THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HEROINE
IN THE AMERICAN NOVEL
FROM 1850 TO 1900

APPROVED:

E. G. Ballard
Major Professor

Robert B. Toulousse
Minor Professor

M. P. Wells
Acting Director of the Department of English

[Signature]
Dean of the Graduate Division
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By

Kathleen C. Greer, B. A.

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PREFACE

The heroines of American fiction have not been as notable characterizations as the heroes. In fact, in the work of two of America's most outstanding authors, Herman Melville and Mark Twain, there are no important women characters. Charles Augoff in an article in The American Mercury stated that ours was a fiction without heroines. To some extent his contention may be correct. America was too long concerned with the frontier to have developed a well-rounded literature before the twentieth century, and tales of adventure are based, for the most part, on the daring deeds of the hero. In the early part of the nineteenth century, the American novel neglected women, laughed at them, or sentimentalized them; and few authors of the later part of that century thought profoundly about or greatly imagined any woman. For the most part, young girls were excessively chosen as heroines. Indeed, the green girl dominated the novel in America as reader, heroine, and censor. Great heroines are usually found in great love stories, and, as some critic has said, great love stories are centered around Mona Lisa's, not Pollyannas.

I have felt that the lack of depth of the heroines in the American novel has been made too general an hypothesis. There

are many heroines in American fiction, and in this thesis I have tried to show the development of the characterization of women in the American novel. To be sure the popular novel of the nineteenth century in America tried to keep the heroine from growing up, but, even as in real life, some few of these heroines did mature. There are heroines in American literature who successfully portray the glad spontaneity of the young girl, the faithful loyalty of the wife, the deep instincts of the mother, and even the determination to lead her own life of an individual. To be sure there are more heroines who do not meet this challenge than there are those who do. Still, I hope, in the heroines I shall discuss, to show how the reaction from the early type made possible the development of the few who are memorable and paved the way for a twentieth century heroine in America who, unashamed, may take her place with Becky Sharp or Elizabeth Bennett in the memory of the reader.
CHAPTER I

THE ROMANTIC HEROINE

Early American Heroines

In America until the close of the eighteenth century, reading fiction was considered a questionable means of wasting time; hence, what literature there was was not native, but borrowed from England and the continent. Not until the publication in 1821 of The Spy by James Fenimore Cooper may the American novel be said to have come of age. However, the development of the heroine in American fiction did not keep pace with the development of the plot. The "sob sisters" of the 1790's, created by Hannah Foster and Susannah Rowson, who lived on in the novels of Charles Brockden Brown, still did not become reasonable human beings under the pen of Cooper.

A country so concerned with winning the necessities of life as was America in that period could ill afford to countenance preoccupation with the problems of imaginary characters. Perhaps the fact that Mrs. Rowson's Charlotte Temple was reputed to be buried in Trinity Churchyard in New York added the needed note of authenticity to insure a hearing for the author. Brown's Constantia Dudley varied the pattern of the heroine only slightly. Constantia's creator had come under the influence of Godwin, and Ormond depicts virtuous humanity oppressed by evil custom. As such a female victim, Constantia
won high regard and praise from Shelley. Brown embroidered his Godwinian theme with such realistic native touches as the yellow fever epidemic of 1793, but he did little for his heroine. Constantia was not quite so ignorant as the school girl Charlotte, for, unlike her contemporaries, she was a student of the classics as well as of the ladylike pursuits of needlework and china painting. Yet Constantia was equally as innocent, as unsuspecting, as preyed upon by evil, as unconvincing as Charlotte. Even their tears failed to bring either of them to life.

Likewise, Cooper, though a greater writer than his American predecessors, was concerned chiefly with telling a story, not creating characters. He evolved a type of plot in which the pursued are frequently allowed to become the pursuers. In his novels there is rapidity of movement, reality of setting, and one character at least, Leather-Stocking, who lives in the memory of the reader. But what does Cooper make of his women characters? They seem to be mere puppets upon which to hang the threads of the story; usually they are necessary only as objects of the hero's rescue. Always Cooper's heroines are of the everwomanly type, creatures who because they are not true to nature, the novelist is not able to depict convincingly. In ordinary life such a woman might give a good account of herself; in a tale of adventure, however, there is little for her to do but swoon in every crisis until the reader is exasperated. Although relieved of the necessity for speech by her coma, the heroine
is still a burden. She must be carried on the flight or left to fall captive to the redman, a savage not to be trusted with the care of a lady. However, despite being a liability, the heroine was still necessary, for she provided Cooper's hero with a woman to love. Adventure had not so fully superseded sentiment as to render the love interest dispensable in a story. Judith Hutter in *The Deerslayer* is one of Cooper's best drawn and most desirable heroines. Yet she, too, fails to become real and is always somewhat shadowy in the reader's mind. His women are too young, too colorless, too uninteresting as individuals to catch the imagination of the bystander. Perhaps the wife of Ishmael Bush in *The Pioneer* is the most memorable of Cooper's women; her silent grief over the loss of her son and brother makes her linger in the reader's mind, but she is not an important character.

Apparently, then, a heroine is not best developed in a novel of adventure. The bare fact of her life's being saved by the hero does not make her peculiar powers as an individual felt to the highest degree. For the charm of a woman to become fully effective, it must cast the glamor of ecstasy over the commonplace. Amid the safety and quiet of normal life, the character of the heroine can best be made to stand out boldly. Yet, if Cooper and the other novelists of adventure who

\[^1\] W.D. Howells, *Heroines of Fiction*, II, 211.
rapidly succeeded him did not create notable heroines, they
did much to make the novel respectable in America. No longer
was it looked upon with disdain as a tool of wickedness which
served no good purpose. It was seen to be fitted for honor
and pleasure, and the yoke cast upon it by Puritanism and fron-
tier life began to be thrown off. However, the type of the
heroine found in these early novels has never died, even
though she began to be found less frequently later than she
had been in the first half of the eighteenth century. The
"ever-womanly," as Howells classifies the granddaughters of
Richardson's Clarissa Harlowe and her American counterparts,
live on in the weeping "Feminine Fifties" in Susan Warner's
Ellen of The Wide, Wide World and Mrs. Stowe's Mara of Pearl
of Orr's Island.

If 1821 with the publication of Cooper's The Spy marks
the coming of age of the American novel, 1850 with Hawthorne's
Scarlet Letter may be said to mark the first signs of matur-
ity in the American heroine. If not quite of age, she was at
least reaching the years of discretion. Swooning had been
exhausted as a device to rid the author of his women while his
men took a tilt at new windmills. The author was compelled by
his theme of regeneration through suffering to deal with ordi-
nary social conditions in which as a woman his heroine was at
home. As this sphere opened up, fainting was increasingly un-
necessary until swooning in a novel became as rare as it is
in life. Some heroines still continued to choke and burst in-
to tears, but so do some women. In the earliest novels this
weakness was not an uncommon display of emotion even for men, and one purpose served by the novel of adventure was that it toughened the hero, who in the stress of rescuing his lady fair was forced into a more manly mold.

As a whole, the heroines of American literature are of easily distinguishable types. Their evolution in their native environment during the last fifty years of the nineteenth century was somewhat influenced by the changing ideals of American womanhood. But they have constantly grown more interesting as they have grown more mature and as the ideal which they embody has changed with woman's place as a force in society.

The Moral Heroine of Hawthorne

Although realism had come into fiction much earlier than 1850 in Europe, the writing in America was still romantic. Hawthorne was in no sense a writer of romances such as Cooper's, but, just as surely, his writing was not in the realistic vein of his English contemporary George Eliot. He was an idealist, but his work had the definiteness of realism. It was romanticism depicted by a cool observer. It was realism colored by poetic temperament. With such skill as this, Hawthorne stood head and shoulders above his predecessors and contemporaries, and the Scarlet Letter may be ranked not only as the first great American novel but as one of the great novels of world literature. His characterization is a subtle psychological analysis of mental states. As William Lyon Phelps
saying, "He was more interested in the creation of character than in the manufacture of incident. Events move fast, while character development is a slow process." There is no hurry or bustling in Hawthorne's writing, and yet, his story gains momentum and sweeps the reader along with increasing interest. Against the somber background of Puritanism, his characters stand out in bold relief. They are not types, nor are they individuals in the throes of passion; rather, they are the embodiment of spiritual conflict. Hawthorne's character analysis is clear cut and revealing, and although he refrains from moralizing, he frequently becomes much involved in symbolism and allegory. The scarlet A in the heavens, or as a brand upon Dimmesdale's breast, is too obviously symbolic for the literal-minded to be impressed by it.

Hawthorne's sense of humor and his artistic restraint kept him from becoming a reformer. He intently watched the inner struggle and painted the effect of sin on the human heart, but he offered no palliative. If his readers are changed by his story, it is not because he has pointed out a moral to them, but because his characters have reminded them that "the wages of sin is death." Hawthorne was not preaching a sermon when he created Hester; he was simply interested in a moral problem—in showing the difference in the effect of sin confessed as contrasted to concealed sin. He was an

2 W. L. Phelps, Some Makers of American Literature, pp. 119-111.
3 John Erskine, Leading American Novelists, p. 244.
artist in spite of his interest in morals. If he had not been concerned with the problem of sin, Hester would have been different, even as she would have been if she had been created by another author.⁴

The author recounts struggle dispassionately; he is not unsympathetic with his characters, but, rather, he views them with a cool eye of meditation. In a criticism of his own work Hawthorne says:

Instead of passion there is sentiment; and even in what purport to be pictures of actual life, we have allegory, not always so warmly dressed in its habiliments of flesh and blood as to be taken into the reader's mind without a shiver. Whether from lack of power, or an uncontrollable reserve, the author's touches have often an effect of terrors; the merriest man can hardly contrive to laugh at his broadest humor; the tenderest woman, one would suppose, will hardly shed tears at his deepest pathos.⁵

Yet, withal, there is a deep emotional effect produced by Hawthorne's writing, perhaps because he has awakened the conscience of the reader. For, although he was not a Puritan himself, his Puritan heredity influenced his thought and even his imagination, as shown by the fact that his greatest theme is sin.⁶

In the Scarlet Letter Hawthorne creates a truly great heroine. Hester Prynne is free from self pity; she is made of stern stuff as became the time in which she lived. She did not insist on a right to happiness; she knew she had

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⁴Leland Schubert, Hawthorne, the Artist, p. 174.
⁵Nathaniel Hawthorne, quoted by Phelps, op. cit., p. 111.
⁶George E. Woodberry, Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 201.
sinned and made no excuses for her transgressions, for, although Hawthorne frequently deals with illicit love, he did not condone it. "The breach," he declared, "which guilt had made into the human soul is never, in this mortal state repaired." Although Hester says "what we did has a consecration of its own. We felt it so!," Hawthorne adds that the teachers---"Shame, Despair, and Solitude"---had made her "strong, but taught her much amiss." This hope of Hester's for forgiveness is ever hushed by Dimmesdale, and if Hawthorne believed that there was a possibility for that forgiveness and the lovers' reunion in another life, he never actually voiced it. Hester's passion was sin, but in acknowledgement, it was expiated to some extent. Dimmesdale's concealment made his the greater sin, which ate like a sore, destroying his very soul, and Chillingworth, in assuming the perogative of God, committed the direst sin of all. "Vengeance is mine sayeth the Lord," Hawthorne whispers through the pages. Hester's was a sin of the flesh, but Chillingworth's was an intellectual sin. His was the culmination of Hawthorne's search for the unpardonable sin which he was seeking in "Rappaccini's Daughter" and "Ethan Brand." Chillingworth tampered with Dimmesdale's immortal soul, until he finally came to live for sin; and when he could sin no more,

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8 Ibid., p. 224.
9 Ibid., p. 229-230.
for Dimmesdale had died, he could live no longer; sin had become necessary to his life. A finite being who tries to discipline the human soul becomes a devil. Intellect is evil unless tempered by human affection, Hawthorne seems to say. 10

Hester is no less a heroine because she represents an abstraction, for she rises above the abstract and as an individual is greater than what she symbolizes. The reality of the symbolic world is deeper than so-called realism. Yet it is the stuff of which romance is made. Hester is a realistic character if the soul is real, or conscience, or evil. Hawthorne was not interested in how sin came to be but in its effect on the human spirit. The reader is too much interested in what will be Hester's fate to be lost in the maze of allegory. Pearl, the child of passion, is the scarlet letter incarnate, and while as such a symbolic figure she suffers in loss of realism, she adds a strange touch of fantasy to the characters.

Hester's self respect was regained because her sin was known, because she was shielding another from the consequences of that sin, and because by her virtuous after life she was winning the respect of those about her, even though they refused to admit it. ostracism is a hard punishment for a woman to bear, but it was Hester's only punishment. She had been removed from fear, as she had already experienced the worst

10 Floyd Stovall, American Idealism, p.87.
suffering that she could be called upon to endure; her mind was at rest. Each time she was shunned, she felt she paid a sort of penance for her wrong doing. Hawthorne has shown the spiritual forces at work in the soul of Hester, and these are reflected in her thoughts and expressions when she meets Arthur. Jonathan Edwards would have portrayed this character as conquered by the enormity of her sin; any other novelist would have shown Hester’s weakness in succumbing to her passion; but Hawthorne chose to begin his story after the crime in order to show the spiritual effect of it on the characters. As a story with an uncomplicated plot, it is flawlessly told through character development. The unfolding of the story seems both natural and relentless, so skillfully is every move foreshadowed by the characters.

It is difficult to determine Hester’s moment of greatest triumph. As she stands alone to receive her judgment, she is heart-rending in her resignation; but when in the forest, she comforts Arthur and plans a way for them to escape the encircling doom of Chillingworth’s revenge, she is all woman seeking to comfort her beloved. This is the most moving scene in the book, and Hester dominates it. There is a serenity in the handling that is typical of great art. No other writer could have treated the subject in the light that Hawthorne did. It is great not only in the revelation of the souls of Hester and Dimmesdale, but in the music of

the lines in which they are revealed. In the development of this heroine, the author added an American to the galaxy of women who live not only in the pages of books, but in the minds of readers.

The Sentimental Heroine of the Fifties

Fred Pattee described feminine fiction as running at high tide in 1856. It was a fiction of "tear jerkers," and it is not to be wondered that Hawthorne wrote his publisher, Ticknor, in 1855 that because of literary conditions in America he felt inclined to abandon fiction:

America [he wrote] is now wholly given over to a d---d mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while public taste is occupied with their trash—and should be ashamed of myself if I did succeed. What is the mystery of these innumerable editions of The Lamp Lighter, and other books neither better nor worse? Worse they could not be, and better they need not be, when they sell by the hundred thousand. 12

Maria Cummins was inspired by the romantic love element found in Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights to create a heroine in The Lamp Lighter who must have been disgusting to Hawthorne. Gerty is a typical sentimental heroine, whose author undoubtedly scorned realism as out of place for the feminine book-reading public. E. D. Whipple, the critic of New England writers, alone sees merit in the character. He commends the naturalness, tenderness, and pathos with which the book opens. 13 If Gerty was overly sentimental

13Ibid., p. 115.
so also were many other heroines; and as the type resulted in a best seller whenever it was used, naturally it was used repeatedly. Since Maria Cummins had read Dickens and Susan Warner, as well as the Brontës, it was no wonder that her characters were sentimental. Susan Warner had created America's first best seller when she wrote *The Wide, Wide World*. Every device of pathos was employed in the developing of Ellen, the heroine. Ellen was orphaned, she was mistreated, she was brave, she was industrious, she never rebelled against an unkind fate. The girl was feelingly religious and a "home body"; this combination was emotional enough for readers who thrive best on moral sentiment. Of the moral and religious development of a young girl, Miss Warner had first hand knowledge in her own home in the lives of her sister and herself. How the novel could have received the praise it did is hard to understand. The reader is inclined to shut the book on Ellen with the comment made by the editor of *Harper's Magazine* when he rejected it: "Fudge." Of the 569 pages of the book, more than half are tear drenched; yet, a book that was read as widely as this one can not be passed over without some consideration. In the portrayal of pious, saintly Ellen, the heroine had not shown development; indeed, in her ability to arouse maudlin emotion, she lived only as a reflection of Charlotte Temple rather than Hester Prynne, if she lived at all.

It seems strange that the artist Hawthorne should have found anything to commend in the sentimental novels about which he had expressed himself very definitely, but of Fanny Fern's *Ruth Hall* he professed approval. However, it was the intensity of feeling in the novel that impressed Hawthorne. A contemporary reviewer in *Harper's Magazine* expressed wonder at the popularity of *Ruth Hall*. The characterization certainly shows no greater genius in retrospect than it did then. Perhaps the fact that Fanny Fern wrote so feelingly can be explained by a study of her own life, for many of her own experiences, about which she felt deeply, were incorporated in the book. That it sold in astonishing numbers can only be accounted for by the time in which it was written—a day when a book without a moral was evidently thought worthless.

Caroline Hentz was better equipped for writing than either Susan Warner or Maria Cummins, and her fifteen novels were closely akin to the great mass of feminine fiction that poured from the press during the fifties—books written by women, for women, and largely about women. She was of Puritan descent and, true to her heritage, burdened her pages with a moralizing which, however, only increased her popularity. Since she had many years of teaching experience, some dramatic talent, and access to her husband's French library as well as undoubted ability, she might have made literary history had she been content to curb her tendency to sensationalism and write a realistic account of life in
the South, where she spent most of her life. The Planter's Northern Bride, an "anti-Uncle Tom" novel, might even have accomplished its purpose if Southern life had not been pictured so unbelievably perfect as to cast doubt on the accuracy of the book.\textsuperscript{15} Bula was another paragon of virtues, but her suitor, Mr. Moreland, was not unworthy to win such a consort. The heroine's life away from her New England birthplace was spent in her Southern husband's plantation home. She was wise in handling many difficult situations; she accepted trouble with fortitude. The following description of the heroine is typical not only of the character but of the tone of the book:

No one could look upon Bula without feeling he was in the presence of one of these pure and holy intelligences which, though clothed in humanity, receive from it no pollution, but rather imparts to it its own celestial nature. Her eyes, like stars shining in deep waters, brought down heaven to earth, and discoursed of celestial things. Though a wife and a mother, she retained the expression of child-like, virgin innocence, which gave her the similitude of a vestal in the white robed village choir; and this expression was the mirror of her soul.\textsuperscript{16}

Of these writers of feminine fiction, the name of only one has stood the test of time---that of Harriet Beecher Stowe. The explanation of her fame lies not in the skill with which she wrote so much as in the timeliness of the slavery theme in her best known work, Uncle Tom's Cabin. Like Caroline Hentz, Harriet Stowe was of New England, and she, too, was

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 122.

\textsuperscript{16} C.L. Hentz, The Planter's Northern Bride, p. 422.
better qualified by education, travel, and ability as a novelist than many of her contemporaries. The saintly Uncle Tom was such a moral miracle that the reader can but agree with Nehemiah Adams, a Boston clergyman, in his comment that the slavery which made an Uncle Tom out of an African savage was not an unmixed evil. There is no real heroine in the book, for all the characters are insignificant in the shining glory of Uncle Tom; in fact, the other characters seem to be types rather than actual studies of individuals. The book abounds in inaccuracies and is sentimental to an unbearable degree. Yet, in spite of its faults, Thomas Nelson Page says that this book was more influential than any other force in precipitating the Civil War.

For the author to be appreciated, it must be remembered that her writing was done not for art's sake but to further a principle, a purpose which she declared was always the chief influence in her selection of subject matter. In Pearl of Orr's Island, Harriet Stowe very capably draws a heroine in Mara. The spiritual intensity of Mara Pennel is impressive; if the author could have restrained herself from making Mara such a paragon of virtue, she would not have lost the touch of reality that she was frequently able to give her characters. Mara at seven read incessantly; Greek and Roman history were favorite subjects, but Plutarch's Lives was enjoyed

18 Pattee, op. cit., p. 134.
19 Brown, op. cit., p. 244.
even more than history. As she grew older, her love for Moses, the ship-wrecked boy, increased, but the author was not willing for her "saint" to develop feet of clay in an earthly marriage. Consequently, Mara died while very young, but not before she had "converted" Moses, as well as changed the lives of all with whom she had come in contact. Apparently, she was too good for life, as her illness was rather far-fetched. There is an idealistic quality about this heroine, however, that distinguishes her from the sickeningly pious Ellen. Captain Kittredge, the lovable old sailor, in comforting Moses over Mara's approaching death, voiced the attitude of most of the inhabitants of Orr's Island when he said:

If she'd jest leave me a hem o' her garment to get in by, I'd be glad; but she was one o' the sort that was jest made to go to heaven. She only stopped a few days in our world, like the robins when they's going south; but there'll be a good many fust and last that'll get into the kingdom for love of her.20

There was an honesty and penetration in the portrayal of the other women characters, foreshadowing a more realistic type of heroine than the author had developed in the poetic Mara. The old maid sisters Roxie and Ruey Toothacre, who nursed the sick, made the shrouds, and "laid out the dead" on Orr's Island, might have been drawn by Sarah Orne Jewett. Harriet Stowe's concern for the humble folk and the shrewdness with which she selected her details of characterization give hints of what she was capable of accomplishing.

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Of all the writers of romantic fiction in America, Hawthorne alone produced heroines who seemed to be real people. When the moralizer predominated, a heroine such as Mara was the result; but when the moralist was restrained by the power of the artist, it was possible for a Hester Prynne to be produced. And Hester stands out in American fiction not only as the greatest of the romantic heroines but as a woman meeting the problem of life and rising above it.

The reason for the popularity of the sentimental heroine lies in the fact that she furnished compensations for the romance life had failed to give the readers. Nowhere except in a book could a woman encounter such delicacy, such chivalry, such immutably poetic justice—and most novel readers were the women. The fiery ordeals, the hot pursuits, the uncomplaining endurance were glamorized to such an extent that an uncritical public failed to find them impossible. The heroine represented the cherished ideal that a generation of readers sought to emulate. The gravest criticism of these heroines is that they were not true to life. However, the impulses from which they were created were not false, although the excess of virtue displayed, perhaps, may have perverted the ideal. In an age fired with a passion for moralizing, the romantic heroine failed to come to life except when guided by an author who could face the realities of life without losing his high ideals. Such an author was Hawthorne. It was their refusal to recognize reality that
has made the favorites of the fifties fade from the literary world. Since the readers persisted in seeking in fiction an escape rather than a challenge to life, the authors, on the whole, were willing to supply as much romance as their public desired.
CHAPTER II

THE TREND TOWARD THE REALISTIC HEROINE

The Effort To Create Individuals Rather Than Types of Characters

It was the realistic portrayal of a romantic character that made Hawthorne's heroines survive, and in Harriet Beecher Stowe's writings, it was the glimpses of the realistic treatment of some of her minor characters that made the reader appreciate her capabilities, rather than any heroine she actually portrayed. By the time of the War between the States the trend was toward a realistic portrayal of familiar characters. Two new elements which influenced the writing of the sixties were the Darwinian scientific contributions to learning and the war-stirred mind of the nation. Both worked toward realism in spite of the romance of certain aspects of their theme. The war demanded accuracy of detail and locality; science demanded clear observation and unbiased presentation.

In Elsie Venner, Oliver Wendell Holmes treated the romantic problem of pre-natal influence from a cool scientific viewpoint. If the book is strangely fanciful to the twentieth century reader, he must take into account the limited scientific knowledge of the subject. Holmes' contribution
to realism has been in scientific analysis of character, and in Elsie this is vital to an understanding of her problem. Elsie's mother had been bitten by a rattlesnake before the birth of her child, and Elsie had a strange fascination and repulsion for all who knew her. She wandered on a nearby mountain infested with rattlesnakes for several days at a time; yet, she was never bitten. In a fit of anger, she had bitten a cousin and left the two small punctures typical of the bite of the snake, which, from the effect produced, were evidently poisoned with the same venom. Elsie realized that she was incapable of inspiring love because she was incapable of experiencing it. Her father's affection for her was produced by grief at his child's strange affliction; only Sophy, the old black woman who had nursed Elsie, felt any deep devotion to her. When Elsie fell ill in despair at feeling herself unloved and unwanted, her schoolmates sent her a basket of flowers and leaves. At first she was delighted, but upon finding purple leaves of the white ash tree lining the basket, she was seized with terror and fell senseless. This seizure was explained by the doctor, who said no "Ugly Thing" could live near the white ash, and Elsie steadily grew worse and died after having been in close proximity to the leaves of this tree. However, she was changed completely before her death and took on all the sweetness of her dead mother. The evil light was gone from her eyes and only love remained; hers was a sickness of the soul as well as the body. As in Hawthorne's The Birth Mark, Georgiana
died when all earthly imperfection was overcome; so when the evil spirit took flight, Elsie's life went with it.

The conception of Elsie Venner is romantic in nature, for it is far removed from the ordinary; but the character is given a semblance of authenticity by the author's analysis. Elsie was not responsible for her evil nature, and although Holmes pondered the doctrine of original sin and human responsibility, he was not as concerned with the point of view of the moralist as he was that of the scientist. The reader's interest is in Elsie's personality and not in her chances of salvation. She is a pathological case and lives as such rather than as a person. The method of handling the character furthers this conception. In the entire book Elsie speaks only seventeen times, and more than half of these speeches are on her death bed. Yet her personality has been so fully described that the defect of not allowing the character to speak for herself is not noticeable. Elsie will never be forgotten by anyone who reads the book, just as meeting an insane person would be remembered. In spite of the repulsion aroused, there is a fascination in Elsie as there is always in something uncanny. This element of the supernatural was a characteristic of romanticism which detracted from the realistic portrayal of Elsie.

In the work of John William De Forest there was more than the attempt at realism made by his predecessors. The author created a realistic heroine in *Miss Ravenel's Conversion* before realism was known by that name. The reason De Forest
was not popular was that his representation of war was too near the truth and neither heroic enough nor partisan enough to please either the North or the South. This heroine lived fifty years too soon to be appreciated by an audience rapt in the platitudes of Ellen or Mara. William Dean Howells recognized the fact that Miss Ravenel marked a change in the conception of character held previously and praised De Forest in the *Atlantic Monthly*. There was a close affinity between these writers, whose style was similar, though Howells represented a refined version of realism, drawing a discreet veil over passions and unpleasantness in contrast to De Forest, who left the reader in no doubt of the wickedness he described.

Lillie Ravenel was not a great beauty; her charm lay in her animation and her faculty for making every man she met think she was particularly interested in him. Against her father's advice, Lillie married a man unworthy of her affection and lived to regret her choice. Her reaction to the knowledge of her husband's infidelity is subtly handled—her great love for him had been the result of her innocence; her later love for Colburne was the result of her discernment.

Lillie Ravenel was a very normal, very charming young lady; she seems to be a person the reader knows and understands. Her changed attitude toward the South and the growth of her realization of the principles of Union resulted partly from the light cast on the motives and morals of the war by the people and the conditions which surrounded her. There are other interesting women than the heroine in this novel,
however; Mrs. LaRue is a perfect foil in her "luridness" for the innocence of Lillie. De Forest was particularly interested in creating the older woman, for he considered the thirties the interesting time of a woman's life. He wrote: "It really annoys me to reflect how little space I must allow myself for painting the character of this remarkable woman."¹ While the author leaves no doubt as to his own attitude toward her wickedness, he does not suppress the details which show the bad as well as whatever of the good there might be in the character. Mrs. LaRue is a Creole, but a vastly different one from the Creoles of Cable. She is much more real than they are, though not so charming. De Forest is enabled through her lapses into French to make some remarks which he could not have printed in English. With Don Juan as her ideal man; naturally Mrs. LaRue was not serious in love and considered all men fair game. Like Becky Sharp, she was capable of looking out for her own welfare and at the end of the book was more prosperous than ever.²

To appreciate the steps in the direction of realism in America taken by this author, it is only necessary to look over the American novels before his time. Lillie Ravenel and Mrs. LaRue were pioneers in realistic character portrayal, and De Forest is one of comparatively few American novelists before 1867 who can be read with interest in the twentieth

¹John William De Forest, Miss Ravenel's Conversion, "Introduction" by Gordon Haight, p. xiv.
²Ibid.
If an author should be classified in the light of one creation, Helen Hunt Jackson might rightly be put in the local color group of novelists on the strength of Ramona, which was probably her supreme achievement. Although the scene is laid in California at a time shortly after the war with Mexico, the novel is in no respect an historical romance, in spite of its idealistic treatment of the theme. In Ramona the author attempts to awaken the nation to the wrongs being done the Indians, even as Uncle Tom's Cabin had done for the slaves. Since the Indian Wars had dispelled the haze of romance about the Indian race, Jackson created a heroine so much above the level of the average Indian that she was hardly typical of her race, in order to gain the sympathy of the reader. The situation is glamorized in setting as well as incidents and characters, but because of the author's deep feeling about her theme, the novel takes on the aspects of universal significance more than of an account of particular wrongs to an individual. Although many of the events recounted actually occurred, the title character was fictitious. The love of Ramona, who was half Indian herself, for Alessandro was made plausible; her courage in the face of imposition by her foster mother seemed very genuine. Acts of oppression were skillfully used to reveal the development of Ramona's character rather than as descriptions of the miserable plight of the Indians. Although the book was written to convey a message,
which it admirably succeeded in doing, the heroine Ramona was a romantic figure against a realistic background; even though the most interesting individual Helen Hunt Jackson created, Ramona was not typical of the heroines in the other books written by this author. There is a realistic treatment of a young widow in *Mercy Philbrick's Choice*, a novel of New England. In the struggle of opposing moral forces, the plot is subordinated to the character development of the heroine; the inner conflict has led some of her contemporary reviewers to compare the writer to George Eliot, but others have likened her to Hawthorne.

In similar vein is *Hetty's Strange History*, a story of a very strong and capable woman who conceived the erroneous idea that her husband, a doctor, had fallen in love with a young patient of his. At first, the patient was considered incurable, and Hetty, although distressed at the supposed loss of her husband's love, did not feel that any move was necessary on her part to secure for him greater happiness than he had at home. However, the unexpected recovery of the young patient, who was so patently in love with Dr. Eben, made Hetty feel that she should by some means efface herself from the scene. She determined to fake an accidental drowning, by means of which she disappeared successfully to create a new life for herself in an obscure Canadian province. With the aid of a wise old French priest, she became a nurse in a hospital there and a power for good in the community. After many years she was
accidentally discovered by her husband, and they were happily
reunited. The author in the final chapter admitted that the
story was incredible but cited some facts to bear out the
truthfulness of the narrative, ending with the declaration
that she knew Hetty personally. The story is told in the
form of a record, and the character of Hetty Gunn is made
very real by the homely details of her life which are recounted.
Hetty was a capable manager of her own farm, an efficient as-
sistant when she accompanied her husband on his professional
calls, and a devoted friend of the Littles when they most needed
a friend. Her love for little Raby and his in turn for her
show what a responsible mother she might have been if she had
had a child of her own. Her success as a nurse in Canada,
where she was unknown, was a tribute to her skill, but it was
an even greater tribute to the personality of this heroine.
Yet, Hetty did not understand the love of a man for a woman;
she doubted her husband's love and left him, in the hope,
however, of giving him greater happiness by losing her. To
give up husband, home, friends, and money, that her husband
might marry a beautiful young girl showed how truly unselfish
Hetty was---almost too unselfish to be credible, for Helen
Hunt Jackson was not ever entirely successful in portraying
a realistic heroine. In her attempts to create a realistic
heroine, which represented the bulk of her work, Mrs. Jack-
son did some competent writing; but it was in the creation of
the idealistic Ramona that she showed her greatest skill.
Jane Marshall, as created by Henry Fuller in *With the Procession*, is a heroine in whom the influence of realism was evident, for Jane was neither young, beautiful, nor glamorous. Yet, the reader feels that these qualities, possessed by many of the heroines who had preceded her, are of little significance. Jane's smiling self-deprecation, her unselfish interest in helping her family gain the social recognition that she felt her father's position warranted are testimonials to her faithful and lovable character. Jane expressed what the family had either not realized or refused to acknowledge when she said:

I mean that I am simply tired of being a nothing and a nobody in a family of nothings and nobodies. That's what it comes to. I'm tired of being a bump on a log. I'm tired of sitting on the fence and seeing the procession go by. Why can't we go by? Why can't we know people? Why can't we make ourselves felt? Other folks do.  

More even than an honest acknowledgement of the situation was her determination to change it. In Susan Bates, an old friend of her father's, Jane found a powerful ally; for Mrs. Bates was not only an accepted social leader, but she was also a friend who appreciated to the fullest extent Jane's essential qualities. She subtly smoothed the rough edges so that Jane, who had seemed "a valuable text put at a disadvantage by an unprepossessing binding," might now appear as an

issue of a new edition, in a tastefully designed cover, with additions and corrections, with extra illustrations too---illustrations of a startling social aptitude, and

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3 H.B. Fuller, *With the Procession*, p.34.
with even a hint of illumination—the illumination that comes from the consciousness of a noble purpose... Jane was at last doing herself the fullest justice.

While this metamorphosis was taking place in Jane's appearance, and the family were getting in "the procession," David Marshall was failing in health. Jane, at her father's death, grieved for fear that the steps she had urged the family to take might have hastened his death, but he most of all appreciated Jane for her goodness and love. He said of her shortly before he died:

She is the only one of them all who really loves me... Jane cares for me. She has always been a dutiful daughter; never a trial, never a disappointment—nothing but a comfort.

Jane is one of the several women characters in *With the Procession* who have a definite personality. She is the central force of the book, however—blunt, angular, outspoken Jane—whose romance pathetically flowered at her father's funeral when her long faithful friend declared his love for her. If not a great book, *With the Procession* paints an accurate picture of the Chicago of the nineties as it evolved from a large town to a great city. In the life of the daughter of a typical family, the heroine was a forceful figure, determined to make her family share her own social consciousness. She was "a heroine of a rare and even new kind."

Two heroines as delightful as may be found in American fiction were created by Frank Stockton in the title characters

of his novel, *The Casting Away of Mrs. Leeks and Mrs. Aleshine*. These two plain middle-aged widows represented heroines of a type of American womanhood not heretofore presented in a novel. By the use of a very matter-of-fact young man as narrator, the author recounted plausibly the fantastic adventures of the heroines, who were shipwrecked on a voyage to Japan. Stockton relinquished his right to see within the minds and hearts of his characters in order to gain authenticity for his story by letting it be told by one who actually took part in the events that transpired. Thus, he created successfully an illusion of reality, which permitted the most improbable occurrences without raising the doubt of the reader. In the names of Mrs. Leeks and Mrs. Aleshine, there is a symbolism representing the difference in the natures of the two. Leeks is a variation of Lex, law, and Aleshine, Alshine, reflection. The individuality of the women was brought out in their conversation; although Mrs. Leeks usually took the initiative, as in deciding to use another life boat than the one to which they had been assigned, Mrs. Aleshine was not without originality herself. When the life boat sank, as it was unseaworthy, she it was who thought of propelling herself through the water with an abandoned oar, which she used with the same stroke as a broom, since she knew how neither to swim nor row. No more ludicrous picture can be imagined than that of the two old ladies, with their bonnets tied under their chins, bobbing

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along in mid-Pacific, calmly pausing to produce food from
capacious pockets and eat supper. New England common sense
had made them realize the necessity of taking food upon
abandoning the ship, food that would be the least harmed
by water. The practicality of the two women was further evi-
denced in their housekeeping on the island to which they
finally propelled themselves. The delightful humor of the
story resulted from the incongruity of the practical reaction
of these two heroines to the strange adventures that befell
them. Rock-bound Puritan honesty was demonstrated by the
fact that since they had of necessity broken into a house on
the island and were using the absent owner's supplies, they
very carefully put aside each week what would be considered
in their home town an adequate amount for board and room. Upon
being joined on the island by three sailors, a missionary, and
his daughter, they insisted on collecting a suitable sum for
board from each. The money was placed for safekeeping in a
ginger jar. However, as Mrs. Leeks and Mrs. Aleshine were
thrifty as well as honest, they felt it only fair to deduct
servant's hire from the sum, since they had taken care of the
property and left it in better condition than they had found
it. All this was explained at length in a letter, which they
left in the jar containing the money, when they decided to
leave the island on the boat in which the sailors had arrived.
The Dusantes, the absent owners, upon finding the money on
their return, were so interested that they set out to locate
Mrs. Leeks and Mrs. Aleshine and return the money, for they
were too hospitable to accept it. There is a permanent quality in the characterization of these two heroines that makes them as enchanting today as they were when first created, and the reader, even as the three sailors fell in love with Mrs. Aleshine, falls equally under the spell of Stockton.

Romantic scenes and incidents had not always given way to the portrayal of familiar life, but progress toward a realistic heroine had been made in the handling of characters. No longer was it necessary for the heroine to express lofty sentiments in stilted language. She was not always required to be young and beautiful. She was allowed to behave in a more nearly possible fashion, and, although she was still a creation of the imagination, her treatment showed acute powers of observation. One major contribution to the development of the heroine made by these pioneers of realism lay in their realization of the possibilities for heroines in people who had never before been treated in American fiction. The heroine was growing up physically, as well as emotionally. It is significant, however, that the public was not ready for a great advance in realism; and the work of the most uncompromising realist of the period, De Forest, was not appreciated until many years later.

The heroines of love affairs were still usually very young and often neither realistic nor tragic. There was little serious conflict for the novelist to be concerned about in the development of the characters, who were taken from
"the broad average current of human existence," according to Van Doren. The emotion of the heroine was simple, because American character was not complicated. She was often older and more self reliant than the romantic heroine and had ceased to resolve herself into showers of tears; but she was a native product and faithful to the traditions of American life.

The Attempt to Capture a Realistic Heroine in a Locality

Most of the writers succeeded best in an effort to be realistic when they confined themselves to a locality. In attempting to write of a person who was indigenous to a certain locale, the novelist was often able to mirror almost photographically a heroine who stood out as an individual. In selecting details of setting, a keen observation was developed that lent itself admirably to the selection of detailed character development. Many of the local color cult did not rise to the universal; in fact, ordinarily they remained provincial for the most part, adding few heroines to the gallery of the imagination. Most of this group of authors chose to write of brief episodes in the lives of characters, rather than to develop a consistent plot. The heroine is not perfectly developed in such a compressed space as the short story.  

Although some heroines have been suggested that lead the reader

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3 Carl Van Doren, Contemporary American Novelists, Ch. I.
to wish the story might have been expanded into a full length book, all too often when that was done, the result was obviously only an expansion, a rather elaborate chain of events but not an integrally related story. Indeed, the pioneer in this field, Bret Harte, with the exception of Miggles, created few women characters whose names the reader recalls even a short time after closing the book. Harte was at his best with men; his women were more romantic in conception, and though rarely encountered, they were, nevertheless, possible creatures. However, amusing or touching as his heroines may be, even Miggles adds no inches to the stature of the American heroine. The only touch of realism in the conception of Miggles lay in her erring past, for her present behavior was entirely exemplary and should have succeeded in shaming some of her self-righteous sisters. The heroine, then, it would seem, must be such that she may be easily imaginable in any setting and not so limited as to seem possible only in the surroundings which the author created, if she is to linger in the reader's fancy. 8

Edward Eggleston went further in the development of regionalism than Bret Harte, but he, too, did not add to the reality of the heroine, in spite of his careful delineation of Indiana life, after the manner of a Dutch genre artist. Hannah, the heroine of The Hoosier School Master, Eggleston's best known book, was a hired girl, but with her station in

8Howells, op. cit., p. 231.
life, the realism ends. In her long-suffering endurance, she loses her identity; she becomes a type, not an individual. However, some of his later women characters have more merit.

 Entirely different, however, is the work of Cable, also a local colorist. Aurora and Clotilde Nanemou are enchanting heroines of Creole days in Louisiana. Life in New Orleans in the early nineteenth century is graphically portrayed, but life in New Orleans of that day was the incarnation of the romantic. The Grandissimes, Cable's first novel, in the mother and daughter Nanemou, shows two heroines who are much more realistic than the older heroines of romance. Cable knew his New Orleans, and he also knew his Creoles, and, perhaps the most valuable knowledge of all, he knew the feminine heart. In order to give an accurate understanding of the Louisiana background, the book contains many details; in order to give an understanding of the people, the book contains many characters. The story becomes involved, but Cable successfully extricates the reader before his interest wanes. In the two heroines the reader has two entirely different types. In Aurora, the mother, a charming young widow, there is portrayed a vivacious fascination which is in sharp contrast to the attraction of her demure, conscientious daughter, Clotilde. The relation is the opposite of the usual mother and daughter situation in literature, but it is not unusual in life for the impetuous mother to be restrained by her more judicious daughter. From the first description of their dainty perfection in beauty
and manner, the reader recognizes the fact that the two were ladies, in all the nice distinctions the word implies. Clotilde had nursed Joseph, her unknown neighbor, in the dread yellow fever epidemic, but he was ignorant of her identity, since her good deed was not within the bounds of propriety. She was only a figment of his delirium, and she remained no more than that, until, in love, he recognized her as the good angel of his dreams. Never would the ladies admit their poverty nor let anyone realize their privations. Although they became faint from hunger, always the elaborate pretense was kept up. Clotilde was the more practical of the two and sought to augment their resources by giving lessons in music, but Aurora, too, tried to help and succeeded in getting one embroidery student. Aurora, however, was brave and went for help to the only person who could help her, the man to whose father her husband had lost his fortune at cards. This action took courage, for it had been eighteen years since any members of the families had spoken. Even more, however, it took an humbled pride to go to Honoré Grandissime and ask for leniency in payment of rent, when she had found it was he who actually owned the modest home she occupied. The reader was not surprised that she captivated him, nor surprised that she refused to believe in her happiness, for, mother-like, she had been convinced that his attention was for Clotilde. When he tried to propose to her, she answered:

... You an' me is too hole to talg about dod lovin', you know. An' you god dad grade rizpeg
fo' me, an' me I godd dad 'ghez rizpeg fo' you;
bud . . . . \textsuperscript{10}

Here she was overcome by her emotion, and the reader is as happy as the lover that Aurora Nancanou, who was made for love, had found happiness at last. Her dialect, at first, seemed to add confusion to the story, but by the last scene of the book, it had become but a part of the charm of the user. Few love scenes are as touching, or as interpretive of character, as the one the end of which was quoted. Aurora revealed herself as the natural coquette, unchanged by age, more adorable and younger even than her daughter Clotilde. The story is faithful to the details of time and place, and if it is romantic in the conception of the characters, it is realistic in the details of characterization.

Sarah Orne Jewett did for the heroine of New England what Cable did for the heroine of Louisiana, and the characters drawn by the two differ just as much as the parts of the country which they represented. Much influenced by the best of Stowe's characterization in 	extit{Pearl of Orr's Island}, Jewett went further in her search for realism and considered the technique of the continental novelists of the eighties; Flaubert and Tolstoy impressed her particularly. However, the reader sees very little of their more solid realism in Jewett's characterizations, for her own temperament so refined her realism that she ever failed to see the grotesque. In the

\textsuperscript{10}C. W. Cable, \textit{The Grandissimes}, p. 447.
simple, repressed fisherfolk of Maine, from whom she largely
drew her heroines, she found only the idyllic. Her heroines
show an innate gentility which she attributed to their being
removed from "the cheap side of life" as found in the cities.
At heart she was a Brahmin, and, though she wrote of simple
folk, they must be inhabitants of the land of her memories
and have respect for their "betters." Her country people were
a "primitive and biblical people," and the world had left
them far behind in their quiet villages, unaware that science
and industrialism had undermined their place in society.\(^n\)
Most critics feel that in the short story Sarah Jewett showed
her greatest art, but the heroine is too compressed in this
medium for detailed study.\(^n\)\(^2\) Ann Floyd in "Marsh Rosemary" is
so skillfully treated that the reader wishes the plot had been
expanded into a novel. The reversal of the Moom Arden story,
which she employed, gives an opportunity for keen psychological
analysis of the character whom tragedy had lifted from the
commonplace to the heroic. More than the usual short story
heroine is developed in Ann Floyd, but the author's heroines
of longer narratives have a greater opportunity to impress
the reader. In A Marsh Island, Doris Owen is struggling with
the conflicting love for Dan Lester, her childhood sweetheart,
and for Dick Dale, a young artist from the city, whose fascin-
ation lies in his "differentness." Passion does not enter into

\(^{11}\) V.L. Farrington, Main Currents in American Thought, III,
63-54.

\(^{12}\) Quinn, op. cit., p. 329.
either courtship, and the struggle between the conflicting love interests is very delicately portrayed. Doris is a poetic conception of the farmer’s daughter, but her lack of force keeps her from being memorable. While an idyllic love story, A Marsh Island is not a great love story. Heroines that live after the book is closed must have experienced life more deeply than Doris did. The author’s description of her is noteworthy:

The girl had a fine repose and dignity of manner. She seemed equal to her duties, but she was grave and brooding; . . . She was an economist by nature, but rich with power and strength, the young man thought, as he wondered if there were anyone who had the gift of sounding the depths of her faithful heart. . . . . Evidently nothing of any great interest had happened to Doris yet, but it could not be possible that she was made only for fading out and growing old, undeveloped by these dull fashions of country life.13

Doris did develop in the book into a woman who understood her own heart and was able to choose wisely between her old love and the unavowed new love which attracted her. She was a desirable woman, and Dale realized her desirability, whether or not the warmth of his affection for Doris was great enough to inspire life-long devotion. When asked by a friend, “Of course you fell in love with the daughter?” he seriously replied, “No—no. But I wish I had, Bradish, if you want the simple truth.”14 Yet, Doris made the wise choice, the choice that her background fitted her to make, when she married Dan, and she could not imagine anything better than her

14Ibid., p. 290.
life on Marsh Island. Perhaps there was nothing better; her life was close to nature and full of beauty and service, Miss Jewett seems to say.

The roots of realism were firmly founded in Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, and she showed her deep understanding of the truthful portrayal of character in her analysis of motives of conduct. In Jane Field, a perfect example of Freeman's success in creating a realistic heroine in New England is found. There is not the same outlook on New England life as is revealed in the characters of Jewett, for Mary Freeman saw the results of Puritan repression on the lives of the people of New England. Jane Field was a woman of character; she represented stern courage, self-respect, and honesty. But her love for her daughter was even stronger than these qualities. When Lois, her daughter, had apparently contracted tuberculosis, a disease which had caused the recent death of Esther, Jane's sister, Jane tried to compromise with her conscience. Esther was willed some property, and Jane, who exactly resembled her, decided to claim it in order to relieve her daughter of the necessity of teaching to provide their livelihood. She was successful in her fraud and in relieving Lois, whose health was regained. But her success was at the expense of her own self-respect. The decision to attempt the fraud was logical for Jane to make, for "there was in her nature an element of activity that must have its outcome in some direction, and
it took the one that it could find."\textsuperscript{15} Jane could not work now, for her hands were crippled from rheumatism. The determination to perpetrate the fraud crystallized when she saw her daughter’s health growing progressively worse from overwork. "I'll tell you what 'tis," she said to her friend, "and you mark my words! I ain't goin' to stand this kind of work much longer! I ain't goin' to see all the child I got in the world murdered; for that's what it is—-it's murder!"\textsuperscript{16} From then on "there was a look of rigid preparation about her, as if all her muscles were strained for an instant leap."\textsuperscript{17} However, in the night after she had taken the irrevocable step, "this steady-headed, unimaginative old woman became possessed by a legion of morbid fancies, which played like wildfire over the terrible main fact of the case—the fact that underlay everything—that she had sinned, that she had gone over from good to evil, and given up her soul for a handful of gold."\textsuperscript{18} Lois, who was never able to understand her mother's act, by her condemning attitude made Jane unable ever to forget what she had done—that she was living a lie.

This narrow-lived old country woman could not consciously moralize. She was no philosopher, but she felt, without putting it into thoughts, as if she had descended far below the surface of all things, and found out that good

\textsuperscript{15}\textit{M.E.W. Freeman, Jane Field}, p.36.
\textsuperscript{16}\textit{Ibid.), p.44.}
\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Ibid.}, p.68.
\textsuperscript{18}\textit{Ibid.}, p.92.
and evil were the root and life of them, and the outside leaves and froth and flowers were fathoms away and no longer to be considered.\textsuperscript{19}

She tried to justify her action to Lois, but she left the girl free to reveal the fraud. "If you want to go away an' desert the mother that's showin' herself willin' to die for you, you can."\textsuperscript{20} She told Lois that she knew the wrong she was doing, but since the dead son of the man who had left Esther as his heir owed her fifteen hundred dollars, she had resolved to claim the property until she had recovered the amount of the debt. However, "although fairly started forth in the slough of deceit, she still held up her Puritan skirts arduously" and refused to tell falsehoods. When questioned about her past life, she either remained silent or so worded her reply that it was technically truthful.

In spite of her efforts to justify her actions to herself by saying that she was only taking what was hers by right, she could not bring herself to spend the money she had sacrificed much to obtain. She and Lois lived in the great house in the strange town without friends, for they dreaded questions that would necessitate lies. This isolation they maintained even when there was barely enough to eat; and the two, shut up there together, became, through Lois' condemnation, separated by "that recession of soul which can cover more than earthly space."\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., p. 94. \textsuperscript{20}Ibid., p. 117. \textsuperscript{21}Ibid., p. 170.
Jane tried to salve her conscience by giving things from the house to the family who would have inherited the property but for her subterfuge. When the three old friends from her home town came unexpectedly to visit her, the strain was greater than Jane could bear. She had narrowly escaped detection, and she knew the puzzled feeling with which her friends regarded her, for, "full of grim defiance of her guilt and misery, and of them, Jane was not a successful entertainer of guests." The last night of their visit, when the danger was passed, she lay awake all night; the next morning she was resolved to declare her guilt. This she did, going from door to door to tell the inhabitants, "I ain't Esther Maxwell!" It is a dramatic outburst as "remorseless and conclusive as fate." Her Puritan heritage links her to Hawthorne when she says, "I took it on myself to do justice instead of the Lord, an' that ain't for any human bein' to do." "The stern will of the New England woman had warped her whole nature into one groove," and, sane in all other respects, her guilt was ever on her lips in confession---"I ain't Esther Maxwell."

This heroine showed Mary Freeman at her best. The spiritual struggle of the character was fully developed and readily understood through the inclusion of homely details and expressions. It was this "new concern for local truth in fiction that was to tell against the romantic," says Farrington.

22 Ibid., p. 253.
23 Ibid., p. 266.
24 Ibid.
25 Farrington, op. cit., p. 258.
In fixing the attention on narrow and homely details, the local colorists, and particularly Mary Wilkins Freeman, were attaining realism. Their charm lay in exactness of character portrayal and setting. With increased interest in the local, the vague for the strange and remote died out, and the sober tone of realism replaced the brilliance of romanticism. Boyesen said in 1894 that "Nothing could testify with more force to the fact that we have outgrown romanticism than this almost unanimous desire, on the part of our authors, to chronicle the widely divergent phases of our American civilization." The way was prepared for the continuance and the advance of realism in the novels of Howells and James.

26 Farrington, op. cit., p. 238, quoting H. H. Boyesen in Literary and Social Silhouettes.
CHAPTER III

THE AMERICAN GIRL OF HOWELLS AND JAMES

The Average Girl as Heroine

The naturalists of a later day deal harshly with the realism of William Dean Howells; they find his writing tedious, his heroines strangely lacking in dramatic interest. It is scarcely necessary to recall that the ways of each generation differ, and that Howells was as revolutionary to the romanticists who preceded him as he was stodgy to the naturalists who followed him. He was a pioneer of realism in American fiction,¹ and De Forest and later Crane were stimulated and heartened by his critical comment. His brand of realism was not the robust type that revels in crudity and vulgarity. Indeed, say his critics, he failed to see the full truth of life, but the fault was not so much in his lack of keen observation as it was in "the temperament of the artist and the refined discretions of his environment."² If he had left New England before his literary method was formed, he might not have reflected, to the extent that he did, the influence of Brahmin culture and thus might have achieved a more adequate realism. His realism was only a quiet loyalty to

¹Farrington, op. cit., p. 242.
²Ibid., p. 241.
American life, where he thought that in the prosaic existence of actual men and women, who were neither the best nor the worst of their kind, were to be found the real heroes and heroines of American fiction. Added to his conception of the province of the realist was his belief that morality was the soul of all things and was empty unless it tended to make the world better. Truth, then, according to Howells, was the keynote of art, but truth that would uplift society was not to be found in the pig sty or come upon in exploring the animal in man, he maintained. In America, at least, he felt that realism must concern itself with the average, which is cheerful, for that aspect of life he considered "more American."

That he was not always too restrained by inhibitions to deal frankly and naturally with human passions is shown in his development of the heroine of *A Modern Instance*, Marcia Gaylord. Most critics have not considered *A Modern Instance* to be Howells' greatest novel. William Lyons Phelps ranked it first, however, and has quoted the author as saying that this novel was undoubtedly his strongest book. Marcia was the most passionate of all heroines, the most carefully elaborated and clearly conceived. Her endurance and unreasoning devotion stimulated the vanity and selfishness of her husband, thus bringing about his moral downfall. Bartley Hubbard might have

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been a good man if he had had a more demanding wife, one in whose nature there was hardness enough to combat his inherent weakness. Marcia was a type it is true, but she was not merely a type of a class; she was an individual with bad qualities as well as good. The catastrophe of this novel, then, was caused by the reaction of character upon character.

Marcia took the initiative in her love affair, and she made a fool of herself in her mad pursuit of Bartley. Yet, she was enchanting because love had made her so. From the first description of her holding the lamp at the door, Howells made her desirable—far above the man whom she was seeking to attract. Still, the reader was not disgusted with her pursuit but, rather, filled with pity.

...The spectacle of a love affair in which the woman gives more of her heart than the man gives of his is so pitiable that we are apt to attribute a kind of merit to her, as if it were a voluntary self-sacrifice for her to love more than her share. ...But possibly there is a compensation in merely loving, even where the love given is out of all proportion to the love received.

Marcia was a woman wholly in love, but Bartley was only half in love. He was not capable of greater affection for her, for his heart was too filled with self-love to enshrine another. This was the tragedy of Marcia's life; she threw away her beauty, her sweetness, her devotion on a man who was unworthy of inspiring love. Her father, old Squire Gaylord, recognized Bartley for the sort of man he was, but he could never convince


6W. D. Howells, A Modern Instance, p. 68.
his daughter of the younger man's failings. After the engagement had been broken, Bartley dismissed, and Marcia on the point of departure to visit a friend, she begged her father to go to Bartley and ask him to come back to her. In the misery of her love, there was complete abasement of self. Then, the squire answered her:

Oh, you poor, crazy girl! Don't you see that the trouble is in what the fellow is, and not in any particular thing that he's done? He's a scamp through and through; and he's all the more a scamp when he doesn't know it. He hasn't got the first idea of anything but selfishness.  

Marcia had loved so completely that her whole life was centered in Bartley. Yet her jealous possessiveness brought out the worst qualities of his nature. As she grew older, her passion for Bartley was "the one spring of tenderness in her nature, and if ever it were spent, she would stiffen into the old man's stern aridity." When she was forsaken, she showed her father's strength, for she was very like him, but she never stopped loving her husband. When Bartley taunted her in the last scene before his desertion with the fact that if she had not virtually kidnapped him, they would never have been married, the reader understands the depths of Marcia's hurt. She knew she had never been loved; her pride was hurt as well as her heart. Bartley had never even intended to propose to Marcia when he did. Surprised to find her holding aloof from him, he said more than he meant to in an effort to win her sympathy, and they were engaged

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before he realized what he had said. Marcia had loved him from the first, and he had known of her love, as had everyone else in Equity, including her parents. As the squire said, Marcia had feelings and she showed them.

The flaring up of her jealousy was as insane as it was intriguing, and it flattered Bartley to see how much she cared for him. Her father showed his understanding of her when he said, "And when a proud girl makes a fool of herself about a fellow, it's a matter of life and death with her. She can't help herself. She lets go everything." She and her father were very dear to each other, and she had been indulged in being allowed to go away to school. As she had never been forced to do the disagreeable, she did only the things she liked, but in these she was very proficient. It pleased her father to spoil her, and if she was a willful daughter, she was also a generous, loving one. Her tragedy seemed inevitable, brought on by trivial happenings, even as most tragedies are. Her father's tragedy of heartbroken fatherhood is life itself.

Marcia was of the upper middle class in her refinement and gentility, but she lived only on the fringes of the great world of James where those live whose "social position is secure, and whose material wealth makes repose of mind easy, and leisure an active and not a passive mood." This world Howells does not enter; it was in the life of the average American girl that he found his heroines. Howells reflected what Henry James called

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9Ibid., p. 57.
the American scene. He achieved a miracle of literary art by the use of characters with whom all were familiar, conversations that might be overheard in any household. It is surprising to reflect that dullness itself can be as interesting as Howells portrayed it. He established an intimacy with his characters so deep that he was able to make the reader understand the motivation of their actions. He serenely avoided the melodramatic, but his mastery of narrative writing enabled him to invest the prosaic with excitement.

It is the business of the novelist to know women well, but novelists are not equally skilled at creating heroines. Howells wrote much of women and always understandingly. It is noteworthy that he usually found them basically good. Evil women are often interesting, and most great heroines have not been good women. Howells, however, has contrived to make his women interesting because he has seen the conflict in their characters, for in life, women are not all good or all bad. However, all his heroines are virtuous and, with amazing lifelikeness, illustrate the codes and etiquette of the last part of the nineteenth century. While his characters are alike to the extent of being typical American women, each is different as an individual. Although strongly sexed, they are never offensive, and the point of one critic seems well taken that while Aeneas got away from Dido, he could never have escaped a Howells woman.

12 Ibid., p. 31.
13 Harvey, op. cit., p. 56.
Howells' harshest criticism, however, has arisen from the unvarying virtue of his women, and the gentility of Howells has become a literary by-word. He was content to mirror his heroines faithfully, to observe life and reflect it with utter truth, in an attitude of receptivity or passivity. His women marked a development in the conception of the American heroine because he let the reader see into the minds and hearts of his characters, and allowed him to know these characters as he does not know even his best friends. This creation of intimacy was an art in which Howells excelled. His gentleness, his artistry were civilizing forces that brought the American novel from the romance of the frontier to the daily life of the settlements.  

**Heroinces of the Leisure Class**

Daisy Miller

Parrington has likened Henry James to modern scholarship and says that he deals more and more with less and less. In some respects this may be a just criticism, for he had fallen in love with culture and failed to see that his idol was often a poor thing.  

His spirit marked the most complete absorption in cultural aspiration and made his work a realism of the spirit, not of the homely realities of life. His interest in the "stream of the psychical experience" might justify his

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being classed as a prophet of expressionism rather than a spiritual realist. His attitude may be explained by his cosmopolitan life as well as his mental kinship to his brother William. The frontier of American literature was too crude for James, who chose to deal in subtleties, and his failure to find in life the intangible reality that existed only in his imagination gave a wistful tone to his work.\textsuperscript{16}

Henry James and William Dean Howells have been called the two leaders of realism in American fiction; yet, they were not alike. James owed much to the advice and encouragement of Howells, but he was even more deeply indebted to Hawthorne, from whom he learned a great deal about characterization.\textsuperscript{17} There seemed to be a temperamental bond between the two, and instinctively James and Hawthorne seem to have responded to similar ideals of art. James' literary creed that "form and substance cannot be separated" might be applied to the work of the older writer equally as well. The perfect focus and relatively slight material of The Scarlet Letter appealed to James' love of form, leading him to term that novel "the finest piece of imaginative writing yet put forth in the country."\textsuperscript{18}

The subject matter of James and Howells differed greatly. Howells had a deeper insight into the American way of life.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.


\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., p. 704, quoting Henry James.
than did James, and his material is unfeignedly drawn from America. James, on the other hand, was interested in the contrast of American character with that of other nationalities. His interpretation of character must not only be true to the character portrayed but indicative of the national traits of the country of which the character was a native. 19 He aspired to write of English and American character with such impartiality that his own nationality could not be determined, and the two countries would be merged as a great Anglo-Saxon total. 20

_Daisy Miller_ was James' most popular book, and the title character provided a name for American girls travelling in Europe which was used for thirty years. 21 The unconventionality of the American girl was shocking to Europeans of the later nineteenth century. However, Daisy did not disregard convention because she was ignorant of it; rather, she disregarded convention because she considered it unimportant and disdained to be hedged in by a code of conduct that she felt unnecessary. 22 In spite of her intelligence, when the story began, Daisy was unconscious of formal social customs, as was her mother; but she soon understood that she was flaunting

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19 Quinn, _op.cit._, p. 279.
20 Cowie, _op.cit._, p. 708, quoting James.
21 Quinn, _op.cit._, p. 286.
22 Pelham Edgar, _Henry James: Men and Author_, p. 52.
them, though it never seemed to occur to Mrs. Miller that, as a mother, she was lacking in parental vigilance. It was Daisy's charm and innocence that attracted the reader as well as her independence. She was quite sure that she could take care of herself anywhere—in Schenectady, New York, or Vevey, Switzerland. The only question that the reader feels for Daisy's consistency is whether a girl of such innate refinement would have been willing to make herself conspicuous by defying old world decorum. In Vevey, Winterbourne, the somewhat sophisticated American who had become interested in Daisy, learned of her unconventional conduct from his aunt, who refused to be introduced to the young American girl. Daisy realized that she was being slighted when she answered Winterbourne's excuse that his aunt's health would not permit an introduction: "'She doesn't want to know me!...Why don't you say so? You needn't be afraid. I'm not afraid!' And she gave a little laugh."23 Winterbourne was touched, shocked, and mortified when he detected a tremor in her voice.

At her familiar attitude toward the courier whom the Millers had employed to supervise their travels, Winterbourne was perplexed; the courier's admonition that Daisy should not go out in a boat at night with a gentleman she turned aside with the remark, "Eugenio doesn't think anything is proper."24

23 Ibid., p. 51.
24 Ibid., pp. 21-23.
Daisy missed her friends at home where she had been much feted as attractive young girls are in America, especially when they are the daughters of wealthy parents. She expressed this feeling when she told Winterbourne:

"The only thing I don't like is the society. There isn't any society, or, if there is, I don't know where it keeps itself....I am very fond of society, and I have always had a great deal of it. In New York I had lots of society. Last winter I had seventeen dinners given for me; and three of them were by men,"added Daisy Miller. "I have always had a great deal of gentleman society."

Naturally Winterbourne, having been away from America for years, was perplexed though charmed, for as he reflected, he had never heard a young girl express such laxity of deportment. He wondered:

Was she simply a pretty girl from New York State? Were they all like that, the pretty girls who had a great deal of gentleman's society? Or was she also a designing, an audacious, an unscrupulous young person? Miss Daisy Miller looked extremely innocent. Some people told him that, after all, American girls were exceedingly innocent; and others had told him that, after all, they were not. He was inclined to think Miss Daisy Miller was a flirt---a pretty American flirt... He had known, in Europe, two or three women who were great coquettes---dangerous, terrible women....But this young girl was not a coquette in that sense; she was very unsophisticated; She was only a pretty American flirt. 25

Such was Winterbourne's conclusion soon after he met Daisy, and later, when he had made the mistake of changing his estimate of the girl, he realized how right his first opinion had been. He had been booked to make a mistake though, he explained, for he had lived too long in foreign parts. 26

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25 Ibid., pp. 21-22.
26 Ibid., p. 134.
Later in Rome, Daisy had been doing, according to Mrs. Walker, a friend of Winterbourne, "Everything that is not done here. Flirting with any men she could pick up; sitting in corners with mysterious Italians; dancing all evening with the same partners; receiving visits at eleven o'clock at night."\textsuperscript{27} Yet, Daisy was not naturally indecent, as Mrs. Walker declared, but, rather as Winterbourne suggested, he and Mrs. Walker had been too long abroad to understand her innocence. The catastrophe was brought about by the fact that Daisy's independence would brook no interference. She refused to be amenable to Mrs. Walker's efforts to stop a walk in the Pincian Garden with a young Italian admirer and Winterbourne, by inviting her to join her in her carriage. Daisy's seeming obtuseness forced Mrs. Walker to tell the girl plainly that she was flaunting all social conventions. Daisy replied, "I don't think I want to know what you mean --- I don't think I should like it."\textsuperscript{28} Upon being told that it was unbecoming for young unmarried women to receive freely the attention of men, Daisy answered that she thought such conduct more proper for young unmarried ones than old married ones. But Giovanelli, the Italian admirer, was not flirting as Daisy, the typical American girl, understood the term; the pathos was in the fact that Daisy was carrying her point from a determination to have her own way, not because she was in love with the little Italian. She was

\textsuperscript{27}Ibid., pp. 89-90.

\textsuperscript{28}Ibid., p. 87.
morely insisting on behaving as she would at home. She was a little fool, of course, but one with the caprices of an enchantress; yet, all society turned its back on her when she refused to abide by its dictates. Daisy paid for her independence with her death, for her final indiscretion, seeing the Coliseum by moonlight, resulted in malarial fever. The night when Winterbourne saw her for the last time, she asked him if he thought that she was engaged; and when he said it made no difference either way, she replied in a strange tone, "I don't care whether I have Roman fever or not!" Several times she sent him a message, during her illness, that she was not engaged to Giovanelli, and that she had not forgotten the trip to the Castle of Chillon she took with him. She wanted his esteem—perhaps his affection; Giovanelli had realized her innocence; and Winterbourne, himself, realized that he had been too long in Europe to have the understanding he should have had for her—an understanding that might have given the story a different ending.

Many Americans were incensed at the picture of an American girl which James painted in this heroine. Yet, Daisy's fault lay only in the fact that she was unschooled in European codes of conduct and refused to take the advice of those who would have helped her. Independence is not always a harmful trait of character. It was one of Daisy's charms, along with her

\[29\] Ibid., p. 123.
sweetness, daintiness and beauty. It gave her a piquant freshness that was lacking in conventional heroines. Hers was the folly of youth, which must make its own mistakes. James sympathized with Daisy, even though he mocked her. With her background and lack of paternal control, Daisy was destined to act as she did, and not less destined to suffer from her actions; the consequence of her behavior was a broken heart, and the reader's aches, even as Winterbourne's must have. For Daisy Miller was a tribute to American civilization, in her divine innocence, her trust in herself and others, to the American attitude toward woman. It was a tribute that civilization was not ready to accept. Men adored her, but women failed to see her charm and saw instead a mockery of her ignorance of life.

Henry James has drawn many heroines, each an individual; yet, none has had greater appeal than Daisy Miller. In time, the American girl as shown in Daisy Miller and Isabel Archer, whose weakness, too, lay in her strength—her independence—has made the public all but forget James' other heroines, equally as well drawn, yet, not as lovable.

Isabel Archer

In Isabel Archer, James presented a more complete "portrait of a lady" than he had drawn in Daisy Miller. None of James' heroines is as memorable as Isabel, perhaps, because

30 Howells, Heroines of Fiction, II, 171.
31 Quinn, loc. cit.
none has as much emotional warmth. She was more important than the other American girls James had drawn, possibly because she represented universal youth in conflict with life even more than she did American womanhood. Her outstanding characteristic was her independence, which was also Daisy Miller's most distinguishing trait, but this trait is frequently seen in the young, although it is proverbially an American characteristic. It was one of the first of Isabel's qualities which the reader learned. Mrs. Touchett, Isabel's aunt who lived in England, had, in a cryptic telegram, announced that she was bringing her niece back to England with her. She termed the girl "quite independent," and Mr. Touchett and his son Ralph wondered whether she alluded to finances or disposition. Ralph added that independence was a family trait and that his mother had "no belief in anyone's power to help her." Mrs. Touchett's independence might have been used to show that when carried to an extreme, the trait lost its attractiveness and alienated others from her. Or her independence might have been assumed as a defense mechanism; thinking herself not needed, she had built her life to be self-sufficient. This shell of independence was broken, and her real feelings were shown at Ralph's death, when she told Isabel to thank God she had no child.

32 Cowie, op. cit., p. 715.
34 Henry James, Portrait of a Lady, pp. 13-14.
35 Ibid., p. 419.
Isabel had been spoiled and shielded by her father. "She had had the best of everything," she realized on reflection and had never "known anything particularly unpleasant. Her father had kept it away from her—her handsome, much loved father, who always had such an aversion to it. It was a great felicity to have been his daughter." James went to great length to give the reader an understanding of his heroines' nature; he described Isabel as a good dancer, a pretty girl with an unquenchable desire to please, but one who labored under the disadvantage of being bookish and clever. She had within her a fund of life and a desire to meet it fully. As James described Isabel's early life:

She had had everything a girl could have; kindness, admiration, bonbons, bouquets, the sense of exclusion from none of the privileges of the world she lived in, abundant opportunities for dancing, plenty of new dresses, the London Spectator, latest publication, the music of Gounod, the poetry of Browning, the prose of George Eliot.

Ralph said of her, "she doesn't take suggestions," but her eagerness and unwillingness to postpone anticipated interests pleased rather than annoyed him. The girl had a nobleness of imagination, a hatred of fear and shame, and an infinite hope that she would never do anything wrong. She considered her independence fortunate and was determined

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36 Ibid., pp. 43-44.
37 Ibid., p. 45.
38 Ibid., p. 46.
39 Ibid., p. 61.
to make some enlightened use of it. It was her conviction that thinking about marriage was vulgar. A woman should be able to live to herself in the absence of a deep love. Always she was trying to improve herself, planning her development, observing her progress. But Isabel "was too young, too impatient to live, too unacquainted with pain" not to be hurt by life. "She was very critical of herself... but she was very sentimental as well." Isabel did not have much common sense, and she had a fixed idea that she was doomed to experience unhappiness. When Lord Warburton urged her for her reason in not marrying him, she said she couldn't escape her fate. If she married him she would give up, she felt, her opportunity to experience the fullness of life. "I can't escape unhappiness," Isabel said, 'In marrying you I shall be trying to.' The character of Isabel Archer is so convincing that the reader shares her joys and sorrows, understands her mistakes, and forgives her her sins. In the Art of Fiction James says, "What is either a picture or a novel that is not of character?" So in this novel, the center of attention is always Isabel, but the Isabel James saw was less concerned about happiness than about enlightenment and freedom. Such a

40 Ibid., p. 76.
41 Ibid., p. 81.
42 Ibid., p. 186.
girl was an easy prey to the sophistication and professional dilettantism of Osmond and Madam Merle.

The plot of the book is the reaction of Isabel to the circumstances that befell her, the development of her character, and her complete acceptance of life. Isabel, the generous and true, is shown in contrast to Madam Merle, the selfish and false. James was moral in his view point, and his realism was psychological rather than factual. Crudeness and immorality were distasteful to him, as they were to Howells, but unlike Howells "he manifested little faith in average human nature and looked with distrust upon the turbulent democracy of his native country." 44 James strove to be international, but he lost in popularity by the effort, for the reader cannot always find in his characters something with which he is familiar. But in Isabel Archer there is a universal appeal of youth, beauty, and high ideals. James has created a character in this heroine whom the reader knows through the author's psychological analysis better than the character knows herself. Always her actions are consistent to the person James has created. If the reader is dissatisfied with the ending of the book, he can but admit that it was logical for Isabel, with her finely developed sense of honor, to have refused to break the ties of an unfortunate marriage into which she had entered of her own free will. In the portrayal of no heroines has James shown a more delicate sense of values or greater capability for describing development of character

44 Stovall, op. cit., p. 121.
than in Isabel's struggle to solve her difficulties without sacrificing her integrity. Most of Isabel's education was gained from being loved. She was the product of her environment and her background, never perfectly free as she conceived of herself as being. Her story "is the interplay of free will and determinism;" whether she knew it or not, she was in the grip of her Puritan heritage. The sad fact that today the marriage vow has come to mean less than in the nineteenth century does not change the picture presented in the book. Isabel was bound by the sacredness of a promise. Against the advice of everyone she knew, Isabel had done the wrong thing for the right reason in marrying Osmond. She took pride in her choice, for she felt she was "giving" time, comfort, and freedom, while she "took" beauty and culture from the marriage. When she left home, Isabel knew that she would come back, for Pansy's sake, if for no other reason---Pansy her step-daughter to whom she had said when she left, "I won't desert you." James leaves the reader, knowing Isabel, to decide for himself what happened later, but satisfied that Isabel would do what she thought right. Isabel had developed character through the discipline of suffering. James had taken for his spiritual theme the value of renunciation. American life as he saw it was a quest for

46 Matthiessen, op.cit., p. 185.
success that brought inner defeat. In Isabel Archer, he gave a picture of inner reliance in the face of adversity. There was a "tragic sense" about Isabel's unhappiness, although the book was not a tragedy, for Isabel had accepted the responsibilities of life.

The American girls as portrayed by Howells and James showed the high regard held by the authors for American character. As heroines, they were eminently satisfactory, for they were portrayed in such a manner that a complete picture of the character was given. Although the reader never lost interest in the story, the interest revolved around character rather than plot development. Howells' heroines were developed largely by conversation, for he had no peer in his time in a comprehensive command of American speech. James, on the other hand, was more subjective in his character development, employing the method of the analyst. Both men by their own natures were unable to accept fully the European naturalism by which they were influenced. From that naturalism, the mild realism of Howells had emerged. He was a bridge between romanticism and naturalism. Believing that in America there were no extremes, Howells failed to produce great people in his quest for the average; and great characters are, as a rule, the basis of great novels. For that reason, both Howells' and James' heroines have not had their deserved popularity. Often in avoiding the moments of highest emotion

\[48\text{Matthiessen, op.cit., p.186.} \quad 49\text{Cowie, op.cit., p. 700.}\]
and extremes of character by skirting the melodramatic, both writers have drawn heroines who are more enjoyed by the expert than they are by the average reader.  

50 Ibid., pp. 734, 699.
CHAPTER IV

THE HEROINE OF HISTORY: A SURVIVAL OF
THE ROMANTIC HEROINE

The revival of romance in England, which was exemplified
in the work of Stevenson and Kipling, was fanned high in
America by the ardor of the patriotism aroused by the Spanish-
American War.\(^1\) The realism of Howells and James and other
writers who tried to portray the truth in life was too mild
to be an effective barrier against the still popular romant-
icism. The romantic heroine, although she had declined in
popularity since the Civil War, had never disappeared from the
literary scene. *St. Elmo* by Augusta Jane Evans Wilson had
more readers than De Forest's *Miss Ravenel's Conversion*, which
appeared within a year's time. If Augusta Wilson knew what
realism was, she failed to profit by it when she created Edna
Earl, the heroine of *St. Elmo*. The romantic view of the after-
math of war as shown by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps' *The Gates Ajar*,
in which the heroine, Mary Cabot, is convinced that she will
see again in an after life a loved one lost in the war, was more
satisfying to the reader than the harsh details of battle
painted by De Forest. Along with the supernatural flavor added
to the novel by Wilson was the persistent popularity of the

nauseating, sentimental moralizing of E. P. Roe. The pious heroines of his novels of the seventies showed no vestiges of realism in character portrayal. Frances Hodgeson Burnett, a better story teller than Roe, threw a romantic glamour about her characters, who, though frequently sentimental, were idealized, rather than moralized heroines. Lousiana, a heroine of a novel of the same name, was a rather appealing country girl who had been placed in a difficult position by a visiting Boston woman. But Lousiana, like Dearest, the mother in Little Lord Fauntleroy, Burnett's most popular novel, was not confused in her sense of values and did not disappoint the reader in her solution of her problem.

Crawford was perhaps the greatest of the romanticists of the later nineteenth century and as a historical novelist was unsurpassed. He possessed the qualifications of a wide knowledge of history, coupled with an imagination capable of fusing facts into descriptions of times and manners. Since Crawford had fallen victim of the romantic lure of things not only far removed in time, but in setting as well, his heroines were not Americans; hence they are not considered in this thesis. Lew Wallace, another great story teller, strayed far from the American scene; but character delineation in Ben Hur kept pace with the incidents to prevent Wallace from being forgotten.2

By the time Thomas Nelson Page wrote Red Rock, a novel of Reconstruction, he thought he was far enough away from the era

2Quinn, op.cit., p. 487.
to be able to see it with perspective, for when an era is marked by profound changes, it is perhaps possible to write objectively of that time after the lapse of some twenty years. Before he had completed the book, however, he realized he could not discuss the era serenely, discarded all that he had written, and rewrote his story concentrating on the effect of the situation upon his characters. In his heroine Blair Cary, the high-spirited daughter of Dr. Cary, the author has drawn a fascinating Southern girl. Page was criticized for not making more contrast between Ruth Welch, the daughter of a Northern officer who had settled near Red Rock, and Blair. His defense was that people of honor are very much alike whatever their political beliefs may be, and this doctrine is brought out repeatedly by the characters in *Red Rock* Blair and Ruth were both inclined to be "tom-boys." Blair was introduced to the reader in a jumping episode which won for her the respect of her boy cousins, and Ruth was up in a cherry tree when she met Steve Allen, whom she married before the end of the story. They are charming girls, but the portrayal is somewhat idealized, for they are never shown at a disadvantage no matter what the situation. On the other hand, the minor women characters show more skill in delineation, and Miss Thomasina, the maiden aunt, might have stepped out of a daguerreotype. She ... is the reality. Do not laugh at her, or call her provincial. She

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3Ibid., p. 485.  
4Ibid., p. 360.  
5Ibid.
belongs to the realm where sincerity dwells and the heart still rules—the realm of old time courtesy and high breeding, and you are the real provincial.  

Thomas Nelson Page was restrained in his treatment of a theme about which he felt deeply, for he had lived as a child in the era he chronicled. He treated his Northern characters with the same fairness with which he handled those of the South, and, consequently, he succeeded in giving a good account of the times of reconstruction. But his heroines showed none of the realism of Howells or the introspection of James, and are important chiefly because they endured hardship bravely and without self-pity. The era, rather than the people individually, will be remembered after reading Red Rock.

James Lane Allen's Choir Invisible showed the pattern of the romantic novel that was based upon an historical situation or character. The roughness of pioneer life in the early day of the nation as it was being affected by the old culture of Virginia and Maryland gave occasion to a more original romantic conflict than the conflicts set in colonial or revolutionary days, which were the usual themes of the historical romance. The story is somewhat long, and the careful analysis of motives sometimes tiresome, but the characters are as important as the scenery and era, a fact which was not always true of the work of Allen's contemporary historical novelists. However, as usual in these stories, the hero is more important than the heroine.

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6 T. N. Page, Red Rock, p. x.
and John Gray, who first loved unwisely when infatuated with Amy, then unhappily when Mrs. Falconer, the wife of his best friend, inspired his passion, and finally after many tribulations made a safe marriage. Mrs. Falconer was an interesting character, for Allen understood the nature of his heroine well enough to make her more than the recipient of John's passion. She grew to return John's undeclared love, for his sense of duty and decency had kept him from ever revealing his feeling before he left her. She brought beauty and strength into John's life, because her background had brought out the best in her nature, and he never forgot her influence—an influence which he must have felt was needed in a man's life; for when his son reached manhood, he sent him to Kentucky to Jessica Falconer, who had never remarried but remained true to an unavowed love.

Before John's love for the older women developed, he told her that he was in love with her niece, and she discouraged his courtship. Allen used his heroine, then, to voice a philosophy of marriage that showed a keen understanding of women:

You might remember this: some women in marrying demand all and give all: with good men they are happy; with base men they are brokenhearted. Some demand everything and give little: with weak men they are tyrants; with strong men they are divorced. Some demand little and give all: with congenial souls they are already in heaven; with un congenial souls they are soon in their graves. Some give little and demand little: they are the heartless, and bring neither the joy of life nor the peace of death.

John Gray was a teacher like the hero of *Eggleston's Hoosier Schoolmaster*, but the book does not have the delineation of the detailed life of a section that made the Indiana story important. However, Allen's power to describe nature and the public enjoyment of the idealized types of characters which he depicted account sufficiently for his popularity.

That Hugh Wynne should be considered by many to be the best of the historical novels is not without explanation, for Weir Mitchell was able to combine the style of the poet and the imagination of the story teller with the power to diagnose the motives of human conduct, an ability which he had gained from his experience as one of the foremost American specialists in nervous diseases. The author obtained a sense of authenticity for his novel by making it autobiographical, but, by using at times the diary of Hugh's friend, Jack Warder, he was able to change his point of view and tell the reader things that Hugh could not have known. Hugh's picture of his French mother is very tender; when he read his father's cold letter, giving him the news of her death, the boy was stunned and could not adjust himself to a life without her. As he expressed it:

I went to and fro, finding neither possibility of repose nor any consolation. I saw as I rode, or lay in my boat, that one dear face, its blue eyed tenderness, its smile of love. I could never thus recall to sight any other of those, who in after years, have left me; but this one face is here today as I write, forever smiling and forever young.

Hugh's Aunt Gainor was a strong woman character, a rank
Whig, who "entertained with a freedom only equaled by that with which she spoke her good Whig mind." Hugh's father had great respect for his sister's "commercial sagacity," and their comfortable fortunes were furthered by her clear-sighted advice. Without Aunt Gainor's love and championing, Hugh's life would have been a very different story from the one that he recounted. As he admitted in speaking of going to Gainor's house during the war: "There I found the love and tender welcome for which I so much yearned." 10

In his description of Darthea, the beloved of Hugh's worthless cousin, Arthur, of the sincere Jack, and of the hero himself, the author was very clear in his analysis.

I have tried [Hugh recounted] since to think what made her so unlike other women. It was not the singular grace which had at once struck my cousin; neither was she beautiful. She had, not withstanding, clear large brown eyes, and a smile which was so variously eloquent that no man saw it unmoved. This was not all. Her face had some of that charm of mystery which a few women possess—a questioning look: but, above all, there was a strange flavour of feminine attractiveness, more common in those who are older than she, and fuller in bud; rare, I think, in one whose virgin curves have not yet come to maturity. What she was to me that summer evening, she was to all men—a creature of many moods, and of great power to express them in face and voice. She was young; she loved admiration, and could be carried off her feet at times by the follies of the gay world. 11

Hugh saw through the eyes of a lover, but what he saw made it not seem unnatural that he should have loved Darthea as he did. He wanted others to understand and love her, he said, and added:

9Ibid., p. 76. 10Ibid., p. 481. 11Ibid., pp. 164-165.
She had it in her to hurt you, help you, pity you, mock or amuse you, and back of it all was the honesty and truth of a womanhood capable of courageous conduct and despising all forms of meanness. That she was variously regarded was natural. Margaret Shippen said she cared only for dress and the men; and the witty Miss Franks, seeing further, but not all, said that Darthea Feniston was an actress of the minute, who believed her every role to be real. My wise aunt declared that she was several women and that she did not always keep some of them in order.  

In Darthea, Mitchell created a heroine worthy to have inspired the love of Author, Jack, and Hugh; but the reader was never at a loss to know with whose suit he sympathized. The characters Mitchell portrayed account for the permanence of his novel. In the realistic method, which he essayed in drawing the historical characters on whom his story was based, the author showed his supremacy over contemporary historical novelists. His characters are more vivid than the same characters in the pages of a biography, but they are not quite made into demi-gods. Literature, according to Quinn, is supposed to be the reflection of life, but often it leads rather than reflects. The patriotism aroused by the Spanish-American War may not have brought on the avalanche of historical novels so much as the patriotism aroused by books such as Hugh Wynne may have caused the war to be fought.  

To Have and to Hold, by Mary Johnston, was inspired by an earlier period than that depicted in Hugh Wynne. The author went back for her material to 1821 when a shipload of women was

12Ibid., p. 123.  
13Quinn, op. cit., p. 319.
landed at Jamestown to provide wives for the colonists. With a plot based upon fact, the characters stand out as improbable on analysis; yet, Miss Johnston's skill in creating an atmosphere of emotion keyed to a high pitch makes them hold the interest of the reader. Ralph Percy, a romantic hero of high birth, tells the story of buying his bride Jocelyn Leigh for a hundred and twenty pounds of tobacco, and of his struggle to hold her against the machinations of the King's favorite, Lord Carnal, from whose pursuit Jocelyn, the king's ward, had fled in disguise to the New World. The improbabilities of the love theme might be disregarded if the author had stayed within reason in some of her hero's exploits. When Ralph and Jocelyn took to a small boat in the open sea to escape Lord Carnal, they were joined by Diccon, a former servant of Ralph's, Jeremy Sparrow, the preacher, and, unwittingly, by Lord Carnal, who was attempting to stop them. Shipwrecked after several days without food, Ralph fights duels with three men in succession to tax the credulity of the reader over much; but his ability as a seaman, which he displayed as captain of the pirate ship, carried romance to the extreme.

Miss Johnston has drawn many men of the caliber of heroes in this novel, but her charm is compassed in one heroine. Jocelyn leaves nothing wanting in beauty or fascination. As Jeremy said, in her cheeks both roses and lilies bloomed; her moods varied with the day, and she was always desirable.

She could be as gay and sweet as the morning, as dark and vengeful as the storms that come up of afternoons, pensive
as the twilight, stately as the night---and in her
there met a hundred minds. Also she could be child-
ishly frank---and tell you nothing.\footnote{14}

What more could romance desire in a heroine of noble birth?
What matter if the reader knows the character is overdrawn,
when she inspires the hero to say she should only die "to
soft music, in the sunshine with flowers about her."\footnote{15} Under
the spell of romance, the reader is inclined to vouch for the
validity of the closing sentence of the novel: "All things
die not; while the soul lives, love lives; the song may be
now gay, now plaintive, but it is deathless."\footnote{16}

Winston Churchill had enough knowledge of history to
give authenticity to his novels, and he had enough moral
earnestness to give his characters a seeming moral significance.\footnote{17}
The hero of Richard Carvel exercised the manly virtues of the
hot-blooded Whig during the dangerous days of Revolution. He
was an excellent swordsman and a faithful lover, but he failed
to see that the beautiful coquette whom he adored returned his
love, although the reader had long since realized it. In this
part of his plot he was following the usual formula established
by the success of Hugh Wynne. An original angle was added to
the plot pattern when Carvel became an habitue of the gaming
houses in London. Quinn accuses Churchill of borrowing this
situation from Owen Wister's The Virginian,\footnote{18} but as Wister's

\footnotetext{14}{Mary Johnston, To Have and to Hold, p. 45.} \footnotetext{15}{Ibid., p. 321.} \footnotetext{16}{Ibid., p. 403.} \footnotetext{17}{Van Doren, The American Novel, p. 260.} \footnotetext{18}{Quinn, op. cit., p. 497.}
novel was not written until 1902, and Richard Carvel was written in 1899, the criticism seems unjust.

The heroine of Richard Carvel, Dorothy Manners, was drawn along the lines that had already proved to be popular. She was a "tall slip of a girl, who could be wilful and cruel, laughing or forgiving, shy or impudent in a breath---she had as many moods as the sea."¹⁹ Like all of the heroines of this type of novel, Dolly had a train of admirers, for she was "all primrose and white, with the flowers in her blue-black hair. Had Sir Joshua seen her, he would never rest content till he should have another portrait."²⁰ Such a beautiful creature of changing moods naturally attracted love, and each adventure was paralleled with a love scene. Apparently, a moody woman was much admired, as the changing moods of the heroine of most novels of this ilk were described in detail. Aunt Lucy, Dolly's old nurse, explained her absence during Richard's convalescence by saying: "'Clare to goodness, Marse Dick, 'clare to goodness, I'ce nursed Miss Dolly since she was dat high, and neber one minnit ob her life is I knowed what de chile gwine t'do de next. She ain't neber yit done what I calculated on."²¹ But the reader was not surprised at her capitulation to Richard after five hundred pages of adventure. Churchill was inspired by a love for his country and a belief in the triumph of right into writing novels that had a great appeal, but his characters are not drawn with as sure a hand as Mitchell's.

¹⁹Churchill, Richard Carvel, p. 46.
²⁰Ibid., p. 443. ²¹Ibid., p. 498.
The Honorable Peter Sterling is not an historical novel in a strict sense of the term, for it makes political conditions and ideals come to life rather than a bygone era. This novel was strong because Ford's own understanding of the political conditions was fused with the historian's understanding of the political philosophies of the two major parties of the nation. Peter Sterling was a Democrat, an exponent of the idea that institutions rest on their leaders. The character was based on Grover Cleveland, but, regardless of the source, Ford has made Peter Sterling a real person, not a copy of a man. He is the new liberal as opposed to the conservative and the radical. The heroine, Lenore D'Alloi, the daughter of Peter's first love, Helen Pierce, and his best friend, Watts D'Alloi, was introduced on a run-away horse, from which Peter rescued her. She had her mother's slate colored eyes, and Peter was at once in love. "Lenore D'Alloi was a far greater beauty than her mother had ever been. But to Peter it was merely the renewal of his dreams."22 Lenore was a charming tyrant, and Peter came out of his shell and left his ward meetings to follow her into the ballroom. To prevent Helen's being hurt at the knowledge of Watts' infidelity, Peter had assumed the responsibility for an illegitimate child. Lenore had learned of the child, and, not knowing the truth of the matter, she broke her engagement to Peter. But virtue must be rewarded, and Lenore, coming to believe Peter's denial of paternity, married him.

22 P. L. Ford, The Honorable Peter Sterling, p. 204.
Peter called her a little idealist, but Peter himself was the idealist, and Lenore idealized him. That Lenore was lovely everyone admitted; as she had spent most of her life traveling in Europe with her parents, she knew few American men. Having heard of Peter from many admiring friends, she was already half in love with him when he caught her in his arms as she fell from the run-away horse. She was interested in his ideals and in having a part in his life. Her air of intimate possessiveness captivated Peter, and the reader who did not feel her young charm would be critical indeed. If the correct definition of romance is the one found in this novel, "Love and the battle between good and evil," Ford has written a true romance. Quinn has quoted Brander Matthews as saying that "the really trustworthy historical novels are those which were a-writing while history was a-making," and that Ford could not write a real historical novel with a tenth the value as a study as this one, regardless of his erudition. 24

Janice Meredith, which Ford published several years later, was the answer to Matthews' assertion.

Janice Meredith, a novel of the Revolution, was a best seller of its day. It shows a great deal of research on conditions, customs, and attitudes of the period. Janice was a great beauty, of course; and, following in one of the usual patterns, she was a Whig sympathizer at heart, although her

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24 Quinn, op. cit., pp. 484-485.
father was a staunch Tory. Her bond servant lover, Charles, who was an English gentleman in disguise, ended up on Washington's staff as a general, but not before several hundred pages of adventure, war, imprisonment, and escape had been recounted. Janice was alternately in the hands of either the American or the English army, and life behind both lines was informatively pictured. Washington and Mrs. Washington figured entertainingly in the story, and the character of the General was well brought out through the revealing incidents of the plot.

Janice's filial devotion, loyalty to her pledge, courage, and honor were emphasized as well as her spirit and enchanting mannerisms. Her greatest vice was reading novels in secret, a very reprehensible habit, and she displayed her quick temper when her mother discovered her at it and burned the book before she knew how the story ended. But Janice had a saving sense of humor even when seeming to accept reproof. Regrettably, she told her friend, "Oh Tibbie, what a nice time we could have if women were only as easy to manage as men!"  

And the way she managed the Squire, and all the men with whom she came in contact, was a proof, indeed, of her fascination. General Washington even admitted that if Janice had made her prayer to him instead of Jack, he should have found it difficult not to be equally faithless to his duty.  

\[25\] P. L. Ford, Janice Meredith, p. 6.  
\[26\] Ibid., p. 536.
however, for all her charm, is not so convincingly drawn as the male characters in this novel. Along with the other historical novelists, Ford shared the fault of a misguided use of stilted, artificial language, and the conversation of the characters is often far from natural. Mitchell was the only one of the group who was able to make the compromise between the archaic forms of the time portrayed and the language in current use. Only enough antiquated speech forms should be used, he said in explaining his successful method, "to keep the reader from time to time in touch with the past, and not so much as to distract incessantly by needless reminders."27 This natural conversation which he employed helped make his characters life-like. The permanence of characterization which he occasionally obtained by some use of a realistic method of approach almost raised his novels of history to the higher level of novels of character. All of the historical heroines were, of course, gentle folk, who were portrayed as gallant spirits. Sometimes they might be provincial, but most often they were Americans with secure standards. They were exquisite ladies, says Van Doren:

generally very young but with some dowagers among them, who live in spacious, cool houses, in a world of mahogany and silver and brocade; ladies who ardently expect new bales of clothing from London, but who joyfully sacrifice all such delights during the Revolution; ladies who rise late, take the air genteelly, play at lovely needle work, and spend their nights at balls of elaborate splendor; and yet ladies

27Quinn, op. cit., p. 312, quoting Wier Mitchell.
who know the saddle and, when need comes, put off their squeamishness and rough it in the most dangerous escapades without a tremor. 28

The authors indulged in a prolixity of detail in an effort to make the characters seem authentic, a method which was often tiresome. The essential artificiality of some of the characters was easily apparent as well as the absurdity of the extravagance of beauty and valor portrayed; but, notwithstanding frequent weakness of characterization, as a type of fiction the historical novel was a literary impulse that increased America's self respect and made possible resulting reforms of the twentieth century which were a matter of pride to a country which had become vain of its past.

If the highest function of literature is, as has been said, to record lofty moments which make the rest of life endurable, these writers served that purpose in recounting the lives of the brave men and women in America's history. It is of little significance that the heroine was often idealized past belief and was left as "an ember of euphuism" when her popularity died out with the recognition of the cycle of heroines produced by the naturalists urged on by the ulterior motive of social reform. She had charmed a generation of readers and remains to charm the adolescent who is fortunate enough to find her today.

28 Van Doren, op. cit., p. 212.
CHAPTER V

THE EMERGENCE OF THE NATURALISTIC HEROINE

Naturalism, a school of nineteenth-century thought, originated in France. And the American writers at the close of the nineteenth century who were opposed to the mass of historical romance that flooded the literary scene were strongly under the influence of the French realists, Balzac and Flaubert, and the naturalist, Zola. Romance, according to the naturalist, is the refuge of a thwarted will, and the naturalist seeks no refuges. The individual as conceived by the naturalist is usually the victim of life. His characters are men and women of strong animal instincts and weak intellects; they are neurotics driven by moods which they do not analyze—-or, infrequently, they are strong characters whose wills are broken. The heroines of naturalistic fiction are not tragic figures in the Aristotelian tradition, according to which a noble character breaks a moral law purposively, and, suffering the punishment that poetic justice decrees, precipitates tragedy. These heroines are tragic because of the disintegration of their moral natures or because of the pity that is excited by an individual conquered by forces over which he has no control. ¹

The naturalism that was found in America seemed to the

¹Parrington, op. cit., pp. 323-327.
reader to be a revolt against the genteel realism of Howells. Hamlin Garland was the American forerunner of the naturalistic movement. In his *Crumbling Idols*, he outlined the tenets of the dissenters. Since the novel was a powerful agent for civilization it must do more in the United States than skim the surfaces. It must bring to light the ugly realities of political corruption, economic injustice, religious unrest, sexual license, greed, hate, violence, and cruelty, which were daily growing more ominous, Garland maintained. Yet, in the light of his later work, Garland was not of this new group. He is called by many a thwarted romantic, and his rebellion is said to have been caused by his refusal to accept a condition in which the beauty that should be a part of every way of life was denied to the individual. The blight laid on the pioneers of the Middle West by the hardships of a drab existence rested heavily upon him. He saw in that life no grace, beauty, or charm—only disillusionment. He was consumed with a desire to speak for his people. If this was democracy then democracy was a poor thing, he decided. In later life, when away from the crudeness of his earlier environment, he discovered a romance he had overlooked—beauty hand in hand with service, art not for art's sake but for the good of humanity. However, in the light of his total work, he was a pioneer of naturalism. Parrington

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quoted Garland as saying he intended to tell the whole truth of the lives of the labor-burdened men and women, but that he could not. "Even my youthful zeal faltered in the midst of a revelation of the lives led by the women on the farms of the middle border. Before the tragic futility of their suffering my pen refused to shed its ink. Over the hidden chamber of their maternal agonies, I drew the veil." It was hard for Garland to maintain the objective viewpoint of the naturalist, for his material was too deeply personal; life on the Middle Border had left too harsh a mark for him to be calmly detached in his attack. But it was only while his will to remain objective did not weaken that he attained distinction. In *Rose of Dutcher's Coolly*, the author portrayed a heroine who had had virtually the same experience as his own in leaving her farm home, first, for education at the State University, and, then, for a wider life in Chicago. But Rose was not content in her escape, for she was torn between a need for freedom and a loyalty to the father she had been forced to desert. Her child life on the farm, her sexual awakening, her later struggle in the city, and, finally, her marriage to Warren Mason, which is based on mutual need rather than sudden infatuation, show Garland's tendency toward naturalism in his treatment of the character, Rose.

In a "Foreword" to the novel, written twenty-eight years

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after the publication of the book, the author said that his design was to show that a girl may be moved to seek advancement from much the same motives as a boy and can achieve it by hard work and devotion to an ideal. This contention, which he had advanced in *Rose of Dutcher's Coolly*, Garland said, has been confirmed many times in his observation since he wrote the story. A striking incident he cited: once he visited in a rancher's home; one of the daughters in her attractive intelligence reminded him of Rose, and, after he had left, he thought of her probable loneliness in this desolate place. Then, years later in the office of a prominent scientist, the secretary introduced herself to him and identified herself as the little girl on the ranch who had impressed him. Her life, he learned, had been very similar in accomplishment to the one he had imagined for Rose.

"Rose had been an unaccountable child from the start."\(^5\)

She had learned to read of her own accord at four; she had quaint grave ways which were accounted for by her lonely life as a child. Her mother had died when Rose was five, and she turned to her father for love and companionship. She was unafraid of things which most children shrank from, and even swore at God to see if he would strike her dead. "There! You see that's a lie," she said scornfully. 'God can't kill me---or else He don't care.'\(^6\)

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\(^6\)Ibid., p. 5.
Her father understood her, and, when nothing in her limited child's horizon escaped her, John Dutcher got "her books to read about it—good books." He guarded her carefully, but innate strength and purity protected the motherless child in a man's world. She grew up as untrammelled as a boy.

Her brown-black eyes shone in her dark warm skin with an eager light; and her calloused little claws of hands reached and took hold of all realities.

The boys respected her as a girl who was not afraid of bugs, and who could run and throw a ball. Above all, she was strong and well. 8

"Her comradeship was sweet to John Dutcher," 9 and he became so completely absorbed in Rose that he hardly missed a son.

Men played an important part in Rose's life; early her father's influence bounded her world. Then, the face of an acrobat whom she saw perform at her first circus attracted her, and in her imagination the man became a knight of romance. The remembrance of this man, seen so briefly, influenced her choice of friends for many years, and Rose was untouched by the beaux who sought her. In Carl, a farm boy, she found refuge from their importunities; but Carl failed to enter a heart so completely occupied by an ideal. In books Rose found the romance in which she imagined her hero lived, and her intelligence and studiousness gained for her the encouragement and

7Ibid., p. 8.
8Ibid., pp. 16-17.
9Ibid., p. 21.
opportunity to realize her ambition of reaching a world far removed from the coolly. Dr. Thatcher described her as passionate, wilful as a colt, magnetic. His influence helped Rose win her father's consent to attend the university at Madison, and Dr. Thatcher became her refuge and stay while she was in the university. "Her strength and grace and mastery"\(^{10}\) made her presence felt there, but the doctor's dominion was absolute in her heart and took its place beside the earlier ideal—"more substantial and therefore less sweet and mythical."\(^{11}\) The lovers of her school days had little permanent influence on Rose; they were measured and found wanting. These were Rose's character-forming days. She had a hidden force within which dominated her animal nature—"some magnificent inheritance of organic moral purity."\(^{12}\) She never realized the love she inspired in Dr. Thatcher's heart, for he was too faithful to his wife, too fine a man, to spoil the relationship that existed between them. The attraction she first felt for him gradually changed, and it was the old figure, not the living man, who became enshrined in her heart.

After her graduation, Rose could not go back to the farm life with contentment. Her father built for her a new home, invited her new friends for visits, but still Rose was not

\(^{10}\text{Ibid., p. 96.}\)
\(^{11}\text{Ibid., p. 98.}\)
\(^{12}\text{Ibid., p. 110.}\)
satisfied. Out there in the world was life—her ideal, waiting; at home in the coolly, she felt withered and without stimulus. It was the bitterest moment of her father's life when she told him she wanted to leave. But he knew "it had to be, for it was a part of progress."\(^{13}\)

Life in Chicago was not easy; Rose was not even sure what she wanted to do, but she found friends, and she had faith that if others had succeeded "by toil, then, surely, there was hope for her."\(^{14}\)

In Warren Mason, the influential journalist, Rose met her third ideal. He was a mature man, one who had fought his way up and now was secure in the literary field to which she aspired. He pointed out stories in the city, human interest themes worthy of an epic. Some compelling power in Mason changed her point of view. "It was a little thing to the great city, a little thing to him probably, but to her it was like unto the war of life and death."\(^{15}\) Each felt the force of the other, and each hesitated to acknowledge it. Mason said of Rose that she had woman's prime virtue—imagination:

Of course there are other domestic and conjugal virtues which are commonly ranked higher, but they are really subordinate. Sappho and Helen and Mary of Scots were not beautiful nor virtuous, as such terms go; they had

\(^{13}\)Ibid., p. 153.

\(^{14}\)Ibid., p. 193.

\(^{15}\)Ibid., p. 244.
imagination, and imagination gave them variety, and variety means endless charm. It is decidedly impossible to keep up your interest in a woman who is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow—whose orbit can be predicted whose radiance is without the shadow of turning.  

Imagination in a woman enabled her to idealize her lover, and filled him with a selfish desire to possess her, Mason explained. And possess her he did, but it was as companions and friends as well as lovers that the author pictured them facing marriage and fame together.

Garland further stated in his "Foreword" that he had originally intended to let the novel include Rose's career after her marriage but that some way he never got it done. His contention was that love was not necessarily an all-absorbing factor in a woman's life and should not deter her career. Love, though beautiful and necessary, is an incident in a powerful individual's life. A strong woman would subordinate it to a professional career, as a man does. This was a radical viewpoint, Garland acknowledged, more so in 1895 than it is today, or was when he wrote the "Foreword" in 1922. In an age of accomplishment in every field by women, he pointed to this early picture of the expanding life of American women. He added that, if it seemed unimportant from that standpoint, perhaps it had the merit Henry James found in it, a true picture of the Middle Border in the late eighties and the early nineties.

Garland's plea was for sincerity and originality, but his tenet, "The question for America to settle is not whether it can produce something greater than the past, but whether it can produce something different from the past," was basically untrue. Not the fact of difference, but what the difference consists of determines the value of change. Hamlin Garland was imbued with the crusading spirit, and in his earlier work, which was his best, Garland the reformer overshadowed Garland the artist. It is the way Garland frames his protest against injustice that matters and makes his Middle Border work important in our literature. Rose revolting against the ceaseless toil and hopeless monotony of life on a farm was not just a Wisconsin country girl; with equal truth she could have come from a farm in any state, for Garland in his trend toward naturalism had faintly struck a chord of universality that makes for permanence of characterization.

In spite of some signs of naturalism, there was optimism in Garland's Rose; but there was none in Crane's Maggie. What Crane found in the slums, he presented unexpurgated. To have moralized Maggie's tragedy would have been a disavowal of his sincerity. He was determined to present what he found in life without comment or apology. His theory of art was that the truth of life is to be found in the depths. Just as the romanticists dealt with the gentle folk, Crane, the apostle of naturalism, was interested in the proletariat. Nothing that

18Quinn, op.cit., p. 455. 19Ibid., pp. 454-455.
could stir the feelings of the reader to an appreciation of human conditions as they existed then was too ugly for Crane to include in this novel. He recognized the unnatural in our social structure and emphasized it in the hope of inciting a new life, which would come nearer being natural. Nature, he felt, was beautiful because it was untainted by civilization. Heredity and environment were given an increased significance by Crane, for they became a new kind of tragic fate, caused by no envious god, no opposing will, but the result of inborn circumstance. Maggie was a victim of both her family and her surroundings. The book is objective and amoral. The world it pictures is without virtues but bound by convention to condemn Maggie, the only pure character in the book. It is a detached, episodic bit of slum life, with only slight elements of plot, "ending with the tragic quality of Greek drama." Originally, the characters of the brother and mother were unnamed; probably the author considered them as abstractions rather than as individuals---"the forces of evil, puppets of fate." As such, they suggest the old morality plays. But even as a type, Maggie's mother was inconsistent; her concern over Maggie's seduction is almost ludicrous, since she herself had hounded the girl out of the house, causing her to be first seduced, then kept, and, finally, to become an unsuccessful prostitute, whose life became

21 Parrington, op. cit., p. 328.
22 Quinn, op. cit., p. 533.
unendurable and was ended in the river.

The drunken brutality of the mother was ever vented on her three children, and when the babe, Tommie, died and was buried with a flower clutched in his hand—a flower that Maggie, the only one who cared for him, had stolen from an Italian—death came as a blessed release for him. Maggie's eyes were perpetually glazed by fear, her face was haggard from weeping, the small frame was quivering, as she huddled protectively in a corner with her brother to escape their mother's drunken rage. Yet, as in a mud puddle, Maggie blossomed, and

She grew to be a most rare and wonderful production of a tenement district, a pretty girl.

None of the dirt of Rum Alley seemed to be in her veins. The philosophers upstairs, downstairs, and on the same floor puzzled over it.

When a child, playing and fighting with gamins in the street, dirt disgusted her. Attired in tatters and grime, she went unseen.

There came a time, however, when the young men of the vicinity said, "Dat Johnson goil is a putty good looker." About this period her brother remarked to her, "Mag, I'll tell yeh dis! See? Yeh've eeder got t'go on d'toif er go t'work!" Whereupon she went to work, having the feminine aversion to the alternative.

As a factory girl, Maggie was busy in the day, and at night she was at home. There she met Pete, a friend of her brother, and Pete's oily dandyism impressed Maggie as elegance. Her eyes followed Pete wistfully as he bragged about his toughness; she noticed her home and wondered if he felt contempt for the dirt and disorder.

23Stephen Crane, Maggie, p. 31.
Maggie perceived that here was the ideal man. Her dim thoughts were often searching for far-away lands where the little hills sing together in the morning. Under the trees of her dream garden, there had always walked a lover. 24

Soon Pete noticed the girl, and she tried to calculate the altitude of the pinnacle from which he, in his perfection, must look down upon her. She clothed him in her fancy as a knight, and made vain attempts to beautify or even straighten the tenement flat. Her admiration for him and infinite pains to win his approval were pathetic. The description of the room in which Maggie received her first caller when Pete came to see her, not her brother, was a far cry from the poetic descriptions of the historical novels:

When Pete arrived, Maggie, in a worn black dress, was waiting for him in the midst of a floor strewn with wreckage. The curtain at the window had been pulled by a heavy hand and hung by one tack, dangling to and fro in the draught through the cracks at the sash. The knots of blue ribbon appeared like violated flowers. The displaced lids and open doors showed heaps of sullen gray ashes. The remnants of a meal, ghastly, lay in a corner. Maggie's mother, stretched on the floor, blasphemed, and gave her daughter a bad name. 25

Pete brought the only happiness Maggie had known. Her life in the factory was almost as squalid as her life in her home, and Pete took her away from all this. She saw nicely dressed people; she saw melodramas, and her spirits were raised as she wondered if the refinement she saw could be acquired by a tenement girl who worked in a shirt factory. The fact

24 Ibid., p. 35.
25 Ibid., p. 40.
that she would not let him kiss her piqued Pete, her ignorance and enjoyment of the amusements he offered her caught his interest; her beauty caused him constantly to seek her out. That she only went to Pete after her mother put her out was proof of her purity—purity strange to find in such sordid surroundings.

Pete was the sun in the sky to Maggie, and she knew such happiness as she had never known; but her joy was short lived. Nellie, who twisted Pete around her finger, returned; she beckoned and Pete followed, leaving Maggie deserted and forgotten. Jimmie, her brother, thought it might be better to bring her home, but her mother was outraged. In hypocritical, wailing tones she reiterated, "She kin cry 'er two eyes out on deh street before I'll dirty d'place wid her." Although Jimmie publicly damned his sister that he might appear on a higher social plane, he privately wondered if she might not "have been more firmly good had she better known why." She tried to go back to Pete, for, loving him, she could not understand his action; but she was told, "Go to Hell!" Hell was the only place open to Maggie, and for several months she lived in it as a common woman of the streets. Then she took the simplest escape and ended her life in the river. If this story had been sentimentalized or made admonitory, it might have been accepted by a public blinded by self-righteousness and sentimentality, though the moral implications seem clear enough today.

26 Ibid., p. 79.
Maggie herself was an attack against every respectable heroine in American literature. She affronted the genteel and was rejected by the readers of that day in favor of somewhat shoddy romantic heroines. The conversation of the characters abounds in dull repetition, and Crane is responsible for the theory that such repetition is realistic art.\(^{27}\) The novel is important, for, though not a masterpiece, it introduced a new strain. The heroine is important, for no such character had yet been created in America;\(^ {28}\) she anticipated the amoral heroines of Dreiser.\(^ {29}\)

That the naturalistic heroine did not emerge more quickly and with greater acclaim was the result of lagging public taste.\(^ {30}\) Garland did little more than suggest the change before he turned to romance. As the hardships from which he drew grim heroines seemed less harsh when he looked back on them than they had at the time he was experiencing them, the naturalistic trend disappeared from his writing. Crane never developed fully the naturalistic heroine such as he first created in Maggie. On Theodore Dreiser, then, rested the responsibility of proving the value of the naturalistic school. He has been said to write crudely about disagreeable people. The truth was that he was applying the methods of the reporter to fiction. The scientist

\(^ {27}\) Quinn, op. cit., p. 532.

\(^ {28}\) Ludwig Lewisohn, Expressionism in America, p. 320.

\(^ {29}\) Hartwick, op. cit., p. 22.

\(^ {30}\) Van Doren, The American Novel, p. 245.
presents facts, and, then, he tries to establish the meaning of those facts. But here is an author who reports what he knows and is indifferent to the meaning of facts. 31 Carrie, his heroine, apparently was trying to satisfy her desires without regard to moral principle; sometimes she succeeded and found happiness; again she failed and suffered the consequences. Dreiser recounted the story dispassionately, but with understanding and pity. Perhaps his viewpoint was different from that of his predecessors because his parents were not Anglo-American, and he was closer to Europe than any of the American authors who had preceded him.

*Sister Carrie* is a story of failure through success. She achieved more materially than her most extravagant dreams had compassed; yet, she did not find happiness. Where beauty led, she followed, but she never felt such happiness as she dreamed of and longed for; always her heart was blindly struggling onward; often disillusioned, she waited the day when her dreams would be real, not entirely knowing the stuff of which her dreams were made. She was not entirely evil; rather she yearned for that which was better and did not care whence the better came. For the dreamer the conventions of society are severe; Carrie's was the mind that feels, not the mind that reasons. She responded to every influence of life, good or bad. 32 So much for Dreiser's own analysis of his heroine.

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When Carrie Meeber left her Wisconsin home to live with her sister in Chicago, she was unsophisticated, emotional, responding with desire to beauty, but she had no moral principles to make her strong. She had enough ambition and determination to make the struggle to find a place for herself at no matter what cost, but not enough fortitude to accept defeat when the price of success was too great. When she took money and a home from Drouet, she did it because there was no other way to stay in Chicago, and she was unwilling to lose the things she thought she saw there. She did not feel any attraction toward him; he was pleasant enough as a means to an end, and he had won her by persuasion. If Drouet had married Carrie, as he had often promised he would, she would probably have been a faithful wife to him. His constantly putting marriage off had convinced her that he never intended to marry her. She thought she saw in Hurstwood a way out. When he was very attentive, she was flattered; she wanted to show Drouet she had a husband of higher station than his, and most of all Carrie wanted marriage. She was not troubled by whether she had done a moral wrong in living with Drouet; marriage meant respectability and security, and Carrie had all the middle class feeling for conventionality. She thought of herself as married and had so little understanding of law that she presumed her marriage to Hurstwood was legal, even though she had found out that he had a living wife, from whom he was not yet divorced, and knew that he had married her under an assumed name. It is doubtful
that Carrie would have left Hurstwood in New York when she began to succeed in her stage career if he had not told her:

'Well I didn't marry you...you can get that out of your head. You talk as though you didn't know.'

Carrie looked at him a moment, her eyes distending. She had believed it was all legal and binding enough.33

It probably would never have occurred to her that she could leave her husband.

Carrie was pretty, she was smart, she was willing to work hard. Hurstwood was many years older than she; he had lost his ambition and his self respect. "Of course, as his own self respect vanished, it perished for him in Carrie."34 She had never loved him, even before his infatuation for her had subsided. Carrie had a good heart; she sympathized with Hurstwood when she thought about it, but Carrie thought mostly of herself. She didn't make enough money to keep up the apartment; she needed clothes. She was young, and she wanted companionship. The reader cannot despise Carrie, for she was understandable. Her character was no more clearly developed than Hurstwood's was, however. The men who risked all for the love of a woman and too late realized that it was not enough was more convincingly portrayed. His moral disintegration was shown without condescension, for Dreiser seems very close to his characters as he writes.35

33Ibid., p. 402. 34Ibid., p. 393.
Sister Carrie had no moral standards to break down. She was merely a rather unscrupulous girl, who wanted more from life than she was getting. Hurstwood was changed by circumstances; Carrie was static in her spiritual development, and seemed untouched by life. Things were on the surface with Carrie; she dreamed, but her dreams centered only around herself, for she was only interested in herself. She seldom thought of others; if she chanced to, she did not let their fortunes change her actions. If she had known Hurstwood's condition, and he had been where she would encounter him, she would have helped him, for she had not been changed in nature by success; it never crossed her mind "to be other than she had been." She was sorry for people who had not anything, she said, when she read *Père Goriot*, the sympathetic significance of which she partially caught. But she didn't see Hurstwood, and, although she knew he had been ill, her sympathy was not strong enough to arouse her to try to find him.

The reader is interested in this heroine, but there is no enthusiasm awakened for Carrie. Neither she nor Hurstwood were fine enough to grieve the reader at what befell them. Dreiser presented a full length portrait of Carrie; she was passive and pliable. In revealing the hypocrisy of men, Dreiser never became a cynic. He was impelled by a profound morality—the morality of truth and mercy. For his protest against superimposed codes, he is condemned by the bourgeois censor.

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His amoral treatment of themes is confused with immorality, but there is no glamour of romance in his sex passages. No other American writer except Whitman has achieved such complete detachment; no other American novelist has given such a disturbing heroine. Even Crane's Maggie suffered for her offenses, pitiful as they might be, but it was not so with Carrie. The end of the book finds her with a fine future in prospect. She was an outrage against any scheme of rewards and punishments. But Dreiser needed no justification, for these things were true of these people; therefore, he might write about them. Sister Carrie may not be a permanent characterization, but it is safe to assert that she marks a stage in the development of the heroine of which the historian of literature will be profoundly mindful, and she will not be soon forgotten by any reader. Though slow in emerging, the naturalistic heroine is found fully developed by Dreiser at the close of the nineteenth century.

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38 Farrington, op. cit., p. 356.
CHAPTER VI

AN EVALUATION OF THE AMERICAN HEROINE

With the nineteenth century, the need of an epic, such as Greece and Rome and Medieval Catholicism had had, to glorify the national past and reflect the national present was felt in America. Then, gradually, as prose fiction came to be considered the modern epic form, critics began to demand the Great American Novel. The pattern for this ideal novel varied with the section and year, and whether the Great American Novel has ever been written is as much a controversial issue as which novel might be selected for the distinction. The controversy ranged from whether everyday persons and events or heightened moments of the lives of superior men and women should be depicted. The conflict, then, came to be between romance and realism.

If no novel has been adjudged the Great American Novel, has a novel been written that contains the Great American Heroine? That selection too is a moot question, which can only be based on the literary tastes of American readers. According to Mencken, "We are sweating through our eighteenth century, our era of sentiment, our spiritual measles." We have already reached, he says, in Howells, our Hannah More; in Mark Twain, our Swift; and in Henry James, our Horace Walpole. But Mencken

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is an iconoclast. Charles Augoff maintains that our lack of heroines is the marked difference between our cultural immaturity and the maturity of England and the Continent.

That America is not far removed from the frontier, which is of a necessity dominated by men, is true, and though the real frontier is gone, intellectual change has lagged. Women have been said to be the shock absorbers of change. Our heroines are "nice" girls who will make good mothers, not dramatic sweethearts. Great writing about women does not come from mother adoration. A Nana for a heroine is unknown to us as a nation. It is, then, perhaps a difference in temperament that has brought about the difference in heroines as much as a cultural immaturity. To some extent, the heroines in the novels of the nation must have voiced the contemporary aspirations and must have shown a course of action that was desired by the majority of readers for their daughters and even by many of the daughters themselves.

The first important heroine in the American novel was Hester. Hester gave herself to the nurture of her child; she was no less a mother than if approved by every human ordinance. New England had no fatal Helen, no glamorous Anna Karenina, but it had Hester, a mother when the book opened, and an outcast.

4 Ibid.
5 Van Doren, The American Novel, p. 70.
Against the somber Puritan background, Hester stood out with a radiance of beauty and courage that will never be forgotten.  

Marcia Gaylord, whose tragedy came in loving both overmuch and unwisely, stands out as an eloquent exponent of the incompatibility of certain natures. In her, Howells seems to say that the head as well as the heart must determine the suitability of a marriage. He offers no panacea for unhappiness in divorce; for the violation of the marriage contract leads only to moral chaos, as shown in Marcia's suffering when deserted. Although not so great an artistic triumph as Hester, Marcia is a thought-provoking heroine.

In the understanding of women characters, Henry James has excelled in American fiction. He has portrayed many heroines, but none is more deftly handled than the beloved Isabel Archer. The reader is given such a fine analysis of her character that Isabel attains a degree of the universality of appeal that determines permanence of characterization. Van Doren says that she is "youth growing irresistibly to meet the destiny which growth compels."  

No more perfect example of an individual determined to lead her own life could be portrayed, nor a more touching example of how inadequate independence is as a basis for happiness. Another writer might have preferred to make a young man his protagonist, but James instead has created a notable American heroine.

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6Ibid., p. 70.
7Ibid., p. 173.
Dreiser has taken every precaution to make Sister Carrie plausible psychologically, and for this reason she is a more convincing heroine than Hardy's Tess, her English prototype. Tess suffered, although her seduction was violent, but Carrie in her new interest in dress and manners suffered no qualms of conscience from a seduction in which she passively acquiesced. It was her enjoyment of the opportunity to cultivate beauty and grace and not her lasciviousness that the author developed. Oscar Cargill has commented that Hurstwood and not Carrie is the center of the reader's interest, and that, therefore, as a heroine Carrie has not fulfilled her mission. But it was Hurstwood's downward plunge that pointed up Carrie's success. How much worse must his condition have seemed to Hurstwood when he saw pretty, selfish Carrie living in luxury. Character could have been shown no more effectively than by this contrast, a method employed by Hawthorne in creating Hester and Dimmesdale, by Howells in Marcia and Bartley. The reader does not remember Sister Carrie with a smirk of satisfaction, but when he leaves her he is infinitely touched.

Marcia and Isabel, the realistic heroines of Howells and James, formed a bridge between Hester, the idealized romantic heroine of Hawthorne, and Carrie, the naturalistic heroine of Dreiser. The materialism of Carrie marked the final point in the decline from the idealism of Hester. It is my contention

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9 Augoff, *loc.cit.*
10 Menoken, *op.cit.* p. 98.
that on these four heroines, in whom the evolution of the heroine in the American novel from 1850 to 1900 may be traced, rests America's claim to intellectual and cultural maturity in the portrayal of the female character in the novel, and that they are a contribution to the heroines of world literature of which America need not be ashamed.
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