A “lively inward revolution”:
The flâneur, realism and revolution
in *L’ Éducation Sentimentale*
and *The Princess Casamassima*

*Sounds of Paris*

Recalling the months that he spent writing *The American* in Paris in 1877 Henry James records in his preface to that novel the sounds and the spectacle outside his apartment window:

> My windows looked into the Rue de Luxembourg – since then meagrely re-named Rue Cambon – and the particular light Parisian click of the small cab-horse on the clear asphalt, with its sharpness of detonation between the high houses, makes for the faded page today a sort of interlineations of sound. This sound rises to a martial clatter at the moment a troop of cuirassiers charges down the narrow street, each morning to file, directly opposite my house, through the plain portal of the barracks occupying part of the vast domain attached in a rearward manner to one of the Ministères that front on the Place Vendôme … (James 1984b: 1058)

Listening as we read, we hear the dominant sounds of the Parisian scene. What is striking about this recollection is that the ‘interlineation’ of sounds that characterise the scene for James, even late in life, are martial. Before even the report of the mounted troops, the description of the clamour of the cab-horses’ hooves recall another, far more alarming sound. The “sharpness of detonation between the high houses” recalls a scene alternative to the Paris we are familiar with in James’s writings. Most writing concerning James’s representations of Paris concentrates upon the use that he makes of “the dreadful old tradition” of moral catastrophe, whether in *The American* or *The Ambassadors*. The sights and sounds of Paris, the pleasure capital of the nineteenth century, also though always provoke in James’s Parisian visitors recognition not just of
revolutions in the distant past but revolutions as ever present to the eye and the ear.

Lambert Strether provides the clearest example of James’s attentiveness to public history recorded in the memories and experience of the individual. Not only does Strether respond imaginatively to the Parisian history of revolutionary violence, he understands it as a dynamic force that continues to shape the everyday experience of city living. During his final interview with Mme de Vionnet he imagines how the sounds that he hears now outside her window, “the vague voice of Paris,” has sounded also on other nights:

Strether had all along been subject to sudden gusts of fancy in connexion with such matters as these – odd starts of the historic sense, suppositions and divinations with no warrant but their intensity. Thus and so, on the eve of the great recorded dates, the days and nights of revolution, the sounds had come in, the omens, the beginnings broken out. They were the smell of revolution, the smell of the public temper – or perhaps simply the smell of blood. (James 1999: 396)

Though the confusion of sound and smell emphasises that this is a fancy of Strether’s, an imaginative leap into the past, the attentive reader recognises that this other ghostly Paris is often present to Strether as a reminder both of personal and public history. Earlier in the novel James has Strether reflect on how the sights (and sites) of Paris stir his historic sense in an acute way. Strether, retreating into the public space of the Tuileries in the second book of *The Ambassadors*, and prompted by the vision of a “white-gaitered red-legged soldier,” recalls his earlier visits to Paris as a young man: “The palace was gone, Strether remembered the palace; and when he gazed into the irremediable void of its site the historic sense in him might have been freely at play – the play under which in Paris indeed it so often winces like a touched nerve.” (James 1999: 73) The sharp pain that Strether feels in the ghostly shadow of the Palace raises the spectre of both a younger Strether, who saw the palace, and the palace itself destroyed by the retreating communards in 1871.

The experience of Strether is that of James himself. As a visitor to Paris over the course of a lifetime he did not escape the lesson that the spaces of the city offered; his recollections in the preface to *The American* recall the years when he immersed
himself in a Paris still reeling from the bloody events of the siege of Paris and the suppression of the communards by French troops. For James, as for Hyacinth Robinson, Paris, “the most brilliant city in the world” is also “the most blood stained.” (James 1987: 380). In *The Princess Casamassima* James loads this observation by Hyacinth with ironies, ironies that I will examine below. Those ironies are potent precisely because the historic sense is at play. These ironies are consequent on James’s representation of urban experience and the constituents of urban identities.

Mark Seltzer has argued that James, in both his subject and his method, foregrounds the relationship between seeing and power in *The Princess Casamassima* (Seltzer 1984: 40). For Seltzer it is in the “rigorous continuity established in James’s novels between seeing, knowing, and exercising power that the politics of the Jamesian text appears.” (Seltzer 1984: 57); this continuity gives the lie to any disavowal by James of the coerciveness of his narrative strategies. This argument follows Fredric Jameson in critiquing James’s realist method as not simply mimicking the logic of the hegemonic forces but contributing to their very constitution and maintenance (Jameson 1981). In response to this work John Carlos Rowe has rightly identified the subtlety of James’s deconstruction of nineteenth century theatricality in the novel, as well as emphasising how James in *The Princess Casamassima* disrupts what Rowe calls the “rhetoric of realism” (Rowe 1984: 180). Neither Jameson, nor Seltzer, nor Rowe sufficiently account, I think, for what is one of its most striking features: its depiction of urban experience through walking the streets of Paris and London.

Though previous critics of the novel agree at least on the importance of James’s evocations of city spaces in *The Princess Casamassima*, they do not address the complexity of his use of these spaces as historical texts, texts of education that Hyacinth learns to read on his bookbinder’s holiday, a kind of grand tour. City-experience as text was powerfully present for James, both in writing the novel and revising it for the New York edition. In the preface he recalls “walking the streets … for amusement, for acquisition,” recognising “possible stories, presentable figures” as they appear before him. (James 1984b: 1086) The strolling author, the teller of stories, is also a listener and a reader of “the more or less gothic text.” *The Princess Casamassima* records James’s revisions of previous narrative representations of the
city in his efforts to construct a model modern urban subjectivity for the artist.

Paris and revolution, Paris and the flâneur

Two ideas are central to the late nineteenth century image of Paris. The first is the idea of revolution, and the second the figure of the flâneur. Victor Hugo, writing an introduction to the book Paris-Guide in 1867, directly associates Paris with revolution. He contrasts Paris with other European cities and says that the supremacy of Paris is an enigma; Rome has majesty, Venice has beauty and Naples grace, while London has riches: “Qu’a donc Paris?” He answers “La révolution.” (Hugo 1967-70: 586) Paris is not only the site of revolutions past but is characterised as the site of a continuous revolution. Hugo was, as Christopher Prendergast notes, writing polemically from exile against Louis Napoleon’s regime but his rhetoric nonetheless sounds a dominant note in the representation of the city. (Prendergast 1992: 7-8) Paris was at once the world-city and a metonym for the idea of revolution.

Crucially, streets that have been the site of battle are also the scene of the artist’s encounter with the urban mass. The artist, in the guise of the flâneur, the strolling individual, confronts the urban sprawl, its multiplicity of spaces and faces, and forges a sovereign identity in acts of mastery over the spectacle afforded by the streets. (Ferguson 1994: 81) The individual writer’s relationship to the urban experience becomes the very basis of their art, and the dominant strategy of representation. Balzac’s Ferragus (1833), one of the trio of novels that became Histoire des Treize (1833-4), encapsulates this precisely, just as the novels grouped under the heading “Scènes de la vie Parisienne” in the Comédie Humaine do so in a more diffuse sense. The plot of Ferragus arises from the inquisitiveness of one passer-by for the life of a woman that he sees in the streets. Similar strategies can be recognised in Charles Dickens’ writings. Sketches by Boz (1836) and some of the key sections of David Copperfield (1850), lead the reader through London, marvelling at the spectacle of the streets, while simultaneously asserting a mastery over the multi-form spectacle. This flânerie implies mastery by the subject of a scene that threatens the very unity of that subject, and thus the realist artist realises a discursive
subject position for himself – and it is always him – in the
discourses of urban representation.

This identification of the flâneur and the artist lasts only for
a brief historical moment. What separates Balzac and Dickens
from Flaubert and James are the changes wrought on both the
material urban text and on the discourses of representation
concerning the urban. In France the results of the revolution of
1848, the rise of the second empire and Baron Haussman’s
modernizations are that the flâneur, and therefore the artist,
now bear a radically different relation to the urban
environment. In this altered urban landscape the solitary
stroller no longer commands the scene, the authority of the
artist-flâneur is revealed as a sham. This is one of the
apprehensions that drove Flaubert to his great stylistic efforts
in L’Éducation Sentimentale (1869).

Flaubert’s novel is a coruscating account of political quietism
and opportunism that charges Second Empire intellectuals with
self-seeking cowardice in the face of a regime based on political
violence. The novel identifies flânerie after 1848 as a form of
dispossession by urban networks of power, rather than of
possession of city territories. What had been the dominant
narrative strategy of the urban realist novel is inadequate when
confronted by rival and more powerful ‘city’ representations of
class and mass social movements, and the figure of the artist it
enshrined is revealed as hopelessly compromised.

In Flaubert’s novel Frédéric Moreau’s wanderings indicate
that the artist-flâneur has become a figure of failure, unable to
place himself in the modern city and in history. This is marked
in the scene when he awaits Madame Arnoux’s possible
adulterous visit to the love nest he has rented in the Rue
Tronchet. She does not appear and Frédéric lingers in the street
waiting for her. Hearing unusual loud noises from behind the
Madeleine he witnesses a riot suppressed by troops; but he is
unable to think of anything except Madame Arnoux. The
flâneur’s aloofness has become a pathetic self-indulgence,
shallow and blind to the actual spectacle of street life.

Flaubert’s style itself directs us to the failure of the flâneur
as a narrative strategy. The deadpan narration of events from
Frédéric’s point of view is radically discontinuous. At the
beginning of book three Frédéric is awoken by sounds of
battle and goes out into the streets, the very streets, those
around the Madeleine and the Champs Elysées, that James
later has Hyacinth walk. The narration of the street scene is dominated by unexpected events given no explanation and by images that are ironically incongruous. Flaubert writes:

Suddenly out of an alley, there rushed a tall, pale young man, with black hair hanging down over his shoulders, and wearing a sort of singlet with coloured dots. He was carrying a long infantry musket and running along on tiptoe, looking as tense as a sleepwalker and as lithe as a tiger. (Flaubert 1964: 285)

This vision retains the jumble of the events without any suggestion that Frédéric can make sense of them. These two sentences contrast ironically what Frédéric can see – literally spots, the polka dot vest – and the possible descriptive power of the narrative; the combination of the images of the sleepwalker and tiger in the description of the young man is surely beyond Frédéric. The subsequent paragraphs continue to highlight ironically the failure of the flâneur to master the scene. In writing the “sentimental history” of his generation Flaubert eviscerates the dominant trope for the artist in the realist novel. Frédéric’s emptiness and Flaubert’s ironic presentation of him contrast with James’s over-determination of Hyacinth Robinson.

The figure of the flâneur-artist is characterised by possession of a secret. Baudelaire describes the perfect flâneur as the “passionate spectator,” someone who feels immense joy in the crowd: “To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world – such are a few of the slightest pleasures of those independent, impatient impartial natures … The spectator is a prince who everywhere rejoices in his incognito.” (Baudelaire 1964: 9) The secret of this flâneur is his identity and his pleasure in the spectacle of the crowd. For Benjamin though the flâneur-artist’s secret is his self-conscious performance of his artistic work in the streets, a performance that attempts to cloak his place in the dominant productive relations.

A further role can be suggested for this spectator with a secret. Just as Benjamin notes that the flâneur is a prototype for the detective, so he is also an early version of the secret agent, the spy, or the underground revolutionary. The revolutionary as a marginal figure leads a double life; simultaneously private, underground,
out of sight, and public. The secret of the revolutionary is the relation in which he stands to the existing social relations, and the threat of violence that this stance often, though not necessarily, implies. In *The Princess Casamassima* James employs this triptych of flâneur-artist-revolutionary, located in the figure of Hyacinth Robinson, to reveal the anxious complicities between narratives of the city, politics and art.

**Hyacinth the flâneur-artist-revolutionary**

Whether in London or Paris, Hyacinth Robinson is characterised as a stroller. He takes, in James’s words, “interminable, restless, melancholy, moody, yet all-observant strolls through London.” (James 1987: 102) His flânerie is inseparable from two of his other characteristics; the first is his social exclusion, and the second is his identity as an artist. An important description of each of these qualities occurs when we learn that Hyacinth likes to go to Hyde Park and observe the crush; that is to observe the spectacle of late Victorian imperial finery as it self-consciously displayed itself. Hyacinth’s experience of these scenes is an exhaustive, imaginative one:

> He wanted to drive in every carriage, to mount on every horse, to feel, on his arm the hand of every pretty woman in the place. In the midst of this his sense was vivid that he belonged to the class whom the upper ten thousand, as they passed, didn’t so much as rest their eyes upon for a quarter of a second. They looked at Millicent, who was safe to be looked at anywhere, and was one of the handsomest girls in any company, but they only reminded him of the high human walls, the deep gulfs of tradition, the steep embankments of privilege and dense layers of stupidity, which fenced him off from social recognition. (James 1987: 164-5)

James closely identifies Hyacinth’s artistic sensibility with his sense of exclusion. Hyacinth is “a youth on whom nothing was lost” (James 1987: 164), a phrase which deliberately echoes James’s own description of the novelist in “The Art of Fiction” (James 1984a: 53). He feels he must “either suffer with the people … or he must apologise to others, as he sometimes came so near doing to himself, for the rich.” (James 1987: 165) He worries that “it might very well be his fate to be divided, to
the point of torture, to be split open by sympathies that pulled him in different ways ... and from the time he could remember was there not one half of him that seemed to be always playing tricks on the other, or getting snubs and pinches from it?” (165) This flâneur, this prince incognito, “the son of the recreant, sacrificial Lord Frederick” (167), feels himself far from the centre of the world. Here, early in the novel, James records some of the problems of the flâneur as he encounters the spectacle of the city. The evisceration of the artist-flâneur figure is recorded here in the schizophrenic self-division of Hyacinth. Later in the novel, when Hyacinth visits Paris, these problems are raised more acutely.

Before Hyacinth’s trip to Paris, at the close of book three, James has him intone the name of the city as though it were some magical talisman. Hyacinth’s response to the proposed trip though is inscrutable, as well it might be for what Paris comes to symbolise in the succeeding pages is not simply a space of revolution, but a space overlaid with just those contradictory impressions that divide Hyacinth’s subjectivity.

The fourth book of the novel begins with Hyacinth’s immersion in the spectacle of the Parisian streets. This spectacle attracts Hyacinth more than the opportunity to see the “succès du jour” of the Variétés. James ironises the idea of weighing these impressions when he has Hyacinth recognise that “The most brilliant city in the world was also the most blood stained.” (James 1987: 380) Here, the bourgeois theatre fails to match the theatre of the streets. Later in the same chapter this irony will be inverted when James has Hyacinth write to the Princess, ironically describing the fate of art in the hands of the revolutionary: Hyacinth describes Hoffendahl doling out strips of the ceilings of the Veronese, a little to each household (James 1987: 396-7). Hyacinth’s imaginings allow James to script an urban drama that offers the reader the uncomfortable spectacle of the continuing co-existence of scenes of strife with scenes of “civilization.”

When Hyacinth wanders the boulevards imaginatively recreating the battle scenes of 1848, accompanied by the spectre of his grandfather, the bathetic “revolutionary watchmaker,” James’s careful staging of this flânerie should alert us to the complex twin inheritance that James inscribes in the palimpsest figure of the bookbinder. Hyacinth’s Parisian wanderings are haunted by the barricades of 1848 and 1871,
and he is also ghosted by previous literary representations of the flâneur.

Hyacinth’s retrospections had not made him drowsy, but quite the reverse; he grew restless and excited, and a kind of pleasant terror of the place and the hour entered into his blood. But it was nearly midnight, and he got up to walk home, taking the line of the boulevard toward the Madeleine. He passed down the Rue Royale, where comparative stillness reigned; and when he reached the Place de la Concorde, to cross the bridge which faces the Corps Législatif, he found himself almost isolated. He had left the human swarm and the obstructed pavements behind, and the wide spaces of the splendid square lay quiet under the summer stars. The splash of the great fountains was audible, and he could almost hear the wind-stirred murmur of the little wood of the Tuileries on the one side, and of the vague expanse of the Champs Élysées on the other. The place itself — the Place Louis Quinze, the Place de la Révolution — had given him a sensible emotion, from the day of his arrival; he had recognised so quickly its tremendously historic character. He had seen, in a rapid vision, the guillotine in the middle, on the site of the inscrutable obelisk, and the tumbrils, with waiting victims, were stationed round the circle now made majestic by the monuments of the cities of France. The great legend of the French Revolution, sanguinary and heroic, was more real to him here than anywhere else; and, strangely, what was most present was not its turpitude and horror, but its magnificent energy, the spirit of life that had been in it, not the spirit of death. That shadow was effaced by the modern fairness of fountain and statue, the stately perspective and composition; and as he lingered, before crossing the Seine, a sudden sense overtook him, making his heart sink with a kind of desolation — a sense of everything that might hold one to the world, of the sweetness of not dying, the fascination of great cities, the charm of travel and discovery, the generosity of admiration. (James 1987: 393)

Two points should be noted from this passage: the actual spaces that James employs, as well as his representations of them, and his representation of Hyacinth’s wanderings. The Madeleine is a potent site: Pierre Larousse’s *Grand Dictionnaire Universel* of 1872 notes that there are “flâneurs whose entire existence unfolds between the church of the Madeleine and the Théâtre du Gymnase.” (Benjamin 1999: 451) It is also associated with key moments of the events of 1848, so much so that Flaubert, at the beginning of the third book of *L’Éducation Sentimentale*, places Frédéric Moreau as witness to action on the Champs Élysées, outside the Madeleine, and within the Palais-Royal. The cluster of street
names in this passage invokes the revolutionary history of the city streets, setting the scene for Hyacinth’s “rapid vision.”

In a sense the streets and monuments are a radical text, a palimpsest that Hyacinth and the reader must learn to read. Hyacinth stands surrounded by the very symbols of bourgeois rule, and sees them overlaid with visions of the violent events of revolution. Hyacinth believes he recognises here the “magnificent energy, the spirit of life” that is represented by the legend of the revolution, but this feeling only serves to emphasise his vulnerability, and his positive vision turns sour all too quickly. James, however, offers us an alternative to Hyacinth’s understanding. We can read in this sudden vision, this interlineations of sights and sounds, of historic resonance, a clear link made by James between, on the one hand, the inseparability of the spirit of death from the “modern fairness of fountain and statue, the stately perspective and composition,” and, on the other hand, the vulnerable artist-flâneur-revolutionary figure. The reader alert to the historical topography of James’s Paris can begin to discern a complex narrative tension generated by the interplay between the tropes of Paris and revolution that James locates in the character of Hyacinth Robinson, and the narratives that arise from his representation of the street scenes. In the history of the Place the events of 1789 become inseparable from the events of 1848. We can read an identification of violence with both the existing order and with revolutionary action. The palimpsest of the ordered civic space is mirrored in Hyacinth’s own divided self, and as James has Hyacinth read the street, and despair, we must learn to read Hyacinth himself.

Hyacinth’s identity is over-determined. James inscribes within an individual consciousness the competition between the powerful discourses that compete to script the urban subjectivity; this is “the lively inward revolution” of the preface to the novel. This flâneur-revolutionary-artist in The Princess Casamassima becomes literally the site of competition, of struggle, just as the streets were. And just as the streets offered interlineations of revolutionary and bourgeois imagery, revealing their shared origins in violence, so the discourses that are enacted in Hyacinth Robinson reveal their common dangers. The roles scripted by the discourse of bourgeois individualism – the dandy, the flâneur, the gentleman of leisure, the aesthete – are revealed as openly rapacious and dominated by the market, while those scripted by the discourses of revolution –
the conspirator, the anarchist, the assassin – are identified as based on the same murderous logic as that of the bourgeois subject. The phrase “lively inward revolution” describes the narrative strategy that James employs in order to evade Flaubert’s evisceration of the flâneur-artist, and the implications of that ironic process. We can see this most clearly in the New York edition preface when James describes his concerns regarding Hyacinth’s adequacy as “the most polished of possible mirrors.” (James 1984b: 1095)

The worry that James returns to time and again in the Prefaces to the New York Edition is the adequacy of his central consciousnesses to the demands that he, and the reader, make on them. In the Preface to The Princess Casamassima he writes:

I have ever found rather terribly the point – that the figures in any picture, the agents in any drama, are interesting only in proportion as they feel their respective situations; since the consciousness, on their part, of the complication exhibited forms for us their link of connexion with it. [...] We care, our curiosity our sympathy care, comparatively little for what happens to the stupid, the coarse and the blind... (James 1984b: 1088-9)

His worry with Hyacinth Robinson was with the difficulty of fixing “at a hundred points the place where one’s impelled bonhomme may feel enough and ‘know’ enough ... for his maximum dramatic value without feeling and knowing too much for his minimum verisimilitude, his proper fusion with the fable.” (1094-5) James worries over failing with Hyacinth just as he claimed Flaubert failed with Frédéric Moreau. In his 1902 preface to a translation of Madame Bovary James asks why Flaubert should have chosen “such abject human specimens” as Emma Bovary and Frédéric Moreau as the central characters of his fictions. (James 1984b: 326) Frédéric Moreau is “positively too poor for his part, too scant for his charge,” as “the personage bearing the weight of the drama, and in whom we are invited to that extent to interest ourselves.” (327) Frédéric does not arouse the reader’s sympathy. Of course, Frédéric’s emptiness and Flaubert’s ironic presentation of him is one of the triumphs of the novel, and, as Philip Horne notes, James seems wilfully to avoid this recognition (Horne 1996).

James invokes the question of the reader’s sympathy with the central consciousness as one aspect of his attempt to
overcome Flaubert’s evisceration of the flâneur-artist. In Flaubert the flâneur-artist position, as a character and a narrative method, is represented by an ironic blankness. In The Princess Casamassima the flâneur-artist is a palimpsest, as I suggested above. James’s scraping of the “vast smug surface” depends upon a complex figuration of the lived experience of the modern urban environment, and this figuration is realised through the scriptibility of the flâneur-artist, the receptiveness of this subjectivity to competing, endangering discourses. 8

James’s little bookbinder, with his “revolutionary commission burn[ing] in his pocket” (James 1987: 563), seems to become only a binding for another’s text, to be nothing more than the puppet of either the market or the shadowy discourses of violence: the chaperon of the Princess who delights in buying people – “Why shouldn’t I have my bookbinder … in attendance … it would be awfully chic” – or the tool of “the party of action.” (James 1987: 582) As Hyacinth enacts the various, competing roles that are thrust upon him – from revolutionary struggle to aestheticist posturing, from dandy/flâneur to gentleman of leisure – his receptivity is manipulated and finally his subjectivity is destroyed.

However the scriptibility of this subjectivity is the achievement of James’s rewriting of Flaubert. By making Hyacinth a scapegoat for both the party of action, and the hegemonic social formations, James’s narrative reveals the dangers of these existing discourses for the artist. Not only do both the reactionary and the radical seek to co-opt the artist, but also the dominant existing realist strategy of representation of the urban is revealed as hopelessly complicit with those discourses.

René Girard has written on the logic of the scapegoat as a representational logic:

Before invoking the scapegoat in connection with a text we must first ask ourselves whether we are dealing with a scapegoat of the text (the hidden structural principle) or a scapegoat in the text (the clearly visible theme). Only in the first case can the text be defined as one of persecution, entirely subjected to the representation of persecution from the perspective of the persecutor. This text is controlled by the effect of a scapegoat that it does not acknowledge. In the second case, on the contrary, the text acknowledges the scapegoat effect which does not control it. Not only is this text no longer a persecution text, but it even reveals the truth of the persecution. (Girard 1982: 119)
Michiel Heyns has read *The Golden Bowl* following Girard’s reasoning. He argues that “the scapegoat of the text” is recognised in *The Golden Bowl* as also “the scapegoat in the text.” Maggie Verver’s figuring of Charlotte Stant makes her the scapegoat, the expulsion of whom provides a close for the story that Maggie self-consciously narrates. However, the narrative of the novel “refuses to validate Maggie’s rewriting.” (Heyns 1994: 268) The narrative of the novel records both Maggie’s story and Charlotte’s, and although Charlotte’s is subordinated to Maggie’s, we can recognise in the narrative of this scapegoat figure an alternative reading of the novel and its concerns.9

*The Princess Casamassima* achieves a similar effect to *The Golden Bowl* in this limited respect: in both novels the scapegoat *in* and *of* the text coincide. The result of James’s engagement with key realist narrative strategies is not a text of persecution but a text, following Girard’s description, which acknowledges the scapegoat as its hidden structural principle. Hyacinth is more than simply the figure whose individual sacrifice will or will not prevent radical social change, will or will not prevent violent action. As the scapegoat *in* the text Hyacinth reveals the complicity, the shared logics of the party of action and the existing social formations that they seek to change. As the scapegoat *of* the text Hyacinth reveals the failure of existing realist narrative strategies in the face of these new urban discourses of representation. Perhaps also there is an anti-narrative, as Heyn suggests there is in *The Golden Bowl*. The anti-narrative that Hyacinth offers is that of a subject position for the individual artist that, because it is based on vulnerability rather than mastery, evades the complicity with the dominant social formations that the “rhetoric of realism” occludes.

**STUART ROBERTSON**

*A “lively inward revolution”: The flâneur, realism and revolution in *L’Éducation Sentimentale* and *The Princess Casamassima***

L’ipotesi di questo articolo è che il conflitto in atto nel romanzo di Henry James *The Princess Casamassima* (1886) sia quello tra rappresentazioni alternative dello spazio e dell’esperienza urbana. La forma dominante nel romanzo realista è la rappresentazione della città attraverso la flânerie di un artista-flâneur. Il potere di questa strategia è sottoposto a critica ne *L’Éducation Sentimentale* di Flaubert (1869), che caratterizza la flânerie come uno spossessamento, registrando il fallimento della strategia narrativa dominante del realismo di fronte alla concorrenza di modi
alternativi di narrare l’esperienza urbana. Il saggio sostiene che James riscrive *L’Éducation Sentimentale* per recuperare il flâneur come posizione soggettiva aperta all’artista nei discorsi concernenti la rappresentazione della dimensione urbana. Tuttavia questa posizione del soggetto, che prima implicava una situazione di padronanza e di controllo, ora ha come caratteristica primaria la vulnerabilità. L’artista-flâneur diventa così un capro espiatorio il cui sacrificio rivela i rischi insiti nel discorso ormai dominante della rappresentazione urbana.

NOTES

1. In early 1872 James reviewed for the *Nation* Theophile Gautier’s *Tableaux de siège*. He chastises Gautier for his moral levity in the face of the horrors of the siege and commune: “The chapter with which he closes his book (*Paris-Capitale*) reveals a moral levity so transcendent and immeasurable as to amount really to a psychological curiosity. It is a strange spectacle to see exquisite genius conditioned, as it were, upon such moral aridity. [...] The ineffable frivolity of his peroration recalls irresistibly that sternly unsavory Scriptural image of the dog and his vomit. It is enough to disgust one with the pursuit of local color” (James 1872: 62). Gautier revelled in the retribution of the advancing French troops against the communards.

2. Mark Seltzer makes insightful remarks concerning the construction and experience of social space in Zola’s *L’Assommoir* but he does not direct these thoughts to James’s representations of Paris and London (Seltzer 1984: 181).

30. One recent critic, Mark Chapman, does attempt to discuss the novel in terms of socially constructed urban space, but his reading is hampered by his literal reading of James’s representations of city spaces in the novel (Chapman 1988).

4. Janet Wolff, Priscilla Parkhurst-Ferguson, and Mieke Bal have all discussed the gender of the flâneur (Bal 1993; Ferguson 1994; Wolff 1990).

5. “Plus loin, il remarqua trois pavés au milieu de la voie, le commencement d’une barricade, sans doute, puis des tessons de bouteilles, et des paquets de fil de fer pour embarrasser la cavalerie; quand tout à coup s’élansca d’une ruelle un grand jeune homme pâle, dont les cheveux noirs flottaient sur les épaules, prises dans une espèce de maillot à pois couleur. Il tenait un long fusil de soldat, et courait sur la pointe de ses pantoufles, avec l’air d’un somnambule et leste comme un tigre.” (Flaubert 1984: 289)

6. Philip Grover also relates James’s depiction of Hyacinth to the hero of *L’Éducation Sentimentale*, though he merely notes their resemblance rather than examining it (Grover 1973: 103).

7. Just as Rastignac at the ball sees the dying Père Goriot’s pallet in the jewels his daughters wear with pride, so James records his recognition of the coincidence of death and beauty. Walter Benjamin captures the view succinctly “without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have an
origin that he cannot contemplate without horror. [...] There is no
document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of
barbarism.” (Benjamin 1992: 248)

8. Barthes’s distinction between “lisible” and “scriptible” can clarify
here the alteration I am arguing for in James’s recuperation of the flâneur-
artist. Where the flâneur in earlier realist fiction masters the city, writes
their story onto the city, and by extension realist fiction promises a
narrative strategy that unifies the chaos of the impressions that the city
gives rise to, James’s flâneur-artist is the text upon which the powerful
discourses of the city write, and James’s text bows under the weight of the
contradictory movements his narrative contortions entail (Barthes 1990).

9. Heyns terms this alternative narrative an “anti-narrative,” suggesting
that such anti-narratives are a feature of all novelistic discourse, not only

WORKS CITED

BAL, MIEKE
1993 “His Master’s Eye” in Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision (ed.
David Michael Levin), Berkeley: University of California Press;
379-404

BARTHES, ROLAND

BAUDELAIRE, CHARLES
1964 The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays, translated and edited

BENJAMIN, WALTER
1992 Illuminations, translated by Harry Zohn with an introduction by
1999 The Arcades Project, translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin
McLaughlin, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of
Harvard University Press.

CHAPMAN, MARK
1988 “Physical Mobility as Social Power in The Princess Casamassima,” in
Henry James Review (9: 3); 165-75.

FERGUSON, PRISCILLA PARKHURST
1994a Paris As Revolution, Berkeley: University of California Press
Stuart Robertson: *The Flâneur: Realism and Revolution in Princess Casamassima*

**Flaubert, Gustave**

**Girard, René**

**Grover, Philip**

**Heyns, Michiel**

**Horne, Philip**

**Hugo, Victor**

**James, Henry**
1872 “Théophile Gautier’s *Tableaux de siège,*” in *The Nation* (January, Number 343); 61-2.

**Jameson, Fredric**

**Prendergast, Christopher**

**Rowe, John Carlos**
Seltzer, Mark

Trilling, Lionel

Wolff, Janet