

MANLIEST OF CITIES: THE IMAGE OF ROME IN HENRY JAMES

Cosmopolitan beyond any of our writers, James could with justice be called both a citizen and a chronicler of the world. His formative years between twelve and fifteen were passed in Switzerland, England, and France. For his education he owed as much to Bonn and Geneva as to Boston and Cambridge, Massachusetts. It was a case of love at first sight when he visited Italy in 1869, a passion profoundly renewed three years later. Resolving to live in Europe, he tried Paris briefly before settling permanently in London, wherefrom he made frequent and protracted trips to the continent. Returning only occasionally to America — in 1881, in 1904, in 1910 — he came to know Florence, Venice, and Rome better perhaps than New York, Newport, or Boston. Yet in several important respects he remained a representative American novelist.

Among his principal predecessors only Poe, who spent part of his youth in Great Britain and then sang « the grandeur that was Rome », failed to pay the latter a pilgrimage. Even Melville paused for a month and set the experience afterward to poetry. Washington Irving, concentrating on France and Germany, had celebrated England and Spain in his special type of sketch. Shortly thereafter, devoting more time and space to Italy, James Fenimore Cooper gathered his *Gleanings in Europe*. Hawthorne, outstanding member of the next generation, produced *The Marble Faun* in 1860. Arriving the following year in the guise of a diplomat — like Irving, Cooper, and Hawthorne before him — William Dean Howells recorded his reactions in three long narratives exactly contemporaneous with *Roderick Hudson*, *Daisy Miller*, and *The Portrait of a Lady*. By then Mark Twain, who would soon mock England in two volumes, had published *In-*

nocents Abroad and *A Tramp Abroad*. From the outset American fiction, aware of its European connections, was preparing the way for Henry James.

With his advent the American novel acquired a new complexity of attitude and method alike, highly original yet unconsciously and inevitably combining the romanticism of Irving with the allegory of Hawthorne, the satire of Twain with the realism of Howells. Whereas the rest reserved their master efforts for the American scene, James converted his actual situation into his literary province and told the hundred-fold tale of Americans confronted by Europe. Generally his procedure involved placing his protagonist in alien circumstances like those of Paris in *The American* of 1877, though now and then he reversed the process as in *The Europeans* the next year. His poor American barely reaches France in *Four Meetings*, while in *Europe* she never even leaves home. Upon this inexhaustible theme James rang his infinite changes. He may project a hero or a heroine, the story may be tragic or comic, its setting may be England or the continent. Not seldom are the possibilities deliberately commingled, whereupon a tragicomedy may emerge presenting several Americans whose misadventures carry them from London to Paris to Rome.

To these three capitals in particular they appear most naturally to gravitate. Repeatedly, however, they are borne to Florence or to Venice — as in the early *Madonna of the Future* and the late *Wings of the Dove* respectively. *The Aspern Papers*, in fact, transfers a Florentine gem to a Venetian setting. Significantly, at the close of his career, the novelist recommended five titles by means of which to approach his work — in one of which Paris figures as prominently as Florence, which plays a minor part in still another. This quintet includes *The Wings of the Dove*, which moves from London to Venice; *The Portrait of a Lady*, which moves from London to Rome; *Roderick Hudson*, which focuses primarily on Rome; its sequel, *The Princess Casamassima*, which focuses primarily on London; and *The Golden Bowl*, which leads to Rome without ever really leaving London.

The image of Rome loomed especially large for James and assumed a new shape with each change in conditions. His original response differed little from Cooper's before him, the latter having been « stupified as a countryman who first visits town, with the whirl of sensations and the multiplicity of objects ». The evening of his arrival in 1869 Henry wrote to his brother William:

...Here I am then in the Eternal City... From midday to dusk I have been roaming the streets... At last — for the first time — I live! It beats everything: it leaves the Rome of your fancy — your education — nowhere. It makes Venice—Florence—Oxford—London — seem like little cities of pasteboard. I went reeling and moaning thro' the streets, in a fever of enjoyment... For the first time I know what the picturesque is... In fine I've seen Rome, and I shall go to bed a wiser man than I last rose...

On the last day of March four years later, during a subsequent and longer stay, he wrote with equal enthusiasm to Charles Eliot Norton:

...I am growing daily fonder of Rome, and Rome at this season is daily growing more loveable... I wish I could take you out on my balcony and let you look at the Roman house-tops and loggias and sky and feel the mild bright air...

And forty years later, in the three volumes constituting his autobiography, the emotion aroused in him by Rome had demonstrably never diminished — a feeling which people from elsewhere in Italy share initially at least, I suspect, with those from far countries.

Beguiled though he was, James did not for long remain uncritical. Proof enough is afforded by those superb travel essays which he collected as *Italian Hours* in 1909 and augmented with a veritable paean to Lazio. Therein, as early as 1873, for every observation such as:

The blessing in Rome is not that this or that or the other isolated object is so very unsurpassable; but that the general air

so contributes to interest, to impressions that are not as any other impressions any where in the world,

can be found another testifying to:

the general oppressive feeling that the city of the soul has become for the time a monstrous mixture of watering-place and curiosity-shop and that its most ardent life is that of the tourists who haggle over false intaglios and yawn through palaces and temples.

He concludes a tribute to the campagna by acknowledging that « Man lives more with Nature in Italy than in New or than in Old England », but commences a consideration of a Roman holiday thus:

There was a time when the Carnival was a serious matter — that is a heartily joyous one; but, thanks to the seven-league boots the kingdom of Italy has lately donned for the march of progress in quite other directions, the fashion of public revelry has fallen woefully out of step... now that Italy is made the Carnival is unmade; and we are not especially tempted to envy the attitude of a population who have lost their relish for play and not yet acquired to any striking extent an enthusiasm for work...

These notes treat scarcely a place or an occasion that was not put to purpose sooner or later in the novels and tales. James had many uses for Rome, among which such essays were merely the most immediate. Another, rather more remote, is represented by his biography of the American lawyer-sculptor-author Story — who spent here almost the whole second half of the nineteenth century and whose *Roba di Roma* appeared only two years after *The Marble Faun*. Published in 1903, *William Wetmore Story and His Friends* contains at least two passages so self-sufficient that James could have incorporated them into *Italian Hours*. The first (Volume I, Pages 328-351) renders homage to « the golden air of Rome » in familiar terms appropriated in part from the graphic and plastic arts, while the second (Volume II, Pages 205-211) pays tribute to « the general experience of Rome » in one of the few elaborate mu-

sical images ever developed by James. Yet for us the chief interest resides in the opening paragraphs where James proposes that, though Europe has been *made* easy for Americans, it was anything but easy (however inspiring) during Story's time in Rome:

The old relation, social, personal, aesthetic, of the American world to the European — a relation expressed practically, at the time, of course, in such active experiments as might be — is as charming a subject as the student of manners, morals, personal adventures, the history of taste, the development of a society, need wish to take up, with the one drawback, in truth, of being treatable but in too many lights... The dawn of the American consciousness of the complicated world it was so persistently to annex is the more touching the more primitive we make that consciousness... The interest is in its becoming perceptive and responsive, and the charming, the amusing, the pathetic, the romantic drama is exactly that process...

This constitutes a definitive recognition of a dominant preoccupation, perhaps his major theme, that of the American initiation.

Not as essayist or biographer does James make his principal claim upon our attention, however, but as novelist and teller of tales. In a typical short story entitled *The Solution*, published in 1889 as the tangible result of prolonged visits during the two previous years, he registers the Roman impact in a direct if superficial fashion. In this amusing trifle the naive American, Henry Wilmerding, nearly pays a pathetic price for his initiation into the complicated ways of the world. In an effort to be friendly at a picnic he takes a common English girl, Veronica Goldie, for a short stroll alone in the campagna — only to be told, by knowing friends in the diplomatic corps, that according to the custom of the country he has compromised her completely. Unconscious that they are joking, he precipitately proposes to her and is as promptly accepted. Thereupon one of the pranksters implores his own fiancée to undo the damage. This she contrives by marrying the American herself. Though the author's love for the Roman countryside here contributes something, *The Solution* depends for its force not upon

his knowledge but upon his protagonist's ignorance of Rome. The action could happen almost anywhere.

The opposite is the case with *The Golden Bowl*, that great novel of 1904 which among other things reflects his final visits to Rome during the summers of 1892 and 1899. Here nothing is shown but what transpires in England, yet the action assumes much of its character and meaning from the fact of its Roman implications. Had he not already employed the title, James would have called this *The Marriages*. In several respects it represents a corrective to *Miss Gunton of Poughkeepsie* of four years earlier, wherein neither a rich American girl nor her impoverished Roman prince can surmount the conflict of mores and ultimately break their engagement. Four people are intimately involved in *The Golden Bowl*: Adam Verver, a wealthy American widower; his loving daughter Maggie, innocent but curious; Charlotte Stant, an American of no innocence whatever but of more compelling needs; and Prince Amerigo, a Roman equipped with a personal history as well as a family heritage. Maggie marries Amerigo, whereupon Adam weds Charlotte, mainly in order to free his daughter to devote herself to the Prince. In the First Book the latter registers his impressions of the situation while Maggie slowly awakens to an awareness that not only had her husband long been Charlotte's lover but their relationship has now been renewed. In the Second Book, with increasing moral support from Amerigo, his wife gradually solves the problem and saves both marriages.

Rome's role is oblique but essential. James projected his young nobleman first as English, then as French, and finally as Italian. From this we might infer that his nationality makes little difference. Nothing could be further from the truth, as Maggie herself would protest. Just as she is what American City has made her, Amerigo is what Rome has made him — and it is this, all dear to her, that she wages her patient battle to win back. When the two actually go to Rome, we hear of it only by telegram. When we see the pair in England, on the contrary, Rome rises and hovers huge in the background. James was by this time a master of indirection and implication, in

other words the complete poet of English prose. He congratulated himself upon making Mrs Newsome, who never appears in *The Ambassadors*, « no less felt as to be reckoned with than the most direct exhibition, the finest portrayal at first hand could make her ». He could have said the same for the part played here by the Palazzo Nero in old golden Rome. Instead he wrote as follows in the Preface:

... We have but to think a moment of such a matter as the play of *representational* values, those that make it a part, and an important part, of our taking offered things in that we should take them as aspects and visibilities — take them to the utmost as appearances, images, figures, objects, so many important, so many contributive items of the furniture of the world — in order to feel immediately the effect of such a condition at every turn of our adventure and every point of the representative surface...

But at the beginning of *The Golden Bowl* it is Amerigo's consciousness of Maggie's *furniture* that constitutes his *romance* « to an extent that made of his inward state a contrast that he was intelligent enough to feel ». The attraction therefore works both ways — and does so more than ever at the end! Nobody has put it better than Barbara Melchiori: « With this triumphant farewell to all that was vulgar in passion James was no longer dealing with the actual, but with the purest distillation of the actual... ».

This distillation, derived from prior efforts, was not arrived at quickly or easily. We can appreciate the limitations of the early Roman tales without subscribing altogether to the strictures of Cristof Wegelin or Umberto Mariani. *The Last of the Valerii* and *Adina*, first fruit of the second trip to Italy, appeared in 1874—thirty years before *The Golden Bowl*, which both surprisingly anticipate, the former in presenting the process by which an American girl married to a Roman nobleman works out her salvation and the latter in projecting a selfish American who loses everything by taking advantage of innocence. Recognized as lightweights by their author, this pair nonetheless proves how early James was given to regarding

both sides of his coin, how soon he outgrew automatically identifying guile with Europe and simplicity with America. Sam Scrope, the young archeologist of *Adina*, foreshadows as he reflects a host of unsympathetic Americans. The reader approves when Angelo Beati, the shepherd whom he has relieved in the campagna of a topaz belonging to the campagna of a topaz belonging to the Emperor Tiberius, avenges himself by eloping with Scrope's adored Adina. « She's better than the topaz », says Angelo—while Sam, from the bridge of San Angelo, sadly drops the trinket in the Tiber.

We discover in *Italian Hours* that in 1873 our novelist made a trip to the tomb of the Valerii beneath the basilica of San Stefano, spent a day observing excavations then going forward in Rome, and paid a visit to the Villa Ludovisi with its half-hidden head of Juno. Out of these ingredients he compounded *The Last of the Valerii*—in which Count Marco Valerio grows so attached to a statue of Juno unearthed at his villa, reverting at last to pagan worship and sacrifice, that he utterly neglects his devoted wife Martha. With shrewdness and resolution the young American countess resolves her dilemma by reburying the goddess, much as Maggie was later to ship Charlotte back to America. Here, rather more than in *Adina*, James renders functional the furniture of Rome. His protagonist is described in terms of Caracalla as well as Augustus, while more of the action occurs in the Pantheon than in Saint Peter's. And as Martha exorcises the power possessing her husband, her creator at a thrust purges himself of the Hawthornesque.

In his biography of Hawthorne, while conceding that *The Marble Faun* « is part of the intellectual equipment of the Anglo-Saxon visitor to Rome », James calls its author « exquisitely and consistently provincial » and « the last specimen of the more primitive type of man of letters ». « An American as cultivated as Hawthorne », he maintains in 1879, « is now almost inevitably more cultivated, and, as a matter of course, more Europeanized in advance, more cosmopolitan ». Such a man James justly thought himself, though he was conscious

of running the same risk as Hawthorne and thereby incurring « the penalty of seeming factitious and unauthoritative, which is always the result of an author's attempt to project himself into an atmosphere in which he has not a transmitted and inherited property ». Wegelin in fact contends that there is in *Roderick Hudson*, published in 1875, « little more psychological realism than Hawthorne achieved in *The Marble Faun*. » With this I cannot agree.

Rome had supplied the material for *Adina* as for *The Last of the Valerii*, James having seen a shepherd resembling Angelo asleep one day in the campagna, suggestion enough for a creative faculty like his. Later it would serve as arbitrary backdrop in *The Solution* and as implicit antipodes in *The Golden Bowl*. *Roderick Hudson* is a Roman novel, however, in which the city functions in all possible fashions. It provides substance, symbol, and setting alike. Rome's influence operates throughout the book. It is strongly felt in the first four chapters laid mainly in Northampton, Massachusetts, in which Rowland Mallet discovers a promising sculptor and persuades him to develop his talent in Rome. It exerts a lingering, inescapable effect in the last five chapters laid in Florence and Switzerland, wherein Rowland's hopes are destroyed along with Roderick's life. And it pervades the central seventeen chapters in which Hudson's brief career describes its parabolic course.

Here it is the very stuff itself—not that Rome which for James could never be « transmitted and inherited property », but that of the American colony with which he was intimately acquainted and especially its artistic segment. Kenyon as sculptor is hard to credit in *The Marble Faun*, whereas Hudson is fully conceived and wholly convincing. He is the fictional embodiment of an actual plight, which James described in dealing with Story as « a sort of beautiful sacrifice to a noble mistake », that of the transplanted artist whose sap drains when he sinks no new roots. Roderick also testifies to his author's belief that a passion for something other than art may to an artist prove fatal, as is the case at Florence with the American

painter Theobald in *The Madonna of the Future*. Most of all, like Story's and Theobald's, his is a talent that contains its own undoing—a gift too slight or too sensitive to external pressures. It is neither Rome nor Christina Light, with whom he becomes infatuated here, that ruins Roderick Hudson. It is himself.

Rome helps to emphasize his rise and Christina to expedite his fall. She is a figure so fascinating that James was to relate her later history in *The Princess Casamassima* of 1886—just as he would introduce the Italian sculptor here, Gloriani, not for the last time in *The Ambassadors* of 1903. Her background is Boston, her foreground the continental playground. She represents in consequence the prototype of that American in Europe who is in James « corrupt, corrupting, corruption ». According to Wegelin, « the coercion of Christina Light into marriage with Prince Casamassima shatters Roderick's power as a creative artist and frustrates Rowland Mallet's project of assisting Roderick's embryonic genius to full maturity ». So the sculptor would insist, but the truth is that he falters long before her wedding. Christina perceives his weakness in that crucial scene at the Coliseum which climaxes the first half of the novel:

« ... For a man who should really give me a certain feeling — I have never had it, but I should know it when it came — I would send Prince Casamassima and his millions to perdition. I don't know what you think of me for saying all this; I suppose we have not climbed up here under the skies to play propriety. Why have you been at such pains to assure me, after all, that you are a little man and not a great one, a weak one and not a strong? I innocently imagined at first that your eyes — because they're so beautiful — declared you strong... Your voice, at any rate, *caro mio*, condemns you; I always wondered at it; it's not the voice of a conqueror! ».

Rowland might sympathize but Christina would not when Roderick first sees her as « a glimpse of ideal beauty », promptly sketches her as a « divinely fair » Juno, and persists

in calling her « a breathing goddess ». There is nothing within him and nobody without to save him from this idolatry as Count Valerio, deeply desiring it, was redeemed by his wife. Roderick's fiancée Mary Garland is powerless because he is too weak to conquer himself and resist annihilation.

Into this novel James poured the essential elements of that ready-made recipe for « the great plum-pudding » of Rome. There is no saying where setting leaves off and substance here begins. Each scene is selected and constituted with loving care, then exploited with close attention to every detail. The fault may be Roderick's rather than Christina's or Rome's, but it would be difficult to isolate his fate from hers or to imagine its overtaking him anywhere else. This is because James makes it so, makes the furniture of town and countryside perfectly serve his purposes. One day, for instance, Rowland discovers a note from Roderick: « I'm gone to Frascati-for meditation. If I'm not home on Friday you had better join me ». Rowland does so and finds him melancholy, almost morose, having spent his time lying under the trees of the Villa Mondragone reading Ariosto. He is languishing more than ever in the throes of that devotion arising from his initial vision of Miss Light at the Villa Ludovisi in conjunction with its famous Juno.

In presenting the city itself James provides a much better guidebook than *The Marble Faun* without of course intending it as such. He treats Rome in all its aspects and visibilities, seasonal as well as sectional, making each a contributive item. The second half of the book opens with a visit by Rowland to Trastevere, where he finds himself unexpectedly confronting Christina in the church of Santa Cecilia. The way James here converts the freight of a travel essay into fictional matter and symbol, each detail taking on significance for the story, suggests why Pound thought him a master imagist and where Eliot may have found his objective correlative. The scene has its counterpart in that brilliant chapter of *The Ambassadors* set in Notre Dame de Paris in which Strether surprises Madame de Vionnet and starts really to appreciate Chad's attachment.

Rowland begins to understand Christina in Santa Cecilia in Trastevere and the church itself helps him do so. He never completely understands, for soon he exclaims to Roderick: « You're blind, you're deaf, you're under a spell. To break it you must leave Rome ». Nor does Roderick, who says shortly afterward: « « There isn't a harm this place can do us, or has done us, that hasn't had something in it we shall ache for again in some better one ». After happening upon Christina in Switzerland in the company of her husband, Roderick acknowledges with his last act that for him a better one cannot be. Rowland finds his body and silently observes: « He had fallen from a great height, but he was singularly little disfigured ».

In his preface to *Roderick Hudson* the author names it « my first attempt at a novel, a long fiction with a 'complicated' subject ». In doing so he ignores *Watch and Ward*, which had been issued in five installments by the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1871. « Though very thin, and as 'cold' as an icicle », James pronounced after revising it in 1878 for publication in book form, « it will appear pretty enough ». Taking their cue from him, critics and readers have underrated it ever since. Yet it is one of three works by means of which we can trace the making of a novelist during his first decade, for each deals more fully and profoundly with the impact of Rome upon an innocent American girl. The other two are, of course, *Daisy Miller: A Study* from 1878 and *The Portrait of a Lady* from 1881. Like the latter, *Watch and Ward* involves a choice on the heroine's part among three American lovers of very different qualities and qualifications. Unlike the lady of the *Portrait*, after nearly making two mistakes, Nora Lambert weds the one whose generosity has done most to make her what she is. This is Roger Lawrence, who adopts Nora as a small orphan and raises her in the secret hope that someday she will marry him. She does so only after rejecting her vulgar and greedy cousin George Fenton as well as Roger's sophisticated but superficial cousin Hubert Lawrence. And if it fails to help her immediately discriminate among her

suitors, Rome prepares Nora ultimately to appreciate the best man.

Rome plays here the role of a finishing-school. When his ward achieves the age of eighteen, Roger consigns her to the care of a chaperon and sends her on the grand tour of Europe. Nora reaches Rome a Bostonian pure and proper. She is no Christina Light when she returns to America a year later, but she has come out—« a thousand miles out ». Mean-time she issues progress reports. To her guardian she writes:

« ... It is a most amusing world. I have seen more people in the last six weeks than I ever expected to in a lifetime. I feel so old, — you wouldn't know me! One grows more in a month in this wonderful Rome than in a year at home... Alas, I am only a convert to worldly vanities, which I confess I vastly enjoy... Nothing can ever be the same after a winter in Rome... ».

Her communication to Hubert is informed with the author's own initial enthusiasm for certain Roman attractions—the Campagna, the Pincio, the Piazza di Spagna, the Vatican, the Ara Coeli, and Santa Maria Maggiore. This letter concludes with Nora saying: « I feel as if in my single person I were a young ladies' boarding-school. But only a man can talk really to the point of this manliest of cities ».

Here, speaking again for her creator, she reveals something in common with Christina. Impressed by Brutus and Augustus, by the Emperors and Popes, Nora has begun to know men from men. Soon she will be compelled to practice such distinctions back in Boston. For back to Boston she comes, transformed from a slip of a girl into a woman ripe for marriage. Her blooming does not pass unnoticed:

« Pallas Athene », said Hubert to himself, « sprang full-armed, we are told, from the brain of Jove. But we have a Western version of the myth. She was born in Missouri; for years she wore aprons and carried lesson-books. Then one fine day she was eighteen, and she sported a black silk dress of Paris! »

It is naturally Roger who senses the immensity of her spiritual growth and recognizes how much is owed to Rome.

It is scarcely astonishing that, responding to this recognition, he rises at the end to perceptions and declarations and actions hitherto rather beyond him.

On the eve of Nora's departure for Rome she receives final instructions from Hubert:

«... For a young girl it's by no means pure gain, going to Europe. She comes into a very pretty heritage of prohibitions. You have no idea of the number of improper things a young girl can do. You are walking on the edge of a precipice. Don't look over or you will lose your head and never walk straight again...».

This sounds like a program for *Daisy Miller*. To that volume of the New York Edition which features the latter James begins his preface:

It was in Rome during the autumn of 1877; a friend then living there ... happened to mention ... some simple and uninformed American lady of the previous winter, whose young daughter, a child of nature and of freedom, accompanying her from hotel to hotel, had « picked up » by the wayside, with the best conscience in the world, a good-looking Roman, of vague identity, astonished at his luck ... all innocently, all serenely ... till the occurrence of some small social check, some interrupting incident, of no great gravity or dignity...

From this hint he fashioned his only best-seller, which within two years made him both famous and controversial. To a letter of protest from Eliza Lynn Linton in 1880 he replied with patience and precision:

... The whole idea of the story is the little tragedy of a light, thin, natural, unsuspecting creature being sacrificed as it were to a social rumpus that went on quite over her head and to which she stood in no measurable relation...

Daisy Miller is not half so long as *Watch and Ward*, but only the central chapter of that novel is occupied with Rome whereas it furnishes the setting for the entire second half of the shorter story. The first half is laid for the most part in Les Trois Couronnes at Vevay, Switzerland. Daisy

here reveals herself « above all things *innocent* », as James explained to Mrs Linton, « too ignorant, too irreflective, too little versed in the proportions of things ». « I have always had a great deal of gentlemen's society », she tells her expatriate countryman Winterbourne—who rightly decides that, very unsophisticated, she is no coquette but only a pretty American flirt. The section closes as she secures his promise to see her that winter in Rome. He arrives towards the end of January to discover that Daisy has become intimate with the family courier. Like Nora, she has found the Roman society splendid. She goes round everywhere making a number of acquaintances and presenting her beautiful Giovanelli. Unlike Christina and her mother, as Winterbourne notes, « Daisy and her mamma have not yet risen to that stage of—what shall I call it?—of culture, at which the idea of catching a count or a *marchese* begins ». And so her innocuous intrigue creates a scandal.

« It was not to make a scandal », as James wrote Mrs Linton, « that she 'went on' with Giovanelli. She never took the measure really of the scandal she produced, and had no means of doing so ». Yet, duly scandalized at last along with the rest of the colony, Winterbourne protests unsuccessfully and abandons pursuit. He understands Daisy's comportment no better than she comprehends her offense. She meantime misconstrues his reaction as disinterest instead of disapproval. James continued to clarify for Mrs Linton: « The keynote of her *character* is her innocence—that of her *conduct* is, of course, that she has a little sentiment about Winterbourne, that she believes to be quite unreciprocated—conscious as she was only of his protesting attitude ». Desperate but determined, without Christina's awareness of not playing propriety, she compels Giovanelli to accompany her in the moonlight to the Coliseum. There she contracts the Roman Fever that proves fatal.

« *Daisy Miller* », insists Wegelin « is not the story of an American girl in Rome and in conflict with the social

taboos in force there but a study of any girl in any place reacting headily to public criticism based on misunderstanding of her behavior and to her lover's craven fear of public opinion and his reluctance to champion her ». If this were so, Rome would play a part no more integral here than in *The Solution*. The story of Henry Wilmerding could occur almost anywhere, but Daisy Miller's could not. It requires facts particular to the time and place, the presence of a situation in which the increasing application of social pressure inevitably drives a bewildered « child of nature and of freedom » to commit an act more imprudent than impudent. And it relies upon the actuality of Roman Fever to convert a little comedy into a little tragedy. The proof is built into the book, for Daisy's asking Giovanelli to escort her to the Coliseum at night mirrors her requesting Winterbourne at Vevay to take her for a boat-ride by starlight and on a trip to Chillon. Visiting castle and Coliseum mean quite the same thing to Daisy, but only to the latter is a dreadful threat attached. How much of the effect would be lost without the full exercise of the Coliseum's baleful influence is demonstrated by the unsatisfactory attempt that James made in 1882 to turn his tragic tale into a comic play.

Daisy Miller would be a comedy of manners if her life were not the price she pays for the penalty of projecting herself into an atmosphere in which she has no property. Tragedy is implicit at the outset, though the protagonist is alive at the end, in *The Portrait of a Lady*. James made his cornerstone here the conception of a certain young woman « affronting her destiny », as he says in his preface—and awakening from her « sweet delusion », as he says in his notebooks. Isabel Archer is a Daisy Miller with grace and dignity, a Nora Lambert who picks the wrong man, a Maggie Verver who preserves a worthless marriage. An innocent girl when the story opens, she has won knowledge and become a lady by the time it closes. Willful but liberal, she is as American as Daisy. It is her fondness for liberty, her anxiety to determine her fate, her desire to pursue the unusual that ironically betray her. « The whole idea of the thing », James discloses in one of his notes, « is

that 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 ».

Her initiation is as gradual as it is complete. Just as Daisy had done at Vevay, Isabel prepares for it by first practicing her liberty in England, where she rejects a dynamic American tycoon and an equally dynamic English lord. Then, inheriting a fortune, she departs for the continent intent upon spending it fruitfully. She goes from England to France to Italy, from San Remo to Florence to Rome. « From the Roman past to Isabel Archer's future was a long stride », writes James, « but her imagination had taken it in a single flight and now hovered in slow circles over the nearer and richer field ». Persuaded by her friend, Madame Merle, she decides to marry the widower Gilbert Osmond—an American who, like Winterbourne, has lived most of his life in Europe. They have not dwelt long at the Palazzo Roccanera, « a dark and massive structure overlooking a sunny *piazzetta* in the neighbourhood of the Farnese Palace », before Isabel realizes that there is nothing dynamic about her husband. He is a selfish and jaded dilettante, more interested in her money than in her mind. His daughter Pansy, it develops, has never learned that Madame Merle is her mother. Partly in order to spare Pansy as much pain as possible, partly because she has brought her grief upon herself, Isabel resolves to remain in Rome with Osmond. Madame Merle is dismissed like Charlotte Verver. Unlike Maggie with her Prince, however, Isabel cannot hope to live happily ever after.

Yet Wegelin is justified in regarding this novel as « a summation of what James had come to see as the positive qualities which contact and conflict with Europe could bring out in the American character ». For, if Italy has brought out the worst in Gilbert Osmond, Rome releases the very best in Isabel. Whereas his life has grown all form and no substance, hers takes a tragic but meaningful shape. She wins her title to ladyship the hard way but deserves it nonetheless for that.

In the process Italy takes more credit than blame. Isabel submits to the spell as soon as she reaches San Remo:

The charm of the Mediterranean coast only deepened for our heroine on acquaintance, for it was the threshold of Italy, the gate of admirations. Italy, as yet imperfectly seen and felt, stretched before her as a land of promise, a land in which a love of the beautiful might be comforted by endless knowledge...

Florence pleases her still more and prepares her to be impressed by Gilbert Osmond, dressed « as a man dresses who takes little other trouble about it than to have no vulgar things », looking « like a prince who has abdicated in a fit of fastidiousness and has been in a state of disgust ever since ». Scarcely less directly than Daisy with Winterbourne, she invites him to visit her in Rome. « Isabel would become a Rome-lover; that was a foregone conclusion ».

I may not attempt to report in its fulness our young woman's response to the deep appeal of Rome, to analyse her feelings as she trod the pavement of the Forum or to number her pulsations as she crossed the threshold of Saint Peter's. It is enough to say that her impression was such as might have been expected of a person of her freshness and her eagerness. She had always been fond of history, and here was history in the stones of the street and the atoms of the sunshine. She had an imagination that kindled at the mention of great deeds, and wherever she turned some great deed had been acted... By her own measure she was very happy; she would even have been willing to take these hours for the happiest she was ever to know. The sense of the terrible human past was heavy to her, but that of something altogether contemporary would suddenly give it wings that it could wave in the blue. Her consciousness was so mixed that she scarcely knew where the different parts of it would lead her...

Among other things it leads her to marry Osmond, so that these prove to have been the happiest hours she was ever to know. « She had taken all the first steps in the purest confidence », James tells us, « and then she had suddenly found the infinite vista of a multiplied life to be a dark, narrow

alley with a dead wall at the end ». Yet, as she confesses to her friend Henrietta, « I can't publish my mistake. I don't think that's decent ». Even at her unhappiest, however, Isabel takes comfort from the city. She forms the daily habit of a walk in the Campagna and, returning to Rome after an absence, pays tribute to her preferences by making the circuit of the Pincio or the Villa Borghese. The time comes when Madame Merle reveals nearly everything:

Isabel took a drive alone that afternoon; she wished to be far away, under the sky, where she could descend from her carriage and tread upon the daisies. She had long before this taken old Rome into her confidence, for in a world of ruins the ruin of her happiness seemed a less unnatural catastrophe. She rested her weariness upon things that had crumbled for centuries and yet still were upright; she dropped her secret sadness into the silence of lonely places, where its very modern quality detached itself and grew objective, so that as she sat in a sunwarmed angle on a winter's day, or stood in a mouldy church to which no one came, she could almost smile at it and think of its smallness. Small it was, in the large Roman record, and her haunting sense of the continuity of the human lot easily carried her from the less to the greater. She had become deeply, tenderly acquainted with Rome; it interfused and moderated her passion. But she had grown to think of it chiefly as the place where people had suffered. This was what came to her in the starved churches, where the marble columns, transferred from pagan ruins, seemed to offer her a companionship in endurance and the musty incense to be a compound of long-unanswered prayers...

Knowing all, she disobeys her husband and leaves him long enough to rejoin her beloved cousin on his deathbed in England:

She had moments indeed in her journey from Rome which were almost as good as being dead. She sat in her corner, so motionless, so passive, simply with the sense of being carried, so detached from hope and regret, that she recalled to herself one of those Etruscan figures couched upon the receptacle of their ashes. There was nothing to regret now — that was all over.

Not only the time of her folly, but the time of her repentance was far... 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... She should never escape; she should last to the end...

So back she goes to take her chosen place among the objects husbanded by Osmond. When intolerably frustrated at being reduced to a creature for disposition and display, she can at least move amidst the casually massed, haphazardly mounted furniture of Rome. In a muster of its monuments or a cluster of its citizens some comfort may always be found.

What then *is* the image of Rome in Henry James? It is everybody's image of the crossroads of the world, a Christian capital replete with pagan survivals, a city incomparably endowed with the trophies of its history. It is the typical American's image of everything that New York or Boston, Schenectady or Poughkeepsie is not—a place full of that charm and warmth and vitality which northern people identify with the spirit of the South, possessing in its cultural heritage and social traditions the antidote for all provincialism. And it is the novelist's image of the source of countless impressions and the scene of infinite actions—above all the great teacher of life whose lessons are sometimes comic, more often tragic, and occasionally fatal. Varied if not vast, his gallery of Romans includes the artless shepherd Angelo and the artful sculptor Gloriani, the aspiring courier Giovanelli and the retrogressing count Valerio—each of whom contributes his bit to the portrait of Prince Amerigo. For his American girls Rome is certainly « the manliest of cities ». Speaking for himself, as his days were drawing to a close, James wrote: « No one who has ever loved Rome as Rome could be loved in youth wants to stop loving her ». He explains in his preface to the *Portrait* why he chose to live elsewhere. Too rich in its own life and too charged with its own meanings, Rome offers the artist « a questionable aid to concentration » when it is not the subject of his work.

JOHN LUCAS