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## Zolaesque Naturalistic Shadows and European Discourses in James's Fiction: A Comparative Study

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### Abstract:

The several French ideological practices and French characters in the fiction of the American novelist Henry James led some critics to believe that James belongs to the French naturalistic school of Emile Zola, and that the ideology in his fiction is French. This paper examines the extent to which ideological practices in James's fiction play a role in determining the character's fate. The paper asserts that despite the European ideological pressure upon James's American characters in European historical contexts, James's treatment of the effect of such ideology on the characters is not French. Unlike Emile Zola who renders his characters victims to the corrupted ideological practices of the old-world Europe, James renders the ideological temperaments of his American characters to be in conflict with such European contexts and practices. James's treatment of ideology falls more under the category of American Realism than the Zolaesque French naturalism, for as the latter portion of the paper will argue, James's characters are behaving according to the ideological context of a specifically Emersonian ideology. To enforce this argument further about James's art, the paper compares the ideological practices and mode of fictional representation in James's *The Portrait of a Lady* and Zola's *Nana*, to assert that James's art is realistic and American, despite the French naturalist shades in his fiction.

Whether Henry James was a Zolaesque naturalist, at least during the decade of the 1880s, is a question that has provoked controversial responses. The strongest statement about James as a Zolaesque naturalist is made by Sergio Perosa in *Henry James and the Experimental Novel*: "James, . . . for some time at least, felt at heart, and was in his fictional practice, a full-fledged *scientific* 'naturalist' in the sense that Zola had given to those terms" (18). Donald Pizer, on the other hand, casts James as a Naturalist in *American Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* stating that James incorporates naturalistic themes in his late fiction, and that he depicts life as "extraordinary and sensational rather than as placid and commonplace" (xii). In *The French Side of Henry James*, Edwin Fussell explains James's factual "depth" and "detail" in his fiction of French topography, morals, culture, and ideology (115-16). The several French characters and ideological practices in James's fiction, together with the many seemingly French Zolaesque themes led Richard Grant, too, to assert in *North American Review* that "Mr. James does not belong to the English school (English and American being in literature but one), but rather to the French. His cast of thought is French." (qtd. in Vivian Pollak 2-3). Philip Glover's book *Henry James and the French Novel* is the most judicious on this subject since he considers the influence of Zola to be a very minor one. James incorporates, as critics argue, sensational naturalistic Zolaesque themes, French morality, behaviors, and architecture; but his treatment of such naturalistic themes, this paper will demonstrate, is not French. Rather, James espouses an Emersonian philosophy of idealism in his fiction, a matter which renders him an idealistic realist. It is possible that James has the French nicety of taste, dexterity of hand, and that he portrays the French topography and social life sometimes; but this does not make him a Zolaesque scientific naturalist.

Most of nineteenth-century French writers such as Zola, Baudelaire, Balzac, Huysmans, Mallarme and others represented the crudest things of the French life. Most of these French writers influenced each other. As Havelock Ellis describes him in his "Introduction" to *Against the Grain*, "They are realistic with a veracious and courageously abject realism . . . dealing with the sordidest and triviales human miseries" (ix). They dealt with themes of open sexuality, social corruption, decadent morality, and prostitution. Huysmans's first novel, for instance, *Marthe* (1876), Ellis explicates, "inaugurated the long series of novels devoted to state-regulated prostitution in those slaughter houses of love, as Huysmans later described them, where Desire is slain at a single stroke,--sufficiently repulsive on the whole" (ix). Huysmans declares a basic policy in his "Preface" to *Marthe* which describes the nature of his work: "I set down what I see, what I feel, what I have lived" (qtd. in Ellis). Baudelaire's prose poems, on the other hand, such as "The Generous Gambler," "Solitude," and "The Crowds," together with his collection "les fleurs du mal" ("flowers of evil"), dealt with similar aspects of the French life: they all have a clear consensus emerges as to what constitutes the French life and culture. Zola influenced Huysmans, Mallarme, Baudelaire and others. He established, however, his own school which he called "naturalism." Zola's basic ideology in his fiction is that of human beings as organisms who are slaves to their biological desires and needs. This ideology is to be found in the historical ambitions advertised by his twenty-novel Saga under the generic title of Les

*Rougon-Macquart, histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le second Empire* (*The Rougon-Macquarts: The Natural and Social History of a Family under the Second Empire* published between 1871 and 1893). Each subtitle of the series explores a specific milieu so that, together, they form a panorama of the French life. Zola portrays organisms in his Saga as corrupted and led by biological determinants which they can neither control nor understand (i.e. Nana in *Nana* (1880), Jacques Lantier in *La bete humaine* (*The Human Beast*) (1890), and Claude Lantier in *L'Oeuvre* (*The Masterpiece*) (1886).

James incorporated in his fiction several French characters, naturalistic themes, social manners, and moralistic behaviors which Zola and other French writers included in their fiction. But does this make James a naturalist or, say, French? Althusser defines ideology as a "particular social reality specific to a given social practices" which "constructs subjects for a particular social formation" (qtd. in Smith 14). Karl Mannheim, on the other hand, categorizes the social practices particular to certain individuals as a "group ideology" ("Ideology and Utopia" 53). The collective social practices of a particular group of people give them a distinctive cultural identity, national unity, and social function. Realistic novelists try to depict life as it is, and they endeavor to reflect and assimilate the reality (i.e. the dominant ideology) of their nations.

Relying on deconstructionist theories, Terry Eagleton asserts in his article, "Text, Ideology, Realism," that "ideology" is synonymous to "metaphysics," and defines it as a "philosophy of presence" (*Literature and Society* 149). No wonder then that upon observing some French Zolaesque ideological practices and characters in James's fiction some readers will cast James as French, especially that ideology, as Eagleton writes, is a matter of "deceptive transparency" (149). The fact that James, who read and commented on most of Zola's works, inserted some Zola's naturalistic creed in his fiction might lead the reader to decide that James inclines to a Zolaesque ideological logocentricity. This is the cunning of the ideological. In this light, ideology can be not just a matter of representation of social practices, but also slippage and deception. We can have ideological mix, that is, several ideologies within the same textual kernel, and this will add confusion that reflects the author's sophisticated fictional representationalism. It is here that duplicity of representationalism in James's fiction lies, and it is the aim of this paper to approach and clear up this ambiguity in James's fictional representation. This article argues that despite the presence of several French ideological practices and Zolaesque naturalistic themes, James's treatment of the effect of such ideology upon his American characters is not French or naturalistic. The European influence is rendered by James as destructive, and is opposed by American Emersonian ideological temperament that translates the violent, sensational, and destructive naturalistic themes into genteel realistic themes of Emersonian idealism and transcendentalism. To highlight further the difference between James's fictional and ideological representation and that of the French writers the paper conducts a comparison between James's masterpiece *The Portrait of a Lady* and Emile Zola's novel *Nana*. Both novels serve good examples of the fictional representation of each writer.

James contrasts in his fiction the ideology of old-world (corrupted) Europe with that of the new-world (innocent) America. Americans are pictured in the fiction as innocent and ethical, situated and estranged in European environments, and deceived and victimized by the immoral and destructive European spheres of life. In what follow, it will be shown how the European ideological mix operates on James's innocent characters, who, although suffer from estranged European social contexts, they resist, transcend, and learn. In doing so, they are drawing from an ideological context of a specifically Emersonian ideology of individualism, Puritanism, idealism, and transcendence.

In order to understand the intricate ins and outs of James's characters and the thrilling ups and downs of their destination it is necessary to cope with the ideological environments. Most of James's novels contain characters from several ideological and environmental backgrounds; a matter which complicates the function of fate, consciousness and interestedness of James's *ficelles* and *disposables*. Such a mix of ideological practices in James's fiction will certainly reveal several infra-structural ideological messages which are all viewed and colored by James's genuine moral artistic ideology. Paul Smith emphasizes in *Discerning the Subject* that the "literary text is the agent for the reproduction of ideology," and that it exhibits the "natural workings of an ideological mechanism" (28). More to the point, the text, in some sense, contains values, meanings, habits, traditions, and behaviors which are highly reliable and expressive of ideology. Put in other words, the text expresses an ideological message. Terry Eagleton, Althusser, and the French critic Pierre Macherey emphasize Smith's point. In *Criticism and Ideology*, Eagleton asserts that "literature... is the most revealing mode of experiential access to ideology that we possess" (101). Althusser, on the other hand, sees the text as that which names the "process of cultural construction" (qtd. in Smith 20). In similar terms, Macherey posits literature in *Une théorie de la Production littéraire* as a "locus of the production of ideology" (qtd. in Smith 26). That the author espouses a certain ideology in the text, and the narrator articulates that ideology in words, then the reader, whether trusting or suspecting the narrator's judgments, accepts that ideology either consciously or unconsciously and works it out with the behavior of the characters.

Ideological practices in James's fiction seem to play a role in determining the character's fate. Most of his American characters are simply determined by ideological pressures which they cannot escape. American characters such as Newman in *The American*, Winterbourne in *Daisy Miller*, and Roderick Hudson in *Roderick Hudson* exhibit this dilemma when they become subject to the European ideological mix, that is, European females, who could be American by origin but raised and received their education in Europe. Newman, for instance, is portrayed as victimized by Claire's mother in *The American*; Winterbourne as victimized by Daisy's flirtiness; and Roderick as victimized by Christina Light in *Roderick Hudson*. More specifically, those males turn to be victims to, to borrow Mary Garland's words in *Roderick Hudson*, the "poisonous" European atmosphere. This atmosphere is one in which European ideology dominants.

Claire in *The American*, for example, belonging to a French ideological mix, seems to Newman "so felicitous... a product of nature and circumstance" (44). That is, her thoughts and social attitudes are colored and affected by the French culture and ideology which she cannot avoid. The reader is exposed to such French ideology via the behavior of both Claire and the members of her family: Madame de Bellegarde, Urban de Bellegarde, Valentine, and the Marquis. Claire, for example, cannot disobey her mother, and she must follow her mother's opinions all the time to protect the family's honor. Claire, in Newman's words, "blackened herself to whiten others" (35), and she never feels independent from the other (we do not see in her Isabel's Emersonian independence which would reflect an American individualist ideology). Further, Claire's submissiveness renders her ignorant of many things of implicit familial affairs, such as her father's suicide, as well as her mother's hypocrisy and adoration for money. Although Newman admires Claire's beauty and pride (151), he finds her terribly controlled by the mother's French temper. Belonging to an Emersonian individualist ideology that calls for the freedom and independence of the individual, Newman hates Claire's submissiveness and feels sorry for her. Being estranged and ideologically dislocated, Newman suffers at the end in a complex way.

Unlike the European American Chadwick Newsome in *The Ambassadors* who achieves success because he fits the French life and the French way of thinking, Newman finds himself among people whom he doesn't know how they think. Though feeling intimately, the pressure of ideological difference, he is ignorant of the French ideological construction and social attitudes. This, in James's words, makes Newman appear an easy victim. He becomes "useful to no one" and "detestable to himself" because of the other's rejection of him: "hopeless" and "helpless loafer" in Claire's mother's social track. However, Newman resists to be entrapped, and his resistance comes to be fruitful at the end. Although he is situated in a different ideological atmosphere, he struggles to insert his self into it. Despite the fact that he was "wronged," "defeated," and "bullied" (427-29); he is projected by James at the end as a "god-natured man" (446), who would "take care of himself" after proving his goodness to the other. It is James's American individualist ideology that moves him to render Newman an independent American, who distinguishes himself as totally indifferent to the other. As Smith puts it, a person is not always "determined and dominated by the ideological pressures [external and internal] of any overarching discourse or ideology, but is also the agent of certain discernment" (xxxv). Newman discerns himself in France as a "terribly positive gentleman," and he comes back home, James tells us, as totally "indifferent" American to what had happened to him (441). James writes that Newman "was himself surprised to the extent of his indifference" (442). Whereas Claire proved to be a passive "common weak creature," who is entrapped by her family's ideological tradition, Newman Proves to be the good American who revolts inwardly: a man who knows but doesn't see and represses but doesn't express.

As Claire is victimized by the French mother who belongs to the European old-world, Pansy is also victimized to the Europeanized American father, Osmond, in *The Portrait of a Lady*. Pansy is a foil for another Daisy Miller, whose ideological perspective is quite different. She is a very simple ficelle whose father Osmond does not even give her the right to plan her own private life. Put in other words, Pansy suffers from the cruel *world of means* of Osmond. Osmond turns Pansy simply to a reflector of himself, utterly "devoid of the spontaneous life of her own." The daughter's natural vitality and spontaneity have been quietly suffocated to be replaced by a perfected "puppet-like" behavior which does not express her own inner life as, say, Isabel. Rather, her behavior seems to reflect her father's taste. She does not seem to have the American girl's independence.

In *Daisy Miller*, the "linearity of mind" of the American Winterbourne, together with his real ignorance of Daisy's nature makes him a puppet in her hand. Being "an erotically aggressive new [Europeanized] woman" whose nature is so deep and secretive, Daisy renders Winterbourne for the reader a blind man to her complex nature and cultural practices. As Pollak puts it in *New Essays on Daisy Miller and The Turn of the Screw*, "as she [Daisy] violates codes of gender appropriate behavior, some of which prove sensible and others fatal to her rudimentary development, the newly rich American girl arouses the anxieties of an improvised impermanent culture in which men like Winterbourne have no obvious compelling economic or social function" (17). Similarly, in *Roderick Hudson*, the American Roderick proves to be a stranger to the ideological nature of the Europeanized Christina Light, the vampire who turned Roderick to a real "helpless," "empty," "distracted" and "debauched" man (312). Thrown into Christina's temptations and flirtiness (367), Roderick becomes, in his own words, a "sacrifice and a scandal" (344), and undergoes a "spiritual collapse" that leads to a spectacular fatality.

Clearly, despite the sensational and violent themes (such as the *femme fatale* theme) that appear in James's fiction, his characters try to resist in a transcendental and gentle way, and they prove to be ethical (i.e. Newman). This ethical Jamesian treatment of the destructive European old-world ideology projects James as a realistic writer. One of the basic concerns of American realists is ethics, and as Hugh Holman asserts, the realist is concerned with ethical issues of life, and he "values the individual very highly" (*A Handbook to Literature* 434). Similarly, Pizer asserts that there should be a "frame of reference" and criteria to consider an art work realistic, and one of these criteria is that the work of art should be "idealistic in its view of human nature and experience," objective, representative of the American life, and "ethically idealistic" (2). Most American realists dictated a realistic representation that is truthful, optimistic, and idealistic. They represented responsible, mature, and independent characters; and depicted commonplace activities that go on with the American ideological spheres of life. As most critics agree, the works of American realists stamped a positive social work and normative spheres of the American life that accommodate the widely divergent phases of the American civilization. In this American realistic fiction, areas of human nature and social life that are barbaric or violent are moderated. It is a realistic fiction, in other words, to serve social ends: a responsible, significant, virile and independent fiction that intended to teach rather than to corrupt. James's realistic representation works to this end: his characters

are idealistic, and although frequently surrounded by corrupting effects of the European pressures of society, their moral insight and Emersonian idealism continue to affirm both the necessary and probable victory of their spirits over these forces.

Some of James's Europeanized female figures are rendered Zolaesque; destructive to the male, vampires and Salomés, polluted in a French environment, such as Christina Light and Madame De Bellegarde. But the presence of such naturalistic themes in the fiction does not make James belong to the French school of naturalism. That is so, because James treats such naturalistic episodes moderately and ethically: they are presented in a way to make readers know how dangerous and filthy such actions are. In this way, James seems to share the American realists' view (i.e. Howells, Twain and others) that literature after all should teach and idealize. In his article, "Naturalism and the Languages of Determinism," Lee Clark Mitchell writes:

*Twain, William Dean Howells, and, to a lesser extent, Henry James condemned their contemporaries' [the naturalists'] delight in spun sugar. Instead of fantastic plots, embellished prose, and moral triviality, they insisted on a direct engagement with the issues and experiences of everyday life. Their own fiction offered a viable alternative and urged (if with decreasing confidence) for traditional moral prerogatives in a society being altered beyond recognition by amoral forces. (529)*

F.O. Matthiessen notes in his critical essay "The Ambassadors" that "what distinguished James from French naturalists and English aesthetes alike was that he never forgot the further *kind of seeing*, the transcendent passage to the world behind appearance and beyond the senses" (434). James's treatment of the American Isabel in *The Portrait of a Lady* gives clearly James's most Emersonian transcendent passage and deep psychological thought about the female figure. His fictional representation proves to be idealistically realistic. Such idealistic fictional representation contrasts with that in French naturalistic works, such as those of Zola, his disciple Huysman and others. In the ensuing pages a comparison will be held between Zola's *Nana* and James's *The Portrait of a Lady* (which are very expressive of the fictional and ideological representation of both authors) to assert that both writers use certain naturalistic techniques with regard to the individual's free choice and moral responsibility. Unlike Zola, James is moderate in dealing with sensational themes, such as explicit sexuality, violence, and seduction. He even comes to distrust sexuality and to render marriage as a symbol for a necessary commitment. Although Isabel and other Jamesian American female figures fail in their heterosexual unions, James never offers them a destructive Zolaesque alternative. Rather, James presents characters most of the time as independent moral agents in a universe in which innate traits matter less than, say, the individual's moral sense of responsibility about his choices in scenes of coercion. As Daniel Mark Fogel points out in "Henry James's American Girls in Darkest Rome: The Abuse and Disabuse of Innocence," James never shows his female figures to be tainted or condemned, but those who are with "selfless self" and who seek to be (89). Both writers, so to speak, seem to portray the female figure as subjected to environmental circumstance--socio-economic, psychological and biological, but in different degrees. Zola, in projecting a corrupted European morality, as this paper will explain, portrays his characters as enslaved to their biological instincts, desires, and needs. In doing so, he frees them from human reason and social consciousness. James, on the other hand, motivated by an American Emersonian individualist ideology of freedom, idealization, and independence portrays his characters as mental engineers who, though seem to be determined temporarily by environmental influences, resist circumstance and seek to be independent, and free from the drearily determining laws of rigid and traditional social existence.

In *The Portrait of a Lady* we see the young American girl, Isabel, at the very beginning of the novel as an ideal girl who spends most of her time thinking of beauty, freedom and theoretical standards that work only in her own private Isabelian world. She has, James tells us, a fixed determination to regard the world as a "place of brightness, of free expansion, of irresistible action" (139); and she is always "planning out her development, desiring her perfection, observing her progress" (144). Idealizing herself is her basic concern: to be "of the best." Indeed, her philosophy of life renders herself ambiguous to those around her, and she even comes to confuse the meaning of herself. James writes in *free indirect style*:

*Who was she, what was she that she should hold herself superior? What view of life, what design upon fate, what conception of happiness, had she that pretended to be larger than these large, these fabulous occasions? ... The isolation and loneliness of pride had for her mind the horror of a desert place. (164)*

Moreover, James writes of her urgent desire to perfect herself to the extreme, and of her isolating secretive self:

*Her [Isabel's] thoughts were a tangle of vague outlines which had never been corrected by the judgment of people speaking with authority... She had a theory that it was only under this provision life was worth living; that one should be one of the best, should be conscious of a fine organization, should move in the realm of light, natural wisdom, of happy impulse, of inspiration gracefully chronic.... One should try to be one's own best friend, in this manner, distinguished company. The girl had a certain nobleness of imagination which rendered her a good many [sic] services and played her a great many tricks.... She had a fixed determination to regard the world as a place of brightness, of free expansion, of irresistible action. (104)*

When she puts her idealistic transcendental philosophy in practice, Isabel, James says, "had an immense desire to appear to resist.... The world, in truth, had never seemed so large; it seemed to open out, all round her" (635). Isabel comes to resist this materialistic common world, and more specifically, the traditional standards of everyday life of which Madame Merle is a goddess. Rejecting the common traditional social practices, Isabel does instead the artistic and imagery, and refuses to be conditioned by the social and material environment. She seeks, to use James's words, the "further kind of seeing" and sticks to Strether's the "imperative live" in *The Ambassadors*. What is at stake is the moral tension between James's protagonist Isabel and the European milieu: Isabel's resistance to the mixed ideological practices of the people around her, such as the Europeanized Madame Merle; and how she simultaneously exists within and makes purposive intervention into social formation. Isabel, in other words, resists what Althusser calls ideology, roughly speaking, a "particular social reality specific to a given social practices" which "constructs

subjects for a particular social formation" (qtd. in Smith 14). In effect, Isabel resists a kind of traditional collective social practices, or what Karl Mannheim calls in his article "Ideology and Utopia" "group ideology" (53) that tries to impose itself on her, to form and construct her personality, and thus to be, for example, like Madame Merle. Rather than surrendering to the Europeanized ideological practices of Mme Merle and others, Isabel posits herself as a distinctive subject whose own opinions, statements, and system of ideas define her as a person who belongs to herself. Eagleton asserts in his book *Ideology: An Introduction* that what makes ideology powerful is its ability to "intervene in the consciousness of those it subjects," and this "tends to make it heterogeneous and inconsistent" (45). In resisting the other Isabel becomes in harmony with herself but not with the other. James shows Isabel's task in formulating her own individualist ideology, and thus in opposing the other, to be difficult but not impossible. As Smith contends, resisting the common social practices of life "can and does take place, actively or passively, through single people... privately and publicly. It can take the form of refusal as much as intervention; it can be in the service of conservation as much as of disruption" (5). Isabel manifests this refusal of the other when she refuses Caspar Goodwood who suggests to her, as Tony Tanner writes in "The Fearful Self: Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*," "oppression, coercion and constraint on the psychological level" (109). Moreover, she rejects Lord Warburton who with his "complex social relations and obligations suggests immobilization on the social level" (Tanner 109). If she rejects the first out of a distinct disinclination to enter a firm physical world, she certainly refuses the second on theoretic grounds, because what he offers her does not fit her vague notions of the indefinite expansion. However, Isabel finds in Osmond the platonic qualities that fit her world: he is the ideal lover for her, the poor artist who seeks to perfect himself via art. But, later on, Isabel finds herself trapped in the unhappiness of a failed marriage. However, her resistance to the common opinions of those around her and her insistence upon making her own choice in marrying Osmond despite any consequences is not completely passive. Her Emersonian adventure participates in the growth of her character, and she nourishes in a transcendent way and builds a strong, independent character. At the same time, Isabel's ignorance and/or avoidance of the common, together with her icy aloofness of thought, have some shortcomings that affect her badly. She refuses for instance to listen to the advice of Ralph, Mrs. Touchett and others with regard to her marriage to Osmond until she realizes herself her mistake and admits it. In her own words, she finds Osmond in reality like a "hidden serpent," and someone who has "a wonderfully cruel intention" towards her (436).

That Isabel could resist certain ideological practices in her surroundings and could construct her personality in a transcendental way, nevertheless, doesn't mean that she is not subject to other hidden environmental forces that formulate her character in such away. A glance at Isabel's childhood as a means to construct a bridge between her present and past explains why she is the way she is in the novel. Although James provides glimpses and hints of Isabel's childhood, they are enough to reflect the kind of social, psychic and economic circumstance under which she lived. Isabel's dead father, James tells us, had told her nothing of the unpleasant side of life, and she had no "regular education and no permanent home." She, James writes, "at once spoiled and neglected." From a developmental psychological standpoint, the fact that Isabel is motherless and has an "irresponsible father" urges her to idealize a father and a mother in herself. In Lacanian terms, the absence of the "narcissistic image" (the mother) and the "symbolic father" makes her develop as an alternative an idealized vision of the father and the mother in herself. That is, she herself becomes the idealized image of the parents, and she develops her theories in the novel to confirm this thesis. Carol Vopat emphasizes this point in his article "Becoming a Lady: The Origins and Development of Isabel Archer's Ideal Self":

*Her [Isabel's] idealism and her fear of experience were alike manifestations of a single response; that this response evolved in part in reaction to the confusions of her childhood in Albany; and, in particular, to her experiences as the eager-to-please, motherless daughter of a charming but irresponsible father .... Isabel lacks an attentive mother to 'mirror' her and a strong competent father to idealize; the child is required to mirror a parent who should be mirroring her. (38-9)*

Interestingly, Isabel tells Madame Merle of her socio-economic circumstance and thereby the consequent effects of them on her. Isabel explains for example: "I can do what I choose--I belong quite to the independent class. I've neither father nor mother; I'm poor and of serious disposition.... I therefore am [sic] bound to be timid and conventional" (214). The effect of being fatherless, is that Isabel, as Vopat writes, becomes the father's "champion" and

*his "partisan," her purpose to support without judging; defend without criticizing; entertain and please; idealize and exalt; to publish his burnished reputation abroad in the world... Isabel's [ideal self] is in its origins like a profligate father's vision of the perfect child, a child whose much praised 'cleverness' and 'independence' would preclude any demands for attention, direction, protection or love, a child with no need or wants; in short, a child without feelings. (39)*

The further consequences of Isabel's invented father, and of her idealizing herself to idealize the father are first and foremost Isabel's subversion of herself and disinterestedness. This point is asserted by Paul Seabright in "The Pursuit of Happiness: Paradoxical Motivation and the Subversion of Character in Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*." Seabright argues that like most "morally healthy individuals," Isabel, in her preoccupation with herself, and in her attempt to crystallize and idealize her character subverts her personality and finds herself "pursuing perverse or paradoxical ends, in full consciousness without unclouded eyes" (314). In justifying Isabel's idealistic behavior, Seabright relates it to her seeking "unnecessary personal unhappiness." This is the basic motive, he contends, for Isabel's idealistic philosophy in life. Moreover, the blind image of Osmond that Isabel formulates is motivated primarily, in Vopat's words, by her "oedipal longings." As Vopat contends, "Osmond proves so attractive [to Isabel] because he provides... mirroring and idealization, and is the ideal self object" which "neither Caspar nor Lord Warburton can be" (52). For her, Osmond becomes then the "real gentleman" who "makes no mistakes," "in control of himself," "artistic," a "romantic [ideal] object," a "teacher," and an "ideal father"--the father without errors. Isabel noticed that people could not criticize Osmond as they did criticize her father. Indeed, Osmond's upbringing of Pansy makes Isabel realize how an ideal father he is. He doesn't send

Pansy to dark libraries or suspicious schools. He advises her and offers her structure, discipline and protection. This behavior of Osmond makes Isabel realize that her father didn't care about her. This in turn motivates her further to destheticize and idealize herself. Vopat writes:

*To realize that her father in truth didn't protect her, nor even particularly care about her, would be painful in itself.... Rather than risk what passed for love in her world, rather than surrender the portrait she has internalized and called herself, she prefers to remain the ideal daughter of an ideal father.... Ultimately, Isabel agrees with her fiancé [Osmond] that life must be lived not emotionally or passionately, but aesthetically.... Their joint ideal is the exquisite life, emotion frozen and framed. (25, 51, 54-5)*

Isabel comes to have a passive view of men in general, that is, she sees them as "abstractions" from whom she needs only their "approval," not, say, their "passionate love" to the extent that "men are afraid of her" (Vopat 38-9). But what about Osmond? Osmond, for Isabel, asserts Vopat, "is a non-threatening masculine figure, who evokes only safe and familiar feelings, like maternal protectiveness, or filial adoration, and who calls forth what is definitely an aesthetic rather than a sexual or sensual appreciation. (52-3)

As Vopat emphasizes, Isabel has a tendency to ignore what others say to her, reducing them, in her own high evaluation of her own ideas, to "things" (40). Osmond chides Isabel several times about this behavior, but she ignores his words. Hating her for having a mind of her own, he tells her sarcastically, "You can do exactly what you choose; you can roam through the space" (281). Madame Merle tells Isabel: "I know you better," and Isabel's answer is: "I'm not sure of that" (190). Caspar Goodwood tells her: "You will get sick of your independence" (151), and Isabel tells him: "I like my liberty too much.... If there is anything in the world I'm fond of ... it is my personal independence" (149). Ralph, indeed, informs her: "I don't believe you allow things to be settled for you," and Isabel responds: "Oh yes; if they're settled as I like them" (73).

Whereas Vopat and Habegger, as explained before, seem to attach Isabel's idealistic philosophy to psychological background (i.e. absence of narcissistic image), Seabright attributes it to Isabel's desire for "disinterest." Vopat and Habegger's view makes more sense than that of Seabright in interpreting Isabel's behavior, because Seabright's view, as several critics demonstrate, is not applicable either psychologically or thematically. Psychologically, how can the motive "disinterest"--personal unhappiness-- attract Isabel? Thematically, how can James persuade us that such motive is logical? As Craig Howard explains in "The House of Interest: A Key Word in *The Portrait of a Lady*," James is amazingly interested in "interest" in most of his novels, the interest in everything: the interest to be, to see, to experience and to resist (192). In short, "interest" is a basic motive in James's fiction for the characters' happiness and growth. In other words, James encouraged an optimistic doctrine in most of his novels, and *The Portrait of a Lady* is not an exception. His portrait of Isabel as a whole is a deep psychological analysis of her personality. He portrayed her moderately, and from a Jamesian moralistic artistic point of view. We don't read in his representation of Isabel sexual passion expressed in bodily language, or indulgence in sentimental love and facile pleasure, nor social greed or corrupted social values that poison and destruct the other. Rather, Isabel's portrait looks classical, moderate, and respectful; and in James's fiction she cannot be but like this.

A look at Isabel's sexuality will reveal further how genuine and classical James's art is. Isabel's sexuality is not represented explicitly, but symbolically, even ambiguously. Isabel's sexuality is rendered ambiguous by James in that she vacillates between the sexual and the asexual: we experience in the novel both a passionate Isabel and an inhibited Isabel. We read in James's narrative a sexual symbolism that renders Isabel sentimental and passionate, and at other times we see her as a tough girl, who de-emphasizes her sexuality and tries to control her sexual drive. At the very beginning of the novel, for example, we see Isabel rejecting Goodwood and Lord Warburton because she feels that they will restrain her independence. She is not at all attracted to their physique. She chooses to marry Osmond not because of a physical or sexual attraction, but because of his artistic talents. Isabel's sexual symbolism is apparent when James writes that she considers Goodwood's figure as "too straight and stiff" (115), a language which some Freudian critics might take for phallic-symbol interpretation. In his article, "ambiguity and Ambivalence: The Psychology of Sexuality in Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*," Seymour Kleinberg, for instance, explains Isabel's relation to Goodwood in Freudian terms, believing that Isabel sees Goodwood as a "walking erection" (3). This sexual symbolism becomes more evident when Isabel rejects Goodwood's offer of marriage. After turning him down, Isabel, James writes, takes his hand and "felt a great respect for him; she knew how much he cared for her and she thought him magnanimous." But a few lines later, she "intensely rejoiced that Caspar Goodwood was gone." At these moments Isabel struggles between her passionate and impassionate pulses, her sexuality and asexuality, till the sexual conflict in her comes to be expressed in bodily gestures:

*She was not praying; she was trembling—trembling all over. Vibration was easy to her, was in fact too constant with her, and she found herself now humming like a smitten harp.*

*She only asked, however, to put on the cover ... but she wished to resist her excitement. (232)*

This unsettled sexuality of Isabel troubles critics and makes them give various views of her sexuality. Edward Wagenknecht sees Isabel's sexuality "limited by the mores and standards of her time" (*Eve and Henry James* 93). William Bysshe Stein views Isabel as sexually repressed and calls her situation a "case history" of a frigid American woman. (180). Annette Niemtow argues in "Marriage and the New Woman in *The Portrait of a Lady*" that Isabel has "an almost obscene—certainly no frigid imagination" (386). Courtney Johnson, falling in the same quagmire, sees her as "Eve" ("Adam and Eve and Isabel Archer" 139). Daniel Schneider believes Isabel to be mentally diseased. He recognizes Isabel's divided self and attributes it to a "schizoid personality" ("The Divided Self in the Fiction of Henry James" 447). Moreover, he says that she is sexually repressed and thus "neurotic" (447). Other critics, such as Leon Edel in *Henry James: A Life*, connect Isabel's sexuality to that of James, believing that James's celibacy made him both fear and idealize women and that his attitude toward women rendered his sexuality, like Isabel's,

divided. The most convincing critical argument is that of Kurt Hochenauer in his "Sexual Realism in *The Portrait of a Lady*: The Divided Sexuality of Isabel Archer." Hochenauer disagrees with most of the previous critics' arguments about Isabel's sexuality, believing that "when the critics fail to recognize the tension between the passionate and the inhibited Isabel, James's portrait runs the risk of becoming a cheap, contrived painting rather than the epitome of the new literary realism" (19). What Hochenauer implies here is that the very ambiguity of Isabel's sexuality makes James's work realistic. James does not let Isabel be tempted easily, as is the case with most naturalistic female figures. If Isabel gives into her sexual passion, she becomes the naturalistic *femme fatale*. In presenting Isabel's sexuality in symbols James is not only following ideological puritan scripts, but he is also reflecting a prevailing ideology of his time. Ideologically speaking, after 1860 most feminists in America tried to legitimize women's sexual drives, though some feminists attempted to enhance sexual freedom and to reject the prudery associated with the idea of passionlessness. In the late nineteenth-century women were torn between the sexual and asexual. James's interest in projecting Isabel's sexuality the way it is in the novel is not causal, and as Hochenauer puts it: "Isabel's sexual realism reflects what James felt to be the prevailing ideology among women in his day. If it reflected anything less, the portrait would be marred: passionless ideology required women to de-sexualize themselves to achieve some equality with men" (24). In this perspective, James is inscribing and reworking cultural practice in this novel to produce an effect of the real, and this renders his work realistic and purposeful. John Frow writes that realism needs to "reflect, 'with objective correctness the total objective process of life'" (*Marxism and Literary History* 13). This reflection of the real, Frow emphasizes, means in actuality "the reconciliation of the artist with society; through his obligation towards 'reality'" (13), and once the artist is committed to historical and ideological realities, his realism directs him to a "precisely determined function in ... society and it subordinates the work of art to a purposeful design" (13).

James's ambiguous representation of sexuality has ideological and historical roots, as explained above, but it is also associated with the nature of James's religious and puritan upbringing, which won't allow him to portray excessive and open sexuality. In part, it is James's Swedenborgian upbringing, Victorian temperament, and his puritan personal taste that push him to hide the sexual in his fiction. Such sexual representationalism is by no means naturalistic or Zolaesque, but classical, moderate, and idealistically realistic, dictated by a puritan genteel realist. William Troy writes of James in his article "The Altar of Henry James": "He [James] must be accounted a religious man. In this he simply followed his astonishing father, who ached out [sic] a life time trying to reconcile a heritage of respectability and good sense with a taste of Swedenborgian mysticism" (267).

Another American ideological reality that James inscribes in the novel, back to our argument, is an Emersonian individualist ideology: the ideology of the restless puritan American individual who seeks growth and independence. If Isabel's portrait as a whole implies anything it is the individual's struggle for Emersonian freedom and independence: the American anxiety to build the topology of the ideal, the complex self-identity whose limits are undefined, as well as the mysticism and spirituality of such identity. At some point in the novel Isabel says, "I'm not fixed, but... a good deal mystified" (120). Nothing expresses her, and others cannot read herself. Her many speeches and monologues in the novel about the nature of herself, her independence, her infinite freedom and the mystified ideal personal behavior remind one of Emerson's statements in "Self-Reliance." For example, Isabel says: "I try to judge for myself; to judge wrong, I think, is more honorable than not to judge at all. I don't want to be a mere sheep in the flock; I wish to choose my fate" (214). This Isabelian speech echoes Ralph Waldo Emerson when he writes:

*Imitation is a suicide...trust thyself.... Ah, that he [man] could pass again into this neutral, god-like independence! Who can thus lose all pledge, and having observed, observe again from the same unaffected, un-biased, unbearable, unaffrightened [sic] innocence, must always be formidable, must always engage the poet's and the man's regard.... These are the voices which we hear in solitude, but they grow faint and inaudible as we enter in the world of society. Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of everyone of its members.... The virtue in most request is conformity. A man is to carry himself in the presence of all opposition as if everything were titular and ephemeral.... A man has nothing to do with what people think. ("Self-reliance" 957-58)*

When Isabel is plighted and deceived by her marriage to Osmond, Ralph assures her not to mind others--not only when the other is the husband who hates her, but also even when he happens to be the cousin who adores her. When Ralph is in pain, she feels a passionate need to "let her sorrow possess her," and to melt "together into his [Ralph's] present pain"; and all he can tell her is: "don't mind people.... I think I'm glad to leave people." When she asks him "Is it true--is it true?... that all [love] I have is yours [Ralph's]," he turns away his head and then replies, "Ah, don't speak of that--that was not happy" (575-76). Reminded by his Emersonian words that heroines are always happy and never surrender to pain--a basic Jamesian idea--not even to the painful truth of love, she responds:

*Here on my knees, with you dying in my arms, I'm happier than I've been for a long time.*

*And I want you to be happy--not to think of anything sad; only to feel that I'm near to you and I love you. Why should there be pain? In such hours as this what have we to do with pain? That's not the deepest thing; there is something deeper. (622)*

Like Emerson, Ralph doesn't deny that unhappiness reigns in the "painful kingdom of time and place," but he has "all eternity to rest." Ralph says to Isabel: "You said just now that pain's not the deepest thing. No-no. But it's very deep .... You [Isabel] won't lose me—you'll keep me in your heart; I shall be nearer to you than I've ever been" (623). When Isabel is about to return to Osmond and Pansy, Caspar pleads, "You [Isabel] don't know where to turn. You can't turn anywhere.... Turn straight to me" (589). But Isabel can't return to him because she cannot ignore her inner Emersonian voice. "To get away from you!" is her only answer to him. She can think of nothing more dangerous than his aggressive reality, and she sticks to this thought despite Caspar's Emersonian invitation for her:

*Why shouldn't we be happy--when it is here before us, when it is so easy? Here I stand as firm as rock. What have you to care about? You have no children... You mustn't lose it all simply because you've lost a part. It would be an insult to you to assume that you care for the look of the thing, for what people will say, for the bottomless idiocy of the world. We all have nothing to do with that; we are quite out of it, we look at things as they are. (634-35)*

Clearly, Isabel hears the voice of herself, and opposes everything that cannot go on with her independent self. We can read her mind only by her Emersonian contemplation in solitude. Her resistance to the ideological reality, the common and materialistic world and her seeking the infinite expansion imply a basic Emersonian ideology. For Marx, an individual cannot exist without his social community. Marx asserts also that "only the people is a concrete fact" and they exist only in "particular class relations and class interests" (qtd. in Smith 4). In other words, Marx attacks the idealist tendency to "presuppose an abstract-isolated- human individual" (qtd. in Smith 8). Yet, this Marxian view for many critics is not absolutely thinkable. Like Althusser and Eagleton, Smith opposes Marx in the sense that an individual can "exist in a dialectical relationship with the social but also lives the relationship alone" (6). For Smith, "none of us lives without a reference to an imaginary singularity which we call our Self" (6). Smith is worth quoting fully here:

*Such singularity or individuality is to be located in the imagery register--in that set of images, identifications, and narratives which appear to consolidate the centered nature of the subject individual. Acting as the broker of that imaginary is the ego, assigned to assuring a dialectical adaptation to the pressures of social life, which has produced it and which helps to produce. (6)*

Isabel lives idealistically and entertains an imaginary world of her own to project an "ideal" Emersonian American Self. And she does this successfully. Further, she lives the real and achieves a certain discernment and assertion of her Self. Like the "ill-used" Newman in *The American*, she proves her personality to be, although deceived by the Europeanized Osmond. She proves herself not as a mimic actor of the other, following ideological scripts; but as an agent who tries to transcend the common other despite the circumstance; and who, in Jonathan Freedman's words, tries "to transcend any one vision that tries to fix or define her," even the author's own ostensibly omniscient vision ("James, Peter, and the Dreaming of Aestheticism" 163).

Zola lived in a world of rapid transformation in every aspect of life. Social and economic currents ran in an irreversible course in the sense that a change from an aristocratic to a bourgeois society, from a domination by wealthy landowners to the predominance of commercial and industrial interests was dominant. Being a journalist, Zola dictated the materialism of his age in his fiction. Titles like "restoration," "second" republic, "second" empire suggested corruption and destructive materialism which crushes and degrades human values. Zola left us an enormous legacy of newspapers, magazine articles, and novels in which he depicts human beings as enslaved to their materialistic desires and instincts. In a sense, he renders humans as slaves to environmental forces which they can neither control nor understand. In describing his novelistic profession Zola admits that "What we do nowadays is take a *bete humaine* [human animal] and study him within the margin of freedom left him by his environment." Most of Zola's works echoed this saying of his. It is not easy to measure the impact of Paris as an environment on Zola's imagination, but he pictured it in most of his novels as the complex modern metropolis that crushes human morality. Ideologically speaking, if James inserted Emersonian philosophy of idealism and transcendence in his fiction, Zola inscribed environmental determinism that controls the lives of individuals.

Zola wrote a vast cyclical Saga of twenty novels, first planned in the sixties of the nineteenth century under the title of "natural and social history of a family under the Second Empire," thereby making explicit the seminal influence of Hippolyte Taine, most notoriously formulated in the Positivist philosopher's isolation of three principal determinants on human behavior: heredity, environment, and the historical moment. Zola's cycle was intended to be openly and consciously scientific. In his book *The Experimental Novel* (1880), Zola attempted to establish an analogy between literature and science, contending that the novelist, like the scientist, situates his characters with specific hereditary traits into a given environment to record their behavior. For Zola, the writer should not interfere his own imagination in the work of art, for he is like a chemist who watches a certain substance from a distance and then noting down the progress and results of his experiment. For this method, Zola coined the term "naturalism," which focuses on the physiology rather than the psychology of characters. Other French writers came later to adopt Zola's conception of "naturalism," such as Baudelaire, Huysmans, Maupassant, Flaubert, and the Goncourts. Flaubert, for instance, is described by many critics as a naturalist, since his characters do not escape hard circumstance. Huysmans, on the other hand, had been, in the words of Pierre Cogy, "plus Zoliste que Zola" (*Huysmans a la recherche de L'unite* 18). Huysmans explains the subject matter of French naturalistic writings as that of "vice." Most of Huysmans's writings display the decadent side of the French society. John Pierrot's recent study of the decadent imagination, for instance, characterizes Huysmans's novel as the "gospel of the [decadent] society" (*The Decadent Imagination* 8). As a literary movement, "Decadence" means the corruption or the falling down of morality in society. In this sense, "Decadence" and "naturalism" are almost the same since both of them focus on the presentation of degraded social life.

By tracing the destiny of a single family and its descendents in his Saga, Zola felt he could give due weight to biological imperatives and would endow his fictional world with an internal coherence. This would be afforded not only by the blood ties and comparative experiences, but also by the reappearing characters. Etienne, the hero of *La Germinal (Spring)* (1885), with his "blood tainted, is a homicidal maniac, and he is also the brother of Jacques Lantier in *La Bete Humaine*, who suffers also from requisite psychotic disorder, killing any woman who arouses him sexually. The two brothers are the sons of Gervaise Macquart, Nana's mother, whose alcohol-ravaged decline is chronicled in *L'Assommoir (Drunkard)* (1877). Gervaise is portrayed by Zola as weak and submissive. Like Nana she sinks into fatty degeneration of character as well as body because of her drunkard husbands, whose



irresponsibility makes her miserable and homeless. In *L'Oeuvre*, Claude Lantier, Gervaise's son, is an insane maniac by a genetic accident of heredity who kills himself because of frustration in front of his "unfinished, unfinishable" masterpiece.

Zola dedicated a novel for each member of the family, depicting the degrading effects of materialism upon the members. One of the basic themes in most of his novels is prostitution, a theme which he also inserts in his novel *Nana*. Moreover, Zola had himself in his semi-autobiographical novel, *La Confession de Claude*, dealt with the subject of prostitution in 1865, where the torments of the idealistic Claude to reform a prostitute have similarities with Muffat's predicament in *Nana*. The same subject of prostitution had been also covered by other French fellow-writers, Huysmans in his *Marthe, histoire d'une fille*, and Edmond de Goncourt in *La Fille Elisa*. The theme had obvious appeal to a society in which male sexuality was so deeply brother-based. *Nana* is on quite a different scale: she is the epitome of a whole class of *courtisanes*, kept women, often associated with the stage, luxury articles which were so prominent a feature of smart society, the world of *galanterie*, of amorous intrigue, the *demi-monde*, where respectable women were never seen but only their wealthy husbands and bachelor men-about-town, a society which flourished during the Second Empire behind the official façade of hypocritical decency maintained by the censor and backed up by the law of courts, an age which saw the prostitution of "Les fleurs du mal" and *Madame Bovary* (1857) in which Emma Bovary degenerates sexually because of her fantasy, dreams, and moral triviality; dreaming of fleshy luxurious life, and commits adultery with her lover Rodolphe.

Materialistic Paris is best shown in *L'Argent (Money)* (1891) where the materialistic Paris itself is being revamped into its modern guise by the transforming genius of Baron Haussmann, whose splendid straight boulevards were not only grand but offered a clear line of fire in the case of any attempt to mob violence to overthrow an unpopular government. In *La Germinal* Zola pictures the conflict between the forces of Capitalism and the interests of human beings necessary to its advance. It is a novel which exposes the inhuman conditions of French miners in the 1860s; a novel of working life, sexual desire, and everyday relationships.

Zola stresses one ideology in most of his novels, that is, depicting the effect of the three so-called natural laws in determining the personalities of the members, namely, heredity, environment, and what he calls *le moment*, the dynamic momentum of a particular period (the second Empire). In her article, "Narrative Tension in the Representation of Women in Zola's *L'Assommoir* and *Nana*," Kathryn Slott writes: "The explicit ideology and organizing principle of the *Rougon-Macquart* involves the demonstration of how the forces of heredity and environment combine to control the lives of individuals who, despite good intentions and valiant efforts, fail to overcome biological and sociological determinism" (95). Another ideology which Zola inserts in his Saga, and more particularly in *Nana*, the ninth of his vast cyclical fresco, is the position of women in the Second Empire society. Slot asserts that the implicit ideology in Zola's Saga is that of "gender oppression": "He [Zola] implies that women fail not just because of their genes, family, and social class, but also because of their sex, a factor which transcends all other categories of determinism" (95). *Nana* in *Nana* and Gervaise in *L'Assommoir* are linked biologically; the latter is the mother of the earlier. Both of them are linked thus biologically. Both are projected in the novels as weak, corrupted and irresponsible. Moreover, both are dominated by the male sex. Gervaise comes out of an alcoholic household. She does not resist being exploited by Lantier and Coupeau, imitating in such an action her own mother. *Nana* inherits, too, several corrupted traits from the mother Gervaise, and leads later a very miserable life; she symbolizes a sexual object used and enjoyed by the male sex, and more specifically, by Georges and Muffat. Slott concludes about the two espoused ideologies in the novels:

*In terms of Zola's ideological stance, he is saying explicitly, on the one hand, that Gervaise and Nana, like all his characters, are the result of unique combinations of genetic and environmental forces which determine their destinies and doom them to personal annihilation. Implicitly, on the other hand, Zola seems to be stating that all women are victims of gender oppression in society, regardless of their specific inherited traits or social situations, because they have little of any legitimate power; they are violently abused and maliciously manipulated so that men can exercise some authority over them. (96)*

Zola detested the Second Empire, which he saw as the flashy, pleasure-loving society. Most of Zola's novels represented the ins and the outs of the French society. In his article, "In the Naturalist Grain: Huysmans's *A Rebours* Viewed through the Lens of Zola's *Germinal*," Gail Finney asserts that Zola's the *Rougon-Macquart* "functions to a degree as a microcosm of French society of the day" (73). He adds that Zola's Saga "contains a number of telling condemnations of contemporary French society" (75). The French society, and more particularly, the Second-Empire society, was singularly propitious for the rise of the courtesans Zola had in mind, a word of festivity which was to reach its zenith in the world Fair of 1867, the year in which his novel starts, when royalty and notables flocked to Paris from all over Europe and beyond. For a basically materialistic society, Zola thought, *Nana* is a highly desirable sex-object to parade at a supper-party or at a race-meeting. His writing *Nana* took him to theatres, art galleries and cafes to record and study cocottes and their admirers. The male protagonist in *Nana*, Count Muffat, a scapegoat for Imperial society, swept off his feet by *Nana*'s physical beauty. The Second-Empire society is portrayed by Zola as sex-obsessed, and Zola offers *Nana* as the beautiful body that seduces and corrupts such a society. As Zola said in his notes, she is "flesh, but flesh with all its grace . . . sex on an altar with everybody offering sacrifices to it." She is portrayed by him as a filthy prostitute, who by an act of heredity acquires traits of moral and sexual degeneration. She seduces and corrupts many men, whose desire for her flesh turns them into despair. Zola makes it clear that *Nana* is obsessed with the idea of becoming rich. She has "heaps of proposals" and is like a "huge fire" that devours everything. Her "greedy mouth" eats up gold and men's wealth, and leaves nothing but ashes. Her flesh is her instrument for seduction and the means thus to gain money.

Being a naturalist, Zola relates *Nana*'s behavior to hereditary origins, and thus focusing on the physiology rather than the psychology of his characters. Like her parents in *L'Assommoir*, *Nana* acquires, via an act of heredity, corrupted traits. Zola scatters

important details of Nana's early life throughout *L'Assommoir*. He must also have been able to rely on the fact that many of his readers would be familiar with Nana's background from their knowledge of *L'Assommoir*, published three years earlier, where her past is abundantly detailed. In *L'Assommoir*, Nana is born in a slum and brought up in apparently traumatic conditions, which would have justified a plea for extenuating circumstances before any reasonable judge. However, she is a bonny baby. At the age of three, by inadvertently causing her father, a tiler, to fall from a roof, Nana unwittingly sets him on the path of his alcoholism when he becomes idle and work-shy as a result of his injury. She turns into a noisy, mischievous child, good natured though described as possessing a "vicious curiosity," so that one night she sees her mother slip, half-naked, into the bedroom of her former lover while her husband, Nana's father, lies grunting in a drunken own vomit. At twelve, she is sticking pieces of paper into her bodice to enhance the shape of her breasts. At fifteen, doubtless influenced by her milieu, she is fold-mouthed and becoming keen on boys. Finally, she leaves home for good and disappears from *L'Assommoir*, though we have news that she's been seen driving round in a smart carriage and is later reported as having snaffled a viscount. From then on, the ups and downs of her life depend on her relationships with men, usually for money. In any case, she is plainly now ready to embark on a wider world, where we meet her again in the first chapter of *Nana* as a fleshy sex-object.

Zola gives a great focus to Nana's voluptuous body and its effect on the audience. As most critics agree, Zola's great innovation as a naturalist was to challenge the reluctance to describe sex. As it has been stated in the third section of this paper, James explores sexuality in *The Portrait of a Lady* in a symbolic and indirect way. We never witness in his novel expressions of open sexuality or bodily language. Zola, however, being a naturalist, is very daring in showing Nana's nudity and sexual fantasies. In her article, "Uncovering *Nana*: The Courtesan's New Clothes," Janet L. Beizer asserts the many sexual scenes in the novel: "we can hardly ignore the many scenes in which Nana, sex goddess and bed partner of an empire, undress before a mirror of strips for her lovers; nor can we forget that she nightly displays herself to theater audiences as she stars in a performance of her own nudity" (45). There are several detailed descriptions of Nana's body in the novel, as in the scene when she looks at her body in the mirror while Muffat is watching her body adoringly; the scene is expressed in mere bodily language: "then she studied other parts of her body amused by what she was doing, and filled once more with the depraved curiosity she had felt as a child . . . Slowly she spread out her arms to set off her figure . . . lingering over the side-view of her bosom and the sweeping curves of her thighs. Nana had stopped moving. With one arm behind her neck, one hand clasped in the other . . . she had thrown back her head, so that he [Muffat] could see a fore-shortened reflection of her half-closed eyes, her parted lips . . . she displayed the solid loins and the firm bosom of an Amazon" (222). Muffat cannot resist Nana's powerful seduction. Slott views Muffat as "the vehicle for conveying the most intense uncontrolled male reactions to Nana" (102). Zola records Muffat's response to the watching of Nana's body as follows: "Muffat gave a long, weary sigh. This solitary self indulgence was beginning to exasperate him. Suddenly his self-control was swept away as if by a mighty wind. In a fit of brutal passion, he seized Nana round the waist" (223). Nana's flesh makes men, such as George, Muffat, La Faloise, and Fontan "under her spell" (45). A twitch of "her little fingers," Zola writes, "could stir men's flesh" (46). And, later on, Zola states, she remained "victorious by virtue of her marble flesh, and that sex of hers . . . was powerful enough to destroy this whole assembly and remain unaffected in return" (46). We read that Muffat, whom she seduces and turns to be one of her victims, comes to view her as a "naked stupid monster" (230), a "fleshy madness" (230) which suggests "beastness": Salomè, a vampire, and the "Beast of the Scripture" (223). In Zola's own words, she is "as blind as a brute force" that is antagonistic, destructive and indifferent to humanity's blight or circumstance. This destructive female force brought George to suicide, destroyed Muffat's life (i.e., became bankrupt), and condemned Nana's son Louis to a deadly disease. Since Zola excludes the role of mind in Nana's behavior (i.e. being merely a blind sexual force), he comes to describe her via animalistic imagery and metaphors, a basic characteristic of naturalism: Nana, Zola writes, has a "neck on which her reddish hair looked like an animal's fleece" (33). She has a face of "horse" (111); she is a "wolf" (183), who sleeps with "its claws drawn in its paws." This animalistic imagery, interestingly, continues throughout the whole novel (Further animalistic metaphors are at pp. 54,111,195,270-71).

Zola comes even to explore in the novel other areas of sexuality, and, in particular, lesbianism. Satin, a piquant young prostitute and former schoolmate of Nana, copulates with men out of financial necessity. Moreover, she is a frequent visitor to the Rue des Martyrs restaurant where Nana comes to meet her. She is shown by Zola to be in a lesbian relationship with Nana. Satin is so taken by Nana that she becomes violently jealous of her male companions, while Nana herself develops a love for Satin which is both passionately sexual and tender. They clearly experience a shared enjoyment and understanding which they do not find in their heterosexual encounters. Although neither Nana nor satin gives up her wayward promiscuity, their relationship is something special and has a tenderness which Nana feels in only one of her heterosexual relationships which, interestingly enough, starts when the boy, Georges Hugon, is dressed in woman's clothes—as Georges presses her, Nana is said to feel as if she were being petted by a girl—friend. Zola writes: "In these clothes with his [Georges] bare young arms showing, and his wet tawny hair falling to his shoulders, he looked just like a girl . . . Georges joined her; and, as if considering the window-sill too narrow, he put his arm round Nana's waist and rested his head against her shoulder" (182, 184). Later, Zola describes Nana's feelings to her episode with Georges in a girl's clothes: "She was experiencing sensations she had never known before. Meanwhile Georges was giving her little coaxing kisses on the neck, and unsettling her even more" (184). Several critics commented on Nana's lesbian feelings toward Satin and Georges. Naomi Schor, for instance, asserts in *Zola's Crowds* that Nana's affair with Georges when dressing up in a woman's clothes is "a rehearsal for the . . . [lesbian] love scenes with Satin" (51).

In *Nana* the sexual conduct of Zola's characters proceeds from boredom, envy, snobbery, ambition, a need for money, a desire for power, or to display wealth. As Slott emphasizes, "Nana has taken up prostitution . . . to earn a good living, not to have a good time, and . . . to seek revenge to the socio-economic situation in which men have placed her family" (102). It is not surprising

then that sexuality appears as joyless and that many of the characters are bedeviled by private torments. None is more bedeviled, in the Christian religious sense, than Count Muffat, whose strong sensuality is the original cause of his falling for Nana's sex-appeal. Muffat's "carnal desires," Zola writes, make him follow her like a "dog" (442) (this is Zola's word) everywhere and blindly. He becomes the slave of his sexual instincts and carnal desires: a helpless prisoner of his own biological desires. Zola writes "He [Muffat] abandoned himself to the power of love.... He would submit shudderingly to the impotence of sex" (440). In short, seduced by the "man-eater," Nana, Muffat's reason "fails him" (445). Nana's ignorance of Muffat's carnal love of her leads him to commit suicide: he plunges "scissors into his chest" when he feels that he will lose her (423). Other figures victimized by Nana is Nana's child who is left to nothing but death because of Nana's ignorance of taking care of him. In Zola's words, the child died because "it had been neglected and badly cared for" (455). The child, Zola writes, is "eaten up by some disease inherited from unknown father." These destructive effects of Nana are further expressed by Fauchery's article in the novel about the "Golden Fly" whose peer is Nana. This article displays ironically Nana's function in her environment. Fauchery explains to Daugneat that the article is

*the story of a girl descended from four or five generations of drunkards, her blood tainted by an accumulated inheritance of poverty and drink, which in her case had taken the form of a nervous derangement of sexual instinct. She had grown up in the slums, in the gutters of Paris... she was avenging the paupers and outcasts of whom she was the product. With her the rottenness that was allowed for ferment among the lower classes was rising to the surface and rotting the aristocracy. She had become a force of nature, a ferment of destruction, unwittingly corrupting and disorganizing Paris between her snow-white thighs, and curdling it just as women, every month, curdle milk... [the Fly] now, buzzing, dancing and glittering like a precious stone, was entering palaces through the windows and poisoning the men inside, simply by setting on them. (221)*

Like the Fly in Fauchery's article, Nana poisons the social surroundings around her. Her destructive force is motivated by restless environmental forces which enslave and determine men to their biological and instinctive impulses. It is not only men who are biologically determined in the novel, but Nana, too. She seems to be determined, like the Fly, by heredity: she is a rotten product of poor and drunkard parents of the gutters of Paris. And, as it was explained before, Louis, Nana's child, becomes also a victimized production of heredity. Even after her suicide, Nana's corrupted influence remains: her corpse, Zola assures us, "was beginning to poison the atmosphere of the room" (469) in which her corpse lays.

In comparing James's portrait of Isabel to Zola's portrait of Nana in *Nana*, we can discern the difference. James did not intend *The Portrait of a Lady* to be a naturalistic novel. However, Zola, as many Zolaesque critics assert, rendered *Nana* as a naturalistic novel. James, on the other hand, presented his characters naturally: he did not force them in certain formulas to fit a certain naturalistic design or to be determined characters to environmental forces. Rather, he projected his characters as human agents through whose behavior we can read and analyze their circumstance. Pizer writes that James's intent in the fiction:

*was to present experience through a consciousness that had the ability to absorb and contemplate experience and ultimately the ability to draw moral deductions from that process. The need for such a consciousness, it is clear, encouraged the choice of an unusual central intelligence [Isabel in this context], one exceptional in perception and sensitivity, and therefore beyond the range of the representative. Yet, although the intelligence itself is unusual, verisimilitude and probability are maintained as guides in the presentation of the reflector, and the total effect is that of psychological realism. (6)*

James's realism is not only idealistic, but also psychological rather than physiological. James explains in the novel the psychological conditioning of Isabel resulted from her bad upbringing, and although deceived in consequence by Osmond, James explains Isabel's mistake, and makes her take a lesson of what had happened to her. In projecting her system of thoughts, ideas of independence, idealism, and transcendence, James signifies Isabel as an Emersonian subject who tries to improve and perfect herself and who refuses to be, in James's words, a "mere sheep in the flock." Such deep analysis and penetration of Isabel's psyche and character in the novel, together with exploring the conditions of her childhood to shed light on the psychological conditioning of the young Isabel renders James a writer who is deeply interested in the psychological side of his characters. James's psychological penetration of Isabel's character in the novel led William Dean Howells to assert that *The Portrait of a Lady* is "an analytic study, rather than a story" (qtd. in Tanner xxxvi). Zola's *Nana*, in contrast, is a scientific study; and even an experiment. Zola situates his characters in certain social contexts to see how they react to environmental forces (social, economic, sexual, and biological). He shows such characters as weak, helpless, and determined. Unlike James's characters who resist environmental forces, Zola's characters surrender to such forces, and are represented primarily as biologically determined to their sexual desires and needs. As Zola explains when he started *The Experimental Novel* in 1868, "I choose characters completely dominated by their nerves and their blood, deprived of free will, pushed to each action of their lives by the fatality of their flesh" (qtd. in Mitchell 525). Zola's last word "flesh" in the previous quotation expresses a further distinction between his portrayal of Nana and James's portrayal of Isabel. In James's *The Portrait*, for instance, we rarely find an explicit reference in language to the body: its exposure, seductive power, and demonic visions. In other words, James does not violate the codes of his moralistic conservative standards in his fiction through which he can give, as Matthiessen demonstrates, "permanence to the more perishable order of society" (483).

Unlike James, Zola used in *Nana* a bodily language explicitly and extensively. In doing so, Zola is not only conducting a scientific study of the character's enslavement to his sexual and biological instincts, but is also reflecting an ideological reality of the French society at some time. More specifically, Zola, as pointed before, presented Nana as a true-to-life seductive portrait of the French courtesan prostitute in the world of fallen pleasure to reveal the laxity of morals in the period of Napoleon III's France. George Holden in his "Introduction" to *Nana*, for instance, contends that *Nana* was meant by Zola as a "poignant drama of a woman's life ruined by the appetite for luxury and facile pleasures" (6). Further, Zola himself, in specifying the theme of *Nana*, writes in his preliminary outline of the novel:

This philosophical subject [of *Nana*] is as follows: A whole society hurling itself at the cunt. A pack of hounds after a bitch, who is not even on heat and makes fun of the hounds following her. *The poem of male desires*, the great lever which moves the world. (qtd. in Holden 11)

Zola's inner understanding of *Nana's* portrayal is highlighted when he asserts in the novel that *Nana* "is nothing but flesh; but flesh in all its beauty" (13). Zola's *free indirect style* in his description of *Nana* in the novel, other character's views of *Nana*, and *Nana's* behavior in the novel explain better the ideological reality of *Nana's* personality and what she meant to be.

Both Zola's *Nana* and James's *The Portrait of a Lady* are strongly distinguished as different fictional ideological representations. The basic ideologies in Zola's *Nana* are his bio-sociological determinism on the one hand, and the traditional, patriarchal view of prostitution on the other. It is difficult to move beyond these Zolaesque ideological framework in *Nana*. The basic ideological construction that prevails in James's *The Portrait of a Lady*, in contrast, is the Emersonian idealistic and transcendent philosophy of life projected via Isabel's independence and freedom; and the puritan standards of the American society represented through Isabel's passionlessness and inhibited sexuality. *Nana* explains the prevailing moral corruption during the period of Napoleon III's France, and in Slott's words, "the decadence of both the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy, the degradation and exploitation of women both socially and economically, the lack of integrity and discipline among men in general" (103). Both writers are drawing from common-life ideological realities. But whereas James's moderate ideological representation, American and European, renders him a genteel and idealist realist, Zola's ideological representation proves him an excessive realist. Zola is inscribing a kind of harsh realism, which is not approached by James, even when James is dealing with French ideology and characters. This Zolaesque excessive realism of open sexuality, prostitution, and moral corruption in *Nana* is described as naturalism, according to critical standard definitions.

Zola, as this paper has demonstrated, presented a real-life slice of the French society in a naturalistic manner, using his theories about heredity and biological determination. Like a scientist, Zola simply observed from a distance and worked as a journalist that monitored people's behavior and social stigmas. Then, he worked out his theories about the behavior of his characters with certain hereditary peculiarities in a certain environment. His language indeed is that of a biologist that inscribes in a verisimilitude of detail the characters' physical and biological traits.

James's representation is hardly comparable to that of Zola. It would be strange, for instance, to find *Nana* or any of her European types, such as Baudelaire's *Madame Bovary* or Huysmans's *Marthe* in one of James's novels, for they do not fit the artistic and moralistic world of James. Most of James's other novels fall appropriately in the typology that James establishes in his portrait of Isabel. As Edward Forster writes in "Patterns in *The Ambassadors*," "Put Tom Jones or Emma or even Mr. Casaubon into a Henry James book, and the book will burn to ashes, whereas we could put them into one another's book and only cause local inflammation. Only a Henry James character will suit" (427).

James's ideological scripts in *The Portrait* revolve around the processes of endless growth, idealization, and transcendence of the individual. These scripts could be a standard formula that can apply to James's other fiction, such as *The American* and *The Ambassadors*. Although James's characters may lack education, estranged, and experience wretched up-bringing as in the case of Isabel, James analyzes their circumstance and penetrates their inner lives not only to expose their helplessness and to lament their situation because they are determined as is the case with *Nana* in Zola's novel, but also to situate them in the level of the "further seeing": to make them experience to learn and flourish. This applies basically to his American characters who are situated in European social contexts and exposed to destructive influence of the old European culture. Even James's portrayal of the European *femme fatales* is not so excessive as that of Zola. For example, James did not treat his French heroines in *Roderick Hudson*, *The American*, *The Ambassadors*, and *Daisy Miller* from a French Zolaesque ideological point of view; rather, he wrote from his own point of view. Claire, Christina Light, and Daisy are portrayed moderately by James. None of them is pictured so destructive and corrupted as *Nana*.

By the same token, although James's American protagonists are entrapped in strange European ideological environments, they achieve success, and when they seem to feel lost in these strange environments James renders them strong and independent at the end: they grow and transcend. If they lapse and become fully hopeless or dangerous human agents to the other, James laments their loss after exposing the terrible effect of their circumstance. Similarly, although James renders some of his protagonists at the end as a failure in their heterosexual unions because of certain circumstance, we see them continue to live and improve. Isabel fails in her marriage to Osmond, Newman does not marry Claire, and Winterbourne leaves Daisy. However, James never shows those heroines as helpless sexual degenerates who use their body to earn living or, say, for a facile pleasure. Despite the fact that Isabel acknowledges her failed marriage to Osmond toward the end of the novel, she escapes Caspar's "white lightning kiss" and manly temptations that "had least pleased her" to her husband's anaesthetic prison: "But when the darkness returned she was free. She never looked about her... she only darted from the spot... she had not known where to turn; but she knew now. There was a very straight path" (591). Caspar calls her sacrifice a horror, a funeral, and an atrocity. So, it is, but it is better than to surrender to a dark twisted path that brings her the dangers and humiliations that the helpless *Nana* faced in the most unlikely situations. As Ruth Bernard Yeazell puts it in "Henry James":

*Isabel's final gesture should primarily be read in the context of the novel's extended exploration of the possible meanings of 'freedom': from her original, prototypically American belief in an independence that defies all limits, Isabel gradually, arrives at a sense of freedom that is largely a state of consciousness--the paradoxical freedom of a self that deliberately accepts its own constraints and faces responsibility for the choices that it makes. (676)*

Rather than depriving Isabel of responsibility and freedom of choice and making her follow her appetite and succumb to the logics of heredity and environment as if she is a filing aligned by a magnet, as most naturalists did to their characters, James portrays Isabel as an autonomous agent who is more or less responsible for her own behavior and who refuses to be swallowed by the circumstance. This Jamesian optimistic philosophy of life that art is to idealize, beautify, and transcend rather than to descend and to corrupt is what basically distinguishes him from the artistic policy of many French naturalistic representations modeled on Zola's naturalistic tenets. Contrary to Zola whose conception of realism, as it was shown in *Nana*, is associated with degeneration and corruption, James's artistic portrayal, though has excessive naturalistic shade sometimes, enhances a basic Jamesian idealist realistic belief, namely, the endless growth of the individual despite life's circumstance, and projecting him as morally superior to the corrupt environmental effects surrounding him/her. Although James's characters seem to be determined by the ideological practices of the old-world European culture, James shows the ideological temperaments of his American protagonists to be in conflict with such European practices. His characters resist such practices and work out an American individualist ideology of resistance, transcendence, and idealization. James's fictional representation in this sense shows the ideal possibilities of action within particular European social contexts, and this makes his fictional representation fall under the category of the idealistic American realism. James's art, in this sense, is that which fuses the ideal with the real. Such an art of idealization cannot fit the French Zolaesque naturalistic teachings and its old-world European ideological practices. And this, in closing, distinguishes James as an idealist who only belongs to himself: an artist who, in Pollak's words, "idealized the life that might have been" (5), and who, in the words of his friend Howells, is "not, after the old fashion, or after any fashion but his own."

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