In a study of this sort where the main focus has been on the feminine characters or heroines, the first logical question to be asked would be in relation to the author's attitude to his women. What specific views does he wish to convey through their portrayals? Is he intrigued and fascinated by them because of their sex? Because they belong to a certain category of women or because they are natives of a specific country? Or is it because the reading public preferred novels about heroines rather than heroes and does it mean the decline of heroes in fiction in general? Or further still, does any sociological upheaval of that period of history warrant a greater emphasis on women characters? And most important of all, is it true that in the fiction of this author, the heroines far eclipse his heroes?

The only definite answer to these and other allied questions that can be found easily is to the last one, which would be a big Yes. It is indeed true that in James the most engaging characters are his women - both his heroines and the anti-heroines. As to the other questions, the answers or some approximations to them will
have to be gleamed from the individual novels in proportion to the particular emphasis given by James on his individual heroines.

Over and above the questions cited which are mostly personal and sociological, one can still add another - the most relevant to this study what has been the artistic quest of the author in his investigation into the consciousness of his heroines? As a workable answer to this, one would not be far wrong in saying that his probe has been for a more complete understanding of reality. This is a concept which lends itself to various interpretations and significations. But confining oneself to this particular Jamesian milieu and the nature of his probe one would like to assert that reality, for the artist, is nothing but the essential truth of being. The search or quest for reality then can be understood as the search for one's essential self.

Taken from this viewpoint then, James's heroines are seen as striving after this reality or finding their true selves in a world dominated by superior forces and more experienced beings of an older civilization, conditioned by situations and their own limited psyches. The maturing of this self from a relative subservience to
established forms, through the hazards of experience to a final state of moral independence is the pattern which can be traced in the development of James's heroines. This search for self takes many forms - many devices are employed to conduct this probe and it is in the investigation of these forms and devices that the answers to the various personal and sociological questions asked earlier can be found.

If one were to generalize on James's quotation of George Eliot on women in his preface to The Portrait of a Lady, the statement could be taken as James's own attitude towards women. That he considered "these frail vessels" to possess a finer sensibility, better equipped to handle the moral questions of life is amply illustrated by the fact that in his fiction he does make them the repositories of all that is true, noble and beautiful in the human mind.

The feminine properties of introspection, meditation and inwardness were indeed fit vehicles for James's artistic quest. However, he does not lay any undue stress on the heroine's femininity as a sex apart and therefore none of his heroines are depicted either as an absolute
mother-figure or lover. It is as though he makes them transcend the question of their primeval and original role and invests them with an awareness of themselves as not merely being the female of the species but as thinking, feeling individuals. In the context of this observation one can draw a distinction between Henry James and D.H. Lawrence in their treatment of their women characters. Though Lawrence also has created memorable heroines in his fiction, his emphasis in the portrayal of most of them is primarily on their instinctive life whereas James's pre-occupation is with the inner life or consciousness of his heroines. This has drawn much adverse criticism, that James's women are sexless, ethereal.

However valid these observations may be vis-a-vis another viewpoint like Lawrence's, their relevance in this study is only tangential. The emphasis being on the inward life of the heroines we have to see how they actualise their insights in a world which is of necessity so antithetical to their sensibilities.

Initially the world in which the heroines have to contend for the assertion of their selves is depicted as essentially European in nature. Except for Catherine Sloper of *Washington Square* all the other heroines find
themselves against "the bribes and lures, the beguilements and prizes" of Europe and its fast vanishing civilization. Like Mme Merle of *The Portrait of a Lady*, the Europeanized people are after attaining these "prizes" as ends in themselves only.

It is to such a Europe and to such an attitude to life that James's heroine embarks on her voyage of discovery. The diametric opposition between American naivete and European callousness to human sensibility is best exemplified by Daisy Miller's history. Her innocence, spontaneity and her superficial understanding of society is no match for the established forms of Europe. In her attempt to establish the validity of herself, Daisy is literally strangulated by the more experienced "culture" of Europe. Though clearly the prototype of all his American heroiness, she remains only a sketch, one which the author tried to defend in later years by calling her "pure poetry."

However the main impact of *Daisy Miller* in the evolution of the Jamesian heroine is that James puts a greater premium on the corollary to the American - European tension that is, he emphasizes the truth that innocence and personal integrity cannot be equated with mere correct social behaviour. Translated into his artistic canon,
this served James to expand his vision beyond the international tension and seek for deeper insights into human consciousness than could be provided by the mere opposition between different cultures. Daisy dies young, inviolate and innocent in every sense of the word as till the last she is not fully aware of her own limitations nor does she come into contact with the evil that is possible in this world. Her attempt was at a grasping at new sensations, new relationships in the way she saw best but her best turned out to be pitifully inadequate to cope with the alien culture to which she has been exposed. In the final analysis Daisy remains more or less static in the opposition of cultures.

But Euphemia Cleve of Mme de Mauves (despite the chronological transposition) does become directly involved in the civilized life of the Europeans. Whereas Daisy's encounter with Europe was merely social and hence superficial, Euphemia does become a part of this world when she marries a French nobleman with "a long pedigree" who marries her because of her wealth. In Euphemia's story, James introduces the mercenary motive of the Europeans and Europeanized Americans like Gilbert Osmond, who marry or attempt to marry the heroines because of their wealth. In the account of the personal relationship between
Euphemia and her husband the opposition between cultures is made more personalized as the innocent American girl is made use of because of her undisguised fascination with the old world culture and the naive belief that anyone 'with a long pedigree' must be a 'fine gentleman.' But when her romantic sensibilities come face to face with the decadence of the de Mauves' way of life, Euphemia withdraws into the rigidity of her puritanic forebears. In her rejection of her contrite husband, one sees not only the author's exposure of the baseness of the European man but also a certain lack of human sympathy in the American girl whose naive conception of life is that it has to be either all black or all white. This is not to say that there is any condonation of the baron's infidelity but only to point out that Euphemia allows personal justification supremacy over human accommodation. Though one may ascribe her attitude to an aspect of her American origin, the direction is towards a broader conception of human relationship and the moral questions involved. Euphemia Cleve, according to D.S. Maini "is not James's ideal of the American woman" because she represents an extremely unpleasant side of the American psyche. The

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theme of the young, innocent American girl being victimized by the European men she marries, first explored here remains for James the stock circumstance for portraying his heroines.

In *Washington Square*, the heroine is depicted in an all-American milieu but the moral question is an expansion of the one introduced in *Mme de Bovary*. Catherine Sloper is victimized because of her wealth but the actual theme of the story is woven round not so much the mercenary motive but the question of violating the sanctity and privacy of the individual self. The manipulation and domination of another self by whatever means then becomes the nature of the evil in this very compact narrative. In the heroine's experience therefore she has to contend with not merely what is committed but what is intended against her as well. In the range of heroines chosen for study in this work Catherine Sloper does stand apart because of her all-American background and a certain incompleteness of her experience. But the thematic importance of this story is undeniable when one realizes that it is in this story that James articulates his belief in the sanctity of the individual mind and how this belief affords him the exploration into the inner life of the protagonists. More and more, as he proceeds
to probe the depths of the individual psyche, he seems to value the moral victory of Catherine Sloper rather than that of Euphemia Cleve for instance, whose victory is fraught with the death of her husband. Catherine has evidently suffered a great personal hurt but she emerges from the experience with her personal dignity intact and inviolate and therefore her triumph is to be reckoned in terms of the inner life of consciousness.

It was however in *The Portrait of a Lady*, that James deliberately puts the entire emphasis upon the heroine's consciousness. On the social level her story is not much different from Mme de Mauves's but apart from the mercenary design with which Osmond marries Isabel, his crime against her is shown as his attempt to subjugate her will to his own and make her mind a "mere appendage to his." The enunciation and exploration of such a delicate moral balance in personal relationship is possibly only through a subjective analysis and this is done through the heroine's consciousness. As he was to assert in his preface to this novel, Isabel's consciousness is the subject of the novel. By doing so he also succeeds in creating one of his most memorable heroines. What he accomplishes in *The Portrait of a Lady* remained more or less his operative leitmotif till the end of his artistic
career. This novel is an important landmark in James's career because it was a success with the reading public and marked a distinct phase in his creative life. But more important than this, it was here in this novel that he articulates one of the most basic needs of modern man - the need to assert oneself away from and independent of any social or cultural association only.

The validity of the self can be established not in contrast to others but in a clear-minded perception of one's relation to oneself. If the former were so, James's international theme would have remained his artistic goal but as he progressed to his last great novels, one sees that this theme per se was inadequate for his artistic exploration. Though he does not discard the theme, he uses it more as a metaphorical backdrop against which the heroine can discover herself. The mode which James employs in The Portrait first to probe the consciousness of the heroine establishes the pattern which was to be adopted by later novelists like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce to explore the tormented and tortured psyches of twentieth-century man.

The statement of James's artistic faith which is so clearly defined in The Portrait of a Lady, however is
not fully explored as the heroine Isabel Archer's career ends on an equivocation, as many readers tend to see it. But when one views this novel not as an entity in itself but rather an important signpost in the development of the Jamesian heroine, such equivocation as indeed there is becomes merely a stage in the process of attaining psychological maturity by the heroine.

As one progresses to the novels of James's great maturity; the exploration of the heroine's inner self becomes more exhaustive and the heroine's impact in her milieu becomes more dominant and affirmative. This impact is felt most in the moral life of the characters who share the heroine's history.

As far as the delineation of the heroine is concerned, Milly Theale of The 'Wings of the Dove emerges as the most poetic vision of James's heroine. She embodies in her personality, the many facets of a psyche placed in a vulnerable situation and who, like all the other heroines, is seeking for a reality outside of this situation. Because of her stricken condition and her extra-ordinary aloneness in the world, Milly remains outside the ken of human palpability;
at no given time is the association of an identity with her self complete. She is at once a dove, a princess, a star, an angel, a priestess and of course the American girl too. Yet none of these singly sufficed to encompass her total personality. And therefore she retains an absolute poetic grandeur till the end. But this is not to say that perforce she is less real for the reader's understanding. Milly Theale possesses the qualities of James's American heroines — her naivete, her spontaneity, her lack of pretensions and her generosity. A quarter of a century after Daisy Miller, Milly emerges a more rounded version of the young girl from Schenectady. Just as Daisy dies because of her failure to grasp the European psyche, Milly too dies because she cannot bear the pain of discovering the true nature of this psyche, the deception she suffers at the hands of "the tough English gang." In these two heroines one sees the extreme vulnerability of American innocence and especially in the case of Milly, James seems to stress that such a personality is viable only in the realm of poetry. It is interesting to note that the earlier version of such an American girl, Daisy, was defended by James as "pure poetry" and the later exposition of this character Milly too remains truly
poetic till the end of her career.

The polarity between the conception of a heroine like Milly Theale and her European experience however does not find permanence in James's portraiture of his last heroine, Maggie Verver of *The Golden Bowl*. Though Maggie too is an American, she is different from the other heroines in many ways. She embodies the spirit of the established noveau rich of America who by now tend to view Europe not so much with the tinted vision of the admirer but with the sharpened senses of acquisitiveness. In such a sensibility the old-world glamour of Europe is a purchasable commodity to lend historical authenticity to American opulence. For all the other heroines, their wealth was more of a liability than anything else but by the time Maggie appears on the scene the heroine's wealth has become a certain attitude to life. Therefore the fact that Prince Amerigo is motivated by the Verver millions to marry Maggie becomes more of a happy coincidence than any serious plotting and planning on his part.

The most important difference about Maggie is that unlike the previous heroines, she is no longer a star struck outsider, because she actually belongs in
the world in which she is depicted. She need not seek for acceptance as Daisy does, as Euphemia and Isabel pay for it with their personal freedom and as Milly dies so pitiably in the attempt to belong there.

Though Maggie too suffers disillusionment and the pain of being deceived, she is not a 'victim' in the sense that the previous heroines are. For the first time the Jamesian heroine is made to bear directly part of the onus of the overall evil that threatens to upset the beautifully arranged life of the characters.

This crucial twist in the delineation of the heroine perhaps makes the synthesis between the two different backgrounds possible. In the admission of her responsibility for the situation is an accommodation for human failure. Again one must not overlook the fact of Maggie's practical attitude to life which would insist that life must go on and that life can never be totally good or totally bad. In Maggie's case, there is no striving after a magic succour for life's ills but it is as though she makes her terms with the 'base ignoble world' when she accepts her responsibility for part of its sordidness. In Maggie Verver then James presents a
heroine who is vulnerable because she is human and not because she is merely naive and idealistic. Because of her realistic attitude to life she assimilates some of the practical, pragmatic world-view of Europe but this assimilation is not the consequence of condoning moral lapses but the attempt to make people, including herself, accept the moral responsibility of their actions.

That James chose to confine his characters to the leisured and monied classes of America and Europe alone is often cited as depriving his fiction of a great amount of "felt-life". But in as much as his probe ultimately led to a more complete understanding of the inner self, perhaps the psyches of these privileged people did prove more suited to the nature of his exploration than, say, that of a factory worker or a farmer. After all, James himself belonged to this class and hence could observe the subtle undercurrents of personal and social interaction at close quarters and infer whatever significance he would out of his observations.

The heroines choosed for study in this work all happen to be American girls. The question of coincidence about this fact applies to this work but when one ponders
over the considerations which led to the choice of these particular girls, one realizes that the very nature of the choice is determined by the author's pattern of developing the career of that 'certain young American girl.......

For these girls the European experience is necessary for the expansion of their intellectual, social and moral horizons, as well as discovering their identities. There is a certain consistency in the pursuance of an artistic conviction in the development of James's American heroine from the awkward, precocious ingenue to the accomplished cosmopolite of The Golden Bowl.

The deep psychological probe into the heroine's consciousness has much to do with James's own American origin, his sojourns in Europe and his eventual settlement in England. His constant awareness of America as an emerging culture as compared to Europe puts his heroines in a defensive situation, intellectually cringing in the presence of a seemingly superior culture with all its established forms. Their encounter with this civilization is always fraught with disillusionment and personal tragedy but yet like Isabel Archer, they seem unable to reject these forms altogether. If this inability is viewed as some kind of lingering admiration for the old
culture then it would mean that they retain some vestiges of their American origin till the end.

However, judging by the evidence in his novels, one could say that James's disenchantment with America increased with the passage of time. Maggie Verver, though an American, is as Europeanized as any of them. The process of this disenchantment seems to have started in The Portrait of a Lady and became more or less complete in The Golden Bowl. America is shown more and more as a land of exile and intellectual banishment. For example, when Mrs. Touchett hears that Mme Merle had gone away to America, she remarks that "she must have done something dreadful." Again in The Golden Bowl the punishment that Charlotte is taking is not so much in being separated from Amerigo but being taken away to the mythical American city and the verver Museum and never to come back to civilization.

The inherent vulnerability in the American psyche is its spontaneity - which indicates a certain shallowness, in the sense that it is a premature reaching out for experience without the basis of any analysis of any sort, personal or social. Such a gesture is inimical to the inner-self as the encounter is bound to be damaging to
personal dignity and identity. On the other hand there is indeed much to be deplored in the European insistence upon appearances alone without any moral relevance as James consistently points out in his fiction. But by using the weakness of one as a counterfoil to that of the other, James seems to have arrived at a very private code of survival of the moral self in perfect peace with itself. Therefore the compromise that the Jamesian heroine makes with the "base, ignoble world" is not by being overwhelmed by it, but, to quote Isabel Archer, 'to extract from it some recognition of one's superiority.'

This superiority can be viewed as the heroine's heightened consciousness which stands for the Jamesian moral code. To a certain extent perhaps James can be regarded as a moralist. But contrary to Phillip Rahv's assertion that James is a 'traditional moralist' James is a moralist who will judge on the merit of the protagonist's own conviction rather than any outside consideration. This conviction rests of James's own philosophy of morality whereby he holds that every individual soul is a free agent and that none shall manipulate, coerce or violate its sanctity by any means whatsoever. According to this code therefore we see that in Washington Square
the charge of immorality is directed more towards Dr. Sloper than Morris Townsend though on a superficial reading of the novel one would think that the latter is the sole guilty person. Catherine herself, in later years thinks that while her erstwhile lover merely 'trifled with her affection' it was, her father who 'broke its spring,' thereby making it clear that her father's is the greater moral lapse. Again in Isabel's history too the recognition of her betrayal takes place long before she actually learns of Osmond's past involvement with Mme. Merle and their joint manoeuvre to gain control of her wealth. Moreover, Osmond cannot be accused of being unfaithful to her as Amerigo has been to Maggie, yet with reference to the Jamesian moral code Osmond is much guiltier of the two. Merton Densher too has not committed a tangible crime against Milly but in his attempt to manipulate her affection for him he is just as guilty as though he had. It would therefore be correct to say that a close analysis of such moral considerations provide the psychological atmosphere in which the development of the Jamesian heroine is best observed.

If a chart of the evolution of the Jamesian heroine can be drawn, one sees that the apex is achieved
in the portrayal of the heroine in *The Wings of the Dove*. The qualities in the personality of the heroine, the moral perspectives and even the social tensions are unambiguously stated. Milly, the American heiress is a victim of European avarice and the evil that accompanies it. In the portrayal of Milly Theale, James creates a truly tragic heroine. In this novel, Europe is depicted at its cruellest, in curbing the free expansion of American innocence and the spontaneity and enthusiasm for life.

However in the next novel, *The Golden Bowl*, there is a tapering off of the poetic tension which sustains Milly's drama till the end and the polarity of the international vision is abandoned for a more pragmatic compromise. Maggie Verver is therefore the most un-American of James's heroines and is therefore more in command of her situation from the start. There is even a hint of cynicism in the portrayal of this heroine. Unlike Milly's, Maggie's history is hardly a tragedy in the real sense. Therefore her heroic proportions are so toned down that at times she seems like an understudy temporarily filling in for the leading lady.

But this in no way should be construed as
diminishing Maggie's importance because her history ultimately constitutes the mirror of James's worldview. Life, the old master seems to be saying, cannot be all poetry or all prose. Euphemia Cleve discovered too late that all the prose was not in America and Milly Theale is distressed to realise that if you want to have poetry in Europe, you have to create it yourself by making believe. But the Jamesian heroine discovers that somewhere between these two, there has to be a viable scheme to make life livable for oneself as well as for others. Euphemia caused her husband's death and Milly herself is destroyed in the search for poetry. But in Maggie's scheme of things there seems to be something worth living for, for everyone concerned. This was made possible because the heroine proves that one must transcend the pursuit of mere self-aggrandisement and accept human limitations as part of one's reality. She is not striving after ready-made anodynes for life's ills and it is because of this level-headed approach to life that it seems possible for Maggie to build life anew with her Prince. Though her decision at one level appears only a social adjustment one must not lose sight of the fact that she has been able to arrive at this decision only on account of her acceptance of her moral
responsibility for the situation between Charlotte and her husband. Maggie, more than any other heroine of James "learns how to adjust European attitudes to the needs of her personality."²

Maggie, therefore personifies the new world-view which states that material and social privileges need not necessarily be incompatible with moral consciousness and that the chasm between the conditions of life and art can be bridged with a bit of accommodation for human limitations.

"All" seems to have been given to the Jamesian heroine.

²Phillip Rahv, The Heiress of all the Ages, p.104.