one does not renounce it. (29)

Zizek suggests that in order to understand the concept of ideological fantasy, "we must return to the Marxian formula 'they do not know it, but they are doing it,' and pose ourselves a very simple question: Where is the place of ideological illusion, in the 'knowing' or in the 'doing' in the reality itself?" (30). According to Zizek,
"The fundamental level of ideology . . . is not of an illusion masking the real state of things but that of an (unconscious) fantasy structuring our social reality itself" (33):

If the illusion were on the side of knowledge, then the cynical position would really be a post-ideological position, simply a position without illusions: "they know what they are doing, and they are doing it." But if the place of the illusion is in the reality of doing itself, then this formula can be read in quite another way: "they know that, in their activity, they are following an illusion, but still, they are doing it." (33)

It is important to remember that to the extent that the goal is illusion and deception, the specific and sole target of such deception is Adam. As Crews says, "Adam 'created' the world that Charlotte, Amerigo, and Maggie inhabit" (107). As "the prime mover" in the novel's "social universe" (Crews 98), Adam is the engine or animus of all its social relations; everyone, not just Charlotte, is caught in what Maggie perceives as "his web" and "his long fine cord" (2: 358). As his very name emphasizes--the Name of the Father of fathers--he is the very origin of "social relations," of "society." Adam Verver is, in other words, a figure of the social-symbolic order, of the Law, itself. Echoing much of the criticism before and after him, Crews goes so far as to suggest that, in "the world of The Golden Bowl . . . Adam may be called its God and Maggie its Christ" (107), whose "role" it is to "represent" Adam "in flesh" (108).
Whatever one might make of the redemptive theme of Crews's interpretation, his religious allegory can with little adjustment be transferred to the socio-symbolic level: if, as Crews suggests, Adam "is capitalism almost in the abstract" (111), then the social relations, the management of which Maggie undertakes, are the incarnation, embodiment, or "representation" of that abstraction. All the dissimulation, equivocation, and "humbuggery" throughout the novel occur for Adam's sake and for the sake of preserving what the novel calls the "equilibrium" of the social order that exists in his name, Maggie at one point becoming "in all her conscious person, the very form of the equilibrium they were, in their different ways, equally trying to save" (2: 268):

she was more than ever conscious that any appearance she had would come round more or less straight to her father, whose life was now so quiet, on the basis accepted for it, that the least alteration of his consciousness, even in the possible sense of enlivenment, would make their precious equilibrium waver. That was at the bottom of her mind, that their equilibrium was everything, and that it was practically precarious, a matter of a hair's breadth for the loss of the balance. It was the equilibrium, or at all events her conscious fear about it, that had brought her heart into her mouth; and the same fear was on either side in the silent look she and Amerigo had exchanged. The happy balance that demanded this amount of consideration was truly thus, as by its own confession, a delicate matter; but that her husband had also his habit of anxiety and his general caution only brought them after all more closely together. (2: 17-18)

Whatever social developments, readjustments, realignments, and conflicts may occur, it is "as if a sense for the
equilibrium was what, between them all, had most power of insistence" (2: 39).

Social "representations" are not merely a matter of dissimulation or mystification but are— even in their dissimulation—constitutive of the social order, which is only present in its re-presentation. Social relations, therefore, "exist" or are embodied at the level of the Symbolic or the signifier. In the midst of her machinations in volume two, Maggie makes "her care for [Adam's] serenity, or at any rate for the firm outer shell of his dignity, all marvellous enamel, her paramount law" (2: 202-3), the rhetoric here effacing distinctions between depth and surface and suggesting indeed that the "outer shell" is equivalent to the inner "serenity." In this way, any clear dichotomy between so-called "reality," "essence," or "truth" and mere "appearance" or "representation," between the "imaginary" and the "real," is precluded, for the mere appearance or representation of equilibrium itself constitutes equilibrium. If such appearances are a lie, they are those "artistic lies," as Edel puts it, which hold civilization together. When Thompson writes that "society cannot exist . . . without forging a representation of its unity" (25), the full gamut of the meaning of "forging" should be assumed. It is, in this regard, an interesting fact about Adam the collector that "there was
henceforth only one ground in all the world, he felt, on which the question of appearance would ever really count for him. He cared that a work of art of price should 'look like' the master to whom it might perhaps be deceitfully attributed" (1: 146-7). Dissimulation and forgery are perfectly serviceable as long as they "look" authentic. Conversely, Maggie, for her part, considers that if her domestic and social relations balanced "they balanced--she had to take it; it deprived her of every pretext for arriving, by however covert a process, at what [Adam] thought" (2: 73). Ultimately it doesn't matter what Adam thinks; only that he continue to sanction and support the reigning social "representations" of his power. What lies "behind" the surface is less of an issue than the surface itself.

Terry Eagleton observes that ideology

is not itself, as some historicist Marxism would seem to suggest, the founding principle of social unity, but rather strives in the teeth of political resistance to reconstitute that unity at an imaginary level. As such, it can never be simple "other-worldliness" or idly disconnected thought; on the contrary, it must figure as an organizing social force which actively constitutes human subjects at the roots of their lived experience and seeks to equip them with forms of value and belief relevant to their specific social tasks and to the general reproduction of the social order. But those subjects are always conflictively, precariously constituted. . . . (Ideology 222-3)

As we see in The Princess Casamassima, The Spoils of Poynton, and The Golden Bowl, the subject is simultaneously constituted, and divided and alienated by
the social-symbolic order, and all three novels narrate the individual attempt to achieve at the level, or by means, of the social-symbolic, a wholeness that this order itself ruptures. So, in The Golden Bowl, the Prince, the Princess, and Charlotte attempt to overcome their own irreducible Otherness by claiming it as their own, by inscribing, or re-inscribing themselves upon the Other, that is, by acting so as to preserve the "equilibrium" of the social-symbolic order that constitutes and sustains them. As Crews puts it, "however imperfect [Maggie's] world has now become, all of the characters are inextricably dependent on it; they live there" (111). Such equilibrium involves, as Charlotte says, "'knowing' one's place" within the social-symbolic order. It is worth noting the inverted commas. The implications would be different if these marks bracketed the entire expression--"know one's place"--to indicate citation of the proverbial; but here it is specifically "knowing" that is qualified. A "knowledge" that is not literally a "knowledge" of course resembles canonical conceptions of both ideology and the aesthetic. "Knowing" is less a matter of cognition than of re-cognition--specifically of one's place in the social order, of where one belongs and of how that place is to be occupied. Altering Althusser's notion of interpellation, whereby "ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as
concrete subjects . . . which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey you there!'" (173-74), we may say, rather, that it is the social-symbolic order that "hails" or "names" the subject, while ideology constitutes the subject's acknowledgment of that "you." That is, while the social-symbolic "names" us, ideology permits our recognition of and conditions our response to that name.

While the pagoda figures the radical Otherness of Maggie's own social "arrangements" as simultaneously an irruption and exclusion, there exists as well a related strand of metaphors of containment, confinement, and constraint, which can be read in light of what Eagleton describes as the subject's "conflictive" and "precarious" constitution. All figures of social "arrangements," these images are suggestive, from one moment to the next and sometimes simultaneously, of both entrapment and freedom, pain and comfort: thus Charlotte observes that Fanny is "fixed, that she must stand exactly where everything has, by her own act, placed her" (1: 341), while also observing--with a certain glee, it is important to recall--that she herself is, "by no merit of my own, just fixed--fixed as fast as a pin stuck up to its head in a cushion. I'm placed--I can't imagine any one more placed. There I am" (1: 256). In the first case, the fixity is self-imposed but agonizing and terrifying, while in the
second it is compelled from without yet liberating and exhilarating. A similar tension can be found in the repeated figure of the bath. Just as the "presence" of the Prince's race is like "the consciousness of some inexpugnable scent" from a "chemical bath," Maggie's own "romantic" appraisal of him "but sweetened the waters in which he now floated, tinted them as by the action of some essence, poured from a gold-topped phial, for making one's bath aromatic" (1: 10). Meanwhile, later in the novel, Maggie sits "in the solid chamber of her helplessness as in a bath of benevolence artfully prepared for her, over the brim of which she could but just manage to see by stretching her neck" (2: 44). Here, the emphasis is more on the element of confinement, the bath following upon the figure of a "vault" arched above Maggie's head and followed by the metaphor of a "gilded cage" (2: 44). The decorative and aesthetic features of most of these metaphors are not incidental. The only difference, for example, between the Prince's two "baths" is the sensual agreeableness of that tended by Maggie. Similarly, Maggie's own bath is one of "benevolence artfully prepared," while her "cage" is "gilded." The purpose of the aesthetic features of all these figures would seem to be to confer a distracting and palliative influence upon an essentially or potentially traumatic and painful situation.
The most concentrated and suggestive of such metaphors is that of the silken halter "looped" around Charlotte's neck and held by Adam. Two commonly accepted critical views hold that, while, on the one hand, Adam Verver remains an opaque and virtually indecipherable character--"a little island," as Stephen Spender describes him, surrounded by a "sea of vagueness" (95)--we can be fairly certain, on the other, that he never comes to know very much about his wife's and son-in-law's past. Adam's lack of knowledge and innocence, however, have been greatly exaggerated by the criticism. For one thing, Charlotte's bondage, particularly as represented by the "silken halter" that Adam holds in his hand and Maggie's perception of the "strange tears" in his eyes (2: 292), which express his pity for Charlotte, does not make much sense in the absence of Adam's knowledge. Nevertheless, as the Prince observes early in the novel, Adam displays a certain ignorance or innocence:

There was even something in him that made [Adam's] position, on any occasion, made his relation to any scene or to any group, a matter of the back of the stage, of an almost conscious want of affinity with the footlights. He would have figured less than anything the stage-manager or the author of the play, who most occupy the foreground; he might be at the best the financial "backer," watching his interests from the wing, but in rather confessed ignorance of the mysteries of mimicry. (1: 169-70)

Within the reified, rationalized social relations--the social "representation" by proxy--that Adam has purchased for himself, his own "want of affinity with the
footlights" is "conscious" and calculated. His very status as a "financial 'backer'" consigns him to the wings. It is in his "interest" to recede from sight, to keep his fund and exercise of power hidden: "His greatest inconvenience, he would have admitted had he analysed, was in finding it so taken for granted that as he had money he had force. It pressed upon him hard and all round assuredly, this attribution of power" (1: 131). So it is that the "white mist" can be seen to figure, at the same time, American "innocence" or ignorance and the social-symbolic order, for it is precisely the American "way" to plead innocence and ignorance before the Law, to disavow, as we have seen, political and social determination, to repudiate and transcend "social forms" in an affirmation of individual autonomy and self-determination, to manifest ideology in the guise of non-ideology. And it is in this regard that the figure of the halter is perhaps most interesting. The silk of which the halter is made is yet another instance of the ornamentation of power and coercion. In addition, the hand that clutches the end of the halter remains at all times "pocketed" (2: 287) and "out of sight" (2: 331), while the cord is "oh quite conveniently long!" (2: 331), allowing ample distance between Adam and his "subject" or social "representative." The figure of the halter evokes the dynamics of power and ideology implicit in the
constitution of both subject and society, as well as the dialectic between individual autonomy and social-symbolic determination. As Maggie observes Adam and Charlotte "making their daily round" at Fawns, the two appear "so together yet at the same time so separate" (2: 287):

Charlotte hung behind with emphasised attention; she stopped when her husband stopped, but at the distance of a case or two, or of whatever other succession of objects; and the likeness of their connexion wouldn't have been wrongly figured if he had been thought of as holding in one of his pocketed hands the end of a long silken halter looped round her beautiful neck. He didn't twitch it, yet it was there; he didn't drag her, but she came. . . . (2: 287).

Although there may be a noose around her neck, Charlotte nonetheless appears to move of her own accord. And while Adam may hold a power of coercion, such coercion need not be exercised because Charlotte already "knows" her place.

What is it but ideology that thus "contains" power in this way, that obviates the violent compulsion, antagonism, and division dormant in social relations? Ideology obviates a coercive exercise of power by inscribing or, as Eagleton suggests, "reproducing" power relations at the level of the individual; power is exercised not through the individual's subjection but through her subjectivization. In this way there crystallizes what the Prince thinks of as "an association, founded, far down, on a community of interest." Each member of such an association has a subjective "self"-interest in the preservation of the
"objective" social order; as Adam puts it: "we're selfish together—we move as a selfish mass. You see we want always the same thing . . . and that holds us, that binds us, together. We want each other . . . only wanting it, each time, for each other. That's what I call the happy spell." (2: 91-2). Such is the "binding" implicit in all those metaphors in the novel in which constraint and freedom are conflated. The figure of the halter reveals perhaps more starkly than any other the nature of the "subject," a term which, as Zizek explains, has a "double meaning":

(1) a person subject to political rule; (2) a free agent, instigator of its activity—subjects can realize themselves as free agents only by means of redoubling themselves, only in so far as they "project," transpose, the pure form of their freedom into the very heart of the substance opposed to them; into the person of the subject-Monarch as "head of the State." In other words, subjects are subjects only in so far as they presuppose that the social substance, opposed to them in the form of the State, is already in itself a subject (Monarch) to whom they are subjected. (229)

In language that cannot but remind us of the novel, Zizek observes that "society is always traversed by an antagonistic split which cannot be integrated into symbolic order" and that "the stake of social-ideological fantasy is to construct a vision of society which does exist"; "we may say," Zizek concludes, "that 'Society as a corporate Body' is the fundamental ideological fantasy." (126)
John B. Thompson writes:

A society cannot exist . . . without forging a representation of its unity. While this unity is attested to by the reciprocal interdependence of social agents, it is constantly threatened by the separation of their activities and the temporal mutability of social relations. The representation of unity in the context of restricted and mutable social relations thus implies the projection of an "imaginary community" by means of which "real" distinctions are portrayed as "natural," the particular is disguised in the universal, the historical is effaced in the atemporality of essence. (25)

While I have been discussing aesthetic/ideological social representation in *The Golden Bowl* almost exclusively as a synchronic structure, usually delineated, as in the figures of the bowl and the halter and in my use here of the word "structure," in spatial terms, "the mutability of social relations" that Thompson here speaks of reminds us that such representations also have a fundamentally temporal dimension. What Thompson calls "the separation of activities" is not only a separation between subjects but also a separation in time, "the mutability of social relations" dividing the subject from the "activities" not just of other subjects but also of its own. The potentially devastating consequences of this mutability is one of the prevailing themes in James's letters at the start of the war and the cause of the anger and despair
expressed in these letters. As early as July 1914, on the eve of the war, we find James writing:

What one first feels one's self uttering, no doubt, is but the intense unthinkability of anything so blank and so infamous in an age that we have been living in and taking for our own as if it were of a high refinement of civilisation—in spite of all conscious incongruities; finding it after all carrying this abomination in its blood, finding this to have been what it meant all the while, is like suddenly having to recognise in one's family circle or group of best friends a band of murderers, swindlers and villains—it's just a similar shock. (Matthiessen, James Family 667)

What is spatially conceived of as an immanence or interiority—"civilization" "carrying this abomination in its blood"—becomes in its temporal dimension a function of posterity, the "meaning" of an "age," though latent, immanent, present, only revealing itself in the future. In this way, however, posterity is all too able, as James writes to Rhoda Broughton, "to undo everything, everything that was ours, in the most horrible retroactive way."

Fredric Jameson distinguishes between "history" and "History." For Jameson, capitalized History is equivalent to Lacan's capitalized Real: in his essay "Imaginary and Symbolic in Lacan," Jameson suggests that "it is not terribly difficult to say what is meant by the Real in Lacan. It is simply History itself" (104). Like Lacan's Real, History denotes "what resists symbolization absolutely" (104), that is, history-in-itself, an elusive, amorphous, recalcitrant excess that while
pressing upon and incising the symbolic cannot be
domesticated and contained by the latter--cannot be
explicated, represented, put into words. It can be
manifest as a specific, undiagnosable, irrepressible
symptom, or posited as what structuralists and Marxists
designate as the historical "totality." In The Golden
Bowl, an evocation of this latter may be read in Maggie's
peering through the "glass," behind which "lurked the
whole history of the relation she had so fairly flattened
her nose against it to penetrate--the glass Mrs Verver
might at this stage have been frantically tapping from
within by way of supreme irrepressible entreaty" (2:
329). "Whole history," or History, stands as a barrier
between self and other. This "glass" can be juxtaposed
with the "glass case" around "the little old church" and
Adam's assorted morceaux de musée; these museum pieces,
moreover, have a negative image in what may be regarded
as another figuration of History: Maggie's "accumulations
of the unanswered":

They were there, these accumulations; they were like
a roomful of confused objects, never as yet
"sorted," which for some time now she had been
passing and re-passing, along the corridor of her
life. She passed it when she could without opening
the door; then, on occasion, she turned the key to
throw in a fresh contribution. So it was that she
had been getting things out of the way. They
rejoined the rest of the confusion; it was as if
they found their place, by some instinct of
affinity, in the heap. They knew in short where to
go, and when she at present by a mental act once
more pushed the door open she had practically a
sense of method and experience. What she should
never know about Charlotte's thought--she tossed that in. It would find itself in company, and she might at last have been standing there long enough to see it fall into its corner. The sight moreover would doubtless have made her stare, had her attention been more free--the sight of the mass of vain things, congruous, incongruous, that awaited every addition. It made her in fact, with a vague gasp, turn away. . . . (2: 14-15)

Beside the figuration of history as a museum of treasures and monuments can stand this figure of history as an accumulation of junk, which in its dumbness and uselessness resembles the loot in the shop window though it "signifies" even less by not even having a price.

Like James, Maggie averts her face from the monstrous scene, which is here a scene of History's intransigent incomprehensibility, opacity, and intractability. But if History at the level of the Real constitutes the frontier between self and other, between the subject and the social totality, then lower-case history, history at the level of the Symbolic, as we have already seen in both The Princess Casamassima and The Spoils of Poynton, and well as in the letters of the war period, divides the subject itself by intervening, as Other, in the subject's own intentions and "meaning." As Fanny Assingham declares at one point, "'I tried, I tried hard to act for the best. And, you know . . . I believe it's what I shall turn out to have done'" (2: 168-9). The meaning of her action is not determined by her
"intention" but by posterity. History "means" for her.  
Likewise, Maggie muses in the opening chapter of the second section that, having "merely driven on a certain Wednesday to Portland Place instead of remaining in Eaton Square,"

there had appeared beforehand no reason why she should have seen the mantle of history flung by a single sharp sweep over so commonplace a deed. That, all the same, was what had happened; it had been bitten into her mind, just in an hour, that nothing she had ever done would hereafter, in some way yet to be determined, so count for her. . . . (2: 10; emphasis added)

And only a few paragraphs later, "the blankness" on Amerigo's face upon finding Maggie at home instead of with her father at Eaton Square, "might, should she choose to insist on it, have a meaning--have as who should say, an historic value--beyond the importance of momentary expressions in general" (2: 16).

Like the Pagoda, the rhetoric of history in this chapter signals a turn in Maggie's social and historical consciousness. When Amerigo warns Maggie in the opening chapter of the novel that "'The happiest reigns . . . are the reigns without any history,'" Maggie replies, "'Oh I'm not afraid of history!'" (1: 9), because for Maggie history at this stage is of Nietzsche's "monumental"

39 In his lamentations over "civilization" on the eve of the war, James observes that "no doubt one will pityingly and wretchedly feel that the intention, after all, was never so bad" (Matthiessen, James Family 668; James's emphasis).
variety. While the Prince’s "romance of machinery" in the novel’s opening chapter holds out the possibility of escaping "race" and "history," Maggie’s own "romantic" imagination consists in an aestheticizing vision that reduces and flattens history into an accumulation of knick-knacks and monuments: her and Adam’s romantic imagination, Maggie tells the Prince, is "‘what makes everything so nice for us’" (1: 11). Within such an aestheticizing vision, history is "other" in the sense that it stands apart from the subject, manifest as an external object of total—-that is, both material and cognitive--possession, as exemplified by the morceau de musée, which, as well as being "an object of beauty" and "an object of price," belongs "to a class about which everything is known" (1: 12). By contrast, the "mantle" by which history is figured in the second volume belongs to that strand of metaphors made up of curtains, drapery, and shrouds: on the one hand of course the "mantle" bestows a kind of dignity upon the seemingly "commonplace"; on the other, it acts as a kind of cloak.

One of the more remarkable aspects of James’s disillusionment with "civilization" in the letters is its resemblance to the disillusionment that pervades The Golden Bowl. Indeed, his remarks on the eve of the war betray a striking affinity with a passage he had written a good decade earlier, for his expression of "shock" in
terms of a "recognition" of villainy inside one's "family circle" recalls Maggie Verver's circuit around her own family circle and the "horror of finding evil seated all at its ease where she had only dreamed of good; the horror of the thing hideously behind, behind so much trusted, so much pretended, nobleness, cleverness, tenderness. It was the first sharp falsity she had known in her life, to touch at all or be touched by it . . . " (2: 237). To be sure, the "horror" of adultery can only seem trivial before that of the war, but what the letters and novel have in common is the experience of disillusionment, not just at the enormity of "the horror of the thing hideously behind," but also at the discovery of a "behind" at all. But, while in his letter to Rhoda Broughton, James confesses that such a discovery forces him to "avert [his] face from the monstrous scene," in a later letter to Edmund Gosse he writes:

I myself find concentration of an extreme difficulty: the proportions of things have so changed and one's poor old "values" received such a shock. I say to myself that this is all the more reason why one should recover as many of them as possible and keep hold of them in the very interest of civilisation and of the honour of our race; as to which I am certainly right--but it takes some doing! (Letters 720)

In other words, amid the wreckage of "so-called civilization," one must "recover" one's now mangled "values"--the scars here appearing as the quotation marks within which values must now be suspended--in the
interest of the very thing under the weight of which they collapsed and now lie with in ruins. Finding one's most cherished convictions discredited--finding them, in Maggie's terms, "false"--one must redouble those convictions, committing oneself to one's "values" and to "civilization" no less than one did to values and civilization. Similarly, the sight of her family at Fawns,

positively brought home to [Maggie] that to feel about them in any of the immediate, inevitable, assuaging ways, the ways usually open to innocence outraged and generosity betrayed, would have been to give them up, and that giving them up was, marvellously, not to be thought of. (2: 237)

Hence, before the "wreck" of her "beliefs" and the wreckage of a social order that has been revealed as "false" and "evil," Maggie--again like James--can only attempt to "recover" those same "beliefs" and that same order.

Amid the kind of aesthetic rhetoric that, as we have seen, is endemic to interpretations of Maggie, Leo Bersani characterizes such "recovery" by analogy with James's notion of "revision":

Reality in The Golden Bowl consists in the novelistic arrangements of the first half; the second half gives us the correction, the unashamed, radical revision which Maggie then makes of her own work and which James, speaking in the preface to The Golden Bowl of his own revisions for the New York edition of his novels, defines and defends as "re-perusal, registered," as "the particular vision of the matter itself that experience had at last made the only possible one."
We couldn’t hope for a more exact summation of The Golden Bowl. In it human relations are seen entirely in terms of their compositional appeal. ("Lie" 147)

The analogy is apt, for, certainly in the preface, the purpose of "revision," defined as a "seeing again," is to reclaim what is "ours" but of which we have been dispossessed by "history." Extending Bersani’s analogy, we can describe not only Maggie’s but perhaps every other character’s "efforts," at least at the start of the novel, in terms borrowed from the preface--that is, as "redolent of good intentions baffled by a treacherous vehicle" (1: xxi). As Fanny says, "‘There were beautiful intentions all round’" (1: 392). Instead of "giving up" the aberrant design that ultimately rises out of everyone’s avowed "good faith," Maggie undertakes its "revision" and "recomposition," or what James calls in the preface "re-representation" (1: xiii). As she tells Fanny, "‘I want a happiness without a hole in it big enough for you to poke in your finger.’" "‘A brilliant perfect surface,’” Fanny replies. "‘The golden bowl--as it was to have been,’" Maggie says: "‘The bowl with all our happiness in it. The bowl without the crack’" (2: 216-17). "Revision" may thus suggest a third, redemptive "form" of history, one which attempts to heal the wounds of both the Real and the Symbolic, to recoup the subject’s losses, to reconcile the self with both other and Other.
As such, James's delineation of "revision" in the preface is instructive. James here is careful to distinguish between "revising" and "re-writing": "What re-writing might be was to remain--it has remained for me to this hour--a mystery" (1: xvi); "To revise," on the other hand, "is to see, or to look over, again--which means in the case of a written thing neither more nor less than to re-read it" (1: xvi). James's implication is that to "re-write" is to reinvent, recreate--to begin anew--while to "revise" is only to "see again" the same "'old' matter" (1: xvii). But while to "reread" his most recent work is "to become aware . . . that the march of my present attention coincides sufficiently with the march of my original expression" (2: xiii), in his rereading of his "work previous to some dozen years ago . . . no such active, appreciative process could take place on the mere palpable lines of expression--thanks to the so frequent lapse of harmony between my present mode of motion and that to which the existing footprints were due" (1: xiii). In the earlier works, there arises a "bar to intercourse" between the writer that he was then and the reader that he is now, "a disparity of sense between" the two, a disparity between "expression" and "experience"; for as James writes,

the act of revision, the act of seeing it again, caused whatever I looked at on any page to flower before me as into the only terms that honourably expressed it; and the "revised" element in the
present Edition is accordingly these terms, these rigid conditions of re-perusal, registered; so many close notes, as who should say, on the particular vision of the matter itself that experience had at last made the only possible one. (1: xvi)

"Revision" thus involves the interrelation of three separate categories: "matter," "expression," and "experience." The first two, it could be argued without much strain, correspond to what we nowadays call the signified and the signifier; the last, it would seem, is nothing other than time and history, the troublesome wild card that intervenes and meddles between the former terms, causing--as we have already seen in the letters and the novel--all kinds of havoc. In the preface, it is "experience" that reveals "the old catastrophes and accidents, the old wounds and mutilations and disfigurements" (1: xxii) that "revision," "seeing again," means to correct and heal. "Revision," which, again, is not the same as re-writing, is an "act of re-appropriation" that entails "a sudden large apprehension of the Absolute" (1: xiv). What precisely is meant by this last term must remain unclear, for James does not define or elaborate upon it, but what is important is that the "apprehension" of this "Absolute" involves the direct apprehension and "re-appropriation" of "matter" itself:

The "old" matter is there, re-accepted, re-tasted, exquisitely re-assimilated and re-enjoyed--believed in, to be brief, with the same "old" grateful faith (since wherever the faith, in a particular case, has
become aware of a twinge of doubt I have simply concluded against the matter itself and left it out); yet for due testimony, for re-assertion of value, perforating as by some strange and fine, some latent and gathered force, a myriad more adequate channels. (1: xvii)

These "more adequate channels" are the "terms" that "experience" provides: but to permit the intervention of "experience" this way would be, as Sprinker points out, to sacrifice the work of art to those "vicissitudes of history" that threaten "the semantic stability of signs upon which the power of the aesthetic depends." Sprinker remarks that "If the aesthetic is opened up to all the vicissitudes of history, if its value is left to float, then no force, however apparently hegemonic and capable of regulating the situation, can protect it from collapse in a catastrophic devaluation of the market" (59). Having "opened up" the aesthetic in precisely this way, however, James forestalls its collapse by a kind of doubling back upon, or a reflexive invocation, of the aesthetic itself, as evident in the metaphor of "flowering," which we have already seen above. While, like the "more adequate channels," the "flower" figures the "terms," the "close notes," and "the particular vision of the matter itself that experience had at last made the only possible one," James's further elaboration of this metaphor bespeaks a crucial dialectic between "experience" and "matter": "What I have been most aware of asking myself," James remarks,
... is how writers, on such occasions of "revision," arrive at that successful resistance to the confident assault of the new reading which appears in the great majority of examples to have marked their course. The term that superlatively, that finally "renders," is a flower that blooms by a beautiful law of its own (the fiftieth part of a second often so sufficing it) in the very heart of the gathered sheaf; it is there already, at any moment, almost before one can either miss or suspect it—so that in short we shall never guess, I think, the working secret of the revisionist for whom its colour and scent stir the air but as immediately to be assimilated. (1: xix)

Hence, although the "revisionist’s" terms represent the "growth" (1: xvi) of his "experience," they nonetheless "bloom by a beautiful law of their own," an exemplary instance of the autoteliology of the aesthetic which conflates free will and necessity: the revisionist’s "terms" are, at the same time, a product of his "experience" and "there already," mediating between "experience" and "matter" in such a way as to collapse any differences and discrepancies between the two.

In his commentary on the preface, J. Hillis Miller reminds us that the word absolute means "unbound," "untied," "free of any shackles" (116), yet "the Absolute" in the preface and the novel—whether in the form of what we call the aesthetic or of what we call ideology—in fact binds, ties, connects, grounds, and contains; it is the very "ground" upon which James’s "revision" "marches." Miller observes that James is after "a glimpse of the ‘thing’ behind ‘things’" (105), "The type or idea of a thing" that we might call, Miller
suggests, the "real thing" (110). Hence, "what the novel represents," Miller writes, is "something behind or deep within the text" (110); "the re-reader or 'second reader,'" therefore, "must subject himself or herself to a higher law than that ascertainable in the text, namely the law to which the text itself was first subject" (118). As this "higher law," the aesthetic reconciles "matter," "expression," and "experience," bridging the gap between sign and referent, the Symbolic and the Real, the individual and the socio-historical. The virtue of this "higher law" is that it heals the ruptures, divisions, and "wounds" that the (lower) socio-historical "Law" inflicts. While we feel this latter as an oppressive, coercive, and painful constraint upon our freedom, the former turns necessity itself into freedom. In the preface, James says of "revision" that "What was thus predominantly interesting to note . . . was the high spontaneity of these deviations and differences, which became thus things not of choice, but of immediate and perfect necessity"--but a necessity that constitutes a "confident and free. . . . act of re-appropriation" (1: xiv).

In the novel, while the "line" between the "authentic aesthetic object" and the "commodity" is "thin," so that the former remains vulnerable to the assaults of the latter and to the vicissitudes of the
economy and history, it is the aesthetic itself that constitutes the "regulating," "hegemonic" "force" that "protects" the "sign" and potentially all Symbolic acts "from collapse in a catastrophic devaluation," whether it be of the market or of "civilization." The aesthetic is thus not merely a matter of surface, decor, ornamentation, and illusion, but of internal constitution; it is the shadow that is the substance. This dual, paradoxical, pervasive, and imperial force--reflected, for example, in the chain of metaphors surrounding Adam's "aesthetic principle," where the aesthetic is one moment internal, private, spiritual, contained, and isolated and, the next, a principle of "the economy at large"--is evident from the very start, already there in one of the earliest images that figure the relationship between the aesthetic and the economic: the "old embossed coin." As we have seen, "futility" for the Prince consists in an aesthetic status that withholds him from circulation and prevents him from being "changed"; in this way, he constitutes "a possession, yet was to escape being reduced to his component parts." But what does it mean for the coin to be reduced to its "component parts"? Given its purity, it means simply being reduced to nothing more than gold metal.

James said somewhere that he discovered after his first visit to the Rothschilds that he could stand a
great deal of gold, and there could hardly be clearer evidence of this tolerance than *The Golden Bowl* itself, which is virtually saturated in this element. But while gold, on the one hand—as we see not only in the novel but even in the preface, where James characterizes his revisions as "the finer air of the better form" that "may sufficiently seem to hang about" his works and "gild them over" (1: xxii)—might seem merely a thing of surface, of appearance and illusion, it is already, in the figure of the coin, the very essence or foundation of the economy. As Jean-Joseph Goux explains in his Lacanian analysis of numismatics, the gold standard

> is an umbilical or gravitational anchor that ensures the consistency of a system of conventional signifying marks and prevents them from drifting or floating in relation to the valences they are meant to signify. The very logic of this economic procedure, without any intervention from linguistics or psychoanalysis, makes it easy to declare that what hangs upon the existence of this standard coverage includes all the value effects of fiduciary currency and thus its signifying aspect. This standard is a privileged place: a node of "cash on hand." Through their imaginary but potentially realizable relation to this pivot, the symbolic valences in circulation are constituted. (114)

Gold is thus the privileged, primordial, transcendent signifier, the function of which is to "provide a social guarantee of value and limit runaway inflation" (116)—to protect, that is, against "a catastrophic devaluation of the market." Thus the aesthetic turns out to be not merely an adjunct or exterior, a mere gilding, of the market or the economy, but rather the very soul of these
latter, for what qualifies gold as the universal standard and final reference, not only in *The Golden Bowl* but in virtually immemorial economic history, is its universal, eternal, indisputable, and unsurpassable aesthetic authority.

If we read Maggie Verver’s story as one of growth from innocence to maturity, with innocence consisting in a naive or "romantic" aestheticizing imagination, then the maturity or anagnorisis of the second half might consist in scarcely more than the aesthetic at a different--that is at a consciously political and ideological--register. It is still, in the end, an "aesthetic consciousness" that "makes everything so nice" for both Maggie and her father.
Conclusion

If in James's novels the aesthetic, contrary not only to widespread critical opinion but also to some of the author's own claims in his nonfictional writing, represents not a privileged, autonomous sphere transcending the pressures of economics, politics, and history, but rather just another piece of contested turf, an arena with perhaps its own particular set of rules but within which occur the same sorts of negotiations and battles that constitute what we call society and history, then these same novels, as aesthetic objects in their own right, are themselves subject to such socio-historical pressures. This, I should hope it would go without saying at this stage of literary history, is not to endorse some kind of critical anarchism in which anything goes. I would hope that the preceding readings suggest the very opposite of such a position. At the same time, however, it is not at all clear to me that the kind of "technically-correct" and "irrefutable" analysis that Paul de Man argues for is, if it is to be interpretive, possible, especially given the aporias and indeterminacies that de Man as much as anyone has taught us the rhetorical or tropological components of a text, and their relation to the grammatical and logical, tend to engender. Moreover, what we call "political"
criticism, whether at the ground level of simple exegesis or at the more lofty heights of "ideology critique," may very well be said to represent the very antithesis of such "technically correct" analysis. Of course any critical reading that hopes to be something more than a manifesto or a diatribe or an instance of propaganda must respect the demands of the text. Yet, while some kind of stringently grammatical or formal criticism may conceivably approach the status that de Man recommends, any reading that claims, as this one does, to be in any way political must also necessarily lapse from any standard of objectivity and remain eminently refutable. It is indeed this tension and friction between the inhuman and impassive ponderousness of the text and the reader's or critic's subjectivity that generates literary history, which like any history is political.

Such a situation is not due to some kind of stubborn wilfulness or obtuseness on the part of readers and critics but to the inescapable nature of subjectivity and what throughout this thesis has been discussed under the sign of the social-symbolic. One of the recurring themes of this thesis has been the nature and construction of the subject and its relation to the social, inescapably political context within which it emerges and lives. My enlistment of certain Lacanian ideas has not been an arbitrary experiment, a shaking together of some randomly
chosen elements in a test-tube in order to see what happens, but has rather been suggested by the novels themselves. Lacan's concept of the Other, for instance, provides a gloss on certain themes, ideas, and issues that are, as James would say, and as it has been the burden of this entire thesis to demonstrate, "there already." In every novel examined, the subject is often at odds but also always inextricably entwined with "society." This particular social conception or "structure" of the subject is evident not only in the later novels that I have looked at here but also in the earliest works. Indeed, one might argue that the most famous and popular of all of James's works, The Portrait of a Lady and Daisy Miller--in which one heroine is, as James describes it, "ground in the very mill of the conventional" (Notebooks 13) while the other is destroyed for flouting it--are only the most explicit or transparent examples of such a conception of the subject.

In the novels discussed in this thesis, we have seen how the aesthetic, far from representing, as it is often argued, an escape route from "convention," from the "Law," from society, in fact intervenes with the promise of brokering some sort of happy partnership between the subject and society, the self and the Other, between desire and the law. Of course, such a reading is itself caught up in all the same tensions, constraints,
determinations, and conflicts of the social-symbolic order of which it is indeed one of the more flagrant manifestations. Michael Sprinker concludes his essay on The Golden Bowl with the following observations:

The calculus of probability leaves the exact position of any element in a system indeterminate from one moment to the next. The aesthetic in James is the unsuccessful attempt to master this potential for randomness in any linguistic or figural system. In acknowledging the counter-entropic force of his project, one should nonetheless resist the temptation to deprive it of the potential to have its configuration altered. Nothing is less in keeping with the spirit of James's own texts than the desire to monumentalize them for all time. (60)

But one might point out that Sprinker’s suggestion is unnecessary since such monumentalization is impossible in the first place; we couldn’t monumentalize James—or any other writer—if we tried. A case in point would be The Golden Bowl, certain rhetorical features of which highlight the novel’s resistance to any kind of monumentalization. There are in this novel at least three points at which there occurs an unmistakeable fracturing of perspective, a disruption of hermeneutic order and stability, a blurring of point of view and interpretive horizons. One (already discussed in the previous chapter) is in the opening paragraph, where the image of "the loot of far-off victories" is presented to the reader amid, or along with, Prince Amerigo’s "short range" imagination. Another comes after the long paragraph at the end of which Adam Verver is compared to "fortunate bachelors"
and "other gentlemen of pleasure," which is followed by a paragraph that begins: "That figure has however a freedom for us that the occasion doubtless scarce demands, though we may retain it for its rough negative value" (179). A similar phrasing occurs in the final example I will mention, in which the narrator suggests that Charlotte and the Prince "might have figured as concrete attestations of a rare power of purchase" to a more "lingering view" than that of Adam Verver, to "a view more penetrating than the occasion really demanded."

"There was much indeed," this passage continues, "in the tone in which Adam Verver spoke again, and who shall say where his thought stopped?" As I indicated in my last chapter, such occlusions, fissures, and irruptions in point of view suggest a multiplicity of interpretive horizons, the lineations of farther reaches, if I may quote myself, of points of view beyond the ostensibly prevailing one. Such moments raise questions that perhaps cannot be, but also must be, answered: How penetrating and lingering a view is permissible? How does one decide? Whose or what kind of "point of view" delimits our interpretation? If the figure of the fortunate bachelor has a greater "freedom" than the "occasion" demands, then why is it offered and what are we to make of it? How much "freedom," that is, do we, as readers, have? Also, what precisely is the nature of these "occasions," and what
sort of "occasion" would demand this figure? Most of all, these tension-points raise the question of who shall say, not only where Adam Verver's thought, but also where James's or the text's or the reader's thought, stops or should stop. In other words, at these points the text seems to emphasize its own porousness, open-endedness, and instability, and to suggest that a transgression of its "limits" is inevitable or perhaps, rather, that such limits or constraints on thought, penetration, point of view, and interpretation are not so easily determinable. The limits of any text, therefore, are inevitably determined and imposed by the "occasion" of its reading. Indeed, in their different ways, all the novels I have discussed here remind us that, whatever James might say in his prefaces or criticism or letters, or whatever he might have thought, art is not exempt from the determinations and pressures, the vicissitudes and randomness, of time, history, and ideology, that it is not, as Blake puts it, "a Representation of what Eternally Exists, Really and Unchangeably," for it is ultimately the "imagination" or "thought" of the reader, himself or herself a kind of partial (in every sense of the word) personification of history and ideology, of "society," of the "Other," that judges and decides and "stops," and that determines the hermeneutic limits,
horizon, and "occasion" of the reading and meaning of these same novels.


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