

WOMAN AS PORTRAYED IN THE WORKS OF HENRY ADAMS

By

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PREFACE

From the beginning of his career as a man of letters, Henry Adams had always shown a great interest in the nature of woman. This interest showed itself primarily in historical and scientific essays, an autobiography, a portrait of the culture of medieval France, and two novels. This thesis is an examination of Adams' general beliefs concerning the nature of woman, and, an application of the conclusions as a criteria against which to measure the female protagonists of his two novels.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Throughout his literary career, Henry Adams displayed an insatiable interest in the nature of woman. In his early essay entitled, "The Primitive Rights of Woman," Adams attempted to demonstrate the importance of woman in the earliest foundations of the family and society. In Adams' Tahiti (1901) primitive woman, by utilizing her intuition, protected the society from man-caused disaster. In his Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres (1904) and Education of Henry Adams (1905), woman, particularly the European woman of the twelfth century, was established as a symbol of natural force and instinct. Adams' "A Letter to American Teachers of History" (1910) demonstrated what he regarded as scientific proof of the superiority of instinct, which he depicted as the force underlying woman's great force in society, over reason, which he regarded as the faculty most used by man.

In the Chartres and the Education, Adams offered the theory that the highest point of unity in man's history had been reached in the period of time, 1150 to 1250 A.D. In these works and in his "A Letter to American Teachers of History" he attempted proof that mankind had steadily dissipated its energies from the thirteenth century in accordance with Kelvin's Second Law of Thermo-dynamics thus arriving at its present state of multiplicity in the twentieth century. The period 1150 to 1250 A.D. was chosen by Adams as the period in which "man held the

highest idea of himself as a unit in a unified universe" because of the strong cohesive nature of the Christian faith at that time--a faith which resulted in the crusades and the great cathedrals. This period was marked, according to Adams, by great feminine influence as evidenced in the intense worship of the Virgin Mary and the erection of many of the cathedrals, particularly that of Chartres, in her honor. Also Adams recorded as proof the great power wielded by the three queens, Eleanor of Guienne, Mary of Champagne, and Blanche of Castile, all of whom helped to initiate the cult of courteous love. As a contrast to the position of woman in the thirteenth century, Adams noted in the Education what he perceived as the degraded position of American woman in the twentieth century.

Both of Adams' novels, Democracy (1879) and Esther (1884) have, as protagonists, women unable to accept suitors because of moral or religious conflicts. The small amount of criticism written on these novels tends to place these protagonists in the position of prototypes to Adams' conception of the twelfth century woman. While there is a small case for this position, I believe it may be demonstrated that the two protagonists resemble much more closely in their situations and actions the modern American woman described in the Education and, furthermore, that they show points of marked dissimilarity to the Virgin of Chartres, Adams' symbol of twelfth century womanhood.

Edward N. Saveth links the two protagonists of the novels, Democracy and Esther, to the Virgin of Chartres through their mutual possession of strength, their desire to dominate men, their challenge of masculine institutions, and their bent for destructiveness. He writes,

Adams projected...destructiveness into the characterization of his heroines. On the one hand, Adams wanted his ideal woman

to be both life-giving and life affirming--'she was goddess because of her force;...she was reproduction, the greatest and most mysterious of all energies; all she needed was to be fecund.' But he also held the opposite view that women had a 'natural tendency toward asceticism, self-extinction, self-abnegation' which are essentially self-denying and life-denying characteristics.¹

It appears to me that Saveth is here making a gross error--he is identifying the Virgin of Chartres, whom Adams certainly did hold to be life-affirming, as one and the same with the protagonists of the novels, both of whom fit very closely the latter description. Nothing appears in either the Chartres or the Education to warrant ascribing any of the life-denying characteristics found in the protagonists of the novels to the Virgin. There is little resemblance, also, between the novels' heroines' destructiveness in their relationships with men and the Virgin's anti-rational and iconoclastic rejection of man-made dogma and law. There is nothing essentially anti-rational in Madeleine Lee's moral repudiation of political corruption in Democracy and Esther's denial of a supernatural faith in Esther.

Saveth, along with several other critics, also links the protagonists of the novels with the Virgin by their use of intuition--their occupation of "a world of their own, surrounded by an impenetrable world of feminine 'feeling,' as inaccessible to masculine 'thought' as the planet Venus."² He remarks on Esther's similarity to the Virgin in her failure "to measure up intellectually to the men who surrounded her... [and in her superiority to] men in emotional depth and in a kind of intuitive power that is both incomprehensible to the male and superior to male rationalism."³ Sister M. Aquinas Healy in a doctoral dissertation asserts that the "woman centered works [Democracy, Esther, Tahiti, Chartres, and the Education] present a consistent apotheosis of

instinct, the 'potential of vital energy.'¹⁴ Accordingly, she believes that Democracy's protagonist "instinctively rejects a male-formulated reasonable political faith," and Esther's protagonist "repudiates an apparently logical system of Christianity in favor of an instinctive religion of 'nature'."¹⁵ Millicent Bell in her article, "Adams' Esther: The Morality of Taste," writes,

...Esther Dudley anticipates Adams' portrait of Mary, the mother of God who 'was illogical, unreasonable, and feminine' and 'had no marked fancy for priests as such' and 'troubled herself little about theology.' The Virgin like Esther, like Adams, preferred individual facts to logic.⁶

Richard F. Miller in "Henry Adams and the Influence of Woman" writes of Democracy's protagonist, "Madeleine Lee is essentially intuitive."⁷ He adds a quotation from Robert E. Spiller's preface to Esther: "...her final judgment of her own case was in terms of her intuitive understanding of moral forces."⁸ Miller also lends his support to two other quotations taken from the same source regarding Esther Dudley.

The trail from Esther to the Virgin of Chartres is a long intricate one, but it is straight.⁹

What he had suspected of Esther, he at last found to be true of the Virgin, or at least of man's worship of her. As the creative life force which alone of all determinants of human experience can bring the soul into focus, Esther was now enshrined at Chartres....¹⁰

R. P. Blackmur in "The Novels of Henry Adams" asserts that Adams, in Esther, concentrated "upon [Esther's] sensibility rather than her intellect as the measure of her growth and response."¹¹ He writes,

Esther Dudley is the first intimation of the woman, all sensibility and imagination, whom Adams symbolically enthroned in the heart of the medieval church and whose energy, the double energy of sex and faith, he heard transformed in the Hall of Dynamos at the Paris Exposition of 1900.¹²

However, he goes on to remark,

Like Madeleine in *Democracy*, [Esther] had been unable to use the strength within her and so had fled, and like Madeleine too, she had been partly wrong in not realizing where her strength lay. Sex was the energy that moved them both, and faith, if it had existed, would have clarified the energy.¹³

He goes further in typifying *Democracy's* Madeleine Lee as intelligence as opposed to the instinctive of which Healy and Miller see her as representative. He writes of Madeleine,

Pure intelligence...coquettes with the corruption it fears, is...unwilling to cleanse necessity by performing it, [sic] but asks corruption rather to reform itself first, and then flees to its great pyramid and its pole star when corruption refuses the wooden nutmeg of reform.¹⁴

While I cannot deny that Madeleine Lee and Esther Dudley did feel some intuitive stirrings denied to the men, I believe their intuition lacked the compelling force of the instinct embodied in the Virgin of Chartres. In the *Education* the sexual instinct in woman was regarded by Adams as a form of inertia that along with the inertia of certain races tended to slow down the acceleration of societal change which was leading to the final dissipation of 'vital energy.' However, in America Adams saw signs that this inertia of sex was giving way. Woman had not yet completely joined man in the worship of reason and science, but she was tending in that direction. I believe that the disintegration of woman's sexual force may be seen characterized in the protagonists of both novels. None of the critics note this correspondence between the characterization of the heroines and the description of the American woman in the *Education*. Although Blackmur comes close to my conclusions in referring to Madeleine as intelligence and not as instinct and also in noting that Esther errs in not utilizing that which the Virgin utilized so well--sex and faith, he does not go on to link them positively to this description.

In my demonstration I will first discuss Adam's conception of woman as revealed in his non-fictional works--"Primitive Rights of Woman," Tahiti, Mont-Saint Michel and Chartres, The Education of Henry Adams, and The Tendency of History. I believe that a look at the protagonists of the two novels in the context of these works will reveal them to be prototypes of Adams' later conception of the American woman of the twentieth century rather than prototypes of his conception of the European woman of the twelfth century or primitive woman.

FOOTNOTES

¹"The Heroines of Henry Adams", American Quarterly, VIII (1956), p. 237.

²Ibid., p. 232.

³Ibid., p. 234.

⁴"A Study of Nonrational Elements in the Works of Henry Adams as Centralized in His Attitude Toward Women," Dissertation Abstracts, XVI (1956), p. 2183.

⁵Ibid.

⁶The New England Quarterly, XXXV (1962), p. 159.

⁷American Literature, XIX (1947), p. 296.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 297.

¹¹Sewanee Review, LI (1943), p. 297.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., p. 304.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 293-294.

CHAPTER II

PRIMITIVE RIGHTS OF WOMAN AND TAHITI

As Richard F. Miller points out, Henry Adams' first "extended treatment" of the subject of women "was [delivered] in a Lowell lecture ...in 1876 and later published in Historical Essays (1891)."¹ This essay, "Primitive Rights of Woman," attacked the conventional view that "the original position of the married woman was one of slavery or akin to slavery."² It forwarded the theory that "the social position of women...[had been] highest in the ages most distant...."³ Adams' later work, *Tahiti*, written in 1893, seems meant to corroborate many of the conclusions reached in this essay in regard to primitive women: their power, independence, and political and legal importance.

In "Primitive Rights of Women" Adams denied with three arguments the validity of the theory of primitive woman's degradation. In his first argument he treated the communal system reputed to have existed prior to the initiation of marriage in civilized society. In his second argument he used observations of the primitive society of modern American Indians, and in his third argument he looked to the literature and laws of four ancient cultures: Egyptian, Grecian, Roman, and Germanic.

The commonly held opinion of writers on primitive society was that women had escaped subjugation due to "a gradual rise in the moral standard of civilized society and...[it] attributed the complete triumph of woman to the influence of Christianity, with its high moral ideas and

its passionate adoration of the Virgin Mother." Adams criticized this assumption by carrying the argument back to what these commentators considered to be the origin of society--the stage of communism, "a state anterior to the institution of marriage." Adams pointed out that at that stage of prehistory when all things were possibly held in common, no notion or only a primitive notion of private property being existent, "there would be no conception of paternity and no notion of paternal authority." As the only form of marriage at this time would be a communal one in which no individual man or woman had the right to appropriate a mate to himself alone, the family consisted only of the mother and the child, and relationship could be traced only through the female. At this early time, then, women would be extremely important, being the only parent.⁴

Adams believed that if such a state ever existed, it ceased at a very early time in prehistory. At this time society developed along the lines of one of man's strongest instincts, the instinct of property. It was from this instinct that marriage had its origin. The theory being attacked by Adams held "that the communal system would not permit the gratification of the desire [to possess that which man desired most] at the expense of communal rights, and that therefore men were driven to gratify their passions by purchasing or capturing women from neighboring and hostile tribes." Adams declared that while this assumption may be supported by "the extraordinary frequency of the forms of purchase and capture [,]...the position of the purchased or captured wife must have been regulated by laws very different from those that controlled the disposition of other purchased or captured property." To support his conclusion, he called upon the evidence offered by the form of marriage

found still existent in the "entire race of American Indians from Behring Straits to the Straits of Magellan [which] were and to a certain extent still are, in the stage of communism."⁵

The Indian tribes, Adams pointed out, were "subdivided into clans ...[which] simulated the supposed form of the primitive commune. The men were classed as brothers, the women as sisters..." In order to avoid what was to them an incestuous situation, they "married only into other clans than their own." This type of marriage, unlike the commentators "so-called marriages by capture, purchase, and other modes, implying slavery or absolute property in the woman[,]...was 'marriage by legal appointment'[:]...the selection and allotment, by the elders of the clans, of some woman belonging to one clan to live with some man belonging to another." While this type of marriage "often took the appearance of purchase," "the so-called purchase was only a detail of the primitive formal marriage as appears from its legal consequences."

A true sale would have deprived the woman of her position in the clan; but in law the Indian woman remained after such a marriage as before a member of her family and tribe, entitled to her rights and proper protection, like any other woman or any man.⁶

There were other forms of marriage provided for by primitive custom. These were elopement, capture (from a clan of the same tribe), capture in war (requiring subsequent adoption of a wife from another tribe into the tribe of her captors), and by duel (between a young man without a wife and a man with more than one wife). These marriages "had the same legal effect." The wife enjoyed the right to divorce her husband, and return to her family or claim their protection. Most important to Adams' case, "in most cases she was the head of the family, her husband usually came to live with her, not she with him, and her

children belonged to her clan, not to their fathers." The Indians commonly traced inheritance and descent through the female. Also both partners owned property separately, and, in case of divorce, each maintained his own property.⁷

Adams turned from the American Indian, an example of primitive society in modern times, to the "oldest records of European and Asiatic society." The study of Egyptian society, Adams noted, weakens the theory that women held the positions of slaves in antiquity. Women held a high position in Egyptian society as witnessed by the custom of putting the queen on the throne with her husband and placing her statue beside his in his tomb. As the Indians, the Egyptians traced descent through the female; in fact, "in certain epochs the family tables often name the mother to the exclusion of the father." Particularly interesting to Adams was the "position taken by woman in the Egyptian philosophy and religion...." The Egyptian trinity consisted of "a man, a woman, and a child." Isis, the woman, "was as essential to the trinity as the father or the son." Here a very interesting hypothesis was broached by Adams:

The Christian philosophers of a later period, probably influenced by their close connection with Alexandria, adopted the trinity, and in adopting it, dethroned the woman from her place. Yet even then, notwithstanding this degradation, the irresistible spread of Mariolatry, the worship of the Virgin Mother, proved how strongly human nature revolted against the change.⁸

From the Egyptians, Adams turned to the "races of Western Europe."

According to Adams,

In all branches of what is commonly known as Aryan stock... are indications that at some period antecedent to recorded history, a social rebellion against the old communal system has been felt. The institution of marriage, the law of descent in the male line, the importance of the family and the authority of the father are characteristics so distinct in

the whole Aryan group as to countenance the idea that this was in fact the real origin of the race and that the primitive Aryan stock broke away from the original society with no other distinctive principle.

First looking at the Greeks, however, he found "unmistakable traces prov[ing] the existence at no very remote time of the same class of institutions as those of the American Indians." However, he warned, these may have been a legacy of races which were conquered by the Greeks.⁹

Adams called on the Homeric poems for a picture of early Greek society--"the heroic age of the Greeks."

...The peculiarity of the Homeric poems which causes them to stand in sharp contrast with later Greek literature is, that they invariably treated women and the marriage contract with respect which subsequent literature of no country or age can show. If marriage were really the child of force, if the wife were a captured or purchased slave, we should find a trace of it here; but no such trace exists.

He went on to comment that "the whole story both of the Iliad and the Odyssey is little more than a running commentary on the Greek law of marriage."¹⁰

Adams chose the Odyssey to make his point. Here Penelope, Ulysses' wife, was depicted as "wealthy in her own right...[carrying in her person] a certain claim to the coveted position which her husband had held ...in face of the claim by inheritance which belonged to her son Telemachus." Telemachus, Adams pointed out, would have preferred some other action than the one chosen by his mother; he would have preferred his mother's marriage to one of the suitors or his mother's return to her father in order to prevent the wasting of his substance occurring as a result of his enforced hospitality to Penelope's many suitors. Also Penelope's family, her father and brothers, urged her marriage to Eury-machus, the most eligible of the suitors, in the understanding that "she

would carry to him the rank which Ulysses had held," a solution satisfactory even to Telemachus. Nevertheless, Penelope "regarded the desperation of her son with as little sympathy as she did the cool advice of her brothers and the too marked attentions of her suitors...." (She was perfectly independent.¹¹

From the Greeks, Adams turned to the Romans who, he found, "threw themselves into the reaction against primitive communism with a degree of energy, not to say of violence, which went far beyond anything known in other branches of the Aryan stock."

The Roman family not only exaggerated the characteristics of the wide-spread hostility to old communistic ideas, and asserted in the strongest manner the principle of relationship through males, but it went even to the extravagance of annihilating relationship through females; not only did it make the father the head of the family it absorbed the family in the father; not only did it raise the authority of the husband over the wife, it asserted the astounding principle that the wife was the daughter of her husband. Alone among Aryan races the Romans, with their extravagant logical sequence, inferred from the premise of paternal headship the conclusion that the headship carried with it the rights of absolute property over the chattels of the family, why not also over the children; and if over the children, then since the father, in giving his daughter in marriage, conveyed with her to her husband all the rights which he himself enjoyed, it necessarily followed that the wife stood toward her husband in the position of a daughter, and that his power over her was unlimited.

However, while the law spoke thus strongly, Adams noted that "the sanctity with which it was invested, elevated and dignified the position of wife and child in spite of the perverted letter of the law." In fact, the Romans seem "to have felt that their family law was not defensible in practice and was inconsistent with the theory of the state." Because of this doubt they freed the wife and child little by little until they had not only destroyed the authority of the husband over the wife but over the family as well. Most important, "the authority conferred upon

the husband by the Roman law did not prove the degradation of women."

Whatever that authority was, it was exercised over the wife, not because she was a woman, but because she was a daughter. To the paternal power the man as well as the woman was subject, and no matter what age the man had attained, he was, during the lifetime of his father, under the same domestic rule as his sister or his mother.¹²

Finally Adams considered the Germans. The German, like the members of other Aryan branches, "founded his society firmly on the family with its masculine peculiarities"; however, unlike the Roman family, the German family was a "loose and flexible structure." For instances of early Germanic culture, Adams pointed to the "least Romanized branch of the German race,"--the Scandinavians, in particular those Scandinavians who established the commonwealth of Iceland. Iceland, like Greece, left a heroic poem, the Njalsaga, embodying "pure or nearly pure and authoritative primitive history." Also, like the Odyssey, the poem turns "on the character of a woman."¹³

This woman, Hallgerda, was a callous, hard woman who, after being married to her first husband, Thornwald, as the result of a bargain struck between him and her father, showed him an intolerable temper and had him murdered after he slapped her face. For this murder and for the murder of her next two husbands, she received no punishment; on the contrary, she "lived to enjoy the wealth acquired from her three murdered husbands, and to bring more misery and death on her friends." Adams commented on the tale of Hallgerda,

Surely a woman of this stamp was no slave, no descendant of slaves, no possible connection of slaves. All the fierce and untamable instincts of infinite generations of free, wild animals were embodied in her. Nor were her legal rights those of a dependant. No Norse pirate, no Danish jarl, enjoyed more completely than she the legal rights of a free citizen. Marriage is described as a sale, and this passage might be quoted to prove that the father sold his daughter to her first husband without her consent; but what sort of a sale was that

which carried with it no rights of property over the thing sold? The father conveyed to the husband no more than the father himself had, and the patria potestas was no part of Scandanavian or German law. The father conveyed to the husband simply the rights of guardianship, not rights of property....¹⁴

Adams used another tale from the Njalsaga, the tale of Unna, wife of Hrut, to demonstrate the ease with which a woman could divorce her husband if dissatisfied with him. This same story also demonstrated for Adams the separate possession of property within the marriage, the wife being able to regain her property if "she could find a representative whose physical strength and legal knowledge were sufficient to overcome" her husband. Drawing on both of these tales Adams hypothesized that "the sole legal inferiority of women to men consisted in their subjection to guardianship." Furthermore, he believed, the only reason for this inferiority lay in the female's inability to do battle either in a war or as her own champion in a wager requiring her to act through her next of kin or some person appointed as her legal representative. One of the strongest rights of women, however, was their right to family protection.¹⁵

Afterwards Adams took a look at the rights of women in the Christian era. He believed that the Church affected all "conditions of social existence and the ethical tendencies of law." One of its greatest influences was on marriage law. While most historians supposed that the church was instrumental in elevating women from their supposed former state of degradation, Adams found that "the share of the Church in the elevation of women was for the most part restricted to a partial restoration of rights which the church herself had a principal share in taking away from them." Adams attributed the antifeminine position of

the Church partly to the fact that it was a "Roman church," and that "it rose to power under the intense moral reaction against the corruptions of the Empire...[and] that of all the corruptions of the Empire none had been more scandalous and more fatal than the corruption of the women." These facts added to the fact that the early church was strongly ascetic, contributed to the "diminution of women's social and legal rights both in the old imperial world and in the new Germanic race...." Adams believed that it was not until the humanitarian strain of Christianity took precedence over the ascetic that women began to regain their former position. The early church emphasized the necessity of strict obedience by the woman to her husband. It strengthened laws against divorce, a situation that more often worked against the woman than the man. Adams found that the Church established a new ideal of feminine character, the patient Griselda, which replaced the "proud, self-confident, vindictive," Hallgerda. At this time in history discipline was of supreme importance as "the most pressing necessity of society was for concentration."

Thus the family, like the State, took on the character of a petty absolutism; and to justify in theory the sacrifice of rights thus surrendered by the wife and children, whether in the form of the harsh provisions of the law toward women or the even harsher rules of primogeniture, men fell back on what they called the patriarchal theory, and derived the principles they required from a curious conglomeration of Old Testament history and pure hypothesis.¹⁶

Adams concluded by asserting that modern society "can only move on the same line which have already and repeatedly been followed to their conclusion. If it carries the tendency toward the independence of woman to its logical extreme, it will find that Rome has already followed that path. If it reacts toward a re-establishment of the family in sterner aspect, it will find that this reaction has again and again told its

whole story." Since "the most powerful instincts in man are his affections and his love for property...[and] on these the family is built,... it will always be the system on which society is built." Finally he hypothesized that "in the measure that society has on the one side carried the theory of the family to an exaggeration or has allowed it to fall into contempt, has been the violence of the reaction."¹⁷

It would appear that, according to Adams, woman was accorded the highest position in the prehistoric communal stage precisely because she was a mother and, in this state, the sole parent. In those societies not far removed from the communal state such as the Indians, and, to some extent, the Egyptians, Adams found that inheritance and descent were still established primarily through the mother. Even in the Aryan societies, where the revolution against the communal state was the most complete, the father taking precedence over the mother as the parent with authority, Adams asserted that women still had important legal rights and were independent to a much greater degree than modern women during his own time. Only among the Romans was woman's importance denied to the point of establishing descent only in the male line, and making the female completely subject to her husband.

In some of his examples, Hallgerda, for instance, Adams shows the legal independence and power of woman to the exclusion of what may be considered traits befitting a mother. Perhaps Adams was here merely stretching a point--that, contrary to the idea that woman was subjugated in primitive society, in truth she possessed more power and independence than she possessed in Adams' day. This power and independence would, however, seem implicitly linked to the primitive appreciation of the mother's role due to her position as sole parent in the more primitive

communal state.

Adam's Tahiti, subtitled "Memoirs of Arii Taimai e Marama of Eimoo, Terriirere of Tooarai, Terrirui of Tahiti, Tauraatua i Amo," is essentially the tale told by an old Tahitian chiefess of the fortunes and misfortunes of the Papara family, one of the most important and oldest families on the island of which she and her children were ruling descendants. In this book, it appears as if Adams had in mind demonstrating another modern proof of his theory concerning the primitive rights of women similar to that of the American Indians. It is obvious that he considered the Tahitian woman a type of primitive woman from a letter to Elizabeth Cameron from Hitia Tahiti, on June 4, 1891. In this letter, he wrote of Arii Taimai,

...I cared less for the gaiety than I did for the parting with the dear old lady who kissed me on both cheeks...and made us a little speech with such dignity and feeling that though it was in native, and I did not understand a word of it, I quite broke down. I shall never see her again, but I have learned from her what the archaic woman was.¹⁸

The book itself dwells largely on the important part the female played in Tahitian history. He wrote of Tahitian women and marriage,

Nowhere in the world was marriage a matter of more political and social consequence than in Tahiti. Women played an astonishing part in the history of the island. In the absence of sons, daughters inherited chiefties and property in the lands that went with the chief's names or titles, and these chiefesses in their own right were much the same sort of personages as female sovereigns in European history; they figured as prominently in island politics as Catherine of Russia, or Maria Theresa of Austria, or Marie Antoinette of France, or Marie Louise of Parma, in the politics of Europe. A chiefess of this rank was as independent of her husband as of any other chief; she had her seat, or throne, in the Marae even to the exclusion of her husband; and if she were ambitious, she might win or lose crowns for her children....¹⁹

Adams noted that the rise of the Papara family came as the result of the kidnapping of a beautiful daughter of one of the Paparan

chieftain's subjects. The war that resulted raised the Paparan chief to control of that portion of Tahiti subject to the Teva clan of which the Paparas were a part. Again, eight generations before Arii Taimai, there was a romantic interlude in the history of her ancestors. The chief of Papara at that time desired the wife of another chief, and, it being the custom of the time, he requested the loan of her with a formal pledge that she would be returned in seven days. This request was granted but the Paparan chief at the end of the seven days was too much in love to return the wife; therefore, the husband sent his warriors to destroy Papara and kill its chieftain. Papara was defeated and the wife recovered, but the Paparan chief pleaded with his captors that it was dishonorable to be killed by any beneath his rank and, thus, was taken to the injured husband alive. The husband could not put the Paparan chief to death because of his reputation for generosity; therefore, he freed him and gave him his wife.²⁰

Four generations before Arii Taimai, a family feud resulted from a rather interesting situation. Since the eldest child of the Paparan ruling family was a daughter, she was married to a chief on another island. As there were two sons left, the eldest claimed the position of headchief. The younger brother, however, refused to recognize his right on what was considered by Adams to be a very interesting point for the study of those interested in primitive law.

Tuiterai's plea or defense seems to have turned on the idea that the eldest child, whether male or female, was the only heir who could set up an indefeasible right to the succession and since the eldest child in this case, being a woman, had married and gone off to Raiatea, all the younger children had equal rights, and might with equal justice claim the position of headchief.²¹

The younger brother was victorious and he married a very important woman

in the island's history, Purea. Of Purea, Adams wrote:

If a family must be ruined by a woman, perhaps it may as well be ruined thoroughly and brilliantly by a woman who makes it famous. Te vahine Airorotua i Ahurai i Farequa [familiarily known as Purea] was a very great lady. Standards of social rank differ a little in different countries and times, but in any country or time a woman would meet with consideration when she and her husband could control a hundred thousand people; when she could build a pyramid for her child, and take for him the produce of a swarming country; when she was handsome with manners equal to the standard of countries where the manners of Europe would be considered barbarous; and finally when she had an unbroken descent from chiefs as far back as human society existed; and the consideration would not be the less because, like a large proportion of the more highly educated ladies and gentlemen of Europe, her views on some points of morality were lax and her later career disastrous.²²

Purea's main fault was extreme ambition for her son, Teriirere. In Tahiti, "the son always superseded the father, whose authority after the birth of a child was merely that of guardian." After the birth of Teriirere, therefore, Tuiteraï was no longer chief of Papara; he was merely regent. Also, "the same cause that superseded the father gave the mother often an increase of influence and freedom from restraint."

Purea, after the birth of Teriirere, was emancipated, and the relation between her and Tuiteraï was from that time a political rather than a domestic one; they were united only in the interests of Teriirere. After her emancipation, Purea, in conjunction with Tuiteraï, did what was considered by the other chiefs of Tahiti as unpardonable--they not only proclaimed a general rahui in Teriirere's honor; they also built a new temple or marae for him.²³

Proclaiming the rahui was serious enough:

A rahui was a great exercise of authority, and was more than royal in its claims. The rahui, which might last a year or more, was a sweeping order that everything produced during that time in the whole territory subject to the chief should be tabu or sacred to the young prince. Not a pig should be killed; not a tapa cloth or fine mat should be made; 'not a

cock should crow,' except for the child; and at the end of the rahui, all was to belong to the infant.

All the chiefs of the island were made extremely jealous, but it was another woman, Purea's sister-in-law, who first chose to attempt to break the rahui. There was a custom that "if during a Rahui, any relative or guest of equal rank should come to visit the chief who had imposed it, the Rahui was broken, and the guest received by courtesy all that the Rahui had produced." Purea's sister-in-law decided to visit Papara, but when she was drawing near the site of the new Marae for Teriirere, Purea, discovering who it was, called out, "How many more royal heads can there be? I know none by Teriirere i Toari. Down with your tent!" At this insult, Purea's sister-in-law "wept and cut her head with the shark's tooth till blood flowed down her face, which was the custom of women in sign of great emotion and meant in this instance revenge as well as grief." The sister-in-law left, but Purea's niece, Iddeah, daughter of the insulted sister-in-law, pursued the quarrel. Iddeah also made an appearance in a state canoe which was received by the same order from Purea, "Down with your tent!" The niece came ashore and, cutting her head with a shark's tooth, she caused her blood to flow into a hole dug for it in the earth. This blood was a call for a blood feud; in order to avoid the feud, the person to whom the sign was directed must wipe the blood away. Purea refused, but her brother-in-law, Manea, wiped it away negating the feud as far as he was concerned. Forth years later, Manea's descendant, Tavi was spared by the Parue Arue, the state Iddeah ruled with her husband Pomare, when it attacked Papara.²⁴

The last show of pride made by Purea was the feast for her son at which he was to first wear the Maro, a crown of feathers, at his new

Marae (temple). Purahi, another woman, from the older Aromaiterai branch of the Papara family, supported by Vehiatua of Teahupoo, broke up the feast and left Papara in devastation. Porea, Tuiteraï, and Teriirere, escaped the slaughter and retained the rule of the district of Papara, but the power of the Papara family over the island was broken. Adams commented, "No one seems to have tried to drive the Papara family out....The quarrel was with Porea rather than with Amo [Tuiteraï] or Teriirere."²⁵

Porea was seen at the height of her power by Captain Samuel Wallis after his discovery of Tahiti on June 18, 1767. Here is Porea's description from Wallis's own narrative.

On Saturday, the 11th, in the afternoon, the gunner came on board with a tall woman, who seemed to be about five-and-forty years of age, of a pleasing countenance and majestic deportment....She seemed to be under no restraint, either from diffidence or fear, when she first came into the ship, and she behaved all the while she was on board with an easy freedom that always distinguishes conscious superiority and habitual command.

Wallis was quite impressed with Porea, with her hospitality and generosity during his stay on the island, and her sentiment on his departure.²⁶

Captain Cook appeared for the first time some four months after Porea's fall. Two weeks after their arrival, Porea made an appearance. She was described by Joseph Banks as being "about forty, tall, and very lusty, her skin white and her eyes full of meaning...." As to her beauty he wrote, "...she might have been handsome when young, but now few or no traces of it were left." Captain Cook described her in his journal as "about forty years of age, and, like most of the other women, very masculine."²⁷

The coming of the British brought to power another Tahitian woman

of Amazonian character, Iddeah, Purea's niece who had declared a blood feud with her. The British mistakenly believed that Iddeah's husband, Tu, later known as Pomare, was the proper ruler of the entire island although Tu's family was looked down upon by the members of the Teva clan, of which the Paparas were a part, as being descended from a savage people from a neighboring island. The other chiefs were very jealous of the British favoritism, but, in time, Tu became well entrenched with English ammunition. Captain Bligh of the *Bounty* gave an interesting account of Iddeah at this time.

When I proposed to leave with him [Tu] a pair of pistols, which they prefer to muskets, he [sic] told me that Iddeah ... would fight with one and Oedidee... with the other. Iddeah has learnt to load and fire a musket with great dexterity... It is not common for women in this country to go to war but Iddeah is a very resolute woman, of large make, and has great bodily strength.²⁸

After Tu's son had reached adulthood, a feud arose between them. When his son found some pretext of bar between them, Tu, now called Pomare, fled leaving Iddeah to handle the situation. Iddeah was "thirty years older than when she succeeded in overthrowing Purea," and according to Adams, it was "she, more than her husband, ... [that] was the real intellect and energy of the party opposed to Papara."

She and her brother, Vaetua, won all of Pomare's victories and upon them fell the task of resisting the Teva influence which controlled Tu [Pomare's son]. Pomare, himself, was not likely to return while the danger lasted.

Iddeah met with Tu and ceded the authority he desired and obtained from him the life of an old friend of his, Manne-manne, who was subsequently murdered by her people. Iddeah was described by the missionaries as receiving the news of Manne-manne's death with "a carthoush box buckled around her waist; a musquet she had been seen with in her hand a little

before...now laid away...[and] a settled air of triumph on her
brow....¹²⁹

After the death of Pomare, the younger Tu, now called Pomare, found it necessary to become Christian in order to maintain the support of the British. He had been in exile on a neighboring island and now desired to regain control of Tahiti. Again the subject of the Tahitian woman's strength and independence appears in Adams' depiction of the role of Pomare's wives.

War was inevitable, and Pomare with his Christian converts could choose when and where to make it. Pomare himself was not a warrior; he left the active campaigning to his wives, who were less likely to rouse the old enmities. Terite and Pomare vahine [wives of Pomare] came over to Parue Arue in a boat, May 1815, with a large party of Christians, and pressed then arrangements for the overthrow of the native chiefs.³⁰

Arii Taimai, the old chiefess whose memoirs make up the book, was herself the central figure of the conclusion. She was the result of a union contrived by the Papan chief of the time of the second Pomare to strengthen his position by marriage with Pomare's cousin. Pomare, in order to strengthen his relationship with the Papanas, claimed Arii Taimai for his own and made a compact that all the other children of the union should marry Pomares. Arii Taimai, then, grew up with Aimata, daughter of Pomare. Aimata was the eldest and in Tahiti chiefteries descend to the eldest regardless of sex, but her father did not believe that she was his own child; therefore, her younger brother was made king. The young boy soon died and Aimata took her place as Queen of Tahiti in the eyes of the missionaries.³¹

At this time the French began sending missionaries to convert the natives from the Protestant faith brought over by the British to Roman Catholicism. The English missionaries appealed to the British Consul

who, through the Queen, caused the expulsion of the French missionaries. The French missionaries appealed to their government, at which Louis Phillipe sent a frigate to Tahiti with an ultimatum to Aimata, to which she conceded. The English missionaries then began to struggle to recover their lost gain and persuaded Queen Aimata to send a letter to the British government asking for protection, but at this time the British had lost interest in such an island as Tahiti and refused aid. The Tahitians, receiving no protection from the British, decided to throw themselves into the hands of the French. However, just as Aimata was preparing to sign with the French, a British frigate appeared and caused a stalemate. The French arrived the next day with a squadron so Aimata, conceding to the country showing most force, signed with the French. Later when Pritchard returned from England, February 25, 1843, and declared violent war against the French[,] Queen Pomare obeyed his wishes, and refused to obey those of the French admiral." The French then "landed troops; took possession of the island; declared the Queen deposed; and arrested Pritchard and turned him roughly out of the island." At this, "Aimata fled to a British ship and then to Raiatea; her people at Mahana and Hitia--the whole Pomare connections--took up arms and established themselves close to Papeete; in short another civil war broke out." At this point, Arii Taimai's own story began.³²

In 1846 Arii Taimai was resting at home when she was aroused by an old woman bewailing the fate of Tahiti; this old woman pointed out to Arii Taimai that she alone could save the island. Arii Taimai, therefore, resolved to see the French governor, Bruat. Meeting with Bruat, she asked permission to try to make peace with the islanders. Permission was granted and Arii Taimai left with her cousin on horseback to go

to the natives. Soon after arriving at the village where the native chiefs were gathered, she sought out one of the chiefs whom she supposed would be her chief opposition and said to him, "My object in coming here is to bring peace and I have counted upon you for the sake of old friendship to be my speaker in this most trying instance." While she knew that this chief was one of the most warlike of the chiefs, she also knew that "he could not leave...[her], a lone woman to speak out before all these men, and therefore he assented to...[her] request." Arii Taimai was shown the utmost respect by all and comments on her mission were very appreciative. One man alone opposed her and he was quickly shamed by her spokesman.³³

Although her mission was a success, a number of the chiefs were worried about the fate of Aimata, the Queen Pomare. To reassure the chiefs, Arii Taimai agreed to go herself to Raiatea to bring Aimata back to Tahiti where it was promised no harm would come to her. Returning to the governor, she was greeted with his approval.

Later, on arriving at Raiatea, Arii Taimai found that Aimata, through listening to her kinfolk, was persuaded not to return to Tahiti to sign the treaty with the French as they still had hope of Britain's help. Three times Arii Taimai and her husband made the trip to Raiatea to get Aimata. After the second journey, Governor Bruat offered Arii Taimai the throne. On her refusal he threatened to make Tahiti a French colony at once but later agreed to let Arii Taimai try once more. The third time Aimata finally agreed to go. Thus Arii Taimai saved her island from destruction and reserved at least a small autonomy for her people.³⁴

In Tahiti one sees Adams' concept of the power, independence, and

importance of primitive woman borne out in the presentation of Tahitian woman's role in the island's history. The female line of descent was here equal in importance with the male's. In fact, in two places, the custom of making the eldest child heir regardless of sex was mentioned. The importance of motherhood was underlined by Purea's increased importance after the birth of her son and her extreme ambition for that son. Iddeah, her opponent, should be noted for her important position as "the real intellect and energy" of the Parue Arue family and for her ambition leading to the blood feud between the Parue Arue family and the Papara family.

With Arii Taimai's own story, a new element entered into Adams' portrait of woman. Other Tahitian women may be seen to have possessed power and independence, but Arii Taimai possessed intuitive wisdom as displayed in her manipulation of Nuutere, the chief committed to war, and in her desire to see the Tahitians make peace with the French rather than attempt to overthrow them. This power of intuition or instinct will play an increasingly important role in Adams' later depiction of the thirteenth century woman in Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres.

FOOTNOTES

¹"Henry Adams and the Influence of Women", American Literature, XIX (1947), pp. 291-292.

²Henry Adams, Historical Essays (New York, 1891), p. 1.

³Ibid., p. 13.

⁴Ibid., pp. 3-4.

⁵Ibid., pp. 6-7.

⁶Ibid., pp. 8-9.

⁷Ibid., pp. 9-11.

⁸Ibid., pp. 12-14.

⁹Ibid., pp. 15-16.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 16-17.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 18-19, 22-23.

¹²Ibid., pp. 23-25.

¹³Ibid., pp. 25-27.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 27-32.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 32-34.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 35-39.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 40-41.

¹⁸Selected Letters of Henry Adams, Newton Arvin, ed. (New York, 1951), p. 164.

¹⁹Tahiti, Robert E. Spiller, ed. (New York, c. 1947), p. 10.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 18-21, 23-27.

²¹Ibid., pp. 31-33.

- ²²Ibid., pp. 31, 40-41.
- ²³Ibid., pp. 41-42.
- ²⁴Ibid., pp. 27, 42-46.
- ²⁵Ibid., pp. 57-61, 74-75.
- ²⁶Ibid., pp. 48-52.
- ²⁷Ibid., pp. 62-63.
- ²⁸Ibid., pp. 94-107.
- ²⁹Ibid., pp. 128-129, 131.
- ³⁰Ibid., pp. 155, 157.
- ³¹Ibid., pp. 161-162, 175-177.
- ³²Ibid., pp. 179-180.
- ³³Ibid., pp. 181-182, 185-186.
- ³⁴Ibid., pp. 187-195.

CHAPTER III

THE EDUCATION OF HENRY ADAMS

The Education of Henry Adams contains the most explicit statement of Adams' view concerning the influence of women on history. In the "Primitive Rights of Women" Adams had noted that the powerful status of women had declined with the coming of the church, but he had also noted that womanly influence had resurged with the intense worship of the Virgin Mary at the time of the crusades and the construction of the great Gothic cathedrals. In the Education, Adams took the Virgin as a symbol of this feminine influence felt during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the Dynamo as a symbol of the scientific influence of the twentieth century. Both were, to him, "symbols of ultimate energy." The Dynamo was the embodiment of "a new universe," a "supersensual world in which...[man] could measure nothing except by chance collisions of movements imperceptible to his senses"; the Virgin, on the other hand, was ultimate in a previous, more human age--"she was the animated dynamo; she was reproduction--the greatest and most mysterious of all energies."¹

Adams was involved in discerning a sequence in history and was dismayed by the lack of order and unity he found. Where his mind might discern an order, a sequence of men, society, time, or thought, another mind might discern none. The only possible way to find a real sequence would be to find a sequence of force. The only method Adams possessed

for reducing all the forces working in society to a common value was the measurement of their attraction on his own mind. On regarding the dynamos at the World Fair at Chicago, Adams had begun "to feel the forty-foot dynamos as a moral force, much as the early Christians felt the Cross."

The planet itself seemed less impressive, in its old-fashioned, deliberate, annual or daily revolution, than this huge wheel, revolving within arm's length at some vertiginous speed, and barely murmuring...while it would not wake the baby lying close against its frame. Before the end, one began to pray to it; inherited instinct taught the natural expression of man before silent and infinite force. Among the thousand symbols of ultimate energy, the dynamo was not so human as some, but it was the most expressive.²

It was obvious to Adams that the Virgin had exerted a powerful force on the society of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and that she was still powerful at Lourdes, France; the Virgin symbolized woman who "had once been supreme" and was "still...potent" in France. This force, personified by the Virgin in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, had been known as Diana of the Ephesians, Venus, Aphrodite, and goddesses of Indian mythology in times previous. The reason behind this powerful force was sex, reproduction, fecundity. Drawing on the evidence of the cathedrals of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Adams asserted that the Virgin, whether as "symbol or energy...had acted as the greatest force the Western world had ever felt and had drawn man's activities to herself more strongly than any other power, natural or supernatural."³

Though Adams believed that woman had held tremendous power in primitive and medieval society, at the present time in American society he found this power non-existent: Woman was "potent merely as sentiment," Adams queried,

Why was [woman] unknown in America? For evidently America was ashamed of her, and she was ashamed of herself, otherwise they would not have strewn fig-leaves so profusely all over her. When she was a true force, she was ignorant of fig-leaves, but the monthly-magazine-made American female had not a feature that would have been recognized by Adam.

While the American could see the results of the power of women upon the art and literature of previous societies, he was unable to really know or understand it. The artists of modern America with the exceptions of Walt Whitman, Bret Harte, and "one or two painters," "had used sex for sentiment, never for force."

American art like the American language and American education, was as far as possible sexless. Society regarded this victory over sex as its greatest triumph, and the historian readily admitted it, since the moral issue, for the moment, did not concern one who was studying the relations of unmoral force. He cared nothing for the sex of the dynamo until he could measure its energy.⁴

Adams was unable to account for the "historical chasm" between the forces of the Virgin and that of the Dynamo.

...He turned from the Virgin to the Dynamo as though he were a Branly coherer. On one side, at the Louvre and at Chartres, as he knew by the record of work actually done and still before his eyes, was the highest energy ever known to man, the creator of four-fifths of his noblest art, exercising vastly more attraction over the human mind than all the steam-engines and dynamos ever dreamed of; and yet this energy was unknown to the American mind. An American Virgin would never dare command; an American Venus would never dare exist.

Nevertheless, it was his business as an historian "to follow the track of the energy; to find where it came from and where it went to; its complex source and shifting channels; its values, equivalents, conversion."⁵

The problem of sequence in history became tied in Adams' mind to the problem of man's perception of the universe as unified. Science had attempted to find a "new assumption of Unity, broader and deeper than

that of the Church"; this "new unit," Science assured, "was as good as found." Adams, after waiting sixty years came to believe "that the final synthesis of science and its ultimate triumph was the kinetic theory of gases; which seemed to cover all motion in space and to furnish the measure of time."

...The theory asserted that any portion of space is occupied by molecules of gas flying in right lines at velocities varying up to a mile in a second, and colliding with each other at intervals varying up to 17,750,000 times in a second. To this analysis--if one understood it right--all matter whatever was reducible, and the only difference of opinion in science regarded the doubt whether a still deeper analysis would reduce the atom of gas to pure motion.

Thus, unless one mistook the meaning of motion, which might well be, the scientific synthesis commonly called Unity was the scientific analysis commonly called Multiplicity. The two things were the same, all forms being shifting phases of motion.⁶

This "larger synthesis" of science "was well enough for science but meant chaos for man." It seemed that if man "were obliged to insist on a universe," instead of a "multiverse," he was "...driven to the Church." But why was unity necessary at all? No philosophy ever denied unity; however, most philosophers agreed that unity is a product of the mind, not a product of nature.

Metaphysics insisted on treating the universe as one thought or treating thought as one universe; and the philosophers agreed, like kinetic gas, that the universe could be known only as motion of mind, and therefore as unity. One could know it only as one's self; it was psychology.

The thirteenth century also had supposed that the only order or unity that exists is an aspect of mind.

Without thought in the unit, there could be no unity; without unity, no orderly sequence or ordered society. Thought alone was Form. Mind and Unity flourished or perished together.⁷

Believing that his only hope of discovering unity was in the study of his own mind, Adams looked to the new psychology. There he tried to

find answers to the "simplest of questions": "Did the new psychology hold that the...soul or mind...was or was not a unit?" Psychologists had discovered several cases of split personalities. It had gone further and found personalities split not only in two parts but in "complex groups like telephonic centres and systems that might be isolated and called up at will; and whose physical action might be occult in the sense of strangeness to any known form of force." It then appeared to Adams that since the personality could split, "the only absolute truth was the sub-conscious chaos below which every one could feel when he sought it." However, this state, experienced in sleep, had no idea of unity. Man's normal thought, therefore, "was dispersion, sleep, dream, un consequence, the simultaneous action of different thought centres without central control." Man's unity of thought, Adams found, was merely "an artificial balance" acquired through habit. Therefore, through psychology Adams found no unity, "nothing but a dissolving mind--and the historian felt himself driven back on thought as one continuous Force, without Race, Sex, Country or Church."⁸

Adams came to believe that a scientific method of history must regard "man as force...measured by motion from a fixed point." Psychology had suggested a unit--"the point of history when man held the highest idea of himself as a unit in a unified universe." From this point, which Adams came to place in the century of the Virgin's greatest influence, 1150-1250 A.D., the motion of man's thought could be measured to his own time "without assuming as true or untrue except relation." Later in the Education, Adams hypothesized that while the motion of thought had accelerated in 310 with the change from polytheism to monotheism, and changed direction with the beginnings of science, these

changes had never "altered the continuity" with the present. However, "in 1900 the continuity snapped" with the discovery of the Roentgen rays or Curie's radium. Since the continuity of thought had snapped, relieving humanity of its "world of illusion"--an illusion of unity, "the child born in 1900 would be born to a new world which would be a unit but a multiple." Previously "man's mind had behaved like a young pearl oyster, secreting its universe to suit its conditions, until it had built up a shell of nacre that embodied all its notions of the perfect." Man had regarded this unity as a work of art. Woman had excelled over man in her ability to create a conception of a unified universe. This point was borne out by the fact that the highest point of unity, the century 1150-1250 A.D., had shown the greatest influence of woman.

The woman especially did great things, creating her deities on a higher level than the male, and, in the end, compelling the man to accept the Virgin as guardian of the man's God. The man's part in this Universe was secondary, but the woman was at home there, and sacrificed herself without limit to make it habitable, when man permitted it, as sometimes happened for brief intervals of war and famine; but she could not provide protection against forces of nature. She did not think of her universe as a raft to which the limpets stuck for life in the surge of a supersensual chaos; she conceived herself and her family as the centre and flower of an ordered universe which she knew to be unity because she had made it after the image of her own fecundity; and this creation of hers was surrounded by beauties and perfections which she knew to be real because she herself had imagined them.⁹

In 1904 Adams spent a summer in the "study of the Virgin, not as a sentiment but as a motive power...." He desired to discover the force that had attracted man during that highest point in man's conception of himself "as a unit in a unified universe." He soon discovered that the Virgin still held an attraction for him. The Virgin's power had failed, but it had failed slowly and not entirely. Religion, with the Virgin at its apex, "had flooded in France from the middle of the twelfth century

till the sixteenth century at which time it "broke into Shelley's light dissolved in star-showers thrown...." In the sixteenth century "the One had become several and Unity had counted more than three, though the Multiple still showed modest numbers." Progress was known only in the directions of complexity, multiplicity and anarchy, not toward perfection.¹⁰

Old formulas of the universe had failed; Adams, to be effective, had to attempt "to invent a formula of his own for his universe." He didn't seek "an absolute truth"--"only a spool on which to wind the thread of history without breaking it." He sought, as a basis of his theory, "the orbit which would best satisfy the observed movement of the runaway star, Groombridge, 1830, commonly called Henry Adams." The "spool" took the form of the theory that Adams first enunciated in the chapters "Dynamic Theory of History" and "Law of Acceleration" in the Education, and which he later expounded in the essay, "Rule of Phase Applied to History."¹¹

In the "Rule of Phase Applied to History," Adams took Willard Gibbs' Rule of Phase, a theory in physics that refined and extended the second law of thermodynamics, and discussed the possibility of its application to thought, which Adams regarded as merely a more diffuse form of matter similar to electricity. Whereas Gibbs' Rule of Phase concerned different stages of equilibrium in material substances, for instance, ice, water, and steam, Adams wished to discover different phases in the history of thought.

Adams theorized that thought moves "from one phase to another through a series of critical points which are determined by the three factors, Attraction, Acceleration, and Volume for each change of

equilibrium." Adams, for convenience, took the figure of the comet of 1843, for the demonstration of the movement of thought, altering only the acceleration by using the electrical law of squares because of the similarity between thought and electricity. From this point, Adams launched into a division of history into four phases--religious, mechanical, electrical, and ethereal. As he estimated the length of the mechanical phase to be three hundred years--from the Renaissance to the beginning of the twentieth century, he calculated the length of the religious phase to be 90,000 years, the square of the length of the mechanical phase. The religious phase took up one long side of the comet; the first change of direction had come with the Renaissance. Whereas in the religious phase, religion, or "the love of God and lust for power in a future life," had been the attracting force, during the Renaissance this role had been taken over by science. This point was crucial in the history of man's conception of a unified universe. At the beginning of the Renaissance, Galileo, Kepler, Spinoza, Descartes, Leibnitz, and Newton never "doubted Unity," "they sought Unity under a different personality." Beginning with Bacon, however, Unity was no longer assumed:

[Bacon] urged society to lay aside the idea of evolving the universe from a thought, and to try evolving thought from the universe. The mind should observe and register forces--take them apart and put them together--without assuming unity at all.

The advent of Bacon's philosophy, then, marked the complete turn in the direction of man's thought.¹²

The next phase, which Adams believed would be known as the electric phase, would last seventeen and a half years, the square root of the length of the preceding phase. This phase, which Adams believed had already begun by 1900, was noted as that time when man completely

abandoned a conception of the universe as unified and came to accept in its place a "multiverse." At the end of this phase, thought would go into its final phase, the ether phase, which would only last four years bringing it to the limit of its possibilities by 1921. If the mechanical phase were lengthened one hundred years, the ether phase would end in 2025. In conclusion Adams described thought in this final phase and its possible implications to society:

Thought in terms of Ether means only Thought in terms of itself, or in other words, pure Mathematics and Metaphysics, a state often reached by individuals. At the utmost it could mean only the subsidence of the current into an ocean of potential thought, of mere consciousness which is also possible, like static electricity. The only consequence might be an indefinitely long stationary period, such as John Stuart Mill foresaw. In that case the current would merely cease to flow.

However, "if man should continue to set free the infinite forces of nature and obtain the control of cosmic forces on a cosmic scale," at a certain point "the forces which are concentrated on his head must act."¹³

Believing thought to be an object being drawn by attractive force, Adams discussed the forces in history that resembled the mechanical force of inertia. Adams found that his mind rejected the image of itself either "at rest or in a straight line." Therefore, he was forced to conclude that the "mind was never at rest but moved--when normal--about something it called a motive, and never moved without motives to move it."

So long as these motives were habitual, and their attraction regular, the consequent result might, for convenience, be called movement of inertia to distinguish it from movement caused by newer or higher attractions; but the greater the bulk to move, the greater must be the force to accelerate or deflect it.

One form of thought-inertia, Adams believed, is race-inertia: "Race

classified thought." While "race-inertia seemed fairly constant," "sex-inertia had never been overcome at all.

Of all movements of inertia, maternity and reproduction are the most typical, and women's property of moving in a constant line forever is ultimate, uniting history in its only unbroken and unbreakable sequence. Whatever else stops, the woman must go on reproducing, as she did in the Siluria of Pteraspis;¹⁴ sex is a vital condition, and race only a local one. If the laws of inertia are to be sought anywhere with certainty, it is in the feminine mind.¹⁵

In America, however, there were signs that this inertia of sex was giving way to the higher attraction of science. The woman in America, as in England, had been disregarded although the "accelera[tion] or deflection of...[her] movement" was of the utmost importance. In his studies on primitive woman, Adams had attempted to show that woman had held a central position in society; in the earliest society, she had been the sole parent. Even after the father had joined the primitive family, primitive woman still possessed unusually great power compared with modern woman. Medieval woman, too, had possessed great power. Now, Adams believed, woman was bereft of power.¹⁶

Because of her role in reproduction and parenthood, Adams believed that woman possessed a higher degree of instinct than possessed by man. As we will learn in "A Letter to American Teachers of History," Adams held that this instinct could be seen in its effect on the art of the Middle Ages when Woman through the Virgin held her greatest influence. Recognizing the potential in instinct and recognizing that "woman's thought is mostly subconscious and particularly sensitive to suggestion," Adams tried to probe the American woman with leading questions. At times he would ask a woman to explain "why the American woman was a failure." Invariably the woman would answer: "Because the American man

is a failure." The woman always had a strong feeling about the questions.

The cleverer the woman, the less she denied the failure. She was bitter at heart about it. She had failed even to hold the family together, and her children ran away like chickens with their first feathers; the family was extinct like chivalry. She had failed not only to create a new society that satisfied her, but even to hold her own in the old society of Church or State; and was left for the most part, with no place but the theatre or streets to decorate.¹⁷

According to Adams in Russia 3,000 million dollars worth of artificial energy had been spent on the project of destroying race-inertia; in America artificial energy to the amount of twenty-five million steam horsepower had been turned over socially to the American woman, "the chief object of social expenditure...." He wondered as to the results. Because of Russia's tremendous bulk, nothing was yet known. But in America the result was phenomenal.

The woman had been set free--volatilized like Clerk Maxwell's perfect gas; almost brought to the point of explosion like steam. One had but to pass a week in Florida or any of a hundred huge ocean steamers...to see that the woman had been set free; but these swarms were ephemeral like clouds of butterflies in season, blown away and lost, while the reproductive sources lay hidden. At Washington, one saw other swarms as grave gatherings of Dames or Daughters...but all these shifting visions, unknown before 1840 touched the true problem slightly and superficially. Behind them, in every city, town, and farm-house, were myriads of new types--or typewriters--telephone and telegraph-girls, shop-clerks, factory-hands, running into millions of millions, and as classes, unknown to themselves as to historians. Even the school mistresses were inarticulate. All these new women had been created since 1840; all were to show their meaning before 1940.

Whatever they were, they were not content, as the ephemera proved; and they were hungry for illusions as ever in the fourth century of the Church; but this was probably survival, and gave no hint of the future.¹⁸

Adams believed that the inertia of sex was being overcome by modern society's immense ability to disperse energy. The problems now were:

Would this movement of woman found previously in the lines of inertia be deflected to the lines taken by man? How would this deflection affect the acceleration of society which already followed the law of squares? The modern American woman was losing her role as the cementing force of the family and was becoming more like the man:

The American woman at her best--like most other women--exerted great charm on the man, but not the charm of a primitive type. She appeared as the result of a long series of discards, and her chief interest lay in what she had discarded. When closely watched, she seemed making a violent effort to follow the man, who had turned his mind and hand to mechanics. The typical American man had his hand on a lever and his eye on a curve in his road; his living depended on keeping up an average speed of forty miles an hour, tending always to become sixty, eighty, or a hundred, and he could not admit emotions or anxieties or subconscious distractions, more than he could admit whiskey or drugs, without breaking his neck. He could not run his machine and a woman too; he must leave her, even though his wife, to find her own way, and all the world saw her trying to find her way by imitating him.

Adams held that woman possessed great physical force--a force having always previously lain in reproduction. This force had worked as "inertia of rotation and...[its] axis of rotation had been the cradle and the family." If this force were diverted, it had "to find a new field, and the family must pay for it."¹⁹

Adams noted that woman had rebelled before: She "had made a fortress of religion." In previous centuries, she had "always been busy in the illusions of heaven or hell, but now the American woman had no illusions or ambitions or new resources, and nothing to rebel against except her own maternity." Woman's ability to act had been severely limited; the various social philosophies assuring "paradise on earth for every male, cut off the few avenues of escape which capitalism had opened to Women, and she saw before her only the future reserved for machine-made collectivist females." No help was forthcoming from the

male whose "instinct for power was blind." In the Church she had once found refuge but after its overthrow she had none.

She was free; she had no illusions; she was sexless; she had discarded all that the male disliked; and although she secretly regretted the discard, she knew that she could not go backward. She must like the man marry machinery. Already the American man sometimes felt surprise at finding himself regarded as sexless; the American woman was oftener surprised at finding herself regarded as sexual.²⁰

The question of the possibility of totally overcoming inertia of sex was of ultimate importance. It "could not be overcome, without overcoming the race, yet an immense force, doubling every few years was working irresistibly to overcome it." One could only hope that "the woman would swim about the ocean of future time with the garfish and the shark,²¹ unable to change."²²

In another work, Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres, Adams had dealt in more depth on the phenomenon of feminine power in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the advent of its failure. Although it was previous to the Education, it appears to have been largely informed by the same theories. As it further illuminates a part of the larger theory, I have placed my discussion of this work in a position immediately following this discussion of the Education.

FOOTNOTES

¹Henry Adams, Education of Henry Adams (New York, c. 1918), pp. 380-381, 384.

²Ibid., pp. 380-382.

³Ibid., pp. 383-384, 388.

⁴Ibid., pp. 384-385.

⁵Ibid., pp. 384-385, 389.

⁶Ibid., pp. 430-431.

⁷Ibid., pp. 431-432, 429.

⁸Ibid., pp. 432-434.

⁹Ibid., pp. 434-435, 457-459.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 468-471.

¹¹Ibid., p. 472.

¹²Henry Adams, Degradation of the Democratic Dogma (New York, 1920), pp. 281, 302-305, 295-296, and Education of Henry Adams, pp. 427, 484.

¹³Degradation of the Democratic Dogma, pp. 308-309.

¹⁴The Pteraspis was a ganoid fish found in the geological division of time known as Siluria which still exists unchanged. Adams considered it a challenge to Lyell's theory of "Natural Selection by Minute Changes Under Uniform Conditions." Education, p. 399.

¹⁵Education, p. 441.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 442.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 442-443.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 444-445.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 445-446.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 446-447.

²¹The gar-fish and the shark are like the Pteraspis in that they are primitive forms that failed to evolve further after a certain point in time.

²²Education, pp. 445-448.

CHAPTER IV

MONT-SAINT-MICHEL AND CHARTRES

Having deduced the age in which man had held the "highest conception of himself as a unity in a unified universe" to be in the century 1150 to 1250 A.D., and having noted the period beginning in 1900 as one in which man totally loses sight of unity and falls into a state of multiplicity, Adams elected to write works concerning these two periods in history: "Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres: A Study of Thirteenth Century Unity" and "The Education of Henry Adams: A Study of Twentieth Century Multiplicity."¹

In Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres, finished in 1904, Adams attempted to capture the essence of society in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries. The book may be divided into three parts--the first covering the "eleventh century Romanesque church of Saint Michel" or the "Church Militant," the second covering the "twelfth-century Transition Church of the Virgin," or the "Church Triumphant," and the third covering the "thirteenth century Gothic cathedral of the Trinity," or the "Church Intellectual." The major interest of the Chartres lies in its depiction of what Adams supposed to be the prominent influence held by women in the church and state in the period of time 1150 to 1250 A.D., the age of the Transition Church of the Virgin, and the age of man's highest unity. In the first and third divisions of the work, Adams discussed the periods prior to and after the period of Woman's greatest

influence, which offer contrast to it.

Adams used three "architectural structures" to typify the three different periods: the cathedrals Mont-Saint-Michel, and Chartres, and the Summa Theologiae of Saint Thomas Aquinas. The cathedral of Mont-Saint-Michel, typical of many Romanesque edifices, had a "military character." The church of the eleventh century was the "Church militant," a masculine church as opposed to the feminine twelfth century Church of the Virgin, and it possessed a unique form of unity but a unity which Adams later finds to be somewhat lacking. However, both the "Church Militant" and the "Church Triumphant" possessed energy that is absent in the "Church Intellectual."

Church and State, Soul and Body, God and Man, are all one at Mont-Saint Michel, and the business of all is to fight, each in his own way, or to stand guard for each other. Neither Church nor State is intellectual, or learned, or even strict in dogma. Here we do not feel the Trinity at all; the Virgin but little; Christ hardly more; we feel only the Archangel and the Unity of God. We have little logic here, and simple faith, but we have energy.

This energy continued, as seen in the construction of the cathedrals in granite through both the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but it failed to some extent in the thirteenth century, the age of the Church Intellectual, in which "the great cathedrals...show economy, and sometimes worse."²

As a literary counterpart to Mont-Saint-Michel, Adams noted the eleventh century Chanson de Roland which shared with the Romanesque cathedral both its military character and masculinity.

The poem and the church are akin; they go together and explain each other. Their common trait is their military character peculiar to the eleventh century. The round arch is masculine. The "Chanson" is so masculine that, in all its four thousand lines, the only Christian woman so much as mentioned was Alda, the sister of Oliver and the betrothed of Roland, to whom one

stanza, exceedingly like a later insertion was given toward the end. Never after the first crusade did one great poem rise to such heroism as to sustain itself without a heroine.³

The first crusade brought the advent of the "period of Transition, the glory of the twelfth century...." The change from the Romanesque architecture of the eleventh century to the Gothic of the Transition can be discerned in Mont-Saint-Michel. The church of Mont-Saint-Michel belongs to the eleventh century; to this structure was added, in the twelfth century, a "new group" "extend[ing] from...the old refectory to the parvis and abuts on the three lost spans of the church." This architecture of the Gothic transition embodied "the quiet, restrained struggle of the Romanesque married to the graceful curves and vaulting imagination of the Gothic...." In comparing the group of the twelfth century with the church of the eleventh century, Adams found a definite difference in sex. Between the eleventh and twelfth centuries a new adulation of the Virgin had risen along with the rise of the cult of courtly love; this rise in the position of women showed in the architecture of the time.

What the Roman could not express flowered into the Gothic; what the masculine mind could not idealize in the warrior, it idealized in the woman; no architecture that ever grew on earth, except the Gothic, gave this effect of flinging its passion against the sky.⁴

Mont-Saint-Michel was a Norman cathedral. Adams noted that "Every great artistic kingdom solved its architectural problems in its own way...[and that] the Norman was commonly the most practical and sometimes the most dignified." But even among the Normans, the twelfth century had brought the worship of the Virgin.

Among the unexpected revelations of human nature that suddenly astonish historians, one of the least reasonable was the passionate outbreak of religious devotion to the ideal of feminine grace, charity and love that took place here in Normandy

while it was still a part of the English kingdom, and flamed up into almost fanatical frenzy among the most hard-hearted and hard-headed race in Europe.

Still, in its over-all effect, "the whole Mount kept the grand style [the style of the eleventh century]; it expressed the unity of Church and State, God and Man, Peace and War, Life and Death, Good and Bad; it solved the whole problem of the universe."⁵

Adams noted that between the construction of the church of Mont-Saint-Michel and the beginning of the construction of Chartres cathedral in France, Mary, mother of Christ, rose in the Western world from a relatively unnoted position to a highly exalted one. Mary "was the chief favorite of the Eastern Empire" long before her arrival to eminence in Western Europe. She had acted "as the patron saint of Constantinople;" her image was carried on the mastheads of the ships of Heraclitus; still today in the Greek church "her picture...[is] carried at the head of every procession and hung on the wall of every hut and hovel." Mary had always held a fairly high position in the Western church "but it was not until the crusades that she began to overshadow the Trinity itself." The orthodox church had "accepted the Virgin throned and crowned, seated by Christ, the Judge throned and crowned," although if it had had its own way entirely it may have left her "remaining prostrate at the foot of the cross."⁶

The French of the period of the first two crusades were not content with this arrangement, however, and wished to see Christ absorbed in his Mother and "the Mother the Church and Christ the Symbol." The Church "could not have dethroned her if it would." Saint Bernard, "a French precursor of Saint Francis of Assisi," exemplified most clearly "the religious emotion of the half century between the first and second

crusades (1095-1145)"; to Saint Bernard the Virgin "was the great mediator to a humanity too culpable to approach a sublime and terrible Christ ...[as] not even the weakest human frailty could fear to approach his Mother." Mystics such as Saint Bernard were not the only ones who claimed the Virgin; philosophers such as Abelard and Albert the Great claimed her. Guilds were devoted to her. The military was the "most vociferous" in her praise. More than anything else, Adams asserted the wealth expended on her proves to the American mind the strength of the people's devotion to the Virgin.⁷

As the eleventh century Norman cathedral Mont-Saint-Michel typified Romanesque architecture, the twelfth century French cathedral of Chartres typified the Gothic transition, and the Virgin Mary was the inspiration for the latter just as the warrior-archangel Saint Michael was the inspiration of the former. To appreciate Chartres, Adams believed, one must relinquish any notion of the Gothic as "hoary with age and decrepitude...[whose] shadows mean death" and return to a state of childlike naivete enabling one to see Chartres as "a child's fancy; a toy house to please the Queen of Heaven." To really savor its essence, one "must believe in Mary as Bernard...did, and feel her presence as the architects did, in every stone they placed, and every touch they chiselled." It was apparent to Adams that Mary's influence was felt throughout the construction of Chartres and that She required as any knowledgeable woman would, "space, light, convenience, and colour decoration to unite and harmonize the whole."

Of course the Virgin was actually and constantly present during all this labour and gave her assistance to it....Without the conviction of her personal presence, men would not have been inspired....Every day, as the work went on, the Virgin was present directing the architects....

However, though created entirely for the pleasure of the Virgin alone--
 "The wants of man...enter[ing] to no great extent into the problem of
 Chartres," "the public is never excluded but invited."⁸

Adams explored the Virgin's personality through the nature of her influence on the art and architecture of Chartres. On the central doorway of the splendid western portal built soon after the first crusade, one can see the influence of the Virgin on the depiction of her son. Here Christ is depicted, not, as in many later cathedrals, as the bringer of judgment, but "as the herald of salvation alone."

Among all the imagery of the three doorways, there is no hint of fear, punishment, or damnation and this is the note of the time. Before 1200, the Church seems not to have felt the need of appealing habitually to terror; the promise of hope and happiness was enough....A hundred years later, every church portal showed Christ not as Saviour but as Judge, and He presided over a Last Judgment...where the despair of the damned is the evident joy of the artist....At Chartres He is identified with his Mother, the spirit of love and grace, and this Church is the Church.

In the earlier part of the cathedral pain as well as fear is absent:

"there is not a martyr with the symbol of his martyrdom, and...the single scene of [Christ's life] that has been omitted is the Crucifixion." Only the "gracious and gentle" side of the Virgin's nature was shown and impressed on her Son.⁹

In the portraits of Mary herself, Adams found not only the majestic Queen of Heaven, but also a woman in touch with the common realities of childbirth and pain. On the lintel above the doorway there is a "succession of small groups" illustrating the events of the Virgin's life. In the centre of the lintel, Mary sits "with her crown on her head and her Son on her lap, enthroned, receiving the homage of heaven and earth; of all time, ancient and modern; of all thought, Christian and Pagan; of all men and all women...." The Mother and Child are depicted as One;

Christ, supported by her right hand, repeats his Mother's attitude. The period of the Transition may be detected in art by "the imperial character of the Virgin [and] her unity with Christ which is the Church." The crown and robes of the Virgin, during the Crusades, were "borrowed from the costumes of the Empresses of the East...." The Virgin "was not a Western, feudal queen, nor was her Son a feudal king; she typified an authority which the people wanted and the fiefs feared; the Pax Romana; the omnipotence of God in government." She and her Son were symbolic of a "power able to enforce justice or to maintain order" at a time when there was no earthly power so capable. Then in a remarkable switch from heavenly queen to mortal and suffering woman, Mary is pictured in a group exemplifying the Nativity lying "on a low bed."

In correct theology, the Virgin ought not to be represented in bed, for she could not suffer like ordinary women, but her palace at Chartres is not much troubled by theology, and to her as empress-mother, the pain of child-birth was a pleasure which she wanted her people to share. The Virgin of Chartres was the greatest of all queens, but the most womanly of women ...and her double character is sustained throughout her palace.¹⁰

From the main entrance, Adams turned to the north porch, the porch belonging to the Virgin "because the north was cold, bleak, sunless, windy and needed warmth, peace, affection and power to protect against the assaults of Satan and his swarming devils." The north porch was the traditional porch belonging to women who came here in need of help. Here the Virgin "is no longer an Empress; she is Queen Mother--an idealized Blanche of Castile--too high to want, or suffer, or to revenge or to aspire, but not too high to pity, to punish, or to pardon." To this porch "women went...for help as babies to their mother and the men in her presence, fell on their knees because they feared her intelligence

and her anger."¹¹

The central point of interest in Chartres cathedral may be found in the great rose window. Adams believed that the architect "concentrated his whole energy on the rose because the Virgin has told him that the rose symbolized herself."

...beyond the futilities of unnecessary doubt, the Virgin designed this rose...wholly for her own pleasure and as her own idea. She placed upon the breast of her Church--which symbolized herself--a jewel so gorgeous that no earthly majesty could bear comparison with it and which no other heavenly majesty has rivalled.

This rose, created in 1195 "contains or hides a Last Judgment--the one subject carefully excluded from the old work, and probably not existing on the south porch for another twenty years." According to Adams this Last Judgment did not represent, as did later Judgment scenes, "God's justice or man's corruption, but...[Mary's] own infinite mercy." The Virgin's great power on heaven and earth coupled with her merciful nature turned the Last Judgment into her "ornament; a plaything, a pleasure! a jeweled decoration which she wore on her breast."

Christ the Trinity might judge as much as He pleased, but Christ the Mother would rescue; and her servants could look boldly into the flames.¹²

Adams noted that the Virgin of Chartres was tolerant of all stations in life. Prodigals, prostitutes, peasants, aristocrats--all were received by her. Persons not admissible to polite society such as Mary Magdalen and Mary the Gipsy were "admitted...to her society." She cared little for her dignity, and when among peasants "as in the nave or on the porch...she liked to appear as one of them." The choir, on the other hand, "was aristocratic; every window there had a court quality, even down to the contemporary Thomas A'Becket, the fashionable martyr

of good society." Tolerant as she was toward most people, for priests she had no great love, and as for their study--theology, it "was put into the transepts or still farther away in the nave." This in part explained the Virgin's popularity with the remainder of her subjects. Her small regard for theology was interpreted by Adams from the absence of anything in Chartres concerning the Trinity, "the most metaphysical subtlety of the church;" instead "The Church is wholly given up to the Mother and the Son."¹³

The fact that all of a society from the peasantry to the nobles participated in the building of Chartres makes its unity surprising. Adams noted that the only tie that can be supposed that unites the art of the cathedral is that tie "the Virgin gave it." Sequence in the windows is lacking "and their charm [lies in their] variety, individuality, and sometimes in [their] downright hostility to each other reflecting the picturesque society that gave them." "The only relation connect[ing]...[all the donors] is their common relation to the Virgin, but that is emphatic and dominates the whole." The Virgin was real to these people; they knew her "as well as they knew their own mothers." She "was as familiar to everyone of them as the sun or the seasons; far more familiar than their own earthly queen or countess...in almost every thought of life, the Virgin was present with a reality that never belonged to her Son or to the Trinity...."¹⁴

To better define the twelfth century conception of the Virgin projected in the art and architecture of Chartres, Adams compared this conception with that of the thirteenth century. Whereas twelfth century art always represented Mary as "a Queen, enthroned, crowned, with the symbols of royal power, holding in her lap the infant King whose

guardian she is," the thirteenth century portrayed her with no sceptre and with the Holy Ghost "giv[ing] her support which she did not need before." In the thirteenth century Mary was no longer surrounded by her archangels, Saint Gabriel and Saint Michael, and their "symbols of power," but she was surrounded by angels who "assert no authority." The effect of a work of the thirteenth century, "dark or filled with shadow, is as though the Empress felt her authority fail and had come down from the western portal to reproach us for neglect." But in any work in Chartres, no matter what period, Mary "is always Queen." After the thirteenth century, however, the Virgin's power continued to fail until it became almost nonexistent and, as a result, the Church has lost the energy that gave it direction.

Most persons of a deeply religious nature would tell you emphatically that nine churches out of ten actually were dead-born, after the thirteenth century, and that church architecture became a pure matter of mechanism and mathematics...¹⁵

The Virgin as a power was found by Adams not only in the architecture, sculpture, and windows of Chartres, but also in the popular legends of the time. Allowing that the people of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries "believed in the supernatural...[and] stood like children before the miracle of miracles which they felt in their own consciences," Adams raised the question of why they "should have so passionately flung themselves at the feet of Woman rather than Man." According to Adams, the reason for this phenomenon lay in mankind's "instinct of self-preservation." Mary was the sole hope of mankind because "She alone represented Love." Because of its nature--Unity through the exclusion of the imperfect--the "Trinity...could...administer justice alone."

There was no crack and no cranny in the system through which human frailty could hope for escape. One was forced from corner to corner by a remorseless logic until one fell helpless at Mary's feet.¹⁶

Adams believed that after the failure of Saint Louis' crusades, "a miraculous faith" was required to persuade "the ordinary man...that Our Lady or any other divine power, had helped...." Nevertheless "society held firm"; it could not afford to forfeit its belief. The Trinity might be dispatched but not the Virgin. What is surprising is that "an authority so established as that of the Virgin, founded on instincts so deep" should fail at all. Nevertheless, the height of the Virgin's power was reached at the time of the death of Queen Blanche and its slow decline began. Still, even five hundred years later, "in France the Virgin still held such power that kings and queens asked her for favours almost as instinctively as before...." The situation in France, however, was opposed to that in England where in Shakespeare's plays "hardly an allusion to the Virgin's name unless as an oath" may be found. It had taken only three hundred years in England to effect "the disappearance of the great divinity on whom the twelfth and thirteenth centuries had lavished all their hopes...." Nevertheless, "the Virgin still remained or remains the most intensely and most vividly and the most personally felt of all characters, divine, or human, or imaginary, that ever existed among men." Her personality survives in the literature written about her as a result of which "we know more about her habits and thoughts than about those of earthly queens."¹⁷

As many of these legends present "devotion to Mary...as a kind of infallible guarantee not only against every sort of evil but also against the most legitimate consequences of sin and even of crime[,]"

Mary has been regarded by such an eminent academic authority as Gaston Paris as unfit for good society. This opinion was held by the English Puritans for much the same reasons. The Virgin would feel uncomfortable in a "well regulated community under a proper system of police." Mary was noted for being unscrupulous in her efforts to save her worshipers; her power over her son was a weapon often used by the Virgin to secure her faithful into the safety of Heaven. While the Orthodox Church refused to recognize this arbitrary power of Mary's, "in the hearts of Mary's servants, the Church and its doctrines were at the mercy of Mary's will." A popular legend recounts how even the devils were exasperated by Mary's exercise of "wholly arbitrary and illegitimate power," but as a poem of the age stated, "the devils admitted that they had no reason to complain of Mary's administration as all the great lords and ladies went to Hell while Heaven received the poor and deformed."¹⁸

The Virgin was partial to the lower classes and the chivalry; for the rising middle class she had little use. The one role Mary failed to act in was that of a bourgeoisie, having been known to help out as a midwife and as a warrior-knight: "The bourgeoisie courted her favor at great expense, but she seemed to be at home on the farm rather than in the shop." In time the Virgin's "views on the subject of money-lending or banking were so feminine as to rouse in that powerful class a vindictive enmity which helped to overthrow her throne."¹⁹

The Virgin often failed to be as dignified as later critics would have liked her to be: "She condescended to do domestic service in order to help her friends, and she would use her needle if she were in the mood for the same object." Among her "unconventional" actions were "the darning [of] Thomas A'Becket's hairshirt and the supporting [of] a

robber on the gibbet." Furthermore, the Virgin was not prudish, and her people delighted in her attitude as they themselves had "always in their heart protested against bearing the responsibility for the Creator's arbitrary creations."

To her sin was simply humanity, and she seemed often on the point of defending her arbitrary acts of mercy by frankly telling the Trinity that if the Creator meant to punish man, He should not have made him.²⁰

The Virgin of History was not the Virgin at Chartres; the power held by the Virgin of Chartres was much more similar, according to Adams' account, to that held by Venus, Diana, and some Oriental goddesses; her force was that of the Magna Mater not that of the Mater Dolorosa. Orthodox Christianity preferred the Mater Dolorosa; "the Trinity would never have raised her from the foot of the Cross had not the Virgin of Majesty been imposed, by necessity and public unanimity on a creed which was meant to be complete without her." The Trinity, however, although it "feared absorption in her, ... was compelled to accept her aid ... because it was a court of strict law and ... no process of equity could be introduced except by direct appeal to a higher power." Mankind insisted on her power because it desired not justice but favor. Since all men were sinners, no hope was to be derived from justice; their only hope was "for a power above law or above the unlimited mass of ignorance and absurdity bearing the name of law." Mankind longed for "protection, pardon and love" which the "Trinity could not give." Regardless of theology, "God could not be Love" because He "was Justice, Order, Unity, Perfection." God was Unity but it was a unity derived only by the exclusion of the imperfect. To Adams a Unity "in which and toward which all energies centre ... must explain and include Duality, Diversity, Infinity--Sex!" It was this Unity, the Unity of the Virgin

that explains the century 1150 to 1250 A.D. The Virgin "was by essence illogical, unreasonable, and feminine," but it was this quality in the Virgin that is the key to the reason why "all Protestant churches [are] cold failures without her help," and why the Holy Ghost or the Son could not equally compel such adoration. The Church while it "never liked to be dragged too far under feminine influence, [after discarding this influence] lost nearly everything of any value to it or the world, except its philosophy." The question that must be answered to understand history is "Why was the Woman struck out of the Church and ignored in the State?"²¹

The exalted position of Woman in the church as discerned in the worship of the Virgin of Chartres was matched by the power of Woman in the state as exemplified by the power of the "Three Queens." Adams noted that the French woman had always, like the Virgin of Chartres, possessed a strength which is usually regarded as masculine. Adams quoted M. Garrew's volume on the "Social State of France during the Crusades" to the effect that there was in France during the Crusades a "close resemblance between the manners of men and women[,]" that women "appear [to have been] distinctly superior" intellectually, that the "sense of Christianity [was] more developed in them than in their husbands" and that "they show[ed] more perfidy and art in crime." Adams asserted that "this superiority of the woman was not a fancy but a fact." She "ruled the household and the workshop, cared for the economy, supplied the intelligence and dictated the taste while her husband merely fought, hunted, feasted or made love." In this society of powerful women, the most powerful were the three queens--Eleanor of Guienne, Mary of Champagne, and Blanche of Castile.²²

Eleanor of Guienne, "the greatest of all French women," came to France in 1137. She loved power and this taste for power and the tastes and manners she brought from the South were "little in harmony with the taste of Saint Bernard whose authority at court rivaled her own." Saint Bernard, while he "adored the Virgin because she was an example of docile obedience to the Trinity," was hostile to women who were indocile because of their relation to Eve, who was supremely indocile and "the instrument of Satan." Eleanor's attainment of power was abetted because "she happened to become Queen of France at the moment when society was turning from its military ideal, Saint Michael, to worship of its social ideal, the Virgin." At this time Society came to assume that Woman had the greater intelligence; man was supposed to be stupid, cowardly and traitorous. Unfortunately Eleanor had met her match in Saint Bernard; therefore, after ruling France as Queen for fifteen years, she divorced Louis VII and moved on to take position as Queen of England at the side of Henry II where she begat two famous sons--Richard Coeur de Lion and John. It was Eleanor who founded the ideals of the cult of courtly love, a "form of religion" based on the adulation of woman which exerted great influence on manners and literature in medieval Europe.

Eleanor and her daughter Mary and her granddaughter Blanche knew as well as Saint Bernard did, or Saint Francis, what a brute the emancipated man could be; and as though they foresaw the society of sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, they used every terror they could invent as well as every tenderness they could invoke to tame the beasts around them. Their charge was of manners, and to teach manners, they made a school which they called their Court of Love, with a code of law to which they gave the name of 'courteous love.' The decisions of this court were recorded, like the decisions of a modern bench, under the names of the great ladies, who made them, and were enforced by the ladies of good society for whose guidance they were made.²³

It was Mary of Champagne, Eleanor's daughter, who "created the

literature of courteous love." Adams compared Mary of Champagne's inspiration of literature to Mary, mother of Christ's inspiration of the cathedral of Chartres. He noted that Mary of Champagne inspired Christian of Troyes whose verse has the quality of the glass windows of Chartres--"conventional decoration; colours in conventional harmonies; refinement, restraint, and feminine delicacy of taste and that Christian wrote his romance, Percival, to Mary "in the same spirit in which the workmen in glass, thirty years later, told the story of Charlemagne to the Mary of Chartres."²⁴

Blanche of Castile, granddaughter of Eleanor and the last of the three queens became Queen of France in 1223 at the age of thirty-six. Her husband, Louis VIII, soon left her a widow and a mother to the new King, Louis IX, a child of ten. There immediately grew dissension as to who would be regent for the young King; Blanche took the position but "the princes of the blood, who thought it was their right, united against her." Aided only by Thibault of Champagne among the princes, a papal legate, and the prelates, Blanche succeeded in maintaining her position. Even after her son achieved adulthood, Blanche continued to dominate him. Adams noted that the awe in which Louis, later Saint Louis, held his mother was considered only natural at that time.²⁵

Blanche was warring for power during much of the construction of Chartres Cathedral and her influence may be seen to some degree along with that of the Virgin. Her co-regent and chief competitor, Pierre de Dreux, and she "carry on war across the very heart of the cathedral" through their windows. While Pierre's rose "asserts flat defiance of the monarchy of Queen Blanche," and his "choice in symbols was as masculine as that of Blanche was feminine," Blanche, in her "Rose of

France" seems to identify the Virgin's relationship to Christ with her own relationship to her young son. This window "shows in its centre the Virgin in her majesty, seated, crowned, holding the sceptre with her right hand, while her left supports the infant Christ-King on her knees; which shows that she, too, is acting as regent for her Son."²⁶

Just as the architecture of Mont-Saint-Michel embodying the masculine spirit of the eleventh century had its counterpart in literature in La Chanson de Roland, so the architecture of Chartres, embodying the feminine spirit of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries found its counterpart in the courtly literature of the time. In courtly literature Woman is always exalted; she is charming but Adams was "less interested in her charm than her power." He noted that almost all of the Romans are "singularly pure and refined"; the ladies inspiring them evidently "frowned on coarseness and allowed no license." The power of these women "must have been great for the best Romans are as free from grossness as the 'Chanson de Roland' or the church glass, or the illustrations in the manuscript." In the works themselves, the heroine is depicted always as the more intelligent of the two lovers; she "always ...appears as the practical guide; the one who keeps her head even in love." Whether she was good or evil "she was always the stronger force." Surprisingly, this superior strength in woman was found in a period in which, Adams held, "men were at their strongest."²⁷

The end of this age in literature may be found in the Roman de la Rose of William Lorris "which dates from the death of Queen Blanche and of all good things, about 1250." In 1300 "Jean de Meung added 1800 lines...." While the Roman of William Lorris presented the Rose as the "feminine ideal of beauty, intelligence, purity, or grace--always

culminating in the Virgin," in the short half century (1250-1300) "[between this Roman and the Roman of Jean de Meung] the Woman and the Rose became bankrupt."

Satire took the place of worship. Man, with his usual monkey-like malice, took pleasure in pulling down what he had built up. The Frenchman had made what he called 'fausse route.' William of Lorris was first to see it, and saw it, with more sadness and less bitterness than Villon showed; he won immortality by telling how he and the thirteenth century in him, and lost himself in pursuing his Rose, and how he had lost the Rose, too, waking up at last to the dull memory of pain and sorrow and death, that 'tout porrist.'²⁸

Having discussed the periods of the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant, Adams turned to the Church Intellectual. Where he used the cathedrals of Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres to represent the earlier periods, here he used a philosophical work, the Summa Theologiae of Saint Thomas Aquinas. Michael Colacurcio notes that in this period "a precipitous decline is already sadly in evidence." The Church Triumphant of 1150 to 1250 A.D. was given the great bulk of the book as it marked the period of highest unity; the Church Militant of the eleventh century, like the Trinity, was incomplete without the Virgin and the Church Intellectual marked the period, beginning about 1250, when the unity of the Church Triumphant began to disintegrate and "when masculine energy again assert[ed] itself, this time as logic."²⁹

The first logician marking the beginning of the Church Intellectual was Abelard who may be dismissed with Adams' comment that his lover, Heloise, "was by French standards, worth at least a dozen Abelards." In the chapter entitled "Abelard," Adams discussed the beginnings of Scholasticism. In the next chapter, "The Mystics," he recorded the reactions of many medieval minds against the corrosive logic of Abelard with some sympathy. The Council of Sens, guided by Saint Bernard,

asserted that the effort to reach God by reason "was futile and likely to be mischievous." Saint Francis unequivocally stated that "Satan was logic." The Abbaye-de-Saint-Victor took it as understood that:

In essence, religion was love: in no case was it logic. Reason can reach nothing except through the senses; God, by essence, cannot be reached through the senses; if He is to be known at all, He must be known by contact of spirit with spirit, essence with essence; directly; by emotion; by ecstasy, by absorption of our existence in His; by substitution of His spirit for ours.

Adams noted that this result was "reaffirmed by Pascal" but that prior to his writing Saint Francis, Saint Bernard, and the Virgin had asserted it.

The Virgin, indeed, made all easy, for it was little enough she cared for reason or logic. She cared for her baby, a simple matter, which any woman could do and understand. The Trinity had its source in her--totius Trinitatis nobile Triclinium [sic]--and she was maternity. She was also poetry and art. In the bankruptcy of reason, she alone was real.³⁰

In the final chapter, "Saint Thomas Aquinas," Adams noted that the Church Intellectual soon reached an extreme "excessively modern, scientific, and technical" and that Aquinas' philosophy "differed little from a system of dynamics as modern as the dynamo." It appears from Adams' later works that he believed that history maintained the direction it had taken with the age of logic. Unity was achieved only by intuitive faith; after the passing of the age of faith into the age of logic, history maintained its direction to arrive at the age of scientific rationalism where unity eventually disintegrated.

Unity turned itself into complexity, multiplicity, variety, and even contradiction. All experience, human and divine, assured man in the thirteenth century that the lines of the Universe converged. How was he to know that these lines came in every conceivable and inconceivable direction and that at least half of them seemed to diverge from any imaginable centre of unity.³¹

The highest point of unity, then, was the age of the Virgin's

greatest influence, 1150 to 1250 A.D., the age of the Transitional Church, or Church Triumphant.

The Transition is the equilibrium between the love of God--which is faith--and the logic of God--which is reason; between the round arch and the pointed. One may not be sure which pleases most, but one need not be harsh toward people who think that the moment of balance is exquisite.

Unity belonged to the twelfth century, "the century of faith and simplicity; not to the mathematical certainties of Descartes and Leibnitz and Newton, nor to the mathematical abstraction of Spinoza."¹³²

Later in "A Letter to American Teachers of History," Adams would assert that thought comes only with the inhibition of activity and must be regarded as merely "a more or less degraded Act--an enfeebled function of Will." Instinct or intuition, which he had attributed to the female, he would attempt to prove superior to reason and the source of the faint glimmering of our modern aesthetic sensibilities and the great artistic works of the thirteenth century.¹³³

FOOTNOTES

- ¹Henry Adams, Education of Henry Adams (New York, c. 1931), p. 435.
- ²Henry Adams, Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres (Boston and New York, c. 1933), pp. 1-9.
- ³Ibid., pp. 21-22.
- ⁴Ibid., pp. 33-34.
- ⁵Ibid., pp. 44, 46, 50.
- ⁶Ibid., pp. 89-91, 93.
- ⁷Ibid., pp. 91-92.
- ⁸Ibid., pp. 87-88, 97-98, 98-99, 103.
- ⁹Ibid., p. 70.
- ¹⁰Ibid., pp. 71-72.
- ¹¹Ibid., pp. 76, 82-83.
- ¹²Ibid., pp. 110, 143, 144-145.
- ¹³Ibid., pp. 100-101, 174.
- ¹⁴Ibid., pp. 179-182.
- ¹⁵Ibid., pp. 103, 145-147.
- ¹⁶Ibid., p. 250.
- ¹⁷Ibid., pp. 252-255.
- ¹⁸Ibid., pp. 256-257, 271-273.
- ¹⁹Ibid., p. 263.
- ²⁰Ibid., pp. 257-258, 263.
- ²¹Ibid., pp. 259-260.
- ²²Ibid., pp. 197-198.

²³Ibid., pp. 200, 208-211.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 212, 216.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 222-224, 199.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 183-187.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 240, 244-245.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 246, 248.

²⁹"The Dynamo and the Angelic Doctor: The Bias of Henry Adams' Medievalism," American Quarterly, XVII (Winter 1965), p. 706.

³⁰Chartres, pp. 284, 316, 321-322, 331.

³¹Education, pp. 374-375.

³²Ibid., pp. 317, 319.

³³Degradation of the Democratic Dogma (New York, 1920), pp. 203, 229-230.

CHAPTER V

A LETTER TO AMERICAN TEACHERS OF HISTORY

What Henry Adams assumed to be the scientific basis of his belief in the superiority of instinct or intuition over reason can best be discerned in his "A Letter to American Teachers of History" (1910) which was included, along with a letter, "The Tendency of History" (1894), and "The Rule of Phase Applied to History" (1909), in a volume entitled Degradation of the Democratic Dogma (1919), assembled and prefaced by Adams' younger brother, Brooks Adams. In this essay Adams studied what he perceived as the problems to a would-be scientific historian posed by Kelvin's second law of thermodynamics and Darwin's theory of evolution.

After the first law of thermodynamics or the law of the conservation of energy had "governed physical science for three hundred years," a new law of dynamics succeeded it in 1850. This second law of thermodynamics went on to say that "while the sum of energy in the universe might remain constant, granting that the universe was a closed box from which nothing could escape,--the higher energies tended always to fall lower, and that this process had no known limit." A statement of this law, also called the law of dissipation and the law of entropy was quoted by Adams from Thomson's paper "On the Universal Tendency in Nature to the Dissipation of Mechanical Energy":

1. There is at present in the material world a universal tendency to the dissipation of mechanical energy.
2. Any restoration of mechanical energy, without more than

an equivalent of dissipation, is impossible in inanimate material processes, and is probably never effected by means of organized matter, either endowed with vegetable life or subjected to the will of an animated creature.

3. Within a finite period of time past, the earth must have been, and within a finite period of time to come, the earth must again be, unfit for the habitation of man as at present constituted, unless operations have been, or are to be performed, which are impossible under the laws to which the known operations going on at present in the material world are subject.¹

Neither creation nor annihilation was allowed in a universe under the law of conservation. Under the new law, however, both appeared implicit. Some "primal force" was implied by the law which "could never be detected--much less recovered--and annihilation was inevitable." If such a situation exists, what are the implications to organic life? Is vital energy or social energy independent of mechanical law? Adams looked to Tyndall for an answer to the problem of the nature of life. Tyndall saw life as a part of the solar energy which falls on the earth "reappear[ing] by some mysterious process...in the singular form of intensity known as Vital Energy and disappear[ing] by a sudden and violent change of phase known as death." An analogy had been made between heat and vital energy by Thomson and was increasingly insisted on by other physicists. It appeared to Adams that science was reaching the conclusion that just as mechanical energy and individual vital energy is dispersed, so vital energy as a whole would eventually disappear.²

The presentation of the second law of thermo-dynamics in Thomson's paper was followed seven years later by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. This law apparently "involved a contradiction...to both the laws of thermo-dynamics." While Darwin never asserted that organic life had "advanced or risen to higher powers," he and his followers did assert that "the inhabitants of the world, at each successive period in

its history, have beaten their predecessors in the race for life, and are, in so far, higher in the scale." The problem involved in this theory is: If evolution is upward, what is "the source or the nature of the numerous energies implied in the process of elevation?" No energy is known "beyond that of uniform solar heat," and it must be taken "for granted [that] the power of all organisms to rise in potential [comes] from its absorption."³

Therefore, towards the end of the nineteenth century, there were three "contradictory laws of energy in force.

1. The Law of Conservation, that nothing could be added, and nothing lost, in the sum of energy.
2. The Law of Dissipation, that nothing could be added but that Intensity must always be lost.
3. The Law of Evolution, that Vital Energy could be added and raised indefinitely in potential, without the smallest apparent compensation.

Although the Darwinists insisted that the law of evolution contradicted the law of dissipation, the physicists were adamant in insisting that it applies to all vital processes even more rigidly than to mechanical.

Adams commented,

Animal energies accent and emphasize the law of physics that nature, always and everywhere tends to an equilibrium by levelling its intensities. Mechanical energies admit apparent exception, like gravitation, but animal energies admit none. All grow old and die. This is the teaching of physics....For human purposes, whatever does work is a form of energy, and since historians exist only to recount and sum up the work that society has done,...they will, if they obey the physical law, hold that society does work by degrading its energies. On the other hand, if the historian follows Haeckel and the evolutionists, he should hold that vital energy by raising itself to higher potentials, without apparent compensation, has accomplished its work in defiance of both the laws of thermodynamics.⁴

While Darwin's theory was more popular, it was not necessarily the more valid. The validity of the second law of thermodynamics was

established in every field except history which did not entirely escape. Much of the success of Darwin's theory was the result of Sir Charles Lyell's doctrine of uniformity. Sir Charles' conservative evolution rested on the assumption of "an infinite series of imperceptible steps, continuous under uniform conditions since the earliest trace of organic life, and always tending upwards to higher intensities--tensions,--potentials,--according to the growing complexity of the organism." However, scientific research soon cast doubt on the optimistic new creed. The research done by Heer on arctic flora and Saporta's History of the World of Plants brought evidence against the law of uniformity and seemed "to substitute a sweeping law of catastrophe." It appeared from the effect on plant life, that "during the whole period since the eocene, the temperature of the planet had steadily declined." The inference which followed this observation was: "We recognize from this point of view as from others, that the world was once young; then adolescent, that it has even passed the age of maturity,--man has come late, when a beginning of physical decadence had struck the globe, his domain." This evidence contradicted the "theory of upward evolution and confirmed the second law of thermodynamics." Geology, hitherto dominated by the law of evolution, was now coming under the scope of the second law of thermodynamics.⁵

Adams, going on the observations of Lapparent on the climactic "energy of vegetable growth" in the carboniferous period and the "equally astonishing animal growth" of the following miocene period, placed the beginning of the decline of the world's vital energies at the end of those periods. This decline, Adams asserted, continued until the appearance of man during the glacial epoch; therefore, organic geology as

well as inorganic confirmed the second law of thermodynamics.⁶

If degradation is true of all the world's energies--organic as well as inorganic, Adams believed that human history must be seen in this light also. Support came from the anthropologists from whom Adams found that man is to some extent degraded from the other animals. Man's inferior teeth and sense of smell were cited as signs of his decadence. Adams also cited evidence that man's brain differs only slightly from those of higher monkeys, that the brains of some mammals have a higher degree of convolution than that of man's. He went on to note that while the brain of man's one marked development lay in increased weight, one can make no definite correlation between weight and instinct or reason. Adams even cited some anthropologists who asserted that intelligence is a sign of decadence and who linked it with decreased fertility and physical vigor. Man, he found, is not superior, but only more specialized than other animals.⁷

To demonstrate how the implications of the theory of degradation were imminent at the present time, Adams cited prophecies that the "sun is ready to condense at any moment causing another violent disequilibrium [referring to glacial epochs], to be followed by another great outburst and waste of its expiring heat. Not only was the degradation of physical energies being prophesied; proof was being given of the degradation of organic energy. Adams noted European statistics on the "falling off of the birth rate; decline of rural population;--lowering of army standards;--multiplication of suicides;--increase of insanity or idiocy,--of cancer, of tuberculosis;--signs of nervous exhaustion, --of enfeebled vitality,--'habits' of alcoholism and drugs,--failure of eyesight in the young," as symptomatic of accelerated deterioration and

degradation of vital or social energies. Along with these signs, Adams noted what sociologists considered the most serious symptom, "the extension of philosophical schools founded on supposed failure of society."⁸

Although history had from its beginning regarded mind as the highest point reached by nature, even mind is not allowed by the physicists as a proof of progress. Adams termed reason "only another phase of an energy earlier known as instinct or intuition." Both instinct and reason are manifestations of the will: instinct is the greater of the two; reason is a degradation from instinct. Adams quoted Schopenhauer who stated in The World as Will and Idea "that all energy in nature, latent or active, is identical with Will." Schopenhauer reversed the previous order in which "the concept of Will was included in the concept of force...on the ground that the unknown should be referred to the known, and that therefore the whole universe of energy, known or unknown, of whatever intensity or volume should be brought into the category of intuition." This theory held the Will to be the "source of variation" in organic life. Life, therefore, which "has lost the power of variation should be regarded as an example of enfeebled energy falling under the second law of thermo-dynamics." Man, with his reason, was the most complex creature wrought by evolution and, therefore, was the creature least capable of further change. This logic, then, showed man to be the most degraded of creatures. Man "as an energy...must be treated as a weakened Will--an enfeebled vitality--a degraded potential." Man's highest will-power had already been given in the "act of transforming himself from a hypothetical eocene lemur...into a man." Reason, supposedly the highest pinnacle achieved by organic life, is shown by Adams' logic to be the most degraded, "a reflective, hesitating,

relatively passive stage." But this was not the end; progressive degradation was to follow.⁹

The only possible way to prove that mind was not subject to the second law of thermo-dynamics was to prove its independence from physical law in its entirety. However, turning to the psychologists, Oswald and Loeb, Adams found from Oswald that "the motion of the 'mind' was more or less a remote consequence of tropism, or a form of motion brought about by exterior forces." Will, itself, lacks independence being termed by Loeb a form of "mechanical attraction." Adams noted that if thought may be compared with electricity, it would seem that it would "fall under the second law of thermo-dynamics as one of the energies which most easily degrades itself." He stated that the majority of physiologists had accepted these same arguments and have come to regard Thought as "a more or less degraded Act--an enfeebled function of Will." Adams quoted Lalande from his volume of "Dissolution" who stated that "Thought is the refraining from speech or action." In short, action and speech are prior in nature to thought; thought occurs when some activity is inhibited. Thought, then, is more passive than instinct. The metaphysician, Henri Bergson, goes farther than Lalande on the point of reason and instinct. Adams quoted from "L'Evolution Creative":

From our point of view, life appears globally as an immense wave which starts from a centre to propagate itself outwards, and which is arrested at almost every point of its circumference, and is converted into oscillation without advance; at one point alone, it has forced the obstacle, and impulse has passed on freely. This liberty is registered in the form of man. Everywhere except with man, consciousness has been brought to a stop; with man alone it has pursued its road.... In doing so...it has been obliged to renounce...some precious properties. Consciousness, in man, is chiefly intelligence. It might have been...intuition too....Another evolution might have led to a humanity, either still more intelligent, or more intuitive. In reality, in the humanity of which we take

part, intuition is almost completely sacrificed to intelligence....Intuition is still there, but vague, and especially discontinuous.

Adams concluded from the evidence given that since all the sciences except history accept instinct rather than thought as "the potential of Vital Energy" and accept man's great art as "the last traces of an instinct now wholly dead or dying," history must now submit to the duty of recording society's "mechanical dissolution."¹⁰

The previous argument is submitted in the first portion of the essay, entitled "Problems"; in the portion entitled "Solutions," Adams discussed the possibilities of a compromise between the evolutionists and the degradationists. Adams pointed out that the evolutionist, "if he is to remain evolutionist,...is forced to assert...the concession of two points:--"

1. That organic life has the exclusive power of economizing nature's waste.
2. That man alone enjoys the supernatural power of consciously reversing nature's process by raising her dissipated energies, including his own, to higher intensities.

The physicist, however, would be unable to concede either of these points. He would "admit that some of the lower forms of life [such as the honey-bee] are economists," but he would point out that inorganic matter is much more economical--the ocean and the atmosphere storing heat, minerals storing heat, light, and electricity, the earth and the sun storing an infinite amount of energy, etc. In fact, "matter indeed, is energy itself, and its economies first made organic life possible by thus correcting nature's tendency to waste." Nor can the physicist "admit that man alone enjoys the supernatural power of consciously reversing nature's processes, and of restoring her dissipated energies to their lost intensity." Instead man's sole function seems to be the

dissipation of energy, and this dissipation is much greater than the small amount of energy saved by other forms of life. Adams cited man's rapid utilization of coal, coal oil, gas, peat, wood, zinc and other combustible metals and oxygen. Further, he cited the waste caused by man's wars and chief pleasures such as "drinking alcohol [and] illuminating cities." The small amount of energy that man "captures from the sun, directly or indirectly, as heat-rays, or water-power, or wind-power, is trifling" when it is compared to the immense amount of energy wasted by man.¹¹

Adams believed that the evolutionist would have to admit the truth of these observations, but that he would assert that "the enormous fall of potential which [man] obtained from all this combustion was utilized or converted by him and reappeared in the intenser form of energy called Thought." However, "if Thought were actually a result of transforming energy into one of a higher potential, it must still be equally subject to the laws which governed those energies, and could not be an independent or supernatural force." Adams then commented on the evolutionists' attempt to evade the necessity of the subjection of thought to the second law of thermodynamics.

The mind either was an independent energy, or it was not. If evolutionists conceded at the outset that it was not, then the mere figure mattered nothing; the dispute ended of itself, and the law of thermodynamics went into operation. If on the contrary, the evolutionists meant to insist on independence, they would gain little or nothing by proving a power to prolong life--animal, vegetable, or physical--by aggregation or by concentration; they merely changed the numerical value of the variable called Time.¹²

However, the real desire of the evolutionists, Adams noted, was "to increase not Time but Tension." They wanted to raise the level of society's Vital Energy not just maintain it, but the physicists would

maintain that while "Vital Energy is not mere attraction or cohesion or elasticity,...it is limited by the same laws." If the evolutionist still insisted "upon his mind being the highest possible intensity of energy on account of its consciousness," the physicist might point out that "the Psychologists have already told you that Consciousness is only a phase in the decline of vital energy--a stage of weakening will." The physicists would admit the intensity of Will but maintain that it is stronger "in the Scarab or Scorpion where it is unconscious than in Monkey or Man where it is conscious." They would insist that the "highest intensities of nature, such as produced the atom and the molecule, were precisely the earliest on our scale, and that as it was with the physical energies, so it was with the Vital Energies."¹³

The physicists would note that while "Paleontologists talk only of specialization, as though the more elaborate type were the higher in intensity," "the opposite is more likely to be true." Proof has been found that

after fifty million years of conditions which made life impossible except under water, these anarchic forces [primitive Vital Energy] dissipated themselves so far as to settle into an equilibrium which showed itself on land in the wild exuberance of the carboniferous forests, and which then developed into the wilder exuberance of the Eocene animals.

The fact that this exuberance ended is the result of the overthrowal of this equilibrium by "the steady dissipation of energy." Darwinists had trouble explaining "within a uniformitarian schedule these violent leaps in the energy of evolution." Adams cited the lack of evolution of the eye, the "decline of Tertiary quadrepeds" and the "universal stunting of animal life in recent times" as other obstacles to a theory of ascendant evolution. The evolutionist would require the physicist "under some

mysterious penalty to make...an exception in favor of man" which he refused to do. The physicist would explain that "in that which we do know, we can see nothing supernatural in action." "Infinite complication we admit, but no ultimate contradiction. Sooner or later every apparent exception, whether man or radium, tends to fall within the domain of physics."¹⁴

According to Adams, reason, being "the last in time," is therefore "the lowest in tension." "Religious and artistic emotion" was the form that human energy took during its most intense phase. However, human energy since the time of the crusades and Gothic churches, "has lost intensity and continues to lose it with accelerated rapidity, as the Church proves." The "faculty for artistic expression" is an instinct man probably "inherited from an earlier, more gifted animal," but "he inherited next to nothing" of creative energy. The only dominant function he possesses is "that of accelerating the operation of the second law of thermodynamics." For this function the reason is marvelously adapted. Since the beginning of the industrial era, Adams noted, "man's progress in mental energy...[had been] measured by his capture of physical forces." Supporters of the law of degradation would reverse this measure. They would observe that mechanical energy is often regarded as "a weakener of nervous energy whenever it gets control as in manufacturing towns, [or] that great masses of people under uniform conditions tend to a mechanical uniformity of mind, as in agricultural districts." So it would appear that every gain in power has been at the expense of man's vitality.¹⁵

Adams pointed out that one of the underlying motives of science appears to be a desire for unity, a desire to find one essential cause.

Science regards the admission of an act of creation as an act of "logical suicide." A theory of "mental enfeeblement" is to be preferred over such an admission. Man's need for unity "gives the degradationist an artificial and...unfair advantage." Convenience is a paramount value in science; when choosing between a variety of figures or theories, the scientist picks the one which is most convenient. Unity's convenience "is beyond question and convenience overrides morals as well as money, when a vast majority of minds, educated or not, are invited to live in a complex of anarchical energies, with only the privilege of acting as chief anarchists." Therefore, when faced with a decision between lack of unity and the universal application of the second law of thermodynamics, the mind necessarily chooses the latter. However, although man's "primitive instinct" for unity forces his acceptance of the law of degradation, this law's "fatal facility in accounting for Reason" is that feature "most repulsive to instinct."

All organisms would tend to develop nervous systems when dynamically ill-nourished. As the Drosera is represented to have taken to a diet of insects when it could no longer nourish itself sufficiently as a vegetable,...so the vital energy which had developed in the exuberance of physical quantity... would turn itself, as its conditions were impoverished into those "connecting, or as they are technically called, association-fibres, which make nerve-currents work together as they could not without being thus associated." Thought then appears in nature as an arrested,--in other words, as a degraded,--physical action. The theory is convenient and convenience makes law, at least in the laboratory.¹⁶

Next Adams enlisted history to demonstrate man's degradation.

Adams believed that modern art shows a decline from ancient art in intensity of energy. If the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns were still existent, it would, Adams believed, most likely be decided in favor of the ancients. Also under the thousand years of religious domination, teachers "were obliged to condemn the human race,--with rare

exceptions, due only to the pity of God--to eternal degradation following the near end of the world." "Standards of excellence" have remained "among the Greeks, Romans, or the Jews" in our universities. Artists consider modern life decadent. Universities, through astronomers, geologists, and physicists, announce the approaching end of the world, and through their anthropologists, "the rapid exhaustion of the race." Adams believed that the physicist-historian would be forced to accept the view of M. Gustave le Bon who wrote of the tendency of society to deteriorate from unity to "an agglomeration of individuals without cohesion, still held together for a time by its tradition and institutions." This individuals displayed "the surest symptom of decadence" which is "the general enfeeblement of characters."¹⁷

Now, Adams gave the physicist's final concession to the evolutionist. He quoted from M. Bernhard Brunhes' "Degradation":

From our point of view the principle of Degradation of energy would prove nothing against the fact of Evolution. The progressive transformation of species, the realization of more perfect organisms, contain nothing contrary to the idea of the constant loss of useful energy. Only the vast and grandiose conceptions of imaginative philosophers who erect into an absolute principle the law of "universal progress," could no longer hold against one of the most fundamental ideal that physics reveals to us. On the one side, therefore, the world wears out; on another side the appearance on earth of living beings more and more elevated and,--in a slightly different order of ideas,--the development of civilization in a human society, undoubtedly give the impression of a progress and a gain.

Therefore, Adams found that the only compromise possible is the concession that an "impression of progress" or "gain" is achieved through "an expression of Order due to the leveling of energy; but that the impression of Order is an illusion consequent on the dissolution of the higher Order which had supplied, by lowering its inequalities, all the useful energies that caused progress." "The reality behind the illusion is,

therefore, absence of the power to do useful work--or what man knows in his finite sensibilities as death."¹⁸

Finally, Adams cited the conclusions reached by many leading social scientists and historians that society is an organism of which man "exists only as a passing representative...without rights or functions except what it imposes." If society is to be regarded as an organism, it must also be regarded as "subject to the Degradation of Energy." So we find that the law of thermodynamics, "instead of being a mere convenience in treatment,...is very rapidly becoming a dogma of absolute truth." At one time "two systems of education could exist side by side for centuries,..but [now] the universe has been terribly narrowed by thermodynamics."¹⁹

Adams believed that the time had come when historians, to be effective, must find "some common formula or figure to serve their students as a working model for their study of the vital energies [in] accord with the figures or formulas used by the department of physic and mechanics."²⁰ A good example of such a formula may be found in Adams' own "Rule of Phase Applied to History," written prior to "A Letter to American Teachers of History" but appended by his brother, Brooks Adams to the end of this essay. In the "Rule of Phase Applied to History," Adams took Willard Gibbs Rule of Phase, a theory in physics that refined and extended the second law of thermodynamics, and discussed the possibility of its application to Thought, which in Adams' conception of the universe was merely a more diffuse form of matter similar to electricity. Whereas Gibbs' Rule of Phase concerned different stages of equilibrium in material substances, Adams wished to discover different phases in the history of Thought. This same theory is also discussed in

the Education.

Several times in "A Letter to American Teachers of History," Adams alluded to the paradox of his conclusions. At the end of that part of the essay entitled "Problems" Adams noted the following:

Intellect should bear the same relation to Instinct that the sun bears to a gaseous nebula, and hitherto in human history it has asserted this relation without a doubt of its self-evident truth. The assertion has led to physical violence and intellectual extravagance without limit, so that history shows man as alternately insane with his own pride of intellect, and shuddering with horror at its bloody consequences; but the remains of primitive instinct taught society that it could not abandon its claim to be, or to represent, a supernatural and independent energy, without, by the same act, admitting and demonstrating its progressive enfeeblement of will. If Intellect led to such an abdication, it proved the universal truth of the second thermodynamic law.

Later in "Solutions" Adams commented again on the opposition of instinct to science.

The contradiction between science and instinct is so radical that, though science should prove twenty times over, by every method of demonstration known to it, that man is a thermodynamic mechanism, instinct would reject the proof, and whenever it should be convinced, it would have to die.

According to Adams, science hails instinct as superior to reason, but instinct rejects the findings of science while reason upholds them. Intuition, opposed to the observations of science, holds that society should not "abandon its claim to be, or to represent, a supernatural and independent energy," and that it should reject science's assertion that man is a thermodynamic mechanism. Another part of the paradox is that man, in arriving at that position through reason at which he can recognize his degradation, proves his degradation. If man's will were stronger, he would never recognize science's claim. Adams, according to his own observation, was proving his own energy was degraded by succumbing to and urging his fellow historians to succumb to the arguments of

science and reason rather than to those of instinct.²¹

In his earlier works we have seen that Adams alluded to the superior power of women--a power gained from instinct; this power is further shown, through most of the works discussed, to have decreased with time. "A Letter to American Teachers of History" allows us to see somewhat more clearly the scientific thought behind his belief in the force of instinct and the lack of force in reason. One should remember in this context the creative energy shown to be manifested during the height of the Virgin's power in the Chartres and the subsequent fall of energy during the period of the church philosophers. One should further bear in mind the depiction in the Education of twentieth century society's lack of unity and force due to its one-minded adherence to science and its refusal to recognize the power of woman and instinct. Finally one should not forget the expression in the Education of the fear that woman herself, who had previously failed to evolve, like some primitive forms of life, was now showing signs of becoming, like man, an adherent of logic rather than instinct.

In his novels, Democracy and Esther, Adams treated two female protagonists; critics have understood both novels, particularly Esther, to be portraying instinctual women, like those depicted in the "Primitive Rights of Women," Tahiti, and Chartres, placed in an adversely modern twentieth century society in which they are thwarted and frustrated. I hope, through my discussions of these several works of Adams', to have laid the groundwork for a demonstration that these protagonists are in fact anti-instinctual--that they have succumbed to the degradation described in "A Letter to American Teachers of History," and are similar to the twentieth century American woman described in the Education.

FOOTNOTES

¹Henry Adams, The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma (New York, 1920), pp. 140-142.

²Ibid., pp. 144-149.

³Ibid., pp. 152-154.

⁴Ibid., pp. 154-156.

⁵Ibid., pp. 158-162.

⁶Ibid., pp. 167-168.

⁷Ibid., pp. 174-177.

⁸Ibid., pp. 180, 186-188.

⁹Ibid., pp. 192-195.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 197-199, 203-205.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 213-218.

¹²Ibid., pp. 219-222.

¹³Ibid., pp. 222-224.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 224-229.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 229-236.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 240-243.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 244-247, 252-253.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 254-257.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 258-261.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 261-263.

²¹Ibid., pp. 206-207, 230-231.

CHAPTER VI

DEMOCRACY

Democracy, anonymously published in 1880, has been variously treated by critics; however, while some critics have recognized its heroine, Madeleine Lee, to be aggressive and unfeminine, none have linked her to the twentieth century American woman described in the Education, and some have even found her to be a prototype of the Virgin of Chartres.

There are actually two qualities Madeleine Lee possessed that could possibly relate her to Adams' thirteenth century woman and this primitive woman: these are her desire for power and her intuitive grasp of moral truths. The desire for power was a major motivation for Madeleine throughout the novel, although she was not always consciously aware of it and this is a desire she shared with the Virgin of Chartres, the three queens, and the women of "Primitive Rights of Woman," and Tahiti. The Virgin of Chartres showed her instinct for power in her overthrowal of the Trinity as the object of prime importance in the life and worship of the time, and the three queens showed theirs in their domination of their sons and husbands and their foundation of the cult of courtly love which exalted woman and set her up as the maker of laws. In "Primitive Rights of Women," and Tahiti, primitive women are also shown to have enjoyed a large amount of power.

Madeleine was depicted as a person attracted by power at the beginning of the novel:

She wanted to see with her own eyes the action of primary forces; to touch with her own hand the massive machinery of society; to measure with her own hand the capacity of motive power.

Religion failed to offer her any insight into power--"A thousand churches were doing their best and she could see no chance for a new faith of which she was to be inspired priestess"; therefore, she turned to the state, and Silas P. Ratcliffe, a politician. It is interesting to note that the church and state were the two spheres in which Adams asserted that woman held sway in the thirteenth century. While in the thirteenth century woman's instinct for power was fulfilled in both church and state, in Democracy's twentieth century society, woman is thwarted in both areas. Further distinction must be drawn between the thirteenth century and primitive woman's frank enjoyment of their power and Madeleine's feelings of guilt over her desire for power. Having rationalized her earlier decision to accept Ratcliffe as merely a plan she had devised to remove herself as a barrier between Sybil and Carrington, Madeleine came to the guilty realization that her real reason was "ambition, thirst for power, restless eagerness to meddle in what did not concern her, blind longing to escape from the torture of watching other women with full lives and satisfied instincts while her own was hungry and sad."¹

The major resemblance Madeleine bears to primitive and thirteenth century woman may be seen in her moral sense which "is a matter of feeling rather than of reason." This important quality is rendered ineffectual, however, by Madeleine's rejection of Ratcliffe. The nature of her grasp of moral truths must be derived from the plot; therefore, I will briefly summarize and comment on some of the major events of the story:

John Carrington, an idealistic but disillusioned friend of Madeleine's, had a knowledge of corruption in Ratcliffe's past and in a conversation in Madeleine's presence, he pressed Ratcliffe for a statement about it. Ratcliffe referred to the matter as one of subordination of means to end. It appeared that Illinois would be "carried by the peace party, by fraud...Had Illinois been lost then,...the Presidential election [would have been lost], and with it probably the Union. At any rate the fate of the war was to depend on the result." Since Ratcliffe at that time was governor of the state, he tampered with the election returns. That his action was approved by the people of the state was proven, Ratcliffe believed, by the fact that he was now a senator. Mrs. Lee did not verbally express any disapproval. The author commented,

The man who has committed a murder for his country is a patriot and not an assassin, even when he receives a seat in the Senate as his share of the plunder. Women cannot be expected to go behind the motives of that patriot who saves his country and his election in times of revolution.²

The acceptance of Ratcliffe's crime by Mrs. Lee may be related to the Virgin's feminine readiness to overlook sin in man and her "trampling] on conventions," differentiating her from the rigid masculine Trinity which was able only to deal strict justice. Adams' Mary was a "power above law or above the contorted mass of ignorance and obscurity bearing the name of law."³ This particular act of Ratcliffe's appeared instinctively to Madeleine as having a good cause and her feminine nature did not demand a strict adherence to law.

Later Carrington revealed to Madeleine in a letter that Ratcliffe had been engaged in some political corruption not for the state, but for his own personal enrichment. When Ratcliffe came to get her answer to a proposal of marriage, Madeleine refused but begged off telling him her

reason. He would not be refused, so Mrs. Lee showed Carrington's letter to him. Ratcliffe told her that he was forced to the position he took by the interests of his party and that he did not see any of the money supposedly paid him as a bribe as it probably went into the campaign fund of the party. Mrs. Lee was interested because of what she saw as the exposure of the disease of politics and she was amused by a request made by Ratcliffe that she aid him in purifying politics. She came to the conclusion "that he talked about virtue and vice as a man who is color-blind talks about red and green. He did not see them as she saw them and if left to choose for himself, he would have nothing to guide him." Ratcliffe reminded her of his other political crime of which she voiced no disapproval and made the comment, "In comparison to it, this is a trifle." When pushed to an answer, Mrs. Lee replied,

I do not want to argue this question. Perhaps on my side there is a matter of feeling rather than of reason, but the truth is only too evident to me that I am not fitted for politics....I can do nothing sillier than to suppose myself competent to reform anything. The idea of my purifying politics is absurd.

Ratcliffe pleaded,

If all true men and women were to take the tone you have taken our government would soon perish. If you consent to share my career, I do not deny that you may find it less satisfying than I hope, but you will lead a mere death in life if you place yourself like a saint on a solitary column.

After Ratcliffe broke down into an impassioned plea and attempted to seize her hand, Madeleine drew back "as though he were a reptile" and dismissed him.⁴

The "matter of feeling" Madeleine referred to in the quotation above rings true; Madeleine did intuitively grasp moral truths in a manner denied to Ratcliffe. This understanding through feeling rather than reason can be characterized as feminine in the manner of the Virgin

of Chartres, but not the subsequent rejection of Ratcliffe on these grounds. In speaking of Mary's mercy, Adams wrote,

Everyone else [except the saints] was criminal and men differed so little in degree of sin that in Mary's eyes all were subjects for her pity and help.⁵

Ratcliffe definitely needed help; Madeleine herself came to that conclusion when she noted that "if left to choose for himself, he would have nothing to guide him." In rejecting Ratcliffe, Madeleine rejected the feminine role of wife and mother, the role in which she could have influenced society to the good. Adams' thirteenth century and primitive women who possessed great power were not independent or emancipated women; the Virgin was a wife and mother as were the three queens and Arii Taimai. The thirteenth century woman's influence was wielded largely through her family; the Virgin sought mercy for her subjects through the authority of her son, and the three queens wielded power through their influence over their husbands and sons. The primitive women of "Primitive Rights of Women" and Tahiti also enjoyed their power because of their role in the family--primarily that of mother. While the Dynamo and the Virgin are powers at opposite poles from one another--the dynamo representing the amoral energy of the machine and the Virgin the fecund energy of woman--an analogy may be drawn between them because of their mutual need to be harnessed to something else to create work or get anything done. As Ratcliffe warned Madeleine would probably lead a mere "death in life" in the sense that she would be ineffectual--her moral insight would be wasted.

Woman's disappearance from politics and, therefore, from history was noted in an interesting passage in Democracy:

She [Mrs. Lee] made a little daily task for herself of reading

in succession the lives and letters of the American Presidents and of their wives when she could find that there was a trace of the latter's existence.⁶

This passage is reminiscent of others in the Education:

The study of history is useful to the historian by teaching him his ignorance of women and the mass of this ignorance crushed one who is familiar enough with what are called historical sources to realize how few women have ever been known.⁷

Later he wrote,

...American history mentioned hardly the name of a woman, while English history handled them as timidly as though they were a new and undescribed species....⁸

Adams believed that woman should have a correcting influence in government; therefore, he viewed the Middle Ages nostalgically as a time of great feminine influence. In his letters he expressed a desire that women would stop what he saw as the ever accelerating downward progress of modern American society. This desire is in some opposition to Madeleine's remarks on the vanity and ridiculousness of the idea that she, a woman, should purify politics. In a letter to Henry James, 29th of May, 1913, he wrote,

...I am sorry to say that men are no good. They are wretched imbeciles in carrying their fellows. Only women are worth cultivating and I am ready to hand over the universe to them if they want it....⁹

In a letter to Margaret Chandler in 1905, he expressed disappointment in modern woman because of her inability to play an active role in society:

...I admit that the American woman is a failure; that she has held nothing together, neither State nor Church, not Society nor Family. She is more of a failure when she tries a mission than she is when she doesn't....The enormous bigness and complexity of the problem crushes us all....Sometimes, I admit, it is the man's fault.¹⁰

Instinctual or intuitive knowledge seems to play some part in Madeleine Lee's decisions and it is here, I believe, most critics go

awry in their treatment of her. Instinct or intuition is an attribute of Adams' Virgin of Chartres; therefore, on noting Madeleine's use, at times, of feeling rather than reason, the critics leap to the conclusion that she is a prototype of the Virgin of Chartres. Intuition was not denied by Adams as an attribute of the modern American woman; it was still active in her though to a lesser degree than in the woman of the thirteenth century. It is this intuition still existent in modern woman which creates the inertia of sex referred to in the Education which had prevented woman's complete evolution in the direction of logic. Adams did note in the Education, however, a tendency for the twentieth century American woman to abandon the old path which woman had followed through the ages, as a result of sex inertia or intuition, for the path imposed by the force of science. She was, therefore, becoming more like the man, and instead of opposing a machine-dominated society, she was becoming part of it. The abandonment of instinct or intuition, however, is still only incipient; it "could not be overcome without overcoming the race."¹¹ Instinct had always kept woman in the role of mother and center of the family. If woman were to thoroughly renounce instinct, she would reject her place in the family also. Adams feared that in time woman would abandon her old role. In a conversation remembered by Brooks Adams, Adams' younger brother, in his preface to the Degradation of the Democratic Dogma, Henry Adams said,

...The family system is the creation of the woman...[and] she has acted as the social cement and sustained the arch on which the social fabric has rested. And now behold the woman has renounced her job, she is ashamed of her sex, and I know not how man can replace her.¹²

Brooks Adams felt that "all women under modern conditions ceased automatically to be cohesive."¹³ His brother sought to amplify the problem:

According to Brooks Adams, his brother believed that

the family tie was weakening and that the woman was volatilizing...he did believe in the superior energy of the maternal instinct, but the inference was that with the American woman in especial, precisely in proportion as she increased her independence, she diminished her weight and importance in the social scale, she dissolved into a finite atom and ceased to be the heart of the social unit.¹⁴

In the Education, Adams, commenting humorously on this situation and his helplessness in the face of it, wrote:

An elderly man, trying only to learn the law of social inertia and the limits of social divergence, could not compel the Superintendent of the Census to ask every young woman whether she wanted children, he could not even require of an octogenarian Senate the passage of a law obliging every woman, married or not, to bear one baby--at the expense of the Treasury --before she was thirty years old, under penalty of solitary confinement for life....¹⁵

At the end of the nineteenth century, the American woman had not completely left her old role; therefore, the remnants of intuition in Madeleine Lee should offer no problem in my interpretation of her as a prototype of Adams' American woman described in the Education rather than the Virgin of Chartres. In fact her inability to read her instincts correctly and her inability to use them as a source of power for the good of society through the family quite supports my thesis.

Other characteristics possessed by Madeleine plainly point to the degraded twentieth century American woman of the Education. Madeleine Lee is a modern American woman": she "frankly avowed that she was American to the tips of her fingers."¹⁶ Her name--Lee--has roots in both Northeastern and Southern American history. This depiction of Mrs. Lee as not only American in origin but thoroughly American in nature lends itself to a comparison with the description of American women in the Education.

Madeleine Lee was without family with the single exception of her

sister, Sybil Ross; she had lost both a husband and a son five years previously. She was very independent and rejected the possibility of another family by refusing the proposal of Silas Ratcliffe. Madeleine's independence may also be linked with the comments on the independence and on the subsequent dissolution of the family in the Education and to Adams' comments on women recorded by his brother, Brooks Adams, in the "Heritage of Henry Adams." Madeleine's independence may be contrasted with the situations of the Virgin of Chartres, the three queens, and also the primitive women in the "Primitive Rights of Women" and Tahiti, all of whom owe their importance primarily to being mothers.

This independence may be related causally to Madeleine's want of motive and purpose. Madeleine is depicted as "tortured by ennui"; she has "resorted to desperate measures...read philosophy in the original German...plunged into philanthropy. This path seemed to lead nowhere."¹⁷ She is spoken of as "eating her heart out because she could find no object worth a sacrifice."¹⁸ As a result of her lack of family ties, Mrs. Lee had no direction in which to pour her energy. It was similar to the situation discussed in the Education:

The cleverer the woman the less she denied [her] failure. She was bitter at heart about it....The family was extinct like chivalry. She had failed not only to create a new society that satisfied her; but even to hold her own in the old society or Church or State; and was left, for the most part, with no place but the theatre or streets to decorate. She might glitter with historical diamonds and sparkle with wit as brilliant as the gems...; but she saw no one except her own sex who knew enough to be worth dazzling, or was competent to pay her intelligent homage. She might have her own way, without restraint or limit, but she know not what to do with herself when free.¹⁹

Madeleine's tendency toward intellectualism is of prime importance in a demonstration of her similarity to the twentieth century American woman of the Education and her difference from the thirteenth century

European woman of the Chartres and the primitive women of "The Primitive Rights of Woman" and Tahiti. While Sister M. Aquinas Heally writes that Adams' "women are often naturally intelligent but never intellectual,"²⁰ I am forced to disagree, especially when dealing with Madeleine Lee. Early in the novel Adams indicated that Madeleine "had read philosophy in the original German," and that she had "talk[ed] of Herbert Spencer for an entire evening."²¹ A little later in the novel he wrote,

She had read voraciously and promiscuously one subject after another. Ruskin and Taine had danced merrily through her mind, hand in hand with Darwin and Stuart Mill, Gustave Droz and Algernon Swinburne. She had even labored over the literature of her own country. She was perhaps the only woman in New York who knew something of American history.²²

Her intellectualism is not as extreme as might be found in some men, being tempered by a tendency, at times, to rely on feeling rather than reason, but it seems fairly evident that Adams saw Madeleine as quite intellectual for a woman, and, in fact, too intellectual. There is a comment early in the book on the futility of her intellectual pursuits in the face of pursuits more proper for a woman.

...she could not see that her time [spent in discussing philosophy] had been better employed than when in former days she had passed it in flirting with a very agreeable young stockbroker; indeed, there was an evident proof to the contrary, for the flirtation might lead to something--had, in fact, led to marriage; while the philosophy could lead to nothing, unless it were perhaps to another evening of the same kind, because transcendental philosophers are mostly elderly men, usually married, and, when engaged in business somewhat apt to be sleepy towards evening.²³

The attitude displayed here may easily be linked to Adams' belief that reason is degraded from intuition or instinct. Madeleine, in this context, may be seen to be following a superior impulse in flirting with her husband-to-be than in her forays into the intellectual world. Adams' Virgin, along with the mystics of the thirteenth century,

distrusted reason and, therefore, philosophers of the time such as Abelard. One may recall that Adams wrote of the Virgin "...she cared little for reason or logic. She cared only for her baby, a simple matter which any woman could do and understand."²⁴

Besides being intellectual, Madeleine was introspective: she "dissected her own feelings and was always wondering whether they were real or not; she had a habit of taking off her mental clothing, as she might take off a dress, and looking at it as though it belonged to someone else, as though sensations were manufactured like clothes."²⁵ Madeleine's self-inspection may be linked with her tendency toward intellectualism. In his Education, Adams spoke of his own introspection, a method he used to find unity which "could only be known as a motion of mind."²⁶

Of all studies, the one he would rather have avoided was that of his own mind. He knew no tragedy so heart-rending as introspection and the more because--as Mephistophles said of Marguerite--he was not the first. Nearly all the highest intelligence known to history had drowned itself in the reflection of its own thought....²⁷

In his "Rule of Phase", Adams named the last phase of man's thought--the most intellectual and degraded phase--the ethereal phase. What he said of thought in this phase is very similar to what he said of introspection in the Education:

Thought in terms of Ether means only Thought in terms of itself, or in other words, pure Mathematics and Metaphysics, a stage often reached by individuals. At the utmost it could mean only the subsidence of the current into an ocean of potential thought, of mere consciousness, which is also possible like static electricity.²⁸

Introspection and metaphysics were linked in the Education where Adams referred to introspection as "the metaphysical form" of pessimism.²⁹

In the description of Madeleine's introspection, the phrase,

"dissected her own feelings" also recalls Adams' belief that unity-- man's "idea of himself as a unity in a unified universe"³⁰--was highest in the age when woman's intuitive influence was greatest and that multiplicity has fallen on a degraded society in which man's logic has the control. Intuition pulls things into a synthesis creating an appearance of unity; logic is analytic and, therefore, divisive.

Also related to Madeleine's intellectualism is her scientific approach to life which was first remarked upon at the beginning of the novel where she was attracted to Ratcliffe ~~as a symbol of power and desires~~ "to sound the depths of statesmanship through him."

She wanted to understand this man, to turn him inside out, to experiment on him and use him as a young psychologist uses frogs and kittens. If there was good or bad in him, she meant to find the meaning.³¹

This passage is reminiscent of Adams' search in the Education for the force which attracted society through the "new psychology," and Mrs. Lee appears much the same as Henry Adams described himself. It is not a flattering picture of Mrs. Lee as a woman in the context of Adams' thought. Adams depicted himself as the victim of modern conditions, thus explaining a life of thought instead of action and the attraction which science and reason held for him. Adams' ideal woman, the Virgin, did not seek power through the anti-instinctual methods of science.

Throughout the novel one finds numerous remarks on Madeleine's "sense of self sacrifice," a characteristic strikingly dissimilar to the Virgin's life-giving and life-affirming qualities. Ratcliffe used Madeleine's "feminine sense of self-sacrifice" in order to involve her irretrievably with himself. He attempted to involve her by asking her advice on the political decisions he must make. He displayed the

corruption of the political world with which he had to deal in his decisions, thereby demonstrating to her the difficulty of following clear cut moral laws. Mrs. Lee was forced to concede to him that life "was more complicated than [she] thought." She tried to refuse to accept any responsibility for Ratcliffe's decisions but Ratcliffe denied her attempt:

Duty is duty, for you as well as for me. I have a right to the help of all pure minds. You have no right to refuse it. How can you reject your own responsibility and hold me to mine.

Ratcliffe's scheme was eminently successful at first:

Mrs. Lee was not to be reached by an appeal to religious sentiment, to ambition or to affection. Any such appeal would have fallen flat on her ears and destroyed its own hopes. But she was a woman to the very last drop of her blood. She could not be induced to love Ratcliffe, but she might be deluded into sacrificing herself for him. She atoned for want of devotion to God, by devotion to man. She had a woman's natural tendency towards asceticism, self-extinction, self-abnegation. All through life she had made painful efforts to understand and follow out her duty. Ratcliffe knew her weak point when he attacked her from this side.³²

Later when Carrington left for a position in Mexico, Madeleine interpreted her sister's depression as a sign of love for Carrington while in actuality it was largely a result of fear of her inability to dissuade Madeleine from marrying Ratcliffe alone. Madeleine felt guilty believing that Carrington's love for her had prevented a relationship between Sybil and him.

With a saint's capacity for self-torment, Madeleine wielded the scourge over her own back until the blood came. She saw the rose fading from Sybil's cheeks and by the help of an active imagination, she discovered a hectic look and symptoms of a cough. She became fairly morbid on the subject and fretted herself into a fever....In fact there was much more reason for anxiety about her than for her anxiety about Sybil who...was as healthy and comfortable a young woman as could be shown in America....

Here again we find a reference to Madeleine's asceticism and self-

sacrifice, even in a situation which does not call for such attitudes.³³

What Adams termed "woman's natural tendency towards asceticism, self-extinction, [and] self-abnegation" is not found later in his ideal woman, the Virgin of Chartres, whom Adams depicted as life-giving and life-affirming. The Virgin rejected the ascetic art predominant in the later Middle Ages. In the art created for her at Chartres "fear is absent, there is no suggestion of pain, there is not a martyr with the symbol of his martyrdom."³⁴ In contrast to a tendency towards self-extinction, the Virgin attracted man partly through his "instinct of individuality."³⁵ Mary refused to remain the "Mater Dolorosa," "prostrate at the foot of the cross," but instead she asserted an imperial nature, one which enjoyed the adulation of her subjects and which was angered at any sign of neglect--"she was very severe on lovers who showed willingness to leave her service and take service with any other lady."³⁶ The major attraction the Virgin held for man was felt through his "instinct for self-preservation."³⁷ Since Adams speaks of two instincts through which the Virgin attracted man--one of individuality and one of self-preservation--it would appear that the tendencies of "asceticism, self-extinction, [and] self-abnegation" are antithetical to instinct or intuition and may be taken, therefore, as signs of the flagging of instinct in the modern American woman.

Finally, one must note Madeleine's destructive tendencies, inability to love, and self distrust as qualities widely divergent from the ideal marked by the Virgin. Sybil didn't believe that Madeleine would "ever let herself love anyone again," and she warned Carrington that he "wouldn't like her [Madeleine] if [he] married her [as] she [had] always had her own way [and] never could learn to take [his]." She gleefully

added that Madeleine would make Ratcliffe's life a "burden." Madeleine agreed, in essence, with her sister. She told Carrington on hearing his avowal of love that he did not know how much misery [she was] saving him" by rejecting him as she had "no heart to give." She told him that, although she had tried to persuade herself that she "might begin life again with the old hopes and feelings,... it [was] no use." If he married her, he "would destroy" himself; he "would wake up some day and find the universe dust and ashes."³⁸

Carrington, like Madeleine, had undergone great personal losses in his past; he had lost two brothers--one in his arms--and had seen his family reduced to poverty as the result of the Civil War. In spite of these disillusionments, Carrington was still able to love Madeleine, a love which Madeleine was unable to return. Realizing that Carrington showed strength and energy she lacked, Madeleine "felt hard and small before him."

Life for life, his had been, and was now, far less bright than hers, yet he was her superior. He sat there a true man, carrying his burden calmly, quietly without complaint ready to face the next shock of life with the same endurance he had shown against the rest. And he thought her perfect! She! Perfect! In her contrition she was half ready to go down at his feet and confess her sins; her hysterical dread of sorrow and suffering, her narrow sympathies, her feeble faith, her miserable selfishness, her abject cowardice. Every nerve in her body tingled with shame when she thought what a miserable fraud she was; what mass of pretentiousness unfounded, of deceit ingrained. She was ready to hide her face in her hands. She was disgusted, outraged with her own image as she saw it contrasted with Carrington's single word: Perfect!³⁹

This passage goes far to demonstrate Madeleine and the Virgin's basic differences; while the Virgin is life and self-affirming, Madeleine is life-denying and self-destructive. Here, as well as in the main plot of the story, we find Madeleine rejecting a suitor and an opportunity for

fulfillment in a family.

Madeleine obviously falls far below the ideal set by Adams' Virgin, but Sybil Ross, her sister, could be said to approach the Virgin in her characterization as an intuitive rather than intellectual woman. Sybil was described as a "straightforward, downright, gay, sympathetic, shallow, warm-hearted, sternly practical young woman," "not clever like Madeleine." She "never troubled herself about the impossible or unthinkable."

She had feelings and was rather quick in her sympathies and sorrows...she was equally quick in getting over them and she expected other people to do likewise.

While Madeleine was introspective, Sybil, "disliked self-inspection"; "...she did not understand it and...her mind was all feelers and amputation was death. She could no more analyze a feeling than doubt its existence." In discussing her sister's absence during a horse ride with Carrington, Sybil said,

I'm very glad she didn't come. If she had, you would have talked with her all the time, and I should have been left to amuse myself. She would have been hunting for first principles, and you would have been running about, trying to catch some for her.

Sybil disliked her sister's interest in reason or logic because of her own intuitive response to life. Sybil recognized her own strength where Madeleine was weak: "...I'm not clever or serious, like Madeleine, and I can't read laws and hate politics, but I've more common sense than she has." Sybil appears to be more like the Virgin than Madeleine in her dislike of logic, to some degree in her religious faith, and in her love of fine clothes and furniture--her aesthetic sensibility. In one respect Madeleine is more like the Virgin and that is her desire for power. Sybil appears not to have possessed this desire to any great

degree; only at one point--when she appeared to receive pleasure out of instructing Carrington in the way he was to approach Madeleine and make his declaration of love--does it appear. However, this situation is very reminiscent of the roles played by the three queens in the cult of courtly love.⁴⁰

In Esther, Adams' other novel, one finds a situation very similar to the situation in Democracy. The protagonist of Esther, while appearing in some ways more feminine, is, nevertheless, like Madeleine Lee in her tendency toward intellectualism, self-sacrifice, and self-destruction, and in her refusal to occupy a position in a family. Also in Esther, one finds a foil to the protagonist very similar to Sybil Ross.

FOOTNOTES

¹Henry Adams, Democracy: An American Novel (New York, c. 1908), pp. 3, 10, 336.

²Ibid., pp. 106-108.

³Chartres, p. 260.

⁴Democracy, pp. 344-367.

⁵Chartres, p. 261.

⁶Democracy, p. 83.

⁷Education, p. 353.

⁸Ibid., pp. 441-442.

⁹Letters of Henry Adams 1892 to 1918, ed., Worthington Chancey Ford (Boston and New York, 1938), II, p. 613.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 457.

¹¹Education, p. 447.

¹²Degradation, pp. 3-4.

¹³Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Education, p. 447.

¹⁶Democracy, p. 5.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 1-2.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁹Education, p. 443.

²⁰"A Study of Non-Rational Elements in the Works of Henry Adams as Centralized in His Attitudes Toward Women" (unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1956), p. 155.

- ²¹Democracy, p. 2.
- ²²Ibid., pp. 9-10.
- ²³Ibid., p. 2.
- ²⁴Chartres, p. 322.
- ²⁵Democracy, p. 216.
- ²⁶Education, p. 432.
- ²⁷Ibid.
- ²⁸Degradation, p. 308.
- ²⁹Education, p. 432.
- ³⁰Ibid., p. 434.
- ³¹Democracy, pp. 36-37.
- ³²Ibid., pp. 174-179.
- ³³Ibid., pp. 284-285.
- ³⁴Chartres, p. 70.
- ³⁵Ibid., p. 260.
- ³⁶Ibid., p. 268.
- ³⁷Ibid., p. 250.
- ³⁸Democracy, pp. 253-256, 260-261.
- ³⁹Ibid., pp. 262-263.
- ⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 16-17, 216, 223-224, 258.

CHAPTER VII

ESTHER

Esther, Adams' second and last novel, was published in 1884 under the penname of Francis Compton Snow.¹ Most critics writing on the subject of Esther Dudley, heroine of the novel, have made the error of identifying her with Adams' Virgin of Chartres because, as they do with Madeleine Lee, they make too much of her intuition.

It is true that in Esther Dudley, one finds a more passive, artistic, and less intellectual character than one finds in Madeleine Lee, and it is further true that there appears to be a greater reliance by Esther on intuition. First Wharton, the artist, noted Esther's ability to know things intuitively which must be learned by man.

She never read a book, I believe, in her life. She picks up all she knows without an effort, and knows nothing well, yet she seems to understand whatever is said. Her mind is as irregular as her face....²

Second, in Adams' thought there is a relation between artistic abilities and instinct, and Esther was depicted as an artistic person. In the Degradation of the Democratic Dogma, Adams wrote of the "faculty for artistic expression" as an instinct which man probably inherited from an earlier more gifted animal.³ Furthermore, Esther, when first beginning to paint in the cathedral, rejected the ascetic style of art she was required to imitate for the portrait of St. Cecilia.

She could not reconcile herself to draw the attenuated figures and haggard forms of the early martyrs merely because they suited the style of church decoration; and she

could see no striking harmony of relation between these ill-looking beings and the Fifth Avenue audience to whom they were supposed to have some moral or sentimental meaning.⁴

This rejection of ascetic art may be related to Adams' Virgin's supposed influence on the art of the twelfth century--a century which avoided the severe art of the later Middle Ages.

Before 1200, the Church seems not to have felt the need of appealing habitually to terror; the promise of hope and happiness was enough....A hundred years later, every church portal showed Christ not as Saviour but as Judge, and He presided over a Last Judgment at Bourges and Amiens....At Chartres Christ is identified with His Mother, the spirit of love and grace, and His Church is the Church Triumphant.⁵

Third, Esther's feminine strength of will was mentioned in several passages, and her instinct to power was alluded to in one. The first references to Esther's strength of will are found when Stephen Hazard, the Episcopalian minister and Esther's would-be suitor, came to visit Esther during her father's illness. He asked to be permitted to stay and help. Esther remarked to him, "Do not feel alarmed about me. Women have more strength than men." On leaving Hazard thought to himself, "...She could give a lesson in strength to me." After Esther's acceptance of Hazard as a suitor, he again felt her strength: "Now when she turned to him and answered his call, she seemed to take possession of him and lift him up." Mention is made of Esther's instinct of power after she had won her way in the matter of the church painting; however, the force of this comment is qualified by a remark that she did not enjoy the responsibility that went with power.⁶

Both her strength of will and instinct of power relate Esther to Adams' Virgin of Chartres, three queens, and primitive women--all women who are described as strong and powerful. In the Education he wrote, "The idea that [woman] was weak revolted all history; it was a

palaeontological falsehood that even an Eocene female monkey would have laughed at."⁷

Finally it appears that Esther rejected the church at least partially as a result of her instinct. In a conversation with Strong in which he asked if she were sure the church is wrong, Esther replied that she was "perfectly sure" although she only felt it rather than reasoned it out.⁸ However, many of the reasons she gave for rejecting the church are definitely anti-instinctual as we shall see when we investigate this decision more closely.

While it would seem that Esther did share her intuitive resources and strength with Adams' Virgin to a greater degree than Madeleine Lee, this source of power remained, for the most part, potential. Indeed many of Esther's actions and opinions are definitely anti-instinctual, including some that many critics regard as proof of her intuition. In my opinion, the resemblance of Esther Dudley to the modern American woman described in the Education is much more marked.

In Esther, as in Democracy, one finds a heroine unable, because of forces within herself, to unite with a suitor and to assume a role within a family. While in Democracy, the conflict is found in politics, in Esther the conflict is centered in religion. Esther Dudley was an agnostic, like her father and her cousin, George Strong; therefore, she found herself unable to marry Stephen Hazard--an Episcopalian minister. As I have noted before, the stages of conflict within the two novels correspond to the two spheres in which women had and then lost influence --the state and the church.

Like Madeleine Lee, Esther Dudley was definitely typed in the novel as an American woman. Of Esther, Wharton remarked

She has a style of her own and I never can quite make up my mind whether to like it or not. I hesitate before everything American,...I don't know...and I never met any man who could tell me, whether American types are going to supplant the old ones, or whether they are to come to nothing for want of ideas. Miss Dudley is one of the most marked American types I ever saw.⁹

Wharton went on to give a very interesting description of Esther's appearance:

She has a bad figure, which she makes answer for a good one. She is too slight, too thin; she looks fragile, willowy as the cheap novels call it, as though you could break her in halves like a switch. She dresses to suit her figure and sometimes overdoes it. Her features are imperfect. Except for her ears, her voice, and her eyes which have a sort of brown depth like a trout brook, she has no very good points.¹⁰

Later he said of Esther's type, "The thing is too subtle and it is not a grand type like what we are used to in the academies."¹¹ The image given in the description of Esther's dress and figure is reminiscent of the passage in the Education in which Adams wrote of the "monthly magazine-made American female [who] had not a feature that would have been recognized by Adam."¹² Sex as a force in Esther's appearance was not mentioned; it would be, I believe, a quality of the "grand type" as depicted perhaps in Renaissance European art as well as in Adams' Virgin of Chartres, whose predecessor was Venus.¹³ A little later in the same conversation Wharton noted that Esther is also modern:

There is nothing medieval about her. If she belongs to any [world] besides the present, it is to the next world which artists want to see, when paganism will come again and we can give a divinity to every waterfall.¹⁴

Thus we find that unlike the Virgin of Chartres, who was European and medieval, Esther was not only American born but American in type and, furthermore, extremely modern. This in itself indicates that Esther may well have more in common with the American woman described in the

Education than with the Virgin of Chartres.

Also like Madeleine, Esther was independent. In the course of the novel, Esther lost her father who had been the only member of her family, her mother having died with Esther was young. Afterwards, she refused matches with both Stephen Hazard and George Strong. I believe Esther's freedom from ties with other people is alluded to in the passage in which Wharton compared her to a yacht:

Miss Dudley interests me. I want to know what she can make of life. She gives one the idea of a lightly-sparred yacht in mid-ocean, unexpected, you ask yourself what the devil she is doing there. She sails gayly along, though there is no land in sight and plenty of rough weather coming.¹⁵

This quotation may be compared with an excerpt from Adams' Education describing the emancipated American woman, as they both seem to emphasize instability and rootlessness.

The woman has been set free--volatilized like Clerk Maxwell's perfect gas; almost brought to the point of explosion like steam....These swarms [of women] were ephemeral like clouds of butterflies in season blown away and lost, while the reproductive sources are hidden.¹⁶

Esther's name may also have a symbolic application here; it was taken from a character in Hawthorne's story of the same name and the main relation between the characters appears to be that they are both American spinsters independent of family ties.¹⁷ Both characters may therefore be contrasted with the Biblical Esther who found her major role as a wife. Esther's independence must be contrasted with the situations of both Adams' medieval women and his primitive women. Ever since his first essay on the primitive woman, Adams had put special emphasis on woman's role as a mother within a family; therefore, the mere inability of Esther to assume a role within a family would imply a diminished importance as a woman.

Esther's independence may be related causally to the want of motive and purpose characterizing both her and Madeleine Lee.

She [Esther] complained to Wharton of her feminine want of motive in life. 'I wished I earned my living....You don't know what it is to work without an object.'¹⁸

Both Esther and Madeleine Lee, as a result of their lack of family ties, had no direction in which to pour their energies. This is very similar to the situation of the American woman described in the Education:

The cleverer the woman the less she denied [her] failure. She was bitter at heart about it....The family was extinct, like chivalry. She had failed not only to create a new society that satisfied her; but even to hold her own in the old society of Church and State; and was left, for the most part, with no place but the theatre or streets to decorate.¹⁹

Being without purpose, both Madeleine Lee and Esther Dudley came to despise themselves. Esther's degrading of herself is very similar to Madeleine Lee's and implies some flagging of instinct. A major instance may be found after Esther heard Hazard's vows of love; she replied, "You do not know me! You must not love me! I shall never satisfy you!" More obvious is the passage in the last scene when Esther told Hazard, "...I despise and loathe myself."²⁰

One way in which Esther failed to conform to the Virgin's qualities even to a greater degree than noted in Mrs. Lee lies in the case of her faltering will. The romance between Esther and Hazard first began when Hazard suggested to Esther that she paint a portrait of Catherine Brooke, a charge of Esther's aunt. While she was painting the picture, Hazard assumed the role of her advisor. Adams commented,

Esther, like most women, was timid, and wanted to be told when she could be bold with perfect safety, while Hazard's grasp of all subjects though feminine in appearance, was masculine and persistent in reality. To be steadily strong was not in Esther's nature. She was audacious only by starts, and recoiled from her own audacity. Before long, Hazard began to dominate her will.²¹

Referring this description of Esther and "most women" to the portraits of the Virgin of Chartres, the three queens, and the primitive women, one finds obvious differences. In his Chartres, Adams did use masculine in the sense of strong, but he also described the French women and consequently the Virgin and the three queens as masculine in this sense.

...Certain it is that the French woman of the Middle Ages, from very early times, has shown qualities peculiar to herself, and the French woman of the Middle Ages was a masculine character.²²

Later when Esther refused to paint Catherine on the church ceiling in the prevailing ascetic style, Hazard agreed with her and permitted her to paint Catherine in the manner she preferred. Soon afterward, however, there is another comment made on Esther's timidity as opposed to her strength of will.

Esther liked to have her own way. She had the instinct of power, but not the love of responsibility, and now that she found herself allowed to violate Wharton's orders and derange her plans, she became alarmed, asked no more favors, stuck closely to her work, and kept Catherine always at her side.²³

Esther shared the instinct of power with the Virgin, the three queens, and the primitive women, but the latter were not troubled by what appears as fear of this power. They wished for the power and when they obtained it, they enjoyed it.

In placing Esther within the context of Adams' thought, one cannot ignore Esther's turn to an overly abstract or spiritualized view of life after her father's death and her definite verbal rejection of instinct. Since the crux of the novel rests on Esther's rejection of Stephen Hazard, it is necessary, first of all, to discern what Hazard represents.

Our first view of Hazard is during his opening sermon at St. John's. His sermon has a striking correspondence to one of the major

themes of Adams' work--the problem of unity. Hazard contended that "all being and all thought rises by slow gradation to God" and that everything--great works of art, metaphysics, crime, virtue, atheism, and materialism--"were all emanations of divine thought."²⁴ The church, Hazard believed, unlike science, is able to strike through the mystery of the universe to find that the starting point, the "I Am", "is not human but divine."²⁵ This sermon, along with a comment made by the author on Hazard's thirteenth century ideas, links Hazard with the church philosophers of the Middle Ages, notably Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas' philosophy, as presented by Adams in the Chartres, held "that every individual, animal, vegetable, or mineral--was a special divine act."²⁶ Later Adams noted that Aquinas excluded "every possible preceding, secondary, or subsequent cause" and that he believed that "the whole universe is, so to speak, a simple emanation from God."²⁷

George Strong, Esther's cousin, is another important male figure. Esther respected his thought and looked to him for advice, but he lacked the attraction Hazard had for Esther. It is well to note that while Esther was emotionally or intuitively drawn toward Hazard and intellectually opposed to him, this situation is reversed in her attitude toward Strong. While Hazard may be linked with the medieval philosophers, Strong seems to represent the modern American male to Adams. As a geologist, he looked to science rather than to the church for answers. He placed great importance on the value of abstract thought as one sees in his discussion with Esther on the possibility of life after death, which I will discuss hereafter. Until the end of the novel, he had never shown much interest in Esther or in any other woman, so far as one can detect, except, perhaps, for a mild flirtation with Catherine Brooke.

When Esther's aunt and father discussed the possibility of a marriage between Esther and Strong, Mr. Dudley remarked, "I own that on his wedding day he would probably be in Dakota flirting with the bones of a fossil monkey."²⁸ Strong, himself, said to Hazard,

'Esther always told me that I had nothing but chalk and plateglass in my mind and could never love or be loved. We have discussed it a good deal. She says I am like an old glove that will not cling.'²⁹

Strong's adherence to the science of geology instead of to a woman is relevant, I believe, to Adams' description in the Education of the typical American male and his disregard of the female in favor of the machine.

...the [American] man...had turned his mind and hand to mechanics. The typical American man had his hand on a lever and his eye on a curve in his road; his living depended on keeping up an average speed of forth miles an hour, tending always to become sixty, eighty, or a hundred, and he could not admit emotions or anxieties or subconscious distractions, more than he could admit whiskey or drugs, without breaking his neck. He could not run his machine and a woman too; he must leave her, even though his wife, to find her own way, and all the world saw her trying to find her way by imitating him.³⁰

Of course, in the context of the thought expressed in the Education, the Chartres, and the "Letter to American Teachers of History," Hazard's position as a scientist alone makes him modern--primitive and medieval man having relied more on instinct and intuition as opposed to the modern trend toward logic and science.

One may see Esther as a novel in which the heroine is pulled intellectually in one direction and intuitively in another, ending in a stalemate. The first turn Esther took after her father's death appeared to be toward Hazard, but it may be later discerned that the mysticism apparently shared by Esther and Hazard was carried by Esther to a logical extreme unanticipated by Hazard. Adams commented on Esther's

mystical tendencies, thus: "Most women are more or less mystical by nature and Esther had a vein of mysticism running through a practical mind."¹³¹ After her father's death "nothing seemed real except the imagination and nothing true but the spiritual"; her only visitor outsider her family was Hazard, "a mystic of the purest water" who talked with her of the "purity of the soul, the victory of spirit over matter and the peace of the mind."¹³² This extremely spiritualized aspect of Esther's character is somewhat antithetical to the Virgin and the forces of instinct. In the Chartres, Adams wrote, "Neither of the two Marys was mystical, in a modern sense."¹³³ One should bear in mind that in the Degradation of the Democratic Dogma, Adams discovered instinct to be a much stronger embodiment of will than intelligence which he believed degraded. Furthermore, Adams theorized that the lower forms of life, which certainly did not hold a spiritualized view of life or a distaste for reality, were superior to man because of their stronger will. Since the physical instincts toward maternity and survival were held by Adams to be proof of an undegraded will, the previous passages surely intimate that Esther, here, was not following the dictates of her instinct.

After Esther accepted Hazard as a suitor, she chose to ignore his profession for a short time. Soon, however, she became anxious for their relationship because of her antipathy toward the church. At first she attributed this dislike to jealousy: she disliked sharing Hazard with his congregation. Also, it seems, the congregation had qualms about sharing him with her. After Esther battled with theology, however, it soon became apparent that the reason for her unwillingness to accept the church lay deeper--in her inability to believe. Eventually she broke off with Hazard and fled to Niagara with her Uncle William,

Aunt Sarah Murphy, and Catherine Brooke.³⁴

It became even more apparent during the journey that while Esther rationally believed that she must refuse Hazard, emotionally and instinctively she was drawn to him. The small lights she saw in the farm windows brought to her mind "a picture of peace and hope." The roofs above these lights "might shelter some realized romance, some contented love." Thinking on this, she came to this conclusion:

In so dark and dreary a world, what a mad act it was to fly from the only happiness life offered! What a strange idea to seek safety by refusing the only protection worth having! Love was all in all! Esther had never before felt herself so helpless as in the face of this outer darkness and if her lover had now been there to claim her, she would have dropped into his arms as unresistingly as a tired child.³⁵

Soon after arriving at Niagara, Esther found herself drawn to the waterfall.

She fell in love with the cataract and turned to it as a confidant, not because of its beauty or power, but because it seemed to tell her a story which she longed to understand. 'If he could only hear it as I do,' and of course 'he' was Mr. Hazard; 'how he would feel it!' She felt tears roll down her face as she listened to the voice of the waters and knew that they were telling her a different secret from any that Hazard could ever hear. 'He will think it is the church talking!'³⁶

The waterfall symbolized "eternity, infinity and omnipotence" to her and in face of it her troubles seemed trivial.³⁷ Adams was fond of symbols of infinity; several such symbols of infinity are noted in the Education in the chapter entitled, "The Dynamo and the Virgin." Adams posed the dynamo as a symbol of infinite power in modern America and the Virgin as a symbol of the same in medieval Europe, and before her Adams supposed that Aphrodite and Venus were the symbols in ancient Greece and Rome, Some critics would have it that Esther's attraction to the Niagara was a result of the promptings of her instinct; I would disagree. The

problem at hand is to decide which of the symbols--the dynamo or the Virgin, Venus, and Aphrodite--is the Niagara most related to. According to Adams, man was drawn to the Virgin and the goddesses through his instinct; his attraction to the dynamo is a result of his tendency away from instinct and toward logic and science.

Strong and Wharton soon arrived and one finds in a conversation involving them, Esther, and Catherine that Esther felt the Niagara was a masculine deity.

It is not a woman! It is a man!...No woman ever had a voice like that! She felt hurt that her cataract should be treated as a self-conscious woman.³⁸

This excerpt would link the fall with the dynamo as the dynamo symbolizes the masculine energy of the twentieth century as opposed to the feminine power of the thirteenth. Also the waterfall may be related to the dynamo through its amoral and impersonal quality. If this relation of the dynamo and the waterfall holds true, one could assert that Esther through her attraction to the waterfall showed herself to be degraded--separated from the power of will embodied in instinct.

Another attraction that should show Esther's degradation is her attraction to abstract thought. When Strong told Esther that while he didn't believe conventionally in a life after death, he did believe that "If our minds could get hold of one abstract truth, they would be immortal as far as that truth is concerned." Esther reinterpreted his remark in light of her own attraction to the waterfall:

Does your idea mean that the next world is a sort of great reservoir of truth, and that what is true in us just sort of pours into it like raindrops?⁴⁰

Here one finds a belief in the ultimate nature of thought--a belief in opposition to Adams' theory that thought is the degraded end of

instinct. Since the thirteenth century was one influenced by instinct and the twentieth century is one which is influenced by logic and science, these sentiments must be construed as modern as consequently degraded.

The climax of the novel comes with the reappearance of Hazard. I will now summarize briefly and comment:

Soon after appearing at Niagara, he attempted to reassume his relationship with Esther, but Esther remained adamant. He then went to the source of their problem--Esther's lack of faith. He pointed out that through atheism one loses all and gains nothing.

At last both they [the atheists] and I come back to a confession of ignorance; the only difference between us is that my ignorance is joined with a faith and hope.

Esther was unable to cope with this argument and resorted to a commonplace: "But you make me say every Sunday that I believe in things I don't believe at all." Hazard noted that his church made large "allowances for difference" and that there must be "common ground between them." He pushed her to agree to return to him; eventually, Esther became angry and "less anxious to spare his pride because he claimed credit for respecting hers," and she confessed to a "feeling of hostility" toward his church, and a feeling that he was "a priest in a Pagan temple, centuries apart from [her]." This remark troubled Hazard's composure somewhat but he proposed to her that "mere ceremonies need not stand in [her] way" and that "she could disregard them and feel the truths behind." Now Esther struck deeper, answering that "the ceremonies are picturesque and...easy to get used to..., but [that] the doctrines are more Pagan than the ceremonies." Hazard became grave and asked if she meant "to separate herself from all communion." Esther

answered,

If you will create a new [church] that shall be really spiritual and not cry: 'flesh--flesh--flesh' at every corner, I will gladly join it, and give my whole life to you and it.

After Hazard pleaded that the church has always satisfied "the purest and most spiritual of souls, Esther continued,

...I can see nothing spiritual about the church. It is all personal and selfish. What difference does it make to me whether I worship one person or three persons or three hundred or three thousand. I don't understand how you worship any person at all.

She asked Hazard if he "really believe[d] in the resurrection of the body." He answered in the affirmative to which she replied,

To me it is a shocking idea. I despise and loathe myself and yet you thrust self at me from every corner of the church as though I loved and admired it. All religion does nothing but pursue me with self even into the next world.

Hazard was visibly upset and asked,

Can you, without feeling still more shocked, think of a future existence where you will not meet once more father or mother, husband or children? Surely the natural instincts [*italics mine*] of your sex must save you from such a creed.

Esther, blushing, replied,

Why must the church always appeal to my weakness and never to my strength! I ask for spiritual life and you send me back to my flesh and blood as though I were a tigress you were sending to her cubs.

Strong entered and Hazard, believing erroneously that he had attempted to upset his romance with Esther, told her that she "would never find happiness there." Then, after a short speech of farewell, he left.⁴¹

That Esther had no love for the church or theology would not automatically debar her from a similarity to Adams' Virgin as the Virgin was not orthodox and disliked theology and theologians, but her reasons for disliking the church are completely anti-instinctual. According to

Adams, the modern church no longer has the warmth and strength that the Virgin gave the church in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Most persons of a deeply religious nature would tell you emphatically that nine churches out of ten actually were dead-born, after the thirteenth century, and that church architecture became a pure matter of mechanism and mathematics.⁴²

Indeed the church philosophers such as Aquinas, whose philosophy seems to correspond closely with that of Hazard's were depicted by Adams as fallen from the pinnacle represented by the Virgin.⁴³ Therefore, it is possible that Esther's intuition could be prompting her to dislike the church as witnessed, perhaps, when she answered Strong's question as to whether or not she was sure Hazard was wrong: "Perfectly sure!...I can't reason it out, but I feel it."⁴⁴ However, if her instinct did indeed prompt her to reject the church, she read the wrong reasons into it due, perhaps, to her situation as a "degraded," modern American woman.

Esther spoke of loathing and despising her self--her individuality, yet Adams wrote of an "instinct of individuality" through which the Virgin appealed to medieval man.⁴⁵ Esther rejected the belief in a physical existence after death, yet the major reason for the Virgin's appeal to man lay in man's "instinct of self-preservation."⁴⁶ By allowing Science to persuade her that there is not a personal God who has created man, Esther demonstrated that she possessed a degraded will, as according to a paradox expressed in the essay, "A Letter to American Teachers of History," if man were not degraded, if his will were stronger he would never recognize science's claim that man was not derived from a supernatural source.

...the remains of primitive instinct taught society that it could not abandon its claim to be, or to represent, a supernatural and independent energy, without, by the same act, admitting and demonstrating its progressive enfeeblement of will.

If Intellect led to such an abdication, it proved the universal truth of the second thermodynamic law.⁴⁷

The clearest sign of Esther's "degradation", however, lies in her repudiation of her instincts, a rejection which shows her to be a polar opposite of the Virgin whose power was derived from these same instincts. It seems to me that my entire argument receives its greatest impetus from the lines in which Hazard pleaded with Esther to listen to the dictates of her "natural instincts," and Esther described the church's attempt to "appeal to [her] weakness," in other words, her "natural instinct" of love of her own "flesh and blood." However, in the Education Adams had noted that woman's strength had always been centered around "the cradle and family."⁴⁸ What Esther considered her lesser self--her "instincts of individuality" and "self preservation" as well as love of "flesh and blood," Adams would come to regard as signs of undiminished will while its opposite, abstract thought or reason, would become a sign of man's degradation.

Finally the rejection of Hazard would represent a rejection of thirteenth century ideas--ideas influenced to a greater degree by instinct than modern ideas, as well as a rejection of an opportunity to fulfill a position within a family--the proper place for the expression of womanly instincts. The medieval philosophers, especially Thomas Aquinas, in their search for unity strove to create a philosophy embodying and accounting for all aspects of existence; Aquinas even came perilously close to pantheism. Unlike Esther, Aquinas found room for both flesh and spirit in his philosophy, denying neither. In the Chartres, Adams commented,

The hive of Saint Thomas sheltered God and man, mind and matter, the universe and the atom, the one and the multiple within the walls of an harmonious home.⁴⁹

While it is obvious in the Chartres that the philosophers fail because the tool which they used in their search for unity was logic rather than instinct, their thought was presented as less degraded than that of contemporary times--it was religious in nature and it respected the Virgin. Esther, it would seem, rejected Hazard's thought not because her intuition told her that the thirteenth century philosophy attempted to find with logic what could only be found through intuition, but because her thought had been influenced by modern thought which is immensely further degraded. Although Hazard was a mystic, his mysticism, unlike Esther's, apparently respected the flesh and man's instincts; evidently, when they shared their ideas on mysticism, Hazard failed to realize the extreme to which Esther carried her beliefs.

The emotions and instincts which Esther had repudiated show themselves present, though weak, in the last sequence of the novel. After Hazard had gone, Strong, highly appreciative of Esther's struggle with Hazard, proposed marriage to her; she refused saying, "But George, I don't love you, I love him." Thus the novel ends in a stalemate with Esther unable to move either in the directions indicated by intuition or reason.⁵⁰

Esther failed to act in the manner of the Virgin in the Chartres. Although Adams' Virgin was not orthodox in her beliefs, she assumed the role due her as mother of Christ, used her power to sway the Trinity to temper justice with mercy, and remade the church to please herself. There appears to be a mutual rejection between the church and state and the modern woman in Adams' works. After the thirteenth century woman continued progressively to lose power in the church and the state. In the Education and the Chartres, it seems that this situation is caused

by the masculine element in the society, for the most part; in the novels, however, women, when offered a position that could lead to power in one of their old spheres of influence, refused them. It would seem that the answer to this problem lies in the chapter "Vis Inertia" of the Education where Adams intimated that under the debilitating modern conditions, woman, herself, may have a tendency to leave the path of inertia imposed by instinct for a new way of life and thought dictated by science. If women totally abandoned their instincts, it would mean the end of mankind since instinct underlies mating and childrearing.⁵¹ Though both Madeleine Lee and Esther Dudley may have had some remnants of instinct, it would appear that they had abandoned it to such a degree that if their behaviour were universal, it would mean the end of the race since they refused to accept mates either for the purpose of sexual union or the purpose of social power in church or state.

Catherine Brooke seems to play a role of foil to the heroine in a manner similar to that played by Sybil Ross in Democracy: just as Sybil appeared to approach the feminine ideal of the Virgin to a greater degree than the major heroine, so does Catherine. Adams depicted Catherine as drawn to Esther "as the extremest contrast to herself."⁵² She is described as "simple-minded" as opposed to Esther who is thought of by Wharton as "clever."⁵³ If this indicates that Esther is more intellectual than Catherine, Catherine's simplicity would link her more closely with Adams' Virgin--an instinctual rather than intellectual woman. However, a little later it is noted that she learns quickly and easily, one might say intuitively.⁵⁴ Catherine's response to art, her definite opinions on the nature of feminine beauty, and her commonsense approach to situations offer yet greater insights into their differences.

There are several allusions to Catherine's response to art. On seeing one of Wharton's pictures she exclaimed, "Why does he make it so dark and dismal."⁵⁵ And on being asked by Wharton if she thought "it would be improved by being lighter," she "pleaded guilty to this heresy."⁵⁶ When she was to be a model for Esther's portrait on the ceiling of St. Jame's Cathedral, she refused to be painted in the prevailing severe style being used and was perhaps even more adamant than Esther in her dislike of the style.⁵⁷ It should be remembered that in the art of that period of time in which woman's influence was greatest, pain as well as fear was absent; therefore, Catherine's rejection of severe art links her with Adams' Virgin.⁵⁸

Later when told by Wharton that she would lose her charm in New York because she would "become self-conscious and self-consciousness is worse than ugliness," Catherine refused to accept his premise. She replied,

Nonsense!...I know more art than you, if that is your notion. Do you suppose girls are so savage in Denver as not to know when they are pretty? Why the birds are self-conscious! So are horses! So are antelopes! I have seen them often showing off their beauties, like New York women, and they are never so pretty as then.⁵⁹

When standing at the Niagara with Esther, George Strong, and Wharton, Catherine differed from Esther in seeing the waterfall as a self-conscious woman instead of as a male deity. While this passage was partly written as merely a characterization device; it also offers a direct contrast to Esther's assertion that the fall is masculine.

'The fall is a woman, and she is as self-conscious this morning as if she were at church. Look at the coquetry of the pretty curve where the water falls over, and the lace of the skirt where it breaks into foam! Only a woman could do that and look so pretty when she might just as easily be hideous.⁶⁰

These passages attest to a quality in Catherine which corresponds well to the aesthetic nature of the Virgin who required color, light and space in her surroundings and who inspired the creation of the giant rose which Adams represented as a jewel worn on "the breast of her church which symbolized herself."⁶¹ Catherine also closer resembles Adams' Virgin in her role as the inspirer of art than Esther in her role as a creator of art.

The story of Laura and Petrarch is brought up in several places throughout the novel. Catherine, who was most fascinated by this story, connived to have herself and Wharton painted as the pair on the ceiling of the church.⁶² She had been introduced by Strong to novels and subsequently every aspect of life seemed romantic.⁶³ While this episode seems in part a satire on contemporary literature, it is also reminiscent of the situation of the women of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries who were entertained by the romantic literature of men who idealized them and wrote about them as Petrarch later did of Laura.

Wharton, who loved Catherine, was described by Adams as a man who "felt rather than talked."⁶⁴ It is through Wharton that one finds the most telling insights into the character of Esther; of Catherine, he declared that "she stooped nearer nature than any woman he knew and that she was in sympathy with his highest emotions."⁶⁵ The reappearance of Wharton's wife, coarse and ruined from drink, caused an inseparable gap between the two lovers so that the analogy between them and Laura and Petrarch becomes even more evident.⁶⁶

When Esther turned after her father's death to mysticism or rather to a cherishing of the ideal or abstract over the real, Catherine came forward as her opposite because of her practical approach to life. It

is part of her femininity that she was able to juxtapose both romantic and practical tendencies in her character. For instance, Catherine ridiculed Esther's jealousy of Hazard, her dislike of sharing him with his congregation:

I might as well be jealous...of the people who look at Mr. Wharton's pictures or read Petrarch's sonnets in my sweet translation. Did you ever hear that Laura found fault with Petrarch, or if she did, that any one believed she was in earnest?

When Esther countered that since Hazard believed in his church more than in her and since she can't believe in it, he must give her up, Catherine offered the analogy of Esther's relatives, the Murrays: Mr. Murray was a lawyer and Mrs. Murray didn't trouble herself with his performance at court. Later when Esther complained that she was "not fit for him"--a statement typical of the self-degradation both she and Madeleine Lee indulged in, Catherine replied with good sense, "Where do you expect the poor man to get a wife, if all of us say we are not fit for him?"⁶⁷

When Esther was delving into theology, Catherine was unable to take the situation too seriously. One of her answers to Esther's theological queries revealed a mingling of romantic, practical, and humorous elements in her character. Catherine told Strong of the incident:

She asked me today what was my idea of heaven, and I said it was reading novels in church. She seemed to think this a rich bonanza of a joke and laughed herself into hysterics, but I was as serious as Mr. Wharton's apostles.⁶⁸

After Esther's dismissal of Hazard before the trip to Niagara, Catherine was described as possessing coolness although she had been somewhat moved by the previous scene. She was glad to be made useful in a practical manner by helping to remove Esther to Niagara.

She was tired of the long strain on her sympathies and feelings, and was glad to be made useful in a way that pleased her practical mind.⁶⁹

The best example of her feminine practicality as opposed to masculine idealism is found in her last scene with Wharton. Catherine was talking to Wharton about Esther and her forthcoming trip to Europe. Wharton suggested that she visit Petrarch's house and think of him and of his sadness. Catherine replied, "No, I will not go there to be sad. Sadness is made only for poetry or painting. It is your affair, not mine. I mean to be gay." After Wharton suggested that she would "one day learn to give up...her own life and follow an ideal," Catherine commented on his willingness to give up the concrete for the abstract or ideal:

Men are always making themselves into ideals and expecting women to follow them...You are all selfish. Tell me honestly, would you not sell yourself and me and all New York, like Faust in the opera if you could paint one picture like Titian.

Wharton replied he would on Faust's conditions that "if ever the devil or anyone else...can get me to say to the passing moment, 'stay thou art so fair,' he can have me for nothing because by that time his soul would be worth nothing." Catherine tauntingly poked at the implications of this philosophy.

Then that is the bargain you offer us women. You want us to take you, and then you tell us that if we do amuse you, it will be because you are no longer worth taking.⁷⁰

Practicality was one of the attributes of the thirteenth century woman. While she inspired the men of that period to write romantic literature and was herself entertained and flattered by it she remained practical, nevertheless. Adams wrote of it in the Chartres,

Man's business was to fight or hunt or feast or make love. The man was also the travelling partner in commerce commonly absent from home for months together, while the woman carried on the business. The woman ruled the household and the workshop; cared for the economy; supplied the intelligence and dictated the taste.

Adams' three queens also had a very practical reason in forming their school of courteous love:

Eleanor and her daughter Mary and her granddaughter Blanche knew as well as Saint Bernard did, or Saint Francis, what a brute the emancipated man could be; and as though they saw the society of the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, they used every terror they could invent, as well as every tenderness they could invoke, to tame the beasts around them.⁷¹

The Virgin, herself, was characterized by Adams as eminently practical as opposed to the Trinity. The Trinity in its pseudo-perfection demanded something akin to perfection on the part of man; Mary, being both a human and practical woman, saw that such standards in regard to man were ridiculous and put the blame for man's misdoings more appropriately on his creator. This situation reflects the Virgin's feminine reliance on the concrete or real as opposed to the Trinity's masculine tendency to seek the abstract and ideal.⁷²

The relationship of Catherine and Wharton provided a foil to the relationship of Esther and Hazard. While it is obvious that there was a strong mutual attraction between Wharton and Catherine, there was also a barrier between them that they were unable to overcome. This barrier, Wharton's marriage, was very real as opposed to the barrier between Esther and Hazard which Esther could easily overcome if so motivated. Though her relationship with Wharton was hopeless, Catherine bore up much better than Esther. After recognizing the situation to be what it was, Catherine does not allow herself to become adversely affected by it. She was enough of a romantic to enjoy Wharton's company, but she kept herself detached in order to avoid sorrow. Wharton appeared to be commenting on her detachment in their last scene, where he compared her to the Greek warriors killing each other with a smile on their faces.⁷³

There is no suggestion as with Esther that this would be the one romance of her life. Her detachment can be related to her feminine practicality and dislike of pain. There is at least one example in the Chartres of a woman's ability to maintain a relationship on a level most comfortable to her in Blanche's relationship with Thibault: Blanche was able to command Thibault's support for her throne when all of his kin were her enemies, to prevent his marriage to Yolande of Brittany, and while never marrying him, to rise above all talk of scandal.⁷⁴

While it seems that Catherine bears generally a much closer resemblance to the Virgin than Esther, there is one instance in which she falls short. Like Sybil Ross in Democracy, Catherine showed no desire for power or influence and was content to remain in the relatively powerless situation that Adams would have characterize the modern woman. While she was not repulsed by the church like Esther, neither did she show any interest in becoming a force in it. Therefore, at the end of the novel the modern church still lacks what Wharton intimated it needs--a Madonna at its heart.⁷⁵ Catherine merely accepted the situation that had come about since the thirteenth century--the subordination of the instinctual woman by the logical and scientific man. She does not, however, appear to have fallen under the influence of science herself to become like the man, as Esther had.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹Robert E. Spiller, ed., Esther (New York, c. 1938), p. iii.
- ²Esther, p. 27.
- ³Degradation of the Democratic Dogma, p. 229.
- ⁴Esther, p. 94.
- ⁵Chartres, p. 70.
- ⁶Esther, pp. 98-99, 153, 155, 168.
- ⁷Education, p. 496.
- ⁸Esther, p. 269.
- ⁹Ibid., p. 26.
- ¹⁰Ibid., pp. 26-27.
- ¹¹Ibid., p. 28.
- ¹²Education, p. 384.
- ¹³Ibid.
- ¹⁴Esther, p. 28.
- ¹⁵Ibid., p. 27.
- ¹⁶Education, p. 444-445.
- ¹⁷Esther, p. 22.
- ¹⁸Ibid., p. 27.
- ¹⁹Education, p. 443.
- ²⁰Esther, pp. 164, 298.
- ²¹Ibid., pp. 65-66.
- ²²Chartres, p. 194.

²³Esther, pp. 98-99.

²⁴Ibid., p. 7.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 7-8.

²⁶Chartres, p. 346.

²⁷Ibid., p. 350.

²⁸Esther, p. 222.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Education, p. 445.

³¹Esther, p. 158.

³²Ibid., pp. 159-160.

³³Chartres, p. 211.

³⁴Esther, pp. 169, 171, 187, 193-204, 228-249.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 247-248.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 258-259.

³⁷Ibid., p. 260.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 266-267.

³⁹Ibid., p. 271.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 273.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 284-302.

⁴²Chartres, p. 103.

⁴³See Michael Colacurcio, "The Dynamo and the Angelic Doctor: The Bias of Henry Adams' Medievalism," American Quarterly, Vol. 17 (1968), pp. 696-712.

⁴⁴Esther, p. 269.

⁴⁵Chartres, p. 260.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 250.

⁴⁷Degradation, p. 207.

⁴⁸Education, p. 446.

- ⁴⁹Chartres, p. 345.
- ⁵⁰Esther, p. 302.
- ⁵¹Education, pp. 436-448.
- ⁵²Esther, p. 48.
- ⁵³Ibid., pp. 74, 103.
- ⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 84-85.
- ⁵⁵Ibid., p. 59.
- ⁵⁶Ibid.
- ⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 75, 99.
- ⁵⁸Chartres, p. 70.
- ⁵⁹Esther, pp. 83-84.
- ⁶⁰Ibid., p. 266.
- ⁶¹Chartres, pp. 103, 145.
- ⁶²Esther, pp. 109-110.
- ⁶³Ibid., p. 90.
- ⁶⁴Ibid., p. 23.
- ⁶⁵Ibid., p. 85.
- ⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 125-137.
- ⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 74, 174-175, 177.
- ⁶⁸Ibid., p. 194.
- ⁶⁹Ibid., p. 240.
- ⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 278-280.
- ⁷¹Chartres, pp. 193, 206.
- ⁷²Ibid., pp. 254-256.
- ⁷³Ibid., p. 281.
- ⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 184, 185, 218, 219.
- ⁷⁵Ibid., p. 98.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

One of the main problems involved in asserting a definitive answer as to Adams' own views concerning the protagonists of his novels, Democracy (1879) and Esther (1884), at the time of the novels' composition lies in the fact that the novels were first published prior to the publication of Tahiti (1901), Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres (1904), The Education of Henry Adams (1905), and "A Letter to American Teachers of History" (1909), from whence one gains the greatest insight into Adams' beliefs concerning the nature of woman. The "Primitive Rights of Woman," alone, was conceived before the publication of the novels, being first delivered in a lecture in 1876.¹ It seems obvious, however, that if Adams did regard the protagonists as ideal female characters, he had a complete change of mind about the nature of woman by the time of his composition of the Chartres.

In the Chartres, Adams portrayed a medieval Europe under the influence of instinctual woman symbolized by the Virgin of Chartres. The bias toward instinct over reason in this work is obvious, as it is in the Education where we find the Virgin of a medieval period of unity compared with the Dynamo of a modern age of multiplicity. The power and instinct of medieval woman was shared with the primitive woman of "Primitive Rights of Woman" and Tahiti, but not with the modern American woman whom Adams described in the Education. Critics, in their

treatment of Madeleine Lee and Esther Dudley, the protagonists of his two novels, seem to overlook Adams' comments on the modern American woman in the Education, and to look only for traits linking the protagonists to the Virgin of Chartres.

While Madeleine Lee and Esther Dudley appear on first glance to be intuitive, after one gains a better understanding of what Adams means by instinct or intuition, one must regard them as basically anti-instinctual, or "degraded." Most critics, dealing with the characterizations of Mrs. Lee or Miss Dudley note only the passages in which their ability to know through feeling or emotion rather than reason is mentioned, along with passages noting their feminine strength of will or instinct of power. This is only part of the problem; they should also note what Adams regarded as man's and particularly woman's "natural instincts,"² notably the "instinct of self-preservation,"³ and "instinct of individuality,"⁴ and what I will term the instinct of sexuality, since the force of woman's instinct linked her to the "cradle and family."⁵ Also one might add the power of instinct in artistic creativity which Adams believed reached its peak in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁶ These are very important and both Madeleine Lee and Esther Dudley disavowed all but the last.

Almost any critic would have to admit that Mrs. Lee and Miss Dudley are somewhat bloodless; they are certainly not notably sexual. However, some might attribute their lack to Adams' novice ability as a novelist. When one looks at his later discussions of women, notably the Virgin of Chartres, or even his previous descriptions, Hallgerda, for instance, one cannot ignore the fact that Adams was capable of admiring a woman of substance. However, not only do the ladies'

characterizations lack the power of sex, but both reject opportunities to marry and perhaps find fulfillment, not just once but twice. Esther stands out in her repudiation of a church which would appeal to what she calls her "weakness," her love for her own "flesh and blood," as opposed to her "strength" which is evidently what she considers her reason.⁷ These are value judgments in direct contradiction to values implicit in Adams' thought.

Esther also stands out in her refusal to accept the idea of an after-life, except in a very abstract sense, which is contradictory to the "instinct for self-preservation" and "the lust for power in a future life"⁸ which characterized religious attitudes of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Both are notable for their disavowal of the "instinct of individuality" in their constant self-degradation which is basically unlike the Virgin who was a very affirmative personality. Finally Madeleine is most notable for her intellectualism and introspection, both antithetical to instinct.

I believe one can easily see the protagonists' lack of resemblance to Adams' instinctual woman as symbolized by the Virgin of Chartres; therefore, let us look at what I conceive to be their resemblance to the American woman of the Education. I will first sum up Adams' remarks on the American woman in the Education: The American woman's charm is "not the charm of a primitive type. She appeared as the result of a long series of discards, and her chief interest lay in what she had discarded." She "had no illusions or ambitions or new resources, and nothing to rebel against except her own maternity." She "seemed to be making a violent effort to follow the man," who "must leave her...to find her own way" which "she did by imitating him." "She was free [and]

sexless."¹⁹

The applicability of this description to Madeleine Lee and Esther Dudley is obvious. They had discarded their instincts and no longer had the "charm of a primitive type." Esther had no illusions about the supernatural; Madeleine rejected her ambitions for power in the state; and both rejected marriage and subsequently maternity. Madeleine Lee was "making a violent effort to follow the man" in her study of philosophy and other intellectual pursuits. Esther allowed herself to be led by the masculine and degraded thought of George Strong, a scientist, who, like the American male of the Education, "must leave her...to find her own way." That they are both free from familial ties and lack sexual fulfillment may be easily discerned.

Finally in both novels, one finds foils to the major protagonists who have, for the most part, been overlooked by critics. These foils, Sybil Ross, and Catherine Brooke, both come closer in their depiction to Adams' Virgin than either Madeleine Lee or Esther Dudley, as they are less intellectual and more practical. They, however, lack the desire for power which was noted by Adams in both primitive and medieval women.

In conclusion, the protagonists of Adams' novels, Madeleine Lee and Esther Dudley, are not, as some critics would have it, prototypes of the Virgin of Chartres, Adams' symbol for the instinctual woman found in his depictions of medieval and primitive women. Instead, they appear to be prototypes of the "degraded" American woman of the Education. If the instinctual woman is represented at all in the novels, they may be found in the secondary figures of Sybil Ross and Catherine Brooke.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹Miller, "Henry Adams and the Influence of Women," pp. 291-292.
- ²Esther, p. 299.
- ³Chartres, p. 250.
- ⁴Ibid., p. 260.
- ⁵Education, p. 446.
- ⁶Degradation, pp. 229-230.
- ⁷Esther, p. 299.
- ⁸Education, p. 427.
- ⁹Ibid., pp. 445-447.

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