

Regarding Henry: The Feminist Henry Adams

Eric Rauchway

Like so many ambitious writers, Frances Snow Compton failed to write a best-selling novel her first time out and glumly retired from her short career as fictioneer. The vanishing of her maiden effort should occasion no comment among historians of American culture were it not that she herself was a figment of a more ambitious (though finally just as thoroughly discouraged) imagination: Henry Adams's. At the height of the Gilded Age, with the fiction market seemingly segregated by sex and driven by force of advertising, Adams brought to his publisher Henry Holt a new manuscript that he wanted printed under the Compton pseudonym. It was Adams's second novel—the first had been the successful and anonymous *Democracy*—and he wrote it while he was working on his *History of the United States*. Where he put no name on *Democracy* and put his weighty family name on the *History*, he wanted an unprepossessing disguise—less sensational even than anonymity—for the new novel, *Esther*. Holt later recalled that Adams meant by thus hiding “to test how much the success of a book depends on pushing—how far a book can make its own publicity.”¹ The experiment in tale-telling proved inconclusive and lost Adams's attention when a real tragedy—the suicide of his wife—overtook the plot of his life, and so *Esther* became a footnote to this personal narrative. But its intended location at the intersection of the commerce, politics, and women's culture of the period was a focus not merely for the movement of the eccentric Adams but for the orbit of Gilded Age culture as a whole.

Currently, cultural histories of the nineteenth century examine a tripartite problem of (white) male democracy, a growing mass market, and a concurrently

developing women's culture. As political and economic opportunities opened for men, married women did less to aid in the getting of money than to organize the spending of it. Consequently women's sphere came to encompass what was outside, and ultimately antithetical to, the competitive political and economic cultures of men. In purely formal terms, this women's culture emphasized (in magazines, advice manuals, and novels) a set of values scholars summarize under the rubric sentimental, which in its nonjudgmental definition refers to "an emotional and philosophical ethos that celebrates human connection, both personal and communal, and acknowledges the shared devastation of affectional loss."² But to the historical mind sentimental culture cannot comprise simply this nonjudgmental definition, for in the society of the nineteenth century these nurturing values belonged specifically to women, and the cultural meaning of this feminine ascription continues to vex scholars. Ann Douglas argues that whatever the intentions of the authors of sentimental culture, by playing on these themes of attachment and redemption through loss, they reinforced and supported the crass market culture from which novelists could greatly profit. In this they were not altogether at fault: theirs "is a dishonesty for which there is no known substitute in a capitalist country." But in any case, they contributed to "the failure of a viable, sexually diversified culture."³ Jane Tompkins, responding directly to Douglas, argues that sentimental novelists propagated a set of women's values that subverted capitalist culture, promoting instead radical equality and a world "ruled not by force but by Christian love."⁴ This argument parallels larger interpretive differences in approaching women's history: did feminism constitute an effort to move beyond women's culturally (legally, morally, politically, often physically) separate sphere, or an effort to seek women's power through a distinctive and even separate women's culture?⁵

Thus the historical question as to the relation among democracy, the market, and the limits of feminist critique in the nineteenth century focuses on the content of culture produced by and for women. Adams's engagement of such issues speaks directly to this question. Despite the general, and possibly correct, conviction that his best works are his last, twentieth-century ones (*Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* and *The Education of Henry Adams*) it is useful to remember that by the time he wrote these works he wrote for himself and a few friends alone—their publication and popularity he neither intended nor foresaw (and in the case of the *Education*, did not live to see, either). In his earlier phase he tried to address a larger public and its problems, and this article seeks to explicate this earlier phase. In these years some of his most original work, including especially his novel *Esther*, focuses on the relation of women to political and economic power in America. The significance of these works lies in their effort to play on, work within, and ultimately reject as inadequate the sentimental limitations on women's activities. As Tompkins wrote of another book, "[t]he specifically political intent of the novel is apparent in its forms of address."⁶ Adams's positioning of his pseudonymous work indicates his intent to participate in the

ongoing debate within sentimental literature. Like Douglas, and the writers she admires, he strove to transcend the sentimental categorization of women though (also like them) he ultimately saw no available alternative.

The common inapt interpretations of Adams with respect to gender and politics position him as an antifeminist, a devotee of the “cult of domesticity,”⁷ and an antidemocrat, an intentionally unpopular man who “would not stand for inspection and election.”⁸ Both of these views emphasize the Adams hauteur, his deliberate distance from the subject. Though there can be no question that Adams struck such a pose, it was finally a pose, as careful attention to what he said and how he said it will show. Even this most aesthetic of Adamses perched himself just across the park from the White House—at a distance, true, but not at so great a distance that the comings and goings of the republic’s highest and mightiest could occur unobserved, nor too far for a mandarin to shuttle back and forth. Consequently his endless play with ideas of masculine and feminine represented more to him than “side[s] of the dialectic.” His frustration with American democracy represented more than “contempt for participation.”⁹ Adams remained a political creature till the very last of his days, and his concern with the place of men and women in American society formed the basis of his critique of democratic civilization.

As I shall argue here, Adams tangled with the basic questions of feminism and democracy, the problems of difference and equality. He believed that no true democratic civilization could flourish that did not include women—not merely a mystical feminine principle, but actual living breathing women—in its ordinary expressions: in its art, its religion, its politics. He left a body of work comprising essays, novels, history, and memoirs that despite their various *donnèes* all turn on this basic question. The keystone in this arch is the pseudonymous novel *Esther*, that as a commodity was an experiment testing and as a novel was an argument about women’s place in the American public. Its protagonist suffers because her peers cannot see her as more than either a mother or an Other. She insists she is different for neither biological nor mystical reasons, and her creator made it clear that he accounted for her difference as he did for other women’s experience of difference: by referring to history. *Esther* showed that whatever his worries, Adams was a feminist and a democrat, and that he was willing to expend his artistic energies and some of his personal fortune in these causes.¹⁰

To make this case I shall have first to lay out Adams’s understanding of the American public and its problems in the 1880s, and a concurrent analysis of Adams’s experience of and concern with the place of women in America. I shall then proceed to a reading of *Esther* and an analysis of its implications in connection with Adams’s other work.

Give the Public a Chance

The Puritan God of colonial Massachusetts called the Adams family to the service of the American colonies and then to the service of the United States, and

the Adamses heeded that call. Henry Adams came of the fourth generation, two Presidents and a minister to Britain later. He decided as early as his graduation from Harvard College that he must acknowledge the call to serve by becoming a writer. "My wishes," he wrote in his Class Book, "are for a quiet literary life, as I believe that to be the happiest and in this country not the least useful."¹¹ The justification "not the least useful" gruffly, and poorly, masked a typical Adams confidence, if not arrogance, regarding his own judgment.

Though the Civil War temporarily sidetracked his career plans, (he served as an assistant to his father, the Minister to the Court of St. James, trying to damp Confederate sympathy in London) by 1867 he had begun to establish himself in his intended line of work. His brother Charles, Jr., just discharged from his commission as commander of a black regiment, decided he too would write. They were both working on essays for publication when they exchanged manuscripts for criticism. Henry's eye had difficulty moving through the tangled lines of Charles's prose, and he told his brother so:

If you wish to write a sentence, how ought you to begin it? I say . . . commençons par le commencement. Begin with your subject. You say: No, I prefer to begin by transposing the middle of the sentence, or indeed the end, to its head. I will put my predicate first, or a wholly irrelevant adverb, or needless paraphrase first, in order to give life to my style. And so you mask, or break up and enfeeble the strong lines of honest composition, by an attempt to deceive the eye. . . . I maintain the same principle about the whole as about the parts. . . . Depend upon it, there is but one good style, and that is the simplest and the truest. Such a style may want elegance, but it can't be bad.¹²

Charles disagreed, saying that one caught the readers' attention by using unusual compositions; the public, he said, found such simple prose as Henry preferred a bore. Henry got hot under the collar, and the aesthetic dispute became a political matter. Charles had insulted the public on whose wisdom the Adamses had long depended to put them in charge of democratic institutions. Henry could not defend the public's taste, at least not as it stood, but he could challenge Charles's accommodation thereof:

[You say t]he public prefers claptrap! You be damned! Yes just that! Give the public a chance. So it is vulgar! So it will drag you down if you let it! But just try once or twice the effect of a clever, pointed article, with all the big words and all the useless words knocked out . . . and then you see which the public will enjoy

most. The vulgar experiment may last a day. The other will put you with one jump at the head of American authors.¹³

Charles had hit a nerve. He had questioned something Henry held as a basic article of faith. If one could think, if one could write, one owed it to the public to do it simply and truly and never to trick out one's prose merely to entertain. If the public had admittedly gone astray then the burden of tugging it back to the straight road fell, by right, to Adamses. "Your whole argument," Henry wrote Charles, "rested on the supposition that you had not cleverness enough to interest your readers unless you made yourself vulgar. You may be right. . . . But right or wrong you have no business to say it without first trying it the better way—and the trial ought to last your life."¹⁴

Henry Adams began to fulfill his mission by exploring the Erie railroad scandals, by debunking the historical myths gathered around John Smith, and by teaching history at Harvard, where he fired students with his "desire to shake up established complacency, to start others to think, to bring out new points of view."¹⁵ The aftermath of the 1876 election drew Adams's attention back to Washington, where he had once lived as a bachelor. In 1877, he and his wife, Marian "Clover" Hooper, moved to the capital to stay.¹⁶ In conflict and correspondence with his brother, he had affirmed his belief that, by virtue of his talent and his inheritance, he owed the American democracy the fruits of his craft. His *History* would serve as a major payment of that debt.

Adams dedicated the *History* explicitly to evaluating the success of the American experiment with democracy, and he set out the possible terms of success in his introductory chapters. "Of all historical problems, the nature of a national character is the most difficult and the most important," he wrote. "New conditions and hopes could hardly fail to produce a literature or arts more or less original. Of all possible triumphs, none could equal that which might be won in the regions of thought if the intellectual influence of the United States should equal their social and economical importance."¹⁷ Adams proposed to judge the cultural development of the United States, and to use the development of an original arts and literature as his standard. But like a good lawyer he did not pose questions to which he did not know answers. Even as he cited the "boundless ambition" of American character, which was breaking free of "the thoughts and methods of the eighteenth century" in a country that "turned the European peasant into a new man within half an hour after landing at New York," he expressed doubt. (79-80, 122) "The American democrat," he said, "possessed little art of expression, and did not watch his own emotions with a view of uttering them either in prose or verse; he never told more of himself than the world might have assumed without listening to him." (124) So when he asked of America, upon setting out on his narrative, "Could it transmute its social power into the higher forms of thought? . . . Could it give new life to religion and art?" he forecast the end of the *History of the United States*. (133)

The earliest critics of Adams's *History* saw in it, as one pamphlet's title put it, "A Case of Hereditary Bias," and indeed the historian's tendency to doubt the wisdom of the American people must have come at least in part from that body's rejection of each of his ancestor presidents after only one term.¹⁸ Adams's mistrust of the democracy on which he nevertheless pinned his hopes for the future grew not only, or even mainly, from an inherited vendetta, but from cold assessment of the present. The failing of American civilization lay conspicuously in its exclusion of women.

A Charming Form of Government

When Adams's friend Henry James immortalized him and his wife in a short story, he gave them the surname Bonnycastle, a reflection on their excellent Washington house and political salon. Adams and his wife Clover, two-fifths of the Five of Hearts (which also included the John Hays and Clarence King) surrounded themselves with objects and *personnes d'art* and had, as much as they could, a grand time. "The universe hitherto has existed in order to produce a dozen people to amuse the five of hearts," Adams joked to Hay.¹⁹

Though he counted himself both a "democrat and a sceptic," he claimed, "I belong to the class of people who have great faith in this country and believe that in another century it will be saying in its turn the last word of civilization."²⁰ Adams and his wife both listened closely to hear just what that word might turn out to be. Clover Adams wrote weekly letters to her father filled with the maneuverings of Roscoe Conkling, Chester A. Arthur, Wayne MacVeagh, and the incorrigibly villainous James G. Blaine. "We are much interested in the make-up of the Cabinet as it develops day by day," she wrote.²¹ When her father wondered if she ought really to involve herself in such matters, she shot back, "I need the warning, and so do all honest, clean-handed folks who object to seeing their country made ridiculous by corrupt blatherskites."²² She had no doubt she belonged in the political hurly burly, whatever polite opinion might say.

Adams's novel *Democracy* illustrates the tensions he and his wife felt in Washington. It is the story of the power wielded by the corrupt Senator Ratcliffe, Prairie Giant of Illinois. He woos protagonist Madeleine Lightfoot Lee, who too late realizes the great politician's true nature. She, widowed, had come to Washington because she "had exhausted all the ordinary feminine resources." She made a pilgrimage to find men who "cast a shadow" and to feel "POWER."²³ She had mastered the society of New York and Boston, and thinks herself hardened after enduring the death of her husband and child. But in the end she realizes herself to have been fatally naïve because she has retained moral scruples. She did not understand the true nature of power, nor of the men who cast a shadow. When the Senator reveals himself entirely oblivious of moral matters or of public virtue, she recoils in disgust, the more so because she almost married him, almost allowed herself to get lost in the haze of rhetoric that Ratcliffe exudes.

The Senator invites her to take on a role that prefigures Eleanor Roosevelt's. She can become the private and public partner of a man who participates, knowingly and ably, in a corrupt political process—partly because they should both believe his continuing governance to be best for the country, but mainly because the influence she might gain by becoming the wife of a powerful man could only be for the public good. The Senator always argues the case against pure public virtue by imploring his critics to consider the greater good. His trump card is the crisis of the Civil War and Reconstruction. The country's best interest at that time lay in the continuing preeminence of the Republican Party (and, during the war, of its great president). Nothing hints that Ratcliffe is not, indeed, an able administrator; quite the contrary. Therefore he can justify vote fraud, bribery, and the peddling of influence. All of it goes to the benefit of the party and therefore of the country. He invites Mrs. Lee to join him, to exercise her beneficent influence on him and on the public. "Do you fear being dragged down to the level of ordinary politicians? So far as concerns myself, my great wish is to have your help in purifying politics. What higher ambition can there be. . . ? Your sense of duty is too keen not to feel that the noblest objects which can inspire any woman, combine to point out your course" (178).

In turn, Mrs. Lee's character comes through in bits and pieces. She has wit, certainly, and "artistic tendencies." She has "read voraciously and promiscuously" (10, 7). With the death of her husband and child, she has come to feel that religion has failed her (11). Her decision to seek amusement or purpose in the politics of democracy is essentially a whim, and a dangerous one. Throughout her stay in Washington she repeats her faith in the democratic ideal, saying, as did Henry Adams, that the American experiment only needed time, that America "still had her story to tell" (64). Her persistent faith makes her deaf and blind to the indications around her that this government runs on issues "not . . . of principle but of power" (81). In her moment of terrible revelation, she banishes Ratcliffe and decides herself to flee the whole country and have done with it. Her experience of presidents, senators, and their wives forces her to see the sour joke on women in American democracy: "nine out of ten of our countrymen would say I had made a mistake" in not marrying Ratcliffe (184).

As the narrative crisis begins, *Democracy's* narrator pauses to comment on why, the question of corruption aside, a sophisticated woman such as Mrs. Lee might even consider marriage to a prairie boor such as the Senator. "Upon this theme," the narrative voice says, "an army of ingenious authors have exhausted their ingenuity in entertaining the public, and their works are to be found at every book-stall. They have decided that any woman will, under the right conditions, marry any man at any time, provided her 'higher nature' is properly appealed to. . . . The capacity of women to make unsuitable marriages must be considered as the corner-stone of society" (143). Adams here twits the conventions of sentimental fiction while making a point basic to his argument. In this literature, marriage (be it ever so unsuitable) remains a woman's only avenue to power while she lives.

It truly is the corner-stone of society. Throughout *Democracy*, political wives, from the first lady down, jealously guard the positions of power they have secured through marriage. From her research into the correspondence of presidential wives down to the prickly relations between herself and the reigning first lady, Madeleine Lee meets women who have only found their way to power by choosing the right husband and nurturing him carefully. In Washington society, where “Men were only valuable in proportion to their strength and their appreciation of women,” the right marriage, however fundamentally unsuitable it may be, leads to the White House (51). But Mrs. Lee at least, though she be “American to her fingertips,” (4) will not, or cannot, sacrifice her moral nature to the purpose of perpetuating this presently corrupt society, however bright its promise, however silver-tongued the appeal.

Madeleine Lee’s naivete derives not from any inherent feminine virtue but rather from her education. She retains what virtue she has because she has not been subject to corruption. Because she is an outsider, she is a throwback to a better age that expected more. Adams, prefiguring Charlotte Perkins Gilman by almost twenty years, supposed that women were unsuited to modern America because the institution of marriage sheltered them from the process of change. Unlike Gilman, Adams believed this process did not originate with primitive man, but had historically discernible roots.

He had delivered his lecture on “The Primitive Rights of Women” in 1876. In it he posed a question that is now a commonplace for many scholars, but which then constituted something of a challenge to the current understanding: What if the condition of women in society had deteriorated over the centuries, rather than advanced? Adams noted that those who did think about the situation of women assumed that as society progressed from primitive to modern, women gained freedom and power as men did.

“The most recent scientific historians,” Adams said, began “with the assumption that the wife was in origin a slave, either by capture or by purchase[;] . . . [the] commonly received theory of her escape from this degradation assumed a gradual rise in the moral standard of civilized society, and finally attributed the complete triumph of women to the influence of Christianity, with its high moral ideals and its passionate adoration of the Virgin Mother.”²⁴ Not so, he countered. If one wished to examine the conditions of women in primitive tribal societies, he claimed (however incorrectly) one need only look to the American Indians. Adams examined the customs of marriage in these cultures and found that the woman retained substantial rights and “in most cases she was the head of the family. . . . The line of inheritance and descent was commonly through females; titles descended through females. . . . she was a free member of her own tribe and clan” (11-12).

He then looked to evidence from the ancestors of European civilization, and discovered a prominent role for women in ancient Egypt, with its trinity of Osiris, Isis, and Horus, in which “Isis stood on the same plane as Osiris” (14). Adams

moved on to the ancient Greeks through Homer, observing that he “invariably treated women and the marriage contract with respect which subsequent literature of no country or age can show” (16-17).

Gradually, Adams said, the structure of paternal power grew up. He argued that in Rome, although the husband was given authority over his wife, that power

did not prove the degradation of women. Whatever that authority was, it was exercised over the wife, not because she was a woman, but because she was a daughter. To the paternal power the man as well as the woman was subject; and no matter what age the man had attained, he was, during the lifetime of his father, under the same domestic rule as his sister or his mother. (25)

It was not patriarchy as such that Adams blamed for the degradation of women. He was more specific. He blamed the Church.

“The rise of Christianity marked the diminution of women’s social and legal rights,” he said (36-37). In fact, the ascetic Church abhorred women for their very sexuality. They were a sore temptation to men who were supposed to keep their eyes on the world to come: “women as such, even the best of women, were not sought by men whose present existence was as nothing in their eyes, and to whom the price of eternal happiness lay in the avoidance even of temptation in worldly life.” Adams noted the close relationship between high morals and “the necessity of discipline and obedience in society,” and the Church’s role in promoting both (36). Therefore, he claimed, the Church had to subdue women:

The Church established a new ideal of feminine character. Thenceforward not the proud, self-confident, vindictive woman of German tradition received the admiration and commanded the service of law and society. . . . In reprobation of these the Church raised up, with the willing co-operation of the men . . . the meek and patient, the silent and tender sufferer, the pale reflection of the Mater Dolorosa, submissive to every torture that her husband could invent, but more submissive to the Church than to her husband. (38)

The Church had thus for its own ends submitted men and women to the hierarchical family which, Adams said, “like the State, took on the character of a petty absolutism” (39). The creation of a feminine character dedicated to submission and sacrifice was an essential part of this transformation.

Considered as a history, the essay contains interpretive problems. It is neither historically apt nor just to suppose that American Indian societies correspond to

primitive European cultures. More important, throughout the essay Adams blandly assumes that the myths of a culture constitute its historical reality. As Clive Bush notes in his critique of Adams, “The relation of the images of a culture to actual history is hardly simple.”²⁵ Nevertheless, if we consider the essay as a counter-myth, as a culturally significant narrative in itself, Adams’s purpose is clear. By denying a Whiggish progress to the history of women’s liberation, Adams sought to defy the notion that women’s sphere served to nurture women to independence. By giving the construction of that sphere a history, he denied it the authority of immemorial custom and biology alike. And by critiquing its effects on women’s spirit he challenged cultural presumptions about women’s proper role. Therefore, like Gilman after him, Adams argued that for the American civilization to achieve its fulfillment, it must include women in the process of progress and thereby rehabilitate that civilization. But he was not at all sure it would be easy, or even possible, simply to admit women to an American civilization that had been born excluding them. To keep women from politics was bad enough, but to exclude them as well from art, religion, and science was a crueler sentence and one more difficult to correct. *Esther* constitutes a meditation on this state of affairs and its implications.

The Portrait of a Lady

Esther, like *Democracy*, opens with a dispossessed heroine. Madeleine Lee lost her husband and child; Esther Dudley is about to lose her father. Mr. Dudley is a widower, a veteran of the Union army, and a genial skeptic who keeps his pew in the Episcopal Church only out of habit. He has become, lately, an invalid, relying on his daughter for companionship. He worries that his death will leave her alone, with no prospects. He confides this worry to his sister, Mrs. Murray. He has, he tells her, always resented the idea of a husband for Esther, a man who would deprive him of his daughter, but now that he must make himself ready to die, he realizes he must take some steps to provide for Esther’s future. He sees no plausible husband among Esther’s circle except perhaps her cousin George Strong, and “to marry him would be cold-blooded,” he says.²⁶ He asks Mrs. Murray to find a husband for Esther. She demurs.

I suggest that you should leave it alone, and let Esther take care of her own husband. . . . Women must take their chance. It is what they are for. Marriage makes no real difference in their lot. All the contented women are fools, and all the discontented ones want to be men. Women are a blunder in the creation, and must take the consequences. If Esther is sensible she will never marry; but no woman is sensible, so she will marry without consulting us.

Mrs. Murray adds that she had, herself, been lucky to find Mr. Murray. "As for bringing about a marriage," she continues dourly, "I would almost rather bring about a murder." Dudley replies, "Poor Esther! . . . She has been brought up among men, and is not used to harness. If things go wrong she will rebel, and a woman who rebels is lost" (206).

Acting as a Greek chorus, Esther's guardians have set the scene. She has had an upbringing that makes her unfit to be bound in marriage. Yet there is no place in this world for an unmarried woman. Esther can either make a cold-blooded choice, and marry her cousin the scientist, or else take her chances—and in that case she will likely end up "lost." The problem that engenders *Esther's* plot, then, is simple: will Esther find a husband after her father's death, or will she rebel and be lost? The social conditions to which Mrs. Murray and Mr. Dudley have attested determine the outcome, but the terms of the action, invoking avatars of Religion, Art, and Science, make Esther's loss more than a sentimental mishap.

Esther, an amateur painter, attends the new Episcopal Church of St. John with her cousin Strong. The new pastor, Hazard, is Strong's old friend, as is Wharton, the artist who has the commission to decorate the new church. Wharton, too, knows Esther, and has helped to teach her to paint. Hazard is new in New York and new to Esther. Their ill-starred love affair founders on Esther's resolute unwillingness to surrender her freedom to the arbitrary intellectual authority of the church. Hazard, for his part, turns out never to have truly known Esther at all, but to have loved and pursued a romantic fiction. There can be no connection between these men and this woman—a sad romance, but also a tragic allegory, given what they, and more importantly she, represent.

Hazard first hears of Esther from Wharton and Strong. The geologist's description of his cousin, "the sternest little Pagan I know," who wants to know whether Hazard really believes his own sermons, entrances the minister (197). When Hazard finally does see Esther, she is sitting before a hearth, telling and illustrating stories to a group of hospitalized children, and therefore radiating maternal, domestic virtue (212). Through a series of machinations, Esther gets to paint one of the saints in Hazard's church; he begins to think of himself as Petrarch to her Laura (243).

Esther's father had predicted, "When I am out of the way she will feel lonely, and any man who wants her very much can probably get her." (206) When Mr. Dudley dies, his prediction nearly comes true. Hazard declares his love to Esther two weeks after Mr. Dudley's death, and she finds herself "swept away in a wave of tenderness" (267). Her romantic mood lasts until she goes again to hear Hazard preach. All her doubts return. She does not believe, she cannot believe, and to marry a clergyman would require her to profess, in all hypocrisy. Hazard has enough faith for both, of course, but she already has the habit of thinking for herself. "She could no more allow him to come into her life and take charge of her thoughts than to go down into her kitchen and take charge of her cook. . . . The moment he was out of her sight she forgot that he was to be the keeper of her conscience, and, without a thought of her dependence, she resumed the charge of

her affairs" (275). She decides finally that there must be no engagement, and she flees town for Niagara Falls, with an entourage including all the major characters but Hazard.

The spurned suitor follows the escaped object of his love, and, in this honeymoon locale, their final confrontation destroys any remaining hope of a marriage, and reveals the root of Esther's incompatibility with Hazard. He pushes her to tell him exactly why she cannot accept him and his religion. She replies she cannot stand the doctrines of the Christian church, which seem to her to cry out "flesh—flesh—flesh." He counters he has heard it all before. "You say the idea of the resurrection is shocking to you. Can you, without feeling still more shocked, think of a future existence where you will not meet once more father or mother, husband or children? Surely the natural instincts of your sex must save you from such a creed!" Now he has cut her:

"Ah!" cried Esther, almost fiercely, and blushing crimson, as though Hazard this time had pierced the last restraint on her self-control: "Why must the church always appeal to my weakness and never to my strength! I ask for spiritual life and you send me back to my flesh and blood as though I were a tigress you were sending back to her cubs. What is the use of appealing to my sex? The atheists at least show me respect enough not to do that!" (333)

Hazard has now to retreat and own himself beaten. He has tried to treat her as he does his congregation, to order her to conform, not only to his religion, but to his idea of femininity.

If Hazard, representative man of the cloth, poses the greatest threat to Esther's independence of mind, and so disqualifies himself as a husband, Esther must, presumably, find someone from among her other acquaintances. But over the course of the novel, her other friends have demonstrated their inadequacy. She paints: what then of her teacher, the artist Wharton? He assesses her, behind her back, as "but a second-rate amateur," who, nevertheless, "has done one or two things which I give you my word I would like to have done myself" (199). The narrator explains that Wharton is simply a hard critic; "[w]hether there was a living artist whom Wharton would have classed higher than a first-rate amateur is doubtful. On his scale to be second-rate was a fair showing" (210). He cannot class her any higher, he says in despair, because "if her style is right, my art is wrong" (200). The difference between Esther's amateur style and Wharton's acclaimed professional art turns out, as with the problem with religion, to result from a difference between men and women.

Esther earns the right to paint a single panel in the church, a portrait of St. Cecilia, using Mrs. Murray's orphaned protégée Catherine Brooke as a model. Catherine comes from Colorado, and is young and fresh and unspoiled. Esther has

already painted Catherine as the spirit of the plains. Now she hopes to introduce that same American spirit to the cathedral. Wharton is a high priest of the art world, and as such rivals Hazard as a tyrant prince. Unlike Hazard, however, he cannot reconcile himself to his calling. He knows that somehow it rings false. He labors in thrall to an artistic ideal born of the old world, an ideal of transcendence, to which Esther's fresh artistic style and her fresh subject matter must remain forever alien. When he sketches Catherine in his own style, Esther instantly rejects it: "This is a man's work. . . . no woman would ever have done it. I don't like it. I prefer her as she is and as I made her" (224). Wharton's sketch is mannish because he has put a romantic, transcendent light into Catherine's eyes. His art depicts spirituality as a "struggle," (246) in which Catherine, as painted by Esther, is out of place. When he tries to get Esther to paint as he does, she rebels against his attempt to make her see Catherine as a man would. Catherine herself sees the same thing: "But don't you see that she is a woman, and you are trying to make a man out of her?" (223) Esther explodes:

What I could do nicely would be to paint squirrels and monkeys playing on vines around the choir, or daisies and buttercups in a row, with one tall daisy in each group of five. That is the way for a woman to make herself useful. . . . I am going home to burn my brushes and break my palette. What is the use of trying to go forward when one feels iron bars across one's face? (247)

Esther's conflict with art remains irresolute, because the business with Hazard and religion pushes it aside, but it is headed in the same direction. Convention limits her to a supporting role—to decoration rather than to complex expression.

With the minister and the artist out of the running, the scientist remains, but he can only offer friendship, not passion. When Hazard asks Strong if he is in love with Esther, Strong replies no; "[s]he says I am an old glove that fits well enough but will not cling" (296). He has no faith, and cannot offer Esther any absolutes. When she corners him, he cannot offer her much.

"Is science true?"

"No!"

"Then why do you believe in it?"

"I don't believe in it."

"Then why do you belong to it?"

"Because I want to help making it truer." (284)

In the end, she has inadvertently won his love, but cannot return it. He asks her to marry him; her refusal—and her frustrated interest in Hazard—is the book's last word: "But George, I don't love you, I love him" (335). Like Madeleine

Lightfoot Lee, Esther has fallen in love with a man who casts a shadow; also like Mrs. Lee, she will not go with him if it means standing in that shadow for the rest of her life.

As her father and aunt had foreseen, in the end Esther rebelled and was lost. Just how lost might seem indeterminate, but on reading the book Clarence King reported to John Hay that “I had the hardihood to say to him [Adams] that he ought to have made Esther jump into Niagara as that was what she would have done. He said ‘certainly she would but I could not suggest it.’”²⁷ But Adams did suggest it. He depicted Niagara Falls as Esther’s destiny in a number of ways. Most vividly, the narrator describes the falls as Esther’s lover. “Her room looked down on the cataract, and she had already taken a fancy to this tremendous, rushing, roaring companion, which thundered and smoked under her window. . . . She fell in love with the cataract” (314). In the beginning of the book a remark of Wharton’s foreshadows the falls as Esther’s personal god; he says she belongs to “the next world which artists want to see, when paganism will come again and we can give a deity to every waterfall” (200). When Strong tries to envision an afterlife as science might predict it, she asks him a question that makes him worry. “Does your idea mean that the next world is a sort of reservoir of truth, and that what is true in us just pours into it like raindrops? . . . After all I wonder whether that may not be what Niagara has been telling me!” said Esther, and she spoke with an outburst of energy that made Strong’s blood run cold” (321). Finally, when Hazard makes his last bid to capture her, he tells her he sees her ready to destroy herself, as if she were “tossing on the rapids yonder, at the edge of the fall” (331). These clues add up to an adequate indication of Esther’s doom.

If Adams did suggest it, why did he not depict it? The conventions of sentimental literature, as scholars of genre suggest, demanded that women either marry or die.²⁸ Esther would not marry, would not make an inapposite match simply to support a society whose basic tenets excluded her. For the same reasons she could not die, for to do so would allow her reabsorption into the conventional narrative of sentiment Adams meant her to avoid. If she were to die, she would die for the sins of an ungrateful world. She would become a sacrifice and thus a conventional heroine, satisfying the expectation she—and Adams—hoped to thwart.

Esther finds herself pushed to the precipice specifically because she cannot play a conventional feminine role. Art and religion require her to play the role of submissive wife, of romantic object. She can do neither, and science offers her insufficient comfort. Half the significance of Esther’s fate lies in the nature of the men who cannot make a place for her. They stand for the finest ideas of American civilization but they can do nothing for her. The other half lies in her own identity. Who, precisely, is Esther, and why is it more than mere spinsterhood that she faces?

Wharton characterized Esther early on as “one of the most marked American types I ever saw.” When Strong asks him what he means by that, he replies, “I want to know what she can make of life. She gives one the idea of a lightly-sparred

yacht in mid-ocean; unexpected; you ask yourself what the devil she is doing there” (199). As a marked American type, according to Wharton, Esther is ill-equipped, out of place. In the same scene, Strong remarks that her name should ring a bell with the literate company. It is, he says, “[a]s familiar as Hawthorne. . . . One of his tales is called after it.” Her father, of an old Puritan family, saw the name and liked the sound (197). The story is “Old Esther Dudley,” last of Hawthorne’s four “Legends of the Province House.” Hawthorne’s Esther Dudley, a Massachusetts loyalist, remains in the Province House after the departure of the Royal Governor, General William Howe. He cannot persuade her to leave with him, and walks away, thinking her “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 merely a vision of faded magnificence.”²⁹ She waits for the royal representative to return. One day, she sees a fine young gentleman coming up the path to the Province House, and she thinks her hopes fulfilled. He is in fact the new Governor, but the new Governor is John Hancock, elected by the men of the State of Massachusetts. He shows compassion, for he knows he can only disappoint her:

“Alas, venerable lady!” said Governor Hancock . . .
 “your life has been prolonged until the world has changed around you. You have treasured up all that time has rendered worthless—the principles, feelings, manners, modes of being and acting which another generation has flung aside—and you are a symbol of the past. And I and those 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.”³⁰

There is no place for old Esther Dudley among the new American men. In bringing her forward in the person of a young Esther Dudley, Adams created a character who is also a “symbol of the past,” clinging to a life that America, for good or ill, had outstripped. After Strong’s recollection of Hawthorne, Wharton remarks that if Esther belongs to any other world it is to “the next world” (200). She is of the past, she may be of the future, but she is not of the here and now, dominated as it is by a medieval church its loyal parishioners do not understand, whose priest cannot understand her, where her art is a mere feminine style that does not satisfy masculine convention, where the most knowledgeable of men can only offer her an uncertain future. A woman such as Esther cannot mate with the best of the “new race of men.”

Reviving Henry

The cottage industry of Henry Adams studies employs some serious scholars. But it also shelters a small band of hero-worshippers. Perhaps in reaction to

this distasteful phenomenon, a number of scholars have made Adams into a usefully antidemocratic, antifeminist straw man. For Blanche Wiesen Cook he is the model for a cynically philandering Franklin Roosevelt, for T. J. Jackson Lears he is a man with a “devotion to the domestic ideal” who needed a nurturing mother-figure, and for Robert Dawidoff he becomes the model opponent of American democracy.³¹ The preceding reading, however brief, of Adams’s work on American democracy and women in it amply demonstrates that none of these views will do.

In considering Adams’s feminism in *Esther* we can look at him both as a critic of and a participant in sentimental culture. In both these roles he suggests the limits of sentimental culture as a discourse for articulating feminist desires. Attacking it left no alternative: it encompassed spinsterhood, marriage, and death in a society where there was as yet no settlement house movement and so no prominent, respectable alternative design for living. Arguing within it allowed the expression only of hopes, not of plans. As a critic he prefigures the arguments of Charlotte Gilman and Ann Douglas, who themselves descend from Angelina and Sarah Grimké (among others): sentimental culture limits women to an unsatisfactory set of duties consisting primarily of submission and sacrifice. Nothing—not even security—could warrant the dishonesty required to take on such a role in an inappropriate marriage. And, like Douglas, he saw no cultural alternative, and concluded his investigations on a note of despair—though significantly he denied Esther the surcease of death, and thus defied sentimental conventions that would have turned her death into a sacrificial martyrdom.

At the same time, Adams participated intentionally in what Joanne Dobson calls the “sentimental project.” Dobson writes that “[t]he principal theme of the sentimental text is the desire for bonding,” and it is this desire that underwrites the nurturing and communitarian values that Tompkins identifies as distinctly feminine and subversive.³² Nothing better characterizes the Adams’s texts of the Gilded Age than the yearning for a society founded on organic connection, on a sense of collective enterprise, on an inclusion of women’s culture in the mainstream of the American democracy. Esther’s desire for bonding is our point of identification with her and the source of her downfall, for she is half of no suitable pair with the men of her culture.

By adopting a feminine pseudonym and creating a feminine heroine whose story pivots on this thwarted quest, Adams clearly meant to find an audience within women’s culture of the period. It is possible, and even tempting given the wealth of recent theory, to consider this strategy a form of literary drag. Ultimately the analogy does not hold: the drag performance undermines gender prescriptions by calling attention to itself as a performance. Adams appears to have had no intention of doing so, but rather meant to remain undercover. Instead his adoption of another identity might have been a protective cover. In both *Democracy* and *Esther* he sought to protect himself from those who would identify him, in the first instance for political and in the second instance for

personal reasons. Moreover, if as Bush suggests “the interior voice of the novelist across style and content” is one with Esther’s, then Adams enjoyed a freedom as a novelist that he did not as a professional historian.³³

Adams began by arguing the case for “The Primitive Rights of Women,” setting forth the notion that history did not support the belief that the role of women in modern American society did not represent the highest point of human achievement, thus undermining the authority of social convention. By giving women’s sphere a history he opened the possibility that the domestic, sentimental role of suffering and nurturing did not grow from women’s biological nature. In his history, Adams could only confront this problem intellectually and from the outside, but in fiction he could examine its emotional and interior content. He moved on in *Democracy* and particularly in *Esther* to confront the crux of the feminist problem. If a woman refuses to define her femininity in biological, maternal terms, then her special vision, her claim to a distinct world-view, rests on outsider status, on novelty, untaintedness, and honesty—the ability to see things as they are. The problem emerges: if women were included, if the feminine vision were incorporated into the social vision, the feminine, no longer excluded, would lose its distinctive quality. Esther incarnates this bind. She has nowhere to go if she wishes to remain who she is.

Adams was not the only writer who faced this dilemma. Apart from those who promoted the values of women’s sphere as an alternative to capitalist culture, more evidently feminist writers (as the historian William Leach points out) had been carrying on a half-hearted assault on the stereotypes of sentimental love for a decade or so. “Middle-class feminists waged an ambivalent war on sentimental love, most feminists adhered to a high standard of female purity, and few denied or wanted to deny the importance of woman’s eternal nature. Indeed, mid-nineteenth century feminism took much of its power from the tradition of female nurture.”³⁴ Thus feminists’ attempt to replace sentimental love with a truly rational love failed. Sentimental love might require deceptive stereotypes, but rational love, based only on self-knowledge, degraded the feelings. The problem persisted.

Henry Adams wrestled with women’s demons because he saw his wife struggling with them. Perhaps he believed that he could work the problems out on paper. It was, after all, a time-honored Adams tactic. Adams’s failure to resolve these problems, of course, echoed eerily in the real end to Clover Adams’s struggle. She came from a family hereditarily given to melancholy: every child of her generation would attempt suicide, and some, like her, would succeed. But the conditions of suicide are not merely hereditary. Clover Adams lived in a world which would not allow women “any realistic means to emotional commitment, or any encouragement for the use of their intellectual potential,” as her biographer Eugenia Kaledin wrote.³⁵ Her intelligence and wry humor liberated her from the strictures of the Church, and the stifling constraints of sentimental womanhood, but it was a fatal freedom. She had nowhere to go and no one to hold to except her

father and Adams, and after her father died, one weekend while Adams was away, she felt she had nothing.

Adams's "Primitive Rights of Women" and Gilman's *Women and Economics* belong to the same intellectual tradition. Both give a history to, and therefore undermine the authority of, women's submissive role. Both criticize modern women for submissive behavior, and both appear to want women to transcend this role. The knowledgeable reader may add that both writers also dealt with the psychological problems wrought by sentimental culture by writing fictional treatments, and that both arguments tended toward an unfortunately dismal role for women in the immediate future. Gilman translated her intellectual argument into political activity. Adams did not. Had his wife not died he might have behaved differently, but he could only turn away from most things after her suicide. The only statement he would make to the world was the enigmatic monument he commissioned Augustus Saint-Gaudens to sculpt for Clover's grave in Rock Creek. The statue, unburdened as it is by explanation, conveys different messages to different observers. But Adams continued afterward to define himself and his place in life in a complex relationship to the public, a relationship richly embittered by Clover's death. Once he paraphrased the Book of Ezekiel to a friend: "Son of man, behold, I take from thee the desire of thine eyes at a stroke yet shall thou neither mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. So spake I unto the people in the morning: and in the evening my wife died."³⁶ He nevertheless clung to his peculiar belief in art and democracy, explaining once of the Saint-Gaudens statue, "All considerable artists make a point of compelling the public to think for itself, and their rule is to require each observer to see what he can, and this will be what the artist meant."³⁷ He never abandoned his task of trying to resolve the paradox he had struggled with in *Esther*. If his wife's suicide had anything at all to do with her belief that her culture stifled her for her womanhood, then we might understand his failure to extend that task further into the public arena, for he had been forced to live out the very narrative of "devastation of affectional loss" he had sought to thwart.³⁸

Adams's critiques of American democracy savaged the practice, not the theory, of democracy, and unlike Dawidoff's typical Tocquevillian, he never made an exception for himself but persistently saw himself caught in the same trap. For Adams, democracy in America failed specifically because it could make no place for women (like Esther Dudley and Madeleine Lee) who would not make themselves into shallow players of the matrimonial power game. Esther literally sees differently from her male counterparts, and articulates her vision in different terms, terms that cannot fit into the established masculine rules of discourse. She embodies what Adams imagined to be a more ancient, respectable, strong and feminine tradition. She will not suffer the constraints of convention, especially when they require her to define her femininity in terms only of her flesh. She contrasts specifically with her callously materialistic counterpart, Catherine Brooke. Where Esther is drawn to the tumultuous depths of Niagara Falls,

Catherine determines herself to “stay in the shallowest puddle I can find” (324). Catherine shuns all modes of serious masculine discourse and does not let it worry her; she is willing to play the game and marry for money, as do the wives of Washington in *Democracy*. Adams hated the thought of an American democracy that demanded that women either play the game or risk becoming, like Esther, hopelessly lost.

The very experimental nature of the book *Esther* illustrates Adams’s point quite as plainly as any of the textual indications of his intentions. He designed the book superficially to appeal to precisely the audience of women who (as he noted in *Democracy*) were daily encouraged by sentimental fiction to sacrifice themselves to the cause of preserving society. *Esther* had a woman’s name for a title and a woman author’s name under the title. But (as William Jordy argued³⁹) however much Adams loved to read, look at, and marvel over science, he was never himself a scientist. So he tested, as was his tendency, two hypotheses at once. He wanted not only to seize that vast popular audience of women and urge them to think differently about marriage, but also to do so on the merits of his writing alone, without puffery. He wanted to shake up the complacent belief in women’s progress and to do so without compromising his argument. As he told his brother, good writing would make its own market. He wanted awfully to believe it could make a politically engaged public out of a mass market. Adams was too pure a feminist and democrat to succeed in Gilded Age America.

As a final illustration of Adams’s influence on the more plainly progressive, feminist, and democratic thinkers in the generation that followed his, we might consider what two such scholars made of him. Adams was both familiar spirit and *bête noire* to Charles and Mary Beard. They invoked him at the outset and conclusion of *The Rise of American Civilization* specifically to refute him, but they made their argument on the terms that he set. When they published the first edition of *The Rise* in 1927, it was much easier to find evidence of cultural progress in America than it had been in 1884, when Adams was writing *Esther* and his *History*. As Nancy F. Cott notes, the Beards took up the questions—could America develop a distinctly democratic civilization? Could it include women in that civilization?⁴⁰—Adams asked, but they answered with a resounding yes. Moreover, they like Adams believed their written works would serve to awaken the public to its own interest. Consequently they could invoke Adams as a “poignant specialist” who nevertheless had set the terms of debate.⁴¹ Like their predecessor they too would find themselves irresistibly flooded by the tide of historical irony—the Beards’ optimistic history had just found its audience when the Crash of 1929 hit—and find themselves struggling against its current.

Adams’s conclusion to the paradox of feminism was not capitulation to the new science of Darwinism nor a resort to mysticism. For him the riddle of women’s place in civilization could not be resolved by enshrining them either as mother or as other. Within the common confines of civilization women yet had a different history from men, which itself made their present situation different.

Adams investigated this history and used it to undermine current assumptions about women's place in the democracy. He reasoned that only if women's history could become part of a historical democratic narrative could women like Esther, Madeleine Lee, or Clover Adams find a place in America. He lacked only the optimism that it would happen. Within his lifetime it did not.

Notes

1. Henry Holt, *Garrulities of an Octogenarian Editor, with Other Essays Somewhat Biographical and Autobiographical* (Boston, 1923), 139.
2. Joanne Dobson, "Reclaiming Sentimental Literature," *American Literature* 69 (June 1997), 263-288; quotation on 266.
3. Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York, 1977), 12-13.
4. Jane P. Tompkins, "Sentimental Power: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Politics of Literary History," *Glyph* 8 (1981), 79-102; quotation on 94. Tompkins has since repented the tenor, if not the terms, of her critique: Jane Tompkins, "Fighting Words: Unlearning to Write the Critical Essay," *Georgia Review* 42:3 (Fall 1988), 585-590; see esp. 588-589.
5. Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Women's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 75 (June 1988), 9-39.
6. Tompkins, "Sentimental Power," 93.
7. T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (Chicago, 1981), 262 and 263, inter alia.
8. Robert Dawidoff, *The Genteel Tradition and the Sacred Rage: High Culture vs. Democracy in Adams, James, & Santayana* (Chapel Hill, 1992), 55.
9. Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 287 and Dawidoff, *The Genteel Tradition*, 66.
10. In Adams scholarship, the book appears variously. Ernest Samuels (*Henry Adams: The Middle Years* [Cambridge, Mass., 1958] decodes the *roman à clef* but warns "it was no thinly veiled confessional" (225). Otto Friedrich (*Clover* [New York, 1979]) sees it as a "coded accusation," an expression of Adams's presumed hostility to his wife, though Friedrich cannot account for Esther's name, which is the key to her identity, and requires that the narrative admire Catherine Brooke, which is not a case easily made (299-306). Patricia O'Toole (*The Five of Hearts* [New York, 1990]) sees *Esther* as an expression of Adams's condescension to his wife and "bafflement over the eternal battle of the sexes" but does not connect this thesis with the notion of the book as experiment or Adams's political thought (139). Clive Bush (*Halfway to Revolution: Investigation and Crisis in the Work of Henry Adams, William James, and Gertrude Stein* [New Haven, 1991]) treats the book essentially as a play among intellectual theses. Edward Chalfant (*Better in Darkness* [Hamden, Conn., 1994]) sees *Esther* as a "hopeful book," and argues it was written to express Clover Adams's opinions (374).
11. Cited in Louis Auchincloss, *Henry Adams*, University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers, No. 93 (Minneapolis, 1971), 10.
12. Henry Adams (hereafter cited as HA) to Charles Francis Adams, Jr. (hereafter cited as CFAJr), 30 July 1867, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 6 vols., ed. J. C. Levenson, Ernest Samuels, et al. (Cambridge, 1982), I, 544.
13. HA to CFAJr, 20 October 1867, *Letters*, I, 555.
14. *Ibid.*
15. J. Laurence Laughlin, "Some Recollections of Henry Adams," *Scribner's*, May 1921, 578. Laughlin was in the same graduate seminar as Henry Cabot Lodge.
16. *Ibid.* Laughlin recalled that Adams was fascinated by the plotting that went before Rutherford B. Hayes's ascent to the presidency, and that he believed General William Sherman had prevented a *coup d'état*.
17. HA, *The History of the United States of America during the Administrations of Jefferson and Madison*, ed. Ernest Samuels (Chicago, 1967), 128 and 58. Subsequent page citations appear in the text.
18. Cited in Ernest Samuels, *Henry Adams* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), 276.
19. HA to John Hay, 8 October 1882, *Letters*, II, 473.
20. HA to Sir Robert Cunliffe, 31 August 1875; HA to Charles Milnes Gaskell, 25 November 1877; *Letters*, II, 233 and 326.
21. Marian Hooper Adams to Robert Hooper, 18 December 1881, *The Letters of Mrs. Henry Adams, 1865-1883*, ed. Ward Thoron (Boston, 1936), 310.
22. Marian Hooper Adams to Robert Hooper, 12 February 1882, *Letters of Mrs. Henry Adams*, 346.

23. *Democracy*, 8. Emphasis in the original. Subsequent page citations appear in the text.
24. HA, "The Primitive Rights of Women," in *Historical Essays*, by Henry Adams (New York, 1891), 2-3. Subsequent page citations appear in the text.
25. Bush, *Halfway to Revolution*, 32.
26. Henry Adams, *Esther in Novels*, 205. Subsequent page citations appear in the text.
27. O'Toole, *The Five of Hearts*, 169.
28. See e.g. Dobson, "Reclaiming Sentimental Literature," and Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*.
29. Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Old Esther Dudley," in *Twice-told Tales* (Philadelphia, n. d.), 285.
30. *Ibid.*, 292.
31. Blanche Wiesen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt*, vol. I, 1884-1933 (New York, 1992), 247. In the note referring to this page, Cook speculates that Martha Cameron was Adams's illegitimate child, that Clover Adams knew it, and it was why she committed suicide (539). Lears attributes to Adams a mystical belief in the "cult of domesticity" (273). Dawidoff uses Adams as the model Tocquevillian, or cultural antidemocrat (16).
32. Dobson, "Reclaiming Sentimental Literature," 280.
33. On the relation between feminism and this use of different voices see Tompkins, "Me and My Shadow," *New Literary History* 19:1 (Autumn 1987), 169-178.
34. William Leach, *True Love and Perfect Union: The Feminist Reform of Sex and Society* (New York, 1980), 112.
35. Eugenia Kaledin, *The Education of Mrs. Henry Adams* (Philadelphia, 1981), 240.
36. Cited in Friedrich, 21. The passage is Ezekiel 24:16 and 18, omitting verse 17. In the King James Version of the Bible, the full 18th verse reads, "So spake I unto the people in the morning, and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded."
37. Cited in Kaledin, *Education of Mrs. Henry Adams*, 256.
38. See Dobson, "Reclaiming Sentimental Literature," and Douglas, *Feminization of American Culture*, 12-13.
39. William Jordy, *Henry Adams: Scientific Historian* (New Haven, 1952).
40. Nancy F. Cott, "Two Beards: Coauthorship and the Concept of Civilization," *American Quarterly* 42 (June 1990).
41. Charles and Mary Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization*, 2 vols. (New York, 1927), II, 800. Evidently both Beards were preoccupied with Adams. According to Mary Beard's correspondence, she set the Adamsesque agenda of culture and women's role in the coauthored history. (See Cott.) Charles Beard reviewed Adams's posthumous *Degradation of the Democratic Dogma* with considerable delight in *The New Republic* and wrote the introduction to a new edition of Brooks Adams's *Law of Civilization and Decay*. Beard wrote Albert Beveridge of Adams, "My God, but he did fly to the heart of things and scatter the clap trap far and wide." (Charles A. Beard, "Henry Adams," *The New Republic* 31 March 1920, 162-163; Brooks Adams, *The Law of Civilization and Decay: An Essay on History*, with an introduction by Charles Beard (1896; New York, 1943); Charles Beard to Albert Beveridge, 22 February 1920, Beard Papers of DePauw University.)