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Murderous historian: Henry Adams, modernity, and the problem of subjectivity. (Volumes I and II)

Regalis, Martha Moseley, Ph.D.
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MURDEROUS HISTORIAN:
HENRY ADAMS,
MODERNITY, AND THE PROBLEM OF SUBJECTIVITY
VOLUME I

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in
The Department of English

by
Martha Moseley Regalis
B.A., Clemson University, 1975
M.A., Louisiana State University, 1980
May 1994
For Fathers and Mothers and Teachers
In All of Their Intermingled Identities:

John Z. and Elizabeth M. Moseley
and
Lewis P. Simpson
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation had a complicated genesis in the realms of mind before it ever acquired a physical habitation and a name on paper, and in writing it I have accumulated a special set of debts. The idea for this project occurred to me in a seminar with Lewis P. Simpson as an extension of an earlier study of Emerson’s conception of the Logos. My greatest scholarly debt in life is to Professor Simpson, who first acquainted me with the problems of consciousness, modernity, and language that I have begun to address here merely as a footnote to his own monumental achievements as a latter-day humanist and man of letters.

Other debts to my teachers at Louisiana State University are of scarcely less weight. James Olney helped me frame my ideas about the evolution—or perhaps dissolution—of the idea of the autonomous self in terms of the traditional canon of life-writing, and has lent both useful admonitions and support to me during the composition of this piece in an infinite variety of ways. His investments, particularly of time and energy as I shaped and edited this project, have ranged far beyond what any student could ask of any teacher. I first tackled the issue of medieval nominalism and the flowering (or blight) that it engendered as it became internalized in the intellectual life of the Reformation, and in Restoration and eighteenth-century English literature with John Fischer, and later...
explored these questions with Aubrey Williams, Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Florida. I am immensely grateful to both for their insight and for their endless willingness to explore ideas on these and other topics in conversation. Such exchanges are the breath of academic life, and without them we find ourselves lapsing into the silences of the solipsism that terrified Henry Adams. John R. May first introduced me to the work of Walter Ong, and with Professor May I explored the relationship between the technology of print culture and book-making, and the emergence of modern self-consciousness that is the focus of Adams's view of western intellectual history. Professor May has also been of immense value as a tireless liaison with the Graduate School and the Department of English at LSU since, as Henry Adams tended to be, I am frequently absent instead of present at designated points in physical space and time. Joseph V. Ricapito offered me insights on the picaresque which have informed my own discussion of Adams's mode of narrative in *The Education of Henry Adams*.

Other professors from outside the community at LSU have also been generous with their time and advice. James M. Cox, Avalon Professor of English Emeritus of Dartmouth College, listened as I talked my way toward a shape for my argument at a succession of MLA meetings, and was a continuing source of enthusiasm and inspiration, as well as an example of courage and intellectual integrity. His view of Henry Adams
has colored my own thinking and writing as certainly as his view of teaching and learning has altered my understanding of the life of the scholar. Thanks are also due to Professor Kenneth Surin of the Program in Literature at Duke University for his unfailing generosity with his time, and for his persistent and probing questions which, while daunting, made it easier for me to grapple with the problems of modernity, postmodernism, and the idea of a transpersonal concept of identity. Professor Ronald G. Witt of the Department of History at Duke helped me chart a path through the complexities of the diffusion of the nominalist view of language in medieval and Renaissance Europe in an NEH summer seminar in 1993. His assistance was invaluable as I picked my way through the tangled history of the view of language that Henry Adams believed to be at the heart of modernity. While we do not always read the Renaissance in identical ways, Professor Witt's rigor and his insistence on precision have helped me clarify my views on any number of issues in early modern intellectual history.

Differing from these debts to my teachers, but no less, is my debt to Gregory Boyce Lyon, my former student, who is now a graduate student himself in early modern history at Princeton University. I first read Gilles Deleuze's The Logic of Sense in his company, as he first read Ficino's commentary on Plato's Symposium in mine, and I have found...
that the greatest reward of teaching is that our students become our teachers.

Finally, I would like to thank those who supplied help in more material ways. Virginia S. Wilson and William Youngblood, of The North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics, were a unified source of unfailing encouragement and of release time for trips back to LSU in the early days of my writing and research. Marcelline Barron, Dean of Academic Programs and Research at the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy, awarded curriculum development grants and travel money which facilitated my research and allowed me to explore my ideas by teaching them in non-traditional courses. The staff at the Massachusetts Historical Society allowed me remarkable freedom of access to Henry Adams's personal library and papers in the summer of 1984. Many of the volumes in his library are extensively annotated, and some are mentioned here. Adams's copies of William James and Henry Maudsley and Karl Marx, as well as his readings on the emerging science of entropy were of crucial importance as he formulated the views of self and history that are the subject of my own study. Reading his annotations in the actual bodily artifacts of his books rather than on microfilm invested my time at the Historical Society with his (appropriately) ghostly presence.

Perhaps greater than all of these debts which have to do with the public world and public life are those private
and nameless ones that I owe to my parents, whose kindness and integrity, and whose generous support have made this rather extended project possible.

While living in exile on his farm, Machiavelli once wrote that his greatest pleasure in life came at the moment when he could strip off the muddy clothes of laborer and exchange them for metaphorical robes of state. In this "graver dress," he wrote, he could enter his study, and visit the "antique courts of the ancients" where he could taste at will the food of mind that seemed to him, as he roamed the historicized and secularized versions of Augustine's courts and palaces of memory, to be his alone. My own greatest pleasure has been less that of the isolated consciousness in communion with the simulacra of thinkers conjured in the private spaces of mind than it has been the experience of communing with the extraordinary group of men and women whom I have mentioned here. Their gifts of mind and spirit and their wisdom have made my writing--indeed, my own education--a pleasure that will always be present to my memory.
PREFACE

This dissertation was produced over a very long period of time. It began as a fairly straightforward exercise in the history of life-writing. I intended to place Henry Adams in the usual line of thinkers—Augustine, Montaigne, and Rousseau—and I planned to show how he anticipated the autobiographical experiments of Gertrude Stein and Samuel Beckett. That route would have been an easier one and, had I followed it, this project would have been completed long ago, but as I worked with Adams, and discovered his links with the Pre-Raphaelites and with Swinburne and William Story as a young man, and his subsequent patronage of Auguste Rodin, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, and Henri Bergson in later life, I became aware of how passionately involved he was with the articulation of a modernist aesthetic of self-representation. I also came to realize that, in his autobiography and his essays, Adams was in search of a world founded in something other than historical reason and represented through something other the agency of the personal self. My way was, at first, fraught with paradox, if not outright confusion. I could not, for example, decide exactly why Adams had found it necessary to destroy his personal diaries, and, symbolically, his youth as he finished his painstaking history of the United States. And then there were the religious dilemmas of the pseudonymous novel *cher, which was written at about the same time as
the History of the United States. The works that most people know—Mt. St. Michel and The Education of Henry Adams—were equally confusing, especially since Adams had claimed that they were the first two installments of an autobiographical enterprise that he equated with suicide, just as he equated biography with murder. I was thus fairly sure, that when Adams wrote of a "scientific" history he meant something other than what most people had assumed he had meant, or at least, that his ideas about it changed between the 1880s and the first decade of the twentieth century.

Adams became something like the hound of heaven for me, except that I pursued him rather than his pursuing me, most notably through the mazes of streets that lead through Washington to Rock Creek Church Cemetery, which because Adams habitually referred to it simply as "Rock Creek Cemetery," I had some difficulty in locating. When I finally did get to the cemetery, the day after Christmas, just before the annual meeting of MLA in 1984, I found that the landscaping that Adams had commissioned made locating the gravesite with its famous statue by St. Gaudens impossible without a map. I also learned that Adams had insisted that no "verbal markers" identify the grave, and that the statue remain nameless. One of the most famous statues in late nineteenth-century American sculpture is thus hidden from any but the most tenacious seeker by tall evergreens. One could pass the monument on all but its northern side and
believe that it was a clump of trees. Having obtained my map, I found myself standing before the statue that Adams claimed had said everything he had to say. Like everything else about Adams, however, the statue was only another unfolding of a Chinese box of self-representations. That late December afternoon, in a blaze of sunlight, I found myself face-to-face with the most enigmatic statue I had ever encountered. It was both male and female, both powerful and vulnerable, both anguished and at peace, as Adams had intended it to be. The statue was the wordless metaphor—the perfect silence—which in its stillness communicated all that Adams had meant by "education" and all the ways of seeing and being that lay outside the realm of rational discourse. The statue did indeed have the power to tell me everything I was to learn about Henry Adams's personal odyssey, but at the time I felt more like Browning's Childe Roland, and the statue looked more like a ruined and gutted chapel than any legitimate source of revelation. I was like the tourists that Adams himself liked to watch from the vantage point of the Egyptian marble benches that surround the statue. He enjoyed his role as unnoticed observer then, and I suppose he would have enjoyed watching me as I, like the pilgrims of two generations before me, read the hieroglyph of my own condition in the impassive face before me without knowing that I was beholding a simulacrum of my own dilemmas.
What I gradually realized, after a summer among Adams's books and papers at the Massachusetts Historical Society, was that the statue, like the *Education*, which Adams claimed shielded a core of meaning hidden from all but the most determined readers, was a sort of Augustinian emblem of reading. The idle passerby would simply pass by—and be rewarded with a husk of meaning. Adams's real audience would persist, and be rewarded with a kernel of meaning that was nevertheless and necessarily indecipherable. The unmarked statue haunted me, especially since Adams had also demanded that no illustrations accompany the *Education*.

Suddenly one day, as I was thinking about Adams's fondness for Pope, I realized that Adams had centered his ideas about the possibility of meaning in history in the problem of language for some of the same reasons that Pope had written the *Dunciad*. Pope had feared the linguistic legacy of the philosophic *via moderna*, and Adams's work was a sort of self-consciously final exemplum of it. I thus began another journey, and this one led me through mazes of mind that made the streets of Washington seem like models of clarity as I retraced Adams's personal intellectual history. Adams may have begun with Gibbon and Hegel, but his own path, as my own did, carried me to the Reformation--which Adams saw as the crack between the medieval and modern worlds--and to the nominalism of Scotus and Ockham that Adams believed had been its place of origin. After a year of
such endeavor I understood that Adams had indeed extended the modernizing project of Scotus and Ockham, but had done so not by embracing its logical outgrowth in enlightenment thinking, but by rejecting it. Most specifically, Adams sought, with Nietzsche, to reject the doctrine that mind and consciousness are the world. He became fascinated with philosophic vitalism late in life, and saw it as a counterpart to the explosive new work in theoretical physics that preoccupied him in the first years of the twentieth century. Seen in this light, Adams's claim in some of his letters that the *Education* had represented an exploration of Bergsonian doctrines about identity made more sense. I saw that Adams, who was born in 1838, but, as he insisted, had also been born in the twelfth century with Abelard, and reborn in new form every time he finished writing a new book, was most properly seen, as he himself claimed, as a theorist and historian of historiography. His proper company in the history of ideas was indeed provided by Augustine and Montaigne, and Rousseau, but also by Petrarch, Ockham, Althusser, and Deleuze. My own study has thus taken unexpected turns, and as it has turned, I have turned; in the process, the boundaries between Henry Adams and me, and the text about Henry Adams that I have written into being have become progressively more blurred.

This is not a traditional dissertation. I have not included the usual overview of scholarly texts about Adams,
and there are few citations from them because most scholars have read Adams from either a more literary or more historical point of view than I have. There are works like Robert Vitzhum's *The American Compromise* or Lois Hughson's *From Biography to History*, in which Adams is primarily an historian and biographer. Then there are more literary treatments--like William Decker's *The Literary Vocation of Henry Adams*, or John Carlos Rowe's *Henry Adams and Henry James*, or Carolyn Porter's brilliant discussion of Adams in her *Seeing and Being: The Plight of the Participant Observer in Emerson, James, Adams and Faulkner*. These, and others like them, are excellent and useful studies, but I felt that if Adams saw his letters and essays, biographies and autobiographies as pieces of fractured whole that was both representative of himself and of a modern consciousness of history, then he needed to be represented in those terms. I have thus chosen to consider Adams as he himself considered himself--as a social theorist and historiographer. Thus Foucault and Hans Blumenberg, Gilles Deleuze and Georges Bataille have replaced the more expected names from the realm of American Studies.

My work is intended as a series of views of Adams, a kaleidoscope of perspectives. It is not intended as a final reading of his work, but rather as what Harold Bloom once called a "map of misreading"--the kind of reading that necessarily leads us to a renewed and more vital response.
As a student of Adams, I have sought to emulate the role he assumes as guide in his *Mt. St. Michel and Chartres*. I cannot claim to point the reader toward the truth of the texts we will encounter, but I can promise to give him a tour around their periphery.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOLUME 1

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ............................................. iv
PREFACE ............................................................ ix
ABSTRACT ........................................................ xvi

CHAPTER

1  SUBJECTIVITY, WORLD PICTURES, AND THE PROBLEM OF LANGUAGE ........................................... 1
2  ADAMS AND THE PROJECT OF MODERNITY ......................... 40
3  THE SOFT PARADE: THE FORMS OF RADICAL NOMINATION AND THE SHAPES OF SIMULACRA ...................... 117

VOLUME 2

4  HENRY ADAMS AND THE UNNAMEABLE ‘I’ ......................... 203
5  ADAMS, HISTORY, AND THE SUBJECT OF MODERNITY ......... 294

BIBLIOGRAPHY ........................................................ 329
VITA ................................................................. 338
ABSTRACT

This study traces Henry Adams's evolution from an enlightenment historian to a prescient postmodern theorist, and explores how he came to regard his own intellectual history as paradigmatic of the arc of subjectivity in the West from the Middle Ages to Nietzsche and Bergson. Adams was a self-conscious philosophical nominalist, and he believed that his radical doubts about the capacity of language for embodying meaning had their origin in medieval nominalism. Adams found the seeds of modernity and the problem of subjectivity which were the focus of his own musings on the nature of the self and history in Abelard and Ockham. Nominalism was, in Adams's view, the only tenable position for the self-imprisoned subject of modernity. Adams's view of language and its powers also anticipates the view of the relationship between self and identity, and self and world in later thinkers like Louis Althusser and Gilles Deleuze. Partly because of his conception of the de-centered Word, the act of writing enjoys a special status in Adams's work. Adams's eloquent and rapacious "I" consumes all of universal history. His "I" is a self-creating and fluid entity constituted within a verbal matrix. Adams is thus not only Adams, but all of his models from Augustine to Petrarch to Bergson. Adams believed that the model of world grounded in consciousness was one that condemned the perceiving subject to a terrible isolation; his final efforts at self-
representation in *Mt. St. Michel and Chartres* and *The Education of Henry Adams*, and in the historical essays that he claimed were addenda to his autobiography are efforts to murder the personal self in order to escape it. Adams's infamous claims that biography was murder and autobiography suicide become explicable in this context. Adams's many versions of self in textual form—whether his *personae* appear as biographical or historical characters or as figures in his parodic version of autobiography—are all founded in written texts which become the ground of his communication with the world.
CHAPTER 1

SUBJECTIVITY, WORLD PICTURES, AND THE PROBLEM OF LANGUAGE

Toward the end of his life, Henry Adams came to speak of his long and varied writing career as a quest for "form" that had found its fruition in "failure." In trying to define what he meant, we may think of Adams's "failure" as embodied in the works for which he is best remembered—Mt. St. Michel and Chartres and The Education of Henry Adams—which Adams regarded as a single effort that had been extended and completed in his essay "The Rule of Phase Applied to History." He wrote John Franklin Jameson that the "Rule of Phase" was merely a "supplementary chapter" for the Education. Adams implied that, taken together, these three works constituted his autobiography. Adams's avowed purpose in all three writings had been to "suggest a reform of the whole University system, grouping all knowledge as an historical stream to be treated by historical methods." He wrote that he had invented a new form for the three works, and that his innovation would enable him to construct an autobiographical survey of the "stream of knowledge" from the twelfth century to the twentieth that was "literary and not technical."

Adams's claim that a work on architecture and stained glass and an essay on the processes of history were part of his own life story is startling. Although we know that he
had predicted that in the future all history would have to be autobiographical, difficulties arise when we attempt to press Adams's use of the word "form." Adams was a man who adopted many masks, and his quest for aesthetic form was itself but another of Adams's many personae, one which was synonymous with his quest for the shape of personal identity. Both quests seem at some point to have merged in his mind with the "historical stream [of knowledge] from the 12th century till today."

Explicitly, Adams believed that his identity was inseparable from, and perhaps synonymous with the patterns of intellectual history from the late Middle Ages to the twentieth century. He chose to engage in a species of life-writing that allowed him to use himself and his own intellectual evolution as a paradigm for western intellectual history. This enterprise was both enigmatic and paradoxical. As his niece Mabel LaFarge explained, Adams "loved to hide himself and invented every possible means for doing so." At the same time, he lived as though he were continually on stage in the theater of history. The persona he adopts is not unlike that of the picaro, and his mode of autobiography is closer to the first person--and presumably fictional--narrative of a picaresque novel than it is to that of John Stuart Mill. Whether he was destroying his diaries and announcing that he had destroyed six years of his life in the process, or writing
pseudonymous novels, or merging his own identity with the Queen of Tahiti's in a joint memoir, he was always engaged both in self-creation and in the analysis and ironic exposure of the fictions and myths of the idea of personal identity which he recognized as having informed the primary notions of order in western society. This was equally true in the case of his histories and biographies. Like his other experiments in narrative, these more conventional works tended to deal explicitly with the failed promises of republics and individuals, while at the same time providing Adams with yet more surrogate selves.

In all of his literary experiments Adams was in search of an appropriate monument for his existence. Believing with Hegel that he inhabited an "age of prose," Adams wrote primarily in the narrative mode. He described narrative as a "ruling mode of perception," a "style of comprehension" in the modern world. However, Adams's novels, histories, biographies, and autobiographies are all somewhat oblique explorations of the boundaries of the personal self. Like many thinkers of his day, Adams was profoundly aware that the self is the creature of its perceptions. The route of his quest for a model of self-representation that would reflect the chaos of modern life rather than an organic notion of order led him to adopt and abandon the generic forms of novel, narrative history, and biography. In fact, his narrative quest is a kind of charnel house, littered
with exhausted forms and selves, and unified and mediated by
the extraordinary body of his letters, which run to six
volumes. Adams's autobiography, the presumed formal apex of
his career, is an exercise in which he legitimizes his
radical rejection of the concept of identity as a viable
organizing principle for the definition of his being. In
order to reveal the great hoax inherent in the notion of the
personal self, Adams had to deconstruct even the
conventional forms of autobiography, and our experience of
reading his own efforts at self-representation is the
experience of stripping off the layers of autobiographical
texts that precede and determine the shape of Adams's
narrative. Indeed, if it can be said that his writing as a
whole involves a quest for form, it must also be said that
it also and equally involves a quest for simultaneous self-
definition and annihilation. Adams's autobiography echoes
and underscores Rilke's anguished recognition that, for the
subject of modernity, "nowhere will world exist but
within." In "The Rule of Phase," Adams wrote that "the
mind has always figured its motives as reflections of
itself...and this is as true in its conception of
electricity as in its instinctive imitation of a god."
"Always and everywhere," he continues, "the mind creates its
own universe and pursues its own phantoms." Adams was not
Emerson, exulting in the possibility that "mind creates the
world...and that at last all matter is dead mind." Rather,
he envisions the self and the subjectivity which governs its perceptions as a permanent prison-house. In the Preface to the Education he says that the work, like the Henry Adams of the title, is the product of a "shrunken Ego."

Appropriately, the Education is written in the third person. Alienated even from himself, Adams cannot be sure that the self that pens its own life story has any existence.

...I am trying to persuade myself that there is any such thing as me. More and more I am forced to admit that the whole show is a piece of idiocy...but I wrote all that ten years ago as education.  

Annotating his copies of the works of William James some twenty years earlier, Adams was already thinking of the self in terms that were beyond modern.

Is thought a stream? Has it a starting point or an end? Why not call it an ocean with streams in it? Or the inter-reflections of mirrors?...Or a magnet, with lines of force? Or a condition, like time and space? Does thought think, or do I think, or does the earth-worm think?

Throughout his copies of the James volumes, Adams's annotations reflect his obsession with the problem of consciousness and its engulfment of world.

The soul in philosophy is the ego. The phenomenon is not ego, but the consciousness of the ego. 'Cogito ergo sum,' the old, old formula! But what am I? All this is to return to the old dispute without answering the old question.
Elsewhere, in another annotated volume in his library, Henry Maudsley’s *Body and Will*, Adams marked a number of passages that suggest that the supposition that there is any world external to our own consciousnesses is no more than a useful working hypothesis. In his extensive annotations to Maudsley, Adams wrote that it is "futile ingenuity" to "think anything outside of human consciousness." If Adams was uncertain about the nature of consciousness and the existence of the world outside the self, he also despaired of attaining to any sort of knowledge through introspection.

Of all studies the one he would rather have avoided was that of his own mind. He knew of no tragedy so heart-rending as introspection...Nearly all the highest intelligence known to history had drowned itself in the reflection of its own thought and the bovine survivors had rudely told the truth about it without affecting the intelligent.

Adams’s fascination with the problem of consciousness led him back to metaphysics and to the reconfiguration of the history of philosophy as a history of subjectivity which would end in a science of chaos.

He got out his Descartes again; dipped into his Hume and Berkeley, wrestled anew with his Kant, pondered solemnly over his Hegel and Schopenhauer and Hartmann; strayed gaily away with his Greeks—all ...to ask what Unity meant, and what happened when one denied it.8

His studies led him to conclude that as "bottomless" as nihilism and pessimism seemed, the western philosophic tradition had been content to collapse the "universe of
contradictions" into "the human thought as one Will" and "treat it as representation." Adams was not satisfied with the idea of treating the universe as a "motion of mind." At the same time, he feared that one could know the universe only "as oneself; it was psychology."

Because Adams framed his philosophic difficulties in the way that he did, any study of Henry Adams is necessarily concerned with Adams's oddly prescient articulation of the twin problems of modernity and subjectivity. Long before the time of postmodern theorists, and even before the time of Heidegger, Adams was addressing the problem of what it means to be a splintered subject who both constructs and inhabits the mental landscape that we know as modernity. Adams claimed that the Chicago Exhibition of 1893 had shattered his sense of historical continuity, but as early as 1882 he had begun to ask what it means to be a subject thinking in a privately constituted world that it conceptualizes in representational terms. All of his late work is about what it means to be an isolated self conceiving of the world in terms of a construct as artificial as that of modernity on the one hand, and about the ages that came before it in terms of what Heidegger called their alternative "world pictures" on the other. Though he began by assuming with most Victorians that history was a mirror which could provide both the individual and his age with meaning and a map of the future he ends by
questioning the very possibility of producing even subjectively grounded meanings in history. He may have claimed to have found a ground for his being in the twelfth century and the sense of unity that he found there, but he also came to believe that this was both a curiously artificial and a curiously modern way of reconstructing the past as a simulacrum of self.

Adams was one of the first self-conscious students of modernism, and he found a focus for his fascination with the alien entity that was modern man in the phenomenon of machines and the universe of force which they seemed to emblematize. The theory of history which he developed in the first decade of the twentieth century uses the machine as a symbol of the triumph of a conceptual and impersonal series of forces which he saw as having replaced the principle of identity and order with a vision of mappable chaos. Implicitly, then, Adams's late work is not only about modernity and subjectively constituted worlds. It is also about the advent of the formless formulae and the anti-selves that mark the embrace of difference and exteriority in post-modern thought. Adams's critique of identity in fact helps explain his recognition that the concept of personal identity with its dependence on the existence of substantive constructs like "god" and "self" and "world" is not the only one for organizing experience. Adams recognized in the first decade of the twentieth century that what was at stake
in modernity was the emergence of a subject which would arbitrarily "picture" both history and the self as constructions of mind. Adams also knew, however, that the Cartesian model of consciousness was not the only one for the perceiving subject, and that the modern self was not a single entity at all, but rather the product of "multiplicity," a term that Adams uses idiosyncratically as a sort of shorthand for his sense of the fragmentation of modern intellectual life. Subjectivity itself is a condition which determines the self-conscious fascination with the power to conceive a world picture, but the subject is multiple, an entity simultaneously beset and determined by what Anthony Cascardi calls "a field of conflicting discourses"—the often contradictory modes of self-conception and expression that characterize the discourses of philosophy, literature, religion and psychology in the modern world.¹⁰ In this view, the self is a compilation of multiple voices, a production founded in language. Thus, Adams can legitimately claim that he is equally present in his Education, his biography of John Randolph, and in his history of the Madison and Jefferson administrations through his articulation of these entities through words.

As I have suggested, Adams couched his own meditation on modernity and a prophecy of post-modernity in his letters and in the series of texts he called his autobiography—Mt. St. Michel and Chartres, The Education of Henry Adams, and
"The Rule of Phase Applied to History." His resulting forays into the history of consciousness and self-consciousness and the problem of subjectivity required him to center his discussion in a consideration of modern man's dependence on language and its adequacy as an instrument for connecting him to the uncertain world that lies beyond the perceiving self. Adams revisits the ancient question of realism and nominalism in language, a question that was apparently much on his mind in the first years of the twentieth century as he finished *Mt. St. Michel and Chartres* and began writing the *Education*. In his annotated copy of Alfred R. Wallace's *Man's Place in the Universe*, Adams articulated his perennial fascination with the "multiplicity of the modern world" in terms of nominalism and realism.

'Unity' means to be one in regard to mechanical, physical, and chemical laws. This one-ness constitutes a unit. Therefore fishes constitute a unit. Water is a unit. Space and time are units. The old question of Realism and Nominalism alive as ever.11

Gilles Deleuze locates the origins of nominalism in the thought of the Stoics,12 and Adams claimed to be fascinated by Zeno, at least, but his questions about the limits of language are more reflective of Plato's *Cratylus*, and the self-erasing impulse of the *Parmenides* than they are of the works of Zeno. Moreover, Adams focuses on medieval nominalism rather than its classical antecedents as a manifestation of western man's fascination with the power of
will and the phenomenon of force. Adams believed that the nominalists and their *via moderna* had begotten a universe of subjectivity in which language was specially privileged. For Adams, modernity and subjectivity were monstrous doubles of one another, the twin fruits of the displacement of God and the Logos by man and the fragile and tentative words that he employs as vehicles for transmitting meaning. Adams's fear of words and his fascination with their power seem to have crystallized along with his doubts about the possibility of producing an objective, scientifically determined version of history. He saw in nominalism the roots not only of the fragmented sensibility of the modern world, but also of its faith in science and in the possibility of naming a new heaven, new earth into being through the right use of reason.

Adams's fascination with language was hardly unique; other late nineteenth-century writers were aware that at least from the time of Descartes, the power of language had been determined by the "I" which uses it. Adams's innovation was his replication of Pope's location of the origins of the fragmentation of an ideal of community founded and reinforced through a universal language in medieval nominalism. The "I" of the Cartesian *cogito* both constitutes and determines its world because of philosophic innovations that preceded the *Discourse on Method* by centuries. Adams realized that Descartes was not interested
in the nature of the hats and cloaks that passed for people in the streets beneath his windows. Rather, both Descartes and Adams after him, helplessly following in the paths of the *via moderna*, were concerned with how their own "personal 'I'" was manifested in the hats and cloaks or any other objects that came before their field of vision. Subjectivity is triumphant in Descartes' *Meditations*, and becomes the primary term of existence in the modern world at the same time that personal identity, with language as its mouthpiece, is necessarily explicitly privileged and empowered. In such a world, the words that we use to connect ourselves to the world outside the self assume deific capacities. For the subject of modernity, words are the primary indicators of being.

Adams's view of language is best understood in the context of Ockham's fourteenth-century versions of nominalism and the resurgent, but sometimes unconscious, nominalism of the late nineteenth century. Adams's ability to create and abolish selves through narrative, and his belief that his biographies were really about himself echoes Nietzsche's claim that "every name in history is 'I.'" Deleuze sees Lewis Carroll as a central figure in nineteenth-century nominalism. The pseudonymous Carroll, himself a double and renaming of Ernest Dodgson, can have his heroine, Alice, go on a quest where she has a revelation that causes her to misplace her sense of personal identity.
Afterwards, Alice experiences life as it is defined by an alien sense of the order of things, a world in which Humpty Dumpty says that when he uses a word it means exactly what he decides it will mean. Alice as a subject of modernity thus reverses the experience of epic heroes, whose quests were crowned by a revelation of meaning. Meanings confirmed from outside the universe of subjectivity are lost in the seas of modernity.

There is a little of Dodgson, of Lewis Carroll, and of Alice in Henry Adams. Adams embarks from the vantage point provided by the enlightenment sensibility on a quest for education, one which he thought would have predictable ends. His quest is memorialized in acts of life-writing that are also a succession of literary funerals. He projects his own linguistic anti-self into a textual entombment through a self-proclaimed "suicide in print." Adams thus represents the triumph of a view of language that both empowers and buries the personal self of the writer.

There are two tendencies implicit in the view of language that accompanies the emergence of the modern world. On the one hand, the Ockhamist, and, later, the Cartesian vision suggests that the world beyond the hats and cloaks is still available. It is the locus of reality that has shifted, not its final composition. God is dependent on the perceiving self's consciousness of God. World is contingent on the perceiving self's constitution of it as world. God
and Self and World remain intact in this vision, and language retains its capacity to embody meanings that reasonable individuals can not only agree upon, but which they can use as a route of access to the realm of the transcendent. The other vision, that of Ockham; of Swift's "Modern Author" in A Tale of a Tub; of Lewis Carroll in Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass; and of Henry Adams in his late work, suggests that words are arbitrary designations which, like the self that articulates them, create a chasm as much as a bridge between self and world. In Mt. St. Michel and Chartres Adams writes that linguistic realism was the Roman arch that presupposed unity between this world and another more permanent one. As he wrote again and again, the "attempt to bridge the chasm between multiplicity and unity" was "the oldest problem of philosophy, religion, and science." Adams demonstrates in Mt. St. Michel that nominalism is the necessary stance for a modernist, but he also says that it offers "no cover at all." There is thus a profound tension in Adams between the longing for unity and the embrace of multiplicity. For Adams, medieval nominalism began with Abelard's notion of concepts. This doctrine, Adams writes, was like a "false wooden roof" concealing a flawed construction. Despite his skepticism, Adams nevertheless retains a faith in "an energy not individual" that is "hidden" somewhere. His faith allowed him continue to question the possibility of the
availability of some universal fountain of meaning, while balancing his linguistic doubles on the edge of the abyss of meaninglessness. Thus, his "Prayer to the Virgin of Chartres" co-exists with the ever-multiplying levels of narrative voice and self in the Education.

Adams seems to have actively sought release from the "sea of introspection" in an arena beyond the realm of personal identity which was available to him through writing. His Education records his embrace of a dimension of being excluded by the whole concept of identity. Deleuze, who places himself, much as Henry Adams did, in the company first of the Stoics and then of Ockham and his nominalist followers, calls this arena the "realm of sense." Deleuze defines the realm of sense as a region of pure event, and sees it has having been recaptured in Nietzsche's desire to reverse Platonism as well as in the linguistic studies of late nineteenth-century linguists like Meinong. 14 It was this region, in radical rejection of his past and what he regarded as the discontinuity of being that it engendered, that Adams sought to figure for his readers in his autobiography and later essays.

As it is represented in his tri-partite autobiography, and as he had planned, Adams's thought recapitulates and mirrors the intellectual history of the modern world. He begins his account of himself in the last three chapters of Mt. St. Michel and Chartres. There, Adams discusses the
problem of medieval nominalism in language that anticipates Deleuze's description of the world of sense, that realm that freed the Stoics from the necessity of reflection and the prisonhouse of what would later be called historical self-consciousness. For Adams, the roots of his own identity were implicit in the linguistic dilemmas of the thirteenth century. Adams's language in *Mt. St. Michel* anticipates the cadence of the self-erasing sentences of the *Education*. As he explained repeatedly, the first part of his autobiography, *Mt. St. Michel and Chartres*, was an attempt to "realise the Unity of Thought in the Thirteenth Century." The *Education*, he claimed, was an attempt to "Realise the Multiplicity of Thought in the Twentieth" (*Letters*, VI, 117). Adams claims that he chose the thirteenth century as a point of unity, but, in fact, he believed that "unity," at least as he understood it, had been lost in the twelfth century. And, as Hans Blumenberg has suggested half a century later, and Adams already knew in 1903, the roots of modernity actually lie in late medieval nominalism's conception of a *deus absconditus* who was far removed from man, but who had given man language and will to allow him to construct a shared sense of a world peopled by individuals who exist only as discrete entities. Our concepts of world in Ockham's view are acts of mind, and it is only through them that we attain to any knowledge of self or world. Adams saw in the nominalists' focus on the relationship...
between language, logic, and reality, and their emphasis on
man's power for interpreting texts the seeds of the
subjectively generated universe that would flower in the
historical consciousness of a Petrarch, and begin to self-
destruct in the Reformation's efforts at radical
enlightenment for the faithful through the reading of
individual texts. For Adams, the project of religious
enlightenment which would reach its secularized apotheosis
in the invention of America as a scientific project was
conceived in the academy of the late Middle Ages.

The works which make up Adams's autobiography are a
sort of twentieth-century version of a Jonathan Swift's Tale
of a Tub, and, as in their great original, false prefaces
and self-deconstructing assertions contrive to entrap and
confront the reader with all of his preconceptions about the
capacity of narrative to contain meaning. Because Adams
chose to frame his narrative of his existence in this way,
any study of him, in a perverse sense, can only incidentally
be a dissertation about Henry Adams. Seen as an infinite
and echoing hall of mirrors, the entire corpus of Adams's
work is nevertheless finally empty of whatever it was that
was Henry Adams. As he had promised in letters that
antedate his "autobiography" by twenty years, he erases
himself in print. To study Henry Adams's work is to study
not the man himself but the context which created his vision
of the world he inhabited and his vision of the world that
would come after him. Adams would have approved the idea of his being only incidental to a study whose title features his name prominently. His way of conjuring a self by representing its absence allowed Adams to effectively realize his own erasure and the suicide of at least his literary selves in print.

Adams doubted the adequacy of the perceiving self as an sufficient narrating principle for his own autobiography, much less as a source of order in a narrative about an individually experienced but nevertheless collective cultural past that we still call history. By the early years of the twentieth century he was writing that he doubted that there was any such thing as Henry Adams at all. At the same time, and perhaps more than any other single figure in western intellectual history, Henry Adams is an appropriate focus for a study of the fabrication and simultaneous fragmentation of the subject amid its various avenues of expression in discourse. In his three-part autobiography--Mt. St. Michel and Chartres, The Education of Henry Adams, and "The Rule of Phase Applied to History"--Henry Adams self-consciously writes a coda to the centuries of self-referential discourse that followed Montaigne's location of the self in the processes of narrating his perceptions, and Descartes' definition half a century later of man as a "thing which thinks." Adams is also an appropriate focus for a study of the fate of the
enlightenment project, which I, following Jurgen Habermas, have called the "project of modernity." Adams saw his intellectual odyssey as not only a focal point for such a discussion, but as its embodiment. In dispassionate fact, Adams's career does epitomize in small the progress of western intellectual history and the idea of self-consciousness from, as he says, at least the eighteenth century to the present, and perhaps, as he believed, from the twelfth century to the present.

The enlightenment project as it is usually understood originated in the eighteenth century, and accounts for Adams's otherwise peculiar and always misunderstood claim that his was initially an eighteenth-century sensibility. The "project of modernity" encompasses the primary aim of the Enlightenment, with its faith in Condorcet's belief that there was one universal law and one universal language. Implicit in this claim was the corollary notion that history was single and universal, and that it chronicled man's progress toward the sacralization and demystification of nature and man's knowledge of nature alike. The adherents of the project of modernity recognized that change and transitoriness were apt to intrude in the gradual realization of enlightenment, but they believed that these were temporary states which would be overcome as science replaced mystery in all areas of human endeavor, and the modes of discourse which accompanied them were examined,
honored, and perfected. The power of the enlightenment's vision of man derived from its faith in the value of the individual, or more exactly, of the personal self.

Adams began with this faith, but like a single thread, unifying the myriad modes of discourse which comprise the body of Adams's work is the single theme of the crisis and eventual failure of the enlightenment project as it was manifested in the ideas about the individual's capacity to know himself and his world. The Ockhamist project, which Adams saw as the ancestor of the enlightenment project, had sought to derive an ahistorical truth available to all men based on reason and experience and articulated in the shared signs of a common language. Ockham's hopes explode in Adams's autobiography. Ockham had insisted that meaning would emerge as man analyzed the phenomena of his world. Adams finds not meaning, but only an infinity of disconnected signs. He ends not as a modernist at all, but as a postmodernist whose suspicion of the enlightenment project rival that first of Nietzsche and Weber, and later that of figures as diverse as Adorno and Althusser, Habermas and Deleuze. Adams may have called himself everything from an eighteenth-century man to a "conservative Christian anarchist" to a Hegelian and, by implication in his letters, a Marxist, but whatever name he assigned himself, he believed that his intellectual experience was the type or figure of the progress of western consciousness and self-
consciousness from the "seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (Education, 723) and "tastes founded on Pope and Dr. Johnson" (Education, 752) to a new world picture whose lineaments were determined by Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud.

Turn the dilemma as he pleased, he still came back on the eighteenth century and the law of Resistance, of Truth; of Duty, and of Freedom. He could under no circumstances have guessed what the next fifty years would teach him, but sometimes, in his old age he wondered—whether the most clear and certain knowledge would have helped him...would he have quitted his abstract ideals...to perform an expiatory pilgrimage to State Street and ask for the fatted calf of his grandfather Brooks...

(Education, 740)

Nowhere is Adams's transformation into a postmodernist more apparent than in his shifting attitudes toward the problem of language. If the unifying thread in Adams's personal project is that of the gradual erosion of faith in the enlightenment project and its replacement by a new vision that was essentially postmodernist in design, the unifying thread in my own meditation is Adams's fascination with the power of language. Implicit in the enlightenment project is the notion that there are single answers to multiple difficulties. If we could represent the world accurately--picture it accurately and objectively--and, by extension, assign it accurate names through language, we could control and order it. Adams and others of his
generation still felt this to be as true of the writing of history as it was of the projects of the natural sciences. And, as David Harvey points out, this was a way of thinking about language and about the world that it represents that united thinkers who were otherwise quite different from one another. Voltaire and Diderot, Condorcet and Hume, Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill and Matthew Arnold shared a sense that a "single, correct mode of representation" was possible. Among these, however, at least Matthew Arnold, and, more profoundly, Henry Adams, came to feel quite differently about language. As the previously cited annotations to William James suggest, Adams wrote that all the new philosophy did was to revisit the endless debate between nominalism and realism.

Adams's most explicit discussion of the problem of language is couched in the imaginary journeys that make up *Mt. St. Michel and Chartres: A Study in Twelfth-Century Unity*. As readers, we accompany him in search of a vision of unity, but, with Adams as a unreliable guide, we founder on the rock of the uncertainties implicit in nominalism at the same time that we see in them the reflection of our doubts about the nature of language. Adams believed that he was part of what later thinkers have called a paradigm shift, and that he had found the roots of modernity and the roots of his own epistemological difficulties in the late Middle Ages and the growing denial of the capacity of man to
attain to a knowledge of universals. Adams thus dramatizes the ancient conflict between linguistic nominalism and realism, and writes his own version of the phenomenon of resurgent nominalism which characterizes the philosophical discourse of modernity.

From the time in the 1860s when he discovered John Smith's falsification of autobiographical episodes in history of the Virginia colony, Henry Adams seems to have feared the power of the word at the same time that he celebrates it with a sensibility akin to that of Derrida. Like everything else about Adams—who described himself at the age of twenty as hopelessly dualistic—his attitude toward language remains paradoxical. In the years between 1903 and 1915, when he adopted what I am calling his stance as a postmodernist, Adams makes himself the god of his narrative universe and experiments with the randomness of linguistic descriptions at the same time that the very existence of his autobiography reveals his old terror of the usurping power of words. Far from reflecting a sense of linguistic plenitude, Adams's work reflects his ever-intensifying belief that words had no referent outside themselves, that they were echoes and shadows of the perceiving subject which articulates them. Thus, Adams invents an audience for his imaginative journey through the Middle Ages in *Mt. St. Michel and Chartres*, but he must also destroy his diaries lest they be left to "gibbet" him.
Adams seems to have believed that, once articulated, verbal constructs had the capacity to incarnate linguistic doubles whose reality was as certain as that of their maker. Adams's ideas about language reflect the enlightenment project's obsession with articulating the power of words. In the early years of the century Coleridge and even Emerson seemed to cling to a belief that there was an essential correspondence between mind and nature and between words and the things they named. Coleridge, for example, had longed to write a volume on "Logos, or the communicative intelligence in nature and Man." As David Riede has shown, the Romantic certainty of a correspondence between self and mind and world and the words that mediate between them gives way to another view—that espoused by the emerging scientific agnosticism of thinkers like Thomas Huxley or Robert Chambers. Chambers, in fact, suggested as early as 1844 that language was not of divine origin at all, but rather a set of signs and gestures which represented man's somewhat limited improvement over animals. An intense conflict raged in Adams's day between proponents of the emerging sciences of man and the physical world alike, who believed that there might be no God, and the advocates for religion, who believed that God had created the world and given man speech as a means of bridging the endless distances between the visible and intelligible universes. Adams reflects the tendencies of both sides. When he
destroyed his own diaries while he was reading the publishers' proofsheets for his monumental "scientific history" of the Jefferson and Madison Administrations, he claimed to be destroying himself. A decade later, Adams refused to assist his brother Brooks in a preparation of a biography of their father in fear that if he failed to call his father and his grandfather, or John Randolph or himself by the right names they would vanish.

Adams's longing for a belief in a time when words still had meanings of their own places him among the Romantics. His certainty that meaning was constructed and artificial places him in a different line of thinkers from Coleridge and Wordsworth, and even from Chambers and Arnold. His radical doubt about that plenitude of language which made it possible for Wordsworth and Coleridge to traverse a sea of imagination into a more unified vision of being moves him backward toward Abelard and Ockham, and forward toward Deleuze. Adams thus should be considered as the intellectual companion of Nietzsche, not as a descendent of Gibbon and the other eighteenth-century icons of order he had admired in his youth. At the same time, Adams demands that his readers embark on the same journey through seas of imagination that his romantic predecessors made. All the while warning us that such a journey is not possible, Adams borrows the informing symbol of the opening section of the Mt. St. Michel and Chartres from Section IX of Wordsworth's
"Intimations" Ode. As we discover, the journey miscarries even in the conception.

Adams’s obsession with language and with the subject that represents world in speech is also reflective of his sense as an historian that the essentially fictional device of narrative is the historian’s only means of recovering and translating meaning within the matrix of an historical continuum. After his history of the Madison and Jefferson Administrations is completed Adams no longer believed that the past can be recovered. Paradoxically, he retains his old belief, derived from George Bancroft, that quintessential Enlightenment historian, that the province of the self is duplicated and can be represented through the processes of history. What interests Adams is the act of creation that enables him to assimilate the past by narrating it. Through radical acts of naming Adams thus invents not only an audience for Mt.St. Michel and Chartres but the whole of the medieval past as a form of autobiography. Through even more radical acts of nomination, he creates a double for himself in The Education of Henry Adams and merges with the forces of a Marxist vision of history in his "Letter to American Teachers of History" and "The Rule of Phase Applied to History." By extension, his own audience is asked to engage in similar kinds of nomination, and Adams is deeply aware that in
reading his works we are reading him, recreating both his texts and the pasts they conjure in a multitude of ways.

Adams's self-conscious awareness of the subject’s self-enclosure was also an awareness of his own entrapment in the prison-house of language. Adams wrote late in life that his letters were "really to [himself]." We might say that Adams and the post-modern theorists whose work he anticipates are failed nominalists whose rightful antecedents are Abelard and Ockham and Duns Scotus. Adams exemplifies a belief which he shares with his medieval predecessors and his post-modern children of mind in a sort of linguistic plenitude that nevertheless permits the radical doubts of a thinker like Robert Chambers. Adams believed that language could lend coherence to either one’s own experience or that of other individuals or nations, but he also believed that the account of one’s self in autobiography or of others in biography or of entire cultures in history was necessarily a subjective one. He believed that in naming things we redefine them and transform them into extensions of our consciousness, destroying their essential identity in the process and producing linguistic doubles. These doubles not only rival their maker, as I indicated earlier, but they take on a life of their own in the minds of the reading audience as well as in the mind of the narrating subject himself.
In attempting to restore Adams to the historical framework whose existence he denied and yet saw affirmed in the canon of his own work, we may find a map for reading the later works of Henry Adams—which are creations fraught with the disease of historical self-consciousness—as well as a model for reading the earlier histories, essays and biographies which, with his two novels, make up a significant body of material. The later Adams, as I have suggested, was primarily interested in the residual power of language in a subjectively conceived world made up of nameless, faceless forces. In his belief that he was living in an age which would chronicle the dissolution of the autonomous self as an adequate narrating principle, Adams prefigures Theodor Adorno. Adorno believed that the rise of the bourgeois individual in the Renaissance is also the moment that marks its gradual erosion and prefigures its eventual annihilation. As Adorno points out in *Minima Moralia*, "the self, its guiding idea, and its a priori object has always, under its own scrutiny, been rendered...nonexistent."25 At the point where the principle of human domination becomes absolute, the self as a knowable entity begins to disintegrate. As we have seen, Adams himself expressed similar sentiments more poetically in his annotations to William James and Henry Maudsley, as well as in his letters.
Our study, however, begins at a point in Adams's career long before Adams's reading of James and Maudsley. Adams began to muse on the possibility of writing history in the Berlin of the 1850s. We will begin with Adams's early essays and his attempts to rectify the chronicle of history. Adams seems to have shared in the Enlightenment vision of a unified language and in the faith in scientific history as it was understood by Gibbon. In this light, we will examine the biographies of John Randolph and Albert Gallatin which, in a Montaignesque stance, Adams later regarded as experiments with his own being. Adams's primary attempt to write scientific history, however, is his History of the Madison and Jefferson Administrations, and we will examine the assumptions about the recuperable capacities of language in these volumes, while at the same time noting that it is during the production of this multi-volume study which is so much an expression of the aims of the Enlightenment project that Adams's theories of biography as murder and autobiography as suicide and his lingering sense of "nausea" at the panorama of history seem to have emerged.

When Adams first began to think about writing history in the late 1850s, self and destiny seemed solid, if dual, and the imitation of Gibbon and filial piety seemed sufficient to determine his own choice of life. He went on to write essays which justified John Quincy Adams's choices and which seemed to rectify the chronicle of history so that
it reflected the complexity of the earlier Adams's choices more accurately. His sense of the mission of the historian may already have been ironic, but he still believed in the possibility of conjuring meaning from and for the past through language. The chronicle of history seems to have been as rock-like in those early days as the certainty of a self that seemed substantive. All the promises of Enlightenment conceptions of historiography seemed to lie before him, if not in the realm conjured by the five senses, then in some realm conjured by the world picture replicated by scientific historians.

The chronicle of history was not enough for Henry Adams by the time he finished his biography of John Randolph in the 1870s. It was at that time that he seems to have begun to think of the writing of history and biography as necessarily autobiographical and solipsistic. Adams's doubts about the possibilities of language and the fragmentation of the perceiving subject are first apparent in his account of the history of the life of the Queen of Tahiti, who, in fact, gave him a Tahitian name and whose identity he shares in the volume that bears her name and his own. The new vision of language emerges full-blown, however, only in the self-deconstructing sentences of Mt. St. Michel and Chartres and in the two prefaces to The Education of Henry Adams. As I have noted earlier, Adams's vision of a subjectively generated "order running through chaos" came to him as a
vision of history. In Chicago for the Exposition of 1893, Adams claimed that he had been forced into an awareness that the old vision of a scientifically created history was an illusion.

Here was a breach of continuity—a rupture in historical sequence. Was it real, or only apparent? One's personal universe hung on the answer, for if the rupture was real and the new American world could take this sharp and conscious twist toward ideals, one's personal friends could come in at last as winners in the great American Chariot race for fame.

(Education, 1032)

Like so many sentences in Mt. St. Michel and Chartres and The Education the faulty logic of the sequence suggests a profoundly ironic stance which reflects Adams's belief that historical sequence was an illusion. While it is true that a breach in historical continuity has profound implications for one's personal universe, such a breach does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that one's friends will become winners in the race for fame. Fame is a value associated with the old world, where sequence mattered, and where one's identity was rock-hard and substantive like the concepts of God and world which coexist with the idea of identity. And that vision is precisely what Adams had seen in symbolic splinters on the shores of Lake Michigan. The kingdom of force and sense confronted the old kingdom of myth, and Adams found that his education had not prepared him to confront what for him was chaos. He writes that he
had never encountered anything like this at Harvard. He hardly means that Harvard in particular was inadequate, but that the western intellectual tradition and the pedagogical methods that had reinforced it were inadequate for dealing with that vast and alien mystery that was and is the world of sense. The world of sense for Adams confronted the world engineered by what Deleuze calls "state philosophy"--that mode of representational thinking which depends on the power of reason and the analogies that reason constructs between the corresponding realms of the subject, the concepts it creates, and the objects in the world to which the concepts are applied.26

Of the Education's two prefaces, one was attributed to Henry Cabot Lodge and one to Adams himself. The preface which he chose to attribute to Henry Cabot Lodge, describes the volume as a sequel to Adams's attempt to "measure" "man as a force" from 1150-1250. The movement, he has Lodge say, was to be studied as a problem in philosophy and mechanics. Lodge explains that Adams intended to "complete St. Augustine's Confessions," and at the same time explore his "favorite theory of history." The exploration of theory continued in his "Letter to American Teachers of History" (1910) and in his essay "The Rule of Phase Applied to History." And, in a manner of speaking, Adams did fulfill his ambition of completing Augustine's Confessions. The Education, as "Lodge" notes moves toward dissolution and
fragmentation—the hallmarks of modernity. The Confessions move toward the stillness of the unity Adams sought but disbelieved.

In the preface to the Education that he claimed as his own, Adams proposes to provide a guide to replace the last valuable one he knew—Rousseau's Confessions, which he called a "monument against ego." Since Rousseau, and partly thanks to Rousseau, that "very great educator in the manner of the eighteenth century," Adams says, the ego has "steadily tended to efface itself," so that it is in Adams's own time a "manikin" upon which the "the toilet of education is to be draped to show the fit or misfit of the clothes." The garments are the object of study, he says, and the tailor must adapt the manikin to his patron's wants. His aim as tailor, Adams says, is to "fit young men in Universities or elsewhere to be men of the world, equipped for any emergency." At the same time, he seeks to reveal "the faults of the patchwork fitted on their fathers."

The young man is not an "ego" at all in the last paragraphs of this Preface. He is rather a "form of energy," and then a nameless construction, a "geometrical figure of three or more dimensions" which can be used as a "measure of motion, of proportion, of human condition." While it must have an "air of reality" and be "taken for real," it is nevertheless an artificial construct. While it must be "treated as though it had life," and while it
"perhaps" had life, it is nevertheless only an arbitrary creation, a designated point in space.

Adams makes his point about the artificiality of his creation by giving the manikin in question—Henry Adams—a new birthday, February 16, 1907. Adams’s own birthday was February 16, 1838. The date of the preface coincides with the private distribution of the *Education*, and suggests a new birth—this time for the linguistic double that is an embattled Adornian self under scrutiny, receding and diminishing with every word. Ironically, everyone, including his brother Brooks, called the book a species of memoir or autobiography. A new Adams is born in the narration of the fate of the point of force otherwise identified only as a nameless manikin. That the name Adams gives it is "Henry Adams" is an arbitrary choice, and, from his point of view, Henry Cabot Lodge was as accurate a name for the writer of the first preface as Henry Adams. After all, after reading Henry James’s biography of William Story, Adams wrote James that his was not the life of Story at all, but "your own and mine--pure autobiography." Adams’s straightforwardly held idea that the Bostonians of his day, including Henry James, were "but one mind and Nature" and that "the individual was a facet" of Boston anticipate his adoption of the view of experience and language that mark him as a Marxist, and paradoxically as a post-modernist, for Adams like the Marxist accepts the concept of alienation.
Adams transcends it, however, in his total acceptance of the fragmentary nature of experience and the necessity of escaping the ideological construct of identity. In this he is closest to Louis Althusser and his notion of the interpelled subject which is created by its ideology at the same time that it substantiates ideology. Adams realized in the 1890’s that he was essentially a Marxist, and his late work is postmodern in both its rejection of the idea of the subject as a naturally occurring entity and in his desire to embrace what we now call a philosophy of difference. The final chapter of this meditation will thus be an exploration and definition of postmodernism and Adams’s place with a line of thinkers from Nietzsche to Adorno, Althusser, and Deleuze.

Sometime during the 1880s Adams came to believe that the history of the future would be autobiographical because we are prisoners of our perceptions. He also believed that he could trace the intellectual progress of modernity from the eighteenth century to the twentieth by writing his own history and charting his own motion. Beginning with Adams’s early essays and proceeding through a study of his biographies of John Randolph and Albert Gallatin and his history of the Jefferson and Madison Administrations we will examine Adams’s justifiable claim that he had begun as the quintessential historiographer of the Enlightenment. Proceeding to a study of Adams’s letters from the mid-1880s,
we will chart his growing sense that he was to embody not the success but the failure of the Enlightenment project. The latter part of our study will deal with Adams's quest for an historical theory that could act as an adequate descriptor for the new world that was being represented through new theories in physics and mathematics. Adams believed that he had found such a theory in Marxism, but, like the post-modern theorists of our time, he also believed that Marx's theories must continually be rethought and rewritten. Thus the end of our study points, as Adams believed his life had, to a time seventy years after Adams's death, just as its beginning is situated a century or two centuries or even six centuries before his birth.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 1


2 Quoted in Heller, Age of Prose, 5.


6 Adams, annotations to James, I, 182.


11 Adams's annotation, Alfred R. Wallace, Man's Place in the Universe: A Study in the Results of Scientific Research in Relation to the Unity or Plurality of Worlds (London: Chapman and Hall, 1903) 190, The Henry Adams Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society.


Blumenberg agrees with Adams about the implications of nominalism.

I am indebted to Riede's discussion of the problem of language in the nineteenth century. See Riede's introduction.


Say it to Father will you I will am my fathers Progenitive I invented him created I him. Say it to him it will not be for he will say I was not and then you and I since philoprogenitive1...

Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury

...his very body was an empty hall echoing with sonorous, defeated names; he was not a being, an entity, he was a commonwealth. He was a barracks filled with stubborn back-looking ghosts still recovering...from the fever which had cured the disease...looking with stubborn recalcitrance backward beyond the fever and into the disease with actual regret, weak from the fever yet free of the disease and not even aware that the freedom was that of impotence.2

Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom!

While Henry Adams may have ended his life sharing and echoing Marx’s sense that in the age of modernity "everything solid melts into air," and believing that all subjects are entities constituted within ideological matrices, he began his study of history by embracing many of the aims of other Enlightenment historians.3 Even the most radical theories that he developed after 1894 reflect a continuing desire to perfect a science of history which would, with the other emerging sciences of man, form a modern summa theoloqica--albeit in an ironic mode. Adams saw history as a form of narrative that was intimately
related to the art of biography. The lives of the powerful individuals who had shaped history could be used as icons of the past and help to reveal history's essential, organic coherence. The order thus revealed in history confirmed the essential order in the mind of God, an order that for Adams's self-proclaimed model, Augustine, had been available to man through the agency of the Logos. For Augustine, the articulation of words places us in direct communion with the divine. For later thinkers, less certain than Augustine that words offered a sort of expressway to the mind of God, the scripture of nature offered more tangible images of order. In Adams's own time, in an age that found itself increasingly alienated from the world of natural process and language alike, man could sense the immanence of a transcendent order in human experience only through the mediation of the text produced by historians, who had replaced the idea of the poet as vates, or mythic seer, in the iconography of modernity. Thomas Carlyle, a primary exponent of the idea of history as the sum of lives of great individuals once described history as a sort of revered and ubiquitous presence which was, like God, available to man in all times and places. The historian was a sort of secularized priest, who afforded man access to this modern-day divinity. Adams initially admired Carlyle's work, but by 1882, in the midst of the five-year period during which he produced three biographies of his own, he wrote William
James that he had little patience with "hero worship like Carlyle's" (Letters, II, 466). Adams's reasoning was that heroes "neutralysed" each other in history. While thought—and hence the good of society—was advanced by only a very few thinkers, their sole contribution was to "drag us up the cork-screw stair of thought" to no avail.

...you could doubtless at any time stop the entire progress of human thought by killing a few score of men...What then? They drag us up the cork-screw stair of thought, but they can no more get their brains to run out of their especial convolutions than a railway train (with a free will of half an inch on three thousand miles) can run free up Mount Shasta. Not one of them has ever got so far as to tell us a single vital fact worth knowing. We can't prove even that we are.

(Letters, II, 466)

The process of writing biography seems to have suggested the idea that Adams was to articulate twenty years later in The Education—that all great thinkers were doomed to be devoured by subjectivity in a "sea of introspection."

When Adams set out to rewrite Sartor Resartus in his Education, he intended to demonstrate that perhaps the point of education was not the revelation of self and its possibilities at all. The cloak of education, which for Adams came to mean something like the cloak of ideology, is the only self there is in The Education. Nevertheless, in 1911, when he was acknowledging that his "sense of a crushed humanity" had dominated everything he had written, Adams
still yearned toward the achievements of "Herakles, who was quite another person." Adams was referring to the literary "Herakles" created by George Cabot Lodge. Adams's last work, written on the heels of his most depersonalized theories of history was a biography intended to memorialize Lodge, whose early death had profoundly saddened him. Significantly, The Life of George Cabot Lodge (1911) was not a biography of a statesman at all, but a portrait of the artist. Thus, while Adams never entirely lost the sense he shared with Carlyle of the power that accompanies the historian's involvement in the creation of an authorized version of the collective human past in history, and the individual past in biography he did shift his focus from history to art. He also never ceased to see himself as both product of and participant in the enlightenment project, though he believed he was presiding over its endpoint and transfiguration. In December, 1884, in the middle of his production of "two heavy volumes" of his History, Adams wrote Francis Parkman that the more he wrote the more certain he was that the old models of history needed to be exchanged for newer ones.

The more I write, the more confident I feel that before long a new school of history will rise which will leave us antiquated. Democracy is the only subject for scientific history. I am satisfied that the purely mechanical development of the human mind in society must appear in a great democracy so clearly, for want of disturbing elements, that in another generation
psychology, physiology, and history, will join in proving man to have as fixed and necessary development as that of a tree; and almost as unconscious.

(Letters, II, 563)

Only Adams's faith in the principle of identity and its reflection in the idea of biography and history had been shaken; he continued to embrace the aims of the Enlighteners and to believe that a mechanical science of man was possible. Though he continued to see himself as an Enlightenment historian, he was self-conscious very early about the limits of history and biography in ways that Carlyle and other nineteenth-century historians were not.

For Adams, history was not merely the record of either a cyclic or a developmental process. Neither was it simply an icon of progress. For Adams history was an emblem of continuity in which the historian assumed a kind of impersonal power over the chaos of the past and transformed it through narrative into history. Adams believed that the historian could construct patterns from the fragments of the human past, and thus provide his readers and himself with an anchor in history. History in this view is entirely subjectified. For Adams, as for Nietzsche and others, the subjectification of history involved what Lewis Simpson calls "the climactic stage of mind's willful transference of nature, man, and society—and eventually of God, and finally of mind itself--into itself." Adams was one of the first
historians to realize that modern historiography had usurped the god-like role of universal storyteller and mythmaker, and that this revolution founded on words and textual study had been implicit in nominalism and its stepchild, the Reformation. Underlying and informing Adams’s quest for an appropriate mode of historiography in the age of modernity was his complicated response to his family’s history and the intricacies of their relationship to the American past and their demands that their descendants continue and complete their projects. The convoluted and often paradoxical process by which he came to understand that his own work was not and could not be either "objective" or scientific history as prescribed by the purer versions of the Enlightenment formula but was more nearly biography shading off into autobiography--and therefore, of necessity subjective and fictional--is the subject of this chapter.

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The historian’s capacity for endowing history with a shape and a meaning that had previously been the province of God was especially apparent for Adams in biography. Biography, that peculiar genre in which the biographical subject and biographer merge in a fictional--and, for Adams, an increasingly troubling--union affords a transformed meaning and an altered shape for both the biographer and the biographical subject. Biography in the Enlightenment
formula served as a replacement for the frayed idea that God had given man a substantive self and a place in the providential order that his destiny on earth would reveal. Adams increasingly came to feel that in biography he was shaping the equivalent of Dr. Frankenstein's creature from the lifeless artifacts of his subjects' lives. He believed that his subjects took on an unnatural existence as distorted doubles of himself and themselves. Even in his first effort at biography, where he had vowed to let his subject Albert Gallatin speak for himself, Adams realized that a kind of alchemy was taking place as he wrote. When Gallatin's daughter, Frances Stevens, was killed in an accident just as Adams was completing the biography of her father. Adams sent her brother, who had commissioned the project, several chapters, remarking that he was as shocked at Mrs. Stevens's death as "though I had known her from birth." He had given a public existence in print to a much older woman whom he had never known.

The biographer is curiously situated, for being immersed in the interests of a past generation, he sees people born, is a confidant in all the affairs of their childhood, youth, and middle life, and gets to entertain a personal regard for them apart from personal acquaintance. To me your sister was still the child whom I am watching with your father and mother here in Washington nearly eighty years ago.

*Letters, II, 330*
Adams's present tense—"I am watching"—is characteristic of his attitude toward his biographical subjects. The reverse was also true; Adams felt that his identity was altered by the act of writing biography. He felt that a sort of unnatural coupling took place between him and his subjects, leaving both forever altered. Adams's writing of the Randolph and Burr biographies seems to have crystallized his feelings that in biography he was at the very least a midwife in the process that lent his characters a new life.

Mr. John Randolph is just coming into the world. Do you know, a book to me always seems a part of myself, a kind of intellectual brat or segment, and I never bring one into the world without a sense of shame. They are naked, helpless, and beggarly, yet the poor wretches must live forever and curse their father from their silent tomb. This particular brat is the only one I ever detested...I know he will live to dance, in the obituaries, over my cold grave.

(Letters, II, 475)

The motif of biography and its incarnation of lives in print as murder and entombment anticipates the radical statement of 1909, that "in biography we are taking life" (Letters, VI, p. 227). Adams was beginning to feel that the biographer's art figured among the black arts of linguistic sorcery. Letters from the period attest to his combined revulsion and fascination with the creatures he conjured in biography. While he is completing his history of Jefferson's administration, for example, Adams writes that he has "just
finished with T. Jefferson! He has gone off to Monticello forever, carrying eight years of my life with him."
(Letters, II, 549). As Adams continued to work with biography, and as he began the history of Madison and Jefferson in the mid-1880's, he came to see that biography involves what Deleuze calls an "individuation without a subject." To borrow Deleuze's language, Adams came to regard individuals as "pockets of consciousness and sensation" that "run over the heath like a line of flight or a line of deterritorialization." In biography the author, a pocket of isolated consciousness, runs over the "line of deterritorialization" that is the alternative self produced through the writing of the biographical narrative. Adams wrote John Hay in 1882, only half-jokingly, that he had "invented Jefferson, Gallatin, and Burr" (Letters, II, 455). Later that year, after Hay had expressed an interest in Adams's biography of Burr, Adams wrote him that his "ideal of authorship would be to have a famous double[Adams's italics] with another name, to wear what honors I could win" (Letters, II, 463). He also remarked that it would be amusing to publish a "low and shameless essay," complete with "smutty woodcuts," and attribute both to his double.
When he wrote again and again that his intellectual quest was a quest for form, Adams meant that he was forever seeking a temporary shape for his increasingly unbounded sense of self. "Form" for Adams means a vehicle in which
mind and consciousness can be expanded. Biography was a necessary vessel for such endeavor, but Adams discovered that it had to be transformed before it could reflect a conception of identity and a vision of history appropriate to a world characterized by multiple and dissonant voices and a sense of imminent chaos rather than the single voices of individuation and order that we see in biography and in the enlightenment models of history. Adams wrote Sir John Clark in late 1884 that "history and biography end with 1815" (Letters, II, 560). Adams's sense of the exhaustion of the idea of biography came to him while he was writing a history that he regarded as an extension of the "feelers" provided by his own major biographical works. Echoing the reflections that accompanied his completion of the biographies of Gallatin, Randolph, and Burr, Adams begins to doubt the efficacy of writing history even before he began the massive undertaking that resulted in The History of the Madison and Jefferson Administrations. As early as 1883, Adams wrote Samuel Tilden that he was sorry he had decided to write the history of Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe, "for they appear like mere grasshoppers kicking and gesticulating on the middle of the Mississippi River...They were carried along on a stream which floated them, after a fashion, without much regard to themselves." Adams's view of the individual caught in the forces of history reflects more than his disgust with Jefferson's political machinations.
He decided that his view of Jefferson was and is the necessary conclusion that any modern historian must draw about the role of any individual in history.

This I take to be the result that students of history generally reach in regard to modern times. The element of individuality is the free-will dogma of the science, if it is a science. My own conclusion is that history is simply social development along the lines of weakest resistance, and that in most cases the line of weakest resistance is found as unconsciously by society as by water.10

Biography and history can only exist in a world picture generated by the concept of identity. As the individual's overburdened consciousness explodes into the world it perceives, a new model for both the self and history must be constructed. History in this sense becomes, paradoxically, both the climactic point of the triumph of subjectivity and an emblem of a willed flight from subjectivity. In an historical reality conceived and rendered in history as subjectivity, the text of written history becomes the meeting ground for a community of being which is posited not on a base of lived experience but on a written document which is shared by both writer and reader—a Dickinsonian "letter to the world" writ large. Adams recognized that the real task of historians is that of designing the subjective reconciliations between past, present, and future that produce the text of history. Autobiography—the linguistic sphere of the deterritorialized subject—and biography—the
sphere of the self as other—blended to produce the form he finally settled on in the Education, which is a sort of antithesis of both genres. After 1894 in his essays and letters on historiography he also felt that part of the historian's purpose was to analyze the text of the history of historiography as an alternative version of self.

Adams's word for continuity was "Unity." If "multiplicity" was the descriptor of life in the world of the modern historian, unity was embodied in the lifeworlds and the historical narratives of the Augustinian vision of history. In Mt. St. Michel and Chartres, Adams makes it plain that St. Thomas Aquinas's systematic vision with its insistence that the world was susceptible to human understanding had paved the way as early as the thirteenth century for the individualistic readings of world and self provided by humanist text criticism. Indeed, he suggests that St. Thomas had outlined the path that would lead toward the Reformation and the emergence of modern science. The Enlightenment notion of biography, like St. Thomas's vision of the natural world, was appropriate to a history that could be represented in a unified way. It assumed that societies and individuals had their origin in the providence provided by a non-contingent Being, and that their record would be the organic one of evolution and demise provided by the predictable patterns of nature and individual existence. The task of the modern historian for Adams lay not only in
producing a scientific, "objective" history that reflected the altered vision of existence provided by science and technology, but also in finding a new shape for existence—a replacement vision of the lost Unity provided by the God of the Christian Middle Ages. An ancillary role of the historian in a historiography described in this way is thus interpreting the changing definitions of what constitutes the individual and its world. If Adams seems to have found part of his solution for narrating a new vision of unity—and a replacement for God—in the idea of biography, he deconstructed the idea of the possibility of both autobiography and biography in his Education. The rest he adapted through a fusion of his vision of the shape of the American past with Gibbon's aesthetics of history, and the methods of Bancroft and Parkman.

Adams's quest for an appropriate form for historiography was in some ways not only determined but compromised by his family's place in American history. Adams felt the presence of the family past, with its generations of diarists and statesmen as a great weight. Like a New England version of Quentin Compson, Adams seems to have felt that he was not a being at all, but, in the language of Absalom, Absalom!, a commonwealth, ringing with sonorous defeated names. If it were true, as Adams said, that family pride and politics were in his blood, then it was also true that the Adamses had sacrificed at the altar of the
Enlightenment Project and honored the god of Science, and he felt that he must continue the tradition that they had begun. In "The Heritage of Henry Adams," a curious and lengthy essay that accompanies the posthumous publication of Henry's last historical essays, his brother Brooks says that John Quincy Adams was a "scientist of the first force," who had been "vexed" by the same problems that troubled Henry and Brooks himself. In Brooks's opinion, "science and education were passions and amounted to a religion" for his grandfather. The Enlightenment habit of mind that makes Jefferson allow the Declaration of Independence to consume the linguistic spaces of his personal memoirs informs "The Heritage of Henry Adams." Brooks's introduction to his brother's life begins not with his and Henry's parents or grandparents, but with the idea of America as an embodiment of Enlightenment thinking. George Washington's desire to devise a "consolidated community" on a scientific model is the focus of the introductory section of Brooks's essay. Brooks eulogizes Washington's vision of a scientifically engineered, urban society focused on a central city which was to be the point of convergence for a network of highways and canals. His plans for the national capital included a national university "which was to serve as the brain of the corporeal system developed by the highways." The purpose of the university was to "fix a standard of collective thought" and "spread systematic ideas through all parts of the rising
empire." The "Heritage of Henry Adams" is a genealogy of thought, and in it Adams's first ancestor is thus not the seventeenth-century Henry Adams who left Somersetshire for the Bay Colony in the 1630s, but an ancestor in mind—a fellow traveler in a project which involved the exploration of the possibilities of mind. In Brooks's view, and perhaps in his brother's view, Henry Adams's work is a continuation of the Enlightenment project that his forbears of mind had begun a century earlier and educated their children to complete. The second figure in this genealogy of mind is a natural ancestor—John Quincy Adams—who, according to Brooks, expanded upon Washington's plan for a "constructive centralization," with "the expansion due to the operation on the problem of a profound scientific mind." Brooks believed that even the most radical of Henry's historical theories had their origin in the work of their grandfather and even their great-grandfather, both of whom had believed that there was a "volume of energy ... stored within the Union." John Quincy Adams believed that it was his function to help liberate the energy of the "corporeal body" of the Union through a continuation of the acts of mind that had contributed to the invention of America in the first place.

The public lands are the richest inheritance ever bestowed by a bountiful Creator upon any national community. All the mines of gold and silver and precious stones on the face or in the bowels of the globe, are in value compared to them but the dust of the balance. Ages upon ages of continual
progressive improvement... were stored up in the possession and disposal of these lands... I had long entertained and cherished the hope... of improving the condition of man, by establishing the practical, self-evident truth of the natural equality and brotherhood of all mankind as the foundation of all human government, and by banishing slavery and war from the earth...

(Degradation, 27-28)

J.Q. Adams saw his plans for an enlightened society wither under the blight of slavery and through "the total abandonment by President Jackson, of all internal improvement by the authority of Congress." The tragedy of the Adamses entwined with the failure of the Enlightenment. If the Enlightenment wrecked on the extreme idealism of its belief in education, the Adamses' political fortunes wrecked on the rock of the property interest of slaveholders and Jackson's "land-jobbers."

The enlightenment project for the Adamses was not merely the eighteenth-century's enlightenment. For them, as Brooks and Henry Adams were aware, it began with the Reformation, and continued the reformers' faith in the possibility of making what Steven Ozment calls "radical intellectual enlightenment" available to all. According to Brooks Adams, Henry had planned a large project in the intellectual history of the Reformation which would have afforded him an historical anchor akin to the one provided by Mt. St. Michel and Chartres. The source of the fascination with the Reformation is obvious; part of its aim
was to enable the individual believer to participate in a transformed world through education. Erasmus, in whom the educational and the religious aims of the Reformation are most clearly fused, realized, as Lisa Jardine has recently shown, that the technology of mass print culture would enable all believers to come to his own recognition that Christ was available to us through speech. Texts and the reading of texts in this view becomes the means through which Christ penetrates to the hearts and minds of believers. However, while the Adamses failed for some of the same reasons that Erasmus and Luther and Calvin did, they did not lose their faith in the divine origins of their mission until Henry Adams examined them from the vantage point of the twentieth century. For John and John Quincy Adams, the "ultimate extinguishment of slavery" was the "great transcendent earthly object of the mission of the Redeemer." More startlingly, for John Quincy Adams, "the Declaration of Independence was a leading event in the progress of gospel dispensation. Because he failed to persuade his fellow countrymen that the way of the future lay beyond private interest, he was possessed of a profound sense that his life had been a sort of passion play, complete with a crucifixion and the hope of a resurrection in history.

John Quincy Adams's martyrdom took place on yet another level, one that is inextricable from his political
martyrdom. He was devoted to the cause of science, and
produced a report of weights and measures for the Senate in
1821 that made John Adams write him that the report was
such a "mass of historical, philosophical, chemical,
metaphysical and political knowledge" that "no industry in
this country but yours could have collected [it] in so
little time." His real passion, however was astronomy.

To me, the observation of the sun, moon,
and stars has been for a great portion
of my life a pleasure of gratified
curiosity, of ever returning wonder, and
of reverence for the Creator and mover
of these unnumbered worlds. There is
something of awful enjoyment in
observing the rising and setting of the
sun. That flashing beam of his first
appearance upon the horizon; that
sinking of his last ray beneath it; that
perpetual revolution of the Great and
Little Bear round the pole...There is,
indeed, intermingled with all this a
painful desire to know more of this
stupendous system; of sorrow in
reflecting how little we can ever know;
and of almost desponding hope that we
may know more of it hereafter...

(Degradation, 60)

Adams was mortified that there was no observatory in America
and that American sailors were still dependent on
observations taken at Greenwich. For him, this was the
equivalent of a lingering intellectual subservience to
England. When Cincinnati decided to build an observatory and
asked him to offer an oration at the laying of the
cornerstone, he risked his life to attend in 1843.

My task is to turn this transient gust
of enthusiasm for the science of
instrumental in elevating the character and improving the condition of man...

(Degradation, 66-67)

The trip was a disaster, complete with snow, trains frozen to the rails, and Adams's own worsening sore throat and fever. He delivered his address long after the appointed time, and, as Brooks notes, "frankly admitted to himself that, in substance, he had committed suicide for the sake of science." His wife wrote that he had "returned in a state of debility and exhaustion beyond description." He did not die in 1843, but three years later having noted in his diary that "some discouragement of soul" accompanied his belief that his desire to "live in the memory of after-ages as a benefactor of my country and of mankind" had not, in his opinion, "received the sanction of my maker."

The elder Adams's project lay unfinished. He had "labored all his life to bring the democratic principle of equality into such a relation with science and education" that it would become an "efficient instrument" for governance. His projects were continued and immortalized in the efforts of his grandson Henry with some irony.

Mr. Adams always adored order and loathed chaos. Yet he died for astronomy, the science of chaos. Such is human effort and prescience.

(Degradation, 122)
His grandson's work, in his own and in his brother Brooks's view, would focus not on envisioning a world order, but on the emerging science of chaos.

In his biography of Albert Gallatin, Jefferson's Secretary of the Treasury, which was written in the late 1870s, Henry Adams first displays his tendency to allegorize the history of his own nation and his own family through narrating the history of other nations and other families and individuals. Anyone who knows the history of the American Adamses is struck by the similarity between Henry Adams's representation of the Gallatins and the representation of his own family that develops in his letters, essays, and other projects--his New England Federalism, for example--from 1858 until about 1890. Adams's sense of the entwined destinies of the Adamses and America had its origins in family mythology, but is mirrored in virtually every narrative history of the U.S. To read the history of the United States from at least the 1770s to the 1820s is to realize that the history of the Adamses was in miniature a history of the ideological bedrock that sustained the formation and molding of the American experiment in republican government. The Adamses were rich in the virtues that Adams ascribes to Geneva aristocracy in the biography of Gallatin, and they, like the Gallatins, were steeped in something akin to Calvinistic doctrine. Self-designated as the "Gibbon of his generation," Adams set
out to write the tragedy of the inevitable decline of the United States after it failed to adhere to the policies of the Federalist Adamses and failed to choose Adamses for leaders. Brooks Adams thus writes accurately that the history of the Adams family was a sort of typology of the history of America for his brother. By extension, the history of America was also a landscape of the self. Adams believed that America’s quest for national identity could best be studied through the fortunes of the Adamses, and the first forty years of his career as an historian were spent in carefully studying and correcting the chronicle of his family’s history. Though there is filial piety in his experiments with his family’s history, there is also the origin of the pattern of Adam’s quest for a deterritorialized self, an unfettered sense of identity, that emerges fully formed in the Education and "Rule of Phase" essay.

Beginning with his early essays for The North American Review, Adams traces what he believes to have been America’s tragic destiny, foretold by the drama enacted by his Federalist forebears and their foes. For Adams, the dramatis personae were particularized in the personalities of John and John Quincy Adams, on the one hand, and anti-Federalist figures from the American South whom Adams chose to represent in the shape of John Randolph on the other. Thus, long before he formally undertook the writing of
biographies, much less of an actual history, Adams was covertly writing a genetically altered species of biography and autobiography in his early historical essays and more limited efforts at historiography such as the editing of the documents that make up the volume he called *New England Federalism*. At the time, however, he was committed to the idea that he was using the scientific and objective forms appropriate to Enlightenment historians.

Adams was quite serious about the matter of family and rather Calvinistic himself about determining his vocation. Possessed of what he called a *mens conscientia recti* (*Letters*, I, 18), Adams was determined to take his place in the family gallery, but at the same time he felt the weight of his family and the demands of life in Boston, where, as he notes in the opening chapters of his *Education*—which was written a half century later—he felt himself surrounded by the visible monuments to the Adamses and their history in a thoroughly ominous way. Letters written to his older brother Charles from Europe beginning in November, 1858, when Adams was only twenty, suggest both his subtle sense of conflict between private ambition and his yearning to make himself worthy of the legacy of earlier Adamses that dominates Brooks's "The Heritage of Henry Adams" which was written in 1919. There is a typology of place apparent in the letters that recurs later in both the Randolph biography and, much later, in the *Education*. Italy, like the American
South, is for him the realm of art and nature. Adams's letters from his trip to Italy focus on events like his visits to William Story's studio and his intoxication with the art world and the artifacts that were all around him. Germany, like New England, was school and duty. The life of the passions, which must be subjugated to the life of mind, confronts the realm of public obligation. In the geography of Adams's childhood, Quincy confronted State Street. In the geography of his histories and biographies, New England winter confronted the Maryland spring.

Adams's first collected letters date from his stay in Berlin, where he had gone after graduation from Harvard to read law and study German, French, and Latin. Having persuaded his father to allow him to take the rather daring step of studying in Berlin, and finding himself in a city where he was "surrounded by Art" (Letters, I, 3), Adams seems to have become aware for the first time that being an Adams was something of a burden. He wrote his brother Charles that Charles's letter of Thanksgiving Day, 1858, had left him feeling a profound sense of relief at being out of Boston.

Your letter dated Thanksgiving day arrived yesterday and I give you my word that though I have been having a delightful time here ...still I have never felt quite so glad at being out of Boston as I felt after reading that epistle. There was in it a sort of contented despair, an unfathomable depth of quiet misery that gave me a placid
feeling of thankfulness at being where I am.

(Letters, I, 6)

Nevertheless, and this is yet another of the paradoxes that mark Adams's personal history, he was already engaged in self-consciously defining himself through a mannered imitation of the actions of the models provided by his antecedents. In particular, he imitated John Quincy Adams, whom he was alternately to vilify and idealize over the next sixty years. Temporarily free of what he seems already to have viewed as the suffocating atmosphere of Boston and the political enterprises of his omnipresent ancestors and the sense of his duty to them, Adams gleefully orders a "quantity of clothes," including a "miracle" of a greatcoat of "peculiar beaver-cloth," with a thick fur lining (Letters, I, 2-3). He also engages in epistolary rhapsody over the availability of "Museums, picture Galleries, Theatres, Gardens." There is an echo in these early letters, no doubt already self-conscious, of the moral conflict in John Quincy Adams's diaries over the guilty but absolute pleasure that he took in the plays and the opera in Paris of fifty years before. Though the theater is somewhat disappointing to the younger Adams, he does go "a good deal to the Opera House," which he describes as "glorious" with its "orchestra, scenery and the ballet." (Letters, I, 8). Still, the opera which he admires so intensely is greatly
described as "a great temptation" (Letters, I, 19). Amid his delight in an extravagance no doubt born of a new sense of the freedom that accompanied his personal anonymity and the excitement of Berlin, he finds, as he grandfather had, that the "tone" in Europe is "low, selfish, and irreligious" compelling him to "a love for what is pure and good" (Letters, I,10).

In the same letters that detail his qualified delight in his pleasures, Adams agonizes over his plan for life: "Can I have enough time to do all this, or ought I to resign the Law and devote myself to Latin? " Initially, he seems to have planned to study law for two years in Berlin and two years in Boston. He proposes to "emigrate" and "practice at Saint Louis" when he completes his self-prescribed course of study. Already, however, in November of 1858, when any plans for his future were necessarily embryonic, Adams fears failure.

I have a theory that an educated and reasonably able man can make his mark if he chooses, and if I fail to make mine, why, then--I fail and that’s all...But if I know myself, I can’t fail.

(Letters, I, 5)

Adams’s oft-stated fears of failure, which persisted throughout his writing career, seem really to have been another way of saying that he feared he would fail in the public sphere and hence fail to acquit himself with his family. Always, in the midst of plans for a future lived out
of politics and away from Boston and his family, Adams's sense of his family intrudes. In response to one of his brother's letters Adams writes that "to be a lawyer I must cease to be what I am" (Letters I, 22). St. Louis and Adams's tentative plans for the future dim and recede as Adams recalls the advice of Richard Henry Dana, who had treated his plans for Europe and life in St. Louis with contempt. Dana had "insisted" that Adams was already looking toward politics, and Adams ruefully admits to his brother that politics are probably an inevitable part of his life.

There are two things that seem to be at the bottom of our constitutions; one is a continual tendency toward politics; the other is family pride, and it is strange how these two feelings run through all of us.

(Letters, I, 5)

As Adams ponders his destiny, the tone of his letters always shifts sharply when he invokes the specter of his family. He believed that he had very few choices.

Here in Europe, away from home, from care and ambition and the fretting of monotony, I must say that I often feel as I often used to at college, as if the whole thing didn't pay, and if I were my own master, it would need more inducements than the law could offer, to drag me out of Europe these ten years yet. I always had an inclination for the Epicurean philosophy, and here in Europe I might gratify it until I was gorged.

(Letters, I, 5)
The qualifier here is Adams's "if I were my own master." He plainly believes that he is not his own master, and that his family is. The results for him are that he must "work, work, work," whether he seeks his fortune in St. Louis or not. The ideal life that he envisions for himself has little to do with the path of duty. For his part, Henry wonders if he will not derive the "most pleasure and ... advantage from what never entered into my calculations: art" (Letters, I, 5).

Give me my thousand a year and free leave and a good conscience, and I'd pass as happy a life here as I'm afraid I never shall in St. Louis.

(Letters, I, 5)

Adams fails to find his "free leave," however. Art does not seem to have been any more acceptable a vision of Henry Adams's sense of his destiny than it was for his grandfather John Quincy Adams. Within six weeks he is musing on his destiny again.

But how of greater literary works? Could I write a history, do you think, or a novel, or anything that would be likely to make it worthwhile for me to try?...it seems probable that the duty of editing our grandfather's works and writing his life may fall on one of us, and if it does, that alone is enough for a man, and enough to shape his whole course...

(Letters, I, 15)

Henry's sense of his duty to his family is mirrored and underscored by his brother's exhortations. Henry's own
letters suggest that Charles Francis admonished Henry to "combine in [himself] the qualities of Seward, Greely,(sic.) and Everett" (Letters, I, 20) Henry is to engage himself in "teaching the people and becoming a light to the nations" (Letters, I, 24). Henry says that he and Charles are a "modern Romulus and Remus, only omitting their murderous propensities" (Letters, I, 23). Henry is to don the "mantle of Cicero" and continue the Adams's tradition of self-sacrifice and public service. One of the peculiarities of Adams's sense of himself and his destiny which appears even as he is drafting his first letters to his older brother is his tendency to find his reality in mirrors provided by literary or historical doubles. The first of his literary and historiographic models was Gibbon. Charles Francis had recommended that Henry read Gibbon, and not long after he received his brother's letter, Henry is writing that he has been trying to find copies of Gibbon. By May 9, 1860, Henry was reading Gibbon's Autobiography and writing Charles Francis that his reading had prompted him to recognize that his earlier quandary about the law or literature might have been misplaced.

...our house needs a historian in this generation and I feel strongly tempted by the quiet and sunny prospect...What do you think? Law and literature.

(Letters, I, 149)

On July 9, 1860, Henry wrote Charles Francis from Paris that he was working from ten to four every day, "la plupart du
Adams thus found a resolution in the "quiet and sunny prospect" of writing history. The tension between private inclination and public responsibility, between the pursuit of art and the defense of and continuation of a tradition of family greatness thus emerges early. Adams's fascination with Gibbon, however, was to continue throughout his career. His claim that the *Education* and the "Rule of Phase" were diversions and toys echoes his master Gibbon's claim that the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* was a diversion designed for his amusement. Adams's vision of history and historiography entwines with his vision of New England and the South. Both are intimately connected to his belief that he was an eighteenth-century man, and that he had inherited the values of a family drenched in the dogma of enlightenment and enlightenment conceptions of society and its institutions. Adams's early conception of history is closely connected to enlightenment ideas of history. For Adams, history rests on a theory of education.

You come down, in your political philosophy, to the principle of education; from different grounds I did the same here some time ago. It's the main idea of all progressists; it's what gives New England its moral power; Horace Mann lived in this idea, and died in it. Goethe always said that his task was to educate his countrymen, and that all the Constitutions in the world wouldn't help, if the people weren't raised, and he and Schiller did more for
it than anyone else. Our people are educated enough intellectually, but it's superficial and only makes them more willful; our task insofar as we attempt a public work is to blow up sophistry and jam down hard on morality...

(Letters, I, 105-106)

As his correspondence with his brother Charles confirms from 1858-1860, Adams seems to have believed that America was to be a new Rome. The mission of the Enlightenment historian, for him, was to provide America with the modern equivalent of a religious vocation—a sense of political destiny. Adams's sense that American history, statesmen, and statecraft were necessarily tragic seems to have been present in embryonic form from the beginning. As a model of style, Adams adopted the ironic mode that was characteristically Gibbon's. At the beginning of his career he was disposed to believe, in the not-altogether-odd company of Thomas Arnold, that history, "read aright, is a mirror to reflect the true character of existing parties...and gives us this true mirror when we have learned to separate what is accidental and particular from what is essential and universal." Adams's early essays reflect what Hayden White calls the nineteenth-century's "rage for realistic apprehension of the world." This tendency manifests itself in a confirmation of the Enlightenment doctrine of progress at the same time that it offered a critique and a revision of this view. As White also notes,
however, an understanding of the nineteenth-century's passion for the real carries with it the necessity of considering the vast realm of experience that they dismissed as "unreal." The primary tendency of the Enlightenment philosophy of history was its faith in progress and reason. For the Enlightenment historian, the project of history was rather like the progress of the human being toward individuation. The origins of society lie in a primitive state where man is enfolded by and at the mercy of nature. History is the record of the triumph of rationality at the expense of the dimension of the natural. Beneath the Enlightenment critique of history, then, is the bedrock of the principle of reason, and its corollary, the principle of identity. By the end of the eighteenth century, Adams's model Gibbon as well as de Tocqueville and Burckhardt, not to mention the philosophers Hume and Kant, feared that a proper justification for the belief in progress, at least, had not yet been articulated. Enlightenment thinkers like Voltaire had operated under the assumption that history as the record of man's progress toward enlightenment would emerge as long as the proper historical methodology was used. For Voltaire, that meant separating the particular from the general, the private man and his incidental passions from his service in the public sphere. As Voltaire notes in his definition of "figurative language" in the Philosophical Dictionary [Works, IX, 64] "ardent
imagination, passion, desire...produce the figurative style." Voltaire goes on to say that the historian is not to "admit it [the figurative style] into history, for too many metaphors are hurtful...to truth...by saying more or less than the thing itself." Voltaire and his fellow apostles of enlightenment thus failed to realize something that Henry Adams saw clearly, though the idea remained substantially absent from his published works—the idea that historical truth could come from outside the chronicles of public service that comprise the documents of political history. Adams does, however, share with the Enlightenment historians the belief not so much in progress as in continuity, and his version of the mythos of rationalism is akin to Vico’s; that is, Adams, initially at least, believed that there was a reasonable pattern in even the most irrational outpourings of the human mind as manifested in historical event as man asserted himself against nature in the unfolding narrative of human history. Adams’s quest for a new focus of unity is tempered by the Viconian recognition that the province of history is the realm of states and laws and the narrative of human accomplishment, passion, and failure. Vico believed that, unlike nature, the realm created by God and hence inaccessible to the historian, the human experience was comprehensible for humans because humans experience the world in universal ways. He did not believe that there was anything universal or stable in human
nature itself. Instead, Vico, and Adams long after him, believed that human nature was a phenomenon that was transformed through the experience of the multiple realms of discourse that we call by the singular name of history.

Adams's way of separating the life of the emotions and of figurative language from the life of reason in his own historical endeavors involved assigning the passions to the American South and to southerners like John Randolph or, later, Andrew Jackson. The life of reason was left to New Englanders like John Adams. Hamilton is dismissed as an opportunist and an upstart; Jefferson is portrayed as a moral coward and a liar. Thus, in further imitation of his accepted model Gibbon, whose subject had been the decline of Rome, Adams, although he was ostensibly dealing with the rise of a new western power, also told a story of inevitable decline. John Randolph, state's rights, slavery, and nullification collectively represented for Adams what Christianity had represented for Gibbon—the affirmation of the dangerous dogma that the individual and its interior provinces of mind and feeling are the world. In what he initially believed to be his ordained role as preserver and interpreter of family fame, Adams demonstrated that failure to heed the advice of the Federalist Adamses had determined the future and disastrous course of America, a course which had led to inevitable civil war. Adams's fatal symbols for this tragic turn of events were the life of John Randolph.
and the state of Virginia, and he was to write about each in both oblique and direct ways. Adams's first foray into the writing of history, where he, once again in imitation—this time of the philosopher Hume—seems to have thought he would find peace and certainty, was an essay on the explorer John Smith and the Indian heroine Pocahontas.

Adams's first serious historical essay, "Captaine John Smith," separated myth from chronicle in the legend of John Smith and Pocahontas, and reflects a deeply felt belief that historical narrative could both replicate and refigure the past. In representing Smith who "maintained many different characters" and Pocahontas, whom seventeenth-century writers described not as an imperial figure but as a "well featured but wanton yong (sic.) girl," Adams did, in fact, create alternative lives for them. An essay on John Smith may seem far-removed from the Adamses and John Randolph, and yet, in the Viconian mythos that Adams was erecting, the essay has its place. John Smith and his falsification of the chronicle of history becomes a type of the bad historian. Pocahontas, whose virtue is impugned, is the ancestress of many Virginia bluebloods, including Randolph. In demeaning her, Adams is deconstructing the sacred ground of southern genealogy. In particular, Adams is deconstructing the sacred ground of the Randolph family tree. He is also suggesting an antecedent in spirit for John Randolph. Just as John Smith is, for him, an icon of
the bad historian, so John Randolph is an icon of the bad statesman.

Adams began the Smith essay in 1861, in the midst of the American Civil War. He was serving as his father's private secretary in London, and was in search of a compelling story that would help him realize his ambition to be his family's historian, the Gibbon of his century at the same time that it would permit him to set the Virginia aristocracy on its ears. Adams and his father were watching the lobbying efforts of "The Southern agents" in Parliament (Letters, I, 272), who were attempting to incite a popular movement in favor of intervention on the side of the Confederacy. While Adams and his father believed that "the Southerners" would fail in Parliament, they had "steady aid" from The London Times and firm support among the "Clubs, which are hopelessly anti-American" (Letters, I, 273).

Adams's essay thus has a topical political purpose, but, in one of the paradoxes that characterizes everything about Adams's career, it remained unpublished until well after the end of the war. Characteristically, the essay, which was eventually published in 1867 in The North American Review under the unassuming title "Captaine John Smith," undertakes its two-fold mission of proving Adams's abilities as an historian and of suggesting in a veiled manner that Virginia aristocracy was a house built on myth and blind worship of a nonexistent past, not on science and
belief in the future. Though he claims merely to be engaged in the Enlightenment project of purifying the chronicle of history of the taint of myth and legend, Adams in fact was already beginning the interminable project of defending his grandfather John Quincy Adams from his detractors—especially from John Randolph, who, as we have noted, claimed descent—as did many Virginians—from Pocahontas and her husband John Rolfe. In preparation for writing the essay, Adams contacted John Gorham Palfrey in late 1861. Palfrey was a Harvard professor, editor of The North American Review, and author of a history of New England. Adams informed him that he was doing some research on the history of Pocahontas. After he had worked on the material for a while, and concluded that Charles Deane, who had recently produced a privately printed edition of Wingfield’s Discourse on Virginia, had been right in assuming that Pocahontas’s rescue of John Smith was pure fiction, he wrote with some glee:

I fully expect that the ghost of John Randolf (sic.) will haunt you and Mr. Deane and me for this impiety, but it wasn’t my fault...

(Letters, I, 280)

Elsewhere, Adams announced that "the Virginia aristocracy ...will be utterly graveled by it if it is successful."16 He wrote John Gorham Palfrey in 1862 that "I can imagine to myself the shade of John Randolf turn green at that quaint picture...of Pocahontas clothed in virgin purity...turning
somerset with all the little ragamuffins ... of Jamestowne" (Letters, I, 287).

In deconstructing the myth upon which many sacred Virginia family trees were erected—Adams called it an "article of American religious creed" (Letters, I, 287)—Adams was already preparing the defense of John Quincy Adams that would resurrect him in history. John Randolph and the southern faction are simultaneously dismissed as lost in intellectual darkness and enchained by the claims of irrational myths and eccentric passions. The method of the essay is remarkable. Juxtaposing passages from Smith's own A True Relation of Virginia, which Smith had written in 1608, with what should have been at least similar passages from Smith's Generall Historie, which was printed in 1624, Adams shows not only that Pocahontas is absent from the earlier work, but also that the dimensions of all of Smith's exploits have been similarly exaggerated and transformed:

Eight guards, which had been sufficient in 1608, are multiplied into thirty or forty tall fellows in 1624. What was enough for ten men...would feed twenty according to the later version.17

Adams also points out that Edward Wingfield's account of these same events, which was rescued from obscurity by Charles Deane and published in 1860, altogether ignores the existence of Pocahontas. That esteemed ancestress of nineteenth-century Virginians first appears in Smith's Map of Virginia, which was printed in 1612, though in this
account she does not yet throw herself between Smith and the blows that would have spilled his brains as she does in Smith's later versions of the story. Adams is perhaps most intrigued by what he, at least at that time, perceived to be Smith's ability to hoodwink even so eminent an historian as George Bancroft. In fact, as he notes, John Smith died quietly in 1631, but his book survived him and took on a life of its own as the "standard authority on Virginian history." 18

When he was writing the Smith essay, Henry Adams was deeply disturbed by the fact that fiction masquerading as myth had managed to survive and prosper as national myth. Yet, when he was writing the Education of Henry Adams between 1905 and 1907, he places the work he had done on Smith after the Civil War.

While drifting, after the war ended, many old American friends came abroad...among the rest, Dr. Palfrey...When Dr. Palfrey happened on the picturesque but unpuritanic figure of Captain John Smith, he felt no call to beautify Smith's picture. The famous story of Pocohantas roused his latent New England skepticism. He suggested to Adams that...an article on Captain John Smith's relations with Pocohantas would attract as much attention...and break as much glass, as any other stone that could be thrown by a beginner...

(Education, 923)

The sequence was actually quite different. As we have seen, Adams's correspondence with Palfrey begins in 1861. When Adams first writes Palfrey, he says that he has been
"fascinated" by Palfrey's "historic doubts" about the legend of Pocahontas and John Smith ever since Palfrey had voiced "certain historical doubts" about them during a visit to the Adams' house in the previous spring. Adams writes that he has "had it in his head ever since" to examine the problem himself, and has spent some time in the British Museum delving into the problem. Palfrey sent Adams's letter to Charles Deane, who responded on 17 November that "I perceive he is not yet possessed of all the facts." The "facts," according to Mr. Deane, were that the earliest accounts of John Smith's adventures are "silent as to his rescue by the Indian girl." In the months that followed Palfrey's and Dean's confirmation of his suspicions about Smith's transformation of his experience into adventure story, Adams completed the essay. Ironically, his own final public reference in *The Education* to what was implicitly a study in the responsibility of the historian is couched amid fictional dates and fictionalized actions. The Henry Adams who tried to rescue historical fact from the shadowy realm of legend ends by abandoning the aims of Enlightenment historiography in favor of the fictions that permit the creation of a deterritorialized self in a narrative that is neither biography nor autobiography, neither legend nor history.

Adams's essay on Smith is the beginning of the realization of the choice of life he had made as a student
in Berlin—to deal with John Quincy Adams's papers and write his life. The project continued with the publication in 1877 of *Documents Relating to New England Federalism*. Adams specifically set out to clear his grandfather of the lingering charge that he had failed to provide proof of his claims that he was innocent of having accused a number of extremists among the Massachusetts Federalists of plotting the dissolution of the Union in the days of the separatist conspiracy that had accompanied the seizure of the ship *Essex* in 1805. The British, of course, had defeated the French and Spanish fleets at Trafalgar, and were in a position to claim sovereignty over the seas, but Napoleon, for the time at least, exercised control over the land mass of western Europe. In the case of the Essex, a British court ruled that whether or not French and Spanish goods passed through American ports they were still enemy goods, and could be seized at any point in a continuous voyage. When the commercial provisions of Jay's Treaty expired in 1807, British interference with American shipping escalated. A complicated series of British Orders in Council followed, and were met by Napoleon's Continental Orders, with the result that American shipments were likely to be seized by either the British or the French on any continental voyage. To make matters worse, the British attacked the *Chesapeake*, an American frigate, when its captain refused to be searched. The British killed three men, wounded eighteen,
and seized four more, one of whom was later hanged for
desertion from the British Navy. To avoid declaring a war,
Jefferson proclaimed an Act of Embargo in 1807. Predictably, it failed, and a group of New England
Federalists, who claimed that Jefferson was in league with
the French, revived the old Federalist cause. At this
point, as Thomas Jefferson later recalled in 1825 at the age
of eighty-three, "Mr. Adams called on me pending the
embargo." According to Jefferson, Adams told him that
"certain citizens of the Eastern States" were engaged in
negotiation with British agents. The object of these
negotiations was an agreement that the New England States
should withdraw from the war, and that "without formally
declaring their separation from the Union of the States,
they should withdraw from all aid and obedience to them." In
return, New England shipping was to be free from "restraint
and interruption by the British." The "affair of the Essex
Junto" as it came to be called, became a focus in John
Quincy Adams's vicious political battle against Andrew
Jackson in 1828. Adams had shed his Federalist affiliations
in favor of Republican ones over the Embargo and the
separatist controversy in 1807. Angered by what were
perceived as his neo-Federalist policies as President, some
"old Republicans," most notably William B. Giles of
Virginia, chose to revisit in 1825 the political decisions
of nearly two decades before, questioning Adam's integrity
and charging him with personal treachery and self-interest. Giles obtained permission from Jefferson's grandson Thomas Randolph to publish letters that Jefferson had written him concerning his conversations with Adams about the Junto. When the letters were published, Adams responded to them indirectly, through *The National Intelligencer*, denying both Jefferson's recollections of the events and Giles's interpretation of them. Giles responded by printing yet another letter which called John Quincy Adams an example of "human depravity." Adams again responded indirectly, this time through *The Washington Expose*. A series of similarly bitter exchanges followed, and Adams was even asked for clarification of his position by a group of Bostonians who felt their families' honor had been compromised. Adams refused to offer evidence to substantiate his claims on the grounds that they could not be proven in a court of law. The latter-day Federalists' "Appeal to the People" followed. Adams refused to respond to the document in any public forum, with the result that his behavior remained open to question. In his *Constitutional and Political History of the United States*, Herman von Holst wrote that the "final decision of history must be suspended" on the conduct of Adams and others in the affair of the Essex Junto.

With the help of Henry Cabot Lodge, who also had an ancestor, George Cabot, to defend, Adams set out to find the scientific evidence that would enable him to correct Von
Holst's version of the story, and, with him, the chronicle of history. He found it in John Quincy Adams's unpublished reply to the Boston Federalists' "Appeal to the People."\textsuperscript{21} Henry Adams's preface to his \textit{Documents Relating to New England Federalism, 1800-1815} begins with the characteristically outrageous claim that "this volume has no controversial purpose." While "the fires of personal and party passion" are buried under the "ashes of half a century," they still glow, he says for the student of history. His avowed aim is an appropriate one for an Enlightenment historian: he seeks to present the student of history with a volume compiled in a "broader spirit of impartial investigation," purified of filial and sectarian loyalties. His decision to omit some passages of "pure invective" from his grandfather's "Reply to the Appeal of the Massachusetts Federalists" is similarly explained. The younger Adams describes them as "passages of a personal nature;" following Gibbon and Voltaire he eliminates them so as to eliminate the distracting world of the passions and focus the reader on the relevant sequence of events in the "Reply." In his "Reply," John Quincy Adams calls his accusers the "mouldering relics" of the Essex Junto, which, in its time, had consisted of "partisans of Alexander Hamilton when he was publishing his pamphlets of slander upon my father." According to Adams, he had acted on Jefferson's behalf, and had informed him only that the
Governor of Nova Scotia was accusing Jefferson of being the creature of the French government, and that there was evidence of ongoing intrigue between Massachusetts Federalists and agents of the British government in Massachusetts. Adams states that he never accused any of the Massachusetts Federalists of treason. Adams then presents the documents, primarily letters, that attest to his innocence. According to Adams, the real issue for Mr. Giles and his other accusers was not his neo-Federalism, a charge that stemmed from his statement to Congress in his first address that "effective energy" must be tapped from "the powers delegated by the people" for the "improvement of the condition of the country." Invoking the ancient controversies and even the language of the English Civil War, Adams embarks on a vitriolic attack on Virginia and on the doctrine of "State rights." Adams is a latter-day Cromwell confronting the claims of English "cavaliers."

The patriotism of this portion of the people of Virginia was rallied by the cabbalistical watchword of 'State-rights.' The lurking jealousies of slave-holders were enlisted against the native of a State wholly free. The bone-bred dislikes of the cavalier race to the scion from the stock of Pilgrim Puritans were summoned to the array against him; and the Virginian and southern and slave-holding mind was thus predisposed to receive falsehood for truth, and sophistry for reason, to ruin the reputation and paralyze the power of a President of the United States...

*(Federalism, 140)*
With great bitterness, John Quincy Adams notes that William Giles was not content to speak alone, but that he also had to summon the mighty shade of Thomas Jefferson and the lesser presence of John Randolph to help him make his case. Adams excuses Jefferson's lapses of memory. Of Randolph, he writes only that he will say nothing of "Mr. John Randolph's agency in this honorable conspiracy. I leave him and his unreproved potations of English porter for a more suitable occasion" (Federalism, 144). Adams ends the "Reply" by reminding his audience that the "lyre of Orpheus was transported to the heavens for its attractive virtues in civilizing and harmonizing the solitary savage of the desert into the social denizen of a community" (Federalism, 329). Orpheus, a type of the mythic civilizer, was a favored Augustan image of the artist, who had the capacity to envision the ideal political order. For Adams, the American politician must also be an Orphic poet. Like the Enlightenment theorists he admired, Adams believed that in matters of governance, the particular and sectarian interest must yield to the general good. Adams feared, rightly, that the general good in America was in danger of being sacrificed to private property interests.

Adams's "Reply" is addressed to the "Citizens of the United States," who had rejected him for a second term as president. Written for the widest audience, it remained unpublished until his grandson chose to give it life and
speech by including it in the text of received history. The long narrative amounts to a revisionist history of the Jefferson and Madison administrations, as well as an attack on all of Adams’s ideological enemies. Though he chose not to print his own revisionist history, his grandson Henry did, and spent the next ten years of his life taking the lives, to use the grandson’s phrase, of John Quincy Adams’s friends and enemies alike, first in the biographies of Gallatin, Randolph, and Burr, the last of which he never printed, and later in the *History of the United States*.

In his introduction to *New England Federalism*, Adams says that his ancestor was "driven, in what he conceived to be disgrace and humiliation, from the Presidency" when his greatest wish had been to serve selflessly in the furthering of the Enlightenment project in America.

   His diary tells how, at this time, the sense of personal abandonment...had gained so strong a hold upon his mind that scarce a day passed when his ears did not ring with the old refrain:—O Richard! O mon roi! L’univers t’abandonne.

   (*Federalism*, vi)

As a student, Adams had felt that preserving his grandfather’s papers and writing his biography was enough to occupy any scholar for life. The process of preparing even a few of his letters seems to have resulted in the sense of doubling through narrative that characterized all of Adams’s work with history and biography. Writing to Elizabeth
Cameron in late 1891 Adams recalled his grandfather's obsession with Gretry's *Richard Coeur de Leon* again. In this letter, however, the passage takes on a rather different significance.

...hurried off to the Opera Comique to perform an act of piety to my revered grandfather...a century ago, more or less, President Washington sent my grandfather to the Hague, and my grandfather was fond of music to such an extent...that he tried to play the flute. Anyway, he was much attached to Gretry's music...when he was turned out of the Presidency, he could think of nothing for days together, but "Oh, Richard, o mon roy l'univers t'abandonne..."

*(Letters, III, 594)*

As early as 1877, Adams was creating the sort of fable for public consumption that John Smith had created in the seventeenth century, and which Adams himself would later create in the story of his grandmother's supposed exotic heritage as Southerner. The private significance of the story about the Opera Comique was that JQA, as Adams liked to call him, not unlike the Henry Adams of 1858 was deeply haunted by his passion for the arts. By 1891, Adams's identification with his grandfather as a sort of double is complete:

Nothing more delightfully rococo and simple could well be, than the music of Gretry. To think that it was fin de siecle too--and shows it in the words and led directly into the French Revolution. I tried to imagine myself as I was then--and you know what an awfully
handsome fellow Copley made me—with
full dress powdered hair, talking to
Mme. Chose in the boxes and stopping to
applaud ‘un regard de ma belle.’

(Letters, III, 228)

Adams is referring, of course, to the famous oval portrait
of his grandfather that had been painted by John Singleton
Copley in 1796. His playful experiment in attempting to
conjure his grandfather through his own experience of an
opera already echoes Nietzsche’s claim to Burckhardt that
"every name in history is ‘I.’" Adams’s obsession with
his grandfather’s life never ceased. Even in 1909, long
after the Education was completed, he was still involved in
evaluating his grandfather’s life, though by that time he
seemed to want him obliterated from the chronicle of
history. In responding to his brother Brooks’s attempt to
write a biography of their grandfather, Henry condemns their
grandfather for the very acts that had constituted his
martyrdom in the Documents, and even doubts the old man’s
patriotism.

I can’t forgive him his vote on the
Embargo, or his defense of Andrew
Jackson. He was not punished half
enough for either...he loathed and hated
America...he never thought of going home
without nausea...

(Letters, VI, 228)

In the same letter Henry also questions John Quincy’s
devotion to the arts, condemning him for his "indifference,"
as well as for his "didactic" tastes in literature. He
also describes him in terms that recall his treatment of John Randolph, suggesting that his biography of Randolph, a work he had claimed at one time to despise (Letters, II, 475, 479), was a work which had succeeded because he had managed to "put some depth and shadow in my picture." Adams implies that a similar treatment would be appropriate for John Quincy Adams, whom he describes as a tragic figure—the "prophet who ends in secret murder and open war, violence, and fraud, and hideous moral depravity." This is presumably the same John Quincy Adams whose "I" Adams had claimed in 1891 as his own in a symbolic act of piety to his memory, and whom he had defended in 1877 (Letters, II, 323) for his love of truth, and whose deep reservations about Jefferson's moral character are meticulously preserved in Adams's own version of the text of history.

Puzzling and contradictory as Adams's attitudes toward himself, his projects, and his biographical and historical subjects are, he continued to produce biography and history throughout the 1880s and returned to it in 1911. With the Smith essay and the biographies of Albert Gallatin and John Randolph that he began in the late 1870s, New England Federalism seems to have been yet another "feeler," as Adams called his biographies, for the eventual writing of the massive History.

Feeling that he had at last donned the "cloak of historian" (Letters, II, 303) in his New England Federalism...
volume, Adams began his massive biography of Albert Gallatin in the summer of 1877 at the request of Gallatin’s son Albert. In writing the life of Gallatin, or, perhaps better, in organizing a narrative around Gallatin’s letters and papers, Adams was literally giving life to a figure who had left few documents to indicate anything other than years of public service and a continuing interest in the language and culture of the American Indian tribes. Gallatin was Adams’s ideal politician. His life was subsumed in service and in the scientific endeavor that resulted in his celebrated classification of the linguistic groups among American Indian tribes on a large scale.

To do justice to Gallatin was a labor of love. After long study of the prominent figures in our history, I am more than ever convinced that, for combination of ability, integrity, knowledge, unselfishness, and social fitness, Mr. Gallatin has no equal. He was the most fully and perfectly equipped statesman we can show. Other men, as I take hold of them, are soft in some spots and rough in others. Gallatin never gave way in my hand or seemed unfinished.

(Letters, II, 491)

Again, Adams’s polarized sense of a moralized geography intrudes. Gallatin was opposed at every turn of his political life by the Southern faction that John Quincy Adams had hated. Gallatin thus interests Adams in part because Gallatin provides an oblique means of writing about John Randolph. In preparation for writing the volume, Adams
began an extended correspondence with Hugh Grigsby, the President of the Virginia Historical Society, explaining that without assistance from the Virginia archives he could not proceed with the biography. The Gallatin biography is probably the best example of Adams's efforts at writing objective history. He wrote Grigsby with some dismay that "Gallatin unfortunately detested letter writing," and that since Gallatin had also avoided gossip Adams was "debarred from the most interesting portion of biography" (Letters, II, 317). His aim, however, avowed to both Grigsby and John Russell Bartlett, was that "as far as possible his story should be told by his own letters or writings" (Letters, II, 347). Adams's own letters that record the process of writing the Gallatin biography show that Adams rapidly became more interested in what he was discovering about John Randolph, Thomas Jefferson, and the Adamses than he was in Gallatin, though Gallatin's life as biographical subject takes on the patterns of exile, alienation, and flight that characterize all of Adams's narrative portraits of all of his biographical and historical subjects. Adams's desire to allow Gallatin to represent himself through his letters extended to a decision not to translate Gallatin's French letters. Adams wrote Gallatin's son that there were several reasons for his not having attempted translation. The most telling of these is the last: "as regards M. de Voltaire, I have my doubts whether the man who thinks he can translate
him, is not a little of a fool" (Letters, II, 330). At the end of his preface to his biography of Albert Gallatin, Adams acknowledges a perhaps exaggerated sense of indebtedness to George Bancroft. Adams seems to have absorbed most directly from Bancroft what he could have gotten from reading any Enlightenment historian, including Carlyle: the idea that the individual is representative of his age. And, as we have seen, by the time he published the Gallatin biography he had abandoned Carlyle's "hero-worship." Thus, early in the Gallatin biography Adams announces that "after the elevation of Geneva to the rank of a sovereign republic, the history of the Gallatins is the history of the city."

The family, if not the first in the state, was second to none. Government was aristocratic in this small republic, and of the eleven families into whose hands it fell at the time of the Reformation, the Gallatins furnished syndics and counsellors with that regularity and frequency which characterized the mode of selection...of the other ten. Five Gallatins held the position of first syndic, and as such were the chief magistrates of the republic...

(Gallatin, 3)

The Gallatins, Adams writes, also counted "at least one political martyr among their number."

...a Gallatin...charged with the crime of being head of a party which aimed at
popular reforms in the Constitution, was seized and imprisoned in 1698...

(Gallatin, 3)

Though they filled the ranks of the professions and died in military service on nearly all of the great battlefields of Europe, the Gallatins were Genevans, after all, and not feudal aristocrats.

In another European country a family like this would have had a feudal organization, a recognized head, great entailed estates, and all of the titles of duke, marquis, count, and peer which royal favor could confer or political and social influence could command. Geneva stood by herself. Aristocratic as her government was, it was still republican, and the parade of rank or wealth was not one of its chief characteristics.

(Gallatin, 4-5)

What they lacked in money and land they made up for in prestige. The family estate was one of "integrity, energy, courage, and intelligence." Despite his scrupulous attempts to let Gallatin write his own biography, and his refusal to usurp Gallatin’s voice through translating his letters, the shape that Adams lends Gallatin’s life is the shape provided by Adams’s sense of his own family history and the lineaments of his own experience. In his quest for a destiny that lay outside his family’s sphere of influence in Geneva, and in his profound restlessness, Gallatin’s line of flight is similar to Adams’s. Ironically, Gallatin first "began to feel his own powers and to see them recognized by
the world" (Gallatin, 53) in Boston, the city Henry Adams had
longed to escape. Unlike Henry Adams, Gallatin became a
victim of what Gibbon in speaking of the fall of Rome called
"immoderate greatness."

...the insidious elevation of Mr.
Gallatin, the displaying of him as a
magician whose touch was superhuman; the
ascribing to him every power and every
act that emanated from government
...destroyed his usefulness by
indirection.

(Gallatin, 438)

There is an echo of Gibbon's elegy to Rome at the height of
its powers in this passage, and a tragic certainty of
Gallatin's coming "betrayal" at the hands of his former
associates Jefferson and Madison. Throughout the
difficulties of his association with the Jefferson and
Madison administrations, however, Gallatin sought always to
"preserve and invigorate the Union" (Letters, II, 481). As
Secretary of the Treasury in a financially troubled country
he had sought to forge a vision that was capable of
"providing for and guiding the moral and material
development of a new Era,—a fresh race of men."

It was not a mere departmental reform or
a mere treasury administration that Mr.
Gallatin undertook; it was a theory of
democratic government which he and his
associates attempted to reduce to
practice. They failed, and although
their failure was due partly to
accident, it was due chiefly to the fact
that they put too high an estimate on
human nature. They failed as Hamilton
and his associates, with a different
ideal and equally positive theories had
failed before them. Yet, whatever may have been the extent of their defeat or of their success, one fact stands out in strong relief on the pages of American history. Except those theories of government which are popularly represented by the names of Hamilton and Jefferson, no solution of the great problems of American politics has ever been offered to the American people. Since the day when foreign violence and domestic faction prostrated Mr. Gallatin and his two friends, no statesman has ever appeared with the strength to bend their bow—to finish their uncompleted task.

(Gallatin, 492)

These are essentially the same claims that Brooks Adams always made for John and John Quincy Adams, and that Henry Adams’s published works suggested during most of his career as an historian. In the chapter on Gallatin’s diplomatic career, Adams acknowledges the "curious parallelism" between the "lives and characters" of John Quincy Adams and Albert Gallatin (Gallatin, 496).

In the process of writing about Gallatin, Adams developed his interest in John Randolph and the problem of what he called "Southern eccentricity." Adams thought he had identified the phenomenon as early as 1862, when he was working on the Smith essay. He was later to realize that this eccentricity was only another name for the tendency of all history in the modern world—a tendency to, if not be invented, then at least swallowed up by the individual mind. Subjectivity was hopelessly entwined for Adams with the idea
of entropy which influenced his vision of history in the _Education_. Adams first explores the problem of "eccentricity" seriously in his biography of John Randolph, which he had in part researched during the writing of the Gallatin biography. The two works are conjoined—like a pair of medieval exempla. Randolph is the exemplum in malo of statecraft, whereas Gallatin is the standard by which all statesmanship must be judged.

Probably no aspect of Henry Adams's thought and writing is more complex than his attitude toward the American South and Southerners. Whether he found them compelling, and somewhat damnable, as in the case of Jefferson, or mostly damnable and still compelling as in the case of the archvillain John Randolph, Adams spent much of his career writing and thinking about Southerners. In part, this may have been a response to his sense of a moral topology of place. Whether he was writing of southern Europe or of the southern U.S., Adams tended to associate the South with the nether world of pleasure, passion, and art that is conspicuously absent from his vision of history. He usually claimed to despise Virginians, though he wrote in the _Education_ that he "liked the Virginians." He also claims in the _Education_ that he was Roony Lee's amanuensis, thus appropriating Robert E. Lee's son's "I" as his own. Acknowledging and underscoring his sense of kinship with the South, he gives the chapter in the _Education_ that deals with
the Civil War the title "Eccentricity," an echo of a chapter in the biography of John Randolph which he had similarly called "Eccentricities." Moreover, Adams transforms his English grandmother into a Southerner, though she herself claimed late in life that she had no sympathy with Southerners at all.24 One of the most famous passages in the Education describes the intoxicating aura of the Maryland spring, which Adams says he loved "too much" as though in its "delicate grace and passionate depravity" it were "Greek and half-human." The passage recalls nothing so much as Adams's letters about the Italian countryside that he had written on his travels at the age of twenty-two. Only much later, at the age of sixty-seven, could he say that the rest of his education paled by comparison with the "delight of this" (Education, 965). Adams's first analysis of Southern character is far less sympathetic. For Adams, John Randolph was a type of the South, just as Adamses were types of New England. In his biography of John Randolph, which he published in 1882, Adams creates a version of Virginia life which illuminates his idiosyncratic typology of place. Virginia--and, by extension, all of the South, was a region wholly dedicated to the notion that America should engage in the recreation of the gracious life of the English manor and build a model of a "future Arcadian America." This idea of the future of America opposes the urbanized and more technical Enlightenment model espoused by the Adamses, and,
to an extent, even by George Washington. Having noted at the beginning of the biography that John Randolph claimed to be a descendant of Pocohantas, in sly allusion to his earlier essay, Adams proceeds to paint Randolph as the "representative man of the South," a type of the "Slave Power" and eccentricity, of slavish devotion to English ways and pastoral myth. Randolph is described on the one hand in the History as a man who should have been the Archangel Michael, Adam's emblem of masculine power both in the Randolph biography and, later in his Mt. St. Michel and Chartres, and on the other as the hapless victim of a regional poison that he "sucked with his mother's milk." Randolph bought his books from English booksellers and aped English manners. "Eccentricity," which, as I have mentioned reasserts itself in Adams's Education, seems to have been Adams's private term for excessive concern with self and self-presentation and the subjectively engendered universe produced through reflection. Henry Adams, like John Quincy Adams, or perhaps Henry Adams in the guise of John Quincy Adams, believed that the drama of the early decades of the Republic resolves itself into a conflict between those who were dedicated to the public good, and who sacrificed their private interests like the heroes of Augustan Rome, and those who, like Randolph and other Southerners, served private vanity, "eccentricity," and a mental as well as literal human bondage. Necessarily, the forces of
eccentricity favored the dissolution of the Union— that symbol of the general Good— while the forces of Enlightenment served the cause of the Union’s preservation. Virginia was a dependent culture.

...the country had plunged into a war which in a single moment cut that connection with England on which the old Virginian society depended for its tastes, fashions, theories, and, above all, for its aristocratic status... the Declaration of Independence proclaimed that America was no longer to be English, but American, that is... democratic and popular in all its parts,— a fact equivalent to a sentence of death upon old Virginian society, and foreboding dissolution to the Randolphs...  

Adams depicts Randolph as a sort of memento mori of American politics. For him, Randolph and the South are engaged in a war for survival with the forces of Enlightenment. Adams notes that Randolph believed that many of his more excessive personal characteristics came from his Indian heritage. In fact, Adams asserts, "The Indian owns no such person... or such temperament,... which... belongs to an order of animated beings still nearer... to the predaceous instincts of dawning intelligence" (Randolph, 253-254). In Adams’s view, Nature cannot produce an aberration like Randolph, who is emblematic of a way of thinking and living that was as exhausted as the tobacco fields that surrounded him. The province of the rationalist historian is to explain Randolph to the chronicle of history. Randolph is explicable only as an agent of benighted thinking and a figure, who, in
opposition to Albert Gallatin and John Quincy Adams, could prefigure the towering interests that were to collide in the American Civil War.

As I have indicated, Adams referred to his biography of Randolph, as he did to that of Gallatin, as a "feeler for my history" (Letters, II, 476-77). The latter work began as Adams's ultimate effort at scientific history-writing. He asked Justin Winsor, a Harvard librarian, to send him "six or seven volumes" of the American newspapers from 1807-09 each week. He also wanted accounts of banking and education and of the "practise of medicine." He asked for a "good sermon, if such a thing existed." In addition, Adams searched archives all over Europe for documents that might illumine his recreation of the past. He believed, as he says in one of the early volumes of the history, that whereas lawyers had to give the shape of theory to their claims, "the historian need only state facts in sequence."

In the eyes of his reviewers, Adams's project succeeded. One critic wrote that his history "approaches nearer the standard of science than any extended historical work yet written on this side of the Atlantic."26 Adams's purpose was to define what he called "national character," and Adams conjures an almost Edenic vision of nature undisturbed by man.

Even after two centuries of struggle, the land was still untamed; forest covered every portion, except here and there a strip of cultivated soil; the
The only blight on this landscape of possibility, one which Adams called "a cancerous disease" (History, 107), was the fact that "one-fifth of the American people were negro slaves" (History, 5). The nation was still an untamed wilderness, in which "nature was rather man's master than his servant." Following the organic model of Enlightenment history, Adams proposes to trace something like America's path toward individuation and cultural independence. Adams's narrative which swiftly turns into an elegiac one is a study in how the blight came to overshadow the possibilities. The primary danger that he saw lay in the southern states where "thought could find little room for free development" as long as "it confined its action to narrowing its own field" (History, 99). The paradox of the Southern problem was epitomized not so much in John Randolph, whose excesses of mind and spirit knew no bounds, but in Jefferson, the acknowledged intellectual leader in Virginia politics. Jefferson was a man of the Enlightenment whose "instincts were those of a liberal European nobleman, like the Duc de Liancourt." His "true delight was in an intellectual life of science and art."

To read, write, speculate in new lines of thought to keep abreast of the intellect in Europe, and to feed on Homer and Horace, were pleasures more to
his mind than any to be found in a public assembly.

(History, 99)

Adams describes Jefferson in moving terms as having been "beyond the ambition of a nationality." His vision "embraced the whole future of man," in the purest Enlightenment fashion.

Jefferson aspired beyond the ambition of a nationality, and embraced in his view the whole future of man. That the United States should become a nation like France, England or Russia, should conquer the world like Rome, or develop a typical race like the Chinese was no part of his scheme. He wished to begin a new era. Hoping for a time when the world's ruling interests should cease to be local and become universal; when questions of boundary and nationality should become insignificant...he set himself to the task of governing with this golden age in view.

(History, 101)

Adams's praise also damns. In his view, Jefferson's Enlightenment was the European Enlightenment, and as long as America's vision for itself was derivative of European versions of enlightenment, America would remain spiritually and intellectually colonized. The implied analogy between Jefferson's life and thought and those of a French nobleman are hardly careless when we recall Adams's disdain for John Randolph's slavish adherence to English customs and thought, and the accusations of illegal French connections that surrounded Jefferson's career in politics. With telling
irony, Adams qualifies his comparison of Jefferson with the Duc de Liancourt by noting that "he built for himself at Monticello a chateau above contact with man" (History, 99). If his house was above the sphere of ordinary life, so was his theoretical stance on the nation's problems. Jefferson was inclined to "generalize without careful analysis," and he was willing to "risk the fate of mankind on the chance of reasoning far from certain in its details" (History, 100). Echoing John Quincy Adams, Henry Adams felt that Jefferson's plans for the nation's development, were in some ways "narrower than ordinary provincialism" (History, 101). In contrast to the vision of an urban and industrialized nation espoused by the Adamses, Jefferson feared that "cities, manufactures, mines, shipping, and accumulation of capital led...to corruption and tyranny" (History, 101). For Adams, the South and Southerners, including Madison and Jefferson, its primary intellectual exponents, was a terrain afflicted not only by slavery but its moral equivalent in mind. Of the Southern states, only North Carolina, the poor relative of Virginia and South Carolina, earned his approval. North Carolina, in Adams's perception, was "the healthiest community south of the Potomac," and was thus partially exempt from his criticism. Charlestonians, like Virginia's John Randolph, remained content to imitate "whatever reminded them of European civilization" (History, 102-103). In the planter society of tidewater South Carolina as
a whole Adams saw the same "interesting union" between "English tastes and provincial prejudices" that disturbed him in Jefferson. Again, Adams preferred the poorer regions of the Southern states; in particular, he was fascinated by the mountainous Piedmont and its up-country farmers whom he saw epitomized in John C. Calhoun, whose "modes of thought were those of a Connecticut Calvinist," and whose mind was "cold, stern, and metaphysical" (History, 106). In the stark landscapes of the Carolina hill country, Adams found an analogue of New England habits of mind and their corresponding ways of seeing and being.

Adams’s vision of the new republic, with its images of "a thousand miles of dreary and desolate forest" (History, 107), echoes that of de Tocqueville with some of the same ends. Adams’s aim, however, was not to show the possibilities of democracy in America, but to outline the ideological battle for its mind and soul. For the careful reader of the history, the dramatis personae of Adams’s vision of what was to be a uniquely American tragedy are set in motion. The fatal weaknesses in the Jeffersonian vision of America were to be ignored; the Adamses’ warnings were to go unheeded. In the history Adams demonstrates the sense indicated in the previously cited letters on his view of Madison and Jefferson. They were creatures inundated by historical forces that were larger than they were. Jefferson’s tendency to inhabit the country of mind rather
than the landscape of his countrymen, and the sectarian politics of New Englanders like the members of the Essex Junto, who had accused John Quincy Adams of "moral depravity" were fatal to the vision of a country liberated from the original sins contained in history. In the absence of a consensus, the outcome of the fatal election that saw Jackson and his version of democracy in triumph was assured. In Jefferson and Madison's day, "individuals retained their old interest as types of character, if not sources of power." The figures of John Quincy Adams, of Madison, and of Jefferson collide in the declining years of the old, organic model of a history that, in Adams's view, ended in 1815.

The History outlines the demise of the eighteenth-century view of progress and history which necessarily evaporated in the face of a century of hero-worship and fact-finding that masqueraded in vain as science. Adams even came to maintain a revisionist view of Gibbon. By 1905, when he was writing the Education, he is less inspired and more troubled than he had been when a first reading of Gibbon helped him map out his destiny as his family's historian.

...he was led more than once to sit at sunset on the steps of the Church of Santa Maria di Ara Coeli curiously wondering that not an inch had been
gained by Gibbon or all the historians towards explaining the Fall.

*(Education, 803)*

Adams wrote Henry Osborn Taylor on 17 January, 1905, that he "had no object but a superficial one, as far as [writing] history is concerned." "Accuracy is relative," he said, articulating a dramatic reversal of the feelings that had dominated his career as an historian in the 1880s. By February of 1909, he claimed to be unable to behold the spectacle of American history without nausea:

...this mental paralysis has practical drawbacks. One is my nauseous indigestion of American history, which now makes me physically sick, so that only by self-compulsion can I read its dreary details...

*(Letters, VI, 224)*

Adams felt particularly nauseated by the very period of American history that had served as a focus for his histories and biographies. This was the era that had been dominated by men like his grandfather and by John Randolph and Thomas Jefferson. By the time Adams wrote of the despair that engulfed him as he contemplated the incomprehensible vistas of an unknowable history, his younger brother Brooks had written a biography of John Quincy Adams. Henry's responses, some of which have been suggested earlier, were overwhelmingly negative. He called the "picture of our wonderful grandpapa" that Brooks had painted a "psychologic nightmare." At the same time, he said that "the
The unhealthy atmosphere of the whole age, its rampant meanness...the one-sided flabbiness of America; the want of self-respect, or purpose; the intellectual feebleness, and the material greed,—I loathe it all.

Adams had begun by believing that John Randolph and the South represented the accidental and particular. What he later realized was that what they represented was universal and essential. What he had at first painted as "eccentricity" was the same malady that Nietzsche had called the disease of historical self-consciousness. Like the Hawthorne of "The Customs House," but belatedly, Adams realized that the reconstruction of history was essentially an art form, and that the historian invariably faces crumbling fragments of the patchwork of past reality, not hard facts. The chronicle of history, practically speaking, purified of all that Voltaire and Gibbon alike would have found offensive did not exist. His view of historians and historiography thus changed drastically between 1858 and 1888. When he was finishing his *History of the Jefferson and Madison Administrations* he wrote that as he "composed the last page of my history" he was "in vain trying to do Gibbon and walk up and down in my garden" (*Letters*, III, 144). As he began the publication of the history he also began the destruction of his diaries. For Adams, there was a necessary connection between his inability to imitate Gibbon.
in life and his inability to imitate Gibbon's vision in historiography.

The narrative was finished last Monday. In imitation of Gibbon, I walked in the garden among the yellow and red autumn flowers, blazing in sunshine, and meditated. My meditations were too painful to last. The contrast between my beginning and end is something Gibbon never anticipated. I have brought from Boston the old volumes of this Diary and begun their systematic destruction. I mean to leave no record that can be obliterated...

(Letters, III, 144)

In what appears to be a conscious juxtaposition of the completion of the History and the destruction of his personal past, Adams adds that "of the four concluding chapters [of the History] I have already written one-third." (Letters, III, 144). Adams continues to destroy his diaries (Letters, III, 146) as he "works ahead toward [his] demise"—presumably the publication of his History. His brain, he says, "reels with the vividness of emotions more than thirty years old." A few weeks later, however, Adams records that he is still reading his diary, but that he "hesitates" to destroy more of his past, as he "may want to read it again."

Adams thus juxtaposes the creation of a chronicle of the past—in this case an historical epoch with which he felt a passionate and personal identification—with an act of self-destruction which takes place not through physical violence, but through the destruction of a body of literary texts—the texts which of necessity incarnate both his personal history
and human history. He destroys his diaries—which perhaps record a more "realistic" account of his life and feelings—in order to obliterate a record that would enable some later historian or biographer to do with his existence what Henry Adams had already done to John Randolph and John Smith and Albert Gallatin. Having demolished the possibility of writing history, Adams seems to have turned toward the stance he had assigned in the History to law: that of theorist. His last works combine the enterprise of biographer, autobiographer, philosopher, and historian of history.

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My epigraphs for this chapter are both taken from Faulkner. One, the first and more poetic but less coherent of the two, is part of Quentin Compson’s musings on the nature of self and history in The Sound and the Fury. The other, and more articulate of the two, is provided by a fictional narrator—or biographer or, in Adams’s view, a sort of secular historian-god. This second perspective, from Absalom, Absalom!, captures Quentin’s peculiar status as a destabilized consciousness. It is more coherent because it is intended to provide a textual ground of community between reader and writer, just as Adams’s histories were intended to produce a text that would provide his audiences with a sort of communion through an artificially conjured past.
Henry Adams spent a lifetime trying to articulate what a fictional Quentin Compson knew only in those moments when he began to feel the water engulfing him even before he came to that fatal, lichened bridge over the Charles River in the spaces of William Faulkner's imagination. In those moments, both Quentin and his creator knew that he was and could only be his "father's Progenitive;" in the modern world, we create not only the selves which imprison us, but also the history within which the self as subject is conceived and moves. Quentin's claim on his father's creation, is of course, both a tragic and ironic echo of what, for Sir Thomas Browne, writing on the opposite fringe of modernity, was a reassuring notion--the idea that "Eve miscarried of me before she conceived of Cain." Eve miscarries of Sir Thomas before she conceives of Cain in the comforting caverns that are part of a landscape of absolute being in the foreknowledge that is omnipresent in the mind of God. In the providential vision, we can invent our fathers and grandfathers with impunity because there is, after all, reconciliation in a time that is imbued with both a preordained shape and a meaning. Quentin Compson and Henry Adams conceive and miscarry of a few generations and a few alternative selves that are generated only by themselves within the confines of a time that is relentless and damaging--one thinks of Quentin's bleeding hand, cut on the crystal of a watch--precisely because it is unredeemed by
any access to anything outside a history whose limits and whose finitude are those of the very subject that it entraps. We recall the clock that presides over the tragic vestibule of Spenser's House of Pride, and with it, Spenser's awareness that the clock-time of Augustine's City of Man would necessarily preside over the projects of a modernity whose presence he had already internalized. But because Quentin's and Adams's past, like their being, is generated by a self condemned to isolation, they can have life only through the agency of memory and the reconciliations provided by memory's record—the texts that constitute self and community alike in the political and personal spaces of the modern world. The agony of a historical consciousness that is both deific and imprisoning accompanies Quentin's "I invented him created I him," and it is an agony shared by Henry Adams. And, like Quentin, Adams self-consciously and intentionally wrecks on the enlightenment project of modernity. His suicide in print, his destruction of his diaries, is a way of shattering the walls of subjectivity, of deterritorializing the problem of identity in a world that has been engulfed and devoured by mind, and by mind's hieroglyph and hand-maiden—history. Quentin chose a baptism in water; Adams, a baptism in the textual waters of history.

I chose the first of the two epigraphs because, in writing this chapter, I realized that, while Henry Adams may
be an ancestor in a genealogy of anti-mind that leads at least from Nietzsche to Gilles Deleuze, he is (and perhaps more importantly) the ancestor of Quentin Compson and of a modernist faith in a resolution in art that was not available to him because he was an Adams. Adams knew, as Faulkner did, that no one can narrate coherently from the interiors of Macbeth's solipsistic nightmare of a history that is horrific precisely because it is self-generated. That species of narration is the province of artists who envision possibilities of coherence and who conjure the semblance of meaning for themselves and their audiences. Necessarily and ironically artists, like historians, engage in a activity which is above all a motion of mind, but which nevertheless embodies the possibilities of the deterritorialized consciousness. And what could be more descriptive of Henry Adams and his sense that he was not a being or entity at all than the haunting passage from Absalom, Absalom! that forms my second epigraph: "his very body was an empty hall echoing with sonorous, defeated names; he was not a being, an entity, he was a commonwealth. He was a barracks filled with stubborn back-looking ghosts still recovering...from the fever which had cured the disease..." With Quentin, Adams was both monarch and subject of a commonwealth of echoes--sounds that are articulated and heard only by the subject that produces them. Different fevers--those suffered by the fictional
Compsons and the literal Adamses, but perhaps—and Adams's and Faulkner's brilliance is that they recognized this—the same disease. In Sanctuary Faulkner has Horace Benbow, another Prufrockian male, fraught and tormented by the endless mirrors that reflect endless consciousness of himself and his hopeless—and quasi-incestuous desire—say that "nature is a she and progress is a he." That "nature made the grape arbor, but Progress invented the mirror." The mirror of the self-reflexive universe is Narcissus's pool for the subject of modernity; the mirror embodies the nightmare of our enclosure in Macbeth's world where our image is, through our own desire, visited not on a successive line of kings who will endow history with our design, but on a successive line of selves. The mirror betokens our sense of both the presence and power of the past that engulfs both Quentin and Henry Adams. The pools of introspection and self-absorption that frame Sanctuary also frame Adams's career as modernist historiographer, biographer, and autobiographer. If Brooks Adams's bizarre claim that John Quincy Adams committed suicide for the sake of science is true, then perhaps Henry Adams's symbolic suicide through his publication of his theories of self and history is but a last act of imitation—one that is mirrored yet again when Quentin Compson is engulfed not by any southern stream, but by the deeply symbolic river of mind that flowed past Cambridge and Harvard, near the heart
of an institution, which, like the republic itself, was a living symbol of the enlightenment project.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 2


3 At least, one facet of Adams's personality, which he himself described as "double" embraced the possibility of a scientific history. Other facets of Adams seem to have had other ideas and serious doubts about his plans. See Letters, I, 5 ff.


5 See Adams's prefaces to The Education of Henry Adams.


8 Deleuze, Dialogues, 40.

9 Harold Dean Cater, Henry Adams and His Friends (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1947) 126.

10 Cater, 126.


15 Quoted in Hayden White, Metahistory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1973) 53.


18 Adams, Chapters of Erie, 224.


21 Samuels, 273.


CHAPTER 3

THE SOFT PARADE: THE FORMS OF RADICAL NOMINATION
AND THE SHAPES OF SIMULACRA

Your life has been prolonged until the world has changed around you. You have treasured up all that time has rendered worthless—the principles, manners, modes of being and acting, which another generation has flung aside—and you are a symbol of the past. And I, and these around me—we represent a new race of men—living no longer in the past, scarcely in the present—but projecting our lives forward into the future. Ceasing to model ourselves on an ancestral superstition, it is our faith and principle to press onward, onward! Yet...let us reverence, for the last time, the stately and gorgeous prejudices of the tottering past.¹

Hawthorne, "Old Esther Dudley"

A new idea is formed in view of the old one, whose defects it avoids and bypasses; but this means that the new idea has the old one inside it, thanks to which it was engendered. This is why many, many years ago it occurred to me to say that while in nature mothers bear offspring in their wombs, in history the female offspring that are new ideas bear their own mothers in their wombs.²

Ortega y Gasset, Historical Reason

In the first decade of the twentieth century, as theorist, as historian, as biographer, and as designer of a new kind of self for himself, Adams sets out, in Foucault’s language, "not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are."³ Adams’s works from 1893-1910 write an ongoing
obituary for the idea of the autonomous self and for the enlightenment project in America. In them, Adams undertakes a prolonged flight into the theory of historiography and away from the Hegelian models of mind and identity that he had adopted so unquestioningly in his youth, but begun to abandon by 1875. First, and more subtly, in the anonymous and pseudonymous novels of 1880 and 1884, and in the memoirs he co-authored with the Aritamaii of Tahiti, and then more explicitly in *Mt. St. Michel and Chartres* and *The Education of Henry Adams*, Adams addresses the same questions about modernity and subjectivity that are a perpetual subtext in the biographies and histories of the 1880s. His later work embodies an attempt to explore the sources and possibilities of identity solely for the purpose of escaping identity.

This chapter and the two which follow it are an artificially divided, but unified, triad that chronicles Adams's self-conscious transformation from historian and heir to the enlightenment traditions of the Adamses to theorist and nihilist. In them, I have myself engaged in the kind of artificial division and classification that is at the heart of the enlightenment project. I have arbitrarily divided Adams's late works into what the uninitiated reader might see as a logical or at least as a useful grouping; works of historiography and theory are separated from works of self-representation, which include *Esther* and *Democracy*, Adams’s two novels. For Adams, however, and, ultimately for
his reader-initiates, if we read him rightly, the emerging theory of history that is the explicit concern of "The Tendency of History" (1894) is as "autobiographical" and as self-annihilating as Mt. St. Michel or the Education, or "The Rule of Phase Applied to History," the final sequence of his "autobiography," in which Adams takes a last willed flight from subjectivity, and in which he, posing as an homunculus scriptor, is at last as deterritorialized as his theories of language and history. After he wrote the Education and "The Rule of Phase" Adams liked to claim that he was already dead— that he had taken his life in his autobiographical enterprise. Of course, Adams had maintained for years, as his brother Brooks points out, that some earlier version of self had been dead since his wife's suicide in 1885. Whether or not it was because Adams-as-Adams had been killed off in his Mt. St. Michel and Chartres, and freed to inhabit his twin mansions of an imagined twelfth-century monastery, and the grave at Rock Creek Cemetery, there is no "I" in Adams's narrative landscape after Mt. St. Michel. Even there the "I" appears only as a record of the utterance of an unnamed Renaissance poet in the Preface, and sporadically, when for example Adams records the words of the simulacrum of self that he has constituted as the Uncle-Narrator, who begs the reader's pardon for "wasting your precious summer day on poetry which was regarded as mystical in its age and which now sounds
like a nursery rhyme" (MSM, 430). The rest of this strange hybrid genre of a work is part travelogue and part meditation on history. Having fashioned a double of himself in the uncle who is to be the narrative voice of Mt. St. Michel, and having manufactured an audience of "nieces," Adams aligns himself with the reading audience and stands with us behind the arras of the text, listening to the Uncle-simulacrum restore the text of medieval history. The text is either addressed to the reader directly, in the second person, or, in a recognition of the complicity between reader and author-reader, in the multiple voices implied by Adams's "we." The erasure of the "I" from the text of Adams's autobiography is even more apparent in the sequel to Mt. St. Michel. From its falsely attributed preface by "H.C.L." to its last sentence, The Education of Henry Adams is a portrait of a dehumanized "manikin," an emblem of the discontinuous being of a disembodied Cartesian cogito drowning in the seas of its own thought and history. Appropriately, it is written entirely in the third person--Adams has assumed the voice of a reified self. "The Rule of Phase Applied to History," (1909) the third installment in his serial experiment in life-writing has no recognizably human characters at all; it is a critique of the presence of nameless, impersonal forces in history written by a voice that is liberated from the limiting construct of the personal self. "A Letter to American Teachers of History
(1910), a sort of postscript to the previous triad of autobiographical works, continues and exteriorizes the aims of the *Education*. The "Letter," which is in fact an essay of more than one hundred pages, is directed toward the sphere of actual community and action. It is a textual grounding of Adams's emerging sense of the shape of an existence based on community. Adams chose the epistolary mode for this last presentation because "that literary form affects to be more colloquial and familiar than the usual scientific treatise" (*Degradation*, 138). The epistolary mode also has the effect of concretizing the writer's absence and the reader's presence, and of literalizing the status of the text as a ground of mediation between writer and reader. The "letter" is a demand for reform of the university system along the lines of a new spirit of philosophic vitalism—a recognition that a new conception of self and a new sense of the direction of society had to replace the ones inherited from the Reformation and the Enlightenment. Citing Rousseau, who reversed the Cartesian formula by insisting that he felt before he thought, and that the man who thinks is a depraved animal; and Bergson, whose *Creative Evolution* and embrace of the life of the instincts had influenced him deeply; Adams rejects the mode of thinking that universities and, particularly, historians had been forced to avow through their voluntary subjugation to the religion of Progress.

The historian is required either expresssly to assert or surreptitiously
to assume, before his students, that the whole function of nature has been the ultimate production of this one-sided Consciousness,—this amputated intelligence--this degraded Act, this truncated Will...the function of man is, to the historian, the production of Thought; but if all the other sciences affirm that not Thought but Instinct is the potential of Vital Energy...nothing remains for the historian to describe or develop except the history of a more or less mechanical dissolution.

(Degradation, 205-206)

In these last works, beginning with the Mt. St. Michel, which was privately printed in 1904, Adams forges a personal, and intentionally arbitrary, anchor in history and creates a succession of linguistic doubles and others who allow him to use the biographical mode to trace his origins and his dissolution as an emblem of western historical consciousness. Part of the reason that he emphasizes his disappearance from the Education and the essays which follow is explained in his claim that the historian of modernity could chronicle only the dissolution of self as subject and its replacement by the objectified simulacra modelled by the imperial mind. Adams's absence from his last "autobiographical" essays reflects his sense of the truncated nature of his being, which has been both determined and restricted by the Cartesian model of man as the "thinking thing." If man is, in effect, merely a floating consciousness which belongs everywhere and nowhere,
then Adams can pose as a universal and ahistorical subject, a fluid being on the stage of history, taking on an incarnation in whatever historical dimension he chooses, but incapable of manifesting himself in any sphere of action. That being so, as Adams notes in the "Letter to American Teachers of History," to trace the arc of western intellectual history through the examination of his own evolution from the twelfth-century to the present is to be forced to trace not self-creation but self-dissolution. This is the reality behind Adams's claims that he was dead or dying. In the Education he describes learning to ride a bicycle and acquiring an automobile in the final years of the nineteenth century when he was in his fifties. He took particular delight in the idea of being transported by automobile on his excursions to look at the glass at the French churches and cathedrals that interested him. He enjoyed his private conceit that the modern world was a machine that had been engineered into being by impersonal and non-transcendent force. In his mind, he was riding the machine of modernity into a vanished past. Even better, for his purposes, an actual machine transported him from the alien terrain of the present moment to the pastoral idyll of the pre-Reformation past that he preferred. Adams's experiences with the new machines quickly acquired a personal and metaphorical significance. For him, the actual automobile rides over a literal countryside mimicked the
transport of imagination through the spaces of mind that he required of his readers in the opening chapter of *Mt. St. Michel and Chartres*. The machines, and particularly the dynamo, were the tangible manifestations of his attempts to grapple with his new anti-Carlylean suit of philosophical clothes that his letters suggest he had begun to design in the 1870s. At times, his retailoring of himself seemed to provoke him to a sort of despair, and a longing to cling the old model of self as mind and consciousness.

If you want to take charge of the dynamo, you can. It all makes me look with yearning eyes to my happy home at Rock Creek, where I can take off my flesh and sit on my stone bench in the sun, to eternity, and see my friends at quiet intervals of thousand-year naps.

*(Letters, V, 202)*

As always, in dealing with Adams, the reverse of this claim is also true. In dissolving Henry Adams as a pocket of consciousness, Adams points toward a new, more vital and nameless species of being, which lies beyond the limited realm of rational discourse. The first novels and the last works are thus Adams's history of the modern world—metaphorically and necessarily hinged on the progress of a single consciousness—his own. They are a culmination of meditations and experiments with the nature of the self, of thought, of history, and of the possibilities for representation in language that, as we have seen, begin to haunt Adams’s letters in the 1870s and his published works.
in the 1880s, but which, in some form had always been with him.

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After "devouring" Henry James's *William Wetmore Story and his Friends* in November, 1903, Adams wrote James that he found it difficult to judge the work's success or failure. For Adams as reader, the Story biography seemed to be an unhappy combination of an unintentional version of James's autobiography and a history of a generation of New Englanders from 1820-1870. The difficulty for him was that in James’s representation, this generation was not made up of distinct individuals at all, but was a manifestation of "one mind and nature; the individual was a facet of Boston." (*Letters, V, 524*). Adams might have said with equal accuracy that Boston was a facet of the individual mind. Adams provides James with a list of alternative and interchangeable selves in which not only Story, but Alcott, Emerson, Longfellow, and Lowell are robbed of any claim to individuality, and reduced to multiple embodiments of the mind of Henry Adams. Through their inability to find what Emerson had described as an "unconditional ground for being"—that nebulous replacement for the certainty provided by religion, and a corollary promise of the enlightenment project—the Bostonians had come to languish in a kind of community of "self-distrust" that became a shared condition
of what Adams calls "nervous self-consciousness." Adams's analysis of the nature of his fellow Bostonians is reminiscent of his earlier images of Randolph and Jefferson and the other renegade Southerners whose "eccentricity" had distressed him when he was writing history as biography in the 1880s. "Southern eccentricity" seems to have been contagious, for in this letter and in all of Adams's late work, the disease afflicts not only James and Adams, but all of nineteenth-century New England. By the first years of the twentieth century, Adams had completely reconfigured the geography of the mind of America that he had--somewhat ironically--shared with Thomas Jefferson. Like Randolph and Jefferson and most Tidewater Southerners of an earlier generation, mid-nineteenth-century Bostonians were all "improvised Europeans," who were possessed of an "irritable dislike of America." Their sense of spiritual exile extended to their "antipathy" for their New England origins. The notion of a motionless ground for being was a tentative replacement for the certainty that religion had provided in an earlier age, and it was a corollary of the enlightenment's promise of intellectual certainty. From the domain of the individual consciousness Adams's Bostonians simultaneously "looked through each other with microscopes," and "feared each other's Knowledge." In trying to write Story's life, James had inadvertently written not the biography of a man or a generation, but a revelation of self
and of the limits of subjectivity; he had configured the "type bourgeois-bostonien," but in the process had "written not Story's life, but your own and mine,—pure autobiography." James's work was thus an extension of Adams's own consciousness: "the whole thing spreads itself out as though I had written it...Verily I believe I wrote it. Except for your specialty of style, it is me" (Letters, V, 524). James's verbal simulacrum of Story was self-multiplying in Adams's imagination, and bore no more relationship to Story's life than it did to that of Adams or James or Alcott. The textual image of Story is merely an index of the text of the mind of Henry James. Whatever reality Story may have had has been erased and supplanted by the action of the mind of his creator, James, and James's creator and reader, Adams.

Six years later, Adams used the "failure" of the Story biography as an excuse for not helping his brother Charles write their father's life and as a sort of explanation for his harsh criticisms of his younger brother Brooks's efforts to write a biography of John Quincy Adams.

Harry James can fail as often as he likes in novels, but when he fails in biography he leaves mighty little of William Story. In biography we are taking life. I would never have anything to do with the life of our father, for that reason. I felt sure that his position in history would be the lower for it. As he stood, the public imagination filled all gaps and voids.
Had I botched it, he would have vanished.

*(Letters, VI, 227)*

In writing the Story biography, James had also given the simulacrum of a collective life lived by a generation of New Englanders from 1820-1870 a solidity in print that it lacked when it existed only in the private provinces of individual memory and the subjective universe. He had accomplished what Hegel said the historian should: "out of individual unreflected features" he had composed a portrait that "transforms the events, actions, and situations present to [him] into a work of representative thought." Adams’s final response, "You make me curl up like a trodden-on worm...you strip us...like a surgeon, and I feel your knife in my ribs" anticipates his metaphor for the entire corpus of his own work—the haunting image of himself as a helpless, writhing "caterpillar that has lost its string." Adams’s fear self-consciously reverses the fears of Pascal, who influenced him perhaps more than any other philosopher, and whom he saw, even more than Descartes, as having articulated the dilemmas of the isolated subject of modernity. Adams found in Pascal an echo of his own sense of the separate spaces occupied by individual subjectivity. Like Pascal, Adams was terrified by the "eternal silence" of "infinite immensity of spaces that know me not," but while Pascal’s spaces were the spaces of a reconfigured physical
universe that lay outside the "little space" filled by his subjectivity, Adams’s spaces were inner recesses of subjectivity, and they were as vast as the spaces of an infinite universe. Worse, these spaces had no uncontaminated contact with the unknown world that fascinated and terrified Pascal. The prism of perception was for Adams the instrument that accomplished the death of the world outside the self. Adams does not fear the spaces that "know not me;" he fears the idea of life as an endless hall of mirrors where the self is eternally replicated in the images that mind produces of world. Adams accepts Hegel’s affirmation that "our minds are primarily conceptual and immediately transform all events into reports for communication," but for him the transformation of the matter of world into the spirit of mind was a frightening rather than an affirming phenomenon. Ironically, Hegel’s belief that the critical historian should "wrest results from narrations rather than from events" was the source of Adams’s belief that in writing history and autobiography we are taking life. The self-contained existence of Hegel’s realm of spirit—of "Being within itself"—and the union of the phenomenon of consciousness with the phenomena that consciousness could know was a prison sentence, not a harbinger of transcendent freedom.

Part of Adams’s sense that he had seen the hieroglyph of his own crushed humanity mirrored in William Wetmore...
Story and his Friends may have stemmed from having seen his being represented symbolically before, in one of Story’s statues. Adams had visited Story’s studio in Rome in 1860, as a twenty-two year-old student on tour in Italy. There he first saw Story’s statue of Cleopatra. Hawthorne had only recently published The Marble Faun, with its famous description of Story’s "Cleopatra." Adams, in quest as always for external affirmation of his own responses, un成功地 scourned all the bookstalls in Rome for a copy after he heard that Hawthorne had "introduced [the "Cleopatra"] into his new novel" (Letters, I, 155).

His statue represents Cleopatra seated; her head leaning on her hand; a figure thoroughly Egyptian in costume as well as feature. She is meditating apparently her suicide. To me, apart from the rich sensualism of the face and form, there is a great charm in the expression that she wears; it seems to be the same old doubt at God’s great mysteries of life and death; a scornful casting up of accounts with fate and a Faust-like superiority and indifference to past, present, or future. Mr. Story has tried to breathe the mystery and grandeur of the sad and solemn old Sphinxes and Pyramids into his marble. I shall not undertake to say whether he has succeeded or not. I only know that his Cleopatra has a fascination for me, before which all his other works...seem tame and pointless. (Letters, I, 147)

Adams’s description of "Cleopatra" is strangely similar to and yet quite different from Hawthorne’s. For Hawthorne, the statue embodied the "repose of despair" but there was
still "a great, smouldering furnace deep down in the woman's heart." The apparent calm, which is "as complete as if she were never to stir hand or foot again" is deceptive, for "such was the creature's latent energy and fierceness, she might spring upon you like a tigress, and stop the very breath that you were drawing, midway in your throat." Story may have meant his viewers to perceive the statue as contemplating her suicide, but Hawthorne saw a terrible beauty and vitality in the strongly featured face. For him, the most compelling aspect of the figure was its extraordinary ambiguity.

The expression was of profound, gloomy, heavily revolving thought; a glance into her past life and present emergencies, while her spirit gathered itself up for some new struggle, or was getting reconciled to impending doom. In one view, there was a certain softness and tenderness, how breathed into the statue, among so many strong and passionate elements it is impossible to say. Catching another glimpse, you beheld her as implacable as a stone, and cruel as fire. In a word, all Cleopatra—fierce, voluptuous, passionate, tender, wicked, terrible, and full of poisonous and rapturous enchantment was kneaded into what, only a week or two before, had been a lump of wet clay from the Tiber. Soon, apotheosized in an indestructible material, she would be one of the images that keep forever, finding a heat in them that does not cool down, throughout the centuries.¹⁰

Story's "Cleopatra" is the first of the many iconic images of human despair that compelled Adams throughout his life. What Hawthorne read as an embodiment of the terrible
ambiguity of nature and of sensuality, Adams read as the intoxicating aura of suicide. Adams saw the figure's sensuality, but for him the physical beauty and power of the "Cleopatra" was of far less interest than the image of the triumph of a consciously chosen death that she seemed to embody. For both Hawthorne and Adams, the statue captured that moment that Nietzsche described a scant twelve years later as the shattering of the comforting illusions provided by the principium individuationis.

...Schopenhauer has described for us the tremendous terror which seizes man when he is suddenly dumfounded by the cognitive form of phenomena because the principle of sufficient reason...seems to suffer an exception. If we add to this terror the blissful ecstasy that wells from the innermost depths of man, indeed of nature at the collapse of the principium individuationis, we steal a glimpse into the nature of the Dionysian, which is brought home to us most intimately by the analogy of intoxication...These Dionysian emotions awake, and as they grow in intensity, everything subjective vanishes into complete self-forgetfulness."

For Nietzsche, this escape from the layers of subjectivity is a triumph, and produces a riot of sensual intoxication and ecstasy. The recovery of the Dionysian realm of animal nature and instinct was for Nietzsche a state of forgetfulness that approached the sublime. Only through forgetting could historical man escape the disease of historical self-consciousness. The crippling dilemma of a subjectivity configured through historical self-
consciousness is at the root not only of Nietzsche's, but also of Adams's view of modern life. Writing in 1874, Nietzsche addressed the dilemma that Adams was coming to see as the primary problem of modernity.

Take as an extreme example a man who possesses no trace of the power to forget, who is condemned everywhere to see becoming: such a one no longer believes in his own existence, no longer believes in himself; he sees everything flow apart in mobile points and loses himself in the stream of becoming: he will, like the true pupil of Heraclitus, hardly dare in the end to lift a finger...there is a degree of insomnia, of rumination, of historical sense which injures every living thing and finally destroys it, be it a man, a people, or a culture.12

The disease that unites Adams's nineteenth-century Bostonians is that of all of Nietzsche's "superhistorical men." As we have seen, Adams's rationalist conception of personal identity as a product of the exercise of sufficient reason through consciousness and as synonymous with the idea of humanity began to unravel even as he was writing his series of biographies. He was intuitively moving as early as 1875 toward Nietzsche's view of the very concept of scientific history as a crippling and limiting weight which tied modern man to the enlightenment ideology in much the same way that a family name and a sense of identity imprisoned the individual and circumscribed his possibilities.13 For Nietzsche, "this famous inwardness of subjectivity" "sitting in its inaccessible little temple"
was dangerous. In the nineteenth century, everything about
man had come to be counterfeit because all experience was
refracted through the all-powerful center of individual
consciousness and annexed to the personal self.

He must, as is well known, be measured
by his thoughts and his feelings and
these he now expresses in his books. If
only it were not just these books which
lately raise more than a doubt, whether
this famous inwardness still sits in its
inaccessible little temple: it would be
terrible to think that it disappeared
one day and all that now remains is
his outer being..It would be almost as
terrible as if that inwardness were to
sit there hidden from view, a
counterfeit rouged and painted, having
become an actress if not something
worse: as for example Grillparzer
...seems to have come to believe though
his dramatic theatrical experience. 'We
feel with abstraction,...we hardly know
any longer how feeling is expressed by
our contemporaries; we portray
expressions of feeling which no longer
occur nowadays. Shakespeare has spoiled
all of us moderns.'

Nietzsche recognized, as Adams did, that, in
anticipation of Descartes, late sixteenth-century figures
like Montaigne and Shakespeare seem to have believed that
man without the *principium individuationis* was a sham—a
form without a soul—the self as simulacrum. The sleeping
and the dead are only "pictures" in *Macbeth*; in *Hamlet*,
Ophelia is "divided from herself and her fair judgment
without the which we are pictures or mere beasts." Similarly, in his essays, Montaigne self-consciously
produces an iconic image of self which solidifies and
constitutes his being as a record of the process of thinking. The image cast in the form of the essay will escape and outwit the mortality of its author, a man who suffers from all the afflictions that are attendant upon what Spenser called the "condition of mortal state." In Descartes, of course, the certainty of existence itself is specifically dependent on the mind's activity. Unless the mind is engaged in the production of simulacra through its interchange with the world, there is no self. The idea of the tortured soul burdened by its own self-consciousness and mesmerized by the image of its own dissolution becomes the central motif in Adams's work. His response to the Story statue and to James's biography of its author reflects a unifying tension in his career. Though he spent his life trying to shape images of other people's lives and his own he seems to have been compelled not so much by life and its preservation in print as he was by an embrace of the death and dissolution of the concept of isolated selfhood. He may have wanted to produce iconic images of being, but Adams as a self acting in a privately constituted history could only produce simulacra of himself. The chief characteristic of these pseudo-Adamses, which they share with the Story biography, is their essential dissimilarity from their objects and even from Adams himself. The idea of suicide for Adams represented the ultimate possibility of flight from the inner prison of consciousness. Whether it was
metaphorical or literal, suicide is perennially present in Adams's work, and it is no accident that Hamlet both as character and as play haunts his letters and the Education. Like Keats, driven by too present a sense of the weight of his consciousness of mortality, but without Keats's passion for living, Adams was half in love with easeful death, and whether he was looking at Story's statue, or taking his own life in autobiography, Adams was as compelled by the idea of a willed cessation of being—a willed division from self—as he was by the possibility of incarnating alternative lives in print. In the inner kingdom of subjectivity Adams was as tormented by bad dreams and solitude as Hamlet had been three hundred years before him. The problem, as Nietzsche also knew, was that for superhistorical individuals death brings not only the "longed for forgetfulness" but also a final sense of violation.

It [death] robs [man] of the present and of existence and impresses its seal on this knowledge: that existence is only an uninterrupted having-been, a thing which lives by denying itself, consuming itself, and contradicting itself.18

Writing in August, 1875, of the suicide of a "worthy neighbor" at Beverly Farms, who "had had too much of all he wanted in the world except content," Adams sees in the man's perpetual ennui and violent death an emblem of his own
condition as a man condemned to life as an "uninterrupted having-been."

Our New England climate and soil do not even breed picturesque situations or incidents. We are but a rather improved low-country Scotland and our lives and deaths are too absolutely unimaginative to adorn a tale. One very worthy neighbor of mine a couple of months ago, being out of spirits because he had too much of all he wanted except content, sat down in his neighbor's avenue and blew his brains out as calmly and practically as a Britisher and was bored with life. There was no flourish, no pathos, no moral, and, except for his poor children and his old father and mother, no tragedy about it.

(Letters, II, 235).

The anecdote is half humorous, but the irony is worthy of Swift. Adams had been having trouble with his eyes, and was bored, a "feeling not unnatural to a man who is more utterly devoid of resources than any English squire outside of stables." The extent of his tragedy is that he has not "read a book" all summer, or even "[kept] a dog," though he is "looking for a bull terrier." Conscious of the absurdity and self-absorption in his claim, Adams juxtaposes his story of his neighbor's desperation and death with his own misery and failure of will; Adams, too, is a man who has everything he wants except contentment. He lives a kind of death-in-life, as his own simulacrum, denying himself, contradicting himself, immersed in and absorbed by the past. His neighbor's tragedy calls him only insofar as it is an extension of his own discontinuous being.
Adams's sense of the community of nineteenth-century intellectuals is one based on the exhaustion of the idea of mind as an adequate ground for history and for identity. The community is not a living community of being at all, but a condition of emptiness, produced by the collapse of world into mind. In Nietzsche's language, subjectivity has "learned to leap, to dance, to use make-up, to express itself with abstraction and calculation and gradually to lose itself"—in short, the mind can shape endless false versions of the world, but it cannot enable its subject to live as a sentient being in the world. For Adams and his fellow moderns, the self that they saw reflected in the mirror images produced by the action of mind on its objects had lost all ability to represent anything that lay outside itself. As mind imposes its simulacra on the world, the world as object disappears, and the subject is relegated to the sterile world produced by its own mirrors of itself. Quoting Ecclesiastes, Baudrillard points out that "the simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth—it is the truth which conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true." This was partly what William Faulkner meant when he said forty years later that "progress invented the mirror." Man judges the world by first imposing a set of mental constructs on the world. The world, in consequence, ceases to be itself for man, and reflects back only the mirror image of the viewer and the ideology that produces
both viewer and ideology. Thus, in the bankruptcy of the vision of Progress, the mirror of subjectivity can provide Adams only with images of death, despair, and a paralyzed will.

In some way, all of Adams's characters, including the "historical" ones like John Quincy Adams, Thomas Jefferson, John Randolph, and Aaron Burr come to the same end that his fictional heroines do. Madeleine Lee flee[s] to the pyramids of Egypt. Esther flee[s] to Niagara Falls in what her cousin George Strong describes as "a genuine flight and escape in all its forms." Esther falls "in love with the cataract and turn[s] 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" (Esther, 314). Something of the same impulse that attracted Adams to Story's statue sends his heroine Madeleine Lee to the pyramids to hide and contemplate the "polar star" "unseen." In 1884, in his novel Esther, Adams portrays Wharton, an artist who works in stained glass, in desperate flight from a disastrous marriage. Wharton appears as an already damaged figure when he is introduced in the novel, an escapee from a marriage that had taken place in part because of his fascination with his wife's preoccupation with suicide. Their troubled and tempestuous life together—which is only suggested in the novel; Adams is never quite comfortable with the life of the body—was apparently built upon Wharton's erotic fascination
with her exoticism, her sensuality, her violence, and her love of death. And while Democracy ends with a journey to the great tombs on the Nile, Esther ends with its heroine mesmerized by the cataract of Niagara Falls, and certain that, "whichever way she moved, she had to look down into an abyss and leap" (Esther, p. 330). The journey that Adams asks his invented audience of readers to take with him to Chartres ends with the haunting reminder that if "faith fails heaven is lost." The work ends not with the triumph of the synthesis of reason and revelation, but with an image of the broken arch and the failure of mind.

Of all the elaborate symbolism which has been suggested for the gothic Cathedral, the most vital and most perfect may be that of the slender nervure, the springing motion of the broken arch...The equilibrium is visibly delicate beyond the line of safety; danger lurks in every stone. The peril of the heavy tower, of the restless vault, of the vagrant buttress; the uncertainty of logic, the inequalities of the syllogism, the irregularities of the mental mirror,—all these haunting nightmares of the Church are expressed as strongly by the gothic Cathedral as though it had been the cry of human suffering...

(Mt. St. Michel, 695)

The Education, similarly, ends with the death of Adams's friend John Hay and Adam's own encounter with the final form of the force his heroines Madeleine and Esther had sought with such tentative results. Adams is thrown into "the depths of Hamlet's Shakespearean silence."
One had seen scores of emperors and heroes fade into cheap obscurity even when alive; and now, at least, one had not that to fear for one’s friend. It was not even the suddenness of the shock, or the sense of the void that threw Adams into the depths of Hamlet’s Shakespearean silence in the full flare of Paris frivolity in its favorite haunt where worldly vanity reached its most futile climax in human history; it was the only quiet summons to follow,—the assent to dismissal. It was time to go.

(Edward, 1181)

Adams’s suicide in autobiography ends with his own encounter with a metaphorical Niagara, his own ultimate flight into that dissolution and death which is also a species of perverse communion. Something like the image of the nameless woe that Story had captured in his statue of Cleopatra forms the climactic point in each of Adams’s major works. Just as he claims to be author, subject, and audience of the Story biography, Adams in contemplation becomes his despairing neighbor, dead in a nearby avenue, not, again, through any ability to share his neighbor’s agony, but because of his ability to etch his own agony onto the face of every object that presented itself to his field of vision. He escapes Washington with Madeleine Lee, and finds himself checkmated at Niagara with Esther, conjuring again, as he recognized in 1911, not the figure of Bay Lodge’s Herakles, but of another lifeless simulacrum, another image of a "wretched humanity." Significantly, the
ultimate symbolic embodiment from his own being was not verbal at all, nor was it created by Adams himself.

A monument is a symbol, and the symbol should be your’s. If there is a single one in the whole innumerable catalogue of symbols that you feel, you should give that to the artist to put in form. By a personal weakness, I have always felt most keenly the sense of a crushed humanity, and, do what I will this symbol comes out in everything I touch. My true symbol is that of our caterpillar which has lost its thread; only I know that it is no use to turn when I am trodden on hard enough...So Saint Gaudens put it in form.

(Letters, VI, 483)

Augustus St. Gaudens had designed a monument to Adams’s wife, and, untitled and unmarked, it presided over what Adams called his "mansion" in Rock Creek Cemetery. When William Roscoe Thayer asked for a photograph of him to include in his biography of John Hay, Adams refused: "I have never had a photograph of myself taken. Early from Junius, I learned to like best the nominis umbra." The refusal to provide a likeness of himself—and the desire to stand behind the particular shadow of linguistic protection that he had provided in the sepulchre of his autobiography—was not a simple one, however. Adams suggested an alternative to a photographic likeness.

I would rather you gave no likeness of me, but, in its place... insert a photograph of St.Gaudens’ monument, to show what a wonderful mastery of words
he could command when the occasion rose to his level.

*(Letters, VI, 713)*

Asked about the Five of Hearts Club—the circle of his close friends that had included John and Clara Hay, Clarence King, and Adams and his wife, he responded that "People who want to know us—we were not eager for notoriety at any time—can always go there. We shall tell no lies" *(Letters, VI, 701).* Just as Adams sought to embody a concept of history and of identity that transcended the limits of a subjectively conceived world, he sought to transcend the limits of language by taking refuge in an image as hauntingly ambiguous as Story's "Cleopatra." The last part of Adams's literary career is spent in a quest not for a vital existence of his own—he had taken too many lives in print for that—but for an image of that vast dimension of human experience that had been devalued and suppressed by the aims of the enlightenment project and its fixation on the realm of rational discourse. The non-verbal language of a world that lies outside the self is the story that the Falls were trying to tell Esther, and it is what the Maryland springtime taught Adams himself. His last works are thus a memorial to the most central facet of the failed experiment of modernity—the fatal notion shared by Emerson that "mind creates the world." Adams's map of a route out of the self is also a route toward silence. The landmarks of Adams's being—his printed works—dissolve as the reader moves
toward their sentence, which in medieval style points toward silence in the face of a truth they cannot contain. Unlike his medieval models, however, Adams's silence does not resolve itself in God, but in a denial of the capacity of language for containing any meaning except meaninglessness. For Adams, there was a corollary to the proposition that mind creates the world; subjectivity led not to self-affirmation, but to kind of exhaustion and even extinction of being. In reading the Story biography, Adams was aware that the modern reader engaged in the activities of Emersonian consciousness is a predator of mind who does not simply read texts or the self or the world, but enters into and devours whatever it encounters. In reading any biography, the life of both the biographical subject and its text is "taken" yet again, as the reader's consciousness envelopes and devours the life of the text. Increasingly, in his letters, Adams figures the reader as a carnivore and voyeur.

You cannot escape the biographer. When I read--standing behind the curtain--these repetitions of life, flabby and foolish as I am;--when I try to glug-glug down my snuffling mucous membrane these lumps of cold calves'-head and boiled pork fat, then I know what you will suffer for your sins...

(Letters, V, 526)

For Adams, the modern premise of the primacy of mind could lead only to the deafening silences of the solipsistic universe. In his vain attempts to escape his discontinuity
with the world outside the self, the modern subject would devour the world in the same way that Adams as reader, standing Polonius-like behind the arras of the text, had cannibalized James's biography of Story. Like Polonius, he is caught in his subterfuge and killed for his trouble; in the language of his earlier letter to James, he feels James's knife in his ribs. For Adams, the relationship between the subject and the world it is perpetually engaged in consuming was one characterized by a violence which could also be seen as perverse sort of creativity. Adams escapes his sense of the discontinuity of his own being by a kind of erotic cannibalizing—a sort of bizarre and forcible intercourse—of his mind with its objects. Through their death and dismemberment in his mind, Adams himself is paradoxically made more whole. The gulf that separates us through subjectivity is, as Georges Bataille points out, a kind of death, and "for us, discontinuous beings that we are, death means continuity of being." In Story's statue of Cleopatra, Adams, mesmerized by the otherness of Cleopatra's despair, discovers the possibility of a felt kinship with the world. Adams is thus restored to a paradoxical sense of continuity with the world through an image that conjured the death of the self for him. Within this frame, of a quest for an escape from the subjectivity of superhistorical individualism, Adams's equation of biography with murder and autobiography with suicide becomes
explicable. In taking his life in print, in being reduced to silence, Adams is reestablished as a continuous being. In biography, similarly, the biographer cannibalizes his subject, stripping him to the bones that are worthy of veneration, and consuming and digesting the flesh of an alternative being at the same time. The biographer for Adams is a cannibal with imperialist designs. While he was working on *Mt. St. Michel and Chartres*, and beginning to plan *The Education of Henry Adams*, Adams wrote George Cabot Lodge that the thing that he found most troubling in his own work was its incapacity to "reflect what lies beyond its field of reflection." Adams at last affirmed explicitly that the enlightenment religion of mind and reason was an imprisoning one.

The fact, which all the psychologists insist on, that the mind really reflects only itself, is to me the most exasperating thing in the world. Until I read over my own work, I never see the holes and bare spots in my own mind; and only then I feel how hard it is to scratch about and put on false hair and rouge and a grin...The application of all this twaddle is perhaps too obvious. You can see it all, at a glance...by that tiresome faculty of seeing oneself. Never--never--never--can you see it as I feel it, for in that case you would be somebody else. Yet by that stupid mental process on which men foolishly pride themselves--called reason--you can construct a doll-figure of my literary
form, and see how it fits, or does not fit, yours.

(Letters, V, 490)

Like Spenser's Archimago, that prophetic emblem of modern man's perverse powers of artifice, the mind of the modern subject fashions lifeless doubles—Shakespeare's "pictures"—of all it encounters. Thus, Adams can write that the individual Bostonian of his generation is a facet of Boston, and mean that Boston itself is a facet of the individual mind.

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Part of Adams's critique of identity involves, necessarily, a critique of the nature of the subject's relationship to power, both as private citizen and—in the case of his friends, and, in his own role as the historian and biographer of other subjects—as public figure. And indeed, the triumph of subjectivity in the West is tightly interwoven with the development and proliferation of power structures that are first apparent in the hierarchy of the Church, and later in the hierarchy of its successor—the modern state. Thus we should not be surprised that Adams, masquerading as a twelfth-century monk, and refusing to indicate his personal authorship of his Mt. St. Michel and Chartres on the title page of the privately printed version of the volume, tells his niece of the "marriage" of the
Virgin and St. Thomas Aquinas in one letter, and moves comfortably to Alfred T. Mahan's view of the necessity of a canal through the Isthmus of Panama in another. In the letter to Elizabeth Cameron, cited above, his longing for his "happy home at Rock Creek" (his burial site, unmarked but already landscaped and memorialized with the unnamed but immediately famous statue by St. Gaudens) is couched amid the details of political intrigue from his vantage point at the centers of power in Washington. Adams's entire oeuvre is an anatomy of power. He is not only an imperialistic biographer who colonizes his subjects, and assumes responsibility for the shape of their identity; he colonizes himself. In the Education, he is the subject and prisoner of his own Cartesian cogito. As Foucault recognized a half-century after Adams, the condition of radical subjectivity, which Adams found so simultaneously fascinating and alarming, was a manifestation of a particular form of power.24

This form of power applies itself to immediate, everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word "subject": subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to.25
Adams's career—characterized as it always was by a quest for flight and deterritorialization of the self—is also characterized by a related effort to untie his sense of his being from his consciousness of himself and his preservation in history. Adams denies the power of extension through family and place that localizes, categorizes, and imprisons him within a set of family names and traditions and iconic places and received modes of knowing and understanding. Central to Adams's exploration of the possibility of the world outside what he called the "sea of introspection" is an exploration of the powers of language that fascinated every nineteenth-century writer from Coleridge to Matthew Arnold and Nietzsche. Adams was deeply aware that he inhabited a linguistic field of resurgent nominalism. He belongs to that period which saw the simultaneous advent of man as an object of study in what Foucault calls the "field of western knowledge," and the exit of a theory of the correspondence between word and thing which, however embattled, had served a dual purpose as a theory of language that was also a critique of the possibilities of knowledge until the beginning of the nineteenth-century. In Adams's time, language as the "spontaneous tabula, the primary grid of things, as an indispensable link between representations and things, is eclipsed in its turn." When language ceases to be the locus of reality—when words lose their meanings—language
may lose its specially privileged status, but its users are also magically empowered. In losing its "privileged status," language is deterritorialized; freed from representing the entrenched power structure, it can, like Adams's notion of an unbounded self, range at the whim of the individual will, acquiring new capacities with every user and every audience. Words, as Humpty Dumpty and Deleuze remind us, mean what the "I" who articulates them "wants them to mean." Adams's fear of representation in biography, autobiography, and history, stems from his sense that the nominalism he had first identified in Abelard was triumphant in his own time and, for better or worse, in his own work. Adams's obsession with form is itself reflective of his aesthetic nominalism, which Theodor Adorno defined as "a process taking place at the level of form; in fact, nominalism itself becomes form: an example of the mediation between particular and universal." Adams's experimentation with the forms of autobiographical representation mirrors his linguistic nominalism. As the forms of traditional biography, history, and autobiography implode and fuse in Adams's late work, he illustrates the impossibility of closure in the modern work of art. His frequently avowed aesthetic failure reflects the oxymoronic nature of the "open form," which in itself illustrates the nominalist critique of the idea of universal, closed, forms in genre and in language. In "The Rule of Phase" and "Letter to American Teachers of History,"
and even in the *Education*, having denied the organizing and guiding hand provided by a self-conscious subject, Adams moves toward mapping the forces and forms of chaos, with results that, judged from a vantage point of enlightenment notions of coherence and unity, were necessarily and intentionally disastrous. Despite the apparently historical subject matter—that of mapping the motion of forces in history—or, in the case of the *Education*, mapping the motion of a reified self—there is no movement or development in the ordinary sense, only a motion around the single point of the subject's unwavering and inescapable consciousness. Adams marks time, but without any claim to a patterned development or sequence. The very principle of narrative itself is reduced to a hollow shell in the *Education*. As Adorno wrote of Beckett, Adams’s principle of construction is "trans-dynamic," in that it "marks time, shuffling its feet and thereby confessing to the uselessness of dynamics." And in Beckett, as in Adams, the "only telos towards which the dynamic of the immutable moves is perennial disaster." The open form of the *Education* refuses and parodies the models from the picaresque tradition that provide the skeleton of its form. Adams as character is as isolated at the end as he is in the beginning—the old rituals of social integration and of autobiographical narrative as a progress toward understanding are denied and replaced with the motifs of
perennial flight and perpetual uncertainty. As hero, Adams
does not move toward the revelation of meaning at all, but
toward the dissolution and death that had fascinated him
even at twenty-two. In the process, he shatters his own as
well as his readers' illusions of continuity.

On the high-explosive revelations,--or
revelation--I have hopelessly failed. So
did Kelvin, as he took pains to affirm.
He fell back on the absolute necessity
of a creation. I am inclined to think
that my logic drives me further, to the
unreality of all phenomena.
Unfortunately, this conclusion destroys
mysticism, too, as well as the Ego, the
Non-Ego, and ends in the Unknown. Q.E.D.
...To us old people, the universe
resolves itself into an effort of the
Ego to maintain an illusion of
continuity...Of all the solutions
offered for the universe, this is the
only one which seems to be
demonstrated...but only we old people
may use it...You younger ones are
obliged to deal with the illusion of
continuity alone, though science is
getting precious close to chaos...I
speak strongly because I lost my own
illusion of unity and continuity thirty
years go, and I know how fatal the
rupture is to one's scheme of life. Once
hit by Zeno's arrow, one is a mere mad
rabbit. I printed all this ten years ago
in my Education and merely drivel in
repeating it.

(Letters, VI, 692)

Writing to Charles Milnes Gaskell in August 1914, just after
the explosive beginning of the first world war, Adams said
that he felt like Browning's Childe Roland. He had come to
the dark tower of revelation only to find a ruined chapel
and a desolate landscape. "Childe Roland to the dark tower
came! He came once too often...and was trapped like an octogenarian rat...He can’t get out" (Letters, VI, 657).

Part of Adams’s "illusion of continuity" was sustained by his nominalist approach to the shape of his own life. He liked to insist that he had been "born in 1138" (Letters, V, 222). He also liked to say that his "mansion in Rock Creek" was growing more attractive, and that it was "idiotic, grotesque, convulsively laughable" to celebrate a sixty-third birthday in 1901, when he knew that he had been "born in the twelfth century with Abelard" (Letters, V, 202). Like the yearning for the grave and his claim that he was already dead, Adams’s claim that he had been born in the twelfth century becomes one of his ongoing poses in his letters from the late 1890s until his actual death. Adams meant that the predicament of the subject of modernity had been conceived in the twelfth century and that it had borne fruit in his own particular burden of historical consciousness. Imprisoned in his own center of subjectivity, his particular burden of consciousness was the only one he could know.

For Adams, the crucial conflict in medieval philosophy had been the conflict between realism and nominalism, and he believed that it had begun in the twelfth century with Abelard. Paradoxically, nominalism’s triumph had been ensured by the middle of the thirteenth century in the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas which, in its time, had acted
as a point of triumph for the principle of reason and linguistic realism. With its dependence on artificial and arbitrary designations in language, which originated with man not God, nominalism was also the necessary philosophic and linguistic stance that bound the Reformation to the Enlightenment project and underlay the transfer of power from Church to Sovereign and then to the State. Its continuation was implicit in the very idea of a "Universal History" that, with the notion of radical enlightenment for all, lay at the heart of the aims of the Reformation and of its offshoot, the Enlightenment. A universal history would become for man the sacralized secular text of a new age—replacing the universals implied by the sacred text of scripture. The need for a "universal history," like the eighteenth-century's need for handbooks of grammar and for compiling dictionaries which codified both spelling and meaning has its origins in the special privileging of the individual's powers of subjective interpretation that was attendant upon the Reformation views of the individual and his understanding. Brooks Adams wrote that "as Henry neared the end of his application of the development of the thirteenth century according to scientific historical theory in 'Mt. St. Michel and Chartres,' he turned more and more toward his next step in the 'Reformation,' on which he constantly talked with me." Adams was antagonistic to the Reformation, and not only because he felt that it
"dethroned" the Virgin as a unifying symbol of medieval society, though this was in his view symptomatic of a fundamental alteration in man's conception of his world. Adams saw the Reformation as the point where the "distinction between Reason and instinct" had originated. The Reformation can be read as a crisis in the history of subjectivity, a moment when the liturgy and the hierarchy of the church with their dual claims to embody and represent both universal truth and the needs of a supplicant band of souls were no longer seen as a sufficient means of bridging the chasm between a subjectively constituted individual and his notion of a god. The Reformation was a response to western man's need to avail himself of the truths that lie in texts, as well as of a need to engage himself in the work of salvation as a full participant. Subject to none and yet subject to all, in Luther's famous formulation, the subject of modernity is king of the metaphysical forest. He no longer needs a pontiff who claims to be servus servorum Dei at the same time that he makes the believer subject to not only God, but the Church and its representatives. Adams's imaginatively constructed refuge in the twelfth-century with its images of Virgin and Archangel, of a harmoniously configured interior of mind and a corresponding exterior of action and words that matched their meanings was a manifestation of the Church's ability to make subjects out of believers through the exercise of its "pastoral power"
and its claim, through its concern for the individual soul and the individual life, to be engaged in the individual’s production of truth. The prisonhouse of self and language that Adams seeks to escape was forged with manacles of religion, and made possible by the very sense of "unity" that made him regard the Christian Middle Ages as a point of spiritual refuge. Subjectivity, as Adams saw in a wonderfully perverse way, is the ultimate form of the pastoral mode—the conjuring of protected mental spaces that are valorized and then shepherded and controlled first by the Church and later by the state and its servant-of-the-servants of God—the Sovereign. It is hardly an accident that the pastoral mode in literature enjoys a spectacular revival in the tangled history of the early modern period with its sometimes conflicting strands of Renaissance, Reformation, and Counter-Reformation. The pastoral mode does for the literary artist and the reader what the Church did for man—it provides a safe space of textual containment, where the Blatant Beast of mortality can be enfolded and reconciled in the life of man. Lope de Vega’s Arcadia, Sidney’s Arcadia, Spenser’s experiments with pastoral in the Faerie Queene, the Shepheardes Calendar, and the Daphnaida; Montemayor’s La Diana—all are of a piece. Perhaps the role of pastoral is most clearly illustrated by the English estate poem, which makes of the individual household and family a repository of the canonized political
and spiritual values of a nation—at least until Marvell’s *Upon Appleton House*, when subjectivity itself usurps the power of pastoral space, and the poet is no longer able to escape either the sense of his mortality or the intrusion of the politics of modernity. The varieties of Renaissance pastoral all conjure protected—even Neoplatonic—spaces of thought, where the dilemmas of the artist, the individual, and of society at large can be examined in a refuge that is exempt from mortality at the same time that it is necessitated by the consciousness of mortality. In Renaissance pastoral we see the shift from the Church as good shepherd to the idea of the artist as shepherd and protector of the province of subjectivity. By extension, just as Augustine envisions the shape of history for the faithful, the Renaissance artist, recovering his Virgilian roots in Dante, envisions the shape of the political future from Spenser to Marvell and from Marvell to Dryden and Pope. Adams places himself in their company, but his visions displace the artist’s subjective vision with a chronicle of the powers of force. Adams’s private project of modernity may have been that of tracing the arc of subjectivity in the West, but his longing to reform the university system in America and to reshape the face and focus of American history are profoundly political and, in his view, were inseparable from his metaphysical enterprises. Adams’s *Mt. St. Michel and Chartres* is an American analogue of the
English estate poem, transplanted to New England and the eve of the advent of urban, industrial society, and transfigured by the enlightenment sensibility. The historian, not the poet, is the seer, and Adamses and Jeffersons, not the Sidneys or Fairfaxes, are beacons of American enlightenment values. Rather than a literal estate, couched in real earth and complete with a dependent peasantry, the estate that Adams treats is that of the boundless territory of mind. Unfortunately, Adams finds that the beacons shed no new light in the night of modernity, and that he himself is rudderless and abandoned amid the forces that were shaping a new world. The Education, a monument to the disappearance of the personal self in the glare of self-scrutiny follows as a necessary sequel. Adams saw himself as completing the process of the sacralization of the secular which begins with the crisis in subjectivity, or the triumph of the private self, that accompanies, or perhaps culminates in the Reformation. Paradoxically, Adams explores this personal genealogy of mind only in order to escape it. Specifically, he aims to reject what he saw—and what is immediately recognizable—as a Hegelian model of mind, identity, and history in favor of a philosophy built on what he called a more "instinctual" way of seeing and being that he saw confirmed in the philosophy of Nietzsche and of Bergson.

As we have seen, Adams's multiple experiments with multiple identities have their origin in the biographies and
histories of the 1880s, which were closely allied in both
time and spirit with his novelistic endeavors from the same
period. In Democracy and Esther, Adams concretizes his
tendency to extend himself through imitation—which we have
seen even in his student days in Berlin and Italy—by
endowing himself and his dilemmas with alternative names and
an alternative sex. As the anonymous author of Democracy—
Henry Holt, his publisher, was exhorted to the strictest
secrecy—Adams embraces for the first time the possibility
that perhaps the kind of history and biography he has set
out to write only exacerbated the problem of radical
subjectivity. Like Adams, Madeleine Lee has been reading
nineteenth-century social theory. She has read "voraciously
and promiscuously one subject after another," with the
result that "Taine had danced merrily through her mind with
Darwin and Stuart Mill, Gustave Droz and Algernon Swinburne"
(Democracy, 7). She has also read Herbert Spencer
(Democracy, 3), and she is consumed by a desire to experience
the "action of primary forces" at first-hand.

Here then, was the explanation of her
restlessness, discontent, ambition,—call it what you will. It was the
feeling of a passenger on an ocean
steamer whose mind will not give him
rest until he has been in the engine-
room, and talked with the engineer. 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 mind
the capacity of motive power. She was
bent upon getting to the heart of the
great American mystery of democracy and
government. She cared little where her pursuit might lead her...

(Democracy, 7)

Adams makes Madeleine Lee a modern-day, feminized version of Marlowe's Faustus, or perhaps she is only a ten-years-later version of George Eliot's Casaubon—determined to find the "key to unlock all mysteries." Like Hamlet, the figure of Casaubon haunts Adams's letters. Shortly after the publication of Democracy, he wrote Henry Cabot Lodge that he had always thought that he was something of a Casaubon, with his investigations and his habitual "making little memoranda of passages," and that "now I see the tendency steadily creeping over me. Pleased with his analogy, he declares that he is "touched" by Lodge's loyalty to his "venerable professor;" he feels like "two Casaubons rather than one, at the idea of standing in the attitude of a gray-haired Nestor surrounded by you and Young and poor Laughlin" (Letters, II, 400). Adams claimed to be seeking "amusement," in his studies of history and biography. Similarly, Madeleine Lee claims to be seeking only "amusement," in her exploration of political life, but she is really in search of the roots of power.

What she wished to see, she thought, was the clash of interests, the interests of forty millions of people, and a whole continent, centering at Washington; guided, restrained, controlled, or unrestrained and uncontrollable, by men of ordinary mould; the tremendous forces of government, and the machinery of
society, at work. What she wanted was POWER.

(Democracy, 8)

Lee's mistake, like Adams's own, is that she believes that she can explore the "passion of exercising power for its own sake" without incurring any personal cost, and without being altered by what she encounters. Henry Adams wanted to be an unseen observer on the backstage of history, and his Mrs. Lee wants something like that privileged vantage point, too. She believes that she can "go quietly on among the supernumeraries and see how the play was acted and the stage effects were produced; how the great tragedians mouthed and the stage-manager swore." In her passion to observe power at close range, she also makes the mistake of confusing the "force of the engine" with "that of the engineer," and "the Power with the men who wielded it." (Democracy, 8). Mrs. Lee is caught in the web of ambiguity that Story had captured in his image of Cleopatra.

Adams also uses the figure of Mrs. Lee to explore his fascination with the regional basis for American character. Adams once again introduces what he saw as the intrinsic bond between New England and the South. Mrs. Lightfoot Lee herself is a hybrid—a product of the Middle Colonies. Her father is a famous Philadelphia clergyman, but her husband is descended from "the Virginia Lees." All of Adams's special seers—including himself—must possess some "taint"
of southern blood. Like Adams, who chose to spend his life in voluntary and dogged exile from his native Boston, alternating between lodgings in Paris and a house in Washington, Mrs. Lee is a sort of fashionable nomad, another of Adams's picaros, offering a running commentary on a society within which they are perpetual aliens. Like Adams, Mrs. Lee is accepted everywhere, but feels at home nowhere. She frowns on Europe, but she is "bitter against New York and Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Boston." Her closest friend and confidante, and the helpless hero of the book, who is hopelessly enamored of her, is John Carrington, a Virginia aristocrat who has been financially ruined by the Civil War. Carrington carries the secret costs of the Civil War in his soul.

...the curious look of patient endurance on his face was the work of a single night when he had held his brother in his arms, knowing that the blood was draining drop by drop from his side, in the dense, tangled woods, beyond the reach of help, hour after hour, till the voice failed and the limbs grew stiff and cold.

(Democracy, 125)

Adams makes Carrington another defeated voice of reason who has been silenced by his confrontation with the forces and the consciousness of history. Carrington is "troubled with memories of civil war and of associations still earlier, belonging to an age already vanishing or vanished"

(Democracy, 108). In the formulation that haunted Adams and
would haunt other American literary artists, Carrington is a man whose imagination resounds with the sonorous names of the dead who people the spaces of his memory and sap his essential life. He is a sort of prefiguring of Quentin Compson and Horace Benbow and Jake Barnes. As he sets out to entertain Madeleine's younger sister Sybil with rides in Rock Creek Park and into the Virginia countryside he awakens in her a sense of the terrible presence of the past. Arlington Cemetery acquires a life in the normally unthinking Sybil's awakening imagination, as "though Cadmus had reversed his myth, and had sown living men, to come up dragons' teeth" (Democracy, 109). The Lees, "old family friends of Carrington's," are conjured as a ghostly presence, even though their abandoned mansion is an empty shell that plays host to "a grave-yard." Carrington explains that Robert E. Lee was "to be our Washington," and as he talks, and the road from Richmond to Appomattox comes alive for Sybil, Adams experiments with the simultaneous recreation of history and the invention of a receptive audience—of uncle talking to niece that was to characterize Mt. St. Michel and Chartres. Significantly, the fictional rides of Carrington and Sybil recapitulate Adams's rides along the same trails with his wife Marian. The favorite path is not the one that leads to Arlington, but to Rock Creek Cemetery. In the "quiet shadows" at Rock Creek Sybil and Carrington find a kind of "protection and a soft
shelter;" there, they are free from the "risk of criticism from curious eyes." Adams was later to use these same phrases to describe both his "autobiography" and his grave at Rock Creek.

The villain of the novel, who teaches Mrs. Lee the reverse of Carrington's lessons about honor and virtue in history, also echoes Adams's fascination with regional characters. Silas P. Ratcliffe is an Illinois senator who is a transplanted New Englander. The Midwest introduces a new element into Adams's geographic equation. If Southerners are voluptuaries and radical individualists, and New Englanders are all metaphysics and Calvin, Ratcliffe is the rising spirit of the new order--the product of a state whose primary city would serve, in Sandburg's words, as "hog-butcher to the world." He has what Carrington calls "Yankee eyes."

Cold eyes...steel grey, rather small, not unpleasant in good-humour, diabolic in a passion, but worst when a little suspicious; then they watch you as though you were a young rattlesnake, to be killed when convenient...His eyes only seem to ask the possible uses you might be put to.

(Democracy, 15)

Though Ratcliffe had ridden the crest of the tide of the anti-slavery movement in Illinois, the issues of mind that so perplexed Adamses and Jeffersons and Randolphins are alien to him. Adams has Ratcliffe come not from Peoria, but from "Peonia," Illinois. For Madeleine, "the Peonia giant" seems
to be "the high priest of American politics" who will initiate her into the mysteries of political power.

To her eyes he was the high-priest of American politics; he was charged with the meaning of the mysteries, the clue to political hieroglyphics. Through him, she hoped to sound the depths of statesmanship and to bring up from its oozy bed that pearl of which she was in search; the mysterious gem which must lie hidden somewhere in politics. She wanted to understand this man; to turn him inside out; to experiment on him and use him as young physiologists use frogs and kittens.

(Democracy, 20)

Madeleine wants to put Mr. Ratcliffe to rack and torture, and in her quest for the pearl of political wisdom which lies buried in the "oozy bed" of Mr. Ratcliffe's statesmanship, she is quite willing to sacrifice his humanity. Adams frames Madeleine's anatomy of Senator Ratcliffe in Baconian terms, and, just as Bacon and the enlighteners who came after him sought power over nature, she seeks power over Ratcliffe in a peculiarly nineteenth-century manner. She seeks to classify him as a particular kind of beast, and to provide him with a name and a definition which will also serve to immobilize him in her mind. Like a biographer Madeleine thus intentionally sets up a discontinuity between herself and Ratcliffe that is also an assertion of her superiority over him. Madeleine attempts to place Ratcliffe in the grid of things known in her mind. In so doing, she engages in the characteristic activity of
modernity—she "cuts up the continuum of being into a pattern of characters."36 In short, she takes his life through the activity of her mind, and substitutes a simulacrum for it. Her inability to probe the depths of Mr. Ratcliffe's mystery stems not from any lack of coldness or intelligence on her part but from her complete lack of awareness that Ratcliffe is a new creature, made from the new cloth of industrial civilization, which, as Hawthorne had known thirty years before, would scarcely take the present into account, much less the past. Not content with having Madeleine place Senator Ratcliffe in a table of things known, classified, and limited, Adams insists that the reader replicate Madeleine's activity. Adams's method recalls that of Harriet Beecher Stowe, whose brutal constitutions of economic class guide the reader to reject the realm of slave traders. The reader rejects Haley, the slave trader we encounter in the tableau that opens Uncle Tom's Cabin not because his activity is morally repugnant, but because he had "coarse bejewelled hands" and "gaudy vests of many colors." The distinction that the reader draws between himself and Haley is based on an assertion of social, not moral superiority. The reader wants to feel superior to Haley; he wants to deny any kinship with this man who speaks in "easy defiance of Murray's grammar."37 Adams's characterization of Senator Ratcliffe, similarly, draws on class distinctions that are designed to define him
for Adams's audience as a creature separate from the world of Madeleine and Carrington and Sybil, the old Baron Jacobi, and most of their familiar acquaintances.

And he was a western widower of fifty; his quarters in Washington were in gaunt boarding house rooms, furnished only with public documents and enlivened by western politicians and office-seekers. In the summer he retired to a solitary, white framehouse with green blinds, surrounded by a few feet of uncared-for grass and a white fence; its interior more dreary still, with iron stoves, oil-cloth carpets, cold white walls, and a large engraving of Abraham Lincoln in the parlour; all in Peonia, Illinois.

(Democracy, 20)

Ratcliffe's oil-cloth carpets and the solitary engraving of Lincoln that adorns his parlor contrast sharply with Madeleine's "melancholy Wilton carpets," and with the miscellany of sketches, paintings, and porcelain that are scattered throughout her house on Lafayette Square. Her own "domestic altar-piece" is no engraving of Lincoln, but a "mystical Corot landscape" (Democracy, 9). As always, however, Adams's vision of Madeleine is not a simple one. Corot's landscapes, of course, had a special bourgeois vulgarity of their own, and Mrs. Lee's taste in paintings, like her taste in philosophy, is one of Adams's hints that this is a satire that cuts in all directions and does not shrink from spearing the character who seems to be a composite of Adams and his wife. Corot landscapes were popularized versions of a Rousseau-esque fascination with
nature. Along with other paintings of the Barbizon school, they were most in vogue among newly monied city-dwellers who liked to adorn their walls with emblems of a country life they had no intention of living, and a life in nature from which they were perpetually alienated by both education and habit. In the summer of 1875, as he contemplated the onset of a new term as a history professor at Harvard where "university priggishness" bored him, Adams wrote Sir Robert Cunliffe that he was delighted to have decorated his own summer-house parlor at Beverly Farms with English watercolors, including a Cousens which he called "the best thing I have." Adams's fellow professors found his tastes alien. Their tastes, like Madeleine's, tended toward Corot paintings, Morris wall-papers, Herbert Spencer, and "culture." The obsession with "culture" as Matthew Arnold had defined it made Adams "want to foam at the mouth." His hostility extended to most of his university acquaintances, and further, to most New England intellectuals.

We are a practical people. We are sternly conscientious. Our young women are haunted by the idea that they ought to read, to draw, or to labor in some way...to 'improve their minds.' They are utterly unconscious of the pathetic impossibility of improving those poor little hard, thin, wiry, one-stringed instruments...which haven't range enough to master one big emotion...Our men in the same devoted temper talk "culture" till the word makes me foam at the mouth. They cram themselves with second-hand facts and theories till they bust, and then they lecture at Harvard College and think that they are the aristocracy
of intellect and are doing truly heroic work by exploding themselves all over a younger generation, and forcing up a new set of simple-minded, honest, harmless intellectual prigs as like to themselves as two dried peas in a bladder.

*(Letters, II, 235)*

In his assault on his fellow New Englanders, Adams despises their continuing dependence on "European fashions in 'Culture.'" His chagrin at a kind of self-willed intellectual colonialism is assigned seven years later to Southerners, but in this letter, written in 1875, Adams in private plainly feels that this is a phenomenon that is endemic to American intellectual life, and perhaps to the modern world. Most importantly, Adams is already moving toward his embrace of the life of the instincts and of feeling that will become of such crucial importance in his later theories of history, of education, and of identity. In the summer of 1875, Adams has already identified what he found to be the troubling tendency of modern education.

It is an atmosphere of "culture," with a really excellent instinct for all the very latest European fashions in "Culture." Matthew Arnold should be their ideal. Ruskin and Herbert Spencer, Morris wall-papers, Corot paintings, Eastlake furniture, are our food and drink. The theories are the very best and latest imported. Our young people have all the most novel intellectual fashions crammed into them with alarming conscientiousness. But I am aghast at the result. Such a swarm of prigs and all suffering under a surfeit of useless information, is new to human experience. Are we never to produce one man who will
do something himself, is the question I am helplessly asking...

(Letters, II, 234-235)

While Madeleine's tastes are built on prejudices against American intellectuals and their pretensions, Adams does not simply skewer his acquaintances in Democracy. He skewers himself and he skewers his readers. We innocently affirm Madeleine's tastes. We want to associate ourselves with her as surely as we want to dissociate ourselves from Ratcliffe. Adams's private joke is that we as readers are unknowingly mocked through the very tastes that we seek to affirm. The joke extends to him, however; Adams and his wife Marian had shopped, albeit unsuccessfully, for Morris wallpapers, and their own house was decorated with an array of objects not unlike those presented by Madeleine's parlor.

At the same time, Adams's own longings—"are we never to produce one man who will do something himself"—are echoed in Madeleine's question of five years later: "Why will somebody not grow to be a tree and cast a shadow?" (Democracy, 6). Similarly, Carrington's regret over the loss of "whatever it was that produced George Washington and a crowd of other men like him" (Democracy, 66) is Adams's regret. Madeleine's quest for the public good in a "maze of personal intrigue, this wilderness of stunted natures" (Democracy, 87) is Adams's own quest in his historical investigations. Madeleine's despair after
reading the lives and letters of the American presidents and their wives, and her disgust at the "melancholy spectacle" "from George Washington down to the last incumbent" replicates Adams's own—the fruit of his efforts at writing American history. Madeleine discovers, as Adams himself had, that all who had "aimed at high purpose... had been thwarted, beaten, and habitually insulted." With Adams himself, she asks what "deeper abyss could have opened under the nation's feet" (Democracy, 43). Madeleine's resolution to her discovery—through Carrington's intervention--of the proof of Ratcliffe's corruption—is also Adams's. She flees, exchanging Washington for Egypt, and consumed by a longing to "live in the Great Pyramid and look out forever at the polar star" (Democracy, 182). Like Adams himself, she seeks relief through entombment. The pyramids, after all, were mysterious monuments that served as both palaces and tombs for the restless dead. The novel closes in a sort of narrative disintegration, which mirrors the confusion and flight of Madeleine and her sister. Except for a postscript that notes that most of her countrymen would think she "had made a mistake" in dismissing Mr. Ratcliffe, we hear from Madeleine only through an amanuensis, Sybil. Sybil's letter is supplemented by a "thin strip of paper" advising Mr. Carrington to "try again" to win Madeleine. This novel is the first of Adams's works to use the nominalistic device of the open form. The novel collapses as a form as Mrs. Lee
moves beyond its circle of action to embrace a different way of seeing and being that is withheld from the reader.

Mrs. Lee's secret—and the source both of her power over others and her inner restlessness—in the narrator's view, is that "she had artistic tendencies," which lent her an air as "impalpable as an Indian summer mist and nonexistent except to people who feel rather than reason." Like her creator, Mrs. Lee may be a frustrated artist, but she also shares with him a yearning for power, and for exploring the possibilities of modernity and of democracy.

When Baron Jacobi, a seventy-five year old Bulgarian minister notes the American tendency to believe itself "excepted from the operation of general laws," with the result that it will "be more corrupt than Rome under Caligula," Mrs. Long wants to believe with Nathan Gore, a New England historian and poet, that one can still hold a faith in the possibilities of modernity.

But I have faith; not perhaps in the old dogmas, but in the new ones; faith in human nature; faith in science; faith in the survival of the fittest. Let us be true to our time, Mrs. Lee!

(Democracy, 41)

Mr. Gore does not recognize, nor does Mrs. Lee, though Gore's analysis sounds hollow to her, that the idea of the "survival of the fittest" is merely a reworking of the old Greek argument for governance based on the order of physis—the rule of the stronger as it is represented in nature.
Baron Jacobi's warning echoes Jefferson's warning in *Notes on the State of Virginia* that Virginians, and by extension, Americans, should look ahead to a time when corruption would necessarily ensue.

They should look forward to a time, and that not a distant one, when corruption in this, as in the country from which we derive our origin, will have seized the heads of government, and be spread by them through the body of the people; when they will purchase the voices of the people, and make them pay the price. Human nature is the same on both sides of the Atlantic, and will be alike influenced by the same causes. The time to guard against corruption and tyranny, is before they shall have gotten hold on us. 40

The safeguard against corruption, in Jefferson's view was the rule of law—a source of order that lay outside the realm of individual caprice. What Madeleine learns in the course of the novel is the necessity of adhering to Jefferson's only political dogma: that in times of necessity, the American "enlists under no man's banner, enquires for no man's name, but repairs always to the standard of the laws." 41  Jefferson haunts the narrative spaces of *Democracy*. Indeed, the novel provides a sort of alternative understanding of Jefferson and of democracy to the versions of history and biography that Adams was providing in *New England Federalism* and in his biography of
Gallatin and the evolving project of the History of the United States.

Adams's relationship to both of his novels is a peculiar one and belongs to a period when his many masks and disguises began to proliferate. Madeleine Lee is the first of Adams's fictional masks. While Democracy was characteristically published under the veil of anonymity, John Hay and Marian Adams were frequently named as possible authors. One of Adams's little masquerades involved pretending that Hay was the author of Adams's books. Hay had in fact proposed to "redeem" the author of Democracy by publishing a vindication of American politicians. Adams's response to Hay's suggestion once again reflects his sense that the act of writing both fiction and non-fiction involved a species of "murder and self-destruction."

If you follow your scheme and write a story 'by the author [of Democracy], 'I hope you will take the new motif under your eyes. Describe the sufferings of the anonymous author on hearing his book discussed in a foreign country, and how it gradually led him to murder and self-destruction. Although my brain is much disturbed by the whirl of authors known to have written your book [i.e. Democracy], and the vision of you and King and James listening to revelations on the subject is almost too much for me...Much as I disapprove the spirit of your book...I can see that in English reflection it must become more terrible to its creator than to anyone else...The situation is tragi-comic to an exceptional degree, and quite new to literature. You can make some atonement for your offence, by explaining the terrors of your atonement. This new
crucifixion is unique in history, and should have great success.

(Letters, II, 474)

Adams's musings on a "crucifixion in history" through novel-writing accompany his announcement of the birth of Adams's version of John Randolph, the biography that was "part of myself" and wherein Randolph, must "live forever" and curse Adams as his literary father from his "silent tomb." Later on, Adams compares the first installments of the proofs of his history to the birth of a "baby." His equation of writing and publication with birth and death transcends all boundaries of time and genre.

The history of Adams's second novel, Esther, is even more complex than that of Democracy. It was published under a pseudonym. Adams was "Frances Snow Compton." Even Adams's closest friends were for a time unaware that he was its author. Adams convinced Henry Holt, its publisher, to allow the book to be published without any advance notices or advertisements, claiming that he wanted to see if the work could survive without the commercializing endeavors of the publishing industry. While Holt had been indiscreet about the authorship of Democracy, he never revealed that Adams had written Esther. Adams's authorship became generally known only after his death in 1918. When he began work on Esther in 1883, Adams wrote John Hay, who was rumored to be a possible author of Democracy, that he heard that Hay was
publishing "another" novel. While Hay was, in fact publishing the first installment of *The Bread-Winners* anonymously, Adams was still playing with the idea that Hay had authored *Democracy*.

I am glad to hear that you are publishing another novel. I was so frank in telling you my unfavorable opinion of 'Democracy' that I will try to read the new one in hopes that I may be able to speak well of it. Is it not a little risky to lay the scene at Cleveland after laying the scene of *Democracy* at Washington? Two such straws must be fatal.

*(Letters, II, 508)*

Eventually Adams told Clarence King and then John Hay about his "melancholy little Esther" *(Letters, III, 34)*, but only after his wife, Marian, had killed herself by drinking the potassium cyanide that she used to retouch photographs in December, 1885. Clarence King claimed that the reason for Adams's secrecy about the book stemmed from his guilt at having "exposed his wife's religious experiences, and, as it were, made of her a chemical subject vis a vis religion." Adams wrote John Hay from Japan in 1886 that the book should die.

My poor boy, how very strong you do draw your vintage for my melancholy little Esther. Your letter of July 18 has just reached me...Now let it die! To admit the public to it would be almost unendurable to me. I will not pretend the book is not precious to me, but its value has nothing to do with the public who could never understand that such a
book might be written in one's heart's blood.

(Letters, III, 34)

Whatever revisionist views Adams developed about the novel which so eerily anticipated his wife's suicide a year later, he began work on Esther in early 1883 in part because he wanted to experiment with representing an American woman in narrative, and felt that neither James nor Howells had done so successfully. Writing John Hay in 1883 after reading the first section of The Bread-Winners, he congratulated Hay on having represented women more successfully than his famous American contemporaries.

Howells cannot deal with gentlemen or ladies; he always slips up. James knows almost nothing of women but the mere outside; he never had a wife. This new writer not only knows women, but knows ladies; the rarest of literary gifts. I suppose he has an eastern wife?...If the author wrote 'Democracy' as is said, he has made a great stride in every way especially in humor, which is rather conspicuously wanting in that over-ambitious and hard-featured book.

(Letters, II, 513)

Once again, Adams maintains his private fantasy that Hay had written Democracy. He also feigns ignorance of the "new" author's identity. Meanwhile, Adams read proof-sheets for his own Esther, and kept the novel's existence a secret from all of his friends. Adams's motives for writing are, as we have seen, always complex; one is inclined always to recall Brooks Adams's warning in his introduction to his brother's
last essays that "Henry was never, I fear, quite frank with himself or with others" (Degradation, 1). However, if Democracy represents in embryo Adams's doubts about the nature and direction of historical process and of America, then Esther is his exploration not of any such simple dichotomy as "science and nature," or "reason and faith," but of his growing sense that individuals were all imprisoned within their private castles of mind and their private systems of belief. No community of being or of meaning either through art or language existed. Wharton's handsome glass saints, to use the language of Mt. St. Michel and Chartres, preside over a dead church and a dead faith. Hazard, the young minister who falls in love with Esther, seems moved less by the mysteries of faith than by his power over his flock.

He took possession of his flock, with a general advertisement that he owned every sheep in it, white or black, and to show that there could be no doubt on this matter, he added a general claim of right of property in all mankind and the universe. He did this in the name and on behalf of the church universal, but there was a self-assertion in the quiet air with which he pointed out the nature of his title, and then, after sweeping all human thought and will into his strong-box, shut down the lid with a sharp click and bade his audience kneel. The sermon dealt with the relations of religion to society. It began by claiming that all being and all thought rose by slow gradations to God,—ended in Him, for Him—existed only through
Him and because of Him. The form of act or thought mattered nothing...

(Esther, 189-190)

Hazard’s first sermon denounces the claims of the Cartesian cogito. Hazard asserts that while philosophers may claim to know that they exist, the Church responds that they live and move and have their being only within the bounds prescribed by the Church: "No! You are not, you have no existence of your own. You were and are and ever will be only a part of the Supreme ‘I AM,’ of which the Church is the Emblem" (Esther, 190). Through Hazard, Adams articulates the problem of identity as he was coming to understand it. For him, identity is a kind of perpetual state of contingent being. Adams recognizes that the idea of a personal self requires the simultaneous existence of God and of world, and that without these constructs our individual names and our notions of identity are empty of meaning. What Adams, and, through him Esther, seeks is the realm in which identity is transpersonal and relational. That realm is available in Esther, but only through the possibility of suicide offered by the Falls. Esther’s central problem is thus an existential one. Hazard, whose name implies the danger he poses to Esther’s quest for an authentic existence, is almost disembodied. Even his desire for Esther is a longing to claim and conquer her soul. George Strong, on the other hand, and his profession—geology—suggest his more instinctual approach to existence, but Esther’s longings
move her toward Hazard, not George. The other romantically paired characters in this psychomachia are equally allegorized. Catherine Brook, Esther's orphaned friend who comes from the West, is "nearer nature" than any woman Wharton, the artist figure, knows. Wharton, for his part, damaged by his unfortunate marriage, "lives only in his art since the collapse of his marriage" (*Esther*, 228-229). Catherine is thus unavailable to him. We later learn that Wharton met his wife in a Paris hospital, where she was suffering from an overdose of arsenic. Like Story's Cleopatra, she is "fierce, splendid, a priestess of the oracle! Tortured by agony and clinging to it as though it were a delight" (*Esther*, 251). In reality, she has the "temper of a Fury, and all the vices of Paris," and she eventually abandons him. Wasted by his encounter Wharton realizes Petrarch's secret: "I knew the secret of Petrarch and I could not tell it. My wife came between me and my thought. All life took form in my hands as a passion" (*Esther*, 252). The primary characters in *Esther* are bits and pieces of human beings--either all soul and thought, or all body and instinct. Only Esther and Wharton have the capacity to mediate between what Adams divides into two worlds. Wharton has retreated into thought and art--which he sees as an imitation of Petrarch's choice of the *vita solitaria*; Esther is left to choose between the "physical life," which she regards as the "unreal" part of existence; and a
spiritual life which she finds deadening and abhorrent. In his passion for control of her being, Hazard finds himself gazing into a "theological abyss" (Esther, 275). Esther, meanwhile, flees to Niagara and a room that overlooks the cataract, where she feels "herself being swept over it. Whichever way she moved, she had to look down into an abyss and leap" (Esther, p. 330). Her choice involves being swept away by the Falls, or owned by Hazard, who admits that he wants her "whole life, and even more." Esther conflates the two poles of her choice--death by drowning in the falls or death by self-annihilation in religion. She imagines the "thunders of the Church already rolling over her head, and that her mind was already shutting itself up under the checks of its new surroundings" (Esther, 331). For Esther, the church is "all personal and selfish." It proposes to extend the personal self into eternity.

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.

(Esther, 332-333)

The cataract becomes a central symbol in Esther, and just as generations of visitors to Adams's own memorial at Rock Creek Cemetery have argued over the sex of St. Gaudens' statue, Esther and her companion argue over the sex of the Falls. For Esther, the falls are masculine: "It is not a woman! It is a man!...No woman ever had a voice like that"
At the same time, Esther describes the falls as though they were feminine: "What a complexion, to stand dazzling white and diamonds in the full sunlight" (Esther, 314). Esther's fascination with the Falls anticipates Kate Chopin's vivid personification of the Gulf of Mexico which calls Edna Pontellier in The Awakening with the same voice and the same story that Esther hears at Niagara. In Chopin's novel, echoing, repetitive passages that mirror the motion of the tides, center the novel in the stages of Edna's awakening to a condition of subjectivity that has its analogue but not its counterpart in a sense of physical ecstasy that she can feel only when she is alone, in the sea. Mrs. Pontellier's erotic visions, like all such visions in the universe of subjectivity are always onanistic. Adams writes his own version of Madame Bovary in his attempt to problematize the issue of sexuality as a twin of the problem of subjectivity. The males around Mrs. Pontellier, like Adams's emasculated modern American males, for whom he repeatedly expressed his contempt, shrink from Edna's budding physical passion and the magnetic power over others that stems from it. For Edna, the "voice of the sea is seductive, never ceasing, whispering, clamoring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander in abysses of solitude." Edna is able to hear the sea, because, like Esther, she has "begun to realize her position in the universe as a human being, and to recognize her relations as an individual to
the world within and about her." Feeling embattled not by the Church, but by lesser instruments of conventional morality, a husband and children, Edna chooses the abyss of solitude through drowning. Adams leaves his heroine poised for such a choice, but unable to make it. Adams draws a distinction between the falls and the sea.

The sea is capricious, fickle, angry, fawning, violent, savage, and wanton; it caresses and raves in a breath, and has its moods of silence, but Esther's huge playmate rambled on with its story in the same steady voice, never shrill or angry, never silent or degraded by a sound of human failings.

(Esther, 314)

Esther does not choose the abyss of solitude. She does not, in fact, choose anything at all within the frame of Adams's narrative, but whereas Edna Pontellier wants to drown in the sea of introspection, Esther, like Adams wants to escape it. The Church is an abyss not because it involves a rejection of the principle of identity, but because it seeks to project identity into eternity. The central characters each revolve in centers of their own. Wharton loves Catherine, but is too damaged to claim her. Esther loves Hazard enough to "sacrifice herself" for him, but she declines to dissolve under the weight of the Church for him. George Strong loves Esther, but she loves him only as a favored brother. All of the traditional routes out of the finite center of self are blocked in Esther. Sex is linked with death and scandal; marriage and convention with ennui. The realm of
spontaneous desire is perpetually alienated from those who make it inaccessible by their very consciousness of its existence.

Adams took Esther's name from the last of the four stories that comprise Hawthorne's "Legends of the Province House" in Twice-Told Tales. Adams admired Hawthorne's work, and in explanation of his futile attempts to locate a copy of The Marble Faun in Rome in 1860, wrote his brother that "when Mr. Hawthorne describes or praises anything it is time that other people should hold their tongues." "Legends of the Province House" deals with the imaginative restoration of the chronicle of New England history that is also at the heart of The Scarlet Letter. In each of the four stories Hawthorne explores the apparently lifeless surface of an historical anecdote, bringing portraits and otherwise uninteresting buildings to an unnatural life by drawing "strenuously upon [his] imagination." Hawthorne's narrator in the tetralogy is fascinated by how the "lapse of time" affords "opportunities for many variations of the narrative." "Despairing of literal and absolute truth" he does not hesitate to make such "further changes as seem conducive to the reader's profit and delight." History as entity is dismissed; it is redesigned as a product of the narrator's mind. "Old Esther Dudley" is the last of the four stories. Hawthorne's Esther is an old royalist woman who refuses to believe that King George has been defeated, and
who continues to inhabit the abandoned mansion of a departed
government even after the Revolution is over, and the last
British General, Sir William Howe has left for England.

As the General glanced back at Esther
Dudley’s antique figure, he deemed her
well fitted for such a charge, as being
so perfect a representative of the
decayed past—of an age gone by, with
its manners, opinions, faith and
feelings, all fallen into oblivion or
scorn—of what had once been a reality,
but was now merely a vision of faded
magnificence...old Esther Dudley was
left to keep watch in the lonely
Province House, dwelling there with
memory; and if Hope ever seemed to flit
around her, still was it memory in
disguise.  

Esther is an artifact, a creature who is one of the walking
dead. The world in which she lived and moved and possessed
an identity has vanished. When she beholds herself in her
mirror, which is popularly believed to have magical powers,
she sees an image that is "indistinct and ghostlike" in part
because she is constituted only through memory; she has no
part to play in any community made up of the living. Old
Esther continues to inhabit the "old historic edifice" of
the Province House, and as the years pass a body of myth
surrounds both the house and her. In the legends, Old
Esther became a sort of Merlin who could use "a tall antique
mirror" in the house to summon the shades of the past.

Among the time-worn articles of
furniture that had been left in the
mansion there was a tall, antique
mirror...it was the general belief that
Esther could cause the Governors of the
overthrown dynasty, with the beautiful
ladies who had once adorned their festivals, the Indian chiefs who had come up to the Province House to hold council or swear allegiance, the grim provincial warriors, the severe clergymen—in short all the pageantry of gone days—all the figures that had ever swept across the broad plate of glass in former times—she could cause the whole to reappear and people the inner world of the mirror with shadows of the old life.52

As in so many of Hawthorne's stories there is an echo of Spenser here. Spenser aimed in his Faerie Queene to provide Queen Elizabeth with a text that was also a "fair mirror," capable of conjuring for her an "antique image" of her "great ancestry."53 The Province House becomes an icon of history; Old Esther becomes a type of the modern magus—the historian who can conjure the simulacrum of the past in her mirror and through it, direct the course of the future. While, as Hawthorne adds, she is a "symbol of a departed system," she also embodies "history in her person." Esther's is a tragedy of the modern subject: "living so continually in her own circle of ideas, and never regulating her mind by a proper reference to present things,"54 Esther appears to the world that has superseded her to be crazed. When a new governor is finally elected, and presents himself at the Province House, which is now refigured as the Governor's mansion, Esther realizes that she is no more than a ghost of a vanished past. The Governor's presence is an intrusion of a living embodiment of the otherness of the world outside the carefully constructed phantasm of life in
the Province House. Her collapse at the feet of the newly
elected representative of a new order who confronts her with
the speech that forms the epigraph of this chapter
symbolizes her loss of access to meaning, both as character
and as symbol. The new governor is a member of a "new race
of men--living no longer in the past." If Esther is an
embodiment of history, the new governor is an embodiment of
the new religion of Progress. His duty is to move his
fellow citizens "onward, onward," with the constant reminder
that they are not the "children of the past" any longer.\textsuperscript{55}
There is very little humanity in his treatment of Esther;
there is no space reserved for sentiment in this newly
engineered order. While the Governor pays lip-service to
honoring the old world that Esther represents, Esther is a
curiosity--an object for scientific examination--whose death
evokes not pity, but a hymn to progress.

Though Hawthorne’s narrator and the "old Loyalist" who
tells Esther’s story lack her mysterious mirror, they too,
can conjure the shapes of the past. Hancock’s statement
about Esther--"she hath done her office"\textsuperscript{56} also refers to
the agency of the Province House. It has summoned the
simulacrum of the past in such a way that the very clocks
seem to strike in a "bygone century." Like Adams, Hawthorne
conflates the related powers of memory and historiography
with a sort of sorcery. His narrator leaves the Province
Throughout his life, Henry Adams felt that he, too, was a sort of ghostly being. In his *Education*, Adams describes himself as a "child of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries." His name carried with it an "eighteenth-century inheritance;" he is brought up in an atmosphere that is "colonial, revolutionary, almost Cromwellian" and yet, "for him alone, the old universe was thrown into an ash heap and a new one created" (*Education*, 723-26). Hawthorne’s Esther is one of Adams’s doubles, and both she and he are literally and figuratively doubled again in Adams’s Esther through the agency of Adams’s narrative imagination. While Adams’s Esther founders on the rock of an identity she is neither willing to relinquish nor affirm, her double and predecessor in Hawthorne help place the novel squarely in Adams’s study of modern intellectual history as the record of a continuing crisis of subjectivity. Adams’s habitual indirection about his motives is at play again. There is more of Adams and of the dilemma he was addressing in Esther in Old Esther Dudley both as story and as character than there is in his own novel.

In both *Democracy* and Esther Adams explores the problems of the historian of modernity that were crystallizing in his mind as he revised the *History of the United States*. At the end of the previous chapter, I
suggested that the enterprise of writing an authoritative history was intimately connected in Adams's imagination with the idea of self-representation. *Esther* as text scarcely has an identity of its own. It is rather a composite of other texts, a narrative *discordia concors* in which other authorial voices and other authorial dilemmas are refi gured by Adams's magisterial imagination. Esther and Hazard, Catherine and Wharton are latterday configurations of other pairs of thwarted artists and lovers from the historical past. In Wharton's anguished imitations of Petrarch's uncertainty over whether life was best lived in the pastoral spaces of contemplation and retirement at Vaucluse, or amid the stench and chaos and excitement of the active life in Avignon, the novel invokes the origins of modernity. The corpus of Petrarch's work centers in his awareness of himself as an isolated subject at the culmination of a history from which he feels alienated. Modelling in small the progress of the entire corpus of Adams's work, *Esther* traces the self-conscious subjectivity of Petrarch to Spenser's passionate post-Reformation endeavor to mirror a usable past through art. It revisits Hawthorne's retelling of Spenser as part of the tragedy of America, and it reminds us always of Adams's self-conscious manipulation of all the texts of the past. Petrarch and Spenser, Adams and Hawthorne are unified by what Adams perceived as the haunting disease of modern historical consciousness. The very Petrarchan
canzoniere that Wharton employs as images of his personal tragedy in Esther underscore the warning that Petrarch as writer has Augustine offer the fictional Francesco of the Secretum: "the story of Narcissus has no warning for you." Petrarch's curious modernity as autobiographical subject, as poet, and as historiographer stems from his tendency to mediate his experience through writing. Not only did Petrarch write autobiographical letters to posterity; he also wrote letters to the dead ancients with whom he desired to establish a "living" connection through writing and reading. As in Adams's own letters, fictive, historical, and living beings exchange places readily in Petrarch's Epistolae Familiare, and like the Laura whose actual death scarcely disturbs the progress of the poems she inspires, they are dependent on Petrarch's fantasia which breathes life into them all. Petrarch calls his recipients to him, as subjects, and moulds them into simulacra of themselves through writing and through memory. His autobiographical letters to posterity along with the Secretum, reflect his need to represent experience through the written word that mirrors Adams's own. "I desire to write but I know not about what or to whom to write." William Kerrigan and Gordon Braden note that in Petrarch's writing "the myth of Apollo and Daphne intersected the myth of Narcissus and Echo." The same is true of Adams, and he saw in the tangle of literary and historical allusions that comprise the
narrative shape of Esther an emblem of the tangled web of his own identity, a composite of writing and speech, of texts and experience remembered and reconstituted—consumed by the subject in the recesses of the sepulchre of mind. Adams chose Petrarch as the central symbolic literary figure in Esther as self-consciously as he chose Hawthorne. Hans Blumenberg marks April 26, 1336, when Petrarch may or may not have ascended Mont Ventoux, as the "one of the great moments that oscillate indecisively between the epochs" of the medieval and modern worlds. The letter epitomizes the conflict between the inner and outer man, between "outside and inside," between "the world and the soul" and its resolution in self-contemplation that preoccupies Petrarch in La Vita Solitaria. Nature shrinks into insignificance in comparison to the "loftiness of human contemplation," in Petrarch's letter, as it had for his model Augustine, but for radically different reasons. Petrarch sacralizes Augustine's vision of the life of religious retirement, as well as the idea of contemplation. Petrarch seeks contemplation not because he seeks the infinite, or because he seeks a dialogue with God, but because "this pursuit of literature (my italics) by means of which we consecrate our own name to that of another, carving statues of illustrious men much more enduring than bronze or marble, can be carried on nowhere more successfully or freely than in solitude." Petrarch uses the authority of Augustine, of the saints'
lives, and of the exemplary figures of solitude to advance a concept of secularized retirement. His vision of the retired life of a man of letters is the life of a monk in which the interior spaces of mind have supplanted the cloister. Petrarch's use of ecclesiastical authorities affords a priestly dimension to the scholar's vocation; his use of secular ones places his endeavor within the framework of human history—the spaces in which the individual life acquires real unity and meaning. After Petrarch, as Adams knew, unity and meaning are earned through the practice of interpreting and writing historical and literary letters to the world. If Petrarch's mission was to establish a vital continuum between his own age and that of the historical past through the literary vocation, Adams's mission is to assert that such connections are entirely subjective, and that the continuity they provide is bought at a price of imprisonment in the echoing halls of the past that doom Quentin Compson.

In the previous chapter, I alluded to Adams's decision to destroy sections of his diary as sections of his *History* were published. The surviving fragments of Adams's diary center in Adams's mother's illness, senility, and death; his own darkening depression; and his steady work on the "deadly routine" of history-writing. The routine was "deadly" not because Adams was bored. On the contrary, he was immersed in the battles of the War of 1812, and in the
drafting of the Treaty of Ghent. The work was "deadly" because Adams was writing about the man who had been the son of Abigail Brooks and Charles Francis Adams, and who had an extended identity as an Adams in Boston and in history out of existence. The History was his monument to that self. He had fulfilled his filial duty. Self-generated selves awaited him. On September 9, 1888, Adams wrote that he was "nearly Buddha" (Letters, III, 139). Aware that he was nearly finished with the history, he brought his diaries from Boston to Quincy, and in "long meditated action," he began their "systematic destruction." On 16 September, when he actually finished his narrative, and "walked in the garden among the yellow and red autumn flowers" "in imitation of Gibbon," he was finished not only with the narratives of Jefferson and Madison, but with the narrative of the original version of Henry Adams. The contrast between his "beginning and end"--something "Gibbon never conceived"--required the death of the self, and in the haunting phrase that would characterize the rest of his writing career, Adams wrote that he meant "to leave no record that can be obliterated." The only "serious undertaking" that remained was for him to communicate with St. Gaudens about the sculptural monument at his wife's grave (Letters, III, 143). By September 20, Adams wrote that he was "steadily working towards my demise...I have read and destroyed my diary to the autumn of 1861" (Letters, III, 146). Obviously he never
destroyed the rest of the diary, and perhaps the point that he intended to make—that the completion of the history was the end of his first life—is better made because the fragments of the diary remain to guide us readers as we poke about among his literary remains. Fragments remain from the rest of 1888 and end in 1889, shortly after the death of Adams's mother in early June. The last entry is for July 7, 1889. In December, 1888, Adams recorded in the diary that "I am launched and must take my final course" (Letters, III, 161). The death of Adams's mother, references to his dealings with St. Gaudens about "the Buddha" for Rock Creek, and the endless and tedious efforts that attended the publication of the History dominate the last of the entries, as they had dominated the fragments that record Adams's planned suicide through destruction of the literary texts of his outworn self. With these dealings accomplished, Adams was ready to make his exit.

Ernest Samuels appropriately calls the paired activities of publication and metaphorical self-destruction a "macabre ritual," but for Adams this strange consignment of the textual self to flames was perhaps not "macabre" at all, but the flight of a phoenix that was to be consumed only to be reborn. Adams's destruction of his diaries symbolized a Nietzschean destruction of the old version of a personal self that must die in order for the man of the future to be born. Adams enacted his private
rites at the fireplace in his study in September, 1888, during the publication of successive chapters of the History. The ritual was the fulfillment of his affirmation—recorded in a surviving fragment of the diary from May, 1888—that he saw "the day near when I shall at last cut this only tie that still connects me with my time" (Letters, III, 114). The text of personal history that had enchained Adams from the time of his birth "under the shadow of Boston State House" to the time he completed his own version of American history from 1801-1817 was to be abandoned at last. Adams did not, it is to be noted, destroy his letters, or want them to be destroyed. On the contrary, he took pains to see that they survived. He chose rather to destroy his diaries, with all their evocation of what Porter Abbott calls an "intensity of privacy, cloistering, [and] isolation." Diaries are a ground of reflexive drama, and "creative cumulatively the effect of a consciousness thrown back on its own resources, abetted only by its pen." Adams burned the diaries in order to escape the idea of a self that he had inherited with his pew at Quincy, an idea of a self whose being was continuous with history, and which had been enshrined in the creation of the American republic.

At about the same time that he finished the History, he wrote Sir Robert Cunliffe that his "last long volume" was drawing to a close, and that he could foresee a time when he would be "free forever from my duties in life, as men call
the occupations they are ashamed to quit, but are sorry to follow". Adams also told Sir Robert that, "once free," he intended to "begin a new life, in which the old one can hardly have any sequence" (Letters, III, 115). That his escape was prefigured in fiction and was to be constituted through a flight into other kinds of texts is but one of the many difficulties in framing an understanding of the complex of paradoxes that, taken together, were and are Henry Adams. Like Hawthorne's narrator in "Old Esther Dudley," Adams was ready to quit the Province House of history for a world that, if not broader, was at least different than the one Adams had inherited with the enlightenment project of his ancestors. A new self was required for such a world, and in the works that follow the history, Adams fashions a sequence of doubles in which the personal self is at last transcended. Adams's line of flight toward the world of sense took him first to the American West, and later, and more importantly to a literally new name and a new identity in Tahiti. The completion of the novels and histories combined with the destruction of his diaries to provide Adams with a kind of fictional and symbolic closure for his old life—the suicide through writing that is also a birth into a new life. Adams's ritualized suicide functions as a sharp divide between the old self and the old life and their replacements. Esther's dilemma at Niagara Falls, and Wharton's dilemma as he tries to provide a living art for a
dead church refigure not only Petrarch's dilemma in the Secretum, but also Adams's dilemma as artist and historian in a textual arena that he perceived as modern in a very different sense than Petrarch did. His dilemma is partially resolved in the destruction of the diaries that embody a personal self and in the writing of the autobiographical works that offer a new and transpersonal identity. While the surviving portions of the diary are a sort of extended suicide note, the actual disappearance of Henry Adams is not recorded in them. That remained for the final and more explicitly autobiographical enterprise that is the subject of the next chapter.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 3


5 Jefferson wrote the Marquis de Chastellux in 1785 that Northerners were "cool, sober, laborious, persevering, jealous of their own liberties, and just to those of others, interested, chicaning, superstitious and hypocritical in their religion." Southerners, by contrast, were "fiery, Voluptuary, indolent, unsteady, zealous for their own liberties, but trampling on those of others, generous, candid, without attachment or pretentions to any religion but that of the heart." Julian P. Boyd, ed., The Papers of Thomas Jefferson (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1954) VIII, 468. Also quoted in Kammen, People of Paradox, 248.


7 See Samuels, 362-363. I disagree with Professor Samuels's interpretation of Adams's fascination with Pascal. I do not believe that Adams found a resolution in "mysticism." See also Letters, V, 381, 660.


9 Hegel, Reason, 5.


15 Shakespeare, Macbeth, II. ii. 53-54.


24 Adams also anticipates the theory of the Subject and Subjects developed by Louis Althusser and Gilles Deleuze. Adams's status as forerunner is treated in the next chapter.


27 Foucault, Order, xxiii.

28 Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, 18.

Late Marxism: Adorno, or the Persistence of the Dialectic (New York, 1990) 157-64.

30 Adorno, Aesthetic Theory, 319.


32 Degradation, 112.

33 See also Foucault, "Subject and Power," 421; and Steven Ozment, The Age of Reform (New Haven, 1980).

34 McKnight, Sacralization of the Secular (Baton Rouge, 1989).

35 Samuels, Henry Adams, 144.

36 Foucault, The Order of Things, 311.


43 Samuels, Henry Adams, 190.


45 See Gilles Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, 1-3.


47 Chopin, 15.
See Letters, I, 155. Adams is explaining that he is amazed that Hawthorne could have admired the plaster cast of Story's "Cleopatra" so deeply, since he did not see it in marble.


Hawthorne, "Old Esther," 954.

Hawthorne, 984.

Hawthorne, 985.

Edmund Spenser, Books I and II of The Faerie Queene, ed. Robert Kellogg and Oliver Steele, (New York, 1965), 230. One of the central epiphanies in the Faerie Queene occurs in the Castle of Alma, when Guyon happens upon the two mysterious texts that contain his own history, the "Antiquity of Faeryland," and the history of Elizabeth-Gloriana, Briton Monuments (II.IX.stanzas 59, 60). Part of Hawthorne's fascination with Spenser may have stemmed from Spenser's thoroughly modern (and prophetic) agony over giving life to the text of history in Canto X of Book II.

Hawthorne, 986.

Hawthorne, 986.


Hawthorne, 990.


Kerrigan and Braden, 163.


MURDEROUS HISTORIAN:
HENRY ADAMS,
MODERNITY, AND THE PROBLEM OF SUBJECTIVITY
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CHAPTER 4

HENRY ADAMS AND THE UNNAMEABLE 'I'

Nietzsche acutely observes that we are more influenced by what does not happen to us than by what does, and, according to the Egyptian ritual of the dead, when the 'double' abandons the corpse and has to perform its feat of self-definition before the judges of the world beyond the grave it makes its confession contrariwise, that is to say, it enumerates the sins it has not committed.

Ortega y Gasset, "The Sunset of Revolutions"

Is not this rather the place where one finishes vanishing?

Samuel Beckett, _The Unnamable_

Adams's quest for a deterritorialized self and, consequently, his more overt treatment of the problem of subjectivity, assumed an experimental form in the 1890s when he undertook to write the deposed Queen of Tahiti's memoirs. Having killed off his old identity, his unbounded consciousness was in search of a new mode of self-definition, which was, in its turn, to be recreated and then destroyed in _Mt. St. Michel and Chartres, The Education of Henry Adams_, and the various essays and letters on history that he wrote between 1894 and 1910.

During and after the publication of the _History of the United States_, Adams, like many other literary figures of his day, undertook a journey to the tropics. Adams had been
interested in Buddhism and in Japanese art for some time, and he had travelled to Japan with John La Farge in the summer of 1886 in pursuit of both interests. The trip had whetted his appetite for further adventures outside the bounds of western civilization. As the publication of the History drew to a close, he planned a journey to what was then called Polynesia. On 8 July, 1890, Adams wrote W.C. Brownell that he had sent the title-page to his history away (Letters, III, 249). He wrote John Hay the next day that he was "melancholy," and that "life seems strangely unreal and weird on this ill-balanced perch. One can so easily drop out" (Letters, III, 250). In mid-August Adams set out for the long western journey through the United States that would make his further journey to what he imagined as a land of exotica possible. He went first to Honolulu, and then set out for what was then known as Polynesia. In Hawaii, Adams took to painting again, producing what he called "a very bad copy of my own ignorance" which nevertheless had "the charm that I felt as a boy going about fishing." (Letters, III, 270-71). He found himself enjoying "much that is not to be set down in literary composition" as well as the landscape.

I get softly intoxicated on the soft violets and strong blues, the masses of purple and the broad bands of orange and green in the sunsets, as I used to griser myself on absynthe on the summer evenings in the Palais Royal before dining at Vefour’s, thirty years ago. The outlines of the great mountains, their reddish purple glow, the infinite variety of greens and the perfectly
intemperate shifting blues of the ocean, are a new world to me. To be sure, man is pretty vile, but perhaps woman might partly compensate for him, if one only knew where to find her. As she canters about the roads, a-straddle on horseback, with wreaths of faced yellow flowers, and clothed in a blue or red or yellow night-gown she is rather a riddle than a satisfaction.

(Letters, III, 280-81)

Adams was recovering—or, more accurately, discovering—his ability to live in a realm of pure sensation. He was learning, in Deleuze's terms, to experience the world as pure event. In his journey to Honolulu, Samoa, and Tahiti, Adams was able to experience what he saw not as "persons, characters, or subjects" but as "atmospheric variation, a change of hue, an imperceptible molecule, a discrete population, a fog, or a cloud of droplets." For the death wish that had accompanied the destruction of his diaries, he substituted a Deleuzian death-wish which was simultaneously an "apotheosis of will"3 and a declaration of a new mode of existence. On horseback-riding expeditions outside Honolulu, Adams recovered a delight in the "scenery, the sky and the ocean, the mountains, the valleys and ravines, the lights, and the constant pleasure of breathing" that he had "never expected ever again to feel" (Letters, III, 282). By late September he was writing Elizabeth Cameron that he was "glad to be dead to the old existence, which was a torture, and to forget it, in a change as complete as that of another
planet." (Letters, III, 285). When he resumed his journey he wrote from the Equator that he was "now fairly dead" (Letters, III, 288). On Samoa he saw girls "with their dripping grasses and leaves and their glistening breasts and arms" seem to "come out of the sea" in the Siva dance. After the dance--and Adams was to see many versions of it in Samoa--Adams found himself and LaFarge lying about with the young native women "sprawling over the mats, smoking, laughing, trying to talk, with a sense of shoulders, arms, legs, cocoa-nut oil, and general nudeness most strangely mixed with a sense of propriety." Adams felt "that at last the kingdom of old-gold was ours" and that "no future experience, short of being eaten, will ever make us feel so new again." (Letters, III, 291). Later, as Adams developed a friendship with a Samoan village princess named Fa-a-uli, he also developed fascination with her splendid strong body and cat-like movements. Adams wrote that "Clarence King would go wild with envy if he could see me lying on the floor watching Fa-a-uli peeling sugar-cane for me to eat, then going through a whole cane on her own account...I never tire of watching her." Admiringly, Adams took the young princess's measurements, and was delighted to find a kind of physical double in her, a counterpart to the doubles in spirit that he had encountered in history and created in novels; her head measured exactly the same as his own. (Letters, III, 316-17). He fantasized about marrying "some
splendid creature, six feet tall, who would carry me in her arms like a child." Adams was fascinated by what he saw as the peculiar but unconfining sexual mores of the Samoans, which he described as "the strangest compound of laxity and strictness, of absolute freedom, and rigorous restraint, of charm, and repulsion" (Letters, III, 324). In the Samoan woman Adams saw a remnant of primitive reverence for woman as nature goddess that was to preoccupy him in Mt. St. Michel and Chartres. In language that oddly anticipates his treatment of the power of the Virgin in the Middle Ages he writes that a princess like Fa-a-uli even "leads the warriors even to battle," wearing a "showy war-costume." The androgynous ideal that informs the St. Gaudens monument and shapes the tension between Virgin and Archangel in Mt. St. Michel and Chartres seems to have been born in Samoa.

As Adams became more used to his new surroundings, he began to feel more and more that he had escaped his own consciousness of himself. He wrote that he found himself "now and then regaining consciousness that I was once an American supposing himself real...my own identity becomes hazy" (Letters, III, 292). Adams's identity was not so easily routed, however. He discovered on a visit to King Malietoa that he possessed status as a great ali, or nobleman, because all of the natives "knew the frigate 'Adams,'" a warship that had been commissioned by the United States to give medical aid to Malietoa's faction in 1887
during a civil war in which British, American, and Samoan interests opposed German interests which had temporarily succeeded in toppling Malietoa from his throne (Letters, III, 293). The Adams name and with it a fragment of his old identity had followed him even to Samoa. The irony was not lost on Adams. He was aware that his journey to Samoa for pleasure was not without its penalties for the Samoans. The missionaries, who had forbidden the Siva dance, excluded Fa-a-uli and other princesses from church membership. Adams realized, long before Levi-Strauss that the intrusion of Adamses—both frigate and man—signalled, along with the arrival of missionaries, the end of the life lived in harmony with nature and with one's fellow man that had been the Samoan past. If in Adams's view, missionaries proffered the apple which taught the natives about sexual shame (Letters, III, 324), his presence also added to the problems inherent in the inevitable collision of native and European culture. Nevertheless, in his account of his tropical sojourn he self-consciously lapses into Madeleine Lee's and his own earlier tendency to turn the people who came beneath his gaze into objects for scientific study. His sketches of Samoan society are designed to provide "entertainment" for himself and his western epistolary audiences. In attempting to translate his experiences into the language of his friends who tied him to late nineteenth-century America—Mrs. Cameron had replaced his History as his one remaining
"tie" to life in the modern world--Adams lapses back into the language of a self and the systems of value that he thought he had left behind. As he writes about the ecstatic moments when he felt that he had truly escaped the sense of discontinuity that had characterized the late 1880s, he exhibits a marked tendency to assume a kind of superiority over the "child-like" Samoans. Adams asserts his sense of personal superiority over the Samoans even when he admires them. The "back of a Samoan woman when she is in motion" is a "joy forever," and he "never tires of watching the swing of their arms and the play of light over the great round curves of their bodies" (Letters, III, 298) but they are like splendid animals to him. When Keats wrote that a "thing of beauty is a joy forever," he was being somewhat ironic. Keats knew that "things"--aesthetic objects--are necessarily devoid of a life of their own. They acquire life only in the imagination of the beholder. For Adams the Samoan women, are indeed, "things" of beauty. Because he can transform them into objects for study, he can draw analogies between them and "ivory image[s] of Benvenuto's;" (Letters, III, 316). The men are creatures out of Homer (Letters, III, 319); the women summon images of a "dozen Rembrandts intensified into the most glowing beauty of life and motion" (Letters, III, 301). Despite his suggestions that Samoa is the last retreat of man in his most perfect form, Adams feels comfortable in asserting that "'love'" for the Samoan women
"is not a deep emotion," and that they "have no deep emotions or strong passions" (Letters, III, 326). At times in his letters he feels capable of narrating their otherness, and of asserting the control over them that only the values of scientific rationalism could provide. The Samoans are reduced to interesting creatures that serve as rewarding objects for Adams's aesthetic and sensual contemplation. Adams seems to have been aware of the paradoxes inherent in the very writing of the serial letters that record is time in Samoa and Tahiti for his closest friends. He wrote Lucy Baxter that he had discovered a world "so unlike anything I imagined that I can write a book more easily than a letter" (Letters, III, 323). Communicating his experience in any form was problematic. Even photographs were unsatisfactory to Adams; they "take all the fun out of the tropics." They "vulgarise the women" and destroy the "softness of lights and colors, the motion of the palms, the delicacy and tenderness of the mornings and evenings" (Letters, III, 307). He sent John Hay some photographs, but wrote that Hay would have to supply for himself "the color, the movement, the play of muscle and feature, and the whole tropical atmosphere, which photographs kill as dead as their own chemicals" (Letters, III, 304). Photographs, which provide a "scientific" version of reality, had as little capacity to communicate the richness of Samoa, where Adams claimed to lose track of both self and clock time, as
Adams's western language and his letters. They reduced everything in Adams's words to "type." Adams, of course, had had occasion to note the death-wielding capacities of photography before, when his wife had died after drinking her own developing fluids. In his more characteristic moods, Adams believed that "the Samoans have an entire intellectual world of their own, and never admit outsiders into it. I feel sure that they have a secret priesthood more powerful than the political chiefs, with supernatural powers."

Marvelling at the way the Samoans were "masters at playing the missionaries off," Adams seems to have realized that the Samoans were finally as impenetrable and mysterious as westerners. However, he seems also to have believed that he had encountered the world of sense that he had sought when he set out on his Polynesian idyll.

Here are these superb men and women,—creatures of this soft climate and voluptuous nature, living under a tropical sun, and skies of divine purple and blue,—who ought, on my notion, to be chock-full of languid longings and passionate emotions, but they are pure Greek fauns. Their intellectual existence is made up of concrete facts. As La Farge says, the have no thoughts. They are not in the least voluptuous; they have no longings and very brief passions; they live a matter-of-fact life that would scare a New England spinster. Even their dances...always represent facts...The dancers play at ball, or at bathing, or a cocoa-nut gathering, or hammer, or row, or represent cats, rats, birds or devils, but never an abstraction...They have the
virtues of healthy children— and the weaknesses of Agamemnon and Ulysses.

(Letters, III, 346)

What the natives represented for Adams was man freed from the disease of self-consciousness, and its accompanying prisons of sentimentality and artifice. Intent on becoming a Polynesian, Adams responded vaguely to Mrs. Cameron's news in January, 1891, of the world left behind. To her remark that the later volumes of his History were "more critical" than their predecessors, Adams responded in his role of the walking dead man, that "they were written... in a very different frame of mind from that in which the work was begun. I found it hard to pretend either sympathy of interest in my subject."

If you compare the tone of my first volume— even toned down as it is, from the original— with that of the ninth, when it appears, you will feel that the light has gone out. I am not to blame. As long as I could make life work, I stood by it, and swore by it as though it were my God, as indeed it was.

(Letters, III, 382)

Adams's epistolary record of his quest for a new self continues the obituary to a lost self and a lost world that ends the decade of the eighties, with its focus on histories, biographies, and novels. The public record of his new strategy for being was not about Samoa, but about Tahiti, and the "memoirs" were not about Adams, though they are, as we shall see, also his memoirs, but about the
surviving members of the Tahitian royal family, who had adopted Adams as one of their own. The narrative web in *Tahiti: Memoirs of Arii Taimai, et. al.* is thus a tangled one, for the memoirs are not really those of the former queen, Marau Taaroa, but of her mother, Ariitamai, the elderly widowed "chiefess," as Adams called her, of the Teva clan (*Letters*, III, 407). They are the memoirs of a family that is also a community in which life acquires meaning through relationships rather than a story of the solitary individuation of a personal self. In an effort that anticipates the narrative experiments of Gertrude Stein, Adams, who had been adopted by Ariitamai, merges his identity with that of the "Chiefess" and her extended family. Early in their visit, Adams and his friend John LaFarge exchanged names with Ori, one of the Teva chieftains. At that point, Adams found the idea amusing, but as he became increasingly fascinated with Ariitamai's family history and its inevitable progress toward decay and decadence, he came to realize that names in Tahiti still had a serious meaning, and an extension in place. As their relationship evolved, Ariitamaii bestowed personal family names on Adams and LaFarge in addition to their tribal names. Adams was not only "Ori," which signified membership in the general body of the clan; he acquired personal identity with his new name of "Taura-atua," which means "Bird Perch of God." He had been adopted by Ariitamai.
Thenceforward, she was his mother, and her family history was also his. Adams had found a literal replacement for his abandoned self. The title page of the original, privately circulated version of Tahiti, in characteristic Adamsian word play reads "Memoirs of Arii Taimai e/ Marama of Eimeo /Teriirere of Tooarai/Teriinui of Tahiti/ Tauraatua I Amo." Adams’s actual name appears nowhere. In later editions of the memoir, the title page reads "Tahiti/ by Henry Adams/ Memoirs of Arii Taimai e Marama of Eimeo/ Teriirere of Tooarai, Terrinui of Tahiti/ Tauraatua i Amo." Adams shares equally in the memoirs with the other members of his acquired "family." By including his Tahitian name—"Tauraatua i Amo"—in the title he becomes not only the author of the memoir, but the agent through which the narrative of his adopted family’s history is made accessible to western history. Just as Ariitamai gave Adams a name in Tahiti, Adams bestows a western identity upon the family through writing her life. At the same time, Adams became a mediating spirit, moving between two worlds and two kinds of consciousness.

Ariitamai’s existence had hardly been a scene of uninterrupted pastoral. The complications of the intrusion of European life were everywhere, including Ariitamai’s marriage to Alexander Salmon, a Londoner who had founded a kind of Tahitian dynasty through his wife’s connections. Adams came to see the symbolic possibilities in his
adoption, and took it quite seriously. The deposed queen, who assisted in compiling the notes and stories that make up Tahiti, is his "sister" (Letters, III, 471) and he writes to his Tahitian "family" of "our ancestors," while feeling "dead as Adam" to his old life (Letters, III, 479). Adams's active quest for a new anchor in history thus begins with the book that is most often called simply Tahiti, and which has frequently been dismissed as a tangential piece of travelogue. In fact, as the title pages suggest, Tahiti is the first installment of Adams's autobiographical enterprise, the first version of a new state of being. In writing it, and in examining the curious mixture of European education and Tahitian tradition that were the life of the Teva clan, Adams found no escape from the dilemmas of modern life. Indeed, he may have chosen to write a Tahitian rather than a Samoan memoir because the Samoans were still sufficiently free of self-consciousness to lack a historical sense; their experience could not be communicated through the alienating medium of language. In the Teva clan, he found a record of the confrontation of European and Polynesian culture, and he also found an occasion for contemplating the problem of identity from the vantage point of the imperial traveller. In Tahiti, Adams explored all of the difficulties that his months in Samoa had presented.

Adams later claimed that his "historical neck" had been "broken" at the Chicago Exhibition of 1893. In reality, his
visit to the South Seas seems to have raised a number of questions about colonialism and imperialism, about individual identity and community, as well as about the nature of personal and political power which took final shape at the Chicago Exhibition and in his "Letter to American Teachers of History," which is treated in the next chapter.

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If Adams had embalmed and buried his old self in the text of his History and escaped it in Samoa, he turned to it as an object of study in Mt. St. Michel and Chartres. There, Adams undertook an examination of Christianity's fostering of the concept of the self, which he had left unresolved in 1884 in Esther. Mt. St. Michel thus is vehicle for exploring the concept of self-doubling through narrative that had originated in the novels, and continued in Tahiti. Mt. St. Michel and Chartres is a response to Adams's growing interest in medieval history and art and a reversal of the motion of his Tahitian quest. Rather than explicitly seeking escape from his western identity, he sought to restore that identity through an immersion in the origins of modern history. Mt. St. Michel entwined in Adams's mind with what for him were the perennial questions of subjectivity, biography, biographers, and self-representation. By 1899, Adams's interest in twelfth-century architecture and glass
and his fondness for translating *chansons de geste*—an occupation that dated back at least to 1893, had resulted in a plan for a experimental kind of history, one which would endow history with a sense of literary form.⁶ In an extension of the equation between autobiography and history, he seems always to have conceived of *Mt. St. Michel and Chartres* as a kind of personal memoir, if not as an autobiography. And for Adams, autobiography was always biography, a cage of form, in which a reified self could come under the scrutiny of the presiding deity of the historian's consciousness. By 1902 the new work had taken full form, and Adams was planning its sequel, which he cryptically described as an "historical romance of the year 1200" (*Letters*, V, 378). The new "romance" would eventually take shape as the *Education of Henry Adams*. Adams's typical epistolary pose for writing both *Mt. St. Michel* and the *Education* was that of a "sexagenarian Hamlet."⁷ Adams was trying to make his peace with history, and, like his favorite literary character Hamlet, he was ready to announce his death to whatever Horatio was present to read him. Adams differs from Hamlet in that Adams wanted to tell his own story, and in so doing take his own portrait for the gallery of history. He was nearly finished with *Mt. St. Michel and Chartres* when he communicated the doubts about James's version of William Story and Morley's version of Gladstone that we have discussed elsewhere, but his doubts about
biography had haunted him all along. In March of 1900, shortly after he had begun serious work on what was to become *Mt. St. Michel and Chartres*, Adams wrote Elizabeth Cameron in his guise of "twelfth-century monk" who had a "habit of tumbling into black holes" of his pain and disgust at trying to read his brother Charles Francis's life of their father.

I've been trying to read my brother Charles's Life of our father, and it makes me sick. Now I understand why I refused so obstinately to do it myself. These biographies are murder, and, in this case, to me, would be both patricide and suicide. They belittle the victim and the assassin equally. They are like bad photographs and distorted perspectives...I have sinned myself, and deeply, but thank my diseased and dyspeptic nervous wreck, I did not assassinate my father.

*(Letters, V, 102)*

Adams's disapprobation of any verbal monuments extended even to collections of letters, and, recording his reaction to the publication of Robert Louis Stevenson's letters, he urged Elizabeth Cameron in an uncharacteristic moment to destroy his own to her: "Do not leave them knocking about, as a mash for female pigs who feed out of the magazine-troughs at five dollars a page, to root in, for scandal and gossip" *(Letters, V, 103)*.

The schizoid focus of Adams's existence—part medieval philosopher, part shrewd political analyst—is nowhere more apparent than in the disparity between the imagined twelfth-
century romance of Mt. St. Michel and the letters that record Adams's immersion in the centers of political power in the Washington of the first years of the twentieth century. However, in its way, Mt. St. Michel is as political a work as the Education or Tahiti; it is an exploration of the remains of a time when the State was still the subject of the church, and the personal self was the subject of both. Unlike the modern subject, who shapes his forms of government arbitrarily and changes them at will, the medieval subject was a part of a foreordained hierarchy of a vision of world order that doubled as source of social order and as an affirmation that words were the true coin of the meanings that they sought to represent.

While Adams may have seen Mt. St. Michel and Chartres as an "historical romance," he also wrote Elizabeth Cameron that he was the "Virgin's biographer" (Letters, V, 448), a curious claim given his usual assertion that "these biographies are murder." He seems to have seen this biography as life-giving. When he began to prepare the work for printing, he wrote that he was "so much absorbed in babies that I dreamt last week that I was going to have one." Adams goes on to explain that "one of [his] minds" was "rather surprised," but that his "other mind" had replied that "men always had babies." The dream is a sort of allegory of what Adams was actually trying to communicate. He was completing his manuscript, which had "swelled to the
size of an ox" (Letters, V, 452-453). Adams always regarded the creation of a literary double as either a pregnancy and birth, or as a wake and funeral for a self. He had regarded the publication of his history as an occasion to engage in ritual destruction of the literary self that had been preserved in his diaries. Similarly, but with curiously opposite intent, he had felt compelled to announce that John Randolph was "just coming into the world" when he finished the Randolph biography. As he prepared to circulate a few copies of Mt. St. Michel, he felt that he was once again with child, and ready to give birth to a new version of himself. After his hundred copies were printed, Adams wrote that he had just finished his Miracles de la Vierge, and that he was reconciled to the "premature demise" of Thomas Aquinas and "the late Duns Scotus"(Letters, V, 618). The meaning of the work, Adams explained to Henry Osborn Taylor, was couched in the last three chapters, which, Adams claimed, were his declaration of anarchy. (Letters, V, 624).

I am trying to work out the formula of anarchism; the law of expansion from unity, simplicity, morality, to multiplicity, contradiction, police....The assumption of unity which was the mark of human thought in the middle ages has yielded very slowly to the proofs of complexity... Yet it is quite sure...that, at the accelerated rate of progression shown since 1600 it will not need another century or half century to tip thought upside down. Law in that case would disappear as theory...and give place to force. Morality would become police. Explosives would reach cosmic violence.
Disintegration would overcome integration. This was the point that leads me back to the twelfth century as the fixed element in the equation. From the relative unity of the Prime Motor, I can work pretty safely down to Karl Pearson's Grammar of Science or Wallace's Man's Place in Nature or to Mach and Ostwald and the other Germans of today. By intercalating Descartes, Newton, Dalton, and a few others, I can even make almost a time-ratio. This is where my middle-ages will work out. I tell you this in order that you may explain...why the volume is not offered to the public...

(Letters, V, 627)

Adams's plan for Mt. St. Michel involved not "accuracy," which was "relative," but a sense of the necessity of bringing the "picture" of the Middle Ages "into relation with ourselves." Adams's desire was activated not by his fascination with the medieval world as much as it was necessitated by the fact that "nothing in all nature [is] so iconoclastic, miraculous and anarchistic as Shakespeare" (Letters, V, 628). As his letter suggests, he was already hard at work on tracing western intellectual history as the arc of subjectivity, and he saw Shakespeare as representative of the sensibility of 1600, the moment when he believed that all unity as having been finally lost. After 1600, in Adams's view, man stood on the precipice overlooking an abyss of modernity. Beginning with the artificial assumption of medieval unity, then, Adams would move toward the triumph of law as "theory," and the point at
which "morality becomes the police." Adams offered a more personal view to Elizabeth Cameron.

...I deny that it is a book; it is only a running chatter with my nieces and those of us who care for old art. Vanity is a danger I can hardly fear now;...self-deprecation has always been my vice, and morbid self-contempt my moral weakness, as it was that of the 12th century mystics, which is the bond of sympathy between us; but we each recoup ourselves by feeling a calm, unruffled, instinctive, unfathomed scepticism about the existence of a world at all... we are all that is; we know no other world...We never despised the world or its opinions; we only failed to find out its existence...Philosophy has never got beyond this point. There are but two schools; one turns the world into me; the other turns me into the world; and the result is the same.

(Letters, V, 659-660)

In Mt. St. Michel and Chartres, Adams turns the mirror on the world, conjuring simulacra of the shapes of time in much the same way that Hawthorne's Old Esther does in "Tales from the Province House" and with much the same end--that of forging vital links between past and present--that preoccupied Petrarch in his efforts to link himself with classical antiquity. Adams begins, however, with the notion that the past in itself is not recuperable, and that the links, like the story, will necessarily be both subjective and fictional. Thus Adams also turns the mirror on himself. For once, Adams was being straightforward when he told Henry Osborn Taylor that he was not interested in accuracy. He was
interested in enabling his imaginary audience, the companions of his own voyage, to become "prematurely young," so that they can cross the "bridge of ages between us and our ancestors" (MSM, 343-344). The uncle says that the point of the voyage is not to recover the facts of medieval history, but the feeling. Our aim, he announces, is to use our "ignorance" to help us "feel what we cannot understand" (MSM, 394).

Upon the book's publication by Houghton Mifflin under the auspices of the American Institute of Architects in 1913 Ralph Adams Crum read the work as Adams's affirmation of the "revelation of the eternal glory of mediaeval art and the elements that brought it into being." Later readers have tended to follow Crum's lead; even more skeptical readers have read the work as a sort of Ruskinian glorification of the unity of the Middle Ages. In fact, Mt. St. Michel consumes itself at every turn, pointing not to the possibility of recovering history through imagination, but to the impossibility of escaping our imposition of self upon history. In this work, Adams does not recapture the Middle Ages at all, but merely reconstitutes himself as a twelfth-century monk. In keeping with his pose and with the supposed medieval ideal of pictor ignotus, the one hundred quarto volumes that were issued privately in 1905 gave no indication of authorship. The title page read simply "Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres/Travels/France." As we have seen
of course, Adams as Adams had absented himself from title pages before—specifically, from the first edition of the *Tahiti* where he is both subject and author of the memoir—but not as Henry Adams. In this case, however, he absents himself in part because he had aimed to pursue the school of thought that "turned me into the world" rather than the reverse. Thus, in writing this volume and its sequel, Adams had drowned in the seas of time and imagination. Having done so, he could proclaim three months into the first world war that "I am Saint Augustin! Read him! You will see me all through" (*Letters*, VI, 666).

The first warning that this is to be a perilous text for the reader comes in the Preface, as Adams examines the tenuous relationship between the modern writer and his audience. Quoting an anonymous Elizabethan "poet or playwright", Adams begins by saying that he "who reads me, when I am ashes is my son in wishes." Adams muses that this sort of relationship is impossible; it is much too close for any relationship in the modern world. The closest kinship we as an audience can claim to him is nephews, but since modern nephews tend not to read, nephews will not do either. Besides, Adams adds, "the metre does not permit it. One may not say:--'Who reads me when I am ashes is my nephew in wishes.'" Nieces are a possibility, however. The "change restores the verse," and they have been known to "read their uncles." Furthermore, they are like to "carry a kodak." The
relationship is an easy one, "capable of being anything or nothing, at the will of either party." (MSM, 341).

Surprisingly, this preface has usually been seen as disarming or comforting. In fact, it is a nominalist manifesto. The aim of Adams's elaborate stage management of uncle and nieces is of a piece with Nietzsche's claim to Jakob Burckhardt in 1889, that "every name in history is 'I.'"

Actually, I would much rather be a Basel professor than God; but I have not ventured to carry my private egoism so far as to omit creating the world on his account... The unpleasant thing, and one that nags my modesty, is that at root every name in history is I; also as regards the children I have brought into the world, it is a case of my considering with some distrust whether all of those who enter the 'Kingdom of God' do not also come out of God. This autumn, as lightly clad as possible, I twice attended my funeral, first as Count Robilant (no, he is my son, insofar as I am Carlo Alberto, my nature below) but I was Antonelli myself. Dear professor, you should see this construction; since I have no experience of the things I create, you may be as critical as you wish; I shall be grateful, without promising I shall make any use of it. We artists are unteachable.

In Nietzsche's now infamous letter, the subject that is Nietzsche embraces centers of subjectivity other than his own in his frustrated quest for a place in the community of humanity. Consuming all the names in history, Nietzsche, like Adams after him, functions as an imperial subject who, in a newly acquired status as narrative god, imposes his "I"
on all he encounters, including his readers. Adams’s quest is a more extended one, however. By the time he wrote Esther, he had become disgusted with the perennial baggage of self-consciousness. Esther’s primary complaint about the Church is that it wants to extend the personal self, which she "loathes," into infinity. Adams is moving in Mt. St. Michel toward his self-erasure in the Education, and, ultimately toward the quest that Beckett outlines in The Unnameable for the point where "one finishes vanishing." In the Preface to Mt. St. Michel, Adams obliquely announces that he will explore the origins of the universe of subjectivity, and the nature and powers of language within that universe. The linguistic play of the Preface casts an ominous shadow over the text that follows. Adams as pilgrim and uncle has already made his voyage through the intellectual history of the modern world, and he knows that not realism, but nominalism has triumphed in language, and that the simplicity of the closed universe of the medieval world has given way to the infinite complexity of the twentieth century. Adams’s audiences are thus whomever he decides they will be, and his words, like Humpty Dumpty’s, mean what he alone decides they will mean.

Mt. St. Michel does not grow more encouraging or comforting as we move through it. Not only are we asked to surrender our own personal selves to become Adams’s nieces; in the first chapter, we are asked to heed Wordsworth’s
"practical" suggestion from the ninth section of the *Intimations* ode, and embark "in a season of fair weather" on that "'immortal sea' which brought us hither from the twelfth century." Travelling backward over the tides of history, we are to reverse our motion and "travel thither" and "see the children sporting on the shore." Wordsworth’s Ode was a response to a realization of the self’s isolation from the realm of nature in the interiors of mind. However, Wordsworth not only accepts but celebrates the inwardness of being that Adams was trying to escape. Wordsworth can make the imaginative leap between self and world that Adams maps but cannot span in *Mt. St. Michel*. Wordsworth explains in the headnote to the poem that in childhood he was "unable to think of external things as having external existence;" he "communed with all that [he] saw as something not apart from but inherent in, [his] own immaterial nature." Wordsworth celebrates the "perpetual benediction" that comes from "those obstinate questionings/ of sense and outward things,/ Fallings from us, vanishings." Wordsworth finds an affirmation of his place in a community of being and a sort of benediction through the power of mind. Adams transforms the passage; the source of Wordsworth’s hope is the source of Adams’s despair. While we may be able to see the children of the Middle Ages sporting on the distant shore of the twelfth century, we will see them not as they were, but as they are recreated and reshaped into doubles of
ourselves. Having extended the promise of an imaginative recreation of the past, Adams immediately proceeds with his customary action of doubling. The view from the Abbey Church is not simply itself; it "recalls the coast of New England," and Adams reminds us that "if you have any English blood at all, you have also Norman." This fact is multiplied into the presence of some "two hundred and fifty million arithmetical ancestors of the eleventh century." Adams's conditional "if we could go back and live again in...our ancestors" at first seems to complete the action of doubling. Unless we are reading very carefully, we find ourselves engaged in "ploughing most of the fields of the Cotentin" and going to Mass in "every parish church in Normandy." Moreover, we are "helping to build the Abbey Church at Mont-Saint-Michel." We are not visiting an alien land at all, but looking out over "hills and woods, the farms and fields of Normandy" which are suddenly "so familiar, so homelike" that we feel that we have "known life once in them," and "never so fully known it since." The Uncle's "we" enfolds not only the present audience of nieces, but all of the arithmetical ancestors that Adams has conjured in his mirror of history. In the first three paragraphs of the first chapter, Adams has apparently managed to expand the Uncle-narrator and a single niece into a majestic "we of the eleventh century." The complication is that we have only journeyed in the conditional mode. The imaginative union of ourselves and our
numerous imaginary ancestors hangs on Adams's "If we could go back and live again" and its complement--"we should find ourselves doing many surprising things." Even if we miss the conditional base that this edifice of imaginary flight is built upon, we should notice that the tense has shifted to the past. From the moment we conditionally cross the "bridge of ages" and claim the coast of Normandy as an extension of the coast of New England, we are in the lost terrain of the past. We "were" a "great part" of the Church. We "stood" at the "world's center." "We were a serious race." And yet, we have not made the journey at all. Adams has trapped us in a web of words: "All this time we have been standing on the parvis, looking out over the sea and sands...or turning at times towards the church door which is the pons seclorum, the bridge of ages between us and our ancestors" (MSM, 347). We are like Esther, looking down into the falls at Niagara, and feeling the waters roar over us, but unable to leap. Yet, "for the present, we are in the eleventh century," "tenants of the Duke or of the Church, or of small feudal lords." We are "helping to quarry granite for the Abbey Church." Adams recreates the life of a world in which we, like Old Esther Dudley, move as ghosts: "the year is 1058," but we have only begun to "get our minds into a condition" to cross the fatal bridge over time. What follows is not the completion of a Wordsworthian journey, but a sort of Adamsian crash landing. Adams moves from our stance on the
parvis not to some reunification but to a tale of builders who overreached themselves.

Yet in 1020 Norman art was already too ambitious. Certainly nine hundred years leave their traces on granite as well as on other material, but the granite of Abbot Hildebert would have stood securely enough if the Abbot had not asked too much from it. Perhaps he asked too much of the Archangel, for the thought of the Archangel’s superiority was clearly the inspiration of his plan...the structure might perhaps have proved strong enough...had not fashions in architecture changed in the great epoch of building...when Abbot Robert de Torigny thought proper to reconstruct the west front, and build out two towers on its flanks. The towers were no doubt beautiful...but their weight broke down the vaulting beneath, and one of them fell in 1300. In 1618 the whole facade began to give way, and in 1776 not only the facade but also three of the seven spans of the nave were pulled down. Of Abbot Hildebert’s nave, only four arches remain.

(MSM, 347-48)

Just as we as the niece-audience have failed to bridge the seas of self and past, the abbots sought to erect overly ambitious architectural enterprises that were doomed to fail and fall. The legend of Babel, with its tower that was to have its "top in the heavens" informs Adams’s account of the falling towers of medieval cathedrals, partly because Adams’s medieval towers are used to suggest the fragmentation of Aquinas’s synthesis of the possibilities of reason and revelation. After Babel, the single language which had represented unity among all men was lost. After
the nominalists of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, universality of meaning in language was lost; the via antiqua of Aquinas and those who followed him gave way to the via moderna of Scotus, and, in particular, of Ockham. Through the conditional phrasing that forms the bridge into our journey, Adams has taken us to the heights of a tower that is built on an insufficient linguistic foundation. We fall as it falls, and see our fall emblematically mirrored all around us. And, as readers, we have to pause over Adams's dates. In 1300, the Papacy was on the eve of the crisis known as the Babylonian Captivity. The compromise provided by Aquinas had come to seem somewhat insufficient. Meister Eckhart was active, and in the more intellectual reaches of the Church, the philosophic quarrel over nominalism, which dominates the last three chapters of Mt. St. Michel and Chartres, was about to erupt—a crisis which would continue in overt form until at least 1500. Adams's second date, 1618, marks the advent of the heyday of European colonization in the new world as well as any date in the first two decades of the seventeenth century, while 1776, for an American historian and an American niece, is the inescapable moment when an entire country was embodied as a construction of mind. The failure of the medieval architects is replicated in the failure of the architecture of the modern world. Adams has constructed a parable of late medieval and early modern intellectual history. The
fallen towers and the fallen choir, which gave way in 1421 "in the midst of the English wars," were replaced by "an exuberant choir of latest gothic, finished in 1521" (MSM, 351). Adams compares the Romanesque arches of 1058 to an elderly man who lives pleasantly with the "beautiful woman" of the choir of 1521. The primary difference between the two, who harmonize pleasantly enough, is produced by the displacement of the "simple, serious, silent dignity and energy" of the eleventh century by "something more complicated...graceful, self-conscious, rhetorical, and beautiful as perfect rhetoric." The self-consciousness of the tower mirrors the emerging shape of self-conscious individualism in being and language alike, and replaces the "naivete" of the masculine principle of pure action represented by Saint Michael the Archangel. The complications of the sixteenth-century choir cannot be explored; our present journey awaits us, even though we have just seen that we will never be able to embark upon it.

...we have no time to run off into the sixteenth century: we have still to learn the alphabet of art in France. One must live deep in the eleventh century in order to understand the twelfth, and even after passing years in the twelfth, we shall find the thirteenth in many ways a world of its own, with a beauty not always inherited, and sometimes not bequeathed.

(MSM, 352)

The attraction of these medieval regions—if only we could reach them—is that, for those whose "lives have been a
broken arch," the simplicity of the Norman style has an attraction. They "feel this repose and self-restraint as they feel nothing else."

The quiet strength of these curved lines, the solid support of these heavy columns, the moderate proportions, even the modified lights, the absence of display, of effort, of self-consciousness satisfy them as no other art does. They come back to it to rest, after a long circle of pilgrimage,—the cradle of rest from which their ancestors started. Even here they find the repose none too deep.

(MSM, 349)

Looking at the simplicity of the Romanesque more closely, however, the uncle and his nieces find not repose, but a fierce and combative assertion of the unity of "Church and State, Soul and Body, God and Man." We feel only "the Archangel and the Unity of God" (MSM, 349). The realm of "private affairs," of the modern and alienated subject, is completely secondary in this irrecoverable world to the single mission of God, Church, and Sovereign. Unfortunately, all that presents itself to Uncle and niece are the ruins of that lost world of unity. "The simple, serious, silent dignity and energy of the eleventh century have gone" (MSM, 352). Rather than a landscape of artifacts restored through imagination, we find only "a mutilated trunk of an eleventh-century church" (MSM, 351). At Mont-Saint-Michel we have attained not to a vision of unity, but to Browning's ruined chapel in a landscape that is empty of meaning.
Adams next proposes to restore the *Chanson de Roland* for us. This venture looks more hopeful; the study of literature rests on the assumption that we can reclaim texts, and poetry, we assume, can be restored to at least a semblance of meaning. Moreover, we know that Adams made all of his own translations in the most exacting manner possible. Having been assured that "the Chanson is in poetry what the Mount is in architecture" (MSM, 353) we prepare to attempt a second journey, this time into a literary landscape. Adams begins his second chapter not with the *Chanson de Roland*, but with the *Roman du Mont Saint Michel*. As uncle, he cheerfully advises us nieces that "if the spelling is corrected, the verses read still almost as easily as Voltaire; more easily than Verlaine, and much like a nursery rhyme" (MSM, 354). Adams hesitates over the translations; translation is a necessary "evil," provided only in order to "lift" lazy tourists and nieces "over the rough spots, even when roughness is beauty." Having nonetheless provided a translation, Adams then announces that "one's translation is sure to be full of gross blunders, but the supreme blunder is that of translating at all when one is trying to catch not a fact but a feeling" (MSM, 354-55). Adams then proceeds to provide a translation of another fragment of a *roman*, only to tell us that if we are "not satisfied with this translation, any scholar of French will easily help make a better, for we...would rather
be inaccurate in such matters than not" (MSM, 356). As readers and mental travellers, we are awash in translations whose worth is questioned even in the moment they appear before our eyes. Adams claims that he wants to demonstrate in the poetry the qualities that he admired in the Abbey Church.

The qualities of the architecture reproduce themselves in the song: the same directness, simplicity, absence of self-consciousness; the same intensity of purpose; even the same material.

(MSM, 369)

Adams presents us with fragments of the poems, while continuing to remind us that it is almost as futile to try to read medieval French poetry as it is to try to translate it. Adams then translates the *Chanson de Roland* while extending his discussion of the "evil" of translation. He informs us that the *Chanson* and its language belong to a separate narrative universe.

Of course the full value of the verse cannot be regained. One knows neither how it was sung nor even how it was pronounced. The assonances are beyond recovering; the 'laisse,' or leash of verses or assonances with the concluding cry, 'Aoi,' has long ago vanished from verse or song.

(MSM, 364)

Our journey through seas of imagination is taking us only to ruined, "truncated" churches and presenting us only with poems full of the archaic sounds of lost words from dead languages. In the discussion of Gothic art which begins in
Chapter III, Adams once again portrays the shift from Romanesque to Gothic architecture in terms of sex.

The difference of sex is not imaginary. In 1058 when the triumphal columns were building, and Taillefer sang to William the Bastard and Harold the Saxon, Roland still prayed his mea culpa to God the Father and gave not a thought to Alda his betrothed. In the twelfth century Saint Bernard recited "Ave Stella Maris" in an ecstasy of miracle before the image of the Virgin, and the armies of France in battle cried Notre-Dame-Saint-Denis-Montjoie. 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...

( MSM, 372-373)

Adams saw in the architectural compromise between Romanesque and Gothic an emblem of erotic conjunction between male and female: "the strength and the grace join hands; the man and woman love each other still." In this harmony of masculine force of will and feminine receptivity there was the strength of the mysterium coniunctionis. For Adams, modernity is conceived in the decadence that attends the loss of balance between the inner world of the Virgin and the outer world of the Saint.

When men no longer felt the passion, they fell back on themselves, or lower. The architects returned to the round arch, and even further to the flatness of the Greek colonnade, but this was not the fault of the twelfth or thirteenth centuries. What they had to say they said; what they felt they expressed; and if the seventeenth century forgot it, the twentieth in turn has forgotten the
seventeenth. History is only a catalogue of the forgotten.

(MSM, 373)

Even as he affirms the world of the Archangel and the Virgin, however, Adams relentlessly carries us through buildings whose rooms have lost their names. The levels of the refectory, for example, look promising, but "every writer gives these rooms different names, and assigns them different purposes." In other words, the tourist brings a ready-made set of names for what he will encounter with him, in his travel bag. With the cathedral and the abbey, the refectory has the capacity to provide "an exceedingly liberal education for anybody...and would make the fortune of an intelligent historian, if such should happen to exist." Unfortunately, this medieval Scarlet Letter of a structure cannot perform its office at all. Adams insists that we are not looking for education, but for "poetry," but even that is not available; "here is only the shell--the dead art--and silence" (MSM, 377-78).

When we finally reach Chartres, we find that this journey is no more rewarding than the previous ones. With grim irony, Adams notes that, children of modernity that we are, we will no doubt prefer the more elaborate--and more modern--northern spire to the southern spire. The architect of 1500 has committed a sort of atrocity, in Adams's eyes, in order to keep his "self-respect." The newer spire
introduces the element of self-consciousness; the old affirms the original architectural unity of the church as a whole. And, once in the Church, unless we accept the "divine right in the Queen of Heaven, apart from the Trinity, yet one with it, Chartres is unintelligible" (MSM, 414). Adams evokes the image of the ubiquitous presence of the Virgin in the building of the Church, and the careless reader is almost seduced into believing that Adams is once again using the magical capacities of language to evoke her presence. The Uncle affirms for us that "the Virgin was actually and constantly present in the building of Chartres...directing the architects" (MSM, 438). He also tells us that "it is this direction that we are going to study if you have now got a realizing sense of what it meant" (MSM, 438). Of course, Adams has taken pains to show us that the "burden of custom" (MSM, 424) and of our self-consciousness prevents our ever being able to acquire such a sense. The success of our journey depends on yet another conditional construction. If we are able to sense the truth of what we see, then we can study. If not, another abyss looms before us, for "without this sense, the church is dead," and the "pleasure consists not in seeing the death, but in feeling the life" (MSM, 438). Far from seeing the children "sport upon the shore" we move only from abyss to abyss. The possibility of meaning is forever being proffered, but is always deferred.
By the time the Uncle is ready to tell us about the glass at Chartres, he warns us that we "had better stop here...unless you are willing to feel that Chartres was made what it is, not by the artist, but by the Virgin" (MSM, 459). We do not stop, however, even when the Uncle warns again that we are doomed to failure.

Therefore, let us plod on, laboriously proving God, although, even to Saint Bernard and Pascal, God was incapable of proof; and using such material as the books furnish for help. It is not much...One knows not even where to seek.

(MSM, 459-60)

We are reduced to a quest for fragmentary works which might make the glass easier to understand, although Adams warns us that since modern viewers tend to expect everything to depend on perspective, our attempts to understand are flawed at best, for "perspective does not enter into a twelfth-century window more than into a Japanese picture" (MSM, 463). The difficulty of the modern audience is that "everyone who has lived since the sixteenth century has felt deep distrust of everyone who lived before it" (MSM, 469-70). The Uncle claims to believe that the Virgin answered both pleas and questions, but even though he assures us that we, too, will feel her presence if we will "only consent to feel like a child," (MSM, 504-05) he assumes that we are incapable of feeling like children. Yet another conditional phrase intrudes.
...you, or any other lost soul, could, if you cared to look and listen, feel a sense beyond the human ready to reveal a sense divine that would make the world once more intelligible, and would bring the Virgin to life again, in all the depths of feeling which she shows here,...more eloquent than the prayer-book, and more beautiful than the autumn sunlight; and any one willing to try could feel it like the child, reading new thought without end into the art he has studied a hundred times.

(MSM, 505)

The revelation once again depends on a willingness to lose ourselves in the mysteries of faith through the Church—the same possibility that faced Adams’s Esther. And, in the familiar formulation, if we fail to make that choice we "shatter the whole art by calling into it a single motive of [our] own" (MSM, 505). The phenomenon that dooms the medieval sense of unity and separates us from it is that of self-conscious individualism.

Throughout *Mt. St. Michel and Chartres*, Adams presents us with the impossibility of recapturing the faith that made the architecture and glass of medieval France possible. The modern reader imposes the alien values of perspective on medieval art. Worse, he carries the alienating phenomenon of self-consciousness with him, and unintentionally imposes himself on the already nebulous centuries, thereby placing whatever it was they had to show him out of reach. A prisoner of the ideology of enlightenment, he demands facts and figures and accurate translations. As a result, when we
leave the Court of the Queen of Heaven, we have failed entirely in our effort to cross the *pons seclorum* to our ancestors.

We have done with Chartres. For seven hundred years Chartres has seen pilgrims, coming and going more or less like us, and will perhaps see them for another seven hundred years; but we shall see it no more, and can safely leave the Virgin in her majesty, with her three great prophets on either hand, as calm and confident in their own strength and in God's providence as they were when Saint Louis was born, but looking down from a deserted heaven, into an empty church, on a dead faith.

(MSM, 522)

Adams's project in the next three chapters is to take us away from the shrines of Gothic into the literary landscape of the medieval romance and the legends of the miracles of the Virgin. The uncle tells us that this should not be an alien terrain.

After worshipping at the shrines of Saint Michael on his Mount and of the Virgin at Chartres, one may wander far and wide over France, and seldom feel lost; all later Gothic art comes naturally, and no new thought disturbs the perfected form.

(MSM, 523)

Unfortunately "tourists of English blood and American training" tend to get lost anyway. Their tendency to rationalize defeats their study of secular literature as surely as it defeated our study of architecture and glass.

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries, studied in the pure light of political
economy are insane. The scientific mind is atrophied, and suffers under inherited weakness, when it comes in contact with the eternal woman, -- Astarte, Isis, Demeter, Aphrodite, and the last and greatest deity of all, the Virgin...

(Adams, 523)

Adams’s avowed concern in these chapters is the "whole subject of sex," and he intends to reverse Pope’s claim that the "proper study of man is man" by announcing that the "proper study of man is woman" (Adams, 523). Adams’s fascination condemns him to bask in ignorance: "we do not, and never can, know the twelfth-century woman, or for that matter, any other woman" (Adams, 537). The legends of medieval woman that Adams spins are tales of power, in which women whom he overtly describes as "masculine" rule in triumph. In the androgyny of the medieval warrior woman Adams sees a figuring of the world of sense, and it is that wholeness that is lost for him in the Reformation. Adams’s claim that the Virgin sealed mankind and God in an unbroken circle is not so different from Steven Ozment’s recognition that the Protestant Reformation was a "revolution in religion" that opened up an abyss between man and God which had been filled with a host of ritual practices that were designed to take the believer from birth to death.

In the first half of the sixteenth century cities and territories passed laws and ordinances that progressively ended or severely limited a host of traditional beliefs, practices, and institutions that touched directly the
daily life of large numbers of people: mandatory fasting; auricular confession; the veneration of saints, relics, and images; the buying and selling of indulgences; pilgrimages and shrines; wakes and processions for the dead and dying; the doctrine of purgatory; Latin Mass and liturgy; traditional ceremonies, festivals, and holidays; monasteries, nunneries, and mendicant orders; the sacramental status of marriage; extreme unction, confirmation, holy orders, and penance; clerical celibacy; clerical immunity from civil taxation and criminal jurisdiction; nonresident benefices; papal excommunication and interdict; canon law; papal and episcopal territorial government; and the traditional scholastic education of the clergy.\textsuperscript{15}

The spirit of reform affected virtually every country in Europe, whether its people remained loyal to Rome in the traditional sense or became reformers. All the beliefs, practices, and institutions of the medieval world whose conceptual unity Adams had admired and which had given security and foreordained meaning to the lives of the faithful for a millennium were either called into question or displaced. The Protestant quest for a disenchanted world paved the way to a belief in God that was dependent upon the subject's ability to conceive of him, rather than upon those reliable systems of ritual and sacrament that led man by certain steps back to the Augustinian country of the soul. Adams is probably quite right when he insists that the Virgin was the tangible embodiment of the accessibility of the realm of the sacred.
The fact, conspicuous above all other historical certainties about religion, that the Virgin was by essence illogical, unreasonable and feminine, is the only fact of any ultimate value worth studying, and starts a number of questions that history has shown itself clearly afraid to touch. Protestant and Catholic differ little in that respect...Why were all the Protestant churches cold failures without her help? Why could not the Holy Ghost,—the spirit of Love and Grace,—equally answer their prayers? Why was the son powerless? Why was Chartres Cathedral, like Lourdes today,—the expression of what is in substance a separate religion? Why did the gentle and gracious Virgin Mother so exasperate the Pilgrim Father? Why was the Woman struck out of the Church and ignored in the State? These questions are not antiquarian or trifling...they tug at the very heartstrings of all that makes whatever order is in the cosmos. If a Unity exists, in which and towards which all energies centre, it must explain and include Duality, Diversity, Infinity, — Sex!

(MSM, 582-83)

For Adams, the Virgin, "illogical, unreasonable, and feminine," "struck out of the Church and ignored in the State" was everything that the enlighteners, starting with the Reformers, had wanted to weed out of human existence. In old age, Adams claimed to have been "struck by Zeno's arrow," and avowed his faith in the Stoics. His attraction to the Virgin is of a piece with his attraction to the Stoics. Adams's commentary on the miracles of the Virgin and her mysterious presence in medieval life is part of his private effort to reverse the dualistic bent of western
philosophy. In *The Logic of Sense*, Gilles Deleuze explains that the philosophy of the Stoics "displaces all reflection." The Stoics, like Adams himself, were in search of the Something that "subsumes being and non-being, existence and inherence."

...the Stoics were the first to reverse Platonism...for if bodies with their states, qualities, and quantities, assume all the characteristics of substance and cause...the characteristics of the Idea are relegated to the ...[the realm of] impassive extra-Being, which is sterile, inefficacious, and on the surface of things: the ideational or the incorporeal can no longer be anything other than an 'effect.'

Adams was, of course, not entirely accurate in saying that the Middle Ages exalted women. As David Noble has shown in *A World Without Women: The Christian Clerical Culture of Western Science*, women did play a significant role in the first millennium of the Christian era, particularly in the "culture of learning." Priests were commonly married during this period, and the androgynous ideal of Johannes Scotus Erigena--the idea that at the Resurrection, sex would be abolished and nature reunited--was viewed seriously. All of this, as Adams suggests in his images of vaulting towers and the gradual emergence of self-consciousness in Gothic architecture, began to change as the ideal of clerical asceticism evolved. As the works of Aristotle were recovered, and as Aquinas engaged in what William Wallace calls the "aristotelianization of Christianity"
once entrenched in universities, spread outward, the power and position of women receded. In the Renaissance, as the state gradually merged with or replaced the Church, women were, in fact eclipsed in exactly the way that Adams suggests that they were. There was no counterpart in Renaissance society as constituted by the state for the powerful feudal noblewoman of an earlier century.

'As the state came to organize
Renaissance society...a new division between personal and public life made itself felt...the bourgeois sex-role system, placing man in the public sphere and the patrician woman in the home.'
Cultural and political power fell increasingly into the hands of men.'

Adams recognized the tremendous losses that had attended upon the emergence of what would eventually triumph as bourgeois individualism, and he found the roots of the loss in the philosophy that dominates the final three chapters of Mt. St. Michel and Chartres. Adams begins the philosophic journey that leads to the Reformation and modernity's deification of empirical science with Abelard. In Abelard, Adams finds the same questions that haunt him, as well as one of the last of his doubles of himself.

Time has settled few or none of the essential points of dispute. Science hesitates, more visibly than the Church ever did, to decide once for all whether unity or diversity is the ultimate law; whether order or chaos is the governing rule of the universe, if universe there is; whether anything except phenomena, exists. Even in matters more vital to society, one dares not speak too loud.
For Adams, Abelard is the "portal of approach to Gothic thought," just as the "west portal of Chartres is the door through which one must of necessity enter the Gothic architecture of the thirteenth century." In Adams's vision of the history of western philosophy, Abelard's work is extended and completed in the work of Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas (MSM, 607). The convulsion in medieval schools of philosophy that Adams centers in Abelard was the debate over Universals which Adams also sees as having been at the root of the emergence of modern philosophy.

According to the latest authorities, the doctrine of Universals...has never received an adequate answer. What is a species? What is a genus or a family or an order? More or less convenient terms of classification, about which the twelfth century cared very little, while it cared deeply about the essence of classes! Science has become too complex to affirm the existence of universal truths, but it strives for nothing else, and disputes the problem as earnestly as in the twelfth century, when the whole field of human and superhuman activity was shut between these barriers of Substance, Universals, and Particulars. The schools knew that their society hung for life on the demonstration that God, the ultimate Universal, was a reality, out of which all other universal truths or realities
sprang. Truth was a real thing, outside of human experience.

(MSM, 611)

In Adams's explanation of the nominalist controversy, the nominalists, or terminists, and the realists found their philosophic origin at opposite points: "one, from the ultimate substance, God,—the Universal, the Ideal, the Type;" and the other from "the Individual, Socrates, the Concrete, the observed Fact of experience" (MSM, 613). The realists, whom Adams represents in the person of William of Champeaux, asserted that the Universal was "a real thing." Abelard declared that the "Universal was only nominally real." Truth for Abelard was merely the "sum of all possible facts that are truth;" while truth for William of Champeaux was, like "virtue" and "humanity," a real "unit and reality." As he contrasts the two thinkers, Adams performs another of his imaginative feats, extending his discussion outward in the history of philosophy.

The Ideal bed is a Form, made by God, said Plato. The Ideal bed is a name, imagined by ourselves, says Aristotle. 'I start from the Universe,' said William. 'I start from the Atom,' said Abelard...William of Champeaux, lecturing on dialectics or logic comes to the question of Universals, which he says are substances. Starting from the highest substance, God, all Being descends through created substances by stages...Humanity being like other essences or substances, indivisible, passes wholly into each individual, becoming Socrates, Plato, Aristotle...Abelard turns the idea round, and infers from it that since
Socrates carries all Humanity in him, he carries Plato, too, and both must be in the same place, though Socrates is at Athens and Plato in Rome.

(***M**M, 614)

As Adams points out, in the universe described by the Nominalists, truth and virtue and charity did not exist, and, while individual identity was a starting point, God could only exist as "an echo of your own ignorance;" the Trinity could be said to exist only "as a sound or a symbol."

In truth, pure Nominalism—if, indeed, anyone ever maintained it,—afforded no cover whatever. Nor did Abelard’s Concept help the matter…Conceptualism was a device, like the false wooden roof, to cover and conceal an inherent weakness of construction. Unity either is, or is not. If soldiers, no matter in what number, can never make an army, and worshippers, though in millions, do not make a Church, and all humanity united would not necessarily constitute a State, equally little can their concepts, individual, or united, constitute, the one or the other. Army, Church, State, each is an organic whole, complex beyond all possible addition of unity, and not a Concept at all, but rather an animal that thinks, creates, devours, and destroys. The attempt to bridge the chasm between multiplicity and Unity is the oldest problem of philosophy, but the flimsiest bridge of all is the human Concept, unless, somewhere, within or beyond it, an energy not individual is hidden; and in that case the old question instantly reappears:—What is that Energy?

(***M**M, 620-21)
In this single paragraph Adams outlines the entirety of his philosophic quest. From Abelard, Adams makes an easy jump to Descartes and Pascal: "The twelfth century had already reached the point where the seventeenth stood when Descartes renewed the attempt to give a solid, philosophical basis for deism by his celebrated "Cogito ergo sum."

Although that ultimate fact seemed new to Europe when Descartes revived it as the starting point of all his demonstrations it was as old and familiar as Saint Augustine to the twelfth century, and as little conclusive as any other assumption of the Ego or Non-Ego. The schools argued according to their tastes from Unity to Multiplicity or from Multiplicity to Unity; but what they wanted was to connect the two. They tried Realism and found that it led to Pantheism. They tried Nominalism and found that it led to materialism. They attempted a compromise in Conceptualism...Then they lay down, exhausted. In the seventeenth century the same violent struggle broke out again, and wrung from Pascal the famous outcry of despair in which the French language rose, perhaps for the last time, to the grand style of the twelfth century.

(EM, 639-40)

Adams's treatise on the mystics, which forms his bridge between Abelard and Aquinas is less focused on medieval mysticism than it is on Pascal and Descartes and the despair that accompanies the "true Promethean lyric" of modernity. And the chapter ends not with any affirmation, but with Saint Francis's remembering to thank "our sister death," the "long-sought, never-found sister of the schoolmen, who
solved all philosophy and merged Multiplicity in Unity" (MSM, 661).

Mt. St. Michel and Chartres concludes with Adams's treatment of the thirteenth century, and the vast architectonic structure of Aquinas's philosophical compromise. "What the schools called Form, what science calls Energy, and what the intermediate period called the evidence of Design, made the foundation of Saint Thomas's cathedral" (MSM, 608). Aquinas followed Abelard in insisting that "dimensional quantity is a principle of individuation."
The soul is thus an energy that exists in matter. This was of course, a controversial stance, and it was one that Aquinas proceeded to modify, but the initial assertion was enough to ensure the emergence and triumph of fourteenth-century nominalists like Duns Scotus and Ockham. In the renewal of the quarrel over the duality of mind and matter of body and spirit, Adams saw even in the midst of St. Thomas's unity the demise of the medieval world.

As early as the fourteenth century signs of unsteadiness appeared, and before the eighteenth century, unity became only a reminiscence...The architects of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries took the Church and the Universe for truths, and tried to express them in a structure which should be final. Knowing by an enormous experience precisely where the strains were to come, they enlarged their scale to the utmost point of material endurance, lightening the load, and distributing the burden until the gutters and gargoyles...all do work either for the arch or for the eye; and every inch of material, up and down,
from crypt to vault, from Man to God, from the Universe to the atom, has its task, giving support where support was needed or weight where concentration was felt, but always with the condition of showing...to the eye the great lines that led to Unity and the curves which controlled divergence...one idea controlled every line; and this is as true of Saint Thomas's Church as it is of Amiens Cathedral...the result was an art marked by singular unity, which endured and served its purpose until man changed his attitude toward the universe.

(MSM, 694-95)

In the final passages of "Thomas Aquinas" Adams achieves a unity of his own, but it is a nominalistic assertion of the power of the artist to assert what he wants on his material. The shape of the cathedral and the claims of Saint Thomas's philosophy are revealed explicitly to be what Adams has shown them to be throughout our failed voyage--mirrors of one another and of a world view in which meanings were engineered by man, not created by God.

Adams intended Mt. St. Michel and The Education of Henry Adams to be read together. As he prepared one hundred quarto volumes of Mt. St. Michel for private distribution he wrote one recipient that "the two volumes go together, as I think of them, and the one is meaningless without the other" (Letters, VI, 102). While he was sending the volumes out for "correction," as he claimed, he also wrote his niece, Louisa Hooper, whose sister had just had a baby, that "nieces are fatal in the long run" (Letters, VI, 106).
Adams had found St. Francis's and Quentin Compson's little sister death on his journey in the company of constructed nieces in Mt. St. Michel, and intended to bring her home to America in the Education. His plan for the Education was characteristically cryptic, and ambitious. In thanking James Ford Rhodes for his "gratifying comments" on his "attempt to realise the Unity of Thought in the Thirteenth Century," Adams explains that the Education is a much more "risky experiment."

If you can imagine a centipede running along in twenty little sections (each with a little mathematical formula carefully concealed in its stomach) to the bottom of a hill; and then laboriously climbing in fifteen sections more (each with a new mathematical problem carefully concealed in its stomach), till it can get up on a hill an inch or two high, so as to see ahead a half an inch or so,—you will understand in advance all that the Education has to say. You will understand also why I believe the literary problem insoluble, and keep the experiment private.

Adams went on to explain to Rhodes that, in fact, the "two works are designed as one, but no one will ever find it out except the author" (Letters, VI, 117). As usual, Adams described the work differently to different people. He wrote William James that it was a "literary experiment," and "an old story of an American drama." He explained what he called the work's "failure" by claiming that form was an unattainable ideal in the modern world.
Did you ever read the Confessions of St. Augustine or of Cardinal de Retz, or of Rousseau, or of Benvenuto Cellini, or even of my dear Gibbon? Of them all, I think St. Augustine alone has an idea of literary form,—a notion of writing a story with an end and an object, not for the sake of the object, but for the form, like a romance. I have worked ten years to satisfy myself that the thing cannot be done today. The world does not furnish the contrasts or the emotion.

(Letters, VI, 118-20)

While the form of Chartres, which Adams described as the only thing he had written that was worth reading, reflected the final unity of the architecture it was intended to mirror, the Education could reflect only the open form of the triumph of the nominalist view of existence. Form is only a relative thing in the narrative universe of the twentieth century, and thus Adams describes the form of the Education as either a failed form, or, more accurately, as a "provisional form."

The most haunting claim about the Education is the counterpart of Adams's humorous remark that "nieces are fatal." In a letter to Henry James that has since becomes famous, Adams explained that the volume was a "mere shield of protection in the grave," and that James should "take [his] own life in the same way, in order to prevent biographers from taking it in theirs." Adams also claimed that the last three chapters of the volume were intended as "a completion and mathematical working out to Q.E.D. of the three concluding chapters" of Mt. St. Michel and Chartres.
Adams's vitriolic response to his reading of James's life of William Story which I have discussed in the previous chapter seems to have reflected a preoccupation with life-writing for Adams in late 1903, when he was preparing to print *Mt. St. Michel*. In *Mt. St. Michel and Chartres* Adams contrived to escape from the political arena which, as his letters suggest, continued to be a primary focus of his thought. As he worked away on *Mt. St. Michel*, he wrote Charles Milnes Gaskell that he felt that he must perform the "pious duty" of writing a "letter of sympathy" about "Morley's murder of Gladstone." (*Letters*, V, 521). Adams was referring not to Gladstone's actual death, which had occurred in 1898, but to what Adams saw as a posthumous murder and second entombment in John Morley's three-volume *Life of William Ewart Gladstone* which had just been published. Adams notes that his own "few remaining white hairs" "stiffen[ed] with horror" at the biographical notes that Gladstone himself had provided for Morley. In particular, he notes Gladstone's willingness to tell Morley that he had made a mistake in declaring in the midst of the American Civil War that "Jefferson Davis had made a nation." This, Adams notes, would only be an appropriate admission "to a priest in the confessional, acting for a respectable deity who can't be hurt" (*Letters*, V, 517).

The focus of Adams's thoughts was in part a response to contemporary political events and in part the result of his
first-hand encounters with imperialism in his travels in the South Seas. His close friends, Henry Cabot Lodge and John Hay, were living their lives at the forefront of American politics. As Secretary of State for Theodore Roosevelt, Hay was more than aware of the military intelligence that had aided Philippe Bunau-Varilla, the chief representative of the Panama Canal Company, in the rebellion that separated Panama from Colombia. The U.S. Navy, with the full knowledge of Hay and Roosevelt, managed to block the sea lanes that would have enabled Colombia to engage in the only military response it could make, since the land routes to the isthmus led through the tangled routes of an almost impenetrable jungle. Hay managed not only to justify the rebellion, but immediately recognized the new Republic, and within a matter of days received Bunau-Varilla as its first ambassador.

While Ernest Samuels attests to Hay's doubts about his role in "stealing Panama," and Hay repeatedly attempted to resign his office, the fact remains that he assisted Roosevelt in his efforts to subdue what Roosevelt regarded as a lesser—he was given to referring to the Colombians as "dagoes" and "contemptible little creatures—" and inconveniently located people. Unfortunately, the Colombians happened to stand in the way of the political aims of the latest version of the Enlightenment Project—that of widening the sphere of American commerce through an imperialistic endeavor that was to facilitated through the use of technology. Adams knew of
the continual intrigues in the Roosevelt White House, and repeatedly advised Hay that he should remain at his post. Adams’s reasoning was that Hay could temper Roosevelt’s tendency to make rash decisions. Nevertheless, within a week of Hay’s reception of Panama’s new ambassador, and amid his musings to other friends on the nature of biography, Adams wrote Hay that he should read both the Story and the Gladstone biographies so that he could "reflect" on what his own fate might be.

Please read Harry James’s Life of Story! Also Morley’s Gladstone! And reflect--wretched man!--that now you have knowingly forced yourself to be biographised! You cannot escape the biographer. When I read,—standing behind the curtain—these repetitions of life, flabby and foolish as I am:—when I try to glug-glug down my snuffling mucous membrane these lumps of cold calves’-head and boiled pork fat, then I know what you will suffer for your sin, and I see President Quiensabe of Colombia revenged...I foresee plainly, that the biographer’s work on you will be strychnine. You will be convulsive. You and the biographer together will make eternity solemn. When I think how all my friends are skewered, and how dreary poor Lowell and Story and Monckton Milnes and Motley and Sumner and Lincoln and Seward and I look in our cages with pins stuck through us to keep the lively attitude of nature, I smile grimly and see you turn ghastly green.

(Letters, V, 526)

Adams was seeing the brightest men of his generation corrupted in the same way that statesmen like Washington and Jefferson and John and John Quincy Adams and the characters
who were allegorized in *Democracy* had each in their way been either corrupted or destroyed by political life. An earlier generation had believed that in inventing America on the Enlightenment model they had somehow designed it so that it might be freed from the patterns of history. Adams seems to have seen Theodore Roosevelt's foreign policy as the certain proof that his generation was not to be freed from the burdens of the past but rather that it was condemned to repeat its mistakes. Hay's role in the Panama Canal Crisis of 1903 recapitulated John Quincy Adams's role—and his change of party affiliation—in the affair of the Essex Junto as well, and more subtly, the old issues of masters and slaves and policy formulated on the basis of property interests. The question of subjugation and at least a metaphorical slavery had moved in Adams's time away from the American South and its "self-conscious" statesmen who were also on stage (*Letters*, V, 455) into the grand theater of the world. Unlike John Quincy Adams, however, Henry Adams did not fear the pains of Hell or the label of "wasted talent" that he had applied to John Randolph. He only feared being gibbeted in the zoo of history.

Perhaps the most fascinating passage in Adams's letter to Hay, however, is his claim that he envisions himself "skewered" in a cage with "pins stuck through [him] to keep the lively attitude of nature." Hay was probably Adams's closest male friend, and twenty years before, in 1883, when
Adams was completing his own stint as a biographer and beginning the massive endeavor that was to become his History of the United States, he had written Hay that Hay "should write autobiography" in order to protect himself from the same biographers that still threaten in 1903.

Trollope has amused me for two evenings. I am clear that you should write autobiography. I mean to do mine. After seeing how coolly and neatly a man like Trollope can destroy the last vestige of heroism in his own life, I object to allowing mine to be murdered by any one except myself. Every church mouse will write autobiography in another generation to prove that it never believed in religion.

(Letters, II, 532)

The only "biographer" that had taken Adams's life—and had had the opportunity to "skewer" him—was Adams himself, who as we have seen, had systematically destroyed his diaries (except for the tantalizing fragments that remind present-day readers that they once existed) while he was overseeing the proofreading and printing of his History, and taken on a new name and identity in Tahiti.

The Education of Henry Adams is in part Adams's response to the culture of imperialism, which, as I have suggested earlier, is a perverse and sacralized extension of the Church's assertion of pastoral power over the lives of the faithful. Adams recognized that the imperial state and its representatives in the guise of businessmen and missionaries assumed diverse roles that were unified in
their essential function as pastors of the "primitive" cultures of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Adams's vehicle for examining the political world of his time was not a history at all, nor even a biography or autobiography, but a critique of identity as a construct of power, in which he himself replaces the Samoans of his earlier experiences as the object of scientific scrutiny.

For the student of autobiography, The Education of Henry Adams, taken together with Mt. St. Michel and Chartres is both an interpretive nightmare, and an inescapable "bridge of ages" between Victorian notions of self-representation, and the narrative experiments of Gertrude Stein and Samuel Beckett. It is an interpretive nightmare because Adams employs all the echoic and allusive tendencies that are at play in his earlier works, and because it is explicitly a record of a reification and murder of self, not a work of self-affirmation. The Education is nevertheless a sort of set piece in the literature of self-representation because Adams self-consciously framed it as an inescapable monument to the idea of the subjectively constituted self. He chose the Confessions of St. Augustine and Rousseau as his models, and intended the Education to be a sequel to them that would complete the arc of self-representation in the West. Unlike his predecessors, who claimed public spaces for the soul and the passions of the private self, Adams is seeking in the Education not to affirm, but to escape
whatever it is that he is. At the same time, he helplessly demonstrates what the universe looks like when it collapses into the mind of Henry Adams.

The map Adams draws for his readers in the *Education* is deceptively clear as the introduction to *Mt. St. Michel and Chartres* is deceptively reassuring. Lest we be lost, he tells us both explicitly and implicitly who his models were, what authors formed his taste, and what century made him. He even tells us why and how he came to write the *Education*. Nevertheless, the *Education* is a badly read book, partly because Adams adopted the authorial veils that shield him from us in all of his works, and partly because his readers have tended to confuse autobiography with chronicle. As a factual history of the enlightenment kind, the *Education* is an exceedingly unsatisfactory text. As a construction and annihilation of a double, and as a monument to the universe of subjectivity, it takes its place with Augustine's *Confessions*, Petrarch's *Secretum*, the essays of Montaigne and the *Confessions* of Rousseau as a marker in the history of self-representation in the West.

Some of the difficulty that readers have had with the *Education* is intimately related to the book’s purpose. When Adams says he wants to provide a guide for young men, he means that he will offer his readers an exercise in the kind of mental gymnastics that have engaged his readers before in *Mt. St. Michel and Chartres*. The tone of the *Education* is
elegiac, and its frustrated motion is that of a would-be quest romance. The book claims to mourn the loss of the eighteenth century, but what it really laments is the continuation of the eighteenth century's values, in the shape of the enlightenment project, into the twentieth century. Nevertheless, the book does not celebrate "failure," as so many critics have claimed. Rather, the *Education* seeks to provide an escape from the sense of the private self that was born with Augustine, reached a crisis in Petrarch, and simultaneous disaster and deification in Rousseau. Written in the third person, the *Education* tells us very little about the *homunculus scriptor* that wrote it, and readers ever since T.S. Eliot have claimed that the book cannot be considered an autobiography because there is too little of the author in it. In a sense, Eliot was right; there is very little of Henry Adams in the *Education*. The being that bears the name of Adams in that text is an object for study that shares Adams's name, and is subject to him as narrator, but it is a disembodied consciousness, not even a complete literary character. Adams was as self-consciously modern as Petrarch, and he believed that he was living through the most important era of transition since the Reformation. He was prepared to offer a redefinition of the nature of identity as potentially paradigmatic as Augustine's valorization of the private self, or Rousseau's insistence on the value of the realm of the emotions. He
isolated Augustine as one of his two primary models because the Education was intended to be an end-mark in the history of self and history, perhaps more radical than that presented by any philosopher since Augustine had written The Confessions and The City of God with their assertion of the idea of an essential order in human life and in history that comforted western man as the Roman Empire was splintering into chaos around him. Adams chose Rousseau because he aimed at a general reform of the educational system, and because he believed that, while Rousseau had represented a kind of final collapse into the chaos of the universe of subjectivity, he had also recognized the limitations of a world and a self shaped in such isolation. In Adams’s eyes, Augustine had written the essential memoir of the crisis of the classical world; Augustine marked the boundary between the world shaped by the polis in classical antiquity and the world that was made by medieval Christianity. Rousseau, for his part, articulated the crisis of the modern ego that Adams intended to explore and extend.

The Education of Henry Adams is Adams’s demonstration that he can "one can know the universe only as oneself" (Education, 1114). If his primary task is to complete the work of Rousseau and Augustine, he also links himself in one of the books’s two prefaces with the cosmic tailors of Carlyle’s Sartor Resartus and Swift’s Tale of a Tub. He tells us that man in his day is possessed of a "shrunken
ego." If Adams was a twelfth-century monk in Mt. St. Michel and Chartres, he is a tailor and artisan in this narrative, and the object of study is not Adams at all (the manikin-ego) but his education (the garment). The garment Adams intends to offer is meant to "fit young men for life in the modern world," and aims to "show the faults of the patchwork fitted on their fathers" (Education, 722). Carlyle's hero in his story of tailors and garments lends his name to a crucial chapter in the Education, but Adams subverts Carlyle's program for young men. Carlyle believed that the philosophical clothes of the hero could be peeled off like a second skin to reveal the essential man beneath them. Carlyle as "editor" moves his readers "from those outmost vulgar, palpable Woollen Hulls of Man; through his wondrous Flesh-Garment, and his wondrous Social Garnitures; inwards to the Garments of his very Soul's Soul, to Time and Space themselves!" Freed of its "wrappages," man's being stands "safe in the far region of Poetic Creation...where that Phoenix Death-Birth of Human Society and of all Human Things, appears possible." For Adams, the clothes of ideology are the only self and the only human reality that is available to man within the frame of human history. When his manikin's clothes are peeled away there are no absolute ideas, no transcendent realm of meaning. There is nothing but the cognitive capacity to perceive the singular and to form abstractions from them. Adams's vision of his "manikin"
and its capacities echoes Ockham's theory of cognition. Concepts for Ockham are located in the mind of individual human beings. For him, concepts were "intentions" and they functioned as "natural signs." Speech in this view is reduced to a conventional social currency that facilitates exchange between individuals. Similarly, while our concepts are "natural" they do not necessarily mirror things in nature. Our knowledge is thus entirely contingent on our experience, and is restricted to us as individuals, though we can reason from it to an assumption about shared experience. Ockham posits a knowledge based on the probability that our knowledge of the world is true rather than the certainty that it is true that was available to Aquinas or Augustine.

Though it at first seems quite distant from Carlyle's concern, Swift's Tale of a Tub, with its patchwork of religions and its absent god treats the same dangers and abuses in modern science and by modern authors that Carlyle does. When the layers of authors and texts are peeled away in the multiple prefaces of the Tale, only the history of the brothers who retailed the garment left them by their dead father remains, with all of its resonances of the Reformation's linguistic and spiritual legacy of subjectivity and fragmentation to the modern world, embodied most dangerously in Cartesian rationalism. Swift, too, revisits the linguistic and cognitive dilemmas of Scotus and
Ockham, exploring, as Adams did the destructive legacy of the triumph of nominalism and the via moderna. Augustine, Swift, and Carlyle thus serve as Adams's symbolic markers for the history of subjectivity. What was a clearly delineated path to certain recovery of truth through memory, and meaning through history in Augustine, gives way in Swift to the ill-fated birth of the Enlightenment Project. In Carlyle, the hero is buried beneath his consciousness of the weight of his history, and the possibility that he is isolated within himself and separated from his fellow human beings. In Adams, the hero has disappeared, and his absence is not mourned.

The first problem we encounter in this work is a Preface, dated September, 1918, in the original Houghton Mifflin edition, six months after Adams's death, and attributed to Henry Cabot Lodge. Lodge did not, of course, write the Preface. Adams wrote it for him, and sent it to him, with elaborate instructions on how Lodge was to treat the manuscript of the Education after Adams's death. Adams apparently did not want alien hands to touch his manikin.

I send you herewith a sealed packet containing a copy of my Education corrected and prepared for publication. Should the question arise at any future time, I wish that you, on behalf of the Hist. Society, would take charge of the matter, and see that the volume is printed as I leave it. With this view, I have written a so-called Editor's Preface, which you have read, and which I have taken the liberty, subject to your assent, to stamp with your
initials. Also, may I beg that you will bar the introduction of all illustrations of any sort. You know that I do not consider illustrations as my work, or having part in any correct rendering of my ideas. Least of all do I wish portraits. I have always tried to follow the rule of making the reader think only of the text, and I do not want to abandon it here.

(Letters, VI, 725)

Adams's complaint with the Church may have been that it sought to extend personal identity into eternity, but he was quite anxious to see that his personal self was available only in the overdetermined form he prescribed. By appropriating Lodge's name, Adams assumes the role of statesman, and Lodge's presence, however pretended, announces the political aims of the Education. In the Adams files at the Massachusetts Historical Society, one can view, on microfilm, a hand-written copy of the Preface. At the end, in shaky letters, Adams has pencilled in the initials "H.C.L.," followed by a question mark. Lodge's Preface states Adams's formal aims for the Education, but the great statesman's historical presence infects our sense of things. Lodge's signature fixes our expectations of an autobiography after the fashion of Adams's own "life and letters" biographies. The reader is confounded. Are we in the narrative universe of Cervantes and Swift, or of Lodge and John Hay? Adams's point, of course, is that the boundaries between history and fiction have collapsed, and that his work, in which he once again, as he had in Mt. St. Michel,
speaks in the third person is like Montaigne's essays—a new genre—a sort of anti-autobiography. Adams's use of the third person in *Mt. St. Michel* reflects his alienation from the world he described; in the *Education*, it reflects his alienation from himself as subject of himself. Whereas his model, St. Augustine, could directly address his God with his "I," conjuring the presence of the Logos through the articulation of the truth of his being, Adams is both Subject and subject. Like a self-conscious Hawthorne, he must create a shape for history. Like the omniscient god of his own narrative universe Adams alters the sequences of history, leaves out twenty years of his life, and reshapes himself not as Henry Adams, but as the Subject of Modernity, in whom all the tendencies of the modern world since Abelard converge.

Along with the labyrinthine references to manikin and tailor, the bogus preface is the reader's first indication that this is an autobiography more concerned with artifice than with life. In the Preface, Adams is tailor, manikin, and garment—Subject, subject, and materia. If Lodge's "preface" lends the book a kind of historical authenticity, it also turns the book into a parody of self-representation. The first section of narrative is constructed upon a lie. On the other hand, Adams had claimed that his generation of Bostonians were "but one mind and spirit; the individual is a facet of Boston." Perhaps part of his claim is that the
manikin could just as easily be named "Lodge" as "Henry Adams." The *Education* is framed within a world where all words have lost their meanings. The preface not only reminds us of multiple and confusing prefaces of *Tale of a Tub*, it makes the text seem more like fiction than it is. The most famous stepfathered and edited manuscript in history is *Don Quijote*, a text in which Cervantes loses his story, finds it, and continually admonishes his readers to remember that their souls are in their own bodies and that neither they nor Cervantes have much to do with the fate of Don Quijote. In the *Education*, Adams blurs the boundaries of our rationalistic sense of the order of things. We are not sure that our souls are in our own bodies. We are somehow aware that we are, at least for the time that we engage with him on the shared ground of his account of himself, his subjects.

In his own Preface, the one he claimed, Adams warns us that his memoir deals not with the manikin-double of himself, but with the garment of education. The Preface begins with what Adams calls Rousseau's "appeal to the Deity."

'I have shown myself as I was; contemptible and vile when I was so; good, generous, sublime, when I was so; I have unveiled my interior such as Thou thyself hast seen it, Eternal Father. Collect about me the innumerable swarm of my fellows; let them hear my confessions; let them groan at my unworthiness; let them blush at my meannesses! Let each of them discover
his heart in his turn at the foot of thy
throne with the same sincerity: and then
let any one of them tell thee if he
dares: --'I was a better man.'

(Education, 721)

Confessing himself to his fellow men, carrying his book with
him to his God, Rousseau has managed to demonstrate Adams's
central thesis in Mt. St. Michel--that the concept of world
has collapsed into the idea of the personal self. Rousseau's
confessions provide not a hand-book for readers seeking
education, but an ironic "warning against the Ego." Adams
points out that, since the time of Rousseau, the "Ego" has
"steadily tended to efface itself," and, "for purposes of
model to become a manikin on which the toilet of education
is to be draped in order to show the fit of misfit of the
clothes" (Education, 722). As Theodor Adorno noted, in the
text that has haunted my own narrative of Henry Adams's
efforts at self-representation, "the self, its guiding idea,
and its a priori object, has always, under its scrutiny,
been rendered at the same time non-existent." When man
becomes the measure of all things, he also becomes an object
for study. At the moment that he is thus objectified as
material for analysis, he is included among all the things
in the world outside the subject's private screening room
that are designated as unreal. The individual's autonomy is
renounced with his unity; he is alienated from himself, and
subjugated to the mechanistic processes or rationalization
which determine the order of things in the modern state. In
such a world, which was born, as Adams had shown in *Mt. St. Michel*, with the advent of medieval nominalism, the object of study is necessarily a manikin, not a self. The "young man" whom Adams as tailor is seeking to "outfit," is the "subject of education," and in the greatest ironic moment of a career built on irony Adams means that the self is the final project of the enlightenment. Through the university system, he would be reconstituted as the subject of the "human sciences." Through the activity of life-writing, he would be reduced first to a "geometrical figure of three or more dimensions," and then "used" in the "study of relation." Adams wants to kill off his manikin, and his language confirms his intention.

The manikin...has the same value as any other figure of three or more dimensions, which is used for the study of relation. For that purpose it cannot be spared; it is the only measure of motion, of proportion, of human condition; it must have the air of reality; must be taken for real; must be treated as though it had life; --Who knows? Possibly it had!

(*Education*, 722)

The "manikin" is Adams's last simulacrum that bears his name, and it is inseparable from its original. It has as much life as Adams has, and as little. Just as Adams kept records of the measures of Tahitians and Samoans, he measures, defines, and limits himself before beginning his scientific history of himself. Whether or not Adams as a living being might have had life in a different world than
that engendered by the Enlightenment project is the final question of the open form of the *Education*, which leads from the construction of the simulacrum in the Preface to its exit in the final pages of the appropriately titled final chapter—"Nunc Age."

Adams’s choice of Rousseau for his primary model undoubtedly held an additional attraction for Adams. By Rousseau’s own admission his being was constructed through and mediated by his reading of romances, and he dates his "unbroken consciousness of [his] existence from the time that he first learned to read."26 Rousseau’s self-consciousness is thus mediated by literary texts, not by relationships to the world of sense. Rousseau later replaced novels with history and with readings from classical antiquity. The habit of constructing a romantic vision of the world through imagination was extended as Rousseau became the "character whose life I was reading."27 As Rousseau grew older his preference for the unnatural pleasures of the imagination over the natural ones provided by the world extended to sex. Rousseau became enamored of one Mlle. Lambercier, the sister of the pastor who was his tutor. Inadvertently, when punishing him for some misdeed, she introduced him to the fatal joys of sexual pleasure induced through pain at the hands of an older woman. Thereafter Rousseau "feasted feverish eyes on lovely women" not because he wanted to imagine himself taking his pleasure
with each of them as distinct individuals, but because he yearned to "make use of them in [his] own fashions as so many Mlle. Lamberciers." In the dominions of Rousseau's imagination doubles of beautiful women could be constructed as things of beauty, and discarded at will; all women were thus his subjects. At the same time, Rousseau experienced a painful discontinuity in his relationships with real women. As he could never confess his desire to "fall of his knees before a masterful mistress" and be punished and humiliated, his actual sexual experiences were characterized by unfulfilled longings which he suffered in silence. In contrast to the role of helpless suppliant that he constructs for himself as lover, he assumes a role of power over the reader. Just as Rousseau fashions real women and fictional characters into simulacra of themselves and himself, he constructs the reader as a helpless audience, constrained to listen to his confession.

I am well aware that the reader does not require information, but I, on the other hand, feel impelled to give it to him. Why should I not relate the little incidents of that happy time, that still give me a flutter of pleasure to recall...let us strike a bargain. I will let you off five, and be content with one...so long as I am allowed to take as long as I like in telling it, in order to prolong my pleasure.

The reader becomes another of Rousseau's simulacra, a creature constructed as the subject of Rousseau's imperial "I." As we move through the Confessions, whole cities become
subject to Rousseau. In Rousseau's imagination, Paris, for example, is a "city of a most imposing appearance, as beautiful as it was large, where nothing was to be seen but splendid streets and palaces of marble or gold." When he goes to Paris, entering through the Faubourg Saint-Marceau, he is overwhelmed by "dirty stinking little streets, ugly black houses, a general air of squalor and poverty, beggars, carters, menders of clothes, sellers of herb drinks and old hats." Later on, he responds similarly to Versailles, and to the sea. Tangible realities are always inferior to the doubles shaped by Rousseau's imagination. Rousseau avoids owning property, favoring money instead, because it promises him freedom. He avoided ties with family, because, again, he sought to have no ties to any material reality. His life is bounded and determined by the text of self that he is constantly engaged in updating. His is model of life founded in discontinuity, and the narrative disarray of the final sections of the Confessions attests to Rousseau's imprisonment in a solipsistic universe. Adams's choice of Rousseau as a model is a rueful admission that his own manikin-self had been similarly entrapped, and that the truncated narrative available through subjectivity was the appropriate monument to the subject of modernity as well as to the way he had chosen to live most of his life, as a sort of childless vagabond. In such a world, as Adams was to note later in his historical essays, one could only chronicle a
sort of mechanical dissolution of being. As Adams explains in his Preface, "Jean Jacques erected a monument against the Ego," and "since his time, and largely thanks to him, the Ego has steadily tended to efface itself." (Education, 721). Like Hawthorne's Old Esther, the self removed from any participation in the life of the world of sense shrivels and disappears. Adams's statement that "the object of study" in the Education is the "garment not the figure" is his acknowledgement of Althusser's recognition that the idea of the personal self is an illusion, generated and perpetuated through an ideology that, through the entrenched power structures of western culture assumes the status of absolute reality. The Education is thus a study of the ideologies that constituted the simulacrum of Henry Adams as character in the Education. In turn, the simulacrum is the subject of Henry Adams as narrator, god, and creator of himself as a shrivelled double. It has the "air of reality" because Adams's readers constitute it as real, taking Adams's life in the process of doubling him once again in the act of interpretation and simultaneously revealing their own imprisonment in the cave of personal identity. The Preface is dated "February 16, 1907" because Adams was designating a birthday for his own simulacrum, that ultimate monument to a self that had been dead for twenty years before the education was printed. Adams's biological and historical
self, it will be remembered, had been killed off with his diaries in 1888.

Adams begins his biography of himself in a fairly conventional way, with his birth, but he is born in the shadow of the great ideological constructs that had given rise to the American Republic. He is born "under the shadow of Boston State House," in a house below the tellingly named "Mt. Vernon Place," and he is "branded" and "crippled" by the presences not only of the State House, but of the First Church, Beacon Hill, John Hancock, John Adams, Mount Vernon, and Quincy. Adams is doomed to be crushed by the weight of history from the start, even while he is still "ten pounds of unconscious babyhood." The baby that was born on February 16, 1838, was destined to live a life in which he, in Nietzsche's terms was "always attached to the past." No matter "how far and fast he runs, he is doomed to "carry his chain with him."^32 Adams's dilemma was how to find what Nietzsche called a "usable past." Like Nietzsche's historical individual, he possessed "no trace of the power to forget," and was thus "condemned everywhere to see becoming." Nietzsche rightly recognized, as Adams himself did, that history was "a disguised theology,"^33 which makes impotent subjects of us all.

In keeping with the Adamses' historical investment in the ideals of the Enlightenment, Adams "reached manhood without knowing religion, and with the certainty that dogma,
metaphysics, and abstract philosophy were not worth knowing" (Education, 752). Adams grew up among brothers and sisters whom he described in the same phrases he used to describe the Bostonians of his entire generation.

...all were conscious that they would like to control power in some form...Their form was tied to politics or literature. They amounted to one individual with half-a-dozen sides or facets; their temperaments reacted on each other, and made each child more like the other...What no one knew was whether the individual who thought himself a representative of this type, was fit to deal with life.

(Education, 753)

For Adams and his brothers and sisters, "books remained as in the eighteenth-century the source of life, and as they came out,—Thackeray, Dickens, Bulwer, Tennyson, Macaulay, Carlyle and the rest,—they were devoured." Like Rousseau, Adams's early sense of himself was formed through reading and through listening to his father read. In addition to the texts his father provided, he liked to lie "on a musty heap of Congressional Documents in the old farm-house at Quincy, reading Quentin Durward, Ivanhoe, and the Talisman." His favorite activity, however, and the one from which he drew most education involved "reading the garden at intervals for peaches and pears" (Education, 755). Novel-reading comes from Rousseau; pear-stealing from Augustine's Confessions. Nothing in Adams's existence bears a spontaneous relationship to the material world. He lived in "the
atmosphere of the Stamp Act, the Tea Tax, and the Boston Massacre" (Education, 758). His first encounter with the sensual world, which, as we have seen earlier, he always associated with the American South, came in his encounter with the nation's capital. There, "the want of barriers, of pavements of forms, the looseness, the laziness, the indolent southern drawl, the pigs in the streets; the negro babies and their mothers with bandannas, the freedom, openness, swagger, of nature and man" (Education, 760) stood in stark contrast to the Enlightenment ideals that formed Adams's image of America. Adams claimed the duality of America as his own, fabricating a southern ancestry through his great-grandmother, Louisa Catherine Adams that the old lady herself denied, and pairing it with his enlightenment heritage. Even as a child Adams claims to have recognized that Boston and Maryland were two worlds that could not live together, but he also felt himself powerless to choose one over the other. As in Adams's history, the blight over the sultry South for Adams was slavery, and the early sections of the Education recapitulate the horror that Adams expressed in his letters before and during the Civil War. Nevertheless, George Washington remained for him a steady figure, like the Pole Star, a "primary...an ultimate relation" who alone remained steady in Adams's youthful imagination. Adams's confrontation with the insoluble dilemma of slavery and freedom, of North and South, of
Virginian ideals and Virginian realities echoed his early sense of the duality of all existence. At every turn in the early chapters of the *Education*, Adams announces that education had not begun. It seemed to him as a young graduate of Harvard that Karl Marx was "standing there waiting for him, and that sooner or later the process of education would have to deal with Karl Marx" (*Education*, 786).

Adams’s experiences with German education were as limiting and as disappointing as his years at Harvard. In his attempt to study Civil Law in Berlin, he found only the "lecture-system in its deadliest form" (*Education*, 789). As for the German model of state education, Adams found it frightening.

> All State-education is a sort of dynamo machine for polarising the popular mind; for turning and holding its lines of force in the direction supposed to be most effective for State-purposes. The German machine was terribly efficient. *(Education*, 792)

Like Louis Althusser, Adams acknowledged and feared the complicity of education and the State, and in his rebellion, found that education for him lay only outside the schoolroom in "time wasted; studies neglected; vices indulged; education reversed; --it came from the despised beer-garden and music-hall; and it was accidental, unintended, unforeseen." Only at one moment, when he finds himself suddenly able to follow a Beethoven symphony does he feel
that a "prison wall that had barred his senses" has fallen. Adams has contacted the primal world of sense, and experienced a "marvel of education;" the equivalent of learning to "read a new language" (Education, 793).

The unfailing sources of education in the Education are music, the arts, and the realm of the senses. The traditional quest for the aufklärung, the progressive "unfolding in history of the force of the foundation" is dramatically abandoned, and with it, the ideas of even the possibility of truth and historical foundation are dissolved. What Nietzsche's calls a "philosophy of morning" in Human All Too Human is in fact a reorientation of self toward proximity rather than toward origins. The real world posited by the enlightenment project and more immediately by Adams's own ancestors had vanished, taking the apparent world produced through subjectivity with it. Adams was left with the realization that there is no self to be recalled—that, as he said in his letters on the writing of the Education—he cannot imitate Augustine's motion toward unity. Adams can only replicate the abandonment of the unifying vision of linear history in favor of a history of discontinuity and dislocation that denies any claim to be a universal history. The history that Adams came to espouse as "multiplicity" is a productive of subjective recollection which is also a distortion.
Adams calls attention to the fact that his story is not only the story of the production of a manikin, but also an essay on the end of the enlightenment version of history by structuring his narrative around successive returns to the moment when Gibbon conceived of his history of the decline and fall of Rome.

Anarchy lost no ground meanwhile. The problem only became the more fascinating. Probably it was more vital in May, 1860 than it had been in October, 1764, when the idea of writing the Decline and Fall of the city first started to the mind of Gibbon, 'in the close of the evening, as I sat musing in the Church of the Zoccolanti...while they were singing Vespers in the Temple of Jupiter, on the ruins of the Capitol. Murray's Handbook had the grace to quote this passage from Gibbon's autobiography, which led Adams more than once to sit at sunset on the steps of the Church of Santa Maria di Ara Coeli, curiously wondering that not an inch had been gained by Gibbon,—or all the historians since,—towards explaining the Fall. The mystery remained unsolved.

(£ducation, 804)

Adams, of course, had not read Gibbon in Murray. He had read the Autobiography in Germany, and, as we have seen, it had inspired him to become his family's historian, though in the Education he claims never to have intended to set himself up as a Gibbon. (£ducation, 804). In later years, he claims to have always returned to Rome, to sit "once more on the steps of Ara Coeli," (£ducation, 935), but the moment of revelation never came. Returning in 1868 he reflected that he knew no more than he had known in 1858, (£ducation, 936);
in 1893, he sat down at the Chicago Exhibition, pondering the mysteries of Richard Hunt's dome "almost as deeply as on the steps of the Ara Coeli, and much to the same purpose."

Here was a breach of continuity,—a rupture in historical sequence! Was it real, or only apparent? One's personal universe hung on the answer, for if the rupture was real and the new American world could take this sharp and conscious twist toward ideals one's personal friends would come in, at last, as winners in the great American chariot race for fame...

(Education, 1032)

Of course, Adams's friends had in fact come in as "winners" in the "chariot race for fame," but their role in the history of the early twentieth century had been solely that of presiding over further folly. "Education ran riot in Chicago," and Adams was forced to "sit down on the steps and brood."

The historical mind can think only in historical processes, and probably this was the first time since historians existed that any of them had sat down helpless before a mechanical sequence. Before a metaphysical or a theological or a political sequence, most historians had felt helpless, but the single clue to which they had hitherto trusted was the unity of natural force.

(Education, 1033)

In Chicago Adams saw his eighteenth century swept "into the ash-heap." He had "stood up for his eighteenth-century, his constitution of 1789, his George Washington, his Harvard College, his Quincy, and his Plymouth Pilgrims, as long as
anyone would stand up with him" \textit{(Education, 1034-35)}. He was faced with the recognition that "education must fit the complex conditions of a new society, always accelerating its movement, and its fitness could be known only from success" \textit{(Education, 1037)}. The old world and its attendant ways of seeing and being that had constituted Adams as a person had vanished, as certainly as Adams's diaries had been symbolically consigned to flames, almost in preparation for the Exhibition. Just as Gibbon's Roman vigil had haunted Adams in life, it haunts and informs the shape of the \textit{Education}, forcing its narrative motion into a cyclic motion that declines to move forward. Adams as manikin perennially winds up where he began. The principle of construction, as we noted earlier, is an affirmation of the triumph of nominalism. There is no progression here. The narrative of Adams's education acknowledges the impossibility of a linear conception of narrative. As we noted before, the narrative refuses and parodies the possibilities of education inherent in the picaresque tradition. The illusion of continuity first fostered by Augustine is abandoned by Adams.

Adams has two other unifying devices in the \textit{Education}. One is the image of the prototypic shark, \textit{Pteraspis}, which Adams discovered in 1867, and which had fascinated him almost as much as Gibbon. The shark had managed to survive through aeons of change. \textit{Pteraspis}, the predator of the sea serves in the \textit{Education} as a kind of counterpoint to
Gibbon’s eighteenth-century values. If Gibbon determined Adams’s investment of himself in historiography, he claimed the shark and its relatives as his "cousins, great-uncles, or grandfathers" (Education, 929-930). The shark survives by living life as a predator, and Adams saw no more evidence or progress in the shark than he had seen in Gibbon’s progressive vision of history. For Adams, the shark becomes an emblem of the modern subject, who is a predator of mind, devouring and digesting all that it encounters, as Adams had "devoured" the "boiled pork fat" of the biographies of Gladstone and Story in 1903. The Pteraspis offered proof that "uniformity...was not uniform; and Selection...did not select" (Education, 931). Pteraspis showed that even Darwinism was a "form of religious hope," a "promise of ultimate perfection," a "dogma to be put in the place of the Athanasian creed." For himself, he "had no Faith." The "idea of one Form, Law, Order, or Sequence had no more value for him than the idea of none;...what he valued most was Motion,...what attracted his mind was Change" (Education, 931).

Adams’s other device of formal unity is provided by the images of paralysis that he himself acknowledged were the dominant symbols of his career. The "broken caterpillar that has lost its thread" of 1911 is America as "earthworm" in the Education, trying to "realise and understand itself; to catch up with its own head, and to twist about in search
of its tail" (Education, 937). Throughout the Education, characters have their "historical necks broken," and Adams himself perennially dangles on the lost thread of personal identity.

His identity, if one could call a bundle of disconnected memories an identity, seemed to remain; but his life was once more broken into separate pieces; he was a spider, and had to spin a new web in some new place with a new attachment.

(Education, 912)

The American people, like Adams himself, were "wandering in a wilderness much more sandy than the Hebrews had ever trodden about Sinai...They had lost the sense of worship" (Education, 1020). Education for Adams resolve itself in the ambiguities of the figure that St. Gaudens "had made for him in his absence." And the figure has no meaning, except to reflect the "response of the observer" (Education, 1021).

If Adams recorded his "death" in the fragments of his diaries, he also records his death by the narrative break in the Education that spans the years between his wife's suicide, his publication of the history, his journey to the South Seas, and his return to Washington in 1892. In that chapter, which he called "Twenty Years After," he begins to refer to himself as a dead man. "Even dead men allow themselves a few narrow prejudices," (Education, 1022). Elsewhere Adams is a "dead American." The remaining chapters, beginning with Adams's journey to the Chicago Exhibition, record the erosion of the principle of the self,
and its replacement by the recognition that "Unity is chaos," (Education, 1091). The final sections end with his explanation of his writing of the Mt. St. Michel and Chartres, and the Education itself. Adams had reached Hegel's limits of contradiction (Education, 1134), and what lay beyond the self that could be framed in narrative was an embrace of the "supersensual universe." The man of the future "could be only a child born of contact between the old and the new energies" (Education, 1177).

The idea of education is defined and redefined throughout this text, and, as its meanings alter, Adams's vistas of understanding, and ours implode. Indeed, the shifting meanings Adams assigns to the word, which sometimes means American history and sometimes means experience of the world and sometimes means consciousness and sometimes means sensory experience underscore his sense that Abelard's and Ockham's radical doctrine of concepts had triumphed in the modern world. When Adams finds himself poised between "The Heights of Knowledge" and "The Abyss of Ignorance," he reminds us, and his manikin-double, of what his letters affirm over and over—that they come to the same thing—the world collapsed into the self, or the self collapsed into the world.

He seemed to know nothing—to be groping in darkness—to be falling forever in space, and the worst depth consisted in
the assurance, incredible as it seemed, that no one knew more.

(education, 1108)

Adams's revelation is that "one's psyche is like a "bicycle rider, mechanically balancing himself, by inhibiting all his inferior personalities" (Education, 1116). As a literary artist, he engages himself in the construction of narrative spaces which serve to free him from himself.

Eight or ten years of study had led Adams to think he might use the century 1150-1250...as the unity from which he might measure motion down to his own time, without assuming anything as true or untrue, except relation...He began a volume which he mentally knew as 'Mt. St. Michel and Chartres: A Study in Thirteenth-Century Unity.' From that point, he proposed to fix a position for himself which he could label 'The Education of Henry Adams: A Study in Twentieth-Century Multiplicity.'

(Education, 1117)

Adams intended to use the force that had lurked on the edges of his eighteenth-century childhood to symbolize the new age. Adams, the child of an alien century, who "got lost in the study of the game of life and never got to play it" did manage to fix a point in history from which he could construct an identity which could be replicated in print. Taken together, Mt. St. Michel and the Education move the reader from a world impelled by God and his angels to a realm created by Henry Adams and modern science. Like Nietzsche, the acrobat from whom he stole his metaphor, Adams may have felt like "an acrobat with a dwarf on his
back, crossing a chasm on a slack rope, and commonly
breaking his neck," but his book paves the way toward a new
order of things, an order that lies beyond the perilous seas
of introspection in the realm of sense.

Late in the Education, Adams tells us that he is
writing in part because since "every man must bear his own
universe" he has decided to tell his readers how he bore
his. If there is a unifying thread in the Education, it is
in the idea of education itself. Adams is using the word in
its Latin sense, as the process which leads men out of
themselves and into communion with other human beings. Adams
assumed in youth that education lay all around him, and was
merely waiting to be claimed. By the time he wrote the
Education, he understood that the paths of reason do not
lead to the palace of wisdom. Abelard and Scotus and Ockham
had ensured that through philosophic doctrines that struck
at the heart of the ideal of community founded on a language
that contained signs of the infinite. As we move through the
chapters of the Education and the word "education" acquires
its series of altered significances, Adams demonstrates the
impossibility of the very universal enlightenment he claims
to espouse in his Preface. At first, Education is an
awareness of colors and sounds. Then it becomes an awareness
of duality--the perception, for example, that life in Quincy
and life in Boston are irreconcilable. In each succeeding
chapter, Adams looks for education. He looks in Berlin and
Rome, and in Washington and London, and fails to find anything beyond insoluble dilemmas. In the course of the *Education*, the word "education" is thus emptied of meaning. If it comes to be synonymous with experience, with weighing and testing experience it is also synonymous with self-creation. Above all, it becomes synonymous with what Deleuze would call the quest for "nomadic thought." What Adams's eighteenth-century childhood had regarded as a static journey through fixed stations of learning had given way to a process of mental gymnastics. When Adams describes the mind poised over the abyss of the conception of the subconscious mind as a bicyclist engaged in the delicate act of balancing himself, he counts on us to remember that, several chapters earlier, he had idly remarked that "at the age of fifty Henry Adams learned to ride a bicycle." The mind in the new age, he observed, would have to jump. As Adams dismisses truth (*Education*, 932) and claims an identity as a "flotsam or jetsam of wreckage" in a dead world (*Education*, 938), he prepares his final voyage into a mode of being that is chaotic, but not discontinuous. Freed of the principle of the personal self, the deterritorialized being could range at will over whatever historical or geographic terrain he wanted, oblivious of boundaries, and contemptuous of the concepts of definition and analysis. Adams's final essays in historiography and the theory of
history prepare the way for a post-structuralist, if not a postmodern conception of history and of existence.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 4


3 Deleuze, Dialogues, 66.

4 Samuels, pp. 257-262. See also Letters, II, 407. Robert Louis Stevenson had also been adopted by the Ori, a fact which had offended the queen. Adams was careful to ask her permission to be initiated into the family. She responded by giving him a personal name.


6 Samuels, 334.

7 Quoted in Samuels, 336.


9 See for example Ernest Samuels, Henry Adams (Cambridge, 1989) 355.

10 Friedrich Nietzsche, Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche, ed. and trans. by Christopher Middleton (Chicago: U. of Chicago, 1969) 346-348. Burckhardt was alarmed by the letter, and took it to Franz Overbeck, who decided that the letters betrayed a "peculiar exaltation," and that "intervention" was necessary. Overbeck went to Turin, where Nietzsche’s landlady announced that "N. had gone out of his mind." Nietzsche was apparently proclaiming himself the "successor of the dead God," punctuating his claims with performances on the piano (Middleton, 351-355). Adams’s claims did not occasion such responses.

292


15 Steven Ozment, The Age of Reform, 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe (New Haven, 1980) 435. See also Ozment’s Reformation in the Cities (New Haven, 1975). My understanding of the effect of the Reformation is highly derivative of my reading of Professor Ozment’s work.

16 Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, 6-7.


19 Tindall, America: A Narrative History, 933.


22 Carlyle, 309-310.

23 See Janet Coleman, Ancient and Medieval Memories (Cambridge, 1992) 500-537.

Ockham’s anti-realist stance in *Ancient and Medieval Memories* (Cambridge, 1992) is also illuminating.


29 Rousseau, 28.

30 Rousseau, 31.

31 Rousseau, 155.


Thinking begins only when we have come to know that reason, glorified for centuries, is the most stiff-necked adversary of thought.¹

Martin Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche"

As we have seen, Henry Adams's self-consciousness about his role as an historian was present in his earliest letters from his student days in Berlin. His radical doubts about the possibilities for locating an adequate stance for narrating the past, along with his sense that traditional historiography belonged to the sphere of the dead languages, places him in the company of both modern and post-modern theorists. Adams seems always to have known that he was to be something both more and less than the Gibbon he sought to be, and that his chosen career of family historian would take him far beyond the progressive historians of his own day. In our study, the idea that Adams became progressively more convinced that such a thing as "history" did not and could not exist as long as we conceived of the past as recuperable or even a concrete entity has become a truism. The sense he shared with Marx, that "everything solid melts into air" is, of course, part of his stance as a self-conscious modernist. At the same time, Adams believed that he was a member of a long line of humanists. He found his

294
rightful antecedents in Swift and the "Battle of the Books," and in Erasmus and Machiavelli and Petrarch. Like them, Adams recognized the power of the historian's narrative for shaping present-day reality. He also shared with literary artists like Petrarch, and Spenser after him, the notion that the historian must provide the mirror in which the past is, if not recovered, at least conveniently deformed, for a contemporary audience. Adam's humanism as an historian is, as all of humanism has been, wedded to a theory of education. Adams recognized the necessary complicity between the historian's narrative and the university system he himself had brought back from Germany to the United States and its complicity, in turn with the mechanism of the State. The responsibility of the teacher of history in Adams's view was awesome.

A parent gives life, but as parent, gives no more. A murderer takes life, but his deed stops there. A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops. A teacher is expected to teach truth, and may perhaps flatter himself that he does so, if he stops with the alphabet or the multiplication table... A teacher must either treat history as a catalogue, a record, a romance; or as an evolution and whether he affirms or denies evolution, he falls into all the burning fagots of the pit. He makes of his scholars either priests or atheists, plutocrats or socialists, judges or anarchists, almost in spite of himself. In essence incoherent and immoral, history had either to be taught as such—or falsified.

(Education, 994)
Adams, who "respected neither history nor method" had found himself caught up in Harvard's attempts at educational reform in the 1870s, and "he imposed Germany"—by which he meant German historical method—"on his scholars with a heavy hand...but he sometimes doubted whether they should be grateful." For Adams, "history is a tangled skein that one may take up at any point and break when one has unravelled enough; but complexity precedes evolution. Pteraspis grins horribly from the closed entrance" (Education, 996-998). The shark of subjectivity that threatens the world in the Education threatens the university system in Adams's historical essays in its thirst for more worlds to devour and in its unconscious and, hence, unchecked quest for power. He wrote his brother Brooks that "the teaching profession is, like the church and the bankers, a vested interest. And the historians will fall on anyone who threatens their stock in trade quite as virulently as do the bankers on the silver men" (Degradation, 97). Though Adams "quitted the university" in 1877, his certainty about the necessity of some kind of educational reform endured, as the title of the Education, and the historical addresses from 1894 and afterward suggest. Adams had seen the Church's pastoral power as a positive force in the Middle Ages. To see it secularized and wedded to the modern state was disturbing, for, in Adams's eyes, the modern state exerted the same pastoral force over the citizen through the agency
of state-sponsored education that the catechism had exerted in an earlier age. Unlike the medieval Church, however, the modern state with its ties to the enlightenment project, could claim only the quest for a great society as its aims. It had no capacity to mediate between the individual and eternity.

In 1894 as an "absent President" of the American Historical Society, Henry Adams discussed the necessity of devising a science of history that would "reduce history under a law as clear as the laws which govern the material world," and which would bring "order and the chaos" and transform "the darkness into light." Recalling the "astonishing influence" of a "mere theorist" like Rousseau or a "reasoner" like Adam Smith or a "philosopher...like Darwin" Adams muses that the production of a "science of history" would be vastly more violent in its effects than the dissensions roused by anyone or by all three of these great men" (Degradation, 127). The address, which was read by some nameless simulacrum of Adams, had already internalized a condition of radical doubt about the possibility of narrating a linear version of the past, and had, as we have seen, lost faith in scientific history even before he finished his History of the United States. At the same time, while he believed that the shape of historical narrative in the future would not be linear or factual or
"scientific," his language in "The Tendency of History" is still that of the enlightenment historiographers.

The world is made up of a few immense forces, each with an organization that corresponds with its strength. The church stands first...and cannot accept any science of history, because science by its definition must exclude the idea of a personal and active providence. The state stands next; and the hostility of the state would be assured toward any system or science that might not strengthen its arm. Property is growing more and more timid, and looks with extreme jealousy on any new idea that might weaken vested rights. Labor is growing more and more self-confident and looks with contempt on all theories that do not support its own. Yet we cannot conceive of a history that would not...affect all these vast social forces.

(Degradation, 129)

Because he was aware of the political force inherent in the narrative of history, Adams saw that in creating the text of "history" we are agreeing on at least a temporary shape for cultural identity. Thus, just as Adams believed that "in biography we are taking life," and that in autobiography we commit suicide, in writing history we drain the essential life of the world, and replace it with a kind of embalming fluid of interpretation. The historian's narrative at its best threatens the fabric of received systems of value and knowledge by forcing renewal upon them.

A science cannot be played with. In an hypothesis is advanced that obviously brings into a direct sequence of cause and effect all the phenomena of human history, we accept it, and if we accept
it we must teach it. The mere fact that it overthrows social organizations affects our attitude...we must follow the new light no matter where it leads...Even if we, like Galileo, should be obliged by the religious or secular authority to recant and repudiate our science, we should still have to say, as he did in secret if not in public, "E pur si muove.'

(Degradation, 131)

Adams's complaint about the historians of his generation was that they tended to fall back on the old illusions of continuity and sequence, rather than attempting to articulate and analyze the new ground of what Heidegger would soon define as a rejection of the idea of being as a ground for existence. If Petrarch's account of his ascent of Mt. Ventoux records a break between the medieval and modern worlds, one in which the religious category of conversion is superimposed on a new consciousness of a secularized nature from which the subject feels alienated, Adams occupies another crack between worlds. In his late essays, Adams engages in a ritualized writing of enlightenment history, but he intentionally empties them of the enlightenment's guiding ideas and justifications, thus demonstrating the exhaustion of his own faith in reason and in the power of the individual to find a generalized meaning through the study of the fragments of the past. "History," like Petrarch's pilgrimage to the inaccessible mountain, has become a hollow shell or fragment in which the historian, to borrow Blumenberg's language, "reoccupies formal systems of
positions" only to radicalize, parody, and transform them. The "meaning" in history thus consists only in establishing a subjective connection with the past through interpretation. It has nothing to do with facts or chronology.

Part of Adams's point is made by his physical absence. Adams was in Guadalajara when his address was delivered elsewhere, by someone else. Through his absence Adams suggests that the historian and the university system must be purified of the mystique of what Marx called the "cult of personality" if they are to be of real service. His sense of his power over the students he taught at Harvard and of the damage he did them in making them "priests or atheists," "plutocrats or socialists" haunted him. Thus he chooses to be absent as a personal self not only in this address, but explicitly in the "Rule of Phase" and "Letter to American Teachers of History." Reader and audience alike, confronted on the one hand with a text, and on the other with speech articulated by some nameless Not Adams are forced to deal with the fragile vessel of words, not the manikin who articulates them. Part of the explicit construction and deconstruction of a self in Mt. St. Michel and Chartres and the Education seems to have been accomplished with the terrible experience of writing and teaching in mind. Adams's awareness of the teacher's power over language recalls his model Augustine's De Magistro, with its haunting reminder
that, since "speaking itself is a sign," there is "absolutely nothing which can be taught without signs." For Augustine, of course, the danger was that the teacher would draw attention to himself or his own words and point the student away from the "universals of which we can have knowledge [if] we do not listen to anyone speaking and making sounds outside ourselves." These "universals" were available only when we "listen to Truth which presides over our minds within us," through the agency of "our real Teacher who is said to dwell in the inner man." When the teachers have expounded by means of words all the disciplines which they profess to teach, the disciplines also of virtue and wisdom, then their pupils take thought within themselves whether what they have told is true, looking to the inward truth...And when they find inwardly that what they have been told is true they praise their teachers, not knowing that they really praise not teachers but learned men if the teachers really know what they express in words. Men are wrong when they call these teachers who are not. But because...there is no interval between the moment of speaking and the moment of knowing, and because they inwardly learn immediately after the speaker has given his admonition, they suppose that they have taught in an external fashion by him who gave the admonition.

For Augustine, the rightly motivated teacher, while a mere simulacrum of the great original provided by Christ, is at least an agent of truth who can point his students toward the mind's road to God. Adams had a longing for universals,
which seems in some finite moments—as when he wrote his "Prayer to the Virgin," to have merged with a faith in their existence. Nevertheless, as educator and historian he is a thoroughgoing nominalist to the end, though he maintains that he is an Augustinian. Adams sought to subvert the historian's stance as a secularized priest, and his masquerade as a purveyor of scientific truth.

Adams believed that the members of the Historical Association of the future would have to deal with the radical doubt about both pedagogy and history that had assailed him, and that its members, would, in the "span of a century" be "torn by some such dilemma." Caught up in his apocalyptic vision, Adams wrote of a coming "crisis" in the university, the "shadow" of which has "cast itself on me both as a teacher and a writer," he says, and "kept me silent." Despite this characteristic disclaimer, Adams did not remain silent, and, as we know, his later "fictional" works, from Mt. St. Michel to "The Rule of Phase" attempt to address the questions that have since been raised by Heidegger's modernist critique of the possibilities of language, and by modernist and postmodernist theorists as disparate as Althusser, Adorno, and Deleuze.

Complicating our vision of Adam's progress as an historian is the fascination with Marx that antedates his writing of his autobiography. Though he never actually called himself a Marxist historian, he approvingly
identifies his brother Brooks as one (Letters, V, 54).

Adams had become interested in Marxist theory as early as the 1880s, and the language and sensibility of his late work is increasingly Marxist in orientation. Adams owned a translation of Capital, the first part of which is annotated in his own hand, and which was published in London in 1887. Typically, in his 1910 "Letter to American Teachers of History," which is an attack on the Hegelian model of history, and which is the most Marxist of his essays, he does not mention Marx. In June of 1894, however, he wrote Charles Milnes Gaskell that, though he disagreed with Marx, Marx had taught him a great deal.

In despair, I've taken to reading history again...I have taken up the story of the greater world, the Roman Empire, which went so inexplicably to the devil before us. Socially I am quite of the Roman empire...Did you ever read Karl Marx? I think I never struck a book which taught me so much, and with which I disagreed so radically in conclusion. Anyway, these studies of morbid society are not so amusing as Petronius and Petrarch.

(Letters, V, 194-95)

Marx may not have been amusing, but Adams was writing his brother Brooks five years later for more information on the Marxist vision of history.

...try and find out for me what is the best statement of the Economical Theory of History in the works of Marks (sic.), Engels, and the socialists authorities. Of course I've read Marx--at least Capital--but I've not read Engels...I may find it very convenient to know
about socialist theories; they seem to be now on the verge of ousting all others except the pure capitalistic.

(Letters, V, 49)

Brooks responded by immediately sending Eduard Bernstein's Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie (1899). Within four days, Adams responded that "Bernstein is very much in my intellectual condition." What Adams means by that is, as usual, cryptic. Bernstein rejects the idea of a coming social cataclysm. For Adams, this means the "bankruptcy of the only idea that our time has produced." "The machine could run many centuries on that time schedule," he adds, while at the same time asserting that "the old rules of Peel’s time are now quite laid aside and abandoned. ...I have every day to reeducate myself, and try to forget all I was ever taught" (Letters, V, 56). More playfully—and cryptically—Adams says that Bernstein has taught him "what Hegelianism is."

I knew I was a Hegelian, but never knew what it was. Now I see that a Hegelian is one who agrees that every-body is right, and who acts as if everybody but himself were wrong. What a delightful idea—so German—that Karl Marx thought himself a Hegelian!" It is equal to Wagner’s philosophy.

(Letters, V, 57)

The language that describes a world moved by great unnameable cultural forces and which characterizes the Mt. St. Michel, the Education, the "Letter to American Teachers of History" and "The Rule of Phase" emerges for the first
time in these letters of the 1890s. Adams’s vision of the kingdom of force which permeates *The Education* may have been born as he claims in *The Education* at the Chicago Exhibition of 1893, but it was crystallized in his reading of Marx and Bernstein.

...the law of economy as the law of history is the only contribution that the socialists have made to my library of ideas, and I am curious to get their best statement. They are a droll set of plus que petits bourgeois, these socialists; but they have all the truth there is; that is, belief in themselves.

*(Letters, V, 55).*

Eleven years later, having completed his essay "The Rule of Phase Applied to History," the supposed third part of his autobiography, Adams wrote again to Charles Milnes Gaskell that he had been writing in the deeply pessimistic vein of Malthus and Marx and Schopenhauer.

Throughout all the thought of Germany, France and England, for there is no thought in America—runs a growing stream of pessimism which comes in a continuous current from Malthus and Karl Marx and Schopenhauer in our youth, and which we were taught to reject then, but which is openly preached now on all sides. Next week I sent you a little volume I have written about it, not for the improvement of humanity, but only to prod up my historical flock. They are all feeble-minded and should be all shut up in your asylums; but I know no way of telling them so...

*(Letters, VI, 316)*

Adams had already mourned the exhaustion of the autonomous self in *Mt. St. Michel and Chartres* and chronicled its
demise in the Education when he wrote the "Rule of Phase Applied to History" in 1909. He was sending Gaskell a copy of this along with "A Letter to American Teachers of History."

In these late essays, Adams claimed to have written a sequel to his autobiography, one in which the individual as a thinking thing has been supplanted as the focus of study. No entity that could be described as an individual is present at all in the late essays. There is only the problem of blind force, and its implications for mankind. "The Rule of Phase" is an overt rejection of the powers of reason and of the principle of identity. "Reason," Adams writes, "can be only another phase of the energy earlier known as Instinct or Intuition" (Degradation, 192).

From the beginnings of philosophy and religion, the thinker was taught by the mere act of thinking, to take for granted that his mind was the highest energy of nature. Society still believes it, as asserts its supremacy, on no other ground, with a sustained force which is the chief theme of history, and which showed no sign of relaxation until attacked in the eighteenth century in its theological or supernatural outposts. Society must still continue to act on it, as the Platonist, the Stoic, and the Christian did, for the obvious reason that it was and is their only motive for existence—their solitary title to their identity. (Degradation, 207)

Adams's "little volume" on the "Rule of Phase" is, in reality, a meditation on subjectivity and an attack on
philosophic idealism that is properly seen as his response on the one hand to his belief that a modernist philosophy of history was needed. On the other hand, he sought to articulate the sense, one which he felt he shared with Schopenhauer, von Hartmann, and Nietzsche, that any credible philosophy of history must reconcile the kingdom of force and the kingdom of mind. In doing so, it would "threaten human history with fantastic revolution." (Degradation, 196).

In his prefatory letter to the larger "Letter to American Teachers of History" Adams explains his choice of the epistolary form as his vehicle for his own forays in his personal version a new science of man.

If I call this volume a letter it is only because that literary form affects to be more colloquial and more familiar than the usual scientific treatise; but such letters never require a response, even when they invite one, and in the present case, the subject of the letter involves a problem which will certainly exceed the limits of a life already far advanced, so that is solution, if a solution is possible will have to be reached by a new generation. (Degradation, 138-39)

Adams echoes his model Petrarch, who affected the use of letters even when they were ostensibly addressed to the dead in order to establish a more "familiar" ground with his audience. The letter conjures the idea of absent presences on both the part of the recipient and the audience. The
letter--speech and gesture translated into the written word by a speaker whom the reader contacts only in imagination--provides a kind of ghostly company for the solitary Adams and for his solitary reader. To deepen our sense of puzzlement about Adams's reforming mission, he claims that the essay is not to be published, but is instead a document "unofficial and personal". His reasoning he says, is that "touching as it does some of the most delicate relations of University Instruction in rival departments, the book has too much the air of provoking controversy."

I do not know that controversy would do harm, but I see nothing to be gained by provoking it. For the moment, the problem is chiefly one of technical instruction; of grouping departments; at most, of hierarchy in the sciences. Some day, it may become a question whether one department, or another, is to impose on the university a final law of instruction; but, for the present, it is a domestic matter, to be settled at home before inviting the world to interfere. Therefore the volume will not be published, or offered for sale, or sent to the press for notice.

(Degradation, 137-38)

Though Adams claims to despise the power vested in the university and in historians, he nevertheless pens his ruminations on reconceptualizing both pedagogy and historiography for an elite audience made up of his fellow men of letters. He addresses a group that is not very different than the audience Petrarch addresses in his letters and treatises. Unlike Petrarch, however, Adams sees
himself not as an anchor for history both past and present, but rather a sort of floating consciousness. He desires no response, and assumes his impotence as a reformer because of his own uncertainty about his motives and his aims.

For the same reason, the volume needs no acknowledgement. Unless the questions which it raises or suggests seem to you so personal as to need action, you have probably no other personal interest than that of avoiding the discussion altogether. Few of us are required to look ten, or twenty years, or a whole generation ahead to realize what will then be the relation of history to physics or physiology, and even if we make the attempt, we are met at the outset by the difficulty of allowing for our personal error, which is, in so delicate a calculation, an element of the first importance. Commonly, our error takes the form of inertia, and is more or less constant and calculable. For myself, the preference of movement over inertia is decided. The risk of error in changing a long-established course seems always greater to me than the chance of correction, unless the elements are known more exactly than is possible in human affairs; but the need of determining these elements is all the greater on that account; and this volume is only a first experiment toward calculating their past, present, and future values.

(Degradation, 138)

Adams's indication that the "Letter" is yet another sequel to his autobiography is marked by the date he assigns it. He dates the "Letter" "16 February, 1910," the birthday of yet another fictional self. Like the Education, this is a text that records another version of self. This time, the self
has no name but is a mere troublesome and truncated self-consciousness, referred to as "the historian" or "the unscientific student." The "Letter" records Adams's embrace of philosophic vitalism.

Since the Church had lost its authority the historian's field had shrunk into narrow limits of rigorously human action; but...within those limits he was clear that the energy with which history had to deal could not be reduced directly to a mechanical or a physico-chemical process. He was therefore either obliged to deny that social energy was an energy at all, or to assert that it was an energy independent of physical laws. Yet how could he deny that social energy was a true form of energy when he had no reason for existence, as professor, except to describe and discuss its acts? He could neither doubt nor dispute its existence without putting an end to his own; and therefore he was of necessity a Vitalist, or adherent of the doctrine that Vital Energy was independent of mechanical law. Vitalists are of many kinds.

(Degradation, 146)

Adams wants to know what thought is and what the subject that produces it is, and he proposes to find out not by turning inward, as his models Augustine and Petrarch had, but by turning outward, to a study of the problem of entropy (Degradation, 142). The late Adams, unlike the Adams of the 1850s, regards thought as an "enfeebled function of will."

The historian is required either expressly to assert or surreptitiously to assume...that the while function of nature has been the ultimate production
of this one-sided consciousness,—this amputated Intelligence,—this degraded Act, this truncated Will. As the function of the crystal is to produce the order of its cleavage, and that of the rose, the beauty of its flower, and that of the peacock the splendors of its tail, and as, except for these purposes neither crystal, nor rose, nor peacock has as much human interest as a thistle or a maggot, so the function of man is, to the historian, the production of Thought; but if all the other sciences affirm that not Thought but Instinct is the potential of Vital Energy, and if the beauties of Thought—shown in the intuitions of artistic genius,—are to be taken for last traces of an instinct now wholly dead or dying, nothing remains for the historian to describe or develop except the history of a more or less mechanic dissolution.

(Degradation, 209)

Adams’s critique of identity anticipates Louis Althusser’s view of the problem of subjectivity in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." Althusser defines the "superstructure" of a society as a spatial metaphor which consists of two sections—the political-legal (law and the State); and ideology (the ethical, legal, and political ideologies). Ideological state apparatuses, on the other hand, are those "realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institutions." Althusser’s definition includes lists of ISA’s that encompass the dimensions of religious, educational, familial, political and cultural life. His treatment of the evolution of these structures is quite similar to Adams’s discussion of them in his 1910 analysis.
of the problem facing the modern historian. Ideology, according to Althusser, has no history. Like Adams’s vision of reason and thought, it is an "imaginary construction whose status is exactly like the theoretical status of dream among writers before Freud." Ideology for Althusser is "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence." Individuals, in Althusser’s view, believe in God, Duty and Justice because they "live in an ideological representation of ideology." Modern subjects conceive of themselves as living in the context of their ideology. More radically, Althusser claims that "there is no ideology except by the subject and for its subjects." The category of the subject—which Althusser equates with the soul—is the constitutive category of all ideology.

"...the category of the subject is only constitutive of all ideology insofar as all ideology has the function (which defines it) of ‘constituting’ concrete individuals as subjects."  

Personal identity, then is determined by the ideological matrix which is generated by the ideological state apparatus which, solipsistically, is generated by the subject itself. For Althusser, St. Paul’s claim that it is in the Logos that we "live and move and have our being" is in reality an affirmation that it is in ideology that we live and move and have our names and our illusion of identity.
Seen in this light, some of Adams's initial revelations of the new view of the human past that accompanied his initial work on Tahiti acquire a variant significance. Adams sent "The Tendency of History" to the members of the American Historical Association as a "communication" from the vantage point of his presidency of the Association. In his "regret" for his "constant absence" epitomized in the epistolary mode and captured in his actual physical absence, Adams manages at least to escape the confines of the personal self. In fact, Adams's absence is an extension of his claim that he had died with the publication of his history, and an announcement that he intended to remain alienated from the members of his profession. The "Letter to the American Teachers' of History" and "The Rule of Phase" vacate, reoccupy, and redefine the spaces of identity in the same way that Adams's assertions about teaching and history vacate and reoccupy the idea of the historical past.

Sixteen years later, he presented another address, this time in a letter—the "Letter to American Teachers of History"—which developed the theories that had been present in embryo in the "Tendency." With "The Rule of Phase," the two essays completed the autobiographical efforts that had occupied Adams since the Tahiti. He hoped that they would complete his textual self-transformation from historian to theorist.
Adams's contact with philosophic vitalism, mediated by his reading of Henri Bergson, colors these last essays. Bergson, whom he later met and entertained at his salon in Washington, offered an affirmation for Adams's own sense, gleaned in Tahiti, that there were other ways of organizing self and community than through the idea of consciousness, historical sense, and personal identity.

...I have been amusing myself with a fable for instructors of history. I've a notion of printing a Letter to Professors. Pure malice! but History will die if not irritated. The only service I can do to my profession is to serve as a flea. I like best Bergson's frank surrender to the superiority of the Instinct over Intellect. You know how I have preached that principle, and how I have studied the facts of it. In fact, I wrote a whole volume--called my Education--which no one ever saw, and which you must some day look into,--borrow William James's copy, in hopes that he may have marginally noted his contempt for me,--in order to recall how Education may be shown to consist in following the intuitions of Instinct. Lobe calls it 'Tropism,' I believe, which means that a mother likes to nurse her own child.

(Letters, VI, 272)

Adams's conviction that the riches of existence lay in the realm of sense became progressively stronger. He wrote Albert Stanburrough Cook, a professor of English at Yale, that he had himself taken on a new identity as an emeritus, a "teacher of teachers," but that in his efforts to avoid overburdening his "students" he had "not even
published [his] books of late." He had aimed, in his privately circulated works, to refigure the shape of history.

The Chartres volume was the second in the series, and intended to fix the starting point, since I could not get enough material to illustrate primitive society, or the society of the seventh century B.C., as I would have liked. I wanted to show the intensity of the vital energy of a given time, and of course that intensity had to be stated in its two highest terms—religion and art. As our society stands, this way of presenting a subject can be felt only by a small number of persons. My idea is that the world outside—the so-called modern world—can only pervert and degrade the conceptions of the primitive instinct of art and feeling, and that our only chance is to accept the limited number of survivors...and to intensify the energy of feeling within that radiant center. In other words, I am a creature of our poor old calvinistic, St. Augustinian fathers, and am not afraid to carry out my logic to the rigorous end of regarding our present society, its ideals, and purposes, as dregs and fragments of some primitive, essential instinct now nearly lost. If you are curious to see the theory stated as official instruction, you have only to look over Bergson's 'Evolution Creatrice,'...The Tendencies of thought in Europe seem to me very strongly that way.

(Letters, VI, 357)

Of course, Adams had taught no students since 1877 in any conventional classroom, and his oft-proclaimed hopelessness about the profession of teaching and the state of historiography makes his remarks even more cryptic than they are ordinarily. There is, nevertheless, as there always is,
a coherence in Adams's sense of his place in the history of thought. Adams conceived of himself as a point of mediation in the history of self-construction in the west. He looks backward to the Stoics of the ancient world, to Scotus's statement of the problem of meaning in language, and to Ockham's nominalism. At the end of his life, he is at one with Nietzsche in his vision of an identity based on something other than consciousness and interiority, and his theorizing can be seen as a vital link between Bergson and Gilles Deleuze.

In his anti-Hegelian stance, Adams runs the danger that Francois Chatelet identifies in failing to take "our Plato"-Hegel--into account. Chatelet points out that Hegel "determined a horizon, a language, a code that we are still at the very heart of today. Hegel by this fact, is our Plato; the one who delimits...the theoretical possibilities of theory." Rejecting Hegel and the model of mind and consciousness as the locus of reality, Adams nevertheless revisits Hegel's hierarchy of value when he declares that his new model of history will look at art and religion as indices of culture. This was partly what Adams meant when he announced that he felt like Childe Roland. He had come to the Dark Tower only to find himself entrapped. Adams's final pessimism stems from his belief that the self is simultaneously the product and the victim of its ideologies. Adams cites Eduard Meyer's belief that "the whole mental
development of mankind has for its preliminary assumption, the existence of separate social groups."

'Above all, the weightiest instrument of men, Speech—which first makes the Man, and first makes possible the growth of our systematic Thought,—has not been a casual creation of individuals,... but has grown out of the common need of equals, bound together by common interests and regulated intercourse. But even the invention of tools... the settlement in Residence... are possible only within a Group; or, at least have meaning only so far as what has first and immediately benefitted one, becomes the property of the whole community.'

Following Meyer, Adams believes that "even the child is the creature of the State Organism, not of the Family." In Adams's view, the "social Organism... is the cause, creator, and end of the Man, who exists only as a passing Representative of it, without rights or functions except what it imposes" (Degradation, 260). For Adams, the dissolution of modern society, which leads it to entropy, is the process by which the "vital energy" of a society becomes focused on individual desires and capacities, rather than on the undifferentiated body of society. His hope for education is that "the departments of biology, sociology, and psychology" will find "some common formula" which will allow them to study the problem of "vital energies" and escape the replication of the second law of thermodynamics in social evolution— that is, the moment of the modern subject, when
the world has been divided into the spheres of infinite universes of individual mind.

That which formed a people, a unity, a block ends by becoming an agglomeration of individuals without cohesion, still held together for a time by its traditions and institutions. This is the phase when men, divided by their interests and aspirations, but no longer knowing how to govern themselves, ask to be directed in their smallest acts; and when the State exercises its absorbing influence. With the definitive loss of the old ideal, the race ends by entirely losing its soul; it becomes nothing more than a dust of isolated individuals, and returns to what it was at the start, --a crowd.13

The world of sense may be a new possibility, but it is not one that he can actively embrace. Adams is too enamored of the idea of absence, too much a part of the Platonic traditions that flower in Augustine and in Petrarch in a sense of inwardness and solitude so full that the subject knows social privation and loneliness only in the company of others.14 Adams's stance as historian, as biographer, and as autobiographer is mediated by his desire for the knowledge he lacks, for the people whose presence he conjures in letters, and for the escape from the sense of a duality of being that had haunted him since his student days in Berlin. What Adams seeks--with self-acknowledged futility--is a reversal of this conception of desire, and his motion away from his characteristic idealism finds an accidental echo in Gilles Deleuze.
In his collaborations with Felix Guattari, Deleuze performs the analogue in the realm of psychoanalysis and the linguistic field of semantics of Adams’s reoccupation and transformation of the normative terms and forms of historiography and autobiography. In Anti-Oedipus and A Thousand Plateaus, the two volumes of Capitalism and Schizophrenia Deleuze and Guattari reverse our sense of the rational order of things, as well as our internalized notion of the nature of desire. In these works, desiring machines replace Adams’s depiction of the perpetually ravenous subject of modernity which was, in turn, his altered version of the Cartesian cogito. Desiring machines, like Adams’s pteraspis, are involved in all human processes, and they are constantly engaged in the production of other desires: "Desire constantly couples continuous flows and partial objects that are by nature fragmentary and fragmented. Desire causes the current to flow, itself flows in turn, and breaks the flows." Desire becomes diseased in Deleuze, as it does in Adams, only when it becomes self-reflexive; that is, when the economy of the individual and the personal self displaces that of the group. In this configuration, the individuated self is not a goal to be attained, but a fate to escape. Thus Deleuze and Guattari call the schizophrenic the "universal producer" because he has managed to escape the disease inherent in existence as an isolated ego, and "the sole thing that is divine is the nature of an energy of
disjunctions. Deleuze and Guattari invoke Beckett's *The Unnamable* as the exemplar of the schizoid's dilemma.

The ego, however is like daddy-mommy: the schizo has long since ceased to believe in it. He is somewhere else, beyond or behind, or below these problems, rather than immersed in them... There are those who will maintain that the schizo is incapable of uttering the word 'I,' and that we must restore his ability to utter this hallowed word. All of which the schizo sums up by saying: they're fucking me over again; 'I won't say 'I' any more, I'll never utter that word again, it's just too damn stupid. Every time I hear it, I'll use the third person instead, if I happen to remember to. If it amuses them. And it won't make one bit of difference.

The problem with versions of Platonic desire for Deleuze is that from the moment we align desire with acquisition by defining it as "absence" or "lack" we "make desire an idealistic (dialectical, nihilistical) conception" that exists in pure mind as something that has only a "psychic reality" and thus leaves us perpetually dissatisfied. The object of desire in Platonic terms is never present, and never really available, and thus it is always fantastical or illusory. In the world of sense, desire produces, and its products are real.

Deleuze is far from believing that he is alone in conceiving of the world in these terms. Rather, he proposes an entire alternative history of philosophy which exemplifies "expressionism" rather than subjectivity, and which leads from the Stoics to the nominalists to Leibniz,
Spinoza, Hume, Nietzsche, and Bergson. For Deleuze the fascination with each of these philosophers lies in their emphasis on man's capacity to order his reality through reference to the world outside the self. For example, Bergson's belief that "we become conscious of an act sui generis by which we detach ourselves from the present in order to replace ourselves, first in the past in general, then in a certain region of the past—a work of adjustment, something like the focusing of a camera" involves a belief that we "place ourselves at once in the past; we leap into the past" through a creative act of will and desire.

Most significant for our study of Adams is Deleuze's view of history which he explores with Felix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*. There, Deleuze proposes to replace what he calls the "arborescent" model of culture with one founded in the idea of the rhizome which connects and unites rather than creating divisions. The problem with notions of reality and of learning based on the image of the tree is that they are hierarchical.

The tree and root inspire a sad image of thought that is forever imitating the multiple on the basis of a centered or higher segmented unity.... Arborescent systems are hierarchical systems with centers of significance and subjectification, central automata like organized memories.

In such a model of thinking, memory is, as we have seen, specially privileged. Long-term memory, which traces the
branches of family trees, and the versions of the shared past of civilizations is the real muse of western concepts of history. And history is what imprisons Quentin Compson, and ultimately Henry Adams, who, as we have seen, could not escape his identity as an Adams even in Tahiti. Deleuze proposes a "de-centered," transpersonal vision of history, in which short-term memory is privileged over long-term memory precisely because one of the characteristics of short-term memory is that it "includes forgetting as a process."

In the hierarchical models of thought that have dominated western culture's conceptions of itself, the idea of the personal self is as privileged as the memory that makes unified conceptions of self possible. The individual, after all, must engage in ordering the hierarchy of his world. He must engage in interpreting the tasks of the composite cultural memory we accept as history. Most privileged of all is the secularized priesthood of historians and literary artists who choose to make their visions of the past accessible to the community, and who bind the community together through the fruits of their long-term memory as they are preserved in writing—that living symbol of our alienation from one another. The literary artist, the historian, the philosopher are each, in their several ways, what Deleuze, following Rosenstiehl and Petitot, calls the "universal friend," mediating between the
members of his audience through the agency of the text, while at the same time announcing a necessary absence.

Who is the friend of humankind? Is it the philo-sopher as he appears in classical thought, even if he is an aborted unity that makes itself felt only through absence or subjectivity, saying all the while I know nothing, I am nothing. Thus the authors [Deleuze and Guattari] speak of dictatorship theorems. Such is indeed the principle of root-trees, or their outcome: the radicle solution, the structure of Power.2

But the universal friend does not unite; rather, he separates, because he can only communicate with his audience through absence. Adams’s celebrated absences from his texts and from scheduled public appearances alike dramatize his own prescient sense that language could resonate only in the silences of the individual consciousness. For Adams, the idea that the "whole of the function of nature has been the ultimate production of this one-sided Consciousness,--this Degraded Act, this truncated Will,...that the function of man is, to the historian the production of thought" (Degradation, p. 205) was a deforming one, and, as he recognized, it lay at the heart of the western sense of the order of things.

Adams thus moves toward what Deleuze called a "nomadology" of thought--the opposite of a history--in which history comes to encompass what neither it nor the artifact of the book have ever accomplished--the world outside the perceiving consciousness.
History has never comprehended nomadism, the book has never comprehended the outside. The State as the model for the book and for thought has a long history: logos, the philosopher-king, the transcendence of the Idea, the interiority of the concept, the republic of minds, the court of reason, the functionaries of thought, man as legislator and subject. The State's pretensions to be a world order, and to root man. The war machine's relation to an outside is not another 'model;' it is an assemblage that makes thought itself nomadic, and the book a working part in every mobile machine, a stem for a rhizome (Kleist and Kafka against Goethe). ²³

Henry Adams's decision to erase himself through representing himself acquires its real significance when we consider his critique of history and historiography. His "suicide in print," was part of his embrace of vitalism; it was his way of naming a future that was not circumscribed by the personal self and its history. His "failure" was that he concluded that he could only point the way toward the alternative selves and the alternative history of the future.

By rights, Henry Adams should have been a high modernist, claiming for himself the capacities for engendering order that would later be claimed by a William Faulkner or a Gertrude Stein as artist. Instead, Adams, like his haunting image of the caterpillar, remains suspended between the textual world where he refuses to say "I," and the epistolary world where he perpetually constitutes a
community founded in absence, but ordered and connected by his own modernist imagination. Adams is hamstrung between an instinctive high modernism, and a prescient groping toward the postmodern realm of Warhol's diaries, which were dictated moment by moment over the electronic fields provided by the telephone. In his discussion of postmodernism, Fredric Jameson notes that postmodernism differs from high modernism in that the former is possessed of a "new kind of flatness or depthlessness." For Jameson, this kind of "death of the world of appearances" is no longer a matter of content, but rather "of some more fundamental mutation both in the object world itself--now become a set of texts or simulacra--and in the disposition of the subject." Adams's high modernist vision of a "crisis in the university--"a crisis of mind that was invented and interpreted by "men of letters"--is borne out in the postmodern outpourings of Deleuze and Warhol, but it is interpreted by the modernism of Adorno and Jameson, who still lend narrative coherence and a conventional linguistic shape to the absent selves and the absent order that both mourn.

From the nominalists to Petrarch, and from Petrarch to the Reformation, to Descartes and Pascal, and to Nietzsche and Bergson, Adams traces the emergence and disappearance of the subject of modernity and the history without which the individual subject has no meaning. Amid the bankruptcy of
his vision of the Cartesian and Hegelian models of mind, he experiments with a new world, one founded on sense and desire which moves us toward the neo-Scholasticism of Deleuze, the late twentieth century and postmodernism. That his quest ends in questionings is perhaps the mark of the true nomad.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 5


2 See Degradation, 245.

3 Blumenberg, Legitimacy of the Modern Age, 342.


5 Augustine, De Magistro, 95.

6 Augustine, 100.


8 Althusser, "ISA," 159.

9 Althusser, "ISA," 170.

10 Althusser, "ISA," 171.


12 Eduard Meyer, quoted in Adams, Degradation, 259-60.


14 See Petrarch, Vita Solitaria, 314. Petrarch writes that "I should assert that I was always at leisure except in my leisure, always lonely except when alone."


16 Deleuze, Anti-Oedipus, 7-13.

17 Deleuze, Anti-Oedipus, 23.


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VITA

If this is "only incidentally" a dissertation by Henry Adams, it was also only accidentally written by Martha Moseley Regalis, who was born somewhere in upstate South Carolina, and earned a B.A. in English and Spanish at Clemson University, and an M.A. in English at Louisiana State University. She wrote this dissertation, which has become yet another simulacrum of Henry Adams, while developing and experiencing experimental inter-disciplinary courses on the entwined concepts of personal identity and subjectivity with the extraordinary students at The North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics, in Durham, North Carolina, and at The Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy in Aurora, Illinois, where she designs and implements programs in integrated studies. Ms. Regalis lives outside Chicago and continues to pursue the paths of nomad thought. She is currently exploring Ockhamist views of language and power in Machiavelli's Mandragola, Rojas' Celestina, and Van Brugh's The Relapse. She is also engaged in examining versions of subjectivity and self-consciousness in Petrarch and Christine de Pizan.

338
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