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THE GROWTH OF ISABEL'S INWARD EYE IN
HENRY JAMES'S *THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY*

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To see is the central action which takes place in the life of Isabel Archer. The act of "seeing" can refer to both visual observation and mental perception. A sensitive person can both see and feel in a single action.¹ If the biological eye grasps sight, the mind's eye apprehends vision; if sight detects the extrinsic appearance, vision discerns the intrinsic value. It must therefore be clarified that vision is not inherent in sight. Vision is the perception of an inward eye, which requires mental exercise.

Isabel is an American girl of an independent spirit, who comes to Europe to see the world. Even a generous offer by an English nobleman cannot arrest her expectancy to see. Having refused Lord Warburton's proposal, the young heroine pronounces the decision to her interested cousin Ralph Touchett, the invalid son of the proprietor of Gardencourt:

... "You want to see life—you'll be hanged if you don't, as the young men say."

"I don't think I want to see it as the young men want to see it. But I do want to look about me."

"You want to drain the cup of experience."

"No, I don't wish to touch the cup of experience. It's a poisoned drink! I only want to see for myself."

"You want to see, but not to feel," Ralph remarked.

"I don't think that if one's a sentient being one can make the distinction."²

Isabel claims that she should be able both to see and feel at once. Now the

question is how deep the "intelligent but presumptuous girl" can see and how much she can feel through her eyes.³ Dorothy Van Ghent states that "[t]he informing and strengthening of the eye of the mind is the theme" of the novel.⁴ Isabel sets out for life with an infinite hope and eager sight. Yet as she only observes, she fails to feel life, as Ralph rightly apprehends. Her sight falls short of the reality of life. It is not until she undergoes her follies and suffering that she comes into full consciousness of life, where the growth of an inward eye endows her with deep insight and clear vision.

The eye of Isabel is the most active organ of her senses. To "look," "observe," and "gaze" are her characteristic actions. The heroine's first entrance to Gardencourt is marked by her very act of seeing: "he [Ralph] had been an object of observation to a person who had just made her appearance in the ample doorway" (25); "[s]he was looking at everything, with an eye that denoted clear perception—at her companion, at the two dogs, at the two gentlemen under the trees, at the beautiful scene that surrounded her" (26); or "[s]he had been looking all round her again—at the lawn, the great trees, the reedy, silver Thames, the beautiful old house . . . a comprehensiveness of observation easily conceivable on the part of a young woman who was evidently both intelligent and excited" (28). "Seeing" in Isabel, however, is marked by two distinctive limitations: one is her susceptibility to the pleasant, exquisite appearance, and the other her aloof viewpoint.

The fondness for exquisiteness is one of the strongest motives of her admiration for Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond, the two thoroughly Europeanized Americans living in the Old World.⁵ Madame Merle fascinates her with her elegant appearance and delicate manner; she seems to her a paragon of a great lady. Osmond impresses her with the image of a clever man leading a pleasant life surrounded with beautiful objets d'art. They excite Isabel's aesthetic inclination for visually beautiful and pleasant things. It is all well that she has fine aesthetic sensibilities; however, the

point is her confusion of aesthetic and ethical values. Carefully kept away from the unpleasant by her extravagantly generous father, she has grown to be a fastidious young girl who cares much for the pleasure of her eyes; "she was immersed in exquisite appearances; her aesthetic—itself a little thin—served as ethic most of the way and persuaded her to think that it was enough."⁶ Isabel has taken it for granted, in her innocent ignorance, that the beautiful is good; and she has never before had to learn the possible discrepancy therein, until she encounters the masters of appearance—Madame Merle and Osmond.

Madame Merle strikes Isabel as a possessor of perfectly-proportioned features, talents, and manner polished by a large experience. Though she may not exactly qualify as a beauty, she is provided with the knowledge to do everything beautifully:

There was no doubt she had great merits—she was charming, sympathetic, intelligent, cultivated. More than this . . . she was rare, superior and preëminent. There are many amiable people in the world, and Madame Merle was far from being vulgarly good-natured and restlessly witty. She knew how to think—an accomplishment rare in women; and she had thought to very good purpose. Of course, too, she knew how to feel; Isabel couldn't have spent a week with her without being sure of that.

(163–64)

Isabel, who has always taken pride in her own way, finds "herself desiring to emulate" the other's accomplishments (165). Dazzled by the elder lady's beautiful surface, Isabel cannot perceive the chips and cracks in her character.

"[T]o Isabel's imagination" Madame Merle has "a sort of greatness" (166); however, in fact, she is a defeated American expatriate, who trails around in European society. Cultivation, civilization, and social wisdom are her specialities; yet, they are not merely her virtues but her sole means of living.

Her failed ambitions are noted by the judicious Ralph:

He was sure she had been yearningly ambitious and that what she had visibly accomplished was far below her secret measure. She had got herself into perfect training, but had won none of the prizes. She was always plain Madame Merle, the widow of a Swiss *négociant*, with a small income and a large acquaintance, who stayed with people a great deal and was almost as universally "liked" as some new volume of smooth twaddle. The contrast between this position and any one of some half-dozen others that he supposed to have at various moments engaged her hope had an element of the tragical. (216--17)

In spite of her efforts, Madame Merle achieved little, while Isabel receives a vast fortune as a windfall, which will enable her to cut a figure in high society. Madame Merle covets the young heiress's fortune and is determined to make use of her without her knowledge.

Madame Merle's present ambitions are for her ex-lover Osmond and their daughter Pansy. She had not married him, for he had no money to meet her standard, nor had she acknowledged their illegitimate child to save her appearances. Yet she has not abandoned her ambitions for them, and she introduces the newly-made rich girl to Osmond with the hope that he will marry her. Moreover, she presses Isabel to make Pansy a Lady Warburton, though she knows Lord Warburton's feeling for Isabel as well as the love of Ned Rosier, a fine young American, for Pansy. Despite her beautiful appearance, Madame Merle does not possess inner grace to match the surface. Isabel, however, cannot discern her wickedness from the well-wrought public face.

Osmond is an even better performer of appearance than Madame Merle. Isabel is attracted to the man who lives alone with the angelic daughter, "in a sorted, sifted, arranged world, thinking about art and beauty and history" (224). She looks up to his "care for beauty and perfection so natural and so

cultivated" (237). His taste is the absolute principle of his life, and Isabel is sincerely impressed by its exquisiteness. She believes that "[h]e knows everything, he understands everything, he has the kindest, gentlest, highest spirit" (293).

Osmond, however, has no such distinguished values as Isabel fancies. Her sober aunt, Mrs. Touchett, defines him as nothing but "an obscure American dilettante, a middle-aged widower with an uncanny child and an ambiguous income" (234); and Ralph describes him as only "a vague, unexplained American. . . . He has a great dread of vulgarity; that's his special line; he hasn't any other that I know of" (214).

Isabel has mistaken his delicate appearance for noble substance. Her fall for the man in disguise is rightly grasped by Ralph:

She was wrong, but she believed; she was deluded, but she was dismally consistent. It was wonderfully characteristic of her that, having invented a fine theory about Gilbert Osmond, she loved him not for what he really possessed, but for his very poverties dressed out as honors. (294)

She observed the surface and believed that she felt the essence. Isabel must bear the accusation of being too susceptible to "fine appearances, to a brilliant surface, to the appeal, in short, of the merely aesthetic, to be morally altogether sound."⁷ She will be thus made use of by the creatures of sophistication.

The concern for appearance in Isabel deserves further investigation. As Tony Tanner points out, Isabel herself is capable of letting appearance precede essence.⁸ There is "her desire to look very well and to be if possible even better" (54); and her chief dread is that "she should appear narrow-minded; what she feared next afterwards was that she should really be so" (62). Therefore, sincerely being in love with him, she tries to look better than she is, and to appear as he likes her to be by carefully concealing what she is:

He probably thought her quicker, cleverer in every way, more prepared, than she was. . . . A part of Isabel's fatigue came from the effort to appear as intelligent as she believed Madame Merle had described her, and from the fear (very unusual with her) of exposing—not her ignorance; for that she cared comparatively little—but her possible grossness of perception. It would have annoyed her to express a liking for something he, in his superior enlightenment, would think she oughtn't to like; or to pass by something at which the truly initiated mind would arrest itself.

(225–26)

A gap between appearance and essence is undeniable in Isabel herself. Without realizing the gravity of the contradiction, she becomes a habitant of the world of Madame Merle and Osmond, where “what *is*, is neglected; what *seems* is paramount.”⁹

Another weakness of seeing in Isabel is the distance she keeps from the object of her sight. Richard Chase calls it “the kind of cold, amoral aloofness, the possibly morbid passion for observing life at a distance.”¹⁰ As she wishes not to take the poisoned drink of experience, she tries to evade her responsibility in human life.

The money she receives provides Isabel with the power to do, as “to be rich” means “to be able to *do*” (182). This power gives her the liberty of experience; but at the same time it demands judgment and responsibility to exercise it. As she hopes that “she should never do anything wrong” (54), Isabel seriously contemplates “the fine things to be done by a rich, independent, generous girl who took a large human view of occasions and obligations” (193). However, her self-righteous attitude makes her afraid of mistakes, and thus of the power of money, which will incur more responsibility in the wider range of experience than she ever knew. Then, she would not take the risk of coming into direct involvement with life; she wishes to stand apart and contents herself to observe life. As she only later realizes, “her money had been a burden, had been on her mind, which was

filled with the desire to transfer the weight of it to some other conscience, to some more prepared receptacle" (358). Unable to handle the burden by herself, Isabel decides to leave the money to Osmond's care in marrying him.

Osmond ostensibly keeps a distance from worldly success; he pretends "[n]ot to worry—not to strive nor struggle" but to "resign" himself (227). Isabel believes it to be "a grand indifference, an exquisite independence" (360). Moreover, Osmond's poverty gives Isabel a chance to be a contributor; she will help him materialize his taste in every way. She thinks that the charitable act will prove her own disinterestedness, which should efface "a certain grossness attaching to the good luck of an unexpected inheritance" (358); and she wishes to share the quiet life with Osmond, which should be filled with art and beauty.

The aloof standpoint is meant not only for her disinterestedness. It also tempts her immoral tendency to amuse herself by observing and judging others' lives. She finds it Madame Merle's supreme merit "to be in a better position for appreciating people than they are for appreciating you" (166). She wants to look at others from a distance and to pass judgment on them without sharing experiences of life. Unaware of the arrogance in such an aloof attitude, she fails to have sympathy with her fellow humans.

While her tendency to see only the beautiful surface removes her from the intrinsic value, her avoidance of the direct touch with life prevents her from understanding its reality. Though she once declared to Lord Warburton that she could not separate herself from life by marrying him, she would now like to escape from "the usual chances and dangers, from what most people know and suffer" in marrying Osmond (119). Then, Lord Warburton was not far from the truth, when he reproached her, "'You judge only from the outside—you don't care'. . . 'You only care to amuse yourself'" (77); for the word "outside" connotes both "the surface" and "the outside." Henrietta, a practical American woman journalist, moreover, rightly sees through her

friend's illusions—the fallacies of her mind's eye:

“... The peril for you is that you live too much in the world of your own dreams. You're not enough in contact with reality—with the toiling, striving, suffering, I may even say sinning, world that surrounds you. You're too fastidious; you've too many graceful illusions. Your newly-acquired thousands will shut you up more and more to the society of a few selfish and heartless people who will be interested in keeping them up.” (188)

Just as Henrietta apprehends, Isabel fails to attain a discerning vision and drifts into a “grave mistake.”

She is now imprisoned in the mind of Osmond, which is “the house of darkness,” “dumbness,” and “suffocation” (360). His serpentine egotism gradually reveals itself to negate Isabel's premature affinity for him. She was attracted by his superficial beauty and misunderstood it for his dignity, as “she had seen only half his nature” and “mistaken a part for the whole” (357).

Inhumanity in Osmond is appropriately described in terms of the peculiarity of his eye: “[i]t was as if he had had the evil eye; as if his presence were a blight and his favor a misfortune” (355–56). She believed that they shared the common prospect of life to see; but he does not see things as she does, nor as she thought him to see. While her seeing is unreliable and immature, his seeing is stained with something sinister and sordid behind the apparent benignity. Osmond allows no sympathy in his view of life, showing no interest in others' human qualities.

The blighting eye of Osmond is fixed in his extreme aestheticism toward life. He sees a human being as a work of art, seeking for the finesse without feeling for the personality; as Adeline R. Tinter points out, “the man who worships art exclusively will, in adjusting people to his museum scale of values, destroy their freedom.”¹¹ Isabel's aestheticism contents itself just to see; but Osmond's works on others to manipulate them as instruments to

please himself.¹²

The aesthetic, plastic view of a human being is exemplary in his treatment of Pansy. She is finished admirably as "a consummate piece" like a "Dresden-china shepherdess" (301); but as an individual she has no will nor independent mind, knowing no better than to obey her father. Having set a high price for his daughter, Osmond is determined to marry Pansy to a figure of high society. He has no scruples about ignoring Pansy's feeling for Rosier. Then, when he fails to marry her to Lord Warburton, he sends her abruptly back to the convent; he means to keep her away from the unsatisfactory suitor and also from Isabel, whom he accuses of being a defiant schemer against him.

Isabel is shocked to discover the perversion of Osmond's aestheticism: he may play "theoretic tricks on the delicate organism of his daughter" so that he may satisfy his egotistical need to relish the complete piece of a *jeune fille*:

He had wanted to do something sudden and arbitrary, something unexpected and refined; to mark the difference between his sympathies and her own, and show that if he regarded his daughter as a precious work of art it was natural he should be more and more careful about the finishing touches. If he wished to be effective he had succeeded; the incident struck a chill into Isabel's heart. (442)

Isabel is also adopted to "his collection of choice objects" (258), because she is a satisfactory objet d'art for the sterile dilettante. She is almost "as smooth to his general need of her as handled ivory to the palm" (259). Osmond amuses himself by appreciating her as one of his properties. She is made to represent his ideas and tastes so that people may acknowledge and admire the superiority of his aesthetic sensibilities:

this lady's intelligence was to be a silver plate, not an earthen one—a plate that he might heap up with ripe fruits, to which it would give a

decorative value, so that talk might become for him a sort of served dessert. (296)

Therefore, he wishes her to have no freedom of mind: her mind should be subsidiary to his and "attached to his own like a small garden-plot to a deer-park" (362). Isabel has regarded the quickness of her mind as her principal merit and taken pride in it; however, she is now hated for her "too many ideas" and even for having a mind of her own at all. Isabel, who has loved her liberty more than anything else, suffers confinement within the four walls of Osmond's mind.

Subjection to appearance is absolute in Osmond, and his indifference to the world is a total deception. Disguised in aloofness, he has always kept his malignant eye on the world to look down upon it: He pretends that he has renounced everything except a few beautiful things; but he has a studied contempt for the baseness and stupidity of common people, wanting to separate himself from them. He utilizes his aesthetic spoils to excite the world's curiosity toward him, so that he may enjoy the satisfaction of excluding envious people from his enclosure. Osmond despises the world; yet he depends much on it to "extract from it some recognition of one's own superiority" (360).

Isabel, on the other hand, expresses an Emersonian view of self-reliance. In her discussion with Madame Merle on the "self" she deprecates one's subjection to the measure of society: "Nothing that belongs to me is any measure of me; everything's on the contrary a limit, a barrier, and a perfectly arbitrary one" (175).

Their disagreement on the ideal of the aristocratic life proves the contrast between Osmond's esteem for convention and Isabel's respect for personal life:

Her notion of the aristocratic life was simply the union of great

knowledge with great liberty; the knowledge would give one a sense of duty and the liberty of sense of enjoyment. But for Osmond it was altogether a thing of forms, a conscious, calculated attitude. (361)

He insists on conventions and traditions of his own invention to supersede the banal ones prevailing in the common world, while she desires freedom from them. Thus, the severity of the conflict gradually withers her spirit away:

the poor girl, who has dreamed of freedom and nobleness, who has done, as she believes, a generous, natural, clear-sighted thing, finds herself in reality ground in the very mill of the conventional.¹³

She believed herself to be leaving the meager world behind; but actually she is descending into Osmond's version of crass worldliness.

Disillusioned of her innocent prospect of life, Isabel visibly turns to be sophisticated and experienced in social behavior. She learns to wear a social armor of appearance to conceal the real state of her suffering. Deep in her mind, however, she experiences the growth of an inward eye. Instead of illusion, penetration beyond the surface begins to mature in her agonies. This discerning eye apprehends more than the sight can tell, and feels the essence beneath the appearance.

She begins to perceive the truth of her relation to Osmond, and comes to realize what is behind Osmond's well-kept appearance. One day she witnesses Osmond and Madame Merle alone in the drawing room, and the scene inspires an ominous impression in Isabel. She catches sight of Osmond sitting in a deep chair, with Madame Merle standing near the fire, intimately exchanging ideas without utterance: "[t]heir relative positions, their absorbed mutual gaze, struck her as something detected" (343). Then, the strange impression of the image haunts her and provokes inscrutable terrors in Isabel (355). The agitation leads to her midnight vigil (Chapter XLII),

where she arrives at the recognition of the true nature of her husband—his perverted aestheticism and malignancy toward the world. Reflecting on their short married life, she understands his evil and deception, as well as her misconception of him and unconscious hypocrisy toward him.

The maturity of Isabel's seeing, furthermore, enables her to gain perception of the intrinsic value of things she could not penetrate before. For instance, Gardencourt goes through a notable change in the scale of her evaluation.¹⁴ When she first visited the place, she was excited by its extrinsic beauty, and registered it simply as the "romantic old house" (50). Later, being confined in the dark, suffocating habitation of Osmond's mind, she comes to feel that there is "something sacred in Gardencourt" (414): "if the place had been a rest to her before, it would be a sanctuary now" (465).

Her deep acquaintance with Rome also evinces a strengthening of her inward eye. She used to dream of Italy as "a land of promise, a land in which a love of the beautiful might be comforted by endless knowledge" (193). Her first visit to the capital told her that Rome "confessed to the psychological moment" (245). She felt then that "[t]he sense of the terrible human past was heavy. . . but that of something altogether contemporary would suddenly give it wings that it could wave in the blue" (245). Contrary to such earlier soaring emotion, the wounded Isabel now finds solace in Rome. Searching for a temporary escape from the oppressive reality, she consoles herself among the colossal relics of the ancient city, because "in a world of ruins the ruin of her happiness seemed a less unnatural catastrophe" (430). Yet, she further grows to "think of it chiefly as the place where people had suffered" (430). Suffering has given her the power to feel for her fellow-creatures beyond time and to share the sorrow of human life with them.

Isabel thus undergoes the intensification of discriminating vision, while wearing the social guise to keep up with Osmond. Nevertheless, she cannot continue disguising herself toward the dying Ralph, who has always seen

through her mask. Because of his infirmity, he has been an observer and connoisseur of life from a distance apart. Yet, unlike Osmond who rejects any sympathy for his object, Ralph sees life with love and feels for it. He is the one who has the right kind of seeing, which Isabel should have emulated, if such a wish were not immoral for a healthy person like her.

Ralph has set himself as a spectator to see what Isabel is going to do with herself. He is "conscious she was an entertainment of a high order" (63); however, he appreciates the natural originality of her character as it is, regarding it as "the finest thing in nature . . . finer than the finest work of art." A "beautiful edifice," she interests him more for her having her independent plan for life. Thus, when asked his opinion on her refusing Lord Warburton's proposal, Ralph answers, "I'm absolutely without a wish on the subject. I don't pretend to advise you, and I content myself with watching you—with the deepest interest" (133). He admires her as an individual being of her own will, rather than a plastic work of art as Osmond does.

Believing in her intelligence and generosity, Ralph makes her rich to be "able to meet the requirements" of her imagination; he persuades his father to leave a large legacy to her, "I should like to put it into her power to some of the things she wants. She wants to see the world for instance. I should like to put money in her purse" (160). Convinced that she is worth her best opportunities, he encourages her to live as she likes and let her character take care of itself. He respects her spontaneity more than anything else, and amuses himself to sit through the play of her intentions.

His prospect, however, is sadly betrayed by her marriage to Osmond:

" . . . You seemed to me to be soaring far up in the blue—to be, sailing in the bright light, over the heads of men. Suddenly some one tosses up a faded rosebud—a missile that should never have reached you—and straight you drop to the ground. It hurts me," said Ralph audaciously, "hurts me as if I had fallen myself!" (291)

Ralph is clearly aware of her delusion about Osmond's beautiful life and indifference to the world. He moreover feels sick to think that the unhappy marriage would not have occurred but for her vast inheritance, which he contrived for her benefit.

Isabel has tried to conceal from Ralph her real situation under the pressure of Osmond's egotism. Yet, Ralph has become "an apostle of freedom" for her, as he has always admired her individual character and was pained by the torments it had to come through (386). Thus, Isabel comes to be reconciled to the true seer of life at his deathbed:

Having seen through the false aesthetic approach to life [as in Osmond], she now appreciates the true artistic attitude [as in Ralph]: a vision based on love, on generosity, on respect for things in themselves and a gift of unselfish appreciation.¹⁵

She asks him to verify his having endowed her with the money; then she surrenders her undisguised self to him, confessing her mistake and suffering. Ralph has penetrated them all:

"... You wanted to look at life for yourself—but you were not allowed; you were punished for your wish. You were ground in the very mill of the conventional!"

"Oh yes, I've been punished," Isabel sobbed. (478)

The reconciliation gives her courage to face her unhappiness. She is now in sincere recognition of her blindness, mistake, and agony; however, she is not altogether wretched, because she has the "knowledge that they were looking at the truth together" (478). Painful though it is, she has come into direct contact with the truth of life. Guided by her apostle of freedom, she reaches the reality of life instead of vain appearance.

The encounter with the Gardencourt apparition finally proves her acceptance of suffering as well as maturity of vision:

He [Ralph] had told her, the first evening she ever spent at Gardencourt, that if she should live to suffer enough she might some day see the ghost with which the old house was duly provided. She apparently had fulfilled the necessary condition; for the next morning, in the cold, faint dawn, she knew that a spirit was standing by her bed. (479)

She has suffered with her whole heart to earn the right to see the ghost. As she sees the spirit, she feels that Ralph is departed from this life. Yet, he will live on in her soul for good to remind her of the dearness of life; "love remains," as Ralph says. Sufferings, after all, are "enrichments of consciousness" (473); they are undeniable ingredients of a human life. The realization confirms the growth of her "inner reliance in the face of adversity";¹⁶ it will convey the premonition of her life:

Deep in her soul—deeper than any appetite for renunciation—was the sense that life would be her business for a long time to come. And at moments there was something inspiring, almost enlivening, in the conviction. It was a proof of strength—it was a proof she should some day be happy again. It couldn't be she was to live only to suffer; she was still young, after all, and a great many things might happen to her yet. To live only to suffer—only to feel the injury of life repeated and enlarged—it seemed to her she was too valuable, too capable, for that.

(466)

Isabel is now ready to take her matrimonial duty to Osmond, because it is "the single sacred act" of her life (386). Besides, she has Pansy to take care of, whose helpless dependence on her tells her that "we must take our duty where we find it" (341). In spite of the vigorous claim by her longtime American suitor Caspar Goodwood that "[t]he world's all before us—and the world's very big" (489), she knows there is "a very straight path" (490), which will lead her to face her own life. She will bear her responsibility on her own.

Isabel launches into life with the prospect of seeing the world for herself.

Confusion of the appearance and the truth has thwarted her ambition and implicated her in the world of exquisite delusions; for this mistake, she has to endure and strive for a new and clearer vision of life. We may conclude that the suffering has rendered her able to feel as to see life. What she sees after all is not the brilliant infinite world but its reality circumscribed with human bondages. Nevertheless, the growth of her aesthetic view into ethical perspective enables her awakening to the full consciousness of living. Along with the maturity of her inward eye, Isabel gains allegiance to her own life.

Notes

- 1 Dorothy Van Ghent discusses the act of seeing in terms of aestheticism and morality:

The theme of "seeing" (the theme of the developing consciousness) is fertile with ironies and ambiguities that arise from the natural symbolism of the act of seeing, upon which so vastly many of human responses and decisions are dependent. The eye, as it registers surfaces, is an organ of aesthetic experience. . . . Aesthetic experience proper, since it is acquired through the senses, is an experience of *feeling*. But so also moral experience, when it is not sheerly nominal and ritualistic, is an experience of *feeling*.

The English Novel (New York, 1953); rpt. in Robert Bamberg (ed.), *The Portrait of a Lady* (New York: W. W. Norton, c1975), p. 695.

- 2 Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady* (New York, 1908); rpt. in Bamberg, pp. 133-34. All further references to the novel will be cited within the text.
- 3 James, "Preface to the New York Edition," in Bamberg, p. 8.
- 4 Van Ghent, in Bamberg, p. 693.
- 5 Isabel's fall for Madame Merle and Osmond may be attributed to the international theme of the novel: fall of an innocent American for Europeanized ones. The spontaneous and sincere American girl encounters the European way of life, "characterized by its intricate amenity, its depth of emotion, and its richness of traditionally ordered experience," to be deluded by its ostensible charms. Richard Chase, *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (New York, 1957); rpt. in

- William T. Stafford (ed.), *Perspectives on James's "The Portrait of a Lady"* (New York and London: University of London Press, 1967), p. 153.
- 6 Denise Donoghue, "Isabel's 'Yes' to Life," *The Ordinary Universe* (London, 1968); rpt. in Alan Shelston (ed.), "*Washington Square*" and "*The Portrait of a Lady*" (London: Macmillan Press, 1984), p. 181.
 - 7 Dorothea Krook, *The Ordeal of Consciousness in Henry James* (London, 1962); rpt. in Bamberg, p. 729. Krook also remarks that

The sense of beauty is one thing, aestheticism, the "touchstone of taste". . . is quite another thing. For aestheticism seeks always to substitute the appearance for the reality, the surface for the substance, the touchstone of taste for the touchstone of truth: that truth which in the life of man (Henry James comes more and more to insist) is in the first instance moral and only secondarily and derivatively aesthetic.
 - 8 Tony Tanner indicates that "Isabel herself is a partial devotee of appearances"; see "The Fearful Self," *Critical Quarterly*, VIII (Autumn 1965); rpt. in Shelston, p. 169.
 - 9 Tanner, in Shelston, p. 169.
 - 10 Chase, in Stafford, p. 160.
 - 11 Adeline R. Tinter, "The Spoils of Henry James," *PMLA*, LXI (March 1946), 243.
 - 12 Osmond's human manipulation is discussed in relation to Kant's second categorical imperative by several critics. "So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as a means only"; in Osmond, "Kant's imperative governs by its absence—as the hollow center"; William H. Gass, "The High Brutality of Good Intentions," *Accent*, XVIII (Winter 1958); rpt. in Bamberg, p. 707. Also see Van Ghent in Bamberg, p. 698, and Tanner in Shelston, p. 164.
 - 13 James, *The Notebooks of Henry James*, (eds.) F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth Murdock (New York, 1947); rpt. in Bamberg, pp. 625–26.
 - 14 See Tanner, in Shelston, p. 173.
 - 15 Tanner, in Shelston, p. 176.
 - 16 F. O. Matthiessen, "The Painter's Sponge and Varnish Bottle," *The Major Phase* (New York, 1944); rpt. in Bamberg, p. 597.